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## Refugee Related Political Violence in Africa

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### Abstract

This work focuses on the analysis of one of the most discussed phenomenon of recent years, the reception of refugees. From a moral and ethical point of view, the reception of refugees is the right thing to do, but it can also pose risks for the state. The author of this work examines refugee-related political violence, a phenomenon that has not been explored in the last twenty years. The aim is to describe the occurrence of this phenomenon in cases from Africa. The individual incidents are categorized into six categories of political violence (Attacks between the sending state and the refugees, Attacks between the receiving state and the refugees, Ethnic or factional violence among the refugees, Internal violence within the receiving state, Interstate war or unilateral intervention and last one Attacks between refugees and transnational VNSA). The author describes the type of political violence involving refugees for the last 15 years and also analyze which type of violence is most common, at the same time she devotes to the analysis and description of frequency, intensity, and persistence. She compares the findings with similar work that was published in 1998 and explains why and what changes have occurred in the field of refugee-related political violence over the last 15 years.

**Keywords:** Africa, Conflict, Refugee, Security, Violence

### 1. Introduction

Currently, more than 70.8 million people are forcibly displaced, of these people, one third are refugees (UNCHR, 2018, p. 2). These people flee not only because of war conflicts, ethnic or religious violence but also because of natural disasters such as droughts or floods. More than half of the forcibly displaced population is relocated within the state, but the other half seek refuge in foreign countries, most of them in neighboring or geographically close countries. The vast majority of refugee-hosting states are not developed and rich states. These are developing countries, which host 86% of the world's refugees. Moreover, the increase in refugees is growing rapidly every year. E.g. from 2016 to the end of 2018, it increased by almost 4 million. The pressure on refugee-hosting states is growing, the number of refugees is increasing and it is necessary to ensure them decent living conditions and take care of their protection and security. However, these states are often unable to provide the basic needs to their own population. The situation is therefore very complicated, refugees exert economic, environmental, political and security pressure on the host states. This is confirmed by the

Fragile State Index, which includes the influx of refugees and the movement of internally displaced persons into its indicators, which largely weaken the state.

Leaving aside the economic and environmental impacts that appear in the vast majority of cases, political-security impacts are something that poses a direct threat to the lives of refugees, but also to the local population. The presence of refugees in the state increases the possibility of political violence. This may be due to several factors. It is very often impossible to distinguish refugees from armed warriors and militias. These armed actors abuse refugee camps and refugee status. They hide in the camps and abuse financial aid. The second factor is that refugees are much more vulnerable and in a desperate situation. Desperate living and economic conditions, together with negative personal experience, increase the possibility of radicalization and their involvement in the activities of armed militias. However, it is not clear how big the problem of refugee-related political is at present. There are very famous cases from the past, for example, the attacks by Palestinian refugees in Lebanon or the involvement of refugees in the structures of the terrorist group Al-Shabaab and their violent activity in Kenyan territory. This includes several cases that are known worldwide. But what does this mean for the global refugee population? In how many cases do refugee-related violence actually occur? There is currently no study to examine this and give a clear answer. In the past, thorough research was conducted by Sarah Kenyon Lischer. She researched refugee-related political violence in Asia and Africa, but the study only works with dates up to 1998. Since that year, no similar research has been conducted. Therefore this study is dealing with the latest cases in the last fifteen years Unlike Lischer, this work deals only with Africa. This is because Africa has the greatest potential for conflict in the last two decades. The study focuses on the whole Africa, but at the end of the work there is also provided a comparison of individual regions - East Africa, North Arica, West Africa, Central Africa, Great Lakes and Southern Africa.

In recent years, during the refugee crisis that has hit Europe, we have seen very often in the media that the influx of refugees increases security risks and increases the chances of terrorist attacks. Much of the Eastern European countries, in particular, refuse to accept refugees. This is very often discussed by the EU institutions, which tried to introduce mandatory quotas, but in vain. This issue very often occurs on the first pages of the media and is still widely discussed. The paradox is that the vast majority of refugees are located in Asia and Africa, not in Europe. This paper presents new time series data in order to analyze the frequency, persistence, and type of political violence involving refugees for the years 2003 to 2018. This also describes to a limited extent the intensity of violence. The analysis reveals trends over the past few years and the article describes what kind of refugee-related political violence occurs most often. In how many cases the violence actually occurs and how often it is. At the same time, it compares specific regions of Africa to determines which region is the most often captured by this phenomenon.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

This chapter is divided into three parts. In the first part, basic terms are introduced and defined. In the second part, the main concept of this work (refugee-related political violence) is explained and described on the basis of available research. The third part describes the methodology. The goals of the research, the way that was proceeded during the analysis and the sources that were used.

## 2.1 Migration and Refugees

The migration of population is a commonplace phenomenon that has evolved since ancient times. People migrated in order to get better living conditions, for food, because of adverse weather or other reasons. This mostly took place within a single continent, but at the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries, overseas cruises were widespread. Thenceforth the migration between continents had begun and it is commonplace today. The migration and movement of refugees are two concepts that are quite similar. E.g. Downs et al. (2005) described migration as a change of residence for a longer period of time, often involving border crossing or international migration. The reasons for migration are different. Natural disasters, overpopulation, religious persecution, but also quite common reasons such as job opportunities, etc. Migration is, therefore, a general category of national or cross-border movement of people, with various reasons (Downs et al., 2005, p. 16-18). Migration can be divided into internal or external, voluntary or forced or permanent or temporary. It is, therefore, a general category that includes refugees, among other things.

Until 1948, there was no international document to denounce refugees. This issue was solved on the basis of bilateral agreements. Nevertheless, in 1948 the UN Convention on the Status of Refugees was approved. It constituted the first comprehensive international agreement and defined the concept of refugee, refugee rights, determined the principles and obligations of ratifying states, described forms of cooperation, etc. States are obliged to grant asylum to refugees, and the principle of non-refoulement applies to all refugees.<sup>1</sup> A refugee is defined under the Convention as any person who, as a result of a well-founded fear of being persecuted because of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political views are outside their national country, and it is impossible or incapable of benefiting from the protection of their own state for fear of the above reasons (UN, 2014).

## 2.2 Refugee-related Political Violence

As described in the introduction, the reception of refugees very often entails a number of problems. This, of course, does not apply to all cases. However, in some cases, there is economic pressure on the host community, environmental degradation, and social and political-security problems. Several dozen authors describe the impact of receiving refugees on the host community. Most of these studies are case studies or studies involving only a few cases. An example is the work of Grindheim, who, based on a questionnaire survey, examined the impact of refugees on the host state in Kenya (Grindheim, 2013, p. 7-66). Another example is the work done by Gomez et al., who divided the negative impacts into four categories: economic, political-security, environmental and social (Gomez et al., 2010, p. 7-20).<sup>2</sup> The key point is that the vast majority of authors who study this issue describe the outbreak of violence and the deterioration of security. However, to analyze what kind of violence occurs is no longer part of their studies.

There are several surveys that deal specifically with refugee-related violence or refugee-related political violence. An example is a survey conducted by Gineste and Savun in 2019. Their research describes that larger refugee populations are associated with higher levels of

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<sup>1</sup> The non-refoulement principle means that a refugee may not be expelled to the country of origin if there is any kind of danger that could possibly endanger them (Pikna, 2012, p. 138).

<sup>2</sup> There are more examples: the study of Loescher and Milner (2001) or the study of Waswa (2012).

violence in host states. They describe several categories of violence associated with refugees. The key is whether violence is directed against refugees or refugees commit violence (Gineste and Savun, 2019, p. 136-137). These authors conduct a simple statistical analysis to determine which type of violence is most common and where violence occurs most often. However, this survey is problematic for several reasons. The authors mainly worked with data from The US State Department of Human Rights Country reports. The information in these reports does not sufficiently cover events in remote African states. Information from these sources is only fragmentary, general and often missing. Their research a description that does not explain the cases, does not compare regions, etc. On the other hand, it is a solid foundation that provides basic information but not deeper analysis. The main problem is its categorical distribution. There are a number of cases where it cannot be said unilaterally that violence is merely directed against refugees or vice versa. Cases of refugee-related political violence are very complex and complicated social events, and this division is very subjective for a large number of cases and does not cover what often happens in reality. For these reasons, we believe that such a division is not appropriate as it does not reflect real events. Examples are events in the Kakuma refugee camp in Kenya and its immediate surroundings. The locals very often attack the refugees verbally and physically. They envy them for the financial or medical assistance they receive. Refugees have problems with the locals as well. They enter the land of local people, where they take away wood and other materials. Cattle were stolen several times. The whole situation has grown several times to riots and violent community clashes. However, during the subsequent police investigation, it could not be clearly determined who initiated the violence (Grindheim, 2013, p. 53). This event cannot be classified into one of the general categories of Gineste and Savun (2019), because it does not understand the events themselves, it simplifies these events and leads to distortion.

Violence in relation to refugees is also described by other authors. E.g. In 2006, Salehyan and Gleditsch created a concept according to which refugees generating civil war in host countries. This occurs with the assistance of four mechanisms. The first mechanism is the proliferation of weapons and the cross-border movement of insurgents. The second mechanism is when refugees provide mobilization resources for domestic opposition. The third mechanism is when the refugee population changes the country's ethnic balance. The last mechanism is a competition between locals and refugees for employment and natural resources that causes violence (Salehyan and Gleditsch, 2006, p. 335).

Lischer conducted a thorough survey of refugee-related political violence in the 1990s. For the purposes of our research, we decided to use her theoretical concept because her approach is the most accurate and thoughtful. This concept is clear and the division and classification of cases into categories cannot be called into question, as it is in a case of study that was conducted by Gineste and Savun. The categories are clearly and logically delimited. She has created a total of five categories of refugee-related political violence: Attacks between sending state and refugees, Attacks between receiving state and refugees, Ethnic or factual violence among refugees, Internal violence within receiving state and Interstate war or unilateral intervention (Lischer, 2001, p. 8). We understand these categories in the same way as Lischer. Based on an analysis of several cases, we decided to create a sixth category. There are new cases of violence that cannot be classified in any of her categories. This is the categorization we work with:

**Attacks between sending state and refugees** (The violence occurs between refugees and government of sending state)

**Attacks between receiving state and refugees** (The violence occurs between refugees and government of receiving state)

**Ethnic or factual violence among refugees** (The violence occurs between groups of refugees)

**Internal violence within receiving state** (The violence occurs between refugees and local population of receiving state)

**Interstate war or unilateral intervention** (Refugees and the government of more than one state are involved in violence)

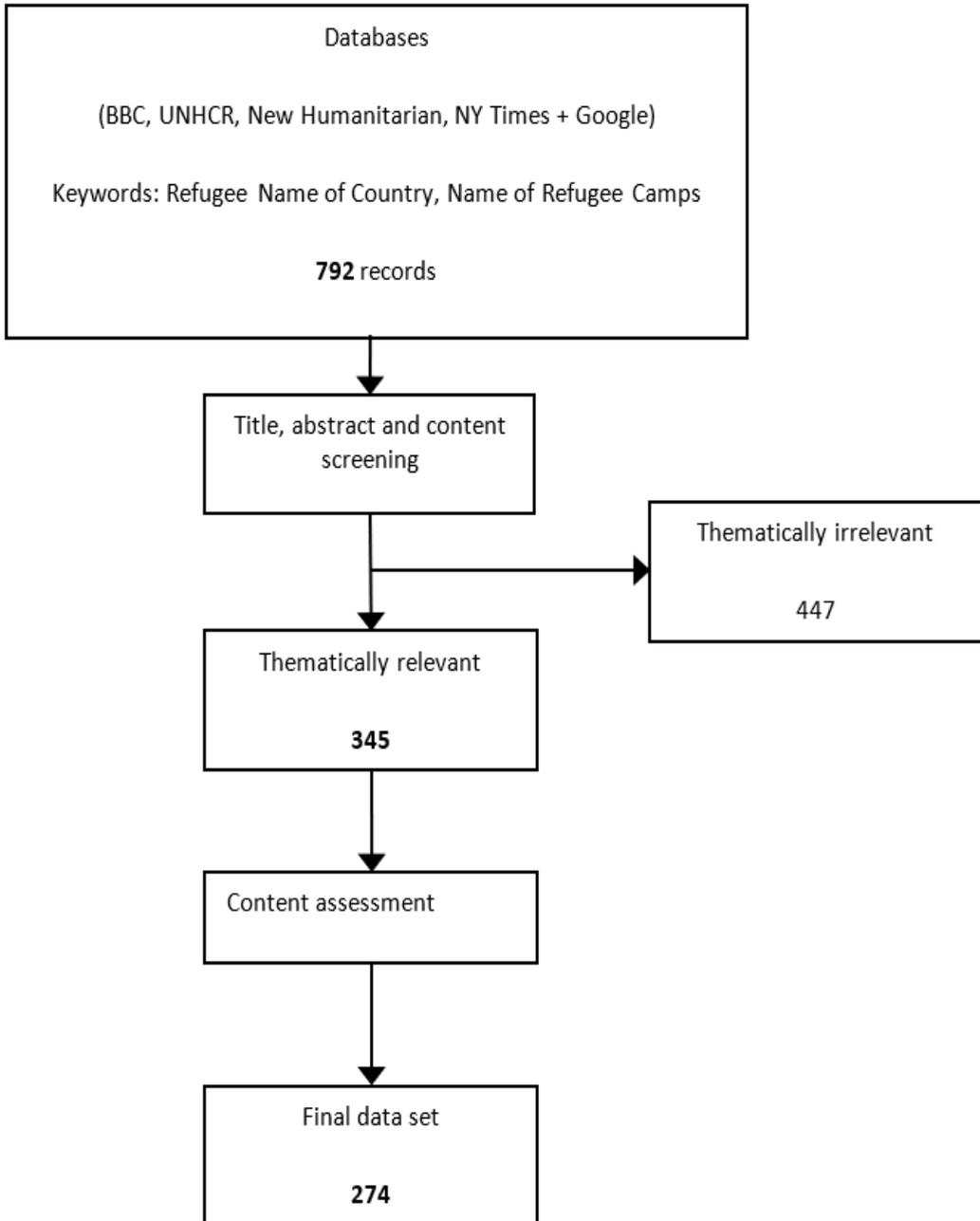
**Attacks between refugees and transnational VNSA** (The violence occurs between refugees and transnational VNSA (( non-state armed groups operating across several countries))

This study builds on her work, since she worked with very old data, only until 1996. Therefore our goal is to assess whether there has been any change in recent years, what the new trends are, and describe and explain in which part of Africa refugee-related political violence occurs most often and also determine which category is the most prevalent.

### 2.3 Methodology

The aim of this work is to describe the development of refugee-related political violence in the last 15 years. We work with the period from 2003 to 2018. This includes the area of Africa because the vast majority of events took place in this area. We describe trends in refugee-related political violence and focus on frequency, persistence and to a limited extent the intensity of violence. We compare all cases through structural comparisons and, based on these comparisons, we create extended typologies/categories. These created categories are mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive, cover all possibilities and do not overlap.

We work with all cases (states) that have a refugee community larger than 2000. This is mainly because data on smaller communities is not available. Moreover, the very low number of refugees (less than 2000) in the vast majority do not affect the events in the host state. We proceed chronologically, monitoring each year within each of these states, and recording and categorizing cases of violence. Consequently, persistence and frequency can be determined. The intensity, in this case, is of secondary importance, we describe it mainly in cases that somehow exceed the average by their scope, while we try to explain these cases. The typology/categorization itself was described in the previous chapter. This includes a total of six types of refugee-related political violence.

*Annex no. 1: Flow diagram of data acquisition.*

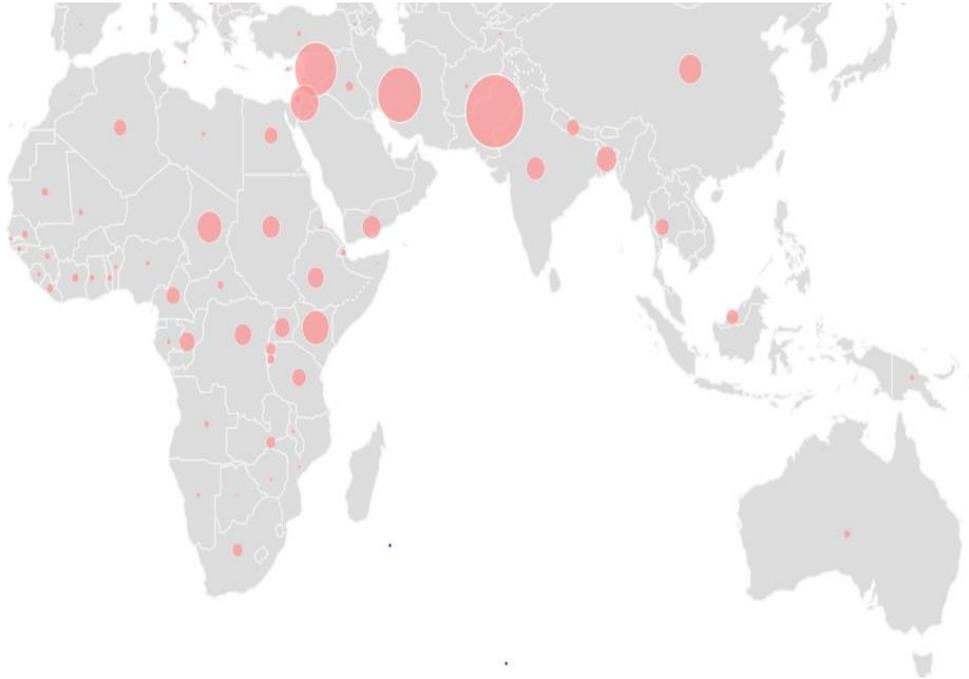
The limits of this work are mainly related to the lack of sources. Small events (according to the number of involved people and the intensity of violence) are often not recorded and reported.

We reduce these limits by using several kinds of sources. This includes UNHCR's monthly and annual reports, as well as data available from the Fragile State Index (Fund for Peace), which measures the growth of refugees in the host state, as well as the development of violence. Another important source is the reports from the New Humanitarian (IRIN), which deal with refugee issues in detail. We supplement all these sources with news from the media, especially the BBC and New York Times.

### **3. Trends in Refugee-Related Violence in Africa**

Refugee-related political violence is a phenomenon that is not currently in decline. The data presented here add new dimensions to the discourse about refugees and security. Few studies have so far dealt with this phenomenon, this research is based on a study conducted by Lischer (2001), but introduces a new category. Thus, the categories are expanded to reflect reality. The data shows that this expansion is necessary because this new category, where violent non-state actors perpetrate violence, is widespread. 2/5 of all cases of refugee-related political violence in Africa fall into the category of Attacks between refugees and transnational VNSA. This is groundbreaking compared to the study of Lischer and it illustrates a rapid development of the phenomenon. In her study, the most frequent type of violence involved the state. Either sending state or receiving state. However, these new data from 2003-2018 show something else. The most frequent type of violence is violence involving VNSA. On the contrary, violence involving states is not very common, as it was in the 1990s. Especially cases where sending states or governments of several states are involved in violence are very rare. This can be influenced by a number of factors. Since the 1990s there has been a rapid decline in interstate wars (Roser, 2013). These wars are rather exceptional, even in Africa. The vast majority of conflicts are domestic civil wars, which involve government forces and VNSA. The internationalization of conflict is not very common. Another factor may be that there is an increase in participation in regional organizations such as the African Union, ECOWAS, ICGLR, etc. (Byiers, 2017). This increases regional interdependence, belonging and cooperation while increasing security and reducing the risk of an outbreak of interstate war. States already have clear borders for the vast majority of cases and no new states are created. The shrinkage of the border and territorial disputes is therefore obvious. Other factors may also have an impact, but its description is not relevant for this work.

Our research also brought further findings. The vast majority of African states have a community of refugees in their territory of over 2000. Almost all countries have a higher incidence of refugees, in particular, this concerns 40 African states. Annex 1 shows the average number of refugees over the years in individual countries. The size of the red dot indicates the size of the refugee community. The largest refugee community has Cameroon, Chad, DRC, Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. On the other hand, Tunisia, Morocco, and Somalia have a smaller community than 2000 refugees.



*Annex no. 2: The size of the refugee community.*

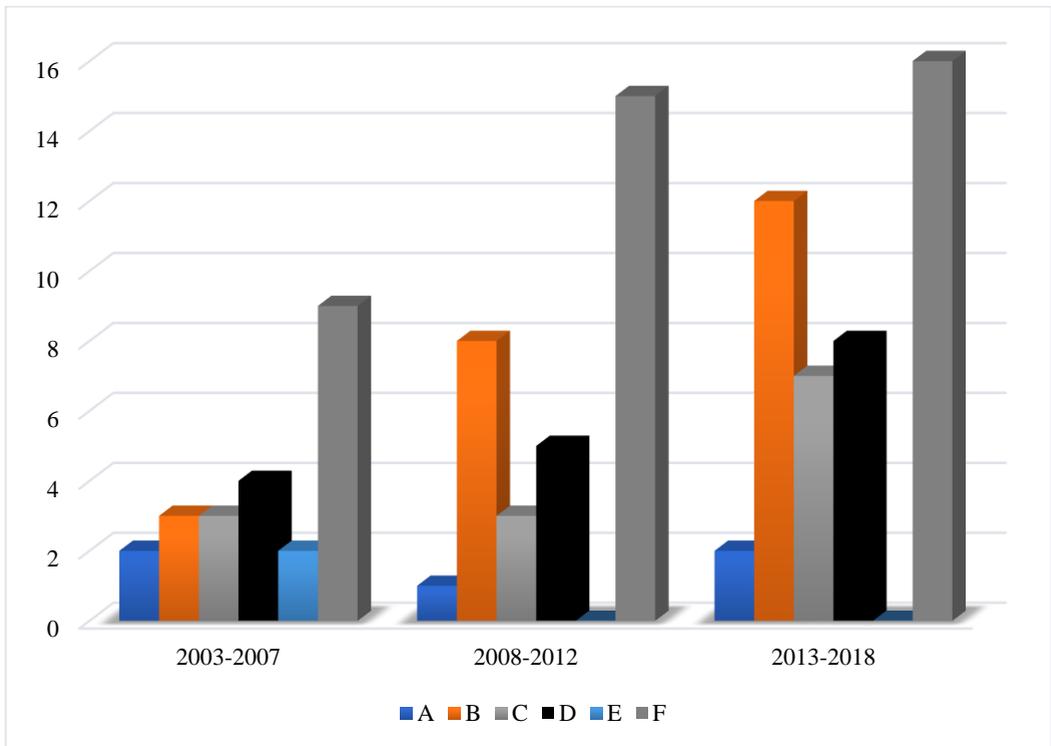
*Source: UNHCR (2019a) – UNHCR Statistics.*

The size of the refugee community affects the occurrence of violent incidents in the national territory. This is not a purely linear relationship. However, our research shows that if the refugee population in a country is large, more than 100,000 individuals, the chances of violence are higher. Specifically, this chance is almost 4 times higher than in states that have a small refugee community. These figures apply to the area of Africa. There are several examples. Djibouti, Gabon, Guinea-Bissau or Malawi have a very small refugee community, and no refugee-related political violence has occurred in these states. On the other hand, there are cases that violate these rules. E.g. Egypt has a high refugee population and no refugee-related political violence has been reported. Conversely, Benin or Ghana have a small community of refugees and violence has occurred. It should be noted that the frequency, persistence, and intensity were much lower than in cases with high refugee communities such as Uganda, DRC or Cameroon.

The vast majority of African refugee camps have poor security conditions. Many of the camps are overcrowded and the capacity is several times exceeded. Examples are refugee camps Dadaab and Kakuma in Kenya or Yida camp in South Sudan (Africa Facts, 2019). Poor security conditions persist in 2/3 of all refugee camps in Africa. This includes, for example, violent assaults, rapes or stealing. This daily crime and acts of violence are often not recorded or it is recorded just occasionally. Therefore it is not possible to work with all these kinds of cases. Some of these cases would be categorized as Ethnic or factual violence among refugees, some of these violent events cannot be categorized as political violence. Data on all these cases is

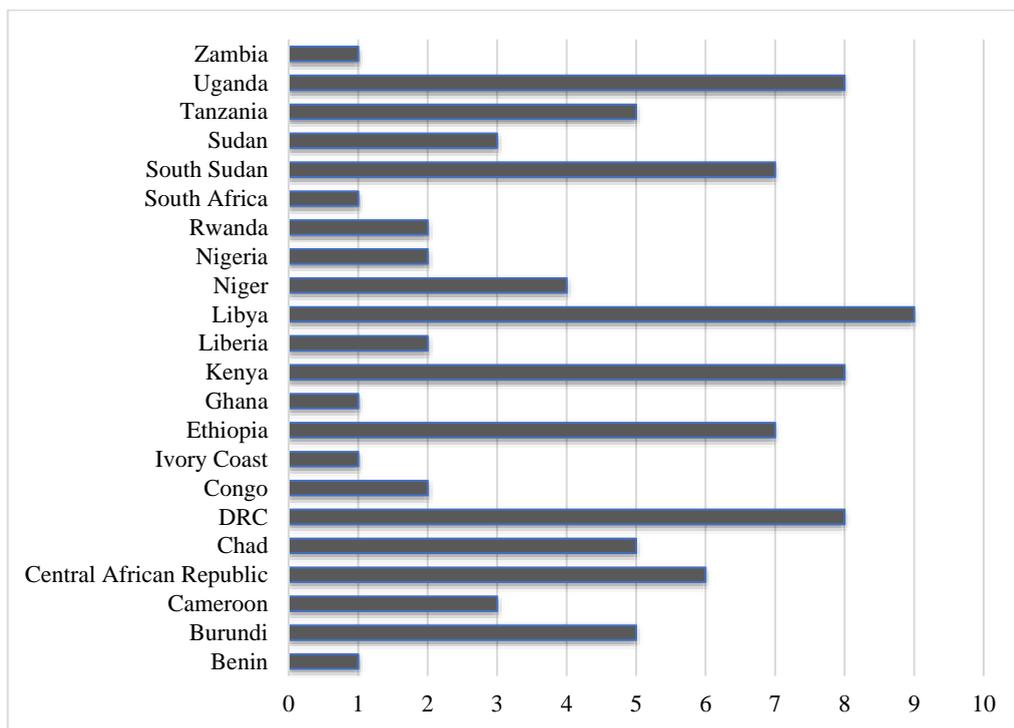
not available. This means that these attacks are most common in practice, but records are missing. These are cases of violence between individuals, which are often not reported. That is why we cannot work with it and we work only with greater violence.

The highest frequency and persistence of violence is mainly in the states of the Great Lakes region and East Africa. To be more specific, the highest persistence of violence is in DRC, Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, and South Sudan. In Kenya and Uganda, this represents VNSA attacks, but in Ethiopia, it is Internal violence within the receiving state and in Kenya, it is Ethnic or factual violence among refugees. The case of South Sudan is specific because it involves two types of violence, among refugees and among refugees and the local community. Conversely, the least violence has been reported in the region of South Africa. No case has been reported in Angola, Namibia, Zimbabwe or Botswana. Only one case in Zambia and one in South Africa. In the following two graphs, individual types of violence are recorded over three time periods of five years. The second graph shows the countries with the highest levels of violence, ranked by frequency. Countries, where no incidence of refugee-related political violence was reported, were not used in the graph.



*Annex no. 3: Type of refugee-related political violence in Africa (2003-2018).*

*Source: UNHCR (2019a), BBC, The New Humanitarian, NY Times, Al-Jazeera, etc.*



Annex no. 4: Frequency of refugee-related political violence by state (2003-2018).

Source: UNHCR (2019a), BBC, The New Humanitarian, NY Times, Al-Jazeera, etc.

### 3.1 Trends within Each Category

The first category (Attacks between sending state and refugees) includes only five incidents of violence. This is interesting as there has generally been a decline in violence involving state actors compared to Lischer's study. There was also a rapid decline in the second category (Attacks between receiving state and refugees), but this includes more cases, a total of 23. The decline in the first category was mainly due to the decline in interstate wars. National governments are reluctant to engage in conflicts and violence outside their territory. See the previous chapter. On the other hand, refugees are often perceived as a threat. Refugee camps very often serve as a base for attack planning and recruitment of members for VNSA. An example is LRA activity in DRC or the Central African Republic. The group forcibly recruited members and attacked refugee camps across several countries. Similar is the situation of refugee camps in Kenya and Ethiopia, where the terrorist group Al-Shabaab operates. However, unlike the LRA, recruitment of Al-Shabaab members is mostly voluntary, influenced primarily by the prospect of financial gains. Therefore, receiving states are willing to take advantage of physical violence against refugees. Most of these "B" cases involve violent clashes between refugees and the police or military of the receiving state, who try to control and reduce the number of refugees, often at the cost of violating human rights and international conventions. "A" cases of violence are more interesting, as the armed forces of one state extend

outside their territory. This strategy is often used by the Sudanese army, which bombs refugee camps in South Sudan, or by the governments of Burundi and Rwanda, who try to get rid of political dissent in refugee camps (BBC, 2013). This type of violence tends to be the most intense and in practice has claimed the largest number of victims.

Ethnic or factual violence among refugees is present in most refugee camps in Africa. However, records of this violence are often missing. Thirteen cases have been reported in total, but we believe that in fact, this category is the most prevalent. Unfortunately, this kind of violence is often overlooked, and the world media does not pay as much attention to it as in the cases of state involvement or VNSA. Examples when large-scale violence occurs (several people have died or it involves hundreds to thousands of individuals) are mostly recorded. Examples are disputes in Mtabila and Myovosi refugee camps (Tanzania) among Hutu and Tutsi refugees during the year 2003 (The New Humanitarian, 2004). Other examples are recent events (2018) from Ethiopia, where different ethnic groups were fighting each other in the Dollo Ado camp. It can be said about this category that violence is most persistent because different ethnic groups are forced to stay together in the camp for a long time. They often have a different culture, religion, and customs. In addition, groups that compete in the home country often compete with each other in refugee camps as well.

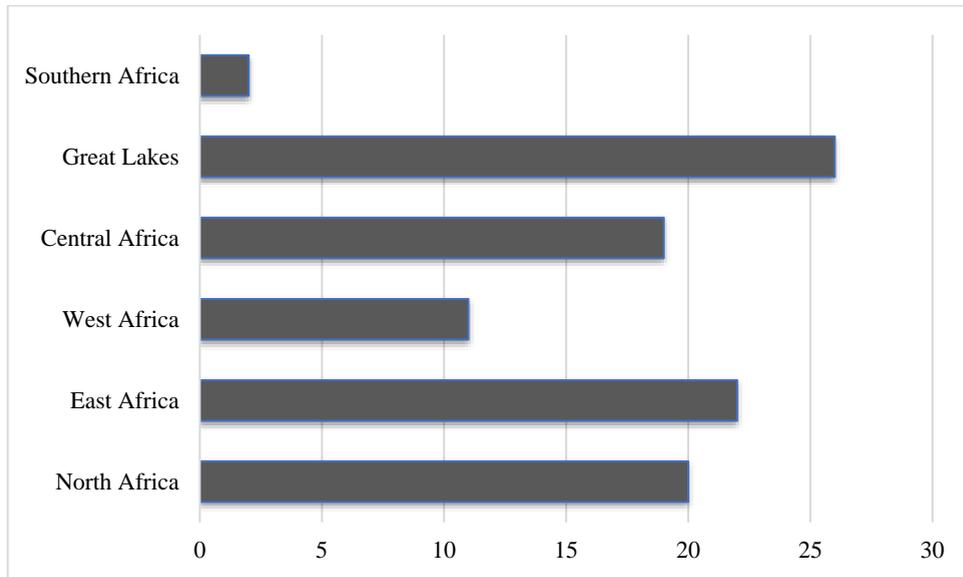
Internal violence within the receiving state most often involves disputes between refugees and the local farmers and herdsmen over land and cattle. These cases are very frequent in East Africa, where livelihood is very difficult because there are deforestation and frequent droughts. A total of 17 incidents were reported in this category. Interstate war or unilateral intervention, on the other hand, are very exceptional. We reported only two cases. Both are related to the second civil war in DRC when the governments of Burundi and Rwanda sent troops to this territory, and, like many other African states, joined the conflict.

The most frequent type of refugee-related political violence is the last category – Attacks between refugees and transnational VNSA. Interestingly, the persistence and intensity of this type of violence vary greatly from case to case. We noticed a total of 40 cases of attacks between refugees and transnational VNSA. In some of these cases, violence was very intense. An example is the LRA's attacks on DRC refugee camps. In the overwhelming majority of these cases, the attacks were very brutal and the violence intense, resulting in several dozen victims. The bloodiest attack ever is the FNL attack in Burundi. The Burundi Hutu rebel faction attacked refugees near the Congolese border, saying that its fighters were pursuing Burundian soldiers who fled to the camp from a nearby military position. The camp sheltered ethnic Tutsi refugees from Congo known as the Banyamulenge who fled the violence in North Kivu. More than 180 refugees died during this attack (New York Times, 2004). On the other hand, VNSA attacks in Kenya or Niger were less intense.

#### **4. Comparison among Regions in Africa**

Some data on regions have already been mentioned in previous chapters. In this chapter, we focused on a thorough comparison across regions. The African continent was divided into several areas on - East Africa, North Africa, West Africa, Central Africa, Great Lakes region and Southern Africa (National Geographic 2020). The first goal in this comparison was to compare individual regions and determine in which region the incidence of refugee-related political violence is the highest and, conversely, in which it is the lowest. We also compared these data with the total numbers of refugees in each region to determine whether or not there is a

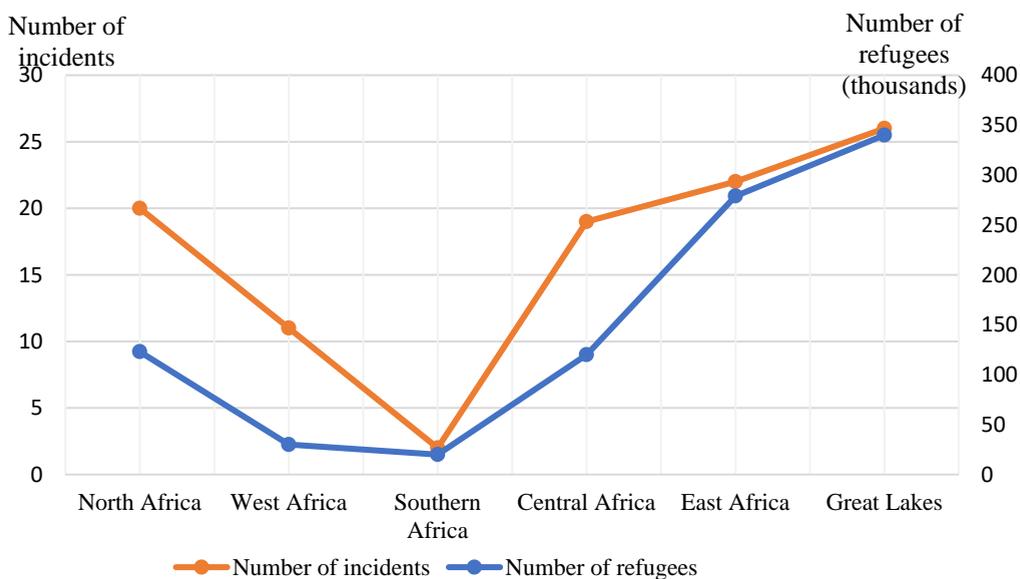
correlation between these numbers. The highest number of all violent incidents took place in the Great Lakes region. This includes a total of 26 violent incidents. The events from Tanzania, Uganda and the DRC had a great influence on these results. The second largest number (22 incidents) of refugee-related political violence took place in East Africa. Specifically, especially in Kenya, Ethiopia and South Sudan. By contrast, the lowest number of violent attacks took place in Southern Africa (only 2) and subsequently in West Africa (11 incidents). The overall results from all regions are shown in Annex 5.



*Annex no. 5: Frequency of refugee-related political violence by region (2003-2018).*

*Source: UNHCR (2019a), BBC, The New Humanitarian, NY Times, Al-Jazeera, etc.*

For all regions, we also calculated the average number of refugees per state (who have been granted refugee status in one of the states) in the region over the last 10 years. This value was then compared in the graph together with the value of the number of refugee-related political violence incidents. The aim of this graphic comparison is to reveal whether or not there are more violent incidents in regions hosting a higher number of refugees. This graph reveals only a certain correlation, we cannot talk about causality, because, this simple graphical comparison is not able to provide a profound analysis. Nevertheless, the results are surprising. Regions that actually host more refugees also have a much higher incidence of violence. This points to the fact that it has been clear for several years that African states are unable to receive large numbers of refugees, provide them with social services and, above all, secure them from violence. The results of this comparison are provided in Annex No. 6.



*Annex no. 6: Comparison of Number of Refugees with Number of Refugee-Related Violent Incidents.*

*Source: UNHCR (2019a), BBC, The New Humanitarian, NY Times, Al-Jazeera, etc.*

The best situation was during the examined period in Southern Africa. This region can be considered the most stable from all of Africa over the last decade. There was almost no occurrence of conflicts and in some countries such as Botswana or Namibia, there have been no conflicts for several decades. It is therefore not surprising that there have been only two incidents of refugee-related political violence. One of these incidents took place in Zambia, second one in SA. Both incidents were classified as internal violence within receiving state (D category). Most countries are politically stable, economically prosperous with higher GDP than the rest of Africa, and there are good job opportunities and security situation. That is why a large part of the refugees from East and Central Africa are trying to get to South Africa. However, large cities such as Cape Town and Johannesburg are already overcrowded, there is high expansion of slums, pollution and other problems (Gastrow 2011, p. 7-11). The second lowest number of incidents (11) occurred in West Africa. There are some countries that are very unstable, such as Mali or Côte d'Ivoire, while in West Africa there are stable and economically prosperous countries, see Ghana or Cape Verde. The average number of refugees is low compared to other regions. Most of the attacks are old, dating from 2003-2008. An exception is the incidents in Niger, where 4 attacks between refugees and transnational VNSAs have taken place in recent years. This type of incident is also prevalent in West Africa.

The situation is very similar in Central and North Africa. It is alike in terms of the number of refugees (average about 120 thousand per state) as well as in terms of the number of attacks (19 and 20). While in North Africa there are mainly two types of incidents - attacks between receiving state and refugees (B) and attacks between refugees and transnational VNSA (F), in

Central Africa practically all types of incidents are represented. In the case of Central Africa, the most common incidents are attacks between refugees and transnational VNSA (F), due to the violent activity of the Lord's Resistance Army in CAR. However, attacks between receiving state and refugees (B) and ethnic or factual violence among refugees (C) are very common as well.

The worst situation in terms of the number of violent clashes is in East Africa (22 incidents) and the Great Lakes region (26 incidents). Countries such as Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda and Tanzania host enormous numbers of refugees. In addition, Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda are among the ten countries hosting the largest number of refugees worldwide (UNHCR 2019b). The vast majority of incidents therefore took place in these states plus the in DRC (where the LRA was and is also active) and in Burundi. The type of incidents is again very variable. In the Great Lakes area, attacks between refugees and transnational VNSA (F) are the most common, but it is interesting that, unlike other areas, attacks between receiving state and refugees (B) are also very common. This includes, for example, military attacks on refugees in the Bukavu area of the DRC in 2004 or the violent relocation of refugees from Tanzania to Rwanda and Burundi in 2013 (BBC 2020; NY Times 2020; New Humanitarian 2020). The situation in East Africa is completely different. Internal violence within the receiving state (D) is the most common type of incident. The second most common is ethnic or factual violence among refugees (C). This can be explained by the high concentration of refugees in remote and poor areas. Examples are Dadaab and Kakuma in Kenya or Gambela in Ethiopia.

## 5. Conclusion

This study explores the topic of refugee-related political violence in Africa in a fifteen-year period from 2003 to 2018. Based on the available data, it is concluded that the phenomenon of refugee-related political violence underwent rapid changes during this period. The number of refugees increased significantly and armed conflicts, as well as refugee-related violence, considerably changed its character. Because of these changes, Lischer's framework had to be revised by including the role of VNSAs into the research structure, in order to properly analyze the new environment. These changes were not reflected by any other studies, therefore we had to introduce a new type of political violence – attacks between refugees and transnational VNSAs.

During the examined period, 40 African states hosted a refugee population of more than 2,000. The largest refugee communities are located in Uganda, Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and Cameroon (UNHCR 2019a). 14 African states host populations of more than 100,000 refugees. Refugee-related political violence is a very frequent phenomenon, as we have recorded 100 incidents in 15 years. From this it can be concluded that this phenomenon is not decreasing, but on the contrary it is increasing. African countries are weak and usually do not have the capacity to properly manage the influx of refugees. The overall instability and weakness of states in Africa have become a factor in the rise of violence related to VNSAs. The most frequent type of violence in Africa was the violence between VNSA and refugees. We observed 40 cases over the examined period. This was mostly caused by the weakness of national states that were unable to secure its borders and did not have proper control over their territory. In some countries in Africa, e.g. DRC or Angola, the problem of VNSA violence was worsened by the fact that both refugee camps and natural resources were located on the periphery, where VNSAs usually operate. Violent groups then used the opportunity to attack, recruit or enslave

refugees and ethnicity was often important part of these conflicts. VNSAs were attacking refugees also on ethnical grounds. Some groups such as LRA and FNL specifically targeted refugee camps and committed terrorist attacks. The nationalist ideology and ethnical exclusiveness of FNL meant that it was more likely to continue to persecute refugees abroad, unlike ISIS or Al-Shabaab, which were ideologically and religiously motivated without being ethnically exclusive. These groups can profit by infiltrating the refugee community, spread propaganda and recruit new members rather than attack the refugees. The occurrence of refugee-related political violence was usually linked to the size of the refugee population, time and protracted situation of this population and the capacity of the receiving state to manage the influx of refugees. We found that in Africa the probability of refugee-related violence was four times higher when the refugee population was above 100,000 individuals.

The intensity of violence was concentrated in specific regions and was less prominent in other areas. African Great Lakes region and East Africa were the most affected by intensive violence. The highest frequency of incidents was also recorded in these two regions. These regions also host the largest refugee community, so some correlation can be seen. We observed the trend of less intrastate conflict and higher involvement by VNSAs. The violence between sending state and refugees was also quite rare. This can be partially explained by the fact that most of the countries have more clearly defined territory and neighboring states are thus less motivated to intervene outside of their borders. Compared to Lischer's study, interstate war or unilateral intervention were almost non-existent in Africa. This finding is consistent with a wider trend of decrease in intrastate conflicts and it further highlights the shift from state-led violence towards non-state actors becoming one of the defining forces in today's conflicts.

The fact that the instability in Africa is likely to continue in the following years makes it improbable that the rate of refugee-related political violence will decline any time soon. Some of the most damaging acts of violence against refugees were committed by the receiving state which is alarming and this illustrates that the refugee population itself is more likely to be a victim of violence in the receiving state than a source of instability. On the other hand, the states affected by an influx of refugees have to be willing to invest in capacities to manage flows of forced migration and prevent possible violence caused directly or indirectly by refugees. The special care should be taken to prevent the creation of isolated communities stuck in a protracted situation with no perspective to change. These, in addition to the size of the refugee population, are the most influential factors determining the probability of refugee-related violence.

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## Abbreviations

- [1] ECOWAS - Economic Community of West African States
- [2] FNL - The National Forces of Liberation (Forces Nationales de Libération)
- [3] ICGLR - International Conference of the Great Lakes Region
- [4] LRA - Lord's Resistance Army
- [5] UNHCR – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- [6] VNSA – Violent Non-State Actor
- [7] GTD – Global Terrorism Database
- [8] IDPs – Internally displaced persons

## Discourse Act Contributing to the Linguistic Formulation from Word to Sentence: Albanian Children

Dr. Zamira Shkreli

Dr. Karmen Lazri

### Abstract

In this argument, based in concrete observation for toddlers 2-4 years old, will be treated the case of lexical input of this age, used in the act of speech from the communication through special words- accompanied with extra-linguistic means,- from holophrases, to generating simple sentences, as special constructs of syntax. Primal phases of owning the language have already slowly started in the first years of their lives. The child follows the unstoppable road to understanding and enriching knowledge. As helping to our material will be included, except for their group and family life, didactic materials as well, in which part of our study were "Open and Find out" books, which are made of secret windows and puzzle books, which contain plenty of material that serves to the children's speech-gaining act. The theory treating of the problem above will be mostly supported by Albanian language data, or by Albanian children – as native speakers of that mother language. The principal phases of owning the language have slowly started during the first years of his life. Now the child follows the unstoppable way to gaining and enriching his knowledge. The methodology followed in this material includes preschool children. During this phase the child articulates more lexical words than grammatical words. We noticed the phenomena when observing 14 children, who were selected from two age groups. The conversations of the different aged and gendered subjects were analyzed, as well as the vocabularies they owned. During this treatment will be shown linguistic features that children are prone to change from one phase of life to another. It's also interesting to emphasize how even in the word and sentence producing phase, children are developed and skilled by using didactic books on them.

**Keywords:** Discourse Act, Linguistic Formulation, Word, Sentence

### Introduction

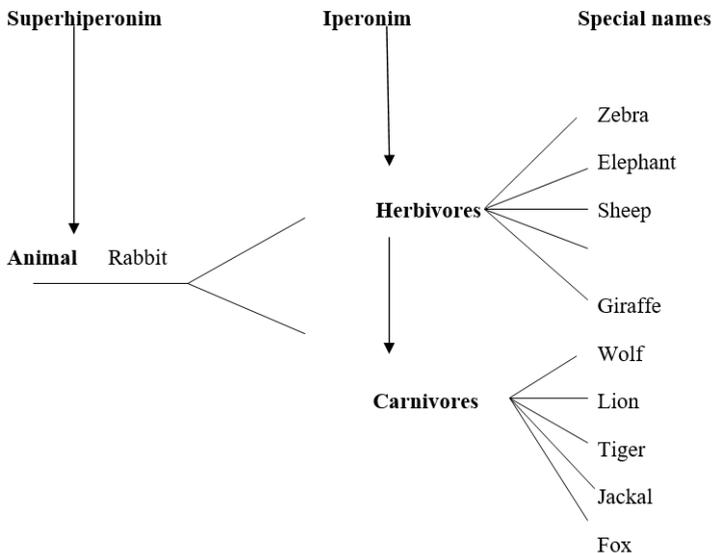
Several scholars have pointed out than by the age of one to two years, the child continues to remain closely dependent on effective plan, by his mother, he likes to be with her, to tell her everything he does, have her admiration, he makes it to participate in all its joys and sorrows [1].

Among that we can mention Marilyn Shatz, writing in terms of shaping and enriching the vocabulary, that first of all there is an explosion of a large number of names by the child because philosophical view, recognition starts from labeling objects. She states that the

applicants and parents have note that some children once discover that things have a name and try to label them [2]...

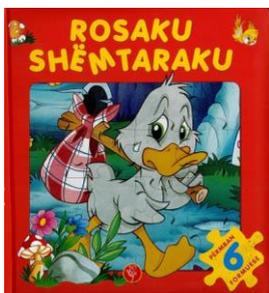
Also, Genter (1982) suspects that the nouns prevail over verbs, because most of them refer to the first objects and are easily recognized; while verbs are supposed to be understood as words than can define the connection between objects and the object itself; as a result, cognition must be easier to give nouns a meaning. For example, in animal world, the youngest label initially: dog, cat, airplane, which designate the basic level categories; after this they use examples of more general level.

It is noted that this phenomena can be explained by the large noun classification category, for example: over generalized nouns, generalized nouns and specific nouns and emphasizing knowledge of the world around them, children pass naturally to those which are called specific names, according to the following scheme [3]. From this text we have the explanation: The difference between iperonimeve and generalized noun is that the first, as much as they are equipped with the general meaning, however, have semantic spaces to describe. For example If we want to put under the above scheme, nouns, leopard, elephant, shark, animals, zebra, lion, deer, giraffe, orangutan, sheep, wolf, jackal, fox,... do the concepts explained above: if we start the noun of animals, dividing the herbivores and carnivores.



On the basis of this presentation generalized names (superhiperonime), hiperonime and specific names etc., exercises may be done, in which we on the one hand present mixed animal figures (carnivorous and herbivorous), connect them to a hay stack and a piece of hanging flesh; a very lexically benefiting physical and mental activity. So these exercises and preschool books that suit certain ages, help children grow rich linguistically. Didactic work that was attended by children of this age was to confront them with three types of didactic titles suitable to that age, through which the young are developed physically as well as linguistically. The first titles work with image formation puzzles. So, puzzle books help children to enrich

their vocabularies. They get acquainted with figures of the world of animals which is very popular to children.



Illustrated books always arouse special interest in children moreover those aged 1-3 years old. Also the animal characters of these books are children's best friends. Actions that appear in the illustrations ensure the growth of mental and bodily development. They become capable to undertake the responsibilities of their age. Researcher R.H. Largo states: "A feature of child language development is they often broaden the real meaning of a word. For example by the word "cow" he names all bigger animals, not only cows but horses, goats and sheep as well. The child doesn't have only the tendency to expand the meaning of words. He can also restrict it. For example the word "car" applies only to the family car and not other cars. Even toy cars or illustrated cars aren't considered cars to him. So the word "car" is basically the name of the family car [4]."<sup>1</sup>



At first we describe the first book illustration which is in the child's hands. The way he manages to maneuver the particles of the image to create a full and clear illustration. The first part includes these extract elements: Duck, - water,-5 ducklings,- puzzle. Thus, children acquire the above words by repeating puzzle formation several times. While the second didactic material used by us in this essay are book with "Open the window and discover" illustrations, in which there are questions and answers which provide material to the toddler regarding to farm animals and their life and gestures they perform, such as the turkey's gllu-gllu"; so children become capable of finding differences of these similar looking birds. On the other side of the figure are questions such as "Who sleeps in a nest? Who sleeps in a cottage?" (Note that in a linguistic point of view, the pronoun "who" is only used to humans not animals or objects. We didn't change it to keep the citations.) Open the window and see



children that are part of their life and childish games. Through these materials which have in the center figures that give appropriate messages for the age we are considering for the fact that these children through the figures perceive the appropriate word for each picture of the book.

With the growth of the baby, the length of his sentences grows and this element is exactly a good indicator of syntactic development, with other words, the movement of the sentence in another state in quantity, also in quality. In his study "A language acquisition", he presented for the first time such an index for measuring the length of expressions called MLU [7]. MLU is based on the average length of sentences produced by the child, taken under study in spontaneous speech. This length is determined by the number of smaller and meaningful units that are Syntagma. Adding any of them, marks an increase of syntactic ability of the child. Children who have the same MLU have the same level of syntactic development and the same level of linguistic complexity. According to R Brown, to measure a child's MLU you should make at least a half-hour conversation with him or her. Brown accompanied the MLU concept with a set of rules for the calculation of the lexeme, among which we can mention the following:

Counted as a single lexeme

- Composite -word
- Impersonal nouns
- Irregular verbs in the past, as there is no evidence that the child connects this shape with its corresponsive in the present
- Auxiliary verbs and modals: have, be, could, should,
- Positive and negative particles: yes, no
- Flattering or reduced forms of names because for the child this is seen as a standard form

Counted as two lexeme

- Names in gender crumples
- Plural names
- Regular verbs in the past
- Verbs in gerundive
- Not taken into shouts of type: em, eh, oh, etc.
- Should be analyzed at least 100 phrases spoken by the child.

Usually this stage begins about age 12-26 months and most are two-word sentences, although there are cases of sentences with three words or four. The interest of the child to discussions grows and he starts to listen attentively when his parents and sisters talk to each other. As the main quality of this stage is the use of words such as content: names, verbs, adjectives and lack of service words as hub words, plural endings, prepositions etc. This indicates that the child is not copying adults. In the sentence "Agron drink water", articulated by the child, it understands that the child manages to distinguish at least two classes of words. He distinguishes names: "Agron", "water" from the verb "drink". This is shown by the fact that it adjusts the verb with the subject "Agron".

This does not mean that they can't create group of words built by their rules, which leads to unusual results. "Agron eat" or "Agron eat bread". This phenomenon is related to initial

difficulties and errors such children adjust quickly. Unusual formations of sentences show that the child does not receive language through imitation but through the structure of the rules [4].

Since its beginnings, the language is deeply creative which means that many of these sentences are never produced by adults. By increasing the complexity of expressions it's added even the usage of service words. A conjecture on this issue was raised by R.Miller [5], which stated that the children make that choice because these words (content words) are more pronounced and more frequent in the speech of adults and therefore are noticed more.

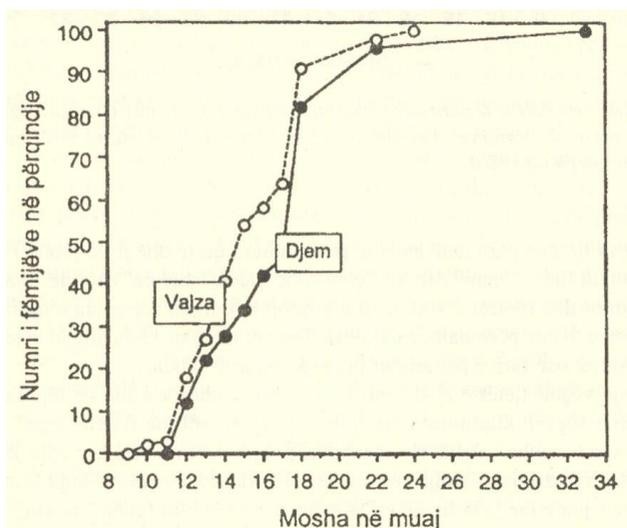
Knowledge of child syntax are based on what children themselves say, so above their speech. To achieve this level of knowledge, linguists have long studies based on listening to children when they play with each other, with older people, in experiments or through direct interviews. This is achieved through spontaneous speech of the child but anyway, even though it may be a set of data, many remain without being taught, by the fact that the linguist fails to understand fully what the child knows, as many of them can't have had the opportunity to express or use. Linguists psychologists give a firsthand important syntactic studies: the way how the young kids reach from the word – a group of words or to the sentence, which is equal to the full communication.

Double word phase expressions (holophrases)

About the 60s under the influence of linguistic vision of Chomsky, linguists assumed that the language of the child starts when the combine begins to merge the words or morpheme. This stage is the stage of double word expressions and was described by Bloom

"... Perhaps the most contested issue in linguistic studies ..." [6]

Ability to analyze and to create sentences appears to child in different ways. Some children manage to create two-word sentences at age 18-24 months and the other at age 30-36 months. Regardless of age when they create sentences appears to be said that this process takes place among all children in the same way subject to the same nomocracy [4,p.316].



In this process the girls present a more rapid development than boys. With sentences or double word expressions, the child can be expressed in more differentiated than isolated words. He can communicate that a person or object is present or not, you can make the connection of actions and persons with their location and can express their desires and goals.

L. Gleitman in 1986 [8], supported the idea that children learn these two word categories almost separately from each other. R. Brown (1973) states for this stage of language development:

"... In the first phase the child is acting as the main elements of the sentence were optional and it doesn't seem that occurs due to a limited sentences complexity. In the second phase and beyond it acts as grammatical morpheme were optional ... He doesn't use what is called linguistically mandatory. This makes me think that the child expects to be understood when it does not produce any intelligible words. In fact, we discovered that he usually takes so as long as he is available at home, in the family environment or with relatives who know his history and trends. It can be said therefore that the first phase is well-adjusted for its communication ... but that would fail in other environments less familiar. This shows that the largest dimension of language development is to learn to express always and immediately some things like move, number, time ...".

Double word phase expressions also is called as telegraphic [9]. For the reason that the lack of maid words makes it look, more like a telegram. The child speaks more lexical words than grammar words, when noticed the lack of grammatical morpheme. Another linguist, Lois Bloom, regarded as a forerunner of the modern study of language development childlike, conducted an extensive study on the manner in which the nature of children's conversations modified during the second year of life. Conversations were initially analyzed for four children with three different ages, when they were 21 months and produced for more expressions of a single word, then at the age of 25 months, during which more expressions using both words and at the end when they were 3 years and 6 months, when expressed by phrases of 3 or 4 words. At what age children are able to rely on what others have said and carry the argument of the conversation? In other words, in what age most children observe the relationship? It is interesting to notice that in the phrase of producing single words, phrases that continue the argument of conversation are in higher number than those who turn.

At the conclusion of this material should emphasize that children can be helped in acquiring the language and the formation of linguistic general, thanks to many factors, among which these didactic books, which we tried to reflect increasingly harvested from mouth of the kids of preschool age. Our subjects conclude on the level and ability, as follows:

- Recognition newly special lexeme;
- Conversion of words from passive to active status;
- Enrichment of lexical input, taken as a whole.
- In addition lexematic case appears to become "construction" material for simple sentences; which the subjects begin to use according to communicative situations.

It's the moment to suggest that linguistic care development and lexical acquisition of these ages, depend in the first instance by the permanent presence of the educator as well as keeping the same level – increase of- the necessary requirements to keep the child in the position of

self abilities to ourselves to the enrichment of vocabulary, up to his expectations, which is materialized and concrete in the structure of semantically related sentence.

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# Causality Between Social Spending and Poverty: Evidence from OECD Countries

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## Abstract

Although social spending constitutes a significant part of the GDP in OECD countries, the problem of fighting poverty has not been completely eliminated. In this study, it was aimed to investigate the causality between social spending and poverty by using the data of 13 OECD countries between 2004-2017. In the study, the panel vector error correction model (panel VECM) proposed by Engle and Granger (1987) was employed to investigate the causality between social spending and poverty in OECD countries. According to the results obtained from the study, while no causality was found from social spending to poverty in the long run in the case of OECD countries, it was concluded that poverty was the granger cause of social spending. Furthermore, no short-run causality was found between the variables. The results obtained from the study revealed the importance of considering the effectiveness of social spending and the social spending items selected rather than the level of social spending in the fight against poverty.

**Keywords:** poverty, social spending, OECD, causality, panel VECM.

## 1. Introduction

Although the rapid growth performance experienced with the globalization process across the world has contributed to the solution to the fight against the poverty problem, the problem of poverty still exists even in developed countries. At this point, social spending constitutes one of the important policy instruments used in fighting poverty. In this context, social spending is defined as direct in-kind or cash aids and tax breaks for social purposes provided to the disadvantaged and needy groups. (OECD, 2016). The ratio of social spending to GDP was above 20% in the average of OECD countries in 2018. Among OECD countries, while the ratio of social spending to GDP in France was above 30% in 2018, this ratio was above 25% in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Germany, and Sweden. Pension funds and health spending have the largest share in social spending items in OECD countries (OECD, 2019). Despite the high level of social spending in OECD countries, the problem of poverty still exists in OECD countries, and there are significant differences between OECD countries in terms of the relative poverty rate. While the relative poverty rate was 11.6% in the OECD average in 2016, the highest poverty rate was recorded with 18% in Israel and the USA. On the other hand, this rate was 5-6% in Denmark and Finland. When the relative poverty rate is considered with regard to gender and age groups, there are significant differences between OECD countries (OECD, 2019). This study aimed to investigate the causality between social

spending and poverty in the case of OECD countries. To this end, this causality was analyzed using the data of 13 OECD countries between the years 2004-2017 and the panel vector error correction model. The study is organized as follows. In the next section, the relationship between social spending and poverty is briefly discussed based on the studies in the literature. In the third section of the study, the data, method, and empirical results are presented. The last section provides conclusions.

## 2. A Brief Review of the Literature

In many studies in the literature, the effect of social spending on poverty was discussed, and while it was concluded in some of these studies that social spending reduced poverty, in another group, depending on which factors the effect of social spending on poverty varied was analyzed. In their study, Caminada et al. (2012) discussed the effect of social spending on poverty for OECD countries between 1985 and 2005, and they concluded that social spending negatively affected poverty. Likewise, Nolan and Marx (2009) also indicated that social spending negatively affected poverty in OECD countries. Behrendt (2002) indicated that poverty could not be eliminated despite high levels of social spending in developed welfare states, and he emphasized the areas of social spending and the importance of its effectiveness rather than the amount of social spending. In this context, Longford and Nicodemo (2010) investigated the effect of social spending on poverty in EU countries and concluded that the relevant effect varied according to the effectiveness of the social transfer system from country to country. Zwiers and Koster (2015) found the effectiveness of social spending varied in urban and non-urban areas. Lustig et al. (2014) concluded that the poverty-reducing effect of social spending in the form of cash or in-kind transfers varied from country to country in Latin American countries. In their study conducted for Turkey between 2004-2011, Celikay and Gumus (2017) concluded that social spending negatively affected poverty in the short run, and they found a positive relationship between the two variables in the long run. On the other hand, they found that education spending as a component of social spending negatively affected poverty both in the short and long run. In a more recent study conducted for the EU countries between 1990-2015, Cammeraat (2020) concluded that there was a negative relationship between social spending on "families", "unemployment", "house and others" and poverty, and he found that the coefficient of social spending on "old age and survivors" was negative but statistically insignificant. Unlike other studies, Yilmaz and Sasmaz (2018) investigated the causality between social spending and poverty in the selected Central and Eastern European Union countries between 2005 and 2014 using the Dumitrescu and Hurlin (2012) causality test, and they could not find causality between social spending and poverty within the context of the selected sample.

## 3. Data Methodology and Results

In the study, the data of 13 OECD<sup>1</sup> countries between 2004-2017 were used to investigate the causality between social spending and poverty in OECD countries. In the study, while the ratio of public social spending to GDP was used as an indicator of social spending, poverty was

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<sup>1</sup> The empirical study was limited to 13 OECD countries and the years between 2004-2017 due to the limitations in poverty data. The OECD countries, the data of which were used in the study, are Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, the Slovak Republic, the United Kingdom, Slovenia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

handled by two different data sets. The first one of them is the total poverty rate. The total poverty rate represents the ratio of the number of people whose income falls below the poverty line. The second one of them is the working-age poverty rate. The working-age poverty rate is the ratio of people between 18-65 years old whose income falls below the poverty line.<sup>1</sup> All data used in the study were obtained from the OECD database. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics**

	lnsos	lnpovtot	lnpov18-65
Mean	3.024132	-2.258479	-2.332650
Median	3.051844	-2.184812	-2.292635
Maximum	3.414179	-1.655482	-1.826351
Minimum	2.404871	-2.956512	-3.057608
Std. Dev.	0.224731	0.305054	0.311909
Skewness	-0.228116	-0.444470	-0.443705
Kurtosis	2.255193	2.288599	2.301994

In the study, the panel vector error correction model (panel VECM) proposed by Engle and Granger (1987) was used to investigate the causality between social spending and poverty in OECD countries. Engle and Granger (1987) stated that standard Granger causality analysis would lead to false results in the presence of cointegrated variables, and they suggested the use of the panel vector error correction model for causality analysis in this case.

Table 2 presents the panel unit root test results of the variables in the model. In the study, the Levin, Lin and Chu (2002) (LLC), Breitung (2000), Im, Pesaran and Shin (2003) (IPS) and Maddala and Wu (1999) ADF Fisher  $\chi^2$  (ADF) and PP Fisher  $\chi^2$  (PP) unit root tests were used to investigate whether the variables were stationary or non-stationary. According to the results in Table 2, it was observed that non-stationary variables became stationary after the first differences of the variables were taken.

**Table 2. Panel Unit Root Test Results**

	Levin, Lin & Chu t*	Breitung t-stat	Im, Pesaran and Shin W-stat	ADF - Fisher Chi-square	PP - Fisher Chi-square
lnsos	-0.50465	-0.09638	1.75485	12.2039	6.67951
lnpovtot	-1.62752	0.83465*	0.42063	26.0138	39.5676**
lnpov18-65	-1.49346*	0.60830	-0.12929	27.3913	34.1217
$\Delta$ lnsos	-8.57277***	-6.61207***	-2.85392***	46.6278***	55.2816***
$\Delta$ lnpovtot	-8.81323***	-0.82209	-5.65702***	76.8337***	128.004***
$\Delta$ lnpov18-65	-7.99884***	-1.66878**	-4.26752***	61.8485***	116.252***

Table 3 shows the panel cointegration test results. Whether the stationary variables of the same order were cointegrated or not was investigated using the Pedroni (2004) panel cointegration test. In the test proposed by Pedroni (2004), the null hypothesis, which states

<sup>1</sup> All data in the study were used in the logarithmic form.

that there is no cointegration in heterogeneous panels, is tested with seven different statistics. Based on the results obtained, according to five of the seven panels and group statistics, it was observed that the variables *lnsos* and *lnpovtot* were cointegrated at a significance level of 1%. Likewise, according to the majority of panel and group statistics in Table 3, variables *lnsos* and *lnpov18-65* were cointegrated.

**Table 3. Panel Cointegration Test Results**

	<i>lnpovtot</i>	<i>lnpov18-65</i>
Panel v-Statistic	-0.638115	-1.605962
Panel rho-Statistic	-1.884827***	-1.053807
Panel PP-Statistic	-2.445093***	-1.842344**
Panel ADF-Statistic	-2.138320***	-2.342875***
Group rho-Statistic	0.409014	1.229242
Group PP-Statistic	-2.487815***	-1.775368**
Group ADF-Statistic	-2.767722***	-2.873058***

We test both long and short-run causality between social spending and poverty by using the panel VECM model. According to the results in Table 4, both the total poverty rate and the working-age poverty rate are the granger causes of social spending in the long run. However, social spending is not the granger cause of the total poverty rate and the working-age poverty rate in the long run. Furthermore, no short-run causality was found between the variables in the study. When the results of the study were compared with the study conducted by Bayar and Sasmaz (2018), who investigated the causality between social spending and poverty in the literature, no causality was found from social spending to poverty in the case of the selected OECD countries. However, unlike the study carried out by Bayar and Sasmaz (2018), it was concluded that poverty was the granger cause of social spending.

**Table 4. Panel VECM Test Results**

	Long-run (ECT)	Short-run
$H_0$ : Total poverty ( <i>lnpovtot</i> ) does not granger cause of social spending.	-0.056545**	1.556767
$H_0$ : Social spending ( <i>lnsos</i> ) does not granger cause of total poverty.	-0.000984	3.055748
$H_0$ : Working age poverty ( <i>lnpov18-65</i> ) does not granger cause of social spending.	-0.058355**	0.550553
$H_0$ : Social spending ( <i>lnsos</i> ) does not granger cause of working age poverty.	-0.001691	3.630266

#### 4. Conclusion

In this study, the causality between social spending and poverty in OECD countries was investigated by using the data of 13 OECD countries between 2004-2017. According to the

results obtained from the study, while no causality was found from social spending to poverty in the long run in the case of the selected OECD countries, it was concluded that poverty was the granger cause of social spending. Furthermore, no short-run causality was found between the variables. The relevant result reveals the careful consideration of the importance of the effectiveness of social spending rather than the level of social spending. Furthermore, the results shows the importance of determining social expenditure items that are more effective in the fight against poverty.

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# The Gender Gap in Skills Development: Determinants of Girls' Access in Vocational Education in Albania

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## Abstract

Administrative data show that girls in vocational education (VE) in Albania have higher retention, completion, and achievement, indicating high potential for girls' integration in the labor market. Despite these positive indicators and VE being a country active labor market policy, enrollment is very low, especially among girls. This research aims to identify the determinants of girls' enrolment in VE. A national survey, in-depth interviews with key informants, and focus groups with students and their family members are used to explore why youngsters, particularly girls, do not choose VE. This study analyzes the gender misbalance from users (students), system offer (vocational schools), social and economic factors, based on human capital investment, social and cultural capital as theoretical frameworks of education choice. We find that family, peers, students' interests, typology, and information on qualifications offered, school location, infrastructure, and labor market prospects, are predictors of girls' enrolment in VE. This research can support adopting tailored and effective national and VE institution measures to increase girls' enrollment in VE.

**Keywords:** vocational education, enrollment, gender inequality, school access, developing country, Albania

## Introduction

Vocational Education (VE) reform, including specific issues, such as declining apprenticeship places, aging labor force, regional imbalances, and social exclusion, has been on policymakers' agenda for a long time (Grubb, 2006). For developing countries, VE is considered a human development policy with both economic and social impacts. The integration of technological knowledge and practical skills into the education and training system adds value to human capital. More middle-level technicians make the labor market attractive and represent the potential for economic growth. Individuals with VE have higher initial employment outcomes and wage patterns than those with general education (Hanushek et al., 2011). VE has a social impact by targeting mainly disadvantaged youths, urban residents, and academically less able, who can find a job more quickly and move out of poverty (Psacharopoulos, 1997). Promoting experiential learning, VE has a potential advantage in transferring skills for the future work world (Pliz, 2012).

Economists and sociologists have explored different theoretical perspectives regarding investments in human capital. This decision is considered by economists as rational, balancing direct costs and foregone earnings (during the time spent at school), with the benefits expected from the education or training (Becker, 1996). Sociologist seems to complete some of the economists' human capital model gaps. Becker (1996) and Blundell et al. (1999) acknowledge the impact that other factors such as individual, peer pressure, and family preferences have in this process, or as Bourdieu (1986) put it - the cultural and social capital. Due to girls' and women's position in society, non-economic factors are expected to play an essential factor in explaining their education choices and, eventually, their success in the labor market.

Compared to human capital, the social reproduction theory is a much more useful framework for analyzing empirical reality (Kupfer, 2014). Schools are viewed as socializing institutions that reproduce both the values and the ideologies of the dominant groups and the existing class structure (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). It is expected that children from middle and upper-class families pursue further education and are oriented toward higher prestigious careers, while those coming from low-class families are oriented toward lower status jobs. Many studies confirmed the theory that education systems are considered "sorting machines," incentivizing either self-sorting or institutional selection, depending on choosing an education/program path (e.g., Reisel et al. 2015).

Despite empirical evidence suggesting the importance of education and, in particular, VE, countries do not fully exploit the returns on human investment mainly due to exclusion based on economic and social status. Gender gaps are substantial. Women's access to skills development and participation in the labor market is still low due to gender biases in occupational choices; barriers to education and training, especially in rural and informal economies; sociocultural and economic constraints; and low representation of women in STEM subjects. Although higher girls' enrollment in VE does not solve horizontal and vertical gender segregation in the labor market, it helps to close the gap.

This research aims to shed some light on the reasons why girls do not choose VE in the context of Albania. The literature review presented in the following session helped the researchers to design the qualitative exploratory research and draw conclusions that can help both policymakers and VE institutes to attract more girls and further close the gender gap.

The paper is structured as follows: Section two presents a review of the factors determining girls' access to VE. Section three contains a description of the research settings. Philosophical approach, methods, and data collection and processing techniques used. Section four includes results and discussions, implications at the policy, and managerial level. Section five presents the main conclusions and future research.

### **Determinants of girls' access to vocational education**

There are many factors influencing VE choice deriving from the demand and supply side. While the labor market determines the demand side, supply is influenced by demographic dimensions such as age, gender, ethnicity, and urbanity (Tognatta, 2014). Girls technical education choice is determined mainly by the quality of facilities in the schools, grades, career guidance, parental pressure, parental literacy level, peer pressure, future family role expectations, role models, tradition, workplace environment, and chances for self -

employment, job availability, and employer gender bias (Kithyo, 1999). For this study, the determinants of enrolment in VE are clustered in four levels: students, social environment, VE provider, and labor market level.

### ***Students characteristics***

Among the most dominant VE student characteristics affecting VE choice is a *low academic achievement*, as suggested extensively by different studies both in developed (Agodini et al., 2004) and developing countries (Agrawal, 2012; Xhumari & Dibra, 2016). Some studies suggest that underperforming students enrolled in VE affect the system itself (Cohen & Besharov, 2002; Agrawal 2012), while others argue that this relationship is more nuanced. For example, Moenjak & Worswick (2003) found that this relationship is positive for males but not females.

Some occupations require specific physical characteristics. Similarly, some technical education programs require students to do heavy physical labor in practical/laboratory classes. Sharma (2000) found that girls' low enrolment in VE is linked to *girls' physical structure* considered not appropriate to engage in heavy physical work demand.

Student's *plans for the future* are another student-level factor affecting VE choice. Students choose VE to learn new skills (ETF, 2014:53) or pursue a specific career (Xhumari & Dibra 2016; Jackson 2002) or as a choice to avoid pursuing further education (Agodini et al., 2004). Sharma (2002) found that girls' low aspirations or their accentuated interest toward higher general education, explain the low female VE participation. However, some research suggests that girls preferred VE to have better skills and occupation, as found by the qualitative study in Turkey of Alniacik et al. (2018).

### ***Social environment***

Youngsters start attending upper-secondary education at a young age (approximately 15 in most countries). Therefore, they lack the maturity needed to make this critical choice (Herr, 1977). This is one of the reasons why other factors such as social environment and social capital, become important supportive factors, especially for girls (Coleman, 1988; Bourdieu, 1986).

Usually, VE students come from low socio-economic status families (Agodini et al., 2004; ETF, 2014; Psacharopoulos, 1997) and less educated parents (Fullarton, 2001). This is fundamentally true for Albania also. VE students' family status is a vulnerable one with unemployed, poorly educated parents, and many family members (Xhumari & Dibra, 2016). Therefore, in some countries, low enrollment is linked to technical education being expensive, or lack of appropriate education of parents (Sharma, 2000) since the latter have a strong influence on their children education choice (Sandefur et al., 2005)

Women make decisions in a more constrained and complex environment. Their participation is often affected by family obligations (Cho et al. 2015). In developing countries, cultural capital influence is more robust due to lower women's status, leading to lower access to education and training (Krugmann - Randolph, 1994). Marriage practices, gender division of labor in the household (Drèze&Sen (1995), as well as fear of being lonely and feeling uncomfortable in male's company, lack of freedom of movement, have a substantial impact on enrollment and girls' participation in education programs (Sharma, 2000).

Teachers and school counselors can affect students' decision-making, too, as Rossetti (1991) and Herr (1987) argued. However, their role has not been corroborated by some studies (e.g., Beukes, 1986).

Peer pressure is an essential factor in students' decisions on choosing a VE education (St. Gean, 2010). However, for girls, the results are mixed, with some research suggesting a positive relationship (e.g., Alniacik et al. 2018), others negative (Coleman 1961), or no influence at all (Beukes, 1986).

### ***VE provider***

There is a positive relationship between the school's quality and students' enrollment (Tansel, 2002). Besides, another factor influencing school choice is the school location in terms of access and distance. In general, urban schools have a higher number of students and more girls (Tansel, 2002; Sharma, 2000).

Characteristics of the programs offered by the VE school, is another factor. Grubb (1988) found a negative relationship between enrolment and the number of programs a vocational institution offers. Chea and Huijsmans (2017) concluded that young women's motivations to enter particular training arrangements in south Asia are also shaped by the perceived quality and program expenses. Adamuti and Sweet (2008), in their study in Canada, suggest that female choices are likely determined as much by the program duration and delivery type, favoring the flexible programs that allow better quality and personal and professional obligations. In Albania, a positive correlation was found between the number of students enrolled in a school and its internal efficiency and external effectiveness, especially for more gender-balanced ones (GIZ/ETF, 2014).

### ***Financial costs and labor market***

Earning more money in the future and increasing the chance to find a job, motivates students to attend VE (ETF, 2014:53). Most studies suggest a positive relationship between the prospect of a well-paid job and VE enrollment. Experimental study findings suggest that VE's attitude is more positive when students have received accurate information on salaries of VE graduates (Jensen, 2010). Walstab (2008) found that the regional labor market profile explains up to 40 percent of regional participation rate variation. However, some research is more inconclusive. Grubb (1988) finds no relationship between the unemployment rate and community college enrollment decisions. Nevertheless, the author does find a small positive relationship between the growth rate of professional occupations and community college enrollment.

Factors outside the student's decision-making, such as the stereotypical tendency of employers toward female workers, is another factor explaining the labor market gender gap, according to Kan (1990).

### ***Methodology***

#### ***Research setting***

In Albania, VE is considered a government priority and an active labor market policy to lower youth unemployment (15-29 years), almost twice the general unemployment rate. Albania has made excellent progress by closing the education attainment gap by 97% (WEF 2020), but a

lot remains to be done in VE, where girls' representation is low. Girls NEEETS (Not included in Employment, Entrepreneurship, Education, or Training) unemployment rate is higher than the average (INSTAT, 2019). General and particularly girls' enrollment in vocational education and training is a (National Employment and Skills) strategy performance indicator. Currently, enrollment in VE remains low (18,25% of the students enrolled in upper secondary education), and girls' participation is at a critical level of 16% (INSTAT, 2019). This gender gap is considered high compared to the EU, where 44% of VE students are girls (Anelli & Peri, 2013). Girls are enrolled in non-technical low-paying vocations and continue to be disadvantaged in the labor market, facing employment discrimination and lower salaries than boys (Viertel & Nikolovska, 2010). Administrative data (Ministry of Economy and Finance, 2018) show that the qualifications with a good gender representation are service-oriented: examples include economy and business, tourism, social care, textile, with ICT being the only technical directions where girls enrolment is increasing.

In terms of output, girls' retainment rate and the average grade are higher than their male counterparts, but the employment rate is low. Tracer studies show that girls' unemployment after graduation is high. Male graduates have higher chances to be employed one year after graduation, but the gender employment gap has decreased from 27% (in 2016) to 19% (in 2018) (S4J, 2020).

### ***Philosophical approach and method***

In this study, we adopted the social constructivist approach to investigate the complexity of views of different participants. A mixed method with more emphasis on the qualitative component was considered the most appropriate method to investigate the phenomena under investigation. The quantitative research aimed to provide a better overview of the research settings and ease the primary qualitative data collection process. In contrast, the qualitative component provided relevant data for an in-depth analysis of the phenomena through discussions and interactions with respondents facilitated by open-ended questioning. We were able to subtract an individual's subjective meaning formed through interaction with others and better understand the historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals' lives, as suggested by Alvesson & Sköldbberg (2010) and Creswell (2008).

### ***Research instruments***

Surveys, focus groups, and interviews were the data collection techniques used in this research. Initially, a *survey* to provide a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions was conducted (Creswell, 2008:145). All public VE schools in Albania were included in the survey on factors influencing enrolment and strategies to attract more girls to VE. School directors were the respondents, as suggested by different scholars when an organization is the research unit (Koslowski & Klein 2000; Rousseau, 1978).

Data gathering at the national level was followed by in-depth qualitative analysis in three regions, namely Tirana, Shkodra, and Korça, where almost 50% of VE students at a national level are enrolled (Ministry of Finance and Economy, 2018). *Focus groups* with students and parents, considered as a suitable data collection technique for educational research (Jarrell, 2000), were used in this study as the primary research instrument. Following Wilson (1997) suggestions on focus groups, we considered the following criteria: (i) the size – small (between 6 and 8 participants); (ii) moderated – one of the authors in this article was the facilitator; (iii)

had the purpose of understanding and interpreting how the students (particularly girls) choose secondary education; and (iv) acquaintances – the participants belonged to the same category but were not necessarily related. We created groups of students and parents, considering the latter being an essential factor influencing education choice (ETF, 2014; St. Gean, 2010; Sandefur et al., 2005; Agodini et al., 2004; Jackson, 2002; Dika & Singh, 2002; Rossetti, 1991). Rather than homogeneity, segmentation was chosen as a group composition principle (Morgan, 1997:7). Six categories of groups were created: mixed-gender students enrolled in VE; mixed-gender students enrolled in the gymnasium; girls enrolled in VE; girls enrolled in the gymnasium; parents of students enrolled in VE; parents of students enrolled in the gymnasium. This categorization created the necessary mixture to overcome the disadvantages of having only homogeneous or heterogeneous groups (Krueger, 1994). A total of 19 focus groups were conducted at the regional level until a clear pattern emerged; the following groups produced only repetitious information (Rabiee, 2004).

Last, semi-structured interviews were realized with 17 key informants (school principals, dorm administrators, and local government unit representatives).

Triangulation of methods (focus groups, interviews, questionnaires) and respondents (students, parents, school administrators, local government unit representatives) is a good prerequisite for the research validity (Yin, 2009). Variety in data gathering methods and respondents at national and regional levels made it possible for the researchers to get different perspectives from participants sharing different sub-cultural norms, a proper research strategy based on the social constructivist approach (Alvesson&Sköldberg, 2010; Creswell, 2008).

Explanation building was used to analyze data collected and test theoretical propositions (Yin 2009).

## Results and discussions

In Albania, girls' low enrollment in VE is *per se* one reason for VE overall low students' enrollment. *VE is considered "more suitable for boys."* This argument was continuously mentioned by all students enrolled in gymnasiums as a reason for refusing VS. Both girls and boys in VE will not feel comfortable in a boys' only school even if they might like the program. ICT is the only profile where the girls are enrolled, despite the "male environment" in the school, because this qualification ensures a secure and highly paid job. This result is controversial compared to similar studies in countries with higher VE enrolment like Germany, where initiatives to increase the number of females in male-dominated programs lead to decreased male applicants (Haverkamp & Runst 2015). The low level of girls' enrolment is a factor discouraging students from enrolling. Besides, it negatively influences students' achievements, learning environment, and personal development, confirming previous studies (Kithyo, 1999).

When asked about the reasons for low girls' enrollment in their school, all technical school principals with low or no girls enrollment confirmed the *lack of gender-responsive profiles*. Girls will not be attracted to heavy work qualifications, which require particular physical strength, supporting Sharma's (2000) findings. Girls enrolled in 'male' vocations will not be able to find a job because most businesses in the automotive, plumbing, wood processing, and electro-technic sector are small and medium enterprises with a limited number of employees.

A strong influence in choosing or refusing VE comes from *peers*, confirming Coleman's (1988) and Dube's (1987) findings. Students want to be in the same class as their friends and are influenced by their (bad) opinion about VE. Besides, we found that VE's low academic achievement environment was an important influencing factor, especially for girls, contrary to Moenjak & Worswick (2003) findings.

VE students and *parents* were asked to explain how they choose a school. Both categories indicate that this decision was taken through a parent-children dialogue, confirming Sandefur et al. (2005) findings. Most of these parents had only secondary education, were born in rural areas, and only one parent (husband or wife) was employed in medium-low paid jobs. This profile corresponds with previous research findings in Albania (Xhumari & Dibra, 2016) and abroad (Sandefur et al., 2005): We argue that such findings represent a clear case of the application of social reproduction theory (Bowles and Gintis, 1976).

Students and their parents are *not well informed on the VE offer*, especially those coming from rural areas. Neither students nor parents could name the VE schools and qualifications provided. Teachers responsible for career education barely name the VS names in the region, limiting their influence in education choice, in contrast with other studies (e.g., Herr, 1987; Rossetti, 1991).

*School infrastructure* is reported as an essential factor in VE choice from all actors. During focus groups, girls argue that a friendly and attractive school environment and good condition in dormitories influenced their decision. Even if the VE infrastructure is improving these years, standards on the number of toilets per female student are not met, and in male-oriented schools, there are no toilets for girls at the workshops. More than 50% of schools lack gender-responsive sports facilities. Although girls living more than 5km from the school can be accommodated in dormitories, conditions are not satisfactory, and they prefer to rent a space or live with their relatives.

*School location* is also considered other reasons for low enrolment, supporting Tansel's (2002) findings. Vocational schools are generally located in the cities' peripheries. Service profile-oriented schools, with higher enrolment of girls, are better located. A good location is considered a critical factor affecting enrolment, particularly for girls. School transportation school is mostly available, but not always as a public service, increasing education costs for students' families (Xhumari & Dibra, 2016, p.329).

*Students' motivation and plans* seem to be another influencing factor in VE enrollment, as suggested by other authors (e.g., Jackson, 2002). The students mention passion and talent in a vocation to choose VE, especially for ICT and textile & confection profile.

Perceived costs and benefits prevail over other factors affecting students' choice. VE is a relatively expensive choice considering the category of students enrolled. Low-income families and rural students have to travel and sometimes pay for accommodation costs in dormitories or rented houses. Respondents report scholarships dedicated to girls and transport reimbursement schemes as potentially effective measures to increase VE interest for this category.

Despite the reason why VE students and parents choose this path "to gain a profession and find a job" when asked about their plans after completing high school, almost all students, boys, and girls, attending VE or gymnasium, answered that would apply for university. Parents

as well, wished their kids could continue further education. Especially for girls, a university degree is expected to guarantee a safer future and increase their chance for employment.

### Conclusions and future work

This study aims to identify the determinants of girls' access to vocational education in Albania. Our research confirmed some previous studies' findings. Some of the confirmed determinants of girls' access in VE include the availability of gender-responsive profiles, peers' pressure (usually negative), infrastructure quality (sometimes poor), access to school location, students' interest and talent, career information, and development plans (Alniacik et al. 2018; Xhumari & Dibra, 2016; St.Gean, 2010; Adamuti and Sweet (2008); Sandefur et al. (2005); Tansel's, 2002; Kithyo, 1999). Family and parents' socio-economic status influenced both girls' and boys' enrollment in VE, as suggested by the social reproduction theory (Bowles and Gintis, 1976). We also found that scholarship schemes targeting girls would be a useful mechanism in increasing their enrollment, as suggested by Sharma (2000). Notably perceived costs and benefits prevail on other factors. VE students, particularly girls, choose a VE path if it leads to highly paid qualification and good career prospects.

In contrast with previous research (e.g., Moenjak&Worswick, 2003), we found that strategies put in place aiming to increase girls' enrollment in VET result in increased enrolment of both genders. Also, girls' higher social pressure, expected role in society/family, their ability to perform in a specific heavy occupation or employer gender segregation identified as strong determinants in other studies, do not seem to have a strong influence in preventing girls from choosing VE in Albania.

Further research using quantitative approaches can shed some light on each determinant's relative influence on girls' access to VE. Gender studies on retention, completion, and achievement would provide additional evidence to policymakers and school directors on how to increase the number of girls in VE.

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## **Copenhagen, as the Smartest Capital in the European Union?**

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### **Abstract**

Nowadays, with accelerating globalization, the smart city development and the application of smart technologies gain emphasis on almost every continent. The cause for this is that the cities have to react to rapidly changing conditions (e.g. challenges of increasing population, city services, problems of the economies of scale), and for this they need new and up-to-date solutions. In this context, the concept of smart cities can offer innovative solutions for the future of cities. This study offers a complex index based on the synthesis of measurement methods, which can measure and rank the performance of smart cities by six components. The analysis of the EU28 capitals shows that, in 2015, the best performing city among those analysed was Copenhagen, followed by Stockholm and Luxembourg. It is important to mention that in the given components dispersion of values among the best and worst performing cities is huge.

**Keywords:** smart city, performance measurement, EU28 capitals, complex index, Copenhagen.

### **Introduction**

The ever-intensifying globalization seems to be a huge challenge for cities. The share of the urban population is growing continuously. In 1950, there were only 80 cities in the world with a population of more than one million people; this number had increased to 480 in 2011. More than three billion people are living in cities, which is expected to increase to almost five billion by 2050, and the share of global urban population is expected to grow over 70% (Muggah, 2012). Similar introductions and statistical data can be found in several national and international publication related to smart cities (e.g. Lados, 2011; Bizjan, 2014; European

Parliament, 2014; Richter et al. 2015; Hajduk, 2016) presenting the challenges of globalization and accelerating urbanization.

Nowadays, smart urban development and the use of smart / intelligent technologies are gaining increasing importance in many parts of the world, on almost every continent. At the same time, there is a significant difference in the focus across continents (eg: in India, adequate water supply is one of the main goals of urban development; in New York, quality of life is the main focus area; Amsterdam appears as a multidimensional smart city – Future Cities Catapult, 2017). In our definition, the smart city is a complex notion. It means a city, which uses innovative strategies and solutions to create better living conditions for the citizens, by the efficient use of the citizens' creativity and knowledge basis (Szendi, 2019).

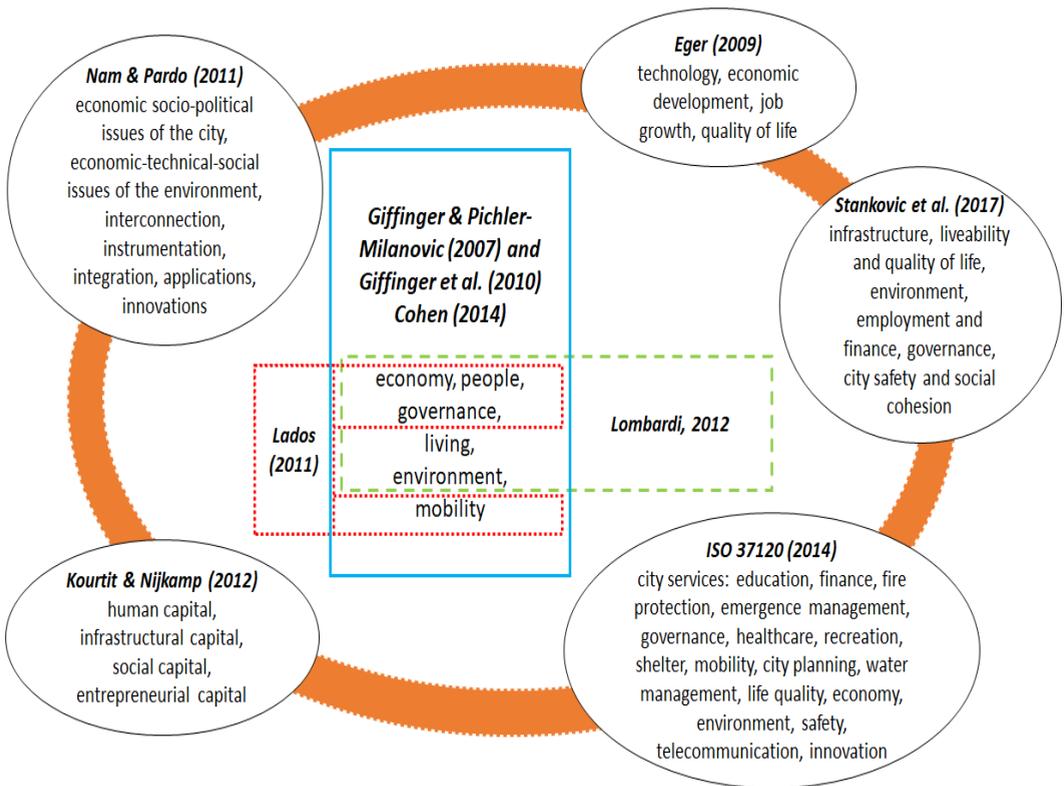
In this study, the capitals of the EU member states are examined from the smart factors' point of view. We have basically relied on the categories of Giffinger and Pichler-Milanovic (2007), but this was further extended by the factors of other researchers.

### **Theory of Smart Cities**

The smart city is a complex notion, which has no agreed-on definition yet. There are several concepts in the literature (knowledge city, intelligent city, digital city, etc.), sometimes with significantly different content. The borders are not clarified at all, and there are overlapping subdivisions. Richter et al. (2015) and Voda and Radu (2018) have also stated that a critical element of smart city research is the lack of a precise definition. The authors emphasize also the interdisciplinary character of smart cities as a problematic point, as the topic integrates the basics of spatial planning, economic geography, knowledge economy, marketing and city technologies (Richter et al., 2015). Stankovic et al. (2017) have also stressed the interdisciplinary character of the smart cities and defined them as "a holistic process of redesigning urban areas, aimed at achieving sustainable urban growth, efficient service systems and increasing the citizens' quality of life" (Stankovic et al. 2017, p. 520).

The ESI ThoughtLab, in partnership with universities and research institutes, conducted a study in 2018 called "Smarter Cities 2025 Building a Sustainable Business and Financing Plan" to analyse the success factors of smart cities. The study used the following definition: Smart cities are settlements that are fitted to solve urban problems, provide high quality services and sustainable growth by using state-of-the-art technology and data analysis (ESI ThoughtLab, 2018). The analysis has shown that the catalytic effects of smarter urban area can increase GDP per capita by 21% on average in the "start-up" city category and increase population growth by 13% over the next three to five years, if they are able to implement their 'smart city plans' (ESI ThoughtLab, 2018).

There is no agreed-on concept in the literature for measuring the performance of smart cities, and various ideas have been developed for the calculation of component values and the content of the complex index (see eg.: Nagy et al. 2018 summary). A common feature of the concepts is that they aim to determine the smart performance of cities based on several components and a number of indicators, and rely on data from both qualitative and quantitative scales. At the same time, too many country-specific factors are included in the indicators, making it difficult to reproduce them in other contexts, so they are not perfectly applicable in international comparisons. To summarize, there are several approaches that can be used as a basis for measuring the performance of smart cities (**Fig.1**):



**Fig.1. Dimensions of smart city concepts.**

Source: compiled by the authors based on Hajduk (2016, p. 3) and Szendi (2017)

Based on the above, it can be concluded that in most of the approaches the research of Giffinger and Pichler-Milanovic (2007) is applied as the basis of component selection, but in some cases the researchers decide to change/replace or exclude some of the components.

**Methodology**

In our study, we evaluated the smart performance of the capitals of the EU28 based on a total of 26 factors. The method was elaborated based on the research of Giffinger and Pichler-Milanovic (2007), whose 6 pillars were used to calculate the values of the smart index. The criteria for selecting the indicators were twofold: on the one hand, the collection of data available for all cities, and on the other hand the repeatability of the calculation at another time. Therefore, in our analysis, in addition to the factors of Giffinger and Pichler-Milanovic (2007) and Cohen (2014), we mainly relied on the indicators of the Urban Audit and Urban Audit Perception Survey (European Commission, 2015) and also included some factors of Lados (2011). The source of the data was the Eurostat database for comparability, partly the Urban Audit and Urban Audit Perception Survey databases and the Metro regions database (Fig.2).

**Databases**  
METRO – Eurostat Metro regions database  
UAP – Urban Audit Perception Survey 2015  
UA – Eurostat Urban Audit database

**Source of indicators**  
Giffinger et al. (2007) – 81 indicator  
Cohen (2014) – 28 indicator  
Urban Audit Perception Survey – 278 indicator  
Lados (2011) – 278 indicator  
Urban Audit  
**Synthesis: 26 indicator**

<p><b>SMART ECONOMY</b> <i>(competitiveness)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- GDP per capita – METRO</li> <li>- Gross value added per capita – METRO</li> <li>- Unemployment rate – METRO</li> <li>- Patent applications to EPO per 100000 inhabitants – METRO</li> </ul>	<p><b>SMART PEOPLE</b> <i>(social and human capital)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Number of students in the higher education per 1000 inhabitants (at levels 5-6 ISCED) – UA</li> <li>- Easy to find a job (strong satisfaction) – UAP</li> <li>- Young-age dependency ratio – UA</li> <li>- Employment rate – METRO</li> </ul>
<p><b>SMART GOVERNANCE</b> <i>(participation)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Administrative services efficiency (strong satisfaction) – UAP</li> <li>- Trust in city people (strong satisfaction) – UAP</li> <li>- Trusted public administration (strong satisfaction) – UAP</li> <li>- Internet use: interaction with public authorities by the inhabitants – UA</li> </ul>	<p><b>SMART MOBILITY</b> <i>(transport and ICT)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strong satisfaction with public transportation – UAP</li> <li>- Cars per 1000 inhabitants – UA</li> <li>- Share of persons using public transportation – UA</li> </ul>
<p><b>SMART ENVIRONMENT</b> <i>(natural resources)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ozone problem (No. of days) – UA</li> <li>- Particulate matter problems (No. of days) – UA</li> <li>- Green spaces (strong satisfaction) – UAP</li> <li>- Waste per household – UA</li> </ul>	<p><b>SMART LIVING</b> <i>(quality of life)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Overights per years per residents – UA</li> <li>- Health care services (strong satisfaction) – UAP</li> <li>- Cultural facilities (strong satisfaction) – UAP</li> <li>- Easy to find a good housing (strong satisfaction) – UAP</li> <li>- Public spaces (strong satisfaction) – UAP</li> <li>- The financial situation of household (strong satisfaction) – UAP</li> <li>- Overcrowding rate – UA</li> </ul>

**Fig.2. Calculation method of the complex smart index.** Source: compiled by the authors

To compare the indicators of different scales and unit of measurement there was a need for the standardization of the values. One method of standardization is the so-called z-transformation, which transforms each indicator value to a standardized value with an average zero and a standard deviation one. The method considers the heterogeneity within groups and conserves the metric information. The disadvantage can be that the index will be more sensible to the changes. This method is widely used when the data have different scales or units of measurement and the aim is to compare them or to summarize different components. The method is not new in the analysis of smart cities; e.g., Giffinger and Pichler-Milanovic (2007), Cohen (2014) and Hajduk (2016) used it in their research. The method is based on the linear transformation of the values, and can be computed with the following equation.

$$X = \frac{X_i - \bar{X}}{\text{standard deviation}},$$

where X means the standardized value;  $X_i$  is the indicator’s value in city  $i$ ;  $\bar{X}$  is the average of the indicator among the examined settlements; and standard deviation is the standard

deviation of the indicator among the examined settlements. The most important advantages of the method:

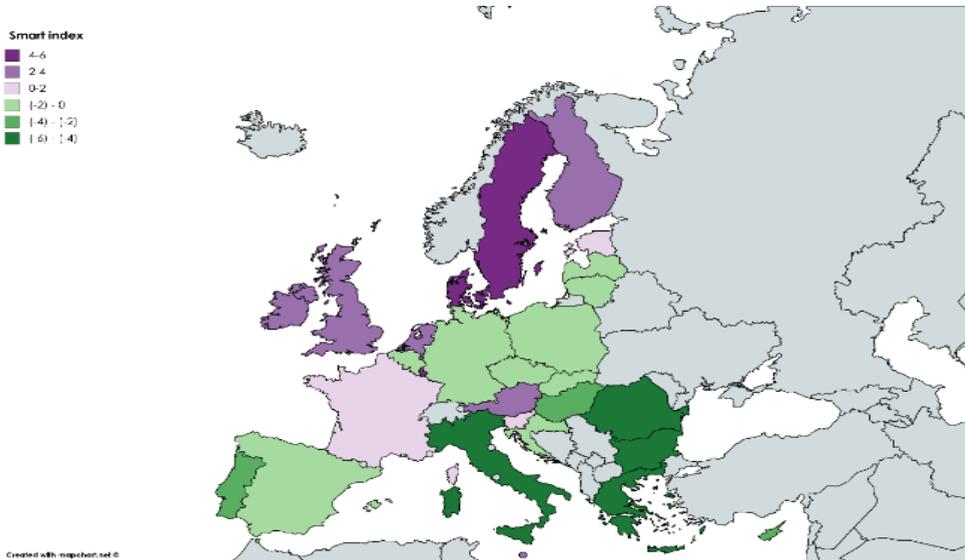
it preserves the original connection among the data, but allows us to compare and summarize data series with different units (e.g. kg, percentage, m<sup>2</sup>),

it does not result in loss of data or distortion (Giffinger & Pichler-Milanovic, 2007; Cohen, 2014).

In some cases, there was a need for modification of the data in the interpretation of components and creation of the complex index, where the given indicators have different scales. In these cases, we calculated with the inverse value of the indicator. A good example for the different scale of data is when a smaller indicator value means the city's situation is more favourable (e.g. unemployment rate, energy use or particulate matter problem). The value of a given component (sub-category or pillar) is the sum of the standardized values of the selected indicators, while the smart index can be calculated as the arithmetic mean of the pillars' values (as is also done in Giffinger & Pichler-Milanovic, 2007; Nagy et al., 2016).

### Ranking of the Capitals of Eu28 Based on the Smart Index

We have compared the results of the smart index for the above-mentioned six components across the capitals of the EU member states. Copenhagen was the best performing capital in 2015 with a smart index of 18.86 points. Stockholm and Luxembourg followed Copenhagen. Based on the results, it can be said that based on the smart index significant territorial differences can be observed. The highest index values are concentrated in the capitals of the Northern and Western member states, while the lowest values are in the Eastern and Southern peripheries. So the EU's West-East and North-South inequalities can be verified (**Fig.3**). Budapest, the Hungarian capital, is ranked as 24<sup>th</sup> among the capitals of the EU-28.



**Fig.3. Dispersion of the complex smart index across the capitals of the EU28.** Source: compiled by the authors.

Note: The countries' colour indicates the smart performance of their capital city.

According to the index, there are big differences between the capitals of the EU-28, as the best performing, Copenhagen have 18.86 points and the worse performing, Rome have -16.65 points. Copenhagen's outstanding position is the result of its overall good performance in each component, except for the mobility pillar. Stockholm and Luxembourg also have outstanding index values, which are only a few hundredth lower than the leading city. In Luxembourg, the people pillar, while in Stockholm the mobility pillar is the only negative component. At the end of the list, the order is as follows: Athens, Sofia, Bucharest and Rome show one of the worst values in almost every pillar.

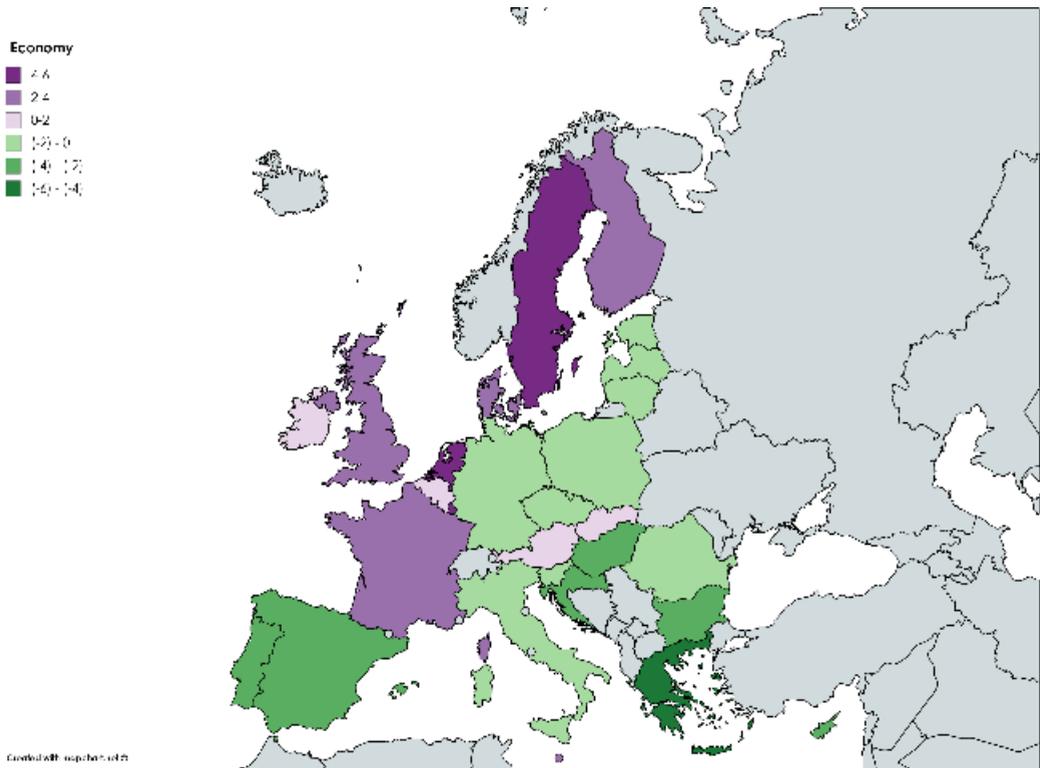
From the list, we were able to create five quasi-similar groups based on the index values. The first group includes the best performing cities: Copenhagen, Stockholm, Luxembourg, Helsinki, Valletta and London. Here, in every city, there is an outstanding component, usually the economy or the governance pillar. The second category contains cities mostly from Western Europe, like Dublin, Vienna, Amsterdam or Paris, and also Ljubljana belongs to this group. The third cluster collects capitals which values are varying about 1.9 point and (-5) points. Two distinct groups can be created within this cluster: the first contains cities with positive indices and the second cities with negative indices. Tallinn had a positive smart index in 2015 (1.39), while Brussels, Vilnius, Prague, Berlin and Madrid were negative. This cluster is also geographically heterogeneous, as its members are coming from the Western part of the continent and from the Baltic States.

A general character of the remaining two clusters is that in 2015 the members had negative smart index values. The fourth cluster of cities have indices within the range of (-5.1) and (-10), and they are located in the advanced capitals of the Eastern periphery (Warsaw, Bratislava, Riga, Zagreb), and the Portuguese capital Lisbon and the capital of Cyprus, Nikosia is also part of that. The last cluster members are the capitals of the less developed Central and Eastern European countries (Budapest, Sofia and Bucharest), and two Southern European capitals (Athens, Rome). Here the value of the smart index is very low, lower than (-10.1) points.

By the economy and people pillar, the capitals of Western Europe have the highest scores. In the economy component, Stockholm leads the rankings before Luxembourg and Amsterdam. The reason for Stockholm's outstanding position is complex (**Fig.4**). The city is in a relatively good position in terms of patent applications, while GDP per capita and as well as the gross value added are extremely high. In Stockholm, there is a strong cooperation between the research institutions and the private and public sectors, and there are some large multi-national companies such as AstraZeneca, Ericsson and Volvo which bring up a high added value (Sweden.se, 2018). Some Central and Eastern European cities are performing well in the economy component, as Bratislava is 11<sup>st</sup>, Prague 15<sup>th</sup> and Warsaw 16<sup>th</sup> in the ranking. In Bratislava, the relatively good situation is the result of two parallel processes. First, the position of the Slovak capital is good in per capita GDP and gross value added (large companies: Volkswagen, Slovak Telekom, as well as Kia). The Deloitte Central European Top 500 list (2016) ranks 14 corporate headquarters in Bratislava. The last place of the economy pillar holds Athens, with the highest unemployment rate across the EU capitals with 25.1%.

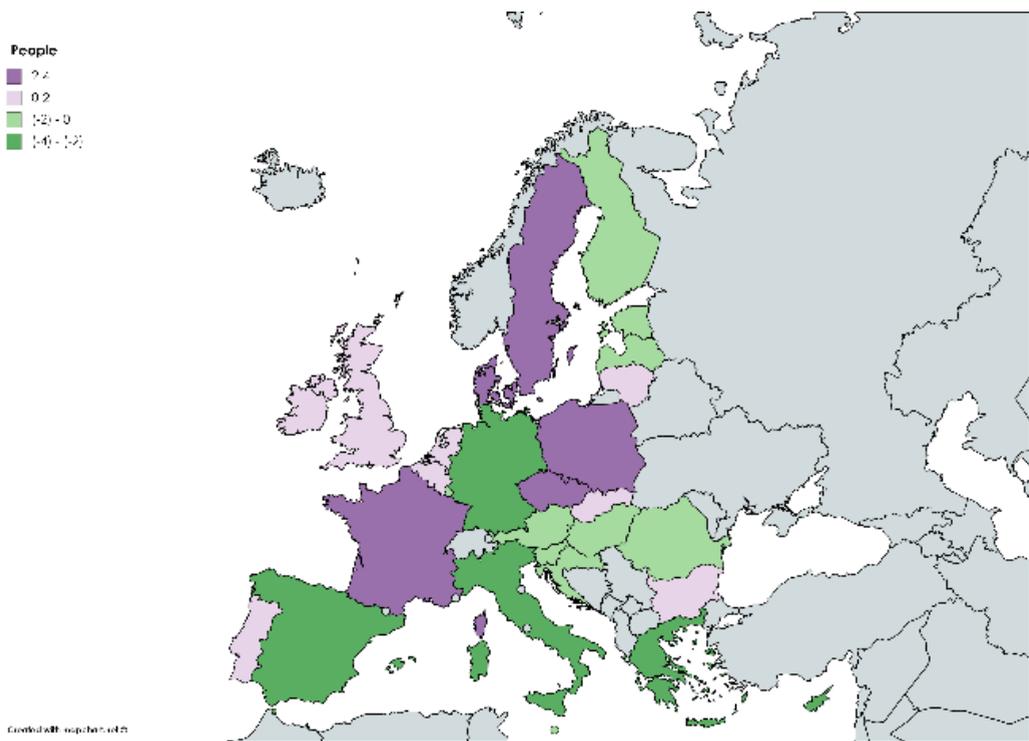
The best-performing cities in the human pillar are Copenhagen, Paris and Stockholm, and thus Western European cities, where all indicator values are positive (**Fig.5**). Copenhagen's leading

position is the result of high employment rate and high young-age dependency ratio (population aged 0-19, compared to 20-64 years). Furthermore, residents have a very good opinion of how easy it is to find a good job in the city. The capital of three Visegrád countries is in a relatively good position, hence Warsaw is 4<sup>th</sup>, Prague is 5<sup>th</sup> and Bratislava is the 6<sup>th</sup> on the list. The reason for this is the relatively high employment rate and juvenile dependency, but in Warsaw and Bratislava the share of students in higher education is also extremely high. In this pillar Rome, Berlin, and Athens are closing the ranking.



**Fig.4. Dispersion of the economy component across the capitals of the EU28.** Source: compiled by the authors.

Note: The countries' colour indicates the smart performance of their capital city.



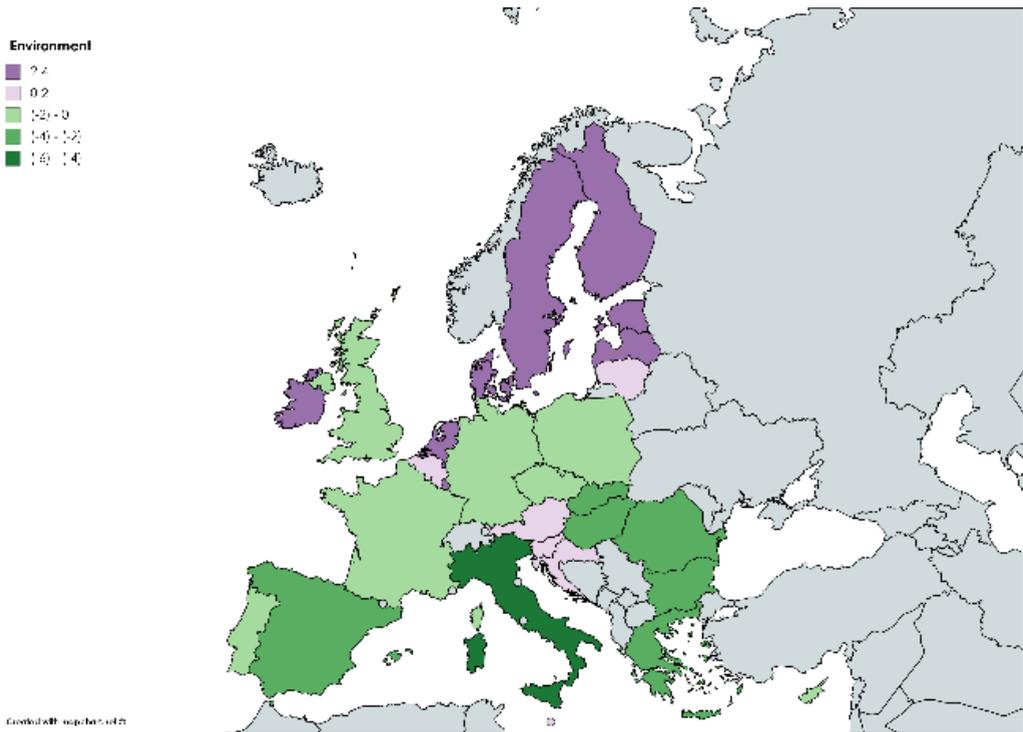
**Fig.5. Dispersion of the people component across the capitals of the EU28.** Source: compiled by the authors

Note: The countries' colour indicates the smart performance of their capital city.

The governance component contains four indicators that measure the quality of public services, trust in governance and eGovernment functions. Copenhagen is leading with 7.2 points ahead of Valletta and Luxembourg. In Copenhagen, there is a very high level of trust among the general public and the public administration. In addition, the proportion of individuals using the Internet to communicate with public authorities is the highest among the capitals of the Member States. According to the governance pillar, the Western-Eastern division of the EU is clearer than in the previous pillars. The capitals of the Central and Eastern European countries are in the second part of the ranking. The least developed cities in this pillar are coming mainly from this region (Prague, Warsaw, Sofia and Rome).

The mobility pillar of Vienna is the best among the capitals before Prague and Luxembourg, so here the inequalities between different parts of Europe are not so significant. In Vienna, two indicators are relatively good, the public transport satisfaction is the best among the examined cities, while number of passenger cars is also high. At the end of the ranking, there are two capitals from the Baltic States (Riga and Vilnius), as well as Amsterdam and Bucharest. Here, the quality of public transport and the proportion of tram or bus travel are relatively lower than in the leading cities.

The environmental pillar shows great differences among the capitals of the EU Member States, where the northern-southern and western-eastern division is identifiable among the cities (**Fig.6**). The top three ranked are Dublin, Copenhagen and Luxembourg, where the number of days with Ozone problem and the number of days with high particulate matter concentration are the lowest, while the share of green spaces is above the average. The Northern cities are doing well in this dimension and the environment is better here. Bucharest, Budapest, Madrid, Rome and Sofia is located at the end of the list. Here the number of days with Ozone problem and the number of days with high particulate matter concentration are problematic, especially in Sofia and Rome (both more than 25 days per year).



**Fig.6. Dispersion of the environmental component across the capitals of the EU28.**  
Source: compiled by the authors

Note: The countries' colour indicates the smart performance of their capital city.

Based on the living component, the Western-Eastern inequalities of Europe can be clearly identified, hence the best cities are Vienna, London and Stockholm, while Bratislava and Sofia is in the worst situation. In Vienna, except the residential real estate prices, all other factors are outstanding. The overcrowding in this city is around the average, but that does not affect the value of the index negatively. The rate of overcrowding is the highest in Romania and Bulgaria, where more than half of the population lives in overcrowded homes.

Our previous analyses showed that there is a moderately strong positive correlation between the smart performance of cities and the cities' GDP per capita of the urban regions. This

suggests that the level of development of the countries/cities influences the available and feasible smart developments and thus indirectly the "smartness" of the capital regions.

Comparing the results with other indices and former analyses we can conclude, that in the IMD (2019) smart city index Copenhagen is the best performing European city, similar to our analysis. So we can conclude that various smart city measurements always rank the same cities on the top but the actually ranking compared to each other may change depending on the method applied.

## Conclusions

There is no commonly accepted definition and measurement method in the literature for analysing the performance of smart cities and create comparable ranking among them. In this study, we have created a complex measurement index based on the synthesis of the methods applied in the literature, which can measure and rank the performance of smart cities by six components. We have analysed the smart performance of the EU28 capitals. The results show that, in 2015, the best performing city among those analysed was Copenhagen, followed by Stockholm and Luxembourg. Based on the smart index significant territorial differences can be observed in the European Union. The highest index values are concentrating in the capitals of the Northern and Western Member States, while the lowest values are in the Eastern and Southern peripheries. It is important to mention that in the given components dispersion of values among the best and worst performing cities is significant (scaling from -15 to 15 points).

Our method and index has some limitations and shortcomings, which we have to consider by calculating it for other territories or different time horizons. The biggest limitation is the data constraints, as these kinds of indicators cannot be reproduced in any possible time; some are available only for shorter terms. Regarding the data constraints, another issue is that these indicators are not available for every city in the same form, so the indicators' comparability is imperfect.

Another shortcoming is the model methodology, which is based on international empirical results; however, it can be misleading in some cases, as the outlier cities/indicators could have a different impact on the index.

## Acknowledgments

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## **Mixed Model Regulation Concepts: New Policy Perspective for Online Transportation Industry in Indonesia**

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### **Abstract**

Indonesia's Government and others have not found feasible policies in regulating conventional transportation and integrated online transportation. This study aims to examine: (1) Legal concepts of business that interfere with innovation in legal competition in the field of transportation; and (2) the management model of online transportation industry governance. This research method uses a type of normative legal research that uses laws, theories, and legal principles through library research. To complete the data, this research will also conduct interviews with experts and government stakeholders. The findings of this study are: First, the disruptive innovations in the online transportation business do not conflict with the principles of business competition law, but it needs to be arranged differently. Self-regulation made by business people is an appropriate legal concept because it is more effective and formulated by business actors themselves. Also, the government uses state law for monopoly and causes unfair competition. Second, the online transportation policy model requests a combination of self-regulation and strict regulatory policies. The mixture will protect unhealthy businesses, providing consumer protection and safety as well as security providers in online transportation business providers.

**Keywords:** Disruptive Innovation, Online Transportation, Business Competition, Self Regulation

### **Introduction**

Disruptive innovation, a phenomenon in business as opposed to sustaining innovation, is unavoidable in business. The business will continue to grow by innovating, regardless of the

innovation model. Without innovation, businesses will be left behind by consumers and lose to the competition (Damien:2015).

Empirically, disruptive innovation raises problems between newcumbents and incumbents because there are competitions between business actors with very different business models. The incumbent business model with the concept of sustaining innovation has experienced chaos since the emergence of a newcumbent business model using disruptive innovation where the business model platforms are very different.

If viewed from the business competition law, a business becomes wrong when the business actor violates 3 things: (a) Prohibited activities, (b) Prohibited agreements, and (c) unfair competition. The results show that businesses with disruptive innovation so far have not violated the three prohibition principles. Thus, business with disruptive innovation is a legal business from the perspective of business competition law.

The online transportation industry with disruptive innovation uses a very different business platform compared to conventional transportation, which continues to develop using the sustaining innovation method (Schmidt: 2008). This causes chaos in legal norms since the regulatory model used to regulate conventional business cannot be properly applied (plug and play) into the online transportation model. This issue has become a regulatory issue in various countries globally and has even caused social unrest among conventional business actors and online transportation(The Business Times:2016).

The inability of conventional law to regulate disruptive innovation in the online transportation industry is because the two are so different. Conventional transportation is a business activity carried out by transportation companies and is subject to standard transportation regulations so far, whereas online transportation is normatively not carried out by transportation companies. This business is run by an application company that regulates ride-sharing, built on the concept of sharing economy (Fajar:2019).

In this situation, legal norms are in chaos, so a regulatory concept is needed to provide legal certainty and accommodate changes in the online transportation sector.

## **Research Methods**

This research used juridical normative and empirical methods. Normative research was to examine secondary data sources from legal materials from various laws and regulations and other legal documents. Besides, this study also used the conceptual and statutory approach.

## **Discussions**

### **Online Transportation Arrangements in Indonesia and other Countries**

The regulation of business competition in the online platform era is an essential study in the era of disruptive innovation from a policy perspective (Silalahi:2019), economic regulation (Erikson:2016), and from a business competition law perspective (Fajar:2019). In terms of the policy, the government's efforts to overcome disruptive innovation are more emphasized on business competition policy patterns and efforts to overcome the effects of disruptive innovation (Mutiarin:2019). From an economic perspective, by borrowing the concept of sharing economy (Miller:2016) the regulation is more directed at the capital regulation pattern and the impact on the welfare of the community. In terms of business competition law,

it examines the application of business competition law to business actors who use disruptive innovation to achieve anti-monopoly goals (Rusydi:2017).

Various policy models for online transportation can be seen from the experiences of several countries regarding online transportation arrangements, including the following (Mutiarin:2019):

		Indonesia	Philippines	Taiwan
Competition Law	Name of Act	Law Number 5 Year 1999 concerning Prohibition of Monopolistic Practices and Unfair Business Competition	The Philippine Competition Act (Republic Act 10667)	Fair Trade Act of 2015
	Control Provision	The Government formed the Business Competition Supervisory Commission (KPPU) Prevent monopolistic practices and or unfair business competition caused by business actors;	The Government formed The Philippine Competition Commission (PCC) Prevent economic concentration. Penalize all forms of anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominant position and anti-competitive mergers and acquisitions.	The Government formed The Fair Trade Commission (FTC) Anti-Competitive Agreements Abuse of Dominant Position.
	Regulating Provision	Improve national economic efficiency creating a conducive business climate prevent monopolistic practices the creation of effectiveness and efficiency in business activities	Promotes entrepreneurial spirit, Encourages private investments, Facilitates technology development and transfer, and Enhances resource productivity.	maintaining trading order protecting consumers' interests ensuring free and fair competition promoting economic stability and prosperity
Government Regulation-Policy on OETS	Name of regulation-policy	Ministerial Decree No. 108 of 2017 about Transportation Management for Public Vehicles Arrangement Ministerial Decree No. 26 of 2017 about Transportation Management for Public Vehicles Ministerial Decree No. 32 of 2016 about	LTFRB Memo Circular No 2015-016 Implementing Guidelines On The Acceptance Of Applications For A Certificate Of Public Convenience To Operate A Transportation Network Vehicle Service	Highway Act the Regulations for Automobile Transportation Operators Transportation Management Regulations The Act of Encouraging Public Transportation Development

		<p>Transportation Management for Public Vehicles Government Regulation No. 37 of 2017 about Safety and Transportation</p>	<p>LTFRB Memo Circular No 2015-017 Terms And Conditions Of A Certificate Of Public Convenience To Operate A Transportation Network Vehicle Service</p> <p>LTFRB Memo Circular No 2015-018 Suspension Of Acceptance Of TNVS Applications</p> <p>LTFRB Memo Circular No 2016-008 Amendment To Memorandum Circular No. 2016-008</p> <p>LTFRB Memo Circular No 2017-022 Terms And Conditions Of A Certificate Of Public Convenience To Operate A Transportation Network Vehicle Service</p> <p>LTFRB Memo Circular No 2018-01 Fare Structure for Transportation Network Vehicle Service</p> <p>LTFRB Memo Circular No 2018-019 Implementing Guidelines On The Acceptance Of Applications For A Certificate Of Public Convenience To Operate A Transportation Network Vehicle Service</p>	
	Policy Aims	Regulating and control of: Type of rental	Transportation Network Vehicle	Operating model expanding

		<p>transportation engine cylinder capacities vehicle storage and workshop periodic testing of vehicles Vehicles sticker identity. Upper and lower limits tariff ownership of vehicles in business entities. Registration certificate. operating area permit a driver income tax</p>	<p>Service (TNVS) Applicants to secure a franchise before the operation Vehicle age Vehicle model Certificate of Public Convenience Requirements Taximeter control drivers' commission fare setting of the ride-sharing company</p>	<p>cooperation with diversified taxi fleets and vehicle rental operators. Collaborating business partnerships with vehicle rental firms. Adopt a new operating model by working with the taxi industry. Serving as a technology platform under the multipurpose taxi program allows app-based metering upfront pricing and flexible vehicle appearances.</p>
	Target Groups	GOJEK, UBER, GRAB, Offline Taxi, TNC's, online transportation application provider	GRAB, TNC's, online transportation application provider, Offline Taxi	UBER, TNC's, online transportation application provider, Offline Taxi
Sharing Economy	Sustainability of benefits	<p>Growing demand on passengers as promising segment. Creating Economic Opportunities at Scale for earning an income through the OETS platform Stable job opportunity for driver-partners who did not work prior to joining OETS.</p>	<p>User-friendly application makes OETS has its own market. OETS as online intercity transportation is affordable and as a high mobility mode in a dense population area. Stable job opportunity for driver-partners who did not work prior to joining OETS.</p>	<p>Stable job opportunity for driver-partners who did not work prior to joining OETS. Widely income support for agent-partners who had no income before joining OETS.</p>

	Security and Trust Concern	Road safety fatality rates towards zero preventable incidents. Safety product features and operational standards Trust and safety of the OETS platform. Safety Centre Passenger and driver verification	Road safety fatality rates towards zero preventable incidents. Safety product features and operational standards Trust and safety of the OETS platform. Safety Centre Passenger and driver verification	Road safety fatality rates towards zero preventable incidents. Safety product features and operational standards Trust and safety of the OETS platform. Safety Centre Passenger and driver verification
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### Online Transportation Regulation in Indonesia

Indonesia is a country that has concerns about online transportation arrangements. At least 5 (five) Regulations have been made, but not all can be applied, and some are even canceled due to the Judicial Review. The last regulation, the Regulation of the Minister of Transportation of the Republic of Indonesia Number PM 118 of 2018 which has been amended by the Regulation of the Minister of Transportation of the Republic of Indonesia Number PM 17 of 2019 concerning the Implementation of Special Leased Transportation is considered quite accommodating, although it still leaves various problems such as restrictions on operational areas, formation business legal entities tariff restrictions, consumer protection, and other legal issues.

Online transportation in Indonesia is regulated using the Special Rental Transport nomenclature. There are several application companies involved in organizing online transportation in Indonesia, including Grab, Gojek, and Maxim. The parties involved in organizing online transportation are as follows:

Application Company (applicator). This application company is required to obtain a license from the Ministry of Communication and Information. For application companies, obtaining a license is by meeting the requirements of the mandatory Application Company (PM 118:2018):

having an Indonesian legal status,

prioritizing transportation safety and security,

provide consumer protection in accordance with statutory provisions,

provide Digital Dashboard access to the Minister or Governor in accordance with the authority containing the name of the company, the person in charge, and the address of the Application Company. It also includes data of all cooperating Special Rental Transportation Companies, data of all vehicles and drivers, access to service operational monitoring in the form of booking transaction data through the application including the origin and destination of trips and tariffs, and consumer complaint services in the form of telephone and electronic mail of Application Companies,

provide application access to drivers whose vehicles already have a license to operate Special Rental Transportation in the form of Service Standard Electronic Cards,

cooperate with a Special Rental Transportation Company that already has a license to operate Special Charter Transportation in recruiting drivers, and

open a branch office and appointed a person in charge of a branch office in the city according to the operational area.

Online Transportation Service Providers (Partners) are parties that organize online transportation service activities or commonly referred to as operators, and are partners of the applicator company. Types of licenses for online transportation service providers, in PM 118 of 2018 are regulated in Article 15, consisting of:

a decree for a license to operate Special Leased Transportation, and  
Service Standard Electronic Card.

The management of a special lease transportation operation permit is subject to fees as non-tax state revenue or regional levies, the provisions regarding the amount of this levy are determined by Regional Regulations or Governor Regulations of the respective provinces.

The application for a license to operate Special Charter Transportation follows the mechanism regulated in the laws and regulations regarding integrated electronic business licensing services or Online Single Submission (OSS). This provision has been fully regulated in the Regulation of the Minister of Transportation of the Republic of Indonesia Number PM 88 of 2018 concerning Norms, Standards, Procedures, and Criteria for Business Licensing Integrated Electronically in the Transportation Sector in the Land Sector (PM No. 88 of 2018). In PM No. 88 of 2018, online transportation licensing is carried out by filling in data on the Online Single Submission (OSS) issued by the OSS Institution for and on behalf of ministers, institutional leaders, governors, or regents/mayors to Business Actors through an integrated electronic system.

The operating license for Special Charter Transportation is granted by (PM 118:2018):

The Minister for Special Charter Transportation whose operational area exceeds 1 (one) provincial area and which exceeds more than 1 (one) provincial area in the areas of Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, Bekasi; and

Governor for Special Charter Transportation whose operational area is within 1 (one) province as a deconcentration task

The special leased transportation operation permit granted by the Minister as referred to in Article 18 Letter A is signed by (PM 17:2019):

Director-General of Land Transportation on behalf of the Minister for Special Leased Transportation whose operational area exceeds 1 (one) provincial area, apart from the Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi areas, and

Head of the Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi Transportation Management Agency on behalf of the Minister for Special Leased Transportation whose operational area exceeds more than 1 (one) provincial area of Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi.

In this research, we carried out research in two areas as a comparison, DKI Jakarta and DI Yogyakarta. In general, the provisions regarding online transportation (Special Rental

Transportation) in DKI Jakarta and DI Yogyakarta refer to PM Number 118 of 2018, which has been amended by PM Number 17 of 2019 concerning Special Rental Transportation. The comparison of regulations in force in DKI Jakarta and DI Yogyakarta is as follows:

No	Description	DKI Jakarta	DI Yogyakarta
1	Regional Regulation	Provincial Regulation of the Special Capital Region of Jakarta Number 5 of 2014 concerning Transportation	Regulation of the Governor of the Special Region of Yogyakarta Number 32 of 2017 concerning the Implementation of Taxis and Special Rental Transportation Using Information Technology-Based Applications
2	Levy provisions	Government Regulation Number 15 of 2016 concerning Types and Rates of Non-Tax State Revenue Applicable to the Ministry of Transportation Provincial Regulation of the Special Capital Region of Jakarta Number 1 of 2015 concerning Amendments to Regional Regulations, Number 3 of 2012 concerning Regional Levies	Provincial Government of the Special Region of Yogyakarta Yogyakarta Special Region Provincial Regulation Number 13 Year 2011 Concerning Certain Permits Retribution
3	Giver of Special Charter Transportation	Jabodetabek Transportation Management Agency after obtaining a recommendation from the Transportation Office	Provincial Office of Licensing and Investment after obtaining a recommendation from the Transportation Service
4	Licensing fee	5.000.000 IDR	240.000 IDR
5	Websites for OSS	<a href="http://ask.dephub.go.id/">http://ask.dephub.go.id/</a>	<a href="https://oss.go.id/">https://oss.go.id/</a>
6	Online transportation quota	36.000 (Regitta:2019)	Not yet regulated
7	Tariffs (KP 348:2019)	Zone II	Zone I

There are two types of licensing documents that must be owned by drivers/online transportation partners:

Transport Operations Permit / Special Charter Transportation Permit (renewed every five years), namely permits granted to individuals and business entities that provide online transportation services, and

Service Standard Electronic Card is a licensing document for vehicles used as online transportation. The Service Standard Electronic Card (KEP) is only valid for 1 (one) vehicle used and must be renewed annually. If the driver has more than 1 (one) vehicle, the Driver must have more than 1 (one) KEP for each vehicle used.

The document requirements for a Transport Operation Permit are as follows (driver.go-jek.com:2020):

No	Legal Entity	Individual (IUMK)
1	Application Letter (Format According to PM 118 of 2018)	Application Letter
2	Copy of Business License (OSS Output) + NIB	Copy of Micro Small Business License (IUMK) In the form of OSS and NIB output
3	Company data: Deed of Establishment and Endorsement (along with amendments if any) NIB (OSS output)/TDP Legal Entity Taxpayer Identification Number Business license Location Permit (OSS)/Domicile Certificate	Copy of Identity Card Copy of Tax ID number
4	Statement of Capability to own or be able to provide vehicle maintenance facilities so that it remains roadworthy (stamped and signed by the company leaders) If in the form of a workshop cooperation letter, attached with a permit owned by the workshop (Business License, Certificate of Company Registration)	Statement of Capability to own or be able to provide vehicle maintenance facilities so that they remain roadworthy (stamped and signed by the applicant)
5	Vehicle data, including: Vehicle registration certificate and taxes (for company, license on behalf of the company) with a maximum vehicle age of 5 years Vehicle photos (front-rear-side) Maintenance History/Service Book according to APM/ATPM standards and/or the latest service note SRUT (Motor Vehicle Type Test Certification)	Vehicle data with a maximum age of 5 years at the time of submission and the TNKB code according to the area of operation (AB plate), data in the form of: Vehicle registration certificate and taxes Vehicle photos (front-rear-side) Maintenance History/Service Book according to APM/ATPM standards and/or the latest service note SRUT (Motor Vehicle Type Test Certification) Application screenshots
6	A certificate stating the extent of being able to store vehicles according to the number of vehicles owned (Pool Certificate) Known by RT/RW/local government	A certificate from the local government stating the extent of being able to store vehicles according to the number of owned vehicles (known by RT/RW)
7	Copy of passenger insurance (mandatory contributions and responsibilities of passengers when they have obtained a principle permit)	Copy of passenger insurance (mandatory fees and responsibility of passengers)
8	Business plan documents	
9	Letter of Agreement between vehicle owners or cooperative members and public transport companies in the form of cooperative legal entities (especially companies with cooperative legal entities)	
10	Statement of commitment to fulfill all obligations as the holder of a Special Lease Transportation Operation Permit (signed by the leader and stamped)	

If the Vehicle Registration Certificate is not in his own name, then a power of attorney for use or a letter of cooperation with the vehicle owner should be attached (if it is on behalf of one of the applicant's family members and is still on 1 Family Card, then it is sufficient to attach a Family Card). For micro and small business licenses, the maximum vehicle ownership is 4.

### **Mixed Regulation Systems as a New Perspective in Online Transportation Regulations in Indonesia**

The Indonesian government has regulated online transportation by issuing various regulations, including (1) The Minister for Transportation Regulation PM No 32 of 2016 on The Organization Of Public Motorized Vehicles Transportation Outside The Route, (2) The Minister for Transportation Regulation PM No 108 of 2017 on The Organization Of Public Motorized Vehicles Transportation Outside The Route, (3) The Minister for Transportation Regulation PM No 118 of 2018 on the organization of special rental transportation, (4) The Minister for Transportation Regulation PM No 17 of 2019 on the organization of special rental transportation. But until the last regulation was made, many violations were carried out without transparent law enforcement (Darmaningtyas:2020).

The failure of this regulation is because the government conceptually views on-line transportation as the same as conventional transportation (both transportation companies) so that these arrangements have not been able to accommodate the digital revolution, which has changed the paradigm of the production process and market mechanisms fundamentally (Patnaik:2020). In other words, competition law does not adequately appreciate market dynamics (Schwab:2012). Meanwhile, new competitors entering the market with new innovations and technologies, in principle, should not be prevented by competition law (Baker:2019).

In a situation like this, one of the steps that can be taken by the government as a regulator is an additional regulation developed by the industry itself and often called as self-regulation (Castro:2011). Self-regulation can be a beneficial complement to government policies and potentially provide essential benefits for both industries. The success of the self-regulation depends on several factors: (1) the strength of the commitments made by the participants, (2) the scope of the industrial self-regulation, (3) the degree to which participants adhere to commitments; and (4) the consequences of not complying with commitments. Another advantage of self-regulation is the cost savings for the government, as law enforcement and monitoring burdens are lightened and/or diverted to business (OECD:2015). Legal theory gives rights to private actors, such as corporations or business associations, to regulate themselves (Fajar:2010).

The concept of self-regulation to regulate disruptive innovation can be an alternative solution to the existing chaos of norms. Self-regulation is considered capable of maintaining economic benefits and is open to innovation and a dynamic Internet industry in the future. However, enforcement requires effective public control, especially from consumers (Marsh:2009). Several studies have shown that self-regulation provides the potential for lower transaction cost efficiencies with the consequences for social welfare because business actors are considered to know more precisely what is regulated based on the interests and participation of the community as consumers (Grajzl, Murrel: 2007).

Self-regulation is developed from the Reflexive Law Theory theory, which states that there is a limit of law to regulate an increasingly dynamic society (Fajar:2018) and is needed when there is an inability of the government to regulate the dynamics of a changing society (Hess;1999). A similar phenomenon when government regulations cannot regulate disruptive innovation.

This regulatory process generally consists of three stages: (1) creating regulations, (2) monitoring compliance, and (3) enforcing regulations. See the following scheme (Castro:2011):



Figure 1. Three stages of the regulatory process

At each of these stages, the level of industry participation in the regulatory process can vary, from industries that are completely excluded from the government to industries that are the main actors in determining policy (Castro:2011).

The idea of self-regulation leaves a question where the position of the government as the holder of power regulates. According to various existing laws and regulations, the position of the government in free competition is needed to monitor market dynamics when: (1) There is fraud and unfair competition in the free market, (2) Prevent monopolistic practices, (3) protecting consumers from dangerous products, (4) Supply in case of product scarcity, (5) Providing protection and social security for the less fortunate, and (6) collect tax from each transaction.

In the disruptive innovation era, a policy response analysis of Online-Enabled Transportation Service (OETS) regulation measures, according to Cortez (Cortez:2014) lays on four critical aspects as follows:

Timing is considered to analyze the time frame of policy, how the government pays attention to the regulation time frame of OETS

The form is the form of regulations that emphasize the content and context of platform policy that mutually benefits both vehicle owners and platform providers.

Duration is important to explain how the government policies that have long-lasting, sustainable resilience, and stakeholders involved in the regulations.

Enforcement is the nature of policy enforcement is looked into how effective the regulations that have been enacted on OETS toward OETS platforms and consumers.

The government's priority in their policy of EOTS is to create, provide and welcome innovation for better public service of online transportation platform is the reason why ride-sharing applications and TNCs have succeeded in penetrating the transportation sector (Marsden:2008). In fact, the regulatory policies of the Governments of the Philippines, Indonesia, and Taiwan were released a year after ride-sharing companies such as Grab and Uber were launched (Mutiarin:2019). As a result, ride-sharing companies in these countries were "self-regulating" due to the unavailability of a policy that governs their operations. Self-regulation could be beneficial to a certain group of professionals and could be detrimental to

other groups (Marsden, 2011). Meanwhile, the government institutions believed that in the absence of regulation specific for TNCs, the existing regulation on land transportation is upheld.

Referring to the policy concept, there are 4 (four) variables involved in the implementation process, as follows (Tachjan:2006):

Idealized Policy, or the pattern of interaction idealized by the formulator with the aim of encouraging the target group to implement policies.

Target Group, which is part of the stakeholders who are expected to adopt the desired patterns of interaction.

Implementing Organization, the executor who is responsible for implementation. The executor can be in the form of an organization or individual who implements policies in the field with the duties of manager, implementation, and supervision.

Environmental Factors, environmental elements that may influence the implementation.

From an economic sharing perspective (Miller:2016), there are facts about the rapid growth in the sharing economy, sharing economy businesses relate to existing local government regulatory structures, which is a surprise given that many sharing economy businesses have violated state or local government laws. Miller uses the “sharing economy” to describe this new economic activity. The term of sharing economy inclusively means an “economic model where people are creating and sharing goods, services, space, and money with each other.” In a business platform for OETS, there are some important players they are : (Transportation Network Companies) TNC’s, owner, provider, and player. Following Miller’s idea on economic sharing, Ganapati and Reddick emphasize 4 (four) aspects to be considerate in sharing economy, these are (Ganapati:2018):

- inequality;
- the monopoly of giant corporations, which undercut gig workers’ benefits;
- the unclear long-term sustainability benefits of the sharing economy; and
- security and trust concerns
- In this case, the relationship between sharing economy, policy on online transportation, and the competition law are to seek (Rauch:2015):
- strengthening consumer protections
- better economic redistribution, and
- achievement of other policy aims

To synthesize the concepts using in the relationship between policy, economic sharing, and competition law, the following is the figure of concepts on self-regulating *disruptive innovation* of online-enabled transportation service:

Based on the concepts and practices discussed in the previous chapter, the recommendations for the policy model in regulating the Online Transportation Industry are as follows:

First, the Government continues to act as a regulator by prioritizing the implementation of business competition law consistently.

The control function is still carried out by the government by prioritizing the control function:

- Unfair business competition
- Consumer protection
- Safety and security of the OETS platform users

At the policy level, the more emphasized is policy innovation that is anticipatory to the influence of technology for all parties involved, namely application companies, transportation provider partners, and consumers. Policies must provide the greatest benefit for various parties. In the OETS policy, what needs to be reformulated are:

Aspect	Self-regulation Policy	Hard-Regulation Policy
Effectivity	More effective in the regulation	Inflexible
Law enforcement	Weak in law enforcement	Strong in law enforcement
Fraud potential	Opening up opportunities for monopoly and all forms of unfair business competition	Lack of monopoly opportunities, and all forms of unfair business competition
Entering business	Entry barrier	The chance for hindering competition is reduced
<b>Mix Model of Self-regulation Policy with Hard-Regulation Policy</b>		
Institutional Authority	Through the OETS Association in the form of a consortium, etc	
Approval	Related government bodies	
Content	Referring to the statutory regulations	
Norms	Code of Conduct	
Standardization	Standardization arrangements for OETS business aspects by TNCs: Service Safety market share area, tariff vehicle requirement vehicle permit data sharing environment driver training license supply of vehicles supply of agent and drivers accessibility insurance integrated transit garage parking lot	

## Conclusion

Disruptive Innovation has radically changed the existing business model in the online transportation sector because conventional transportation and online transportation use different business platforms. This difference still cannot be accommodated by regulations issued by the government. This is because the government still has the perspective that online

transportation is the same as conventional transportation since both are transportation companies. It is just that online transportation uses different media, the applications.

The online transportation industry cannot be equated with conventional transportation and requires different regulatory methods. In this case, one of the regulations that can be applied is the concept of self-regulation. Self-regulation is a form of law created by business actors or business associations to regulate their business activities more effectively, flexibly, and based on their agreements and needs. However, self-regulation also has drawbacks. So that state law is still needed when there is monopolistic effort, unfair competition, safeguards the safety of the public as consumers, and collects taxes.

Thus, the proposed model is a combination model between self-regulation policy and state law (hard regulation policy) where the government positions itself as a regulator by prioritizing the implementation of Business Competition Law consistently and adding aspects of institutional authority, approval, content, norms, standardization.

With this combination model of self-regulation policy and hard regulation policy, online transportation regulatory policy innovation is expected to accommodate efforts to prevent unfair business competition, provide consumer protection and guarantee the safety and security of users and online transportation providers.

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## Smart Retailing in COVID-19 World: Insights from Egypt

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### Abstract

COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on business in general and the retail sector in particular which was hardly hit as sales fell by 20 percent during this period. The main challenges that face retailers nowadays during COVID-19 outbreak include: balance in supply and demand; safety of employees; trust between retailer and consumer; distribution & transportation capability; shortage of manpower and consumer behavior (Fernandes, 2020; Kumar et al., 2020; Pantano et al., 2020). Yet, retailers around the world started to understand the benefits and new opportunities offered by smart technologies (Inman and Nikolova, 2017; Renko and Druzijanic, 2014). New technologies like internet of things (IoT) can play a significant role in controlling the pandemic situation in the retail sector and are expected to bring substantial benefits such as lower labor costs, increased efficiency, attraction of new shoppers and the generation of new revenue channels (Roy et al., 2017; Vaishya et al., 2020; Wunderlich et al., 2013). However, only a limited number of retailers has adopted IoT due to the huge financial investments required and uncertainty of customers' acceptance (Alkemade and Suurs, 2012; Evans, 2011; Pantano et al., 2013). It is, thus, expected to see smart retailers taking a series of actions over the short to medium term to conserve cash and structure of their company for post-COVID-19 operations. This research aims to explore the retailers' perceptions towards the adoption of smart retail technologies in Egyptian retailing context throughout conducting a series of semi-structured interviews with mid-to-top level management in different retail organisations and discuss the advantages and challenges expected from smart retail technologies adoption. Moreover, the research explains how smart retail can help overcoming uncertainties and is considered a well managed response strategy by retailers to COVID-19.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Egypt, Internet of Things (IoT), Smart Retail, Retail 4.0, Omni-Channel

### Introduction

Technology development is ongoing with an exceptional speed (McLean and Wilson, 2019). One of the industries that is observing a revolution due to the continual advance in technology

is the retail industry (Priporas et al., 2017). In this era, retailing has become a dynamic industry and consumers depending on technology have significantly increased (Zhitomirsky-Geffet and Blau, 2016).

Retailing has changed dramatically in the last decades, due to ongoing digitization that enabled increased innovation in retail sector. Retailing is promptly shifting from traditional in-store and multichannel practices to Omni-Channel practices (Ailawadi and Farris, 2017). Thus, the concept of retail 4.0 is about Omni-Channel retail experiences, breaking the boundaries between the physical and virtual, and integrating service experience of various channels through an innovative model.

The Omni-Channel business model includes the use of multichannels such as physical in-store locations, social media platforms, mobile web, mobile devices, mobile applications, Chabot's, and virtual reality and all of the channels can be leveraged to serve all of their customers in purchase process regardless where and when. "Omni-Channel retailing" is widely known as new age of retail (Verhoef et al., 2015). Therefore, one of the most critical and serious challenges for retailers today is how to integrate new digital technologies into traditional operations and services to deliver more advanced, tailored customer experiences regardless of the channel used by end-customers.

While retailers usually lack modern capacity and they generally adapt to innovations; innovative and interactive technologies and systems for selling goods and services are available and growing fast to support customers and retailers (Pantano, 2014). Currently the Internet of Things (IoT) is considered as one of the highly rated technological and strategic innovations that are anticipated to create new business opportunities by 2020 (Fagerstrøm et al., 2020) throughout developing a digitally enhanced environment aiming to deliver intelligent and autonomous solutions for both service providers and customers. This linkage between physical and digital entities across virtual platforms is known as The Internet of Things (IoT) which is not a single technology, but it is more of a set of numerous complementary technologies with competencies to connect the virtual and physical world. IoT stands on three main principles: 1) identification 2) interaction and 3) communication. Taking into consideration that these pillars are not only applicable among themselves or with other associated objects, but also with end-users (Gigli and Koo, 2011; Hoffman and Novak, 2015; Miorandi et al., 2012; Roy et al., 2018). The retail industry is on the verge of introducing IoT and smart technology which will lead to a significant improvement in retailing processes as well as entertaining consumers (Dacko, 2017; Inman and Nikolova, 2017; Pantano et al., 2017; Roy et al., 2017; Willems et al., 2017).

The emergence of COVID-19 pandemic and its implications are causing negative impact in the short- and mid-term to retailers, therefore urgent strategies and tactics for retailers are required (Pantano et al., 2020). The integration of new and innovative technologies like Internet of Things (IoT) can play a key and major role in reducing retailers' problems in

dealing with COVID-19 pandemic (Vaishya et al., 2020). This research aims at exploring the retailers' perceptions towards using smart technologies within the Egyptian retail context; consequently discuss the challenges resulting from smart retail technologies adoption as well as the advantages expected from shifting towards smart retail.

### **Overview of Retail Business in Egypt**

Egypt retail market is one of the most appealing markets for investments in the world indeed. In addition, Egypt population is the biggest in the Middle East North Africa region (MENA). The population of Egypt as of January 2020 was 102,334,404 (Worldometer, 2020). Also, Egypt had one of most diversified economy in the Arab world. According to AT-Kearney (2016), Egypt is the third largest economy in the Arab world and its total retail sales amount to US\$ 133 billion. Egypt retail market is competitive, fragmented and traditional similar to many developing countries.

Overall, the retail industry in Egypt is mainly divided into two main sectors; modern and traditional retail. Mainly, traditional retail has served Egypt's consumers shopping needs for decades. The traditional retail sector includes several formats, such as street vendors, independent high-street shops, and neighborhood corner stores. Modern retail, also known as organized retail, refers to retailing activities achieved by licensed retailers who are registered for sales tax, income tax, and value added tax, etc. In recent years, Egypt retail market shifted from traditional retail towards modern trade. The modern retailing growth in recent years can be assessed by the rise of shopping malls, franchise stores along with the increasing number of grocery modern retail formats such as supermarkets, hypermarkets, and discounters. Inflation, complex bureaucracy, depreciation of the Egyptian pound versus dollar, terror attacks, and consumer spending power are the main challenges for retail investors in Egypt. However and despite these challenges, many local and multinational retailers have submitted plans to join or expand their business in Egypt.

Another exciting fact in Egypt's retail market is the rise of online retailing due to the evolution of smartphones and social media. Egypt has a number of key e-commerce platforms where "JUMIA", "SOUQ" and "NOON" are the most familiar ones. Also, there is a large segment of individuals initially starting up their businesses totally on online platforms, such as "Facebook", "Instagram" or other websites. According to AT-Kearney report (2016), online retailing business in Egypt has reached US\$ 544 million in 2015/2016 which approximately forms 0.4% of the total retail sales amounted to US\$ 133 billion. Retail Experts suggest that online retailing activities volume will grow by 35% on annual basis. Applying this estimation and in case of constant demand on e-commerce products and services, online retailing volume is expected to become US\$ 1.93 billion by the year 2019/2020.

Currently, COVID-19 pandemic caused significant negative implications in regards to national economies, businesses and individual jobs (Parker et al., 2020). According to The World Bank (2020), despite the extraordinary efforts of many governments to counter the decline with

monetary policy support, it expects a 5.2 percent contraction in global GDP in 2020; this is considered the deepest global recession in decades. Since World War II, the world has not practiced such heavy restrictions on the freedom of individuals as those executed by numerous governments due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Pantano et al., 2020).

Service sectors such as retail hit hardly (Fernandes, 2020). Retail sales fell by 20 percent over the same period and COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted everything where huge challenges and uncertainties have impacted retail industry and the consumers' normal habits and behaviors in retail settings might be limited for now (Fernandes, 2020; Pantano et al., 2020)

Many consumers are in self-imposed isolation where trips to brick and mortar stores are no longer possible or fraught with challenges. Retail organizations around the world like Deloitte, KPMG, Nielsen, Forbes, IDC and McKinsey suggest that technology adoption can play a significant role in controlling the pandemic situations and retailers problems (Kumar et al., 2020; Vaishya et al., 2020).

For retailers, smart retail technology is expected to bring substantial benefits such as lowering labor costs, increasing operations' efficiency, attracting new shoppers and generating new revenue channels. In addition, it will provide consumers with tremendous benefits such as superior, convenient, entertaining, interacting, fast, satisfactory, personalized and smart shopping experience (Roy et al., 2017; Wunderlich et al., 2013).

### **The Internet of Things (IoT) in Retailing**

The Internet of Things (IoT) also known as the Internet of Everything or the Industrial Internet is a novel technology standard seen as a worldwide network of machines and devices that are able to interact and connect with each other (Lee and Lee, 2015). Although the definition of IoT is still in its development stages, its generally agreed that *"it is a paradigm where everyday things are embedded with technology that equips them with sensing, identifying, networking and processing capabilities which enable them to communicate with other devices and services over the Internet to accomplish objectives"* (Whitmore et al., 2015). It is estimated that there will be between 25 billion and 50 billion connected devices by 2025. Furthermore, Manyika et al. (2015) predict that customers are expected to capture 90% of IoT benefits and it will have a potential impact of US\$11 trillion by 2025. The IoT is considered as one of the most distinguished area of future technology and is attaining a huge attention from a broad range of industries. The real value of IoT for enterprises is attained when connected devices communicate and integrate with merchant systems, customer support systems, business intelligence applications, and business analytics.

IoT is, therefore, recognized as the next big thing in the retail industry that is considered one of the most important areas for IoT applications (Gregory, 2015; Pantano and Timmermans, 2014) and it will have a significant impact on the retail industry namely in three crucial areas: (1) customer experience; (2) supply chain, and (3) new channels & revenue streams (Firdausi, 2016; Gigli and Koo, 2011; Miorandi et al., 2012). The effective deployment of IoT in retail

context could have an economic effect of \$410 billion to \$1.2 trillion per year in 2025. IoT Shelf Availability, Automated Checkout, Smart Customer Relationship Management and Real-time In-store Promotions are the most promising applications for IoT technology in the retail sector (Manyika et al., 2015).

In the new ecosystem, as more retail 4.0 technologies are adopted, it can be concluded that retailers of the future will rethink how to create and capture value in light of IoT technological advancement by introducing what so called “SMART” store, products and services that are characterized with hybridization between new technologies and traditional retail features to engage with their customers and create seamless shopping experiences embedded in our daily life activities.

Therefore, it is argued that IoT enabled technologies will be a game changer for retail sector in the future. IoT technologies help creating interactive consumer experiences giving rise to “smart” retail stores where inventories levels and customer movement in store can be tracked; real-time notifications when products are out of stock to restock; install smart shelves; alert consumers about promotions and discounts when near certain products and automated checkouts. Therefore, the paper main objective is to explore the perceptions of Egyptian retailers towards the adoption of smart technologies and examine the main constraints and benefits of smart retail adoption within the Egyptian context. To achieve this objective the researcher will attempt to answer the following questions:

- Q1. What are the challenges and obstacles of smart retail adoption?
- Q2. What are the advantages and expected results of smart retail adoption?
- Q3. What are the retailers’ recommendations for successful smart retail adoption?

### **Methodology**

A qualitative research method has been selected for this research. Qualitative data analysis procedures are considered to be very useful and necessary because the baseline knowledge on smart retail, IoT technology and the surrounding issues with respect to the population of interest are still new.

The most widely used method for sorting out sample size for qualitative interviews is the saturation of information (Vasileiou et al., 2018). In other words, sample size for qualitative research determine, when no new information, no new data and no new themes can be extract from participants (Morse, 1995). Moreover, Morse (1995) affirms that the more useable data are collected from each participant, the fewer participants are needed. Furthermore, he confirmed that in qualitative interviewing parameters such as the scope of study, the nature of topic (i.e. complexity, accessibility), the quality of data, experts experience aim and the study design should be taken into account by researchers to determine the qualitative research sample size.

A semi-structured interview consisting of 9 questions (See Appendix A) is designed in relation with the research objective; however, the discussions remain flexible and open-ended and the participants are informed that their honest and frank opinions are what the researcher is interested in and that there is not a wrong or right answer.

The interviews mainly focused on getting insights from the retail managers concerning: (1) the impact of COVID-19 on the retail industry; (2) offline retailers readiness to implement smart retail technologies (SRT); (3) smart retail technologies (SRT) impact in physical stores; (4) the obstacles and challenges that affect the adoption of Smart Retail Technologies (SRT); (5) the advantages of smart retail technologies (SRT) adoption in retail sector; (6) their perception of post smart retail technologies (SRT) adoption results; (7) their perception towards consumers' willingness to adopt smart retail technologies (SRT); and finally (8) based on their experience in the retail industry, their recommendation to successfully adopt smart retail technologies (SRT).

Using a convenience sampling strategy to select the participants, five experts confirmed their willingness to participate in this study which was considered being sufficient for the purpose of the current study.

The participants are selected from different types of retail industry including: fashion, beauty and gifts retailing, food distribution, books and hypermarket chains. To assure the usefulness of the data, the researcher selected the participants with sufficient knowledge about smart technologies and its applications on retail sector. The interviews were conducted via ZOOM for approximately 45 minute per interview, and all interviews were audio recorded with the interviewee consent to increase the accuracy of data collected since it permits the interviewer to be more focused on the interviewee (Patton, 1990). It also allowed the researcher to transcribe each interview effectively. The researchers took handwritten notes during the sessions. After all the interviews were completed, the discussions were transcribed and data are organized in themes and analyzed. Table 1 illustrates the profile of each of the five cases that participated in the interview with brief information about the company, its size and if they currently adopt Smart Retail Technologies (SRT).

Table 1  
The Sample Characteristics (Case profile)

Case s	Job title	Managemen t Level	Gend er	Locati on	Experien ce (years)	Company	Type	Compa ny Size	Type of Technology used/adopt ed
RE-01	Area manager	Mid-level	Male	Egypt	>10	ALEF Bookstores	Bookstore Retailer	>300	Digital platform
RE-02	Category manager	Mid-level	Male	Egypt	>15	Carrefour Egypt	Hypermarket &	>6,000	Digital platform,

							supermarket chain		Self-checkouts, Click & collect, Intelligent self-service kiosk
RE-03	Business development manager	Mid-level	Male	Dubai	>10	Hershey Company Middle East	Chocolate manufacturer	>40	Digital Platform
RE-04	Retail area sales manager	Mid-level	Male	Kuwait	>20	Chalhoub Group Middle East	Luxury retailer in beauty, fashion, and gift sectors.	>12,000	Digital platform, Smart mirrors, click & collect, Intelligent self-service kiosk
RE-05	Store manager	Mid-level	Male	Egypt	>10	Zara	Fashion retailer	>1,000	RFID Readers, Digital platform, Intelligent self-service kiosk

### Thematic Analysis

When a pattern emerges repeatedly in multiple cases, it is identified as a theme, thus considered an explanatory finding that describes the phenomenon. The main purpose of this section is to develop a clear interpretation for the data collected and to distinguish between information relevant to all cases and those aspects that are exclusive to some cases in particular. First, data are decontextualized by exploring individual case, then data are re-contextualized by grouping into themes with commonalities taken from multiple respondents to reduce data across all cases (Ayres et al., 2003).

### Within Case Analysis

The within-case analysis depicted the issues each expert reported in regard to the eight objectives mentioned above. Table 2 presents the eight objectives and relates each objective with the interview questions developed by the researcher.

Table 2

## Objectives and interview questions

Objectives	Question
The impact of COVID-19 on the retail industry	How is the current COVID-19 pandemic affecting the retail industry in Egypt? To what extent SRTs could help the retail industry during the current pandemic crisis?
Offline Retailers readiness to implement SRT	Which retailers have the “capabilities necessary for successful Smart Retail Technologies implementation?
Smart retail technologies (SRT) impact in physical stores	Which smart retail technologies will have the biggest impact if implemented within retail stores? Why?
Obstacles and challenges that affect the adoption of Smart Retail Technologies (SRT)	What are the obstacles and challenges that may prevent retailers from adopting Smart Retail Technologies?
Advantages of smart retail technologies (SRT) adoption in retail sector	What are the changes and expected benefits to take place if retailers adopt smart retail technologies?
Retail experts perception of post smart retail technologies (SRT) adoption results	What is your perception regarding the changes smart retail technologies may create?
Retail experts perception of consumers’ willingness to adopt SRT	Do you think the consumer will accept using Smart Retail Technologies? Why?
Retail experts’ acceptance to adopt smart retail technologies (SRT).	Are you considering/ accepting adopting Smart Retail Technologies? Why?

**Case RE-01**

First: concerning the impact of COVID-19 on the retail industry in Egypt, the respondent noted that with regards to online retailers who have been tested during this period, a few online retailers proved that they have the capacity to accept orders from new shoppers and to deliver a great online experience. He elaborated that the impact of COVID-19 on offline retailers in Egypt forced integration on online channel and moving for multichannel. Retailers recognise the necessity to merge all available channels including web store, mobile applications and

social media and etc. Furthermore, the respondent stated that he expects to see further adoption of smart technology mainly in Egypt modern retail sector (e.g. shopping malls, supermarkets, hypermarkets, famous brands). He, finally, noted that the pandemic outbreak accelerated and forced the consumer adaptation to online shopping and it has become a habit. He also believes that many shoppers will continue to use the online platforms after the current situation ends.

Second: concerning retailers' readiness to implement SRT, he noted that he does not believe that Egypt offline retailers have the essential capabilities to implement SRT now.

Third: concerning the smart technologies, he believes it will have the most impact if implemented within physical stores (offline). Moreover, he confirms that the use of virtual mirrors instead of dressing rooms is expected to increase significantly; automated checkout and self-checkout payment system are very interesting technologies that can improve customer shopping experience. However, he mentioned that if systems do not work well or break easily, customers will avoid them and go to regular cashiers instead. He also added that he believes that these technological innovations are important, but automated technologies cannot replace humans totally, especially in developing countries.

Fourth: concerning the expected obstacles and challenges that may prevent retailers from implementing SRT, he noted that smart technologies require huge funding and financing investments. Moreover, he added that customers will be the biggest challenge, no matter how improvement smart technology can provide, without customer acceptance the technology would be useless.

Fifth: concerning the advantages of adopting SRTs in retailing, he noted that retailers can become more efficient, smart technology can prevent errors caused by human factors and reduce overall operation costs, response time to the minimum, improve the accuracy of inventory tracking, track goods across the supply chain, and help managers take better informed decisions with regard to lower prices either on promotional or low-turnover items, or increase pricing on higher-demand items and thus drive more sales and revenue.

Sixth: with regards to his perception of the changes smart retail technologies may create, he noted that he asserts that changes would be both positive and negative. As for the positive side, it can help retailers deal with COVID-19, generate new revenue stream and save retailers costs. As for the negative side, the automation would eliminate jobs and eventually it may affect Egypt's economy negatively.

Seventh: with regards to his perception on consumer willingness to accept and use SRTs, he noted that it mainly depends on consumers' age group; older generations would be a the major challenge for retailers while younger generations would accept and use smart technology and smart devices easily. Moreover, he mentioned that he believes younger generations would be

the early adopters for smart retail technology and SRTs would enhance customer shopping experience in which shopping can be faster and enjoyable.

Eighth: with regards to his acceptance to SRT adoption in the future, he confirmed his agreement of the importance to shift towards smart retail and added that it can help retailers in the new post-COVID-19 world. and improve customers shopping experience.

### **Case RE-02**

First: concerning the impact of COVID-19 on the retail industry in Egypt he noted that with regards to online retailers, online sales have increased in comparison to last year. He elaborated that COVID-19's impact on offline retailers led to a drop on stores'sales, cash flow and forecasted profits for 2020. Further, the respondent stated that he expects the adoption of smart technology to increase in the coming years and offline retailer stores should deploy smart technologies to compete with online platforms. He, finally, noted that the pandemic accelerated the consumer adaptation to e-payment solutions.

Second: concerning retailers' readiness to implement SRT, he noted that he believes that multinational retailers only would have the financial and human resources capacity to implement smart retail technologies (SRT).

Third: concerning smart technologies, he believes to have the most impact if implemented within physical stores (offline). He believes that the use of real time in store promotions technology would help retailers increase their sales and improve their connection with target customer.

Fourth: concerning the expected obstacles and challenges that may prevent retailers from implementing SRTs, he noted that retail industry was hit by an economic slowdown, losses and decrease in revenue streams in 2020 due to COVID-19. He added that currently most retailers focus on cost savings and smart technologies, however this would be costly to be fully implemented. Further, he noted that customers' willingness and trust to use smart technologies should be considered as the main challenge that can prevent retailers from smart technologies' adoption. Finally, he highlighted that the internet infrastructure in Egypt needs a huge investment to improve network connections and to ensure a high speed internet.

Fifth: concerning the advantages of adopting SRTs in retailing, he noted that retailers can become more efficient. Smart technology can reduce operations and labor costs, help offline retailers to compete with online stores, and improve shopping experiences for consumers. Thus drives more sales and revenue.

Sixth: with regards to his perception of the changes smart retail technologies may create, he noted that he is evident that changes would be positive. It will help retailers generate more revenues.

Seventh: with regards to his perception on consumer willingness to accept and use SRTs, he noted that consumers would use it by time especially if it is easy, useful, error free and saves customer time. Moreover, he mentioned that he believes smart technology would transform retail businesses; it would facilitate customers shopping, make it faster and enjoyable, and will help stores to interact and engage with customers better.

Eighth: finally with regards to his acceptance to SRT adoption in the future, he confirmed his agreement as long as it is easy, useful and convenient for consumers.

### **Case RE-03**

First: concerning the impact of COVID-19 on the retail industry in Egypt, he claimed that e-commerce dominated the retail market during Corona virus pandemic. In his elaboration about the impact of COVID-19 on offline retailers, he noted that online sales grew, offline retailers' sales has shrunk and their market dominance was negatively impacted. He added that the pandemic accelerated the collapsing of the already struggling traditional retail sector. He pressured that it has become crucial to modern retail sector to use digital tools and platforms and to renovate and reshape their business models. Furthermore, the respondent stated that he believes that the pandemic would accelerate the use of smart technologies, but still it depends on the retailer's target customers acceptance. He, finally, noted that during the current pandemic, consumers' behavior and shopping preferences around the world have changed in which they were actively stockpiling emergency supplies (e.g. foodstuffs, canned goods, flour, sugar and bottled water) and reduced their spending on some other categories, such as apparel, footwear, accessories...etc.

Second: concerning retailers' readiness to implement SRT, he stated "only the multinational retailers in the modern retail sector can implement SRT , such as in Carrefour", he believes that small and local retailers may not be ready to implmenet SRT

Third: concerning the smart technologies, he believes it would have the most impact if implemented within physical stores (offline), he believes that automated checkout and self-checkout payment systems are the most realistic technologies that can be implemented currently in Egypt and the Middle East

Fourth: concerning the expected obstacles and challenges that may prevent retailers from implementing SRTs, he noted that the uncertainty of consumer acceptance to smart technologies is the biggest challenge. He stated that without the consumer acceptance to use smart retail technologies, the efforts to implement SRT would be unsuccessful and waste of resources.

Fifth: concerning the advantages of adopting SRTs in retailing, he noted that smart technologies can change all retail operations. It can increase the speed and flexibility of operations, help improve retailers' bottom line, inventory management and reduce order

processing time. However, he believes that smart technologies would not be implemented in less than three to five years.

Sixth: with regards to his perception of the changes smart retail technologies may create, he noted that changes would be positive, furthermore confirms that with current growth of e-commerce on average 35% annually with respect to the steady situation in offline retailing that is currently declining due to COVID-19; He affirms that smart technologies become a necessary strategic response for offline retailers.

Seventh: with regards to his perception on consumers' willingness to accept and use SRTs, he noted that it mainly depends on consumers' age group, their education level and income.

Eighth: with regards to his acceptance to SRT adoption in the future, he confirmed his agreement and added that it can help retailers' offline retailers who must start to consider implementing smart retail technologies to catch up with ecommerce players and fulfilling consumers' demands for innovative and new shopping experiences.

#### **Case RE-04**

First: concerning the impact of COVID-19 on the retail industry in Egypt, he claims that consumers shifted to online retailers to fulfill their shopping demands. He elaborated that the negative impact of COVID-19 on retail stores led to several decisions such as employees lay off and salary reduction. Moreover, the respondents stated that smart retail technology is a highly regarded solution for certain retailing sectors (e.g. cosmetics sector) in the current pandemic. He added it can maintain social distancing measures and decrease the human interaction. He, finally, noted that the pandemic changed consumers' attitudes, behaviors towards online shopping.

Second: concerning retailers' readiness to implement SRT, he noted that he believes that only brands have the essential capabilities to implement smart retail technologies now.

Third: concerning the smart technologies, he believes it will have the most impact if implemented within physical stores (offline), he believes that self checkout payment systems can be easy and simple for consumers in our region. . Furthermore, he added that smart retail technologies impact will differ from one retailer to another based on the retailers' products' offering and store formats.

Fourth: concerning the expected obstacles and challenges that may prevent retailers from implementing SRTs, he stated that "financing investments, customers' acceptance, and dealing with employees' resistance are the main challenges to successfully adopt smart retail technologies".

Fifth: concerning the advantages of adopting SRTs in retailing, he noted that smart retail technologies can help retailers maximize the efficiencies of operation, optimize cost, and increase the company revenues.

Sixth: with regards to his perception of the changes smart retail technologies may create, he noted that both positive and negative changes will occur. As for the positive side, he believes that it can help retailers enhance consumer shopping experience, generate new revenue stream and save costs for retailers. As for the negative side, he stated that business executives would face high resistance from employees.

Seventh: with regards to his perception on consumer willingness to accept and use SRTs, he noted that it mainly depends on consumers' characteristics such as age, education, gender, and income. He believes that younger generations will be early adopters to accept and use smart technology.

Eighth: with regards to his acceptance to SRT adoption in the future, he confirmed his agreement and added that it would help retailers create a better customer experience, thus increase their sales and bottom line results.

### **Case RE-05**

First: concerning the impact of COVID-19 on the retail industry in Egypt, he noted that with regards to online retailers, online sales have increased. He elaborated that the COVID-19 impacted the sales of offline retailers negatively. Furthermore, the respondent stated that he expects smart retail technologies to be very useful mainly for customers who have decided to apply social distancing and stay away from any risks caused by shopping in crowded stores (e.g. shopping malls). Finally, he noted that during pandemic outbreak, customers were panicking and had problems with communication.

Second: concerning retailers' readiness to implement SRT, he noted that he believes only well-known brands that have large amounts of cash flow would be able to implement smart retail technologies.

Third: concerning the smart technologies, he believe it will have the most impact if implemented within physical stores (offline), he believes that the use of virtual mirrors automated checkout systems, and click and collect are very interesting technologies that can improve customers' shopping experience.

Fourth: concerning the expected obstacles and challenges that may prevent retailers from implementing smart retail technologies, he noted that the internet infrastructure, bureaucracy, and dealing with unskilled workers would be the biggest challenges.

Fifth: concerning the advantages of adopting SRTs in retailing, he noted that smart retail technologies can help retailers reduce costs, and ultimately increase the profits.

Sixth: with regards to his perception of the changes smart retail technologies may create, he noted that he believes that changes will be positive and negative. Smart technologies will help in reducing operating costs, increase profits, and allow retailers to decrease stores floor area and concentrate more on technological means.

Seventh: with regards to his perception on consumer willingness to accept and use SRTs, he noted that it mainly depends if consumers' will accept and use smart technology when introduced or will resist it and have concerns.

Eighth: with regards to his acceptance to SRT adoption in the future, he confirmed his agreement and added that adopting smart technologies can increase the productivity of the stores in terms of sales transactions; help customers checking for availability of products, support staff during shipments arrival. Consequently, improving service quality.

### Cross-Case Analysis and Discussion

The cross-case analysis presents the similarities and differences between the 5 cases in light of the thematic map. Table (3) illustrates the 8 objectives and extracted themes from the the 5 cases analysed with respect to each objective.

Table 5.13  
Objectives and themes

objective	Theme	Case(s)
The impact of COVID-19	Impact on online retailers; Impact on offline retailers; Impact on SRT adoption ; Impact on Consumers	RE-01,RE-02,RE-03,RE-04,Re-05
Offline retailers readiness to implement SRT	Modern retail sector.	RE-01,RE-02,RE-03,RE-04,Re-05
Smart retail technologies (SRT) impact in physical stores	Automated and self-checkout payment system, Virtual mirror, Click and Collect. Real time in store promotion	RE-01,RE-03,RE-04,Re-05 RE-02
Obstacles and challenges that affect the adoption of Smart Retail Technologies (SRT)	Customers' acceptance	RE-01,RE-02,RE-03,RE-04
	Financial challenges	RE-01,RE-02,RE-03,RE-04
	Employees' resistance	RE-04
	Internet infrastructure	RE-05
Advantages of smart retail technologies (SRT) adoption in retail sector	Improved consumers' shopping experience	RE-01,RE-02,RE-03,RE-04,Re-05
	Reduce operation and labor cost	RE-01,RE-02, RE-04,Re-05
	Increase sales and revenue	RE-01,RE-02, RE-04,Re-05
	Improve retail operation efficiency	RE-01, RE-03,RE-04

	Improve Inventory management Help retail stores compete with online shopping	RE-01, RE-04 RE-02, RE-03
Retail experts perception of post smart retail technologies (SRT) adoption results	Positive perception  Negative perception	RE-01,RE-02,RE- 03,RE-04,Re-05 RE-01
Retail experts perception of consumers' willingness to adopt SRT	Positive perception	RE-01,RE-02,RE- 03,RE-04,Re-05
Retail experts' acceptance to adopt smart retail technologies (SRT).	Retail businesses acceptance adopting SRTs to their advantage.	RE-01,RE-02,RE- 03,RE-04,Re-05

### **The Impact of COVID-19 on the Retail Industry in Egypt**

The emergence of COVID-19 global pandemic is one of the defining events of 2020 and its implications disrupted everything where huge challenges and uncertainties have overshadowed the retail growth for 2020. Hence, it was necessary to discuss the impact of COVID-19 on the retail industry with the interviewees. Four primary themes have been extracted during the discussions with the interviewees: (1) Impact on online retailers; (2) Impact on offline retailers; (3) Impact on SRT adoption; (4) Impact on consumers. It is worth mentioning that all the respondents mentioned that online shopping grew while offline retailers' sales dropped.

According to The German-Arab Chamber of Industry and Commerce (GACIC) in Egypt, dependence on e-commerce has significantly increased in Egypt in which rising of Covid-19 and the physical distancing measures, encourage consumers to depend on online marketing sources for groceries, fresh food, hygiene products, clothes, medicine, electronics (AHK Egypt, 2020). Moreover, 80% of Egyptians made online purchases for food, health care products or clothes during the curfew from March until June to confront the coronavirus pandemic (Consumer Protection Agency, 2020).

According to Fernandes (2020), retail sales fell by 20 percent over the same period and COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted everything where huge challenges and uncertainties have impacted the retail industry (Fernandes, 2020; Pantano et al., 2020). The respondents explained that Egyptian consumers' behavior changed, shoppers shifted to online retailers to fulfill their demands. Moreover, this pandemic accelerated the consumer adaptation to online shopping. They also indicated that smart retail technologies can be an inevitable solution during the current pandemic and they expect further adoption of smart technologies in the future.

Finally, all respondents explained that smart retail technologies can help offline stores to compete with online retailers, maintain the social distancing, reduce human interaction, and decrease risks caused by shopping at crowded stores.

For example: First: Concerning the impact of COVID-19 on the retail industry in Egypt respondent (RE-02) stated that with regards to online retailers *“online sales have risen from last year”*. In his elaboration for the impact of COVID-19 on offline retailers he mentioned *“During this outbreak, offline retailers sales have dropped, cash flow impacted negatively and forecasted profits for 2020 have fallen”*. Further, the respondent quoted in regards to the impact of COVID-19 on smart retail technologies adoption *“COVID-19 will increase the adoption of smart technologies in stores and I believe offline retailer stores should deploy smart technologies to compete with online platforms”*. Finally he quoted in regards to the impact of COVID-19 on consumers *“due to the current pandemic, consumers’ adoption to use credit/debit cards or mobile wallets instead of cash in hand increased”*.

### **Offline Retailers Readiness to Implement SRT**

Proceeding with the questions and topics, the interviewees expressed their thoughts in respect to offline retailers’ readiness to implement smart retail technologies. The main trend was noted among the respondents that: in regards to the financial investments and human capital required only the multinational retailers in the modern retail sector and brands are likely to implement smart retail technologies.

The following quote is quite interesting *“The well reputed retailers only will be able to successfully implement smart technologies with their financial and human capacity”* (RE-02).

### **Smart Retail Technologies (SRT) Impact in Physical Stores**

Regarding smart technologies, most of the respondents think automatic and self-checkouts payment systems would have the biggest impact on consumers while shopping instores. Many of them indicated that the current checkout process is a serious source of disappointment for many customers because they have to wait in long queues before they can proceed to the cashier. One of the participants outlined the main advantages of automated and self-payment systems penetration in retailing in *“simple, easy, speed up check out,”* RE-05 said. Inman and Nikolova (2017) pinpoint that several global retailers have begun to introduce the Scan and Go technology to reduce consumers wait time during check out process along with savings labor cost to the retailer. Kang et al. (2015) and Pantano and Priporas (2016) explained in their studies that consumers use smart technologies in shopping to avoid to avoid queues, carrying cash on hands and thus have a speedy and easy transactions

Also, respondents mentioned that virtual mirror, click and collect and real time in store promotions are very interesting technologies. Although most of them believe that smart retail technologies are important innovation and can improve customer shopping experience; however, interviewees were concerned from automated technologies system failures, and replacing humans totally, especially in developing countries; for example *“Based on our type of customers, I believe in the Automated Checkout system since they will avoid standing in queues and waiting to pay in cash. The virtual mirror is a great idea especially in the current*

*circumstances where we have to sanitize all products tried by different customers. Also click and collect is one of the very good applications that I expect to grow in Egypt” (RE-05).*

### **Obstacles and Challenges that Affect the Adoption of Smart Retail Technologies (SRT)**

One of the most important topics discussed with the interviewees were the obstacles and challenges that may prevent retailers from adopting Smart Retail Technologies. It was noticed that majority of the respondents (80%) believe that customer acceptance and financial challenges are the main obstacles to adopt SRTs. For example RE-03 quoted *“I believe the uncertainty of consumer acceptance to smart technologies is the biggest challenge without their acceptance; it will be unsuccessful and a waste of resources especially with the huge financial investments Smart Retail Technologies require” (RE-03)*. It is worth to mention that according to Alkemade and Suurs (2012), Evans (2011) and Pantano et al. (2013) studies, factors that most likely to intimidate retailers to employ smart technologies are uncertainty of consumer acceptance, massive financial investments required, and challenges in measuring returns on investments.

However, one of the interviewees mentioned employee resistance to change will cause uncertainty and consider being a significant factor in adopting SRTs. Additionally, other interviewee mentioned the internet infrastructure, software and dealing with incompetent technicians are major threat and obstacle to successfully adopt SRTs, i.e. *“The software and internet infrastructure, bureaucracy and having to work with incompetent technicians are the worst obstacles we may face” (RE-05)*.

### **Advantages of Smart Retail Technologies (SRT) Adoption in Retail Sector**

Retailers' benefits and advantages from smart retail technologies discussed with the respondents, six primary themes were extracted during the discussions with the interviewees: (1) Improved consumers' shopping experience; (2) Reduce operation and labor cost; (3) Increase sales and revenue; (4) Improve retail operation efficiency; (5) Improve Inventory management; (6) Help retail stores compete with online shopping.

All respondents mentioned that smart retail technologies can help retailer improve customers shopping experience in terms of faster shopping, enjoyable convenient personalized and easier. For example RE-02 quoted *“Smart technology will transform retail businesses, it can facilitate customers shopping, make it faster and enjoyable. It can help stores to interact and engage with customer better; provide them with recommendations and good understanding what customers want”*. In addition, RE-04 quoted *“Smart retail technology will enhance customers' shopping experience especially younger generation and early adopters' consumers. I believe consumers look for more convenient and improved services like reducing shopping time ease of payment and credit, receiving deliveries faster, personalized offers etc.”* Fotiadis and Stylos (2017); Pantano and Priporas (2016) and Pantano and Viassone (2014) mentioned that retailers employ various novel and innovative (smart) technologies to enhance the consumers' shopping experience.

Furthermore, the majority of the interviewees (80%) believe that Smart Retail Technology can help retailers reduce labor and operation cost and increase revenue. For example, RE-04 quoted *“Smart retail technologies can help retailers maximize the efficiencies of operation, optimize cost and thus increase the company revenue”*. In addition, interviewees mentioned that retailers can benefit from SRTs in improving retail operation efficiency, improving inventory management, tracking goods across the supply chain, helping managers take better informed decisions in regard to goods pricing and preventing errors. According to Roy et al. (2017), Wunderlich et al. (2013), the implementation of Smart Retail Technology is expected to bring substantial benefits such as lower labor costs and increased efficiency for retailers.

Finally, two of the interviewees' highlighted that smart technology is necessary to physical stores to compete with the rise of online shopping; e.g. RE-02 quoted *“Smart technology will help offline retailers to compete with online stores”*. Pantano and Timmermans (2014) mentioned that smart retail technology is considered to be a necessary strategic for offline retailers especially.

### **Retail Experts' Perception of Post Smart Retail Technologies (SRT) Adoption Results**

Interview participants were asked to predict the post smart technologies adoption results. Most of the perceptions concentrated on the positive relevant consequences. Some representative excerpts are: *“Definitely positive since the reduced costs would increase the profits of the company”* (RE-05), *“Certainly positive, because it will drive more revenue”* (RE-02).

On the other hand, one of the interviewees expressed his concerns about the widespread use of smart technologies in retailing and the possible negative impact on particular job categories; such as, cashiers and stock clerks e.g. *“Automation will eliminate jobs and eventually it may affect Egypt economy negatively”* (RE-01).

This has been discussed in Priporas et al.'s (2017) study that expressed concerns about the possible negative consequences of the smart retailing on employment and job market since some of the technologies being Proposed (i.e. robots) may replace actual employees.

### **Retail Experts' Perception of Consumers' Willingness to Adopt SRT**

Since consumer acceptance and the use of smart technology in retailing are the main challenges facing smart retail technology adoption, participants were asked about the perception in regards to consumer's willingness to accept and use smart retail technology. All of the interviewees believe that although it will be challenging at first, by time consumers will accept and use smart retail technologies in which age will be a significant factor e.g. *“Consumers will adapt and get used to it by time”* (RE-02, RE-05), *“It depends on consumers' age group, older generations will be a real challenge for retailers while Generation Y & Z will accept and use smart technology and smart devices easily”*.(RE-01, RE-03, RE-04). According to Lee (2009), age is an important factor in the new digital culture that is why there are differences in different categories of consumers, (i.e., Generation Y, Generation Z) and in their expectations as consumers.

### **Retail Experts' acceptance to Adopt Smart Retail Technologies (SRT)**

The last topic discussed during the semi-structured interviews with the retailer experts was whether to accept or not smart retail technology in the future. All of the participants were convinced that smart retail technology should be implemented to deal with COVID-19, improve customers shopping experience, help customers check for the availability of products, support staff during shipments arrival, improve quality of service, catch up with ecommerce players, deal with consumers' demands for innovative shopping, increase sales and revenue; e.g. *"Definitely, smart retail technologies can help retailers deal with COVID-19 and improve customers shopping experience"*(RE-01), *"Definitely, offline retailers must consider implementing smart retail technologies to catch up with ecommerce players and dealing with consumers' demands for innovative shopping"* (RE-03) and finally *"Definitely, 100% SRT will help retailers create a better customer experience and thus increase their sales and bottom line"*(RE-04).

According to Greenhalgh et al. (2004), Pantano and Naccarato (2010), Weber and Kantamneni (2002) studies, the ability of retailers to build and defend their competitive market position depends on their willingness and capacity to use technology.

### **Conclusion**

COVID-19 pandemic has hit retail sector hardly, sales fell by 20 percent over the same period and huge challenges and uncertainties have impacted the industry and consumers' (Fernandes, 2020; Pantano et al., 2020). The findings provide an understanding on retail experts' insights in regards to interactions with smart technology in retail settings, perception, and expectations on the potential impact of smart technology on the industry and consumers in the future and explore the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the retail industry.

First, all the interviewees agree that smart technology will spread and they hope that retailers will manage to adapt fast to this dynamic environment especially with the rise on online shopping and the emergence of COVID-19 global pandemic and its implications. Second, All interviewees highlighted that Egypt's modern retail sector (e.g. modern distribution areas, shopping malls and brands) had the financial and human resources required to successfully implement smart retail technologies. Third, most of the interviewees explained that the main challenges to smart retail technologies adoption are customer acceptance and financial challenges. Moreover, smart retail technologies adoption can face challenges such as employee resistance, internet availability, software, dealing with incompetent technicians and bureaucracy. Fourth, all interviewees pointed out that smart can retail technologies can enhance shoppers' experience on offline retail settings suggesting that smart retail technologies can deal with consumers' demands regarding the ease, speed, enjoyment and convenience of shopping transactions. Fifth, given the challenges offline retailers are facing from a host of online channels, all the interviewees agreed that smart technology is a promising route to establish competitive advantages. Sixth, Most of the interviewee's

perceptions relevant to consequences of smart retail technologies adoption were positive. It was highlighted that smart retail technology should be implemented to deal with COVID-19, improve customers shopping experience, help customers checking for availability of products, support staff during shipments arrival, improving quality of service, to catch up with ecommerce players, dealing with consumers' demands for innovative shopping and increase sales and revenue. Finally, several interviewees noted their concerns in regards to the shift from the human to human interaction to human machines interaction. Moreover interviewees highlighted their concern in the potential negative impact on job market and the number of employees due to SRTs adoption.

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## Appendix A: (interview with retail experts)

Before we start please indicate;

Your Name:

Company/Organization:

Size of Your Organisation:

Location:

Position at your organization:

1. How is the current COVID-19 pandemic affecting the retail industry in Egypt?
2. To what extent SRTs could help the retail industry during the current pandemic crisis?
3. Which retailers have the “capabilities necessary for successful Smart Retail Technologies implementation?
4. Which smart retail technologies will have the biggest impact if implemented within retail stores? Why?
5. What are the obstacles and challenges that may prevent retailers from adopting Smart Retail Technologies?
6. What are the changes and expected benefits to take place if retailers adopt smart retail technologies?
7. What is your perception regarding the changes smart retail technologies may create?
8. Do you think the consumer will accept using Smart Retail Technologies? Why?
9. Are you considering/ accepting adopting Smart Retail Technologies? Why?

## Freedom of Religion in Albania: A Review of the National Legislation from the Perspective of European Standards

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### Abstract

The freedom of religion and belief in Albania is guaranteed by the constitution of this multi-religious European nation. Moreover, seven laws have ratified agreements between the Council of Ministers and five of the country's religious communities, and there are also a number of provisions detailed in specific legislation. Nevertheless, taking into account the international legal framework, Albania lacks solid legislation regarding religion, as it remains one of the few European countries that does not have an overall law regarding the freedom of religion and belief. As such, some of the legal provisions in the different laws on religion are either inconsistent, do not take into account the national interest, or clearly infringe on the freedom itself. This paper analyses the Albanian legal framework regarding religion as compared to the European Convention of Human Rights, identifies the main issues and tries to give an overall approach to possible solutions.

**Keywords:** Albania, religion, legislation, freedom of religion and belief, European Convention of Human Rights

### Introduction

Albania is a multi-religious nation in which five different religious communities have had a long presence with none of them forming an outright majority. The five religions they represent are Sunni Islam, Orthodox Christianity, Roman Catholic Christianity, Bektashi Islam, and Protestantism. Under the Communist regime, Albania was officially an atheist state from 1967 to 1990 – the only such state in the world. All religious communities were abolished, their property was confiscated, and no Albanian was allowed to profess any religion. After 1990, religion was allowed once again, and the religious communities flourished, but the legal framework of their relations with the state, as well as the question of individual rights regarding religion, remains a matter of discussion as it has not been fully worked out. In this paper, I will outline the existing legal framework and point to certain evasive and ambiguous aspects of the legislation that still need to be addressed. The methodology used is a combination of the interpretative analysis on the legal provisions in Albania and comparison to a number of decisions of the European Court of Human Rights. I will also propose an overall approach to improving such legislation in the future.

Two separate articles in the Constitution of the Republic of Albania outline the basic religious rights. Article 10 stipulates: "Albania has no official religion" and the state "is neutral to issues of belief and consciousness and guarantees the rights of their expression in the public life". It

further recognizes “the equality of religious communities” and states that relations with them are to be “regulated through agreements between their representatives and the Council of Ministers” which must be ratified by the Parliament. Finally, Article 10 stipulates that the religious communities “are independent in the administration of their properties according to their own principles, rules and canons, as long as the rights of third parties are not violated”. Meanwhile, Article 24 focuses on individual rights regarding religion and belief. Along with guaranteeing freedom of conscience and religion, the article states that “everyone has the right to choose or change his religion or conviction, as well as to manifest it individually or collectively, in public or in private life, through cult, education, practices and rituals”. Finally, it stipulates that “no one can be forced into or prevented from taking part in a religious community or in its practices, or manifesting their convictions and beliefs”. (Law 8417/1998 Constitution of Albania)

Moreover, given that the Constitution of Albania incorporates the individual rights and freedoms outlined in the European Convention on Human Rights, the legal provisions of the latter regarding religion are also part of the constitutional rights of Albanians. The first paragraph of Article 9 of the Convention is similar to Article 24 of the Albanian Constitution, as it states: “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.” Meanwhile, the second paragraph is an important addition to Albanian constitutional law, as it states: “Freedom to manifest one’s religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.” (European Convention on Human Rights Art. 9)

Based on the constitutional provisions, seven agreements exist between the Albanian state and the country’s five religious communities and regulate some of their relations. (Law 8902/2002: Agreement with the Holy See; Law 9365/2005: On the Juridical Personality of the Catholic Church; Law 9865/2008: Financial Agreement with the Holy See; Law 10056/2009: Agreement with the Albanian Muslim Community; Law 10057/2009 Agreement with the Albanian Orthodox Church; Law 10056/2009: Agreement with the World Bektashi Grandfatherhood; Law 10394/2011, Agreement with the Albanian Evangelical Brotherhood.) Additionally, specific laws, such as the laws on cemeteries and prisons, assign specific rights to the religious communities. Nevertheless, Albania does not appear to have any concrete legislation regarding religion and it remains one of the very few European countries without any comprehensive law on religion which would define the full spectrum of the rights of individuals regarding the freedom of religion as well as the rights of organized religious groups and communities.

The analysis of the legal framework on religious communities

The general constitutional provisions for the state to sign agreements with the religious communities does not define what constitutes a religious community. The five religious communities with signed agreements (Sunni Muslim, Orthodox, Catholic, Bektashi, and Protestant) would certainly be included here, as they all have a traditional and substantial presence in Albania. But the absence of such a legal definition leaves it unclear why other

groups do not have the right to such agreements. The main questions left unanswered are: How does the Council of Ministers refuse or agree to reach an agreement with a religious group? Is it enough to have a traditional presence in Albania? Could a non-traditional religious group become a “religious community”? What if a religious group develops a traditional presence in the future, as the Protestants did in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century? Would they then have the right to an agreement with the state? If a religious community splits up and each part requests an agreement, would then the state then have to choose which of the claimants is the true representative of that religion? What if a religious group recognizes the independence of a breakaway sect? Will the latter have the right to an agreement? What about the Jews in Albania, who do have a traditional presence, but for the last 50 years have constituted only a tiny portion of the population? If the Albanian Jewish community revives, would they have the right to be recognized as a religious community, especially given how rich the Jewish cultural heritage is in Albania? These questions have no answer in the current legislation, which does not specify any religious groups or communities but rather leaves the question up to the Council of Ministers, with no legal provisions for making case-by-case decisions. The law also does not specify whether it is only an individual religious group that can constitute a religious community, or if this category could also include, for example, alliances of religious groups.

Religious groups that are not recognized as religious communities are organized as NGOs and acquire the juridical personality of a religious community only when they receive that status. But the legislation is unclear as to whether a religious community exists prior to the Parliament’s ratification of the agreement with the state. If it does, then what is the definition of a religious community? Do Jews, Jehovah Witnesses, and other religious groups constitute a religious community? What about more controversial groups such as Scientologists, Satanists, etc.? But if an agreement with the state is required for a group to become a religious community, does this mean that Muslims, Orthodox, Catholics, Bektashi and Protestants were merely NGOs prior to attaining this status?

This ambiguity creates another question. The legal framework for the organization and functioning of the State Committee on Cults, which is a governmental institution under the auspices of the Prime Minister overseeing relations between the government and religious groups, stipulates that “the structure of the Committee [should] reflect, really, the identity and the values of the religious communities”. Moreover, it states that the Committee is established for the “creation, change and closure of the relations between the state and the communities that have as their object belief and consciousness, according to the law”. (Council of Ministers’ Decision 459/1999: On the Creation of the State Committee of Cults) But there is no law that defines what the community, the group, and the relations should be. Moreover, the wording “the Committee [should] reflect, really, the identity and the values of the religious communities” is ambiguous and unclear. Does this mean that every community should have their own representative on the committee, or at least someone who has been approved by the community? Even if this is not the actual legal basis, today the reality is that each committee member is in fact affiliated with a religious community. And yet, the jurisprudence that derives from the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg has been quite clear that the relations between a religious community and the state cannot be subject to the approval of another religious community. (CoE, 2008, 70-75)

Furthermore, the law on the financing of religious communities and the acts that derive from it stipulate that the five religious communities receive funding from the state based on a

formula that these communities mutually agree on. (Law 10140/2009: Financing from the State Budget of Religious Communities) This kind of corporatist structure, whereby the state passes its own responsibilities onto the religious communities is clearly at odds with the European Convention on Human Rights and the jurisprudence that derives from the Strasbourg court. Additionally, we should remember that the Committee of Cults is obliged to establish and conduct affairs also with religious groups that are not recognized as communities and that may well be in direct conflict with the recognized communities, which have a voting representative on the Committee.

The analysis of the legal framework on individual religious rights

The legal confusion that results from the lack of any basic law on religion becomes even more problematic when we consider the rights of the individual. Most individual rights regarding the freedom of religion and belief are detailed in jurisprudence deriving from the European Convention on Human Rights and as such apply directly to Albania as well, but the Strasbourg court has left a number of issues that must be legally decided by the individual countries. (CoE, 2008, 15-38) For example, parents and guardians have the right to raise their children in the religion or belief that they themselves practice, but the legal framework of each country specifies the age at which this right passes from parent to child. Must a 17-year-old be obliged to adhere to the religious beliefs of his parents until he reaches the age of 18, or is his own belief what is essential? It is easy to say that it is his belief that matters, but starting at what age? What about orphaned children who are raised in irreligious institution? And more generally, how do we guarantee the specific individual rights of persons that live in special institutions? The legislation on prisons includes a number of provisions relating to the rights of inmates. But do these cover the issue of religious dietary laws? The law is silent on this issue. Do inmates have the right to receive religious counseling from clerics of their own faith? The law says they do, but there is no legal modality that provides for prisoners' free access to clerics. And does the law mean only clerics of the recognized religious communities, or those of any religious group? Again it is silent.

The legislation on labour, specifically that which relates to employees in government institutions, is also unclear about individual rights. (Law 7961/1995 Labour Code) Is a person who wears a headscarf or a big visible cross around their neck allowed to work in a government institution? The law is silent. What about students in state schools? Can teachers preach their own religion in a public institution if others agree to this? These are all matters that a specific law on religion could define but are not, for the most part, regulated under existing law.

The legislation on the Armed Forces goes further. There is no provision on the right to collectively express freedom of religion and belief, but there are a number of provisions relating to prohibitions on the practice of religion by persons in uniform or during working hours; such provisions are normal in a secular state. But Article 13 of the pertinent law stipulates that it is a severe violation "to allow persons from political, religious and other non-governmental organizations to propagandize in the facilities of the Armed Forces or in their property." (Law 174/2014 Discipline in the Armed Forces) Does this mean that a soldier cannot belong to a "religious organization", or that a cleric cannot join the Armed Forces? And what does "propagandize" mean? Is it propaganda to pray out loud in a military facility, or for a person to ask to pray in a common area during a time of war? The word "propaganda" is very

broad, and the law could be more specific, e.g. by making it illegal to “proselytize” or “preach to others without being a cleric with a specific authorization”; this would avoid the impression of an “atheistic” article in that law which could in fact be a violation of the Constitution.

Is there equality of religious communities?

Another important unanswered question is whether Albania is actually a secular state. The Constitution does not specify that it is. The legislation varies from being almost atheistic, as in the law on discipline in the Armed Forces, to religious corporatism, as in the legal framework for the Committee of Cults or the law on financing religious communities. If we assume that Albania is indeed a secular state, is this moderate secularism, comparable to what we find in certain English-speaking countries, or is it enforced secularism, as in France or Turkey?

A good example of a legal definition is found in the law on cemeteries and funeral services, which in addition to the indisputable rights set out in the ECHR, sets out a number of special privileges that are limited to legally recognized religious communities, such as the right to establish religious cemeteries, the administration of public cemeteries, and the right to propose the creation of religious sections within public cemeteries. (Law 9220/2004 On Cemeteries and Public Funeral Services) Such specification could be extended in the future to other regulations, following Western variants.

Here, however, a problem arises that also relates to the agreements between the state and the communities. What happens if the majority on a municipal council (like the majority in the Parliament) refuses to accept the proposals or agreements with one, some, or all of the religious communities, especially with regard to minority communities? If, fortunately, this is extremely unlikely in reality, it is still true that the agreements with the communities are not identical and there is no state mechanism to ensure that such agreements are based on the will of the parties, with no discrimination or coercion. What if the parliament or a municipal council decides unilaterally to repeal an agreement or to grant additional rights to a community? Can such things be left solely to the national or local political will?

Apart from issues of funding and the right to propose religious holidays, the current agreements between the state and the religious communities do not in fact contain any rights that derive exclusively from the agreement; all the other paragraphs in the agreements concern rights that without exception derive from the Albanian Constitution and the ECHR. Moreover, the provision in the agreements that specifies that the state guarantees the protection of the community from any person or “group claiming the name” is vague and can be interpreted as meaning that a religious group may not have a name that is not overly similar to another religious group, which would be contrary to the ECHR. (CoE, 2008, 70-75)

Last but not least, when analysing the legal aspect of religious freedom, it is worth noting that the only time after 1990 Albania attempted to draft a law on religion, in 2006, the draft was openly in conflict with the ECHR and as such was rejected by the Venice Commission. (Venice Commission Opinion 429/2007 CDL-AD(2007)041) But what is more interesting is the fact that the law did not define any obligation relating to the national interest. On this point a broader debate would be worthwhile: are there aspects of the national interest that need to be considered? Both history and the present time tell us yes. This is because, historically, the notion of the interfaith brotherhood of Albanians originated with and was supported by a majority of the clergy, with only a minority opposing it. Among Muslims, there were Albanian

nationalists who stood alongside Vehbi Agolli Dibra, Hafiz Ali Korça, Ymer Prizreni, and Haxhi Zeka, against Musa Qazimi and a few Ottomanist radicals. There were Albanian nationalists among the Orthodox, who stood alongside Noli, Xhuvani, Kisi, Qirici, and Kurilla, against Iakovos and Kotoko and a few Northern Epirote radicals. And there were Albanian nationalists among Catholics, who stood alongside Dom Nikollë Kaçorri, Gjergj Fishta, and Ndre Mjeda, against a few supporters of the Italian occupation. (Della Rocca, 1990) But even today there is still some opposition, albeit very sporadic, to the idea of the interfaith brotherhood of Albanians, where among a minority of Muslims you can hear echoes of the debates that go on inside Turkey or various Arab radical tendencies, even among clerics; or where, among Orthodox, you hear echoes of Greek nationalism and the rejection of the use of Albanian in church, even in such entirely ethnic Albanian villages as Sopiku and Muzina, and even in the city of Saranda.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the legislation in Albania regarding the freedom of religion and belief has strong foundations insofar as, in addition to the constitutional provisions, it is supplemented by strong jurisprudence emanating from the ECHR. However, certain essential elements are absent, such as the conceptual division between religious groups, religious communities, and their agreements with the state. The agreements with religious communities contain very few additional rights and many redundant stipulations, which already pertain to these communities as religious groups, and although the agreements are generally uniform, they are not clear about how rights are acquired and protected, and whether such procedures are based on the will of the communities, the will of the state, or through a negotiation that guarantees non-discrimination and state impartiality.

In order to overcome these problems, Albania should create the overall legal framework on religions. Legislation, for example, could guarantee the economic independence of religious communities –so they would not have to rely on foreign funding – through such Western forms as a church/mosque tax. In addition, laws could ensure the restitution of property with concrete favourable legal provisions; promote the education of clergy within Albania; support believers in the diaspora (where dogma allows); and even stipulate that high-level clergy must be Albanian citizens, with the exception of those foreigners who currently hold such positions.

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## A Reading of Virginia Woolf's Novel the Waves

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### Abstract

The paper focuses on one of the best-known literary works of the modernist writer Virginia Woolf, *The Waves*, published in 1931. The novel, which defies generic boundaries by fusing prose, poetry and the dramatic, has been considered the most experimental and “difficult” of Woolf’s books. The paper discusses the opposition between permanence and mutability, one of the key dualisms not only in *The Waves* but throughout Woolf’s fictional and non-fictional works. In *The Waves* the writer discusses the most fundamental issues that concern her – the identity of self, the relationship between self and the world, and the fleetingness of human life. The relationship between the self and the world has also been dealt with in the paper. Woolf often pits the natural, material world to the human world and the stability, endurance and permanence of the former is often contrasted and juxtaposed with the instability, meaninglessness and mutability of the latter. *The Waves* is composed of nine soliloquies uttered by the six protagonists interlaced with ten fragments in which an impersonal voice describes the movement of the sun in the sky from dawn to nightfall, which both corresponds to and contrasts with the lives of the protagonists. An important topic of discussion is also the clash between idealism and materialism and Woolf’s attitude in this perennial philosophical debate in her literary works.

**Keywords:** self, dualism, fleetingness of life, idealism, materialism.

### Introduction

One of the major literary concerns of Virginia Woolf was the capturing of the quintessence of self and its representation in literature. In her most experimental novel, *The Waves*, published in 1931, the exploration of self is rendered in a poetical, even mystical, language. The term novel can only imperfectly be used to describe this book, which Woolf herself called a “poetical play” and truly it defies generic categorization, combining elements from drama, prose and poetry, thereby pushing and redefining the boundaries of the novel. As critic John Mepham points out, with this work Woolf “moved further away from mimetic realism than in any previous work.” (1991) and Richardson notices that “plot and character in the traditional novelistic sense seem at best elusive, at worst sketchy, even nonexistent.” () The book is composed of nine fragments – the soliloquies – uttered by the six protagonists, Bernard, Jinny, Louis, Neville, Rhoda, and Susan. The soliloquies trace the characters’ development from nursery to elderly age. They are interlaced with ten “interludes” in which an impersonal voice recounts the gradual passage of the sun in the sky, from dawn to nightfall. These “nature” passages are highly poetical and in each of them the wave imagery features prominently. The

movement of the sun and the waves corresponds to the development of the six protagonists and their life journey, but these natural objects also provide a contrast to human transience. The paper discusses the way Woolf often contrasts and contraposes the human world with the material and natural world.

In several of Woolf's fictional and non-fictional writings, the reader perceives a constant interplay of dualisms, of opposites, which often remain unresolved. In *The Waves* there are several such dualisms, one of the most important being the opposition between mutability and permanence. In one of her diary entries (January 4, 1929) Woolf asks,

is life very solid or very shifting? I am haunted by the two contradictions. This has gone on for ever; will last for ever; goes down to the bottom of the world—this moment I stand on. Also it is transitory, flying, diaphanous. I shall pass like a cloud on the waves. Perhaps it may be that though we change ... yet we are somehow successive and continuous we human beings ... I am impressed by the transitoriness of human life." (Woolf, 2003)

This was a contradiction that intrigued Woolf throughout her life and which she explored in her fictional and non-fictional writings. Is the self a solid entity, having coherence, continuity and indivisibility? Or is it something that is forever changing and whose existence can never be fully apprehended? In *The Waves* the six protagonists waver between these two stances. It is interesting to notice in the above diary passage the imagery of cloud and wave, which Woolf makes use of in several of her works. These two images are pervasive in *The Waves* and they suggest the changeability of self and the world:

Life passes. The clouds change perpetually over our houses. I do this, do that, and again do this and then that. Meeting and parting, we assemble different forms, make different patterns. But if I do not nail these impressions to the board and out of the many men in me make one; exist here and now and not in streaks and patches ... then I shall fall like snow and be wasted.

Let me cast and throw away this veil of being, this cloud that changes with the least breath, night and day, and all night and all day. (Woolf, 2015)

The cloud imagery echoes two poems by Percy B. Shelley, *Mutability* (We are as clouds that veil the midnight moon) and *The Cloud*. In both poems the cloud becomes a symbol of transitoriness and changeability and in the first poem human life is likened to the ever-changing cloud. There are many such examples in *The Waves* as well as in her diary entries which link the changeability of clouds to that of human life.

Philosopher Henri Bergson, contradicting the "mechanistic" theory of human consciousness, posited that the activity of the human mind is duration and it resembles a flow which can never be spatialized and segmented. His ideas influenced many subsequent philosophers and writers, including Virginia Woolf. The reader notices that the protagonists of *The Waves* often strive arduously to oppose the never-ceasing flux of time and to immobilize it. They feel the need to pinpoint a solid self which is not subject to mutability and which coheres into a continuous entity. One often finds in Woolf this contradiction between the self as a solid entity, coherent and complete in itself, and self as always in a state of flux, which, when subjected to the pressure of being with others, coagulates temporarily thereby giving the impression of a united self. There are many passages in the book which explore this contradiction: "And we ourselves, walking six abreast, what do we oppose ... how can we do battle against this flood; what has permanence? Our lives too stream away, down the unlighted avenues, past the strip

of time, unidentified,” (Woolf, 2015) and in another passages Louis despairingly declares: “I am conscious of flux, of disorder; of annihilation and despair. If this is all, this is worthless.” (Woolf, 2015)

There is a constant oscillation in *The Waves* between the desire to reach a solid self and the feeling that the self and world are unstable and ever-shifting. Bernard, the story-teller, gives voice to this idea: “There is no stability in this world. Who is to say what meaning there is in anything? ... To speak of knowledge is futile ... We are for ever mixing ourselves with unknown quantities.” (Woolf, 2015) Woolf’s characters in *The Waves* however waver from one position to its opposite and a few pages later the same character gives an optimistic affirmation of the stability of life, which opposes its meaninglessness and fleetingness. In this passage human achievements are seen as a defence against chaos and nothingness:

We are not slaves bound to suffer incessantly unrecorded petty blows on our bent backs. ... We are creators. We too have made something that will join the innumerable congregations of past time. We too ... stride not into chaos, but into a world that our own force can subjugate and make part of the illumined and everlasting road. (Woolf, 2015)

The wave imagery, the most important in the book, is also related to the opposition between mutability and permanence. The waves are incessant and they are continually changing and breaking on the shore. However the sea, composed of waves, is unchanging and eternal. As critic Donna Lazenby has pointed out, Woolf has fused content and formal structural constructs by means of the image of the wave, since the sea “is self-contained, permanent and in possession of every wave,” while the waves “are individual, transitory movements on the surface of one permanent mass.” (2014) Stella McNichol points to Woolf’s “fundamental preoccupation with the unresolvable relation of the finite to the infinite”. (1992) Thus the wave imagery masterly captures both the mutable and the immutable. Discussing the function of the wave imagery in the book, Ralph Freedman aptly asserts: “Constantly in motion, yet timeless and unchanging in its form, the wave expresses the paradox underlying the novel’s theme. Changing worlds governed by time and place are rendered as a timeless image by the constantly surviving, rhythmically alternating wave.” (1963)

Often the mutability of human self is highlighted and contraposed with the permanence and solidity of the material world of objects. Woolf’s characters often cling to the material world in an attempt to find refuge from the mutable and chaotic self, beset by innumerable sensations. The solid world is a welcome relief from a fluid and unstable being. For Rhoda, the most “ephemeral” character in the novel, self is illusory:

I ... see the railings of the square, and two people without faces, leaning like statues against the sky. There is, then, a world immune from change. When I have passed through this drawing-room flickering with tongues that cut me like knives ... I find faces rid of features, robed in beauty ... There is, then, a world immune from change. (Woolf, 2015)

She finds comfort from her irreality and immateriality in the world of objects, which resists change. The material world has a contour and is solid compared to the shapeless and ethereal self and that is what Bernard points out when he compares his shifting, drifting self with the life of a tree:

The tree alone resisted our eternal flux. For I changed and changed; was Hamlet, was Shelley, was the hero, whose name I now forget, of a novel by Dostoevsky ... but was Byron chiefly ... I

was saying there was a willow tree. Its ... creased and crooked bark had the effect of what remains outside our illusions yet cannot stay them, is changed by them for the moment, yet shows through stable, still, and with a sternness that our lives lack. Hence the comment it makes; the standard it supplies, and the reason why, as we flow and change, it seems to measure. (Woolf, 2015)

Similarly, in the short story *The Mark on the Wall* the speaker considers existence from the point of view of a tree. Michelle Levy writes that “the endurance of the natural world, and its independence from and indifference to human affairs, both attracts and alienates us.” (2004) Human life as measured against the material and natural world is also found in another short story, *Kew Gardens*, in which the process of a snail at the Botanical Gardens in London is intertwined with four lines of narrative about four different groups of people. The snail’s progress is slow, steady, and relentless. Contraposed to the discussions and thoughts of the human characters, which are often random, meaningless, or trivial, it suggests the unchangeability of the natural world, its imperviousness to human concerns and, possibly, also its superiority to human life.

When discussing the composition of *The Waves* and, specifically the function of the nature interludes, Woolf makes it clear that they are “essential” to the book, “so as to bridge and also to give a background—the sea; insensitive nature ...” (2003) The interludes describe the passage of the sun from dawn to nightfall and the movement from spring to winter and they are given hand in hand with the soliloquies of the six protagonists. The soliloquies present the thoughts of the protagonists and they also describe their progress from early childhood to adulthood and elderly age. The nature interludes correspond to the soliloquy sections describing the life movement of the six characters: “Thus in a moment, in a drawing-room, our life adjusts itself to the majestic march of day across the sky.” (Woolf, 2015) Woolf links the interludes and soliloquies through shared images and phrases, which acquire added significance once they are repeated. She intended the book to defy the generic boundaries. *The Waves* does indeed resemble a poetical work since the whole structure is more dependent on recurring images and motifs rather than on narrative. Freedman asserts that, “The macrocosm of time and wave ... is matched with the microcosm of individual lives in a carefully contrived pattern. The design is that of a long lyrical poem whose images embody but do not directly describe a series of events.” (1963) The interludes add to the lives of the six characters thereby endowing them with a deeper and quasi-cosmic significance. However, in Woolf ambivalence is a characteristic feature and at the same time the relentless passage of the sun in its arc and the unceasing ebb and tide of the waves seem to undermine human life and turn human cares and concerns into trivial and insignificant activity. S.P. Rosenbaum writes that, “Human consciousness is confronted with its impending extinction by the natural. The brevity of life is symbolised by the one day of consciousness that the rising and setting sun of the intervals represents as the duration of the six lives.” (1998) The natural stands in stark contrast to the chaos and instability of human life, an implacable force which is indifferent to human life and even seems to tacitly deride its fickleness and restlessness. Julia Briggs notices that in *The Waves* the “changing, changeless, impersonal forces, ‘time & the sea’ ... the hours and the seasons are counterpointed to human repetitiveness and human mortality”. (Briggs) In the interludes Woolf has come very close to realizing an almost totally impersonal point of view, which she also had made use of in the second section of one of her most accomplished novels, *To the Lighthouse*. From the very first passage of *The Waves* the sea and sky are described as

if seen from a non-human, impersonal eye. There is no mentioning of the world “waves” but rather “bars”, “strokes”, and “lines”, and the whole description is given from an impersonal and non-human perspective.

The relation between consciousness and the world, between subject and object, has always interested Virginia Woolf. In *The Mark on the Wall* an unidentified mark on the wall prompts the speaker, presumably Woolf herself, to a number of conjectures as to its identity. Her thoughts meander and there is an unending flow of associations swarming in her mind, until, at one point she exclaims that “nothing is proved, nothing is known” and she wishes she could “sink deeper and deeper, away from the surface, with its hard separate facts.” (Woolf, 2011) There is in Woolf’s writing the constant lure of idealism, the tendency to see the mental as “the ultimate foundation of all reality” and that even though “the existence of something independent of the mind is conceded, everything that we can know about this mind-independent ‘reality’ is held to be so permeated by the creative, formative, or constructive activities of the mind,” (Guyer and Horstmann, 2020). This has prompted several critics to regard her writings as endorsing idealism. In *The Waves* it seems that especially the character of Rhoda embodies several features of idealism. The only moments when she feels no anxiety is when “The still mood, the disembodied mood is on us ... and we enjoy this momentary alleviation.” (Woolf, 2015) It seems that the “disembodied” existence, or the existence of the mind (or soul, or will) is the only welcome existence for Rhoda and the only way she can really be herself: “Now I spread my body on this frail mattress and hang suspended. I am above the earth now ... All is soft and bending . . . Out of me now my mind can pour . . . I am relieved of hard contacts and collisions.” (Woolf, 2015) Passages such as these might tempt readers to align Woolf with the principles of idealism and even Berkeleyan “immaterialism”.

Indeed in her essay *Modern Fiction* Woolf criticized the “materialist” writers (Bennet, Wells, Galsworthy) and insisted that the proper domain of the novelist should be the inner mind. (Woolf, 1996) The most important modernist writers, Joyce, Woolf, Proust, explore the workings of inner consciousness and reality is forever colored by it. Not only is reality colored by consciousness, it might be argued that the only way one can learn about reality is through consciousness. Considering the definition of idealism, that “everything that we can know” about reality is “permeated by the creative, formative, or constructive activities of the mind”, one might be tempted to categorize these writers as upholding the idealistic views. That seems to be the reason why modernist writers more and more left out of their works the description of the (outside) reality. In them the aesthetic is inextricably linked with the epistemological. In *The Waves* the reader learns next to nothing about the physical appearance of the six protagonists, about the houses they live in, their occupations, and their social life. All nine fragments are in fact soliloquies of the six characters and therefore the only thing the reader knows is the contents of their mind.

On the other hand, the critics of idealism have claimed that it inevitably leads to solipsism, the individual trapped in the prison of his mind and his inability to know and connect with the Other and the reality. Even though representing many of the tenets of idealism in her fictional and non-fictional works, probably the most prominent feature of Virginia Woolf’s work is her ambivalence. Thus even though many passages in *The Waves* suggest an idealistic worldview, there are however other passages which seem to refute them and even to point to the danger of idealism. Bernard feels the danger of falling into idealism, of losing grasp of reality, and he asks himself: “I begin now to forget; I begin to doubt the fixity of tables, the reality of here and

now, to tap my knuckles smartly upon the edges of apparently solid objects and say, 'Are you hard?'" (Woolf, 2015) In Mrs Dalloway too the eponymous protagonist of the novel, pondering over death, asks the (Berkeleyan-flavored) question: "Does the outside world depend for its reality on our awareness of it? That would put an intolerable burden on selfhood." (Woolf, 2000) Thus Woolf acknowledges the danger of solipsism and her characters often find comfort, as stated above, in the material world, the solid world of objects, which would counterbalance the ephemeral and the intangible. Rhoda finds comfort from annihilation in the fact that there is a "world immune from change" and in another passage we read:

We launch out now over the precipice ... The cliffs vanish. Rippling small ... innumerable waves spread beneath us. I touch nothing. I see nothing. We may sink and settle on the waves ... Rolling me over the waves will shoulder me under. Everything falls in a tremendous shower, dissolving me. Yet that tree has bristling branches; that is the hard line of a cottage roof. Those bladder shapes painted red and yellow are faces. Putting my foot to the ground I step gingerly and press my hand against the hard door of a Spanish inn. (Woolf, 2015)

Similarly, in *The Mark on the Wall* the speaker finds a welcome sense of reality in the tangible world of objects: "waking from a midnight dream of horror, one hastily turns on the light and lies quiescent, worshipping the chest of drawers, worshipping solidity, worshipping reality, worshipping the impersonal world which is a proof of some existence other than ours." (Woolf, 2011)

## Conclusion

In her writings Woolf often balances idealism and realism (or materialism) and this is a sign of her dualistic and ambivalent way of writing. Jaakko Hintikka points out that though Woolf puts "the emphasis on the inner world of sense-experience, feeling, and thought," this "is not designed to disparage the normal everyday reality but to enhance it. The realm of consciousness does not replace the reality we naively believe in, it is shown to constitute this reality." (1979) Even though her literary works, culminating with *The Waves*, focus on the inner life of characters, she does not deny the existence of an outer reality. For all her skepticism about the ability to reach a thorough apprehension of the world, she nevertheless does not rule out the interconnectedness and interaction between subject and object, self and reality. This relationship, however, remains highly problematic in Woolf's writings and the resulting tension and ambivalence is one of the key features of her worldview.

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## **The Figure of Popular Rhapsodist as An Interpreter in the Musical Instrument and as a Poet. Examination of the Case of the Lute in the "Epic of the Kreshniks"**

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### **Abstract**

The popular rhapsodist is a singer and musician who sings creations of legendary and historical epics and at the same time interprets them with the musical instrument of the lahuta-lute. Nowadays, rhapsodists are considered popular musicians, who are closely related to the singing of the "Epic of the Kreshniks", of the legendary Albanian epic in general. This songs, along with other traditions of northern Albania, such as gjama, kuja, etc., stand in complete artistic harmony with each other. An epic without music does not exist and a text without music can never be an epic. In this context, the legendary musical narratives of the epic of the Kreshniks created and accompanied by lute, constitute a poetic and ethnocultural complex. Traditionally the instrument of lute is produced by the rhapsodists themselves who sing and perform in it, which gives the lute and its interpretation a unique character.

**Keywords:** Oral singing, epic, rhapsodist, lahut, popular music.

### **Introduction**

The popular rhapsodist is a singer and musician who sings creations of legendary and historical epics and at the same time interprets them with the lute musical instrument. Nowadays, the meaning of the word rhapsodist has expanded. They are considered as that category of popular musicians, who are closely associated with the singing of "Epic of the Kreshniks", the legendary Albanian epic in general, but also beyond. Among the well-known rhapsodists in our folk music we mention: Sali Bajram Krasniqi (1919-1987)- Kosovo, Vad Marashi-Puka, Prendush Gega (Lazër,1921), Selim Hasani-Vlora, Dervish Shaqja-Rrushbull, Mato Hasani-Vlora, Xhebro Gjika- Vlora; Zef Avdia-Tropojë, Sokol Arifi-Tropojë, Lefter Çipa-Himarë, Frrok Haxhia-Puka, Sali Mani, Azis Ndreu, Fatime Sokoli, Xhelal Daka etc. (Tole,2010).

In 1953, Milman Parry and Albert Lord (Elsie ,1995) published "Serbo-Croatian heroic songs" to prove that the Homeric tradition of epic poetry was still alive in the Balkans at the time. The testimony comes from the main subject, Salih Ugljanin, a rhapsodist from the sandzak, capable of reciting for hours epic Serbo-Croatian and Albanian poems about heroic acts of the past. Hence the discussions about the beginnings of epic poetry in the Balkans. In the context of the Kreshnik Epic, it is unknown whether the Albanian songs of the Kreshniks were inspired by the Serbo-Croatian ones or the opposite happened. The centers of epic rhapsodisties seem to have been the mountainous lands of Bosnia, the Sandzak of Novi Pazar, Montenegro, and northern Albania, although surprisingly most of the Albanian epic has Jutbina (Udbina), a village fifty kilometers from northeast of Zadar in Croatia (Elsie ,1995).The present study,

through an analytical and interpretative methodology investigates the main studies on the origin of epic heroic creation, focusing on the Epic of the Kreshniks, the role of the popular instrument of lute in the accompaniment of the Epics of the Kreshniks and the value of this work and the creative individuality of the popular rhapsodist.

### **Origin of Epic Heroic Creations Focusing on the Epic of the Kreshniks**

An issue that has been raised is the question of a possible connection between the Balkan heroic epic and the very precious epic of the ancient Greeks. Is this the epic and heroic poetry still sung by the Albanians and South Slavs, the successor to the Homeric epic? Writer Ismail Kadare, seduced by this hypothesis, has created the novel "The H File", the content of which includes two fictional Irish-American scholars, Max Rothi and Vili Nortoni, who set out for the deep mountains of pre-war Northern Albania with a dual-purpose arm recording device. First, they are looking for the birthplace of the epic and second, they investigate the possibility of a direct connection between the Homeric epic and the heroic epic, whose songs are performed by the majestic highlanders of Northern Albania with their one-wire lutes, as the main instruments for conveying the songs of the Epic of the Kreshniks. For both researchers, the situation is unclear:

*"Since this (epic) is the only artistic creation in the world that exists dual ... in two languages of the two warring nations ... Albanians and Serbs ..." Furthermore, it is naive to believe that the epic was born independently in both peoples. Someone has to be the author and someone the imitator. We have an inner conviction that the Albanians, as the most ancient inhabitants of the peninsula, created it first (The fact that their sisterhood is much closer to the Homeric works proves this) says Ismail Kadare, (1990, p. 141).*

The field trip of the foreign scholars created a sense of suspicion especially for the deputy prefect of the province, who puts them behind the secret agent Dullë Baxhaja to observe them and bring information about their activity and movements. The same suspicious attitude towards researchers, for a possible espionage was born among the locals. Thus, their apartment in Hani of Rrashtbuallit is raided, and the camera that had recorded their voices is destroyed, which marks the end of their research mission in Albania. Albanologist Robert Elsie described the work "Dosja H" as a pleasant satire for two innocent foreigners who try to understand the Albanian soul and, especially, the nuances of Albanian life with which foreign visitors are often amazed: the Balkan tendency for gossip and slander, the inability of the administration, as well as a childish sense of fear and suspicion on the part of the authorities about anything foreign (Elsie, 1995), due to the isolation of the country and the practice of interfering in every vital aspect of state security mechanisms.

Referring to the Epic of the Kreshniks as one of the most important artistic pillars of the spiritual culture of Albanians (Neziri, 2010), the research of legendary epic heroic songs testifies, among other things, to their connection with epic lyrical songs. The epicologist D. Shala underlines: "The epic Illyrian life during the centuries-old period of war and uprisings against the Romans has produced epic songs, which are a link with the Epic of the Kreshniks" (Shala, 1985). Despite the lack of evidence for Illyrian epic songs, the above assertion is supported by other historical and archaeological evidence. Also, a testimony in the field of linguistics comes from the Croatian linguist R. Katicic, who talks about the ancient formulas of epic songs in Illyria, based on anthroponomic and homonymous Illyrian evidence (Katiçiq, 1988).

Also, the Epic of the Kreshniks is the forerunner of the cycles of epic historical songs among Albanians, related to songs dedicated to the Battle of Kosovo in the XIV century; Skanderbeg in the XV century; Ali Pasha and Mahmut Pasha Bushati, in the XVIII and XX century; Albanian League of Prizren, in the XIX century; anti-Ottoman uprisings at the beginning of the XX century etc.

In this context, M.W.M. The Pope would say:

*"Epic poetry, which still exists in some parts of the world and once existed in many more, is specifically the singing of stories. It is normal for them to be accompanied by instrumental music, and it is generally played by the singer himself. The singer is not just a reciter. He composes the songs. He has to be sensitive to both the case and the audience ... He can corrupt a good story, or he can improve and decide on a story that he took from tradition in a corrupt state. He is not simply a person who repeats to the extreme what he has learned. He is a creative artist"* (Pope, 1970, p.2)

Piero Ghiglione would describe the Albanian rhapsodist as follows:

*"Accompanied by lute, the rhapsodistic singer of the mountains, after a prelude to melodies that repeat the simple motives of pastoral works, begins to sing. And, more than anything else, an announcement, at first slow, then increasingly hot, lively; the singer articulates the ten rhymes that show wonderful facts. Stories and legends are intertwined. Heroes, men of arms, women, myths, distant eras live in poetic restoration in the events of love and hate, peace, war ..."* Ghiglione (1941, p.7).

### **The Role of Lute in the Accompaniment of the Epics of the Kreshniks**

Since the 'lute' is the main instrument for conveying the songs of the Epic of the Kreshniks, the rhapsodist takes the name 'luter'. Lute is one of the most popular popular instruments with a string, on which it is played with a curved hair bow that is used mainly in Northern Albania and Kosovo. Traditionally the lute instrument is produced by the rhapsodists themselves who sing and perform on it. The widest and most complete repertoire of these regions is "Epic of the Kreshniks", which is sung with lute. Lute has risen to the level of a cult (Neziri, 2010). The cult of lute in the Albanian family is widespread, just as there is a sanctifying respect for the songs of the saints (Sinani, 2000). Many authors have written about the construction, functions and symbolism of the lute. The verses of the epic themselves speak of its construction:

*"How well Muji is remembering, after he took the big sword... he took out the lute from the palnjet..." he said* (Tole, 2010).

For B. Palajt:

*"The lute is a primitive and simple tool. It consists of an oval-shaped wooden cup covered with leather, called a shark, and has a not very long tail"* (Tole, 2010).

The lute of our northern highlanders represents the most ancient archetype of arched chordal instruments of the European continent and that the house without the lute in the north is called the "abandoned house" (Miso, 1990). Fishta considers the lute as "an instrument strongly liked by the people of our mountains, with which they sing their praises or mourn their pain" (Fishta, 1981).

According to prof. Dr. Ramadan Sokoli, the head on the tail of the lute, in the shape of a goat is a symbol of our national hero, Skanderbeg, while according to prof. Dr. Vasil S. Tole, may have been an earlier symbol of mountain fairies (Tole, 2010). Despite the symbolism, for Asdren "The sweet fairy of lute / This is the song of Malësia" (Tole, 2010).

An epic without music does not exist and a text without music can never be an epic (Supan, 1989). In this context, the legendary musical narratives of the epic of Kreshniks with the main characters of Muji and Halil, created and accompanied by lute (Koliqi, 2003), constitute a poetic and ethnocultural complex (Uçi, 1986). The narrative-musical and musical practice in this case is that of "singing with variations" (Tole, 2010), which deals with musical changes or variations, based on a single and simple initial musical motif-phrase, coupled with the corresponding strings of a polymetric character. In the Epic of the Kreshniks: "... *the luteri danced the rhapsody with pipes. After each pipe, he would break his song and always be accompanied by lute until he started singing again*" (Koliqi, 2003), etc. Both the way the instrument is produced with material materials of the natural environment, as well as the way it is interpreted, is a proof of the antiquity of the heroic songs.

The role of the use of the lute begins at the very beginning of the interpretation. The instrumental introduction with lute defines the musical character of the sung melody, together with the nature and other features of its interpretation. The rhapsodist, through the lute strings, determines the pitch of the sound, the intonation and the color of his voice, as it has a dual identity: that of the poet and the popular musician (Tole, 2010). The technique of using the lute is simple. The four fingers of the left hand allow the maximum combination of four notes, ie up to the ambitus of the tetrachord, starting from the final tone. During the musical singing, the rhapsodist carefully regulates the process of breathing and exhaling, which lasts in time longer (due to the considerable amount of literary information on the event) than any other kind of popular musical creation, throughout the Albanian ethnomusic space (Tole, 2010). The musical model followed in the Epic of the Kreshniks is clear, simple and in descending order, with few notes and combinations between them, in order to be easily remembered and to support the legendary musical narrative (Tole, 2010). In relation to this musical model, the rhapsodist builds its individuality. According to Koliqi: "*what the people of that world wanted, they knew how to give*" (Koliqi, 2003). The literary material is transmitted to the listeners through the unity of a single rhapsodist in the instrument and the rhapsodist singer, who "*shows*" through singing (Tole, 2010). Moreover, according to Gërcaliu (Gërcaliu, 1986): all the rhapsodists of the epic, the mastery of the execution of songs and instruments take place at a very young age and many of them remember and interpret up to 10-15 thousand verses from the epic (Tole, 2002).

Compared to the aedes of ancient Greece, who passed from one place to another exalting the gestures of the brave, our rhapsodists did not practice their craft for a fee, but rhapsodist has been an integral part of their lives. Since ancient times, the songs of the Kreshniks borned and lived in the epic environment of the highlands and represented the spiritual and artistic world of the highlanders themselves. These songs were sung by ordinary people found in every tribe, neighborhood or village of the highlands for various folk or family celebrations (*Visaret e kombit*, 1937). They were distinguished for their attractive voice, mastery in lute interpretation, the technique of memorizing verses, such as the lute player of A. Lord from the province of Plava and Gucia, Adem Brahimi, who sang to him 2163 verses (Neziri, 2010); recreating forgotten verses, hyperbolic representation of heroes, etc.

The epic was sung in guest rooms and men's assemblies. Although the rhapsodists who performed lute in front of the people were men, women also knew the verses of these songs by heart and some of them even knew how to play the lute. Created in the bosom of the people and performed by him, the songs of the Kreshniks have a limited vocal range and a simple melodic line of a mainly recitative-melodic character. In line with the epic line of events, rhapsodists interpret the songs of the Kreshniks with a strong chest voice and a manly tone.

The cycle of legendary songs of the Epic of the Kreshniks, accompanied by lute is found to be sung by rhapsodists in Malësia e Madhe, Rranzat, Postrisë, Shllak and Dukagjin, Nikaj-Mërtur, Krasniqe and Gash Bytyç Berisha, Has and in Kosovo, in Rrafshin of Dukagjini with the centers Peja, Gjakova, Prizren, Rahovec, Deçan, Istog and Suhareka. The time of its formation is localized to be before the Slavic invasion in the Balkans, ie pre-Slavic and pre-Turkish (Tole, 2010). The verses of the cycle are verses 6, 8, 10, 14 and 16-syllables based on the modal diatonic musical scales with a half-tone tone, suitable for accompaniment with lute.

The collection and systematization of the northern epic was started by Father Bernardin Palaj in 1919, whom he introduced in 1924 to "Hylli i Dritës" saying:

*"The songs of the Kreshniks were not only to be despised, but on the contrary would be valued as visages of literature, as living moments of spiritual nobility and as pure imaginations of national characteristics" (Visaret e kombit, 1937).*

The work of the Franciscan fathers was finalized with the publication in 1937 of the volume "Visaret e kombit - 4", Volume II, "Songs of knights and legends", etc. (Tole, 2004). It is also worth mentioning the valuable collection of songs of the Kreshniks by A.Lordi, in the 30's.

In 1934, prof. Eqrem Çabej, talking about the epic songs of Albanians, noticed that in the north these songs are accompanied by lute (Çabej, 1975). He further evidenced the songs with trays in which the singer during the singing quickly rolls a copper tray (Çabej, 1975). A few years later, regarding the civic music of Northern Albania, he also noticed their oriental magic, while, according to him:

*"Musically and chronologically older melodies live in the songs of the Highlanders of Northern Albania. This strong solo song is the ancient expression of the free highlander, the last sound trace of the primary layer of Albanian culture" Çabej (1975 p. 129).*

Here we would list the modest contributions made by Pjetër Dingu, in 1940 with the publication of transcripts of folk music "Lyra Shqiptare", as well as Gjon Kujxhia with "National Dance", published in Florence in 1943 (Tole, 2004).

### **The Value of the Epic of the Kreshniks and the Creative Individuality of the Popular Rhapsodist**

Many authors have compared the value of the Kreshnik epic with the Homeric epic (Lambertz, Schmaus, Minna Skafte Jensen, etc.), Scandinavian sagas, Kalevala, Russian Bilins, etc. However, from a foreign point of view, this epic, being the product of a very little known culture and a difficult and rarely studied language, has remained in the shadow of the Serbo-Croatian epic, or rather of that Bosnian Muslim, which, without question, has proximity (Eslie, 2010). Although there is a more archaic stratification in the songs of the Kreshniks and it is difficult to define a clear picture of the addition of the epic poem (Elsie, 2004), it is thought that they were created in the XVII and XVIII century, on the Balkan border separating the

Islamic and Christian worlds. Our heroes are Muslim rebels who live in the "province" and enjoy crossing the mountains towards the invasion of the "kingdom," the Christian kingdom, and putting the king and his Slavic warriors ahead (Elsie, 2004). There are many parallels between the Albanian and the Serbo-Croatian epic, such as the names of the places referred to in the songs, Jutbina and Kotorr i Ri, etc., were identified in the province of Lika and Krbava-s, the valley east of Zadar in Croatia, not far from the present-day Bosnian border, which testifies to a common origin or culture but which developed in different environments taking on values, characteristics and forms of expression in accordance with these premises. In the epic of the Kreshniks, the conflict has shifted from the battle between Muslims and Christians to the battle between Albanians and Slavs (Elsie, 2004). The heroes of the cycle, Muji and Halili are antagonists with heroes of the Slavic world, such as: Kravec Marku, Behuri, Llabutani, Peci Vojvoda, who risk their vital interests and thus unfold many scenes of fighting and bloodshed, such as the siege of the kreshniks by the scoundrel and his revenge on the enemies. The verses of the epic say "We do not have blood or tribes with enemies", but also stand out features such as taking blood, honoring the "deceased", etc., which bring elements of psychology and the spiritual world of our people (Haxhihasani, 1983). The contrast between the characters in the epic is not just a reference to historical reality, but also a distinct poetic tool that highlights the features that legendary heroes should have. The denial of Slavic characters with negative and conquering intentions, despite their outstanding cavalry abilities, aims at exalting the heroes of the Albanian people, who display greatness with their intentions and actions. These artistic creations are the culture and art of a period that has left deep traces (*Kultura Popullore*, 1983).

Despite the similarities with the Serbo-Croatian epic, the songs of the Kreshniks have undergone a continuous and independent development that after the period of their creation and in this context, are not considered Bosnian, Croatian, Montenegrin or Serbian but a product of the creative genius of the highlands of Northern Albania (Elsie, 2010). Unlike the Bosnian epic, the Albanian one is still alive as it has been inherited as an oral tradition from generation to generation. According to the albanologist R. Elsie, even at the beginning of the XXI century, you can still find quite a few luters in Kosovo, especially in the highlands of Rugova, west of Peja, and in northern Albania, along with those few rhapsodists living in Mal Black, who are able to sing and recite the deeds of Muji and Khalil and their thirty ags, who constitute the last group of traditional epic singers in Europe (Elsie, 2010).

Also, the heroes of our legendary epic can be universalized in shaping their personality and characters of the folk art of the medieval period (Dibra, 2015), in which it was necessary to create types that self-sacrifice or conspire in the name of ethnic ideals, part of both the Albanian oral tradition and the oral tradition of other peoples (Bronxini, 1986), (Mizis, 1986), (Hoxha, 1986), (Bala, 1986), (Çausholli, 1986). Heroes are formed as a set of real features and characters of different times in accordance with the historical, social and aesthetic reality where the life of Albanians has progressed. The heroes of the epic, Muji, Halili, Basho Jona, Zuku, Ali Bajraktari, are strong, successful, wise, stable, simple, like the cavalier types of the Middle Ages in many epics of European peoples, as the people project them in the conscience of the best sons who have ever been gods (Dibra, 2015). These legendary heroes are ready to sacrifice themselves, to be successful, compassionate, in a universalization of legendary epics. As quoted by M. Dibra, the heroes of the Albanian epic:

*"With their monumental faces and gestures, they are regularly embedded in a mythological setting: they talk to horses, to fairies for hours, to birds; and Aga's sister Hasan Aga talks to the bear, the wolf, the raven. In the Albanian songs of the Kreshniks, it is not common to combine the wonderful, the fantastic legendary element with the modern historical facts"* Haxhihasani (1983, p. 64).

Some examples of mythical epics are when in a verse the kreshnik emerges from Yutbina and arrives in Miskov (Moscow) (Neziri, 2003). The researcher Sh. Sinan mentions time and timelessness in the epic. The folk tales of the Kreshnik songs, formed in verse, have a stable structure (Dundes, 1964). The language of the narrator about the greatness of the heroes is individualized providing opportunities for interpretation. Each of the rhapsodists, depending on his formation and individual abilities, incorporates in the practiced version his own imagination, the collective worldview, his attitude and that of the listeners, of the province, of the ancestors he taught, of the echoes of generations, of ethnicity in general (Dibra, 2015).

So, the epic of the Kreshniks includes songs with a subject, being organized and composed according to the laws of the narrative work. The characters, free highlanders, are volunteers and respond to the challenge when the country, the community calls, and are not armies led by princes and kings. As soon as they finish a combat action and rejoice in victory, they return to daily life near their family. These characters act in accordance with the legendary epic typology (Dibra, 2015).

The themes in the Epic of the Kreshniks are varied. The main topics are the protection of the territory of the province, cattle, the tower and the family, the topic of the fight against taxes, the topic of the origin of the knights who take power and maintain friendship with crafts, the theme of the knights' marriage, the theme of captivity, imprisonment, of release from prison, the topic of rivalry between the kreshniks, the topic of revenge, the topic of betrayal by women, the topic of rape of graves by opponents, etc. (Neziri, 2010).

The characters of the Epos of the Kreshniks have been shaped in accordance with the characteristic tools and nuances of the language of the epic genre in the imagination of people for many generations. They are *"... more or less like color in painting the word in the text takes on an embodiment aspect"* Papeleka (2005, p.98).

The musicality and image created by the interaction of melody with the meaning of the word has a poetic etymology derived from the word (Dibra, 2015). The creations of the epic of the Kreshniks, together with the individuality of the popular rhapsodists, have expressed and become the embodiment of the aesthetic demands of the inhabitants, when they sought to convey through artistic values great, extremely important, related to existence as endurance, love for the paternal land and its people, for family, honor, character and human dignity, without forgetting each other's love for life (Dibra, 2015).

## Conclusion

The popular rhapsodist is both an interpret in the musical instrument of lute and a poet who recites and recreates the traditional epic verses. He is characterized by a creative individuality which gives additional value to Albanian heroic songs. Epic of the Kreshniks is a legendary Albanian epic which has been subject of a number of discussions about its origin (Serbo-Croatian or Albanian) according to the work of the authors M. Parry and A. Lord, as well as a possible relation between Balkan heroic epic and the very precious epic of the ancient Greeks

according to the work of I. Kadare, a well-known Albanian author. S Also, the epicologist D. Shala underlines the historical and archaeological evidence of relation between the epic Illyrian life and the Epic of the Kreshniks and the linguist R. Katicic, who talks about the ancient formulas of epic songs in Illyria, based on anthroponomic and homonymous Illyrian evidence. In this context, the Epic of the Kreshniks remains one of the most important artistic pillars of the Albanian culture.

The Albanian rhapsodist has expressed its artistic individuality in performing the Epic of the Kreshniks with lute, a simple instrument produced by them. Lute has accompanied the Albanians' life and historical events through the years. Lute is an archaic instrument that has had a multidimensional function in the accompaniment of songs and the heritage of the popular culture in Albania. The music produced by lute gives value to the epic, which cannot exist without music. These older melodies still live in the songs of the highlanders of Northern Albania and luters (people who play lahute and sing epic songs) constitute the last group of traditional epic singers in Europe.

The study of the Albanian epic can give us new information about the decomposition of ancient oral songs formulas and the way of their creation between reality and imagination.

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## Complex training Methodology Increases Standard of Amateurs Boxing for Senior

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### Abstract

The presented research reflects an aspect of the training process with the amateur boxing champion team of sports club "Tirana" of Albania, for 2019, in which prominent boxers have been prepared, who are worthily represented in national and international activities, winning medals national. Normalization and modeling of the training process in a complex way according to special preparation cycles, in order to qualitatively develop the training indicators, in accordance with the physical, physiological and psychological requirements set by amateur boxing for senior. **Experimentation;** an original complex training methodology based on macrocycles was experimented, which are divided in 4 phases (adapter, developer, reinforcer and perfection) with senior amateur sports club boxers . "Tirana", within a period of one year (January 6, 2019 to December 31, 2019), Athletes are tested 3 times during the year at the beginning, between and the finish. Where they are tested indicators physical movements, special functional and Leonardo platforms are tested. It is worth mentioning the developments in physical, technical and functional indicators, where there was an average increase of **8.1%**. N Special test with the first two exercises, marked a rise of **14.9%** (8:44% in the amount of repetitions, 2:26 in the blinking% in cargo and 4:20 in the blinking% after one minute). In Drop-jump test was a marked increase in h **7:55%**. In te tin Singel 2 Leg Jump (assisted), at **6.54%** (FFI, at 5.96%, Jump Height, at 7.55% and Efficiency, at 6.12%). In the Singel leg Jump test (without assistance): **6.17%** (where F.Mes, Rel, at 7.69%, F.Mes.Rel / weight, at 9.73% and A. C ontakt time, at 1.09%). Conclusion: N of the training process should take advantage character loads pronounced aquaerobik physiological during which prevailing energy processes anaerobic against those aerobic (process anaerobic alaktik, at 10%, anaerbik process lactic glikolitik, 60% and aerobic process, to the extent 30%).

**Keywords:** Complex training Methodology, Amateurs Boxing, Senior

### Introduction

The presented research reflects an aspect of the training process with the amateur boxing champion team of sports club "Tirana" of Albania, for 2019, in which prominent boxers have been prepared, who are worthily represented in national and international activities, winning medals national.

The presented study is included in the group of complex scientific research. He concentrates modeling and rating of a training methodology to the original value, which would create space and resources for development in order to accelerate the training indicators and sporting achievements.

*Normalization and modeling of the training process in a complex way according to special preparation cycles, in order to qualitatively develop the training indicators, in accordance with the physical, physiological and psychological requirements set by amateur boxing for adults*

**Experimentation;** where an original complex training methodology based on macrocycles was experimented with, with the adult amateur boxers of KS "Tirana", within a period of one year (January 6, 2018 to 31 December, 2019), Athletes are tested 3 times during the year at the beginning, middle and end.

Boxer training is organized on a modern training methodology, which includes classical and specific training methods as well as training tools, preceded by special principles, such as: scientific development, deepening of specialization, creative development of training, etc. All this activity is focused with priority in the optimal preparation of the main types of preparation, general, special and specific, in the required ratios and modalities of boxing discipline and training period. (F.P Suslov, Shustin B.N, 1995);

Special place is occupied especially by supercompensation, as a biological and physiological process, where quantitative changes turn into qualitative changes, in the increase of training indicators, thanks to the delayed effects. (Matvejev-i, 1962).

The effects of supercompensation are closely related to the specific functioning of the structural elements, leading to the achievement of a new quality, which are: adaptation, stationing, adaptation, erection, culmination and preservation. Achieving a new quality is realized in 28-35 days, while of some qualities, not less than 2.5-3 months of systematic training. (Dibra F. 2013)

The organization of training loads is of primary importance, because the process of supercompensation is closely related to their implementation. The training load is *a studied amount of training incentives, which enable positive changes to increase the functional and coordinating physical indicators in the future.* (Dibra F, 2012).

The training load works on the coordination of the external load and the internal load. External load is estimated by the size-threshold of structural elements (volume, intensity, duration, etc.), while internal load, by the size of the internal impact of structural elements of the load.

Training load is well estimated by size, being classified into: large, medium and small load. The main evaluation criterion is the "load coefficient", according to the load volume. (See study)

The type of loads and their distribution is related to the criteria of renewal and maintaining the continuity of training, based on the principle that: After large loads requires a long rest (60-72 hours) and small loads of renewal and vice versa. (Dibra F, 2007).

In the treated former boxer with the necessary indicators to training, where indispensable role play *after site motor*, as certain trends *that constrain and enable motor activity and its dynamics in specific sports activity.*

Motor skills are different, starting from:

Sensory-perceptive skills; enabling connections to the external and internal environment through the central and peripheral nervous system;

Conditioning skills; which condition the motor action in its form and dynamics;

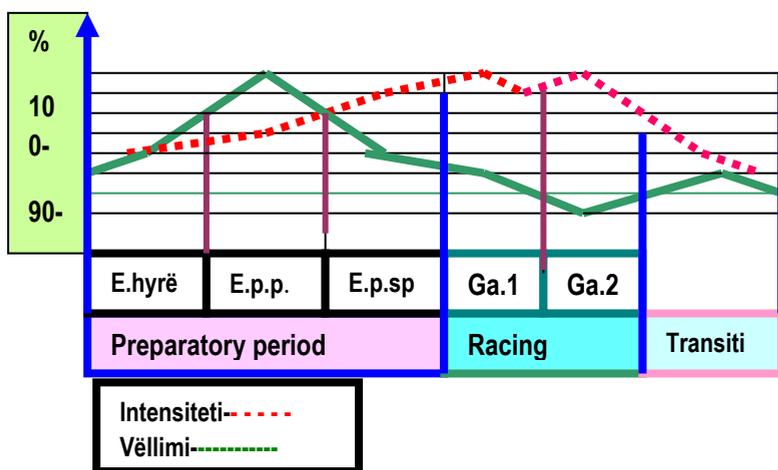
Coordination skills and Mobility Properties, which coordinate movement actions.

An important place is occupied by the activity of physical-motor abilities, strength, speed and endurance, which produce movements in all regimes, their spaces and dynamics. These skills are closely related to each other, feeling more the force factor, without which not even the simplest movement can develop. Their development is related to the influence of real factors of a genetic and training character, where the primary influence is given by sensory-perceptive abilities, muscle mass, activation of muscle fibers; type of muscle fibers, VO<sub>2</sub> max level, psychological preparation, energy reserves, etc.

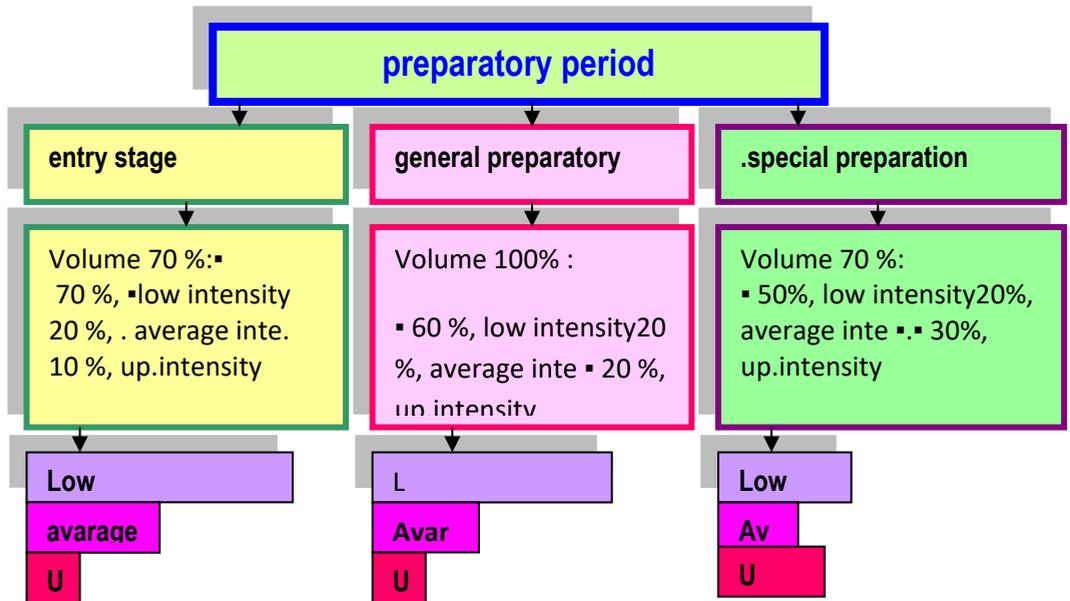
Physical abilities in the conditions of the development of the race, are applied with different strains: with maximum strains, with fast and explosive strains, with small but long strains. In all these cases, all physical abilities are demonstrated, with the maximum strength at the top, giving an undeniable impact on the size of the strain, applied in the appropriate regimes of physical-motor activity.

Physical skills are developed in two forms, in general and special terms, where the main tool is exercise. The general form is practiced with exercises of other sports; special form is developed with exercises similar to and similar to the conditions of the race such as: plyometric, pyramidal, contrast methods (for strength); iterative method (for velocity), extended and interval method (for developing general and special stability ed).

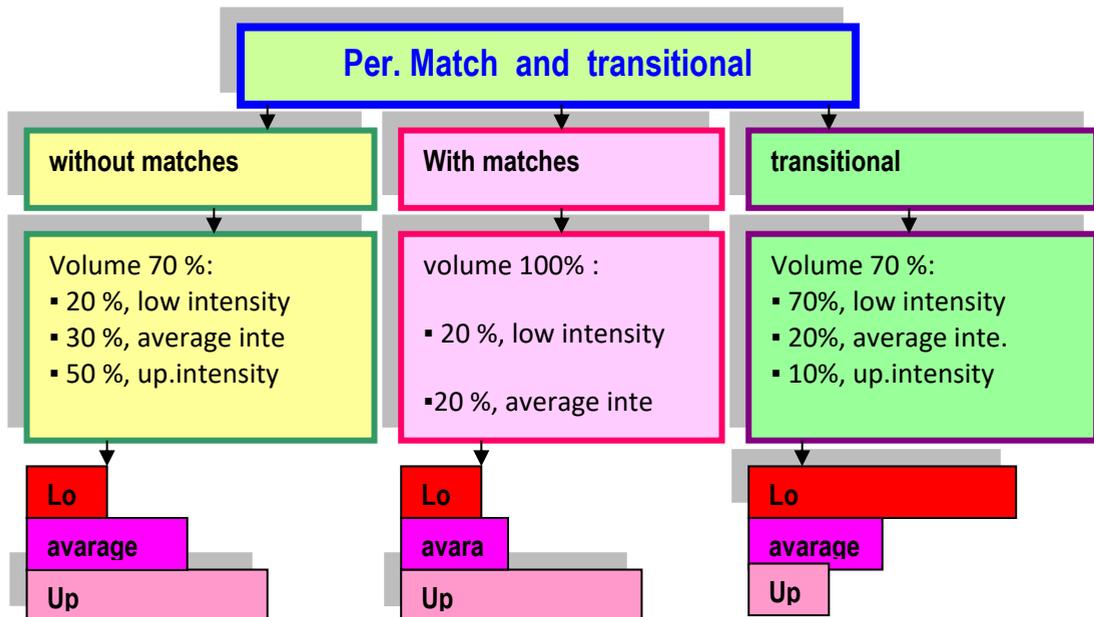
Modern training methodology requires that at each training stage the intensity scales be alternated, from high to low and vice versa, which allows the possibility of training with renewal.



Scheme 30 :Intensity scales in the training load in the preparatory period (Dibra F.-Bushati S., 2014)



Scheme 31: Intensity scales in the training load in the period of matches and passes (Dibra F.-Bushati S., 2014)



The training process is built on the following training macrocycles:

Adaptive macrocycle (42 training days); which is focused on the recovery of the previous state of boxer training, after the transition period of the previous year;

▪ ☒

Training stages	Type of microcycle	Day of training	Volume (Min.)	General preparation	Preparation special	Preparation specifik
General preparation	Sign ě s 1	1x 7 = 7 day	385 ' 100%	256 ' (67%)	55 ' 15%	74 ' 18%
	I p ě rgji. 1	1x 7 = 7 day	491 ' 100%	290 ' 59%	109 ' 22%	92 ' 19%
amount	2	14 days	14.6 h 100%	9.1 h 63%	2.74 h 18.5%	2.77 h 18.5%
Preparation special	Special. 1	1x 7 = 7 day	514 ' 100%	243 ' 47%	174 ' 34%	97 ' 19%
amount	1	1x 7 = 7 day	8.6 h	4 h 47%	2.9 h 34%	1.6 h 19%
Competition period	match 2	2x7 = 14 day	868 ' '(100%)	324 ' 37%	262 ' 31%	282 ' 32%
	Near the match 1	1x6 = 6 day	174 ' 100%	72 ' 41%	33 ' 19%	69 ' 40%
	Near the match 1	1x6 = 6 day	174 ' 100%	72 ' 41%	33 ' 19%	69 ' 40%
amount	3	20 days ě	17.37 h (100%)	6.6 h 39.5%	4.92 h 25%	5.85 h 35.5%

Developmental macro cycle (86 training days); which is focused on the rapid development of training indicators

General preparation	Type of microcycle	Day of training	Volume (Min.)	General preparation	Preparation special	Preparation specifik
amount	Login h s (1)	1x 7 = 7 day	385 ' 100%	256 ' (67%)	55 ' 15%	74 ' 18%
	General. (3)	3x 7 = 21 day	1473 ' 100%	870 ' 59%	327 ' 22%	276 ' 19%
Preparation special	3 micro.	21 days ě	31 h 100%	18.8 h 63%	6.4 h 18.5%	5.84 h 18.5%
amount	Special. (4)	4x 7 = 28 day	2056 ' 100%	972 ' 47%	696 ' 34%	388 ' 19%
competition period	4 micro.	28 days ě	34.3 h	16.2 h 47%	11.6 h 34%	6.47 h 19%
amount	match (3)	3x7 = 21 day	1302 ' '(100%)	486 ' 38%	393 ' 31.0%	423 ' 31%
	Near the match (1)	1x7 = 7 day	185 ' 100%	77 ' 41%	36 ' 19%	72 ' 40%
amount	4 micro.	28 days ě	24.79 h (100%)	9.39 h 39.5%	7.15 h 25%	8.25 h 35.5%

▣ *Booster macrocycle (132 training days);* which is focused on consolidating training indicators

Tab. 26: Load volume during the booster macrocycle

	I general . (5)	5x 7 = 35 day	2455 ' 100%	1150 ' 59%	545 ' 22%	370 ' 19%
amount	6 micro.	42 days ÷	45.59 h 100%	22.75 h 63%	9.67 h 18.5%	6.67 h 18.5%
Preparation special	Special. (6)	6x 7 = 42 day	3084 ' 100%	1458 ' 47%	1044 ' 34%	582 ' 19%
amount	6 micro.	42 days ÷	51.40 h 100%	24.3 h 47%	17.4 h 34%	9.7 h 19%
Etap s competition	match ( 6 )	6x7 = 42 days (77 sessions)	2850 ' '(100%)	1080 ' 38%	762 ' 27.0%	1008 ' 35%
	Near the match (2)	2x7 = 14 day	348 ' 100%	144 ' 41%	66 ' 19%	138 ' 40%
amount	7 micro.	49 days ÷ + 35 se. for days	53.3 h (100%)	20.4 h 38.0 %	13.8 h 26.0 %	19.1 h 36 %

▪ *Makrociklitweaker (63 training days);* which is focused on perfecting and maintaining training indicators.

Tab. 28: Load volume during the perfect macrocycle

Training stages	Type of microcycle	Day of training	Volume (Min.)	General preparation	Preparation special	Preparation specifk
General preparation	Login h s ( 1 )	1x4 = 4 day	179 ' 100%	129 ' ( 72 %)	30 ' 17 %	20 ' 11 %
	I general . (1)	1x7 = 7 day	491 ' 100%	290 ' 59%	109 ' 22%	92 ' 19%
amount	2 micro.	11 days ÷	11.17 h 100%	6.99 h 63%	2.32 h 18.5%	1.87 h 18.5%
Preparation special	Special. (2)	2x 7 = 14 day	1028 ' 100%	486 ' 47%	348 ' 34%	194 ' 19%
amount	2 micro.	14 days ÷	17.14 h 100%	8.1 h 47%	5.8 h 34%	3.24 h 19%
Competition period	match (1)	1x7 = 7 day	434 ' '(100%)	162 ' 38%	131 ' 31.0%	141 ' 31%
	Near the match (5)	5x6 = 30 days	835 ' 100%	325 ' 39%	165 ' 20%	345 ' 41%

Imi Determining and ordering the amount of training tasks in the microcycle and training cycle is evaluated as a factor that regulates the regulation and program of sports training, where we rely on a simple mathematical but meaningful action, the " *rule of three* ", which converts the indicator the percentage amount of tasks (units) under development goals: to prepare date Total m 's, special and specific to each stage of training every makrocikli.

## Realizations in Physical-Mobile Indicators

Realization in physical-motor and functional indicators focuses on basic motor-functional, technical, technical and coordination objectives. For this purpose, special tests were used, which included the following exercises:

30 Runs 30-50 m from high start, for speed assessment, in sec;

Dy Long jump with two legs from the ground, for speed assessment, in full meters and centimeters.

- Traction on iron, to assess the strength of the arms and contracting muscles, at times; .

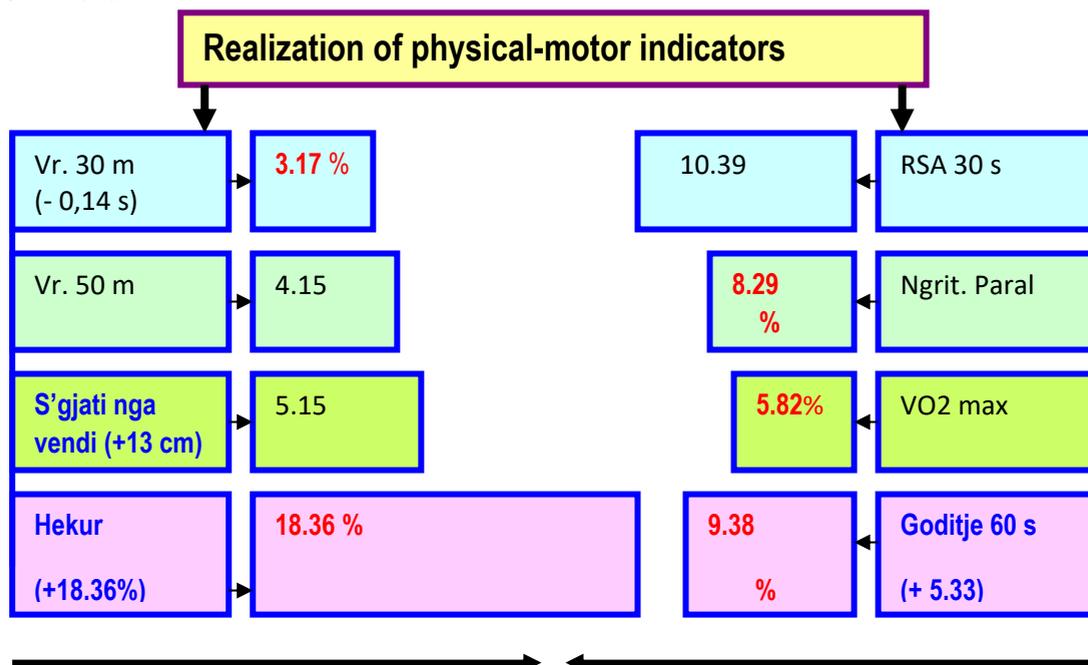
Rimi Approaching the chest near the knees (RSA, with barbell disc 5 kg in the chest), for the assessment of strength in the lumbar region, at times for 30 sec;

- Raise my arm in parallel, to assess the strength of the arms, at times;

Të Straight strokes, for the assessment of special force, at times in one minute;

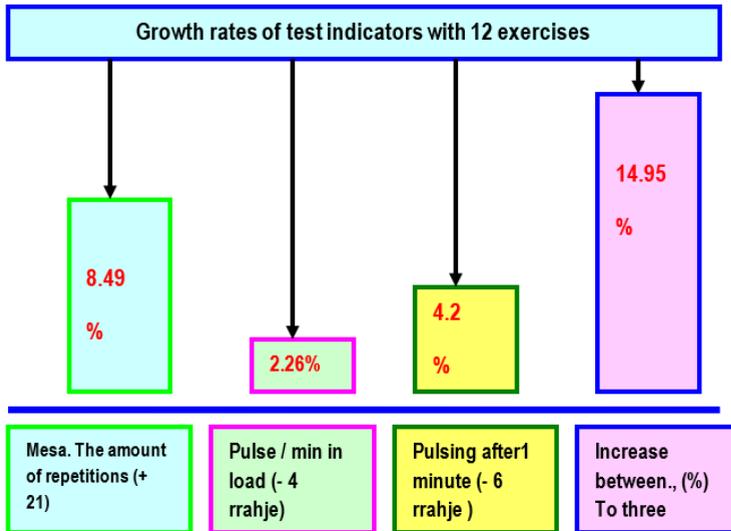
- VO2 max; for the evaluation of functional preparation, in mil / kg / min (Astrandtest )  
- Tab. 47

S kema 33: Dynamics of physical-motor indicators in the boxing team SK" Tirana"



## Realization N Y TRREGUSIT PHYSICAL W -functional OF SPECIAL W.

Achievements in t Indicators functional special s focus on the dynamics of "test with 12 exercises " in the order and manner determined by the first . (Tab. 48 )



Scheme 34 : Growth rates s h indices n h test special exercises 12

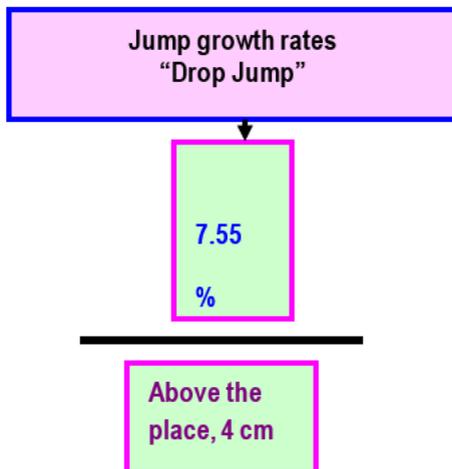
**DJ: DROP JUMP**

**(Jumping on the ground with both feet):**

- K s only two rcim k h mb h t after falling on an object with height n s 40 cm.

Scheme 36 : Growth rates s h indices n s dance test s s highest by country

Me two legs, p a DECISION ë n the side ë ve

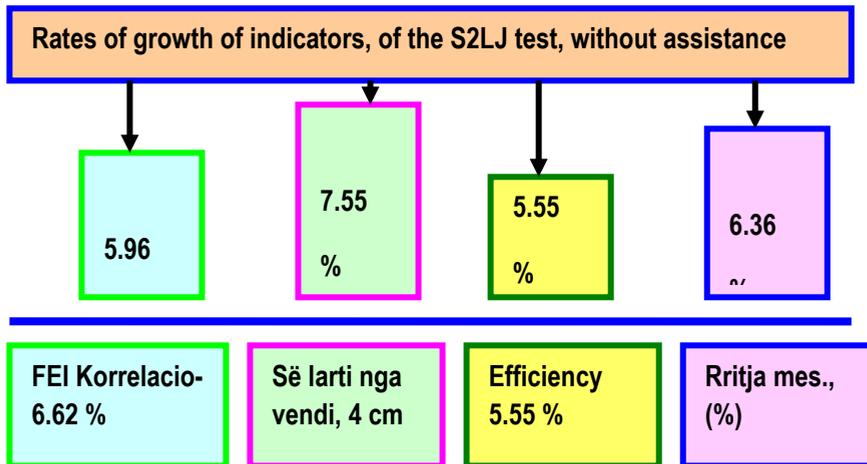


**S2LJ: SINGLE 2 LEG JUMP (Jumping n h above h as two feet on the ground , without the aid of wings) :**

- Continuous jumps, within 10 seconds, with hands placed in the middle;
- Evaluates the correlation of force in relation to speed, length, fashion and weight as well as the level of explosive force and coordination.

*Scheme 37 : Growth rates s h indices n s dance test s s highest by country*

*Me two legs, p a DECISION ë n the side ë ve*



**☐ S2LJ: SINGLE 2 LEG JUMP**

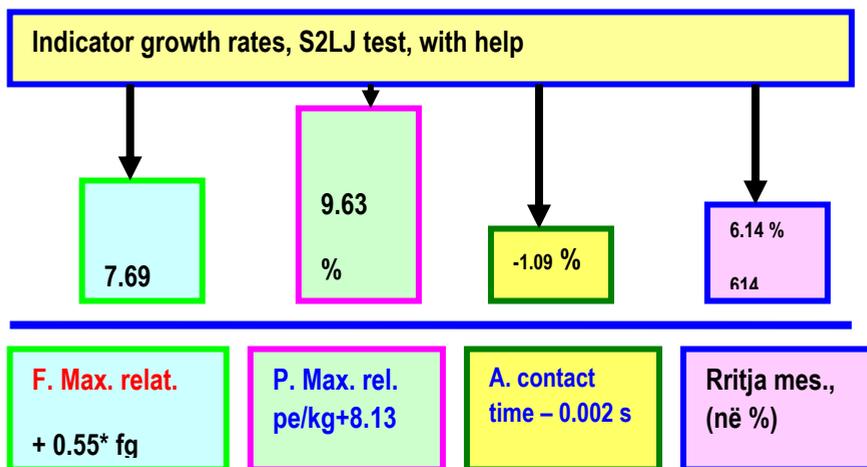
**(Jumping n ë above ë as the two feet on the ground with the aid of wings);**

I Single high jump, with the help of wings;

- Evaluates in particular the maximum relative strength, power and reaction.

*Scheme 38 : Growth rates s h indices n s dance test s s highest by country*

*Me two legs, p a DECISION ë n the side ë ve*



It is worth mentioning the developments in physical, technical and functional indicators, where there was an average increase of **8.1%**. N Special test with the first two exercises, marked a rise of **14.9%** (8:44% in the amount of repetitions, 2:26 in the blinking% in cargo and 4:20 in the blinking% after one minute). In Drop-jump test was a marked increase in h 7:55%. In the test Singel 2 Leg Jump (assisted), at **6.54%** (FFI, at 5.96%, Jump Height, at 7.55% and Efficiency, at 6.12%). In the Singel leg Jump test (without assistance): **6.17%** (where F.Mes, Rel, at 7.69%, F.Mes.Rel / weight, at 9.73% and A. Kontakt time, at 1.09%).

Analyzing the data, it is noticed that the whole team of boxers has made progress in all physical, functional and coordination indicators. This increase is greater in the iron and RSA traction indicator and smaller in the 30 m segment, where increases are more difficult. However, in the future the indicators of long jump from the ground and VO2 max, from 253 cm to 270 cm and from 45 to 55 mil / kg / weight, should be improved, as indicators that increase strength and aerobic capacity, for higher level loads. high in the future,

## Conclusions

At the end of the study, "*Complex training methodology of training increases the standards of training in amateur boxing, adults*", we come to the following main conclusions:

**First;** The experimental training process proves the theoretical and practical values of a new training methodology in the field of amateur boxing with specific and complex features feasible and necessary for high achievements. Through it, the right opportunities and conditions were achieved for the realization of the respective goals and objectives, focusing on a series of individual and team achievements.

**Second ;** The training methodology presented in the scope of this study is an original, standardized, applied and rational activity, freed from unnecessary overloads, which tire and exhaust the boxer, making it difficult to achieve special and specific indicators of training as a prerequisite. for high results.

**Third;** The training process in the field of amateur boxing should be organized in accordance with the requirements set by the sports match, during which anaerobic to aerobic energy processes prevail (anaerobic process, to the extent of 10%, lactic glycolytic anaerobic process, to the extent of 60% and aerobic process, to the extent of 30%).

Under these conditions, in the training process, priority should be given to loads with a pronounced aerobic character, which present special requirements for special endurance indicators, such as basic physical ability in the preparation of the boxer and physical-physical activities with breaks and intervals, where they are applied with priority interval and alternative methods

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## **Reflections on Factors that Led to the Establishment of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (Sotl) in An Open Distance and E-Learning University**

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University of South Africa

### **Abstract**

The paper reports on the reflections of how the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) was initiated in the College of Education at an open distance and e-learning (ODEL) institution. The study is embedded in a transformative paradigm and a qualitative research method was employed. The lens that guided the study was transactional distance theory, the Ubuntu philosophy and wellness theory. The transactional distance theory was used owing to the digital platforms that the university uses in bridging the gap between the lecturers and the students. Furthermore, the Ubuntu philosophy has been chosen as a lens since the researcher applied humane element in teaching and learning. In addition, the wellness theory served as a lens for the study mainly because the researcher focused on the intellectual, emotional and career wellness of the students while engaging with teaching and learning matters. The design was participatory action research since the researcher was actively involved throughout the study. Data were collected through document analysis, activities over a period of three years through students' assignments, engagement with students on digital platforms such as WhatsApp, discussion forum, podcasts, videos, seminars, workshops, students' queries, and responses and experience of the researcher and the context during fieldwork. Analysis was qualitative thematic content data analysis, which was done manually. Categories from codes led to the following findings that the focus on teaching and learning is on operational submissions like question papers and tutorial letters, training was of continuous professional development (CPD), and engagement with tutors. Student engagement on digital platforms with the lecturers revealed keen interest in learning. Regarding seminars and workshops, approximately 50 academics attended though few engaged in robust discourses and the jargon of teaching and learning was not used extensively. Findings on published work revealed that very few academics publish on what they teach. As far as observations made by the researcher are concerned, most young academics struggled to balance between teaching workload and their studies (doctoral studies), balancing of key performance areas (KPA's). Some were not aware that one could research on what they teach and publish. The researcher observed that senior scholars who were publishing on teaching and learning influenced their mentees to do likewise; hence, one can say communities of practice (COP) work better in a university. In addressing the challenges of teaching and learning, an intervention was in an initiative of the SoTL. The study led to a

scholarly approach to teaching and learning at a meso level that is college or faculty level.

**Keywords:** Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL); Jargon of Teaching and Learning; Student Support; Scholarly Approach; Communities of Practice (COP's)

## Introduction

The higher education landscape has changed drastically post-1994 (democratic South Africa). Some of these changes entail access to higher education by the previously marginalised groups, an increase in enrolment figures across universities and a demand for free education seen in the protests of #Feesmustfall campaigns (CHE, 2016). With high enrolment then comes, the issue of quality in teaching and learning. The contact universities using a face-to-face teaching were also inundated by the high number of students. The open distance learning (ODL) institution such as the University of South Africa (Unisa), owing to its nature of modalities of offering tuition, experienced high enrolment figures. For an example, between 2014 to 2018, the student population ranged between 350 775 and 381 483 (Unisa, 2018). The College of Education had the highest enrolment figures, which had 116 234 students in 2018 (Unisa, 2018). The current study focused on the College of Education Unisa. The researcher was interested in seeing how scholarship of teaching and learning could be established with the aim of enhancing quality in teaching and learning. With high numbers of students in an ODeL, one was interested in seeing how teaching and learning was conducted and how students were supported to ensure that there were quality graduates. Hence the research question that guided the study was: **What are the factors that led to the establishment of the scholarship of teaching and learning in an open and distance and e-learning university?**

Education White Paper 3 of 1997 introduced quality assurance in higher education through the establishment of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) as a permanent committee of the Council of Higher Education (CHE) (Department of Education, 1997). "The aim of the Quality Enhancement Programme (QEP) is to enhance all aspects of teaching and learning in order to improve student success" (CHE, 2014:ii). This led to, institutional reviews, ii) programme accreditation, iii) national reviews, and iv) capacity development. These are key in ensuring that there is an improvement in teaching and learning from programme development to students' completion of any qualification. The HEQC was responsible for institutional audits, which were conducted between 2004 and 2011. Subsequently, all institutions were required to report on quality measures employed for teaching and learning. The second round of audits came in the form of launching QEP, which began in 2014 and its focus was on the development of quality systems of teaching (CHE, 2016). The purpose of the QEP was to enhance teaching and learning in order to improve student success in increasing the number of graduates with attributes that are personally, professionally and socially valuable, enhancing the learning environment, enhancing course, and programme enrolment management (CHE, 2014). The QEP initiative was inclusive in the sense that there were a number of workshops for Deputy Vice-Chancellors responsible for teaching and learning and students were also brought on board (CHE Annual Report 2015/16). The goal of QEP initiative was to develop capacity in the sector where a need is identified. Institutions submitted reports in September 2014 and they were analysed. The findings revealed that institutions did not

allocate similar weights to teaching and research in particular for promotions and reward structures. After the first phase of QEP, institutions submitted their reports on the improvements on teaching and learning they had made subsequent to their participation in the project. The CHE then organised two workshops on Assessment and Recognition of University Teaching conducted by Professor Thomas Olsson, from Lund University in Sweden, who has participated in a national system to promote pedagogical competence among academics in Sweden. It is against this background that universities have embarked on a rigorous exercise of ensuring that teaching and learning as core functions in higher education receive the necessary attention that it deserves. Hence, the current study explored an initiative of establishing the scholarship of teaching and learning in an attempt to improve quality in teaching and learning. In looking closely at what QEP focused on, the researcher benchmarked on their findings in exploring further on what the College of Education at Unisa is doing in ensuring that teaching and learning is taken seriously and it is of a better quality. Hence there was a need for an in-depth study in exploring the day-to-day activities in teaching and learning and determining the scholarliness thereof.

### **Rationale for the study**

A number of studies conducted in an ODeL institution in particular Unisa focused more on student supervision for postgraduate studies (van Biljon, de Villiers, 2013; Bireda, 2012; Roets, 2016; Manyike, 2017; Prinsloo & Maritz, 2015). Several studies focused on teaching and learning, in particular undergraduate qualifications at Unisa. The studies addressed issues such as Teaching Practice or Work Integrated Learning (WIL), the use of portfolios, assessment in ODL, pedagogical strategies across disciplines, the use of African indigenous language in higher education, shift in ODL to ODeL and student support in ODL among others (Mokoena, 2017; Letseka & Pitsoe, 2013; Arko-Archemfour, 2017; Ramdass & Masithulela, 2016; Du Plessis, 2010; Phaahla, 2014; Van Wyk, 2016; Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2017). The topics addressed at Unisa on teaching and learning showed that the researchers are passionate about addressing issues that are pertinent to the core function leading to student success. As I studied these research papers, there were recommendations emanating from the studies but the gap lies in the follow-up papers on intervention and also on which actions were taken by the college or institution and what were the success stories. The question that I asked myself was: “so what next? As a newly appointed Manager of Teaching and Learning in the College of Education, I pondered on the QEP initiative on enhancing quality in teaching and learning and the research conducted at Unisa between 2000 and 2017. I realised that there was limited number of research papers that address the actual teaching and how students learn hence a gap in the scholarship of teaching and learning. Therefore, I initiated the scholarship of learning and teaching (SoTL) as a project that will address the quality in teaching and learning and address the gaps identified by researchers at Unisa.

**The main research question for the study was:**

**What are the factors that led to the establishment of the scholarship of teaching and learning in an ODeL university?**

**The Sub questions were as follows:**

**How was teaching and learning conducted in the College of Education and how were students supported to ensure that they become quality graduates?**

**What were the initiatives in teaching and learning which unfolded until the SoTL was established at the College of Education at Unisa to ensure that there is quality in learning, teaching and student success?**

### **Understandings on Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)**

The Carnegie Foundation Ernest Boyer (1990) initiated the movement of SoTL to end the comparison between teaching and research where teaching was devalued. Boyer (1990) defines scholarship as a concept that can fit core functions of an academic as follows: SoTL, scholarship of discovery, scholarship of integration and the scholarship of application. According to Boyer (1990), SoTL implies that we teach, analyse, reflect on it, and make findings public. The scholarship of discovery is the traditional concept of research in an empirical way. For the scholarship of integration is seen where scholarly concepts are adapted from inside or outside our work. The scholarship of application was defined as a scholarly approach to service, engaging the scholar in addressing society's challenges (Bailey & Monroe, 2013). The theory of Boyer was further developed by other scholars such as Shulman (1999) who purported that scholarship should have three characteristics, that is be disseminated to public, critical evaluation and review, and be accessible for use by other peers of one's scholarly community (Bailey & Monroe, 2013). In addition, Shulman (2000:50) asserts that "we develop scholarship of teaching when our work as teachers becomes publicly peer-reviewed and critiqued. Exchange with members of our professional communities so they, in turn, can build on our work." Furthermore, Hutchings and Shulman (1999:12) point out that SoTL is not synonymous with excellent teaching. As scholars were debating on the understanding around SoTL after what Boyer initiated, it became clear that the SoTL movement was gaining momentum and there were additions to Boyer's work. Richlin and Cox (2004) underscore that scholarly teaching is intended to directly affect teaching and learning experiences and to contribute to a public body of information about teaching and learning. An interesting thing is that there were additions to where the original explanation was lacking. For instance, Shulman (1999) revealed the point of SoTL's aim, which was to improve student learning (Sturges, 2013). This was also emphasised by Hutchings and Huber (2008) that the purpose of SoTL is to improve student learning. While others put emphasis on student learning, Bender (2005) proposed that SoTL should be orientated towards securing evidence about learning. Cranton (2011) argues that SoTL work needed to include explicit reflection on the institutional norms and societal context of teaching and learning. I am also of the view that Unisa as its vision is "The African University shaping futures in service of humanity", the societal context in teaching and learning should be visible and as scholars, it is our duty to research on that in our teaching and learning. Furthermore, Potter and Kustra (2011) elaborate on Cranton's (2011) idea that SoTL originates in critical reflection. To draw from the development of what SoTL is as defined by different scholars from Carnegie foundation to the current situation, I do concur with them. Moreover, for the current study and how the SoTL project was initiated in an ODeL university, I adopt the definition of Potter and Kustra (2011) that SoTL at Unisa is based on improving the quality of teaching and learning. There will be continuous reflection using systematic gathered evidence that will be subjected to review and evaluation, and be shared publicly with scholars within our disciplines.

## Theoretical Framework

The study is underpinned by three theories. They include transactional distance theory of Moore (2005), wellness theory of Hettler (1980) and Ubuntu theory (Tutu, 1999; Letseka, 2013). The purpose of using these three theories is to respectively see how the ODeL institution bridges the distance between itself and the student, consider the well-being of the student and uses humaneness in teaching platforms so that meaningful learning takes place ultimately producing globally competent graduates. The transactional distance theory of Moore (1997) is postulated as a pedagogical concept used for teaching in distance education wherein dialogue, structure and student autonomy play a critical role in learning. Giossos, Koutsouba and Lionarakis (2009) further refined the theory by looking at the dialogue and course material that may affect the students' autonomy regarding independence and interdependence. Since the University has no students on campus, but uses digital platforms in teaching and learning, the researcher saw that the transactional distance theory was relevant for the study. Therefore, this theory is relevant for the establishment of the SoTL in an ODeL context. The interdependence that is needed in an ODeL context resonates well with the Ubuntu and wellness theory. The Ubuntu as explained by Tutu (1999) and Letseka (2013) calls for interconnectedness as the saying goes "motho ke motho ka batho", meaning I am because you are. The Ubuntu philosophy is the researcher's stance and lens in teaching and learning shown to students and the care that is shown so that there is a dialogic engagement that is healthy which may culminate into success and better throughput. The use of Ubuntu/botho theory is equally relevant for the SoTL project since it is also aligned to the vision of Unisa, "The African University in shaping futures in service of humanity (Unisa, 2013). The wellness theory of Hettler (1980) was also relevant as a theoretical lens since studying in an ODeL institution is aimed at producing graduates that are optimally developed in all six dimensions, namely, intellectually, emotionally, socially, occupationally, physically, and spiritually. In practicing Ubuntu or being humane, the lecturer is interested in the wellness and optimal development of the student even though separated by distance, connectivity can be used in the teaching and learning process to support the students. The students' well-being is realised or initiated by the lecturer so that the students' learning is smooth. As I embarked on the process of establishing a SoTL project, I was propelled by the three theories in order to address the goals of QEP initiated by CHE (2015/16) which purports quality in teaching and learning and student success. Unless an exploratory study is conducted in how teaching is carried out and how students learn, quality and student success may be compromised; hence, the critical look into the practice was of crucial importance.

## Method

The study is embedded in a transformative paradigm, which is defined by Wagner, Kawulich and Chilisa (2012) as a paradigm that seeks to dispel the myths and is geared for transformation in society. This paradigm was intentionally chosen for the establishment of SoTL so that in responding to the QEP, there could be transformation in teaching and learning, which will eventually leads to student success. The qualitative research method was employed since the study occurred in a naturalistic environment (Creswell, 2012). The design was participatory action research since the researcher was actively involved throughout the study. Since I wanted to see change in the domain or portfolio of teaching and learning. As Greenwood and Levin (1998) purport, action research was a viable design. McNiff and Whitehead (2006) also assert that action research is a design that promotes social change. The

researcher was also a participant in the entire process. According to Gillis and Jackson (2002), data collection and analysis in PAR should be conducted in a systematic way with the aim of effecting change and implementing practical knowledge generation in teaching and learning. The location where the study took place was the College of Education at Unisa. I explored the engagement between lecturer and students on digital platform such as e-learning management system branded myUnisa and discussion forum. Moreover, I examined the feedback given to students on assignments, whether it was engaging the student in studying further. The use of videos and podcasts in teaching on virtual platforms was also explored. Documents such as quarterly reports that are presented at College Teaching and Learning Committee were analysed as to what departments do regarding teaching and learning activities. Furthermore, seminars were also used to determine the level of engagement of academics in teaching and learning activities. In addition, workshops on topical issues were determinant factors on the knowledge of academics and the level of involvement regarding the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL). I further scrutinised the student queries reports, which were submitted quarterly at College Teaching and Learning Committee. I also checked the research and innovation reports on the publications of academics within the College whether their research publications were on separate projects or on what they teach within the College of Education. Thematic analysis was used, which was done manually. Categories from codes led to the following themes:

**Table 1****Themes from Findings on Scholarship of Teaching and Learning**

Themes from actual teaching	Themes from Quarterly Reports	Themes from seminars and workshops on Teaching and Learning	Published research articles	Observations
Tutorial letter and study guide a teaching tool	Focus is on operational submissions e.g. exam papers and tutorial letters	Approximately 50 academics attend seminars and workshop in the College of Education	Very few academics publish on what they teach	Balance between teaching workload and studies for those doing doctorates a challenge
Lecturers do engage students on virtual platform such as myUnisa, not all students engage in discussion forum	Academics who attended CPD training and library training	Few engage in discourses on teaching and learning	Most published papers are on research projects and not on modules that lecturers teach	Balancing of key performance areas by academics a challenge
Some lecturers use podcasts and YouTube videos to	Attendance of discussion classes for some modules	Jargon of teaching and learning as		Awareness that teaching and learning can be researched and

teach	in high risk modules	captured in university policies not used extensively		published on was minimal
Assignment feedback varies some detail comments others give scanty comments	How academics engage with tutors			Communities of Practice work better
Announcements, WhatsApp, blogs used mostly by e-tutors and lecturers to communicate with students regarding teaching and learning matters	How student queries are handled			

## Discussion

### FINDINGS FROM ACTUAL TEACHING:

#### ***Theme 1: Tutorial letter and study guide a teaching tool:***

The findings revealed that the tutorial letter and study guide are the teaching tools that the students engage with. The University promotes the dialogic writing of study material where the lecturer engages with the students at a personal level. For instance, the welcome message is written in such a way that the students get a feeling that the lecturer is talking directly to them. The following snippet is taken from Tutorial letter 101

*“Dear Student*

*Welcome to the short course offered by the Department of Psychology of Education. This short learning programme is called “The support of children at risk”. We trust that you will enjoy this short course and that it enhances and broadens your scope of knowledge on children at risk”.*

The dialogic way of writing the tutorial letter and the study guide in an ODeL institution enables the students to feel nearer to the lecturer. Similarly, Moore and Kearsley (2005) explain how distance is bridged in an ODeL institution. The teaching tools examined, namely, the study guide and the tutorial letters were clear in outlining content and how assignments were to be written, closing dates and how to send it online. The language of communication was student-centred and accessible. However, in searching Google Scholar and research gate, I did not come across any Unisa publication indicating any research on how Unisa study material is written and how students experienced using the study material. Hence I saw it fit that there should be SoTL and explore on how the College of Education writes the study material and the way students experience it.

***Theme 2: Lecturers do engage students (Use of podcast, feedback in assignments and Announcements and Whats App)***

The dialogic engagement is crucial in teaching and learning since it draws both parties nearer to each other as they embark on a teaching and learning journey. Hence, all tutorial letters are written in the same way though content may differ to ensure that the distance is bridged between lecturer and the student. The study material is availed online and also on print mode to cover a diverse population of students. The researcher found that all lecturers adhered to the requirements of the university in developing the material that is engaging and there were no deviations on the sampled study material (Unisa, 2013).

It was also found that lecturers do engage students on virtual platform such as myUnisa, although not all students engage in discussion forums. This is a challenge since the virtual platforms create a teaching environment and support from e-tutors (Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2017). Furthermore, some lecturers use podcasts and YouTube videos to teach the modules. These podcasts and videos can be accessed by using either a phone or computer. It was easy to determine the way students download the videos and the analytics tell if students are interested or not. In determining also how teaching occurs in an ODeL environment, assignment feedback is important as indicated by (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2013). The findings revealed that feedback varies from one marker to another some detail comments others give scanty ones. This is something that needs attention to improve the teaching and learning using feedback on assignments. Announcements, WhatsApp and blogs used mostly by e-tutors and lecturers to communicate with students regarding teaching and learning matters the most. Most students prefer WhatsApp and this mode of teaching works better since students can get guidance wherever they are without any difficulty using any cellphone. This was researched by Makoe and Shandu (2018) and Makoe and Shandu (2019) and was found to be a useful tool for teaching and learning. Lecturers who were successful in their teaching and with a high pass percentage in their modules prefer this mode of teaching and learning just to augment on what the university avails. I saw the need of exploring the lecturer and student engagement within the College of Education and see how the engagement that is in existence can further be improved. It was against this background that SoTL was conceptualised so that we constantly revisit our practices and improve where we can.

**Findings from Quarterly Reports:*****Theme 1 Teaching and Learning taken on an Operational level only***

The study revealed that teaching and learning was taken on an operational level and a ticking of boxes regarding the daily obligations that academics are expected to carry out. It was just a matter of fulfilling daily operations on teaching and learning and key performance areas. Furthermore, the academics set examination papers and these were submitted in fulfilling their key performance areas, namely, teaching and learning. What the academics did was just to teach and fulfil their key performance areas. There was neither reflection nor research on their teaching and how students learn. Teaching and learning was approached in a traditional way and there was no indication of research taking place in most modules taught and the exploration on how students learn in higher education. As Cranton (2011) asserts, there should be a reflection in teaching and learning. This is supported by what Boyer (1990) alluded to that teaching in higher education was not receiving recognition compared to traditional research. Norton (2018) asserts that there should be action research in teaching

and learning and that there must be a balance between being an academic and a practitioner. That balance simply reflects on how one teaches, researches on that and improves on the practice. Upon realising that there was no research in the teaching of most modules, then I saw the need of initiating some research into teaching and how learning takes place.

### ***Theme 2 CPD Training attendance***

The findings further revealed that new academics and a few old academics would report on attendance of CPD training workshops, which was reported quarterly. The CPD training focused on understanding the e-learning management system from the ICT and how students engage with academics on various platforms virtually. The CPD further focused on library training and understanding the ODeL context and how to teach in that context. Even though there were CPD training workshops but as a college, we never embarked on a research to see to it that there was a scholarly approach to the exercise. There were neither explorations nor reflection meetings on whether the CPD workshops were adding value to teaching and learning. Hence, there was no scholarly approach on the CPD workshops to deeply explore, reflect, write, and expose peers to a peer review process with the aim of publishing the work. Collin and Van der Heijden (2012) point out that CPD is important and should be continuous regardless of the occupation or profession. If CPD is to be scholarly, then there must be research to ensure that practice is improved in a relevant and dynamic way. Consequently, I saw a need regarding what the CPD in the institution was availing to develop academics needed some research and if need be some improvement should be introduced.

### ***Theme 3: Discussion classes for high risk modules***

The findings of the study revealed that for modules which are regarded as being at-risk, discussion classes were held almost quarterly in different provinces. Modules at risk are those modules which underperform or get a pass rate which is below the baseline of the College of Education. The discussion classes were conducted on a face-to-face mode of teaching and learning and students attended these classes since they wanted to interact with their lecturers on module content. A number of studies conducted at the University of South Africa focused on e-tutors, face-to-face tutors, e-learning by several researchers by none focused on modules at risk (Ngengebule, 1998; Baloyi, 2008; Molepo & Mothudi, 2014). Therefore, there was a need to focus on conducting research on face-to-face discussion classes on modules that are at risk and measure the impact in an empirical way. Therefore, the need to establish the SoTL within the College emerged.

### ***Theme 4: Engagement with tutors***

In assessing quarterly reports that were submitted to the College Teaching and Learning Committee, I realised how academics were engaging with e-tutors in supporting students and also attended to online discussion forums in supporting the students in modules. Since Unisa is an ODeL institution, it is crucial that every initiative of using a tool or support staff in teaching and learning and the impact thereof should be assessed either using action research or any other method. Although there were random studies conducted by Letseka and Pitsoe (2014) Pitsoane, Mahlo and Lethole (2015), none of the studies focused on the quarterly reports submitted by lecturers on e-tutors and their engagements with students in the College of Education. As a result, I saw a need of establishing a SoTL focusing on most of the aspects that affect teaching and learning within the college.

***Theme 5: How student queries were handled***

Individual lecturers also handled students' queries and reports were submitted quarterly but no analysis of queries was done. I commend the lecturers who made an analysis and improved on how they support students even though there was no research paper. This is one area where research needs to be conducted to minimise frustrations experienced by students who study in ODeL.

**Findings from Seminars and Workshops on Teaching and Learning:*****Theme 1: Attendance of seminars focusing on teaching and learning***

The findings of the study revealed that approximately 50 academics attended the seminars and workshops on teaching and learning. The Teaching and Learning Office within the College of Education conducted workshops to ensure that academics get involved in discourses that pertain to teaching and learning. From these seminars, an observation made was that very few senior academics would attend; only new academics or those who really love teaching and learning would attend. The workshops ranged from pedagogical strategies, assessment practices in an ODeL context and the use of various online tools in supporting students. These workshops were necessary since many academics were not equipped in teaching in an ODeL space but were used to face-to-face teaching context. Although research has been conducted on topics of assessment and other asynchronous teaching (Letseka & Pitsoe, 2014; Ngubane-Mokiwa, 2017), there was a need to explore on how the College was doing since the students' demographics were changing annually. Hence, these seminars necessitated a need to establish the SoTL within the College.

***Theme 2: Engagement on matters pertaining to teaching and learning and interrogating Unisa Policies***

Upon reflecting on seminars on addressing teaching and learning matters, I found that there was a need to align practice in what Unisa academics were doing and the relevant policies on teaching and learning. The academics during seminars engaged on how they apply what was in the policies of tuition and learning and how they interpreted the content. These seminars and workshops created a Community of Practice where academics were learning from one another and copying good practices (Ramdas & Masithulela, 2016). Therefore, I seized an opportunity of turning these Communities of Practice in teaching and learning as a fertile ground to initiate SoTL. The discussions led to the model of Ernest Boyer (1990) and how he professed on the SoTL and how other scholars (Hutchings & Shulman, 1999; Bender, 2005) saw how teaching and learning should be researched and improve on the practice.

**Findings from Published Research Articles*****Theme 1: Focus of research and what academics taught***

When it comes to publications in the College, it was clear that almost every academic was publishing articles and book chapters, even though the focus on published material was on various projects in which academics were involved. Most of the publications were based on research conducted elsewhere other than on what the academics were teaching. Others did not view what they taught as researchable. They saw teaching and learning in isolation to research. I then realised that there was a need as the academics in the College of Education to start researching into what we teach so that our practice may be improved. It is important to

reflect on what one teaches so that the students' learning is improved and ensure their success (Hutchings & Huber, 2008; Sturges, 2013). In order to achieve students' success, it was important that the College of Education embark on the SoTL project.

Very few academics focused on their modules and their pedagogy. By virtue of being a College of Education, most lecturers and professors were trained in teaching methodology. Hence, our pass percentage ranged from 83-86% for almost five years in succession. Maybe as former teachers we knew the pedagogical strategies, hence attention was not paid on doing research on our teaching and learning and improving on our practice. This was a necessary element and a missing link in fulfilling the role of an academic. In the same vein, Allen and Field (2005) concur that scholarly teaching is based on practice wisdom, which is developed by reflection on experience and published research.

### **Findings Form Observations**

#### ***Theme 1: Balance between workload and studies***

What I observed was that young academics who were still busy with their studies struggled in balancing teaching workload, their studies and balancing key performance areas. Normally, their teaching and learning would be the recording of how they support students, do marking and write tutorial letters. On research, it was mainly their doctoral studies and there would not be any other publication; only a few managed to publish. This resulted in a ticking of boxes exercise as far as teaching was concerned. It was impressive that young academics attended most seminars and workshops on teaching and learning in trying to understand how teaching is conducted in an ODeL institution. The worrying thing was: Where was scholarship in the whole exercise? I was intrigued by this and thought that while they were interested in learning how an ODeL teaching and learning was like, it would be of value to introduce research into their teaching and bring in a scholarly element to their practice. As Kustra (2011) points out, critical reflection was necessary in teaching and learning.

#### ***Theme 2: Awareness that research can be conducted in modules that one teaches and COP's important***

I also observed that even among senior scholars, there was lack of awareness that there can be research and publications in teaching and learning, what Boyer (1990) calls the SoTL. Very few academics in the college published on teaching and learning matters in an ODeL context which indicated that there was dearth of research and an intervention was necessary.

There were professors who were researching on teaching and learning and they influenced their mentees to also research on what they taught and to improve on their practice. Those young academics and senior professors formed Communities of Practice, which work better. The Communities of Practice were necessary since learning does not occur in isolation but it is a social process (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Therefore, it was important for the mentors (experienced academics) to work closely with mentees (young academics).

### **Analysis of Themes Above and New Initiatives**

#### **Phase 2: Intervention and the establishment of SoTL**

After a preliminary study and findings on the position of teaching and learning matters, I then decided to have an engagement with the Dean of the College of Education and submitted a

proposal on establishing the SoTL. The concept was also discussed with the College Management in 2017 and the entire staff in the College of Education. As I was managing the portfolio of teaching and learning, I decided that the establishment must be done in an ethical way and in line with the policies of the institution. I positioned myself in the position of scholars who promoted SoTL in their institutions such as Boyer (1990); Shulman (1999); Hutchings and Huber (2008); Bender (2005); Potter and Kustra (2011). I studied how the researchers who purported SoTL in their institutions focused on and how they argued on the importance of SoTL. I aligned myself with Sturges' (2013) assertion that the aim of SoTL was to improve students' learning. I argue that not only students' learning but also the lecturer's teaching, academic content, and other factors that promote students' success should be part of SoTL. Several meetings were held and an application for ethical clearance was sought and received in May 2018. The launch of the project took place on 4 May 2018.

**Figure 1 Concept of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (College of Education Unisa)**

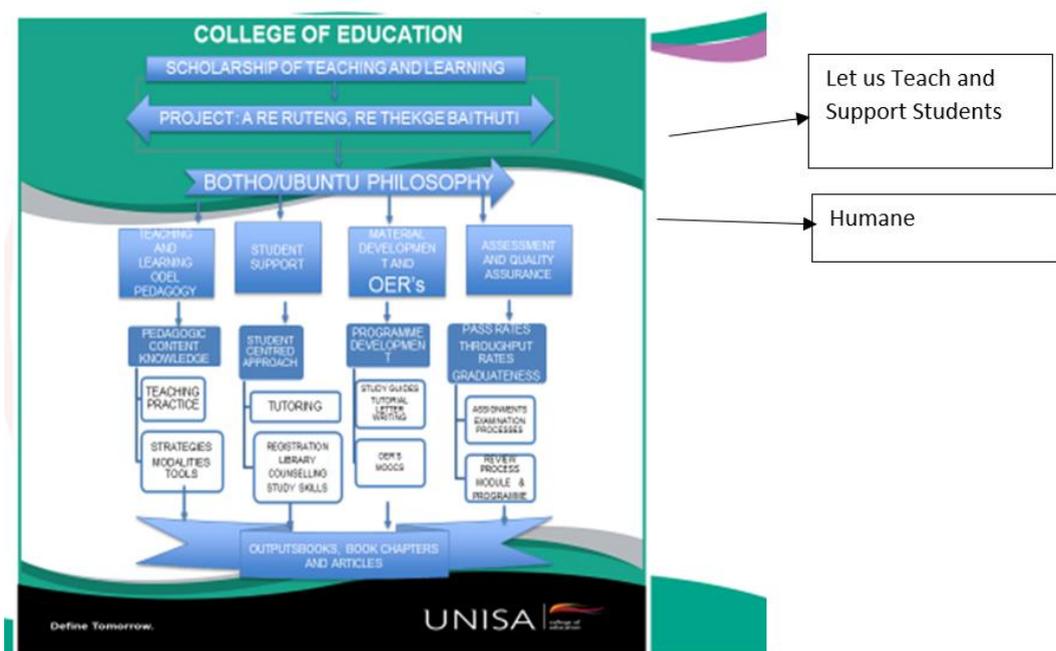


Figure 1 depicts the concept of SoTL and the factors that were identified as key in findings on the state of teaching and learning in the College of Education. The concept was embedded in the African philosophical paradigm of bothu/Ubuntu (humaneness) simply because the staff members were looking at teaching and learning from a lens of the ethos of care to their students. Under teaching and learning in an ODeL aspect, the research would focus on pedagogic content knowledge, teaching practice and strategies. Under the component of student support tutoring and systems that range from registration, library and counselling would be explored. In the third component, material development would be the focus and the

fourth component would focus on assessment and quality assurance. The model in Figure 1 may be changed as and when the need arises as research unfolds in the College of Education.

Upon receiving ethical clearance, it was clear that academics were ready to embark on conducting research in teaching and learning. The exploratory endeavour in modules and programmes that lecturers were involved in was supposed to be researched. Academics were to reflect on their teaching and learning and make their work public to be critiqued by peers in the discipline. The research was supposed to be conducted either through surveys, document analysis or interviews with students and or support staff on modules taught within the College which may lead to improved scholarship (Potter & Kustra, 2011). If scholarship is realised in teaching and learning, then practice may be improved and the way things were done may change as we constantly reflect on what we do.

One strength of the study is the use of three theories. The wellness theory (Hettler, 1980) helped the researcher to focus on the wellness dimensions of the students the academic, emotional, career and social well-being since they were not physically on campus but through support and meaningful engagement with lecturers they can reach their goals. Therefore, it is important to have a scholarly approach to teaching. The transactional distance theory (Moore & Kearsley, 2005) assisted the researcher to forge ahead the agenda of enhancing quality in teaching and learning since the modalities are virtual and not like contact institutions. Unisa should be vigorous in research in teaching and learning so that there is continuous reflection on the practice. The third theory derived from African philosophies Botho/Ubuntu (humaneness) links closely with the vision of the university which is “The African University in the service of humanity.” This calls for kindness as we teach our students and the SoTL is driving that element in reflecting constantly on what we do in teaching and learning. The study is conducted through action research design. Therefore, there will be further research on SoTL so that there is improvement that ultimately leads to student success. The paper outlined factors leading to the establishment of SoTL in the College of Education at Unisa and currently academics are researching on their teaching and how students learn. This is work in progress of a project that has obtained an ethical clearance of four years.

### **Limitations of the study**

The researcher is writing this article having only fifty academics involved in the scholarship of teaching and learning.

### **Recommendations**

The exercise carried out by staff members in the College of Education can be duplicated in other colleges at Unisa so that our practices on teaching and learning can improve. Furthermore, Communities of Practice may be established across colleges and other ODeL institutions globally so that there can be comparison and to benchmark with other institutions. SoTL should be considered during tenures and promotions not in a way of ticking boxes that one is teaching but also one should demonstrate how one is researching his/her teaching and what improvement were effected to the course or pedagogy.

### **Conclusion**

The paper attempted to explain processes that led to the establishment of the SoTL in the College of Education at Unisa. The study led to a scholarly approach to teaching and learning

at a meso level that is college or faculty level. Newly appointed academics and experienced ones now have much to research on and to some it brought awareness that they can actually be scholars (researchers) in what they teach and improve on their practice. The initiative is one way of responding to the call of CHE on the QEP with an endeavour of improving student success. I argue that teaching and learning must be taken seriously and it is a scholarly enterprise that must be considered during tenures and promotions.

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# Pragmatic Failures in Written and Spoken English Among Iraqi Learners

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## Abstract

English plays an incredibly important role in cross-cultural interaction as a communication medium. Communication is the primary function of language, and pragmatic competence is an integral aspect of communication skills. Yet, because of lack of realistic understanding, English learners can hardly avoid pragmatic failure to commit cross-cultural communication. A pragmatic failure establishes obstacles for cross-cultural communication effectiveness. Because pragmatic deficiencies correlate rather strongly to the absence of pragmatic competence, in order to develop better communication skills, further exposure to pragmatic and cultural awareness should be included in English language instruction. It is believed that it is necessary to acquire the background details on communication and take the dialogue item as a whole instead of dissecting the phrase or message by letter, thereby rendering the text understandable in the specific sense. This research aims to identify and analyse the frequently poorly used texts among EFL students in a state university in Iraq, as well as the primary sources that contribute to the pragmatic failures among the students.

**Keywords:** teaching English, Iraqi EFL learners, pragmatics, written text

## 1. Introduction

Every language is regulated by its own specific set of linguistic and socio-cultural criteria. Driven by these criteria, speakers of a language instinctively acquire a sense of communication ability that permits them to perceive and to communicate their communication in an understood and acceptable manner. Likewise, to speak a foreign language properly, students must be aware of the cultural norms which underlie the linguistic patterns. It is not only a matter of mastering all the grammatical and structural rules but also of acquiring the knowledge of how language is pragmatically used in the target culture (Leech, 1983). Meaning tends to be the most apparent and obscure element of language. It is clear since language is used to interact with people. Pragmatics is concerned with the use and function of language.

It is a study of contextual meaning communicated by a speaker or writer and interpreted by a listener (Yule, 2006). It describes the relationship between the fundamental features of speech and its usage and interpretation by language users. It studies how the 'context' of a statement depends on the situations under which it is expressed or how people take a linguistic decision.

The critical element for pragmatic competence is the context of utterance; for example, the interlocutor's history knowledge, details communicated in other aspects, spoken or written, and the clear understanding view of the interlocutors. Yoosefv and Rasekh (2014) mention that a successful communication in a target language requires not only the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary but also pragmatic competence and knowledge about the culture of the target language. We often offer many details about the items that are not relevant according to the context, and that turns the reader's attention away. In addition to grammar and orthography, this study focuses on the importance of the language and the function of pragmatics to support the interpretation of the pragmatic failures. Pragmatic failure may cause misunderstanding, and, thus, sets up barriers to successful cross-cultural communication (Lihui & Jianbin, 2010). As the aim of teaching English is to improve students' language skills, educators are called upon to devote further attention to developing student pragmatic skills in order to prevent pragmatic failure.

The present study intends to analyse the pragmatic failures among Iraqi EFL students, in written and spoken English. This study attempts to find answers to the frequently poorly used texts that indicate pragmatic failures among college learners of English, as well as the role of pragmatics for understanding the texts.

## **2. Pragmatics and Context of Utterance**

Reality-conditional semantics relies on the interpretation of the term. The aim is to evaluate the definition of the expression in view of formal rigour and rational plausibility by allocating the terms of reality in conjunction with the continued condition. However, the analysis of the structure of sentence and the encoded lexical content in terms of truth-conditions needs to be supplemented by inferring information about meaning supplied by other sources (Chapman 2000). As Capone (2005) says, language is both 'an instrument of thought' and 'an instrument of social action'.

The primary concepts to be explored in the study of meaning in real communicative conditions are the interpretation and purpose of the speaker and the extraction of the interpretation and purpose of the speaker by the receiver. Interpretation and purpose at both ends (the end of the speaker and the end of the receiver) play a critical role. Grice (1975) describes the importance by using the intentions of the speaker and the reflectional essence of these thoughts, namely that the addressee should consider them as such. The instinctive purpose of the speaker against the audience is to make the listener realise that the speaker needs a particular effect on the perception when delivering a statement in a certain way. The context is crucial whether the conversation is written or spoken. While the spoken language can be interpreted from the many super-segmental characteristics, it is not easy to interpret the written text. The meaning (Pragmatics) would play a vital role as the written text is interpreted.

Taking into consideration the issues confronting Iraqi students during the EFL studies, this article addresses steps to recognise and find out the pragmatic failures made by the students.

One requires sense frequently to explain the significance of unclear terms, sentences, phrases or whole language. Still, in this study, the data collected is fragile, with several errors in grammar or spelling. In other terms, the data collected is morpho-syntactically weak, and realistic techniques play a crucial role in such cases, and those techniques should be used to instruct students how to interpret the document in the correct sense (Bustan & Alakrash 2020).

Context is very important. It forms the purpose of all written or spoken language. A person can not comprehend a message successfully without a context. When someone sends the message in one sense, but interpret it in another way, it usually triggers confusion. This happens with the text written and spoken by EFL students in this study. They are thought to possess no context-awareness. More or less, translation is what they do. We can understand how someone can claim more than "strictly speaking" in two separate ways, considering the same context.

The key element of pragmatic competence is the context of utterance (interlocutor background knowledge, knowledge in other aspects of the spoken or a written document and the background experiences of interlocutor). The role performed, mentally, socially or culturally, by meaning in influencing decision-makers in the composition and creation of text, is performed by readers. The context determines the options, criteria and limits that the authors render in the structure of their texts. The background forms the reader's attempt to create meaning. The physical environment will improve or reduce reading capability. Social contexts may affect how speakers and audience communicate shared experiences and expectations about a message. The cultural context can influence common perceptions, values and expectations from the message conveyed. Grice (1975) says that to analyse meaning in actual communicative situations, the key notions to be looked into are the speaker's meaning and intention and recovery of speaker's meaning and intentions by the addressee. He determines meaning through the purposes of the speaker and the observation on purpose, namely by understanding the addressor as such. The speaker's reflection on the audience is meant to have the listener to know that the speaker wants to have some impact on the listener by delivering a message in a particular way (Alakrash & Bustan 2020).

### **3. Literature Review**

Many past researchers performed several empirical experiments to examine the pragmatic failures in the conversation and writing of students. However, little has been done to define the issues in the field of discourse between attitudes and organisations. Here is, however, some list of studies carried out in this area that will explain the research in progress and its relevance.

Vygotsky (1986) and Halliday (1994) claim that the phrase we talk is the language we acquire when we communicate with the environments where social interactions are carried out in this context. Motta-Roth (2013) outlined this perspective in his own words: as learners come to realise the social arrangements of their environment, they develop reflexivity upon the rules of grammatical operation and text structures. Learners should care about meaning and language, how language relates to patterns of meaning. This viewpoint provides a collection of possibilities for scholarly teaching, which can be outlined in three so-called "discourse-analytical principles" which govern pedagogy.

(1) Learners must rely on their contexts in order to fully understand the applications of formal elements in language;

(2) In order to compose, the new writers may examine the interaction between the social activities and the texts by connecting with the texts generated within (journals, articles, dissertations, article reviews, etc.), giving focus on what they have been able to deduce from their observations;

(3) Learners must strive to evaluate their rhetoric in order to learn a language.

The first researcher to examine complementary responses from a pragmatic point of view was Pomerantz (1978). Based on its US statistics, it has categorised compliment responses into four strategies: acceptance, agreement, rejection, and disagreement. She finds that the complimentary individual is faced with a dispute between two values, which are either to consent on remarks or to prevent self-praise. She has claimed that the speakers "follow particular rules" while complimenting. Since then, various researches have examined the complimentary speech act in different other languages. Herbert (1986) examined the Taxonomy of Pomerantz and concluded with twelve taxonomies in three groups. He implemented the taxonomy for both American and South African college-level research (1989, 1990). The results revealed that Americans appeared to make use of a high frequency of compliment remarks and a low frequency of compliments acceptance. In contrast, South Africans used a low frequency of remarks and a high frequency of compliments acceptance. He demonstrated this in that every culture has its worldview, linking speakers with a range of socio-cultural viewpoints "including faith, politics and ecology".

In the article 'The Role of Context in Academic-Text Production and Writing Pedagogy,' Motta-Roth (2013) notes that the problem of text producing in academic genres has posed itself as a challenge for undergraduate and graduate students as well as to teaching writers from different departments. In language teaching and study, one of the key difficulties lies in educating citizens on innovative ways to communicate language structure norms (grammars) inside the academic community. There are a variety of definitions, laws, beliefs, ties of influence and the genres engaged in social activities of a community. To teach students about language use in such situations, the relations between texts and the meaning are explicitly defined. Text and purpose have been described as two sides of the encounter by Motta-Roth (Bustan & Alakrash 2020).

#### **4. Methodology**

Participants in this analysis have been chosen from EFL students in a state university in Iraq. English was the means of their degrees. They share a uniform native language, and their upbringing and their previous schooling achieve a feeling of homogeneity. The students should use English in and out of school. In order to provide a comprehensive study of this debate, data was collected containing the Morpho-syntactic forms, including sentences and terms conveyed by them, as well as written texts. The data were syntactically evaluated and presumably understood with specific aid (context) as the answer was poor.

## 5. Data Analysis and Discussion

### 5.1 Poorly Written and Spoken English Texts

Some of the frequently poorly used texts that indicated pragmatic failures among college English learners are given below:

#### Written Text 1

*To be regarded as a decent human being, the characteristics of humans are, to some degree unclear. This problem has been the focus of several controversies. For culture to have decent people is a form of luxury.*

This first written text is explicitly free of grammatical errors except with a section dealing with the spelling ("luxury"). The discourse starts with its title at the core of the upper margin. The opening statement is affected as well. Both strategies and coherence are absent in writing. Neither the topic nor the role expressed by the title is the emphasis of the theme phrase. Therefore, the body of the presentation does not include developers and there is no satisfactory conclusion. Consequently, it is challenging to establish the composition objectively. The introduction is not composed correctly and does not conform with standard paragraph writing guidelines.

#### Written Text 2

*Great individual is a social gift. The great individual is the one expectations and privileges. He has the right to engage in the country's democratic, civil, social, economic and religious relations. He is responsible for upholding the country's history and heritage.*

This text is prone to both cohesive and grammatical mistakes. The word "individual" is a count noun that should have a determiner (such as "a") before it. Also, there is no finite verb in the second phrase and grammatically wrong as well. Finally, the third phrase, since it doesn't have a crucial clause, is also incorrect. Moreover, the paragraph does not involve any structural sequence. There are no thematic phrases, nor do they talk about a decent citizen's 'duties and obligations' except that the speaker references 'love for the country's history and heritage' in the last section. It is found that ideas and systems are absent for ideal discourse for this "intro" of the composition.

#### Spoken Text 1

*"Hi Dr, many lecturers are apologising for lectures tomorrow. Can you also cancel tomorrow's lecture?"*

The meaning could not be conveyed in the first read. The reader was puzzled by the word "apologizing." The following sentence of the student was "Can you also cancel tomorrow's lecture," which made the reader know that other teachers would cancel their lecture tomorrow, so the student was asking if the reader could cancel the class tomorrow as well. Here, the single word "cancel" made the whole sentence clear.

#### Spoken Text 2

*"Doctor, he makes me out of the room, I can't attend online class because no connection now. I don't know what to do?"*

The student meant to imply that her internet was disconnected and that she could not join the online classroom. She can't explain it, though. There were several interpretations of what she meant. It looks like she has a child that bothers her or her brother, dad or husband doesn't want her to stay in the classroom, and someone wants her to leave the room. Then she finally said that "no connection" made the listener understand she was having Internet issues and she can't enter the room. She referred to the internet with 'he' and the connection meaning helped to understand this text.

## **5.2 Analysis of the Primary Sources of Pragmatic Failures**

### **Negative Pragmatic Transfer**

Language conversion involves the use of previous linguistic knowledge by the student (mostly of his native language) or physical transformation of the surface of the language into a sense of the second language. When the mother tongue of the learner is different from the the second language in the society, the way it is taught is negative. Thomas and Kasper attribute this situation to a pragmatic failure. Kasper (1992) defines pragmatic transfer as "the influence exerted by learners' pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension, production, and acquisition of L2 pragmatic information". If the pragmatic transfer contributes to a pragmatic communication breakdown, this is known to be a pragmatic negative transfer. Two kinds of negative pragmatic transfer may occur, these are the negative transfer of first language information and negative transmission of first cultural agreements (Alakrash & Bustan 2020).

### **5.3 SVO Errors**

Through relevant research, Sado Al-Jarf (2007) has found that English-Arabic translation test results have shown the SVO sentences made are of 76% to 55% by student translators, even though all of the English-speaking trials needed an Arabic translation in VSO order. The student is unable to clarify the variations in sentence structure between two languages as a justification for the transference of the SVO word order to Arabic. The students must understand and establish a link between word order and themes in English-Arabic translation, and they must identify the types of sentences that involve the use of an SVO structure. Olan and Zahner (1996) said that students who know that languages vary from one language to the other conceptually are able to identify variations and thus provide more accurate translations. Students are often more likely to translate word-by-word than meaning. They tended to be imitative and not biased (Bustan&Alakrash 2020). Lado (1961) pointed out that incompetent translators predominantly use phrases in the level of single words, while professional translators switch from one language to a deeper level of thinking or thought and then back to another. Owing to its linguistic ambiguity and its inability to replicate the meaning in the target language, there is also a lack of understanding of the original text. It was found from Dancette (1993) that most descriptive, argumentative and rhetorical translation mistakes are underlying a lack of understanding.

### **5.4 Negative Transfer of Native Cultural Conventions**

In cross-cultural contact, speakers are driven by those social norms. They assess what to say in a discussion and discuss what others have said in compliance with these standards. EFL students, who are heavily impacted by their national social values, are consciously or unconsciously able to apply their native language norms in the second language, in touch with

foreigners, which may cause misunderstandings or even communication failures (Alakrash et al, 2020).

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study examined the learners' poor text and their position in interpreting it. Subject to the dominant context, the conversation or any piece of writing are reconfigured. One must be local in a pragmatic message. For instance, a narrative analysis of a text tends to be precise, and its subject must be carefully prepared. This is the challenge with most artistic essays. Writing style often appears in many other cases to shake and capture; that's why the old practises and the practices have little significance. Pragmatic text is aimed at its readers. These texts refer to their importance here, which means they identify things known to all.

The emphasis on finding and trying to fix errors should be developed so that the language would not be vague and inadequate. This can be achieved by providing the learners with a broad exercise in the use of these coherent tools, not in isolation but in the written language, where these characteristics can first be separated and then integrated into the entire structure of the discourse. During discourse communication, the learners should obtain the format, frameworks, templates and brainstorming activities.

The learners can also be taught the key concepts of syntax as they begin to use the meaning correctly. They should start by identifying the different terms in syntax in the sections of the expression. They may then move to the next step, which is the statement step, in which all the word order is taught. They can start here with easy words and then with complicated phrases. After learning how to construct an expression, they can write interactions in the right syntactic and semantic order. And above all, they must use context accordingly, so they can use words correctly through their understanding of context and then syntactically position them. Thus, the language is not only understandable to their educators concerned, who are aware of the meaning, but also to those who do not know that the given piece of writing has been addressed or written in a particular sense. As words and phrases used are acceptable according to their meaning, the entire dialogue becomes understandable when the word order is right.

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# Plyometric Performance Assessment of Basketball & Volleyball Female Players

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## Abstract

Improving the ability to jump is a major training goal for many sports, and drop jump is the well-known training method used to achieve this improvement. The players in team games should be thrown higher than his or her opponent, and this jump should be executed faster than the opponent's jump. Volleyball & Basketball from the specificity of their training, there are differences in the physical qualities of individual and team sports performance, where one of the elements is vertical jumping in training the plyometric. This study is concentrated on two teams: Women's Volleyball Team (V) and Women's Basketball Team (B) 15 members each, focusing on 30 subjects. Players were measured in physical parameters; Age (V-24: B-27), Body Height (V-180.4cm; B-173.4cm), Body Weight (V-70.37kg; B-63.88kg), BMI (V-21.67%; B-20.93%). The players performed the test DJ 40cm and DJ60cm in the platform Leonardo® Ground Force Reaction Plate (GRFP) which expresses Force max (kN), Power max (w/kg), Time Contact (TCs), Air Time (TAs), TA/TCs. Results obtained by GRFP showed different team values of the two sports in the parameters of test from DJ40 cm and DJ 60cm. The TA/TC show  $V1.89 > B1.85$  in DJ40 test and TA/TC in DJ60  $V1.96 > B1.71$ . The results showed statistically significant improvement with respect to F max (kN), F max (kg N) and power (kg W) at the level of  $p = 0.05$ . Conclusion; The methodology used helps us to compare high and poor performances, which help trainers to program a more detailed plyometric training for the development of athletes' jumping ability. Through the Drop Jump test it can be achieved to be evaluated not only by the height of the development of vertical jump but also by the phase of stay in the air. Through value comparisons, between tests and sports, trainers can develop programmed plyometric.

**Keywords:** volleyball, drop jump 40 cm- 60cm, basketball, plyometric.

## 1. Introduction

Plyometric training (1) is widely used to improve jumping ability, especially in sports such as volleyball and basketball (2, 3, 4, 5). Volleyball (V) and Basketball (B) sports have different performances for their own game characteristic, so the training is specific where there are differences in the physical qualities of individual and team performance. Volleyball players develop tactical and technical elements such as; Attack, Blocking, Service, etc., while basketball players in addition to running on the field and technical elements must jump during

penetrations in the area, catching the ball on the board or realizing the shot. One of the main elements of these sports is vertical jumping. By vertical jump we mean the athlete's ability to raise the center of gravity of his body with the help of dynamic work of the muscles of the lower extremities. So the meaning of the vertical jump element is basically the measurement of the strength, strength, speed of the lower extremities. Numerous scholars have found that high jumps can be improved through applications of plyometric exercises. The best possible perfection of a vertical jump is achieved with training with the purpose of increasing the height of the jump, the high degree of muscular activity that is achieved by increasing the loads in the phase of extension of the vertical jump. Drop Jump is a popular form of plyometric training as well as better interpretation of the term plyometry. Plyometric training (6) is widely used to improve the ability to dance, especially in collective sports such as volleyball, basketball, football, etc (7). Many authors show that explosive power is characteristic of professional basketball players not only in volleyball (8). Evaluation of vertical jump through the Drop Jump 40cm-60cm plyometric test will enable us to compare the values obtained from the strength platform between these sports.

## 2. Methodology

This study is concentrated on two teams: Women's Volleyball Team (V) and Women's Basketball Team (B) 15 members each, focusing on 30 subjects. Players were measured in physical parameters;

Table1 Anthropometric Measurements (Volleyball&Basketball players)

Team	Nr	Age	BH (cm)	BW(kg)	BMI( kg/m <sup>2</sup> )
Volleyball	15	24	180.4	70.37	21.67%
Basketball	15	27	173.4	63.88	20.93%

### 2.1. Protocols of the Test Performed

After were conducted anthropometric measurements and later on the tests in vertical jump performance of the protocol tests .The players performed the test DJ40cm and DJ60cm in the system platform Leonardo® Ground Force Reaction Plate (GRFP) which expresses Force max (kN), Power max (w/kg), Time Contact (TCs), Air Time (TAs), TA/TCs in University of Sports, Tirana. The players one by one performed on the cube height 40cm and 60cm, with their hands on their loins. Through a free fall from the height of the cube they leave themselves falling into GRFP platform and rapidly the reaction after contacting with GRFP they should jump in vertical as high as possible. The test has been developed 3 times and we got the best measure of the contact time and the time in the air.

### Drop Jump Test

Table2. Data obtained from GRFP (Volleyball&Basketball players)

Test	Fmax N/kg		Pmax w/kg		Time Contact TCs		Air Time TAs		TA/TC	
	Vboll	Bboll	Vboll	Bboll	Vboll	Bboll	Vboll	Bboll	Vboll	Bboll
V15- B15										

<b>DJ-40</b>	48.14	55.62	31.44	26.43	0.251	0.202	0.45	0.37	1.89	1.85
<b>DJ-60</b>	65.19	74.07	31.26	23.06	0.231	0.198	0.436	0.34	1.96	1.71

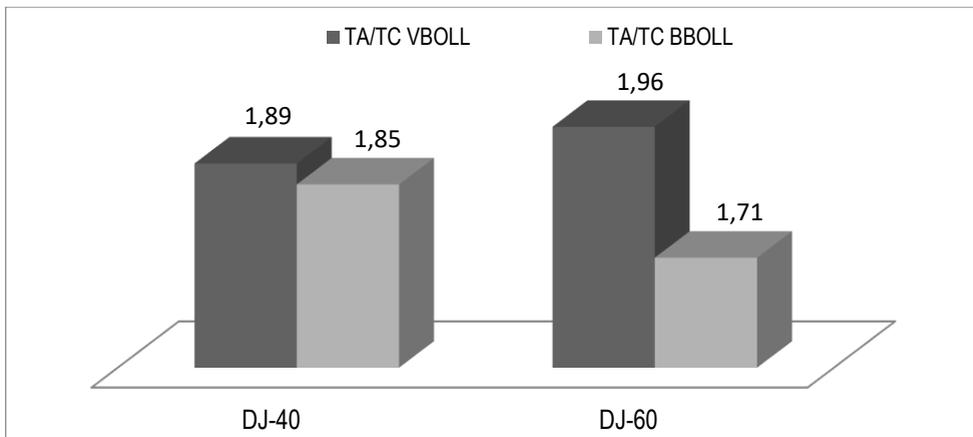
## 2.2. Statistical analyses

An analysis was done to check whether the test and measurement methods used were valid to identify whether groups of Volleyball players and Basketball players achieved high or poor performance. A unilateral analysis of variance (ANOVA) on data from 30 athletes was performed in order to identify changes in the parameters of the DJ40cm-DJ60cm test; Scheffe post hoc analysis was run to show differences between groups. T-tests of paired samples were performed to compare DJ40cm- DJ60cm parameters. Moreover, a PCA with a Varimax rotation was executed to examine a possible tendency towards the dependence of temporary force or peak between groups of athletes when executing DJ60cm test. All statistical procedures were performed using the Package Statistics for Social Sciences 10.0.1 software (SPSS) Inc., Chicago, IL). An alpha level of 0.05 was used.

## 3. Results

The results revealed that the Volleyball players were thrown higher ( $p, 0.001$ ) than the Basketball players. From the data obtained from the platform we see that there are different performances between individual players in both sports, despite the fact that in the team average it turned out that volleyball players are higher in the DJ test. The graph below clearly shows the level of values obtained by GFRP of the two tests DJ40-DJ60 in Volleyball & Basketball players.

Graphic.1: Drop Jump 60cm - 40cm test at measurement.



## 4. Discussion

From the data obtained we see that Volleyball players have a better result in time than Basketball players in DJ tests. This test assesses the explosive strength of the lower limbs. The test represents the "Explosive-Reactive-Ballistic Force" and in particular, the neuromuscular capacity to develop very high values of force during the stretch-contraction cycle (9). But the Basketball players showed that in the DJ40cm test they performed better than in the DJ60cm

test. Where on the contrary the volleyball players performed better in DJ60cm. The DJ40cm and DJ60cm test performance results presented above differ from each other. Strength and power variables were tested for statistically significant differences between the two sports volleyball & basketball. The aim was to identify any possible changes as to the effects of the training derived from their team training. Analysis of ANOVA with 2 measurements for maximum strength as dependent variable and groups as independent resulted in statistically insignificant values ( $\text{sig.} > 0.05$ ) for both Drop Jump test 40cm and Drop Jump test 60cm. ANOVA analysis with 2 repeated measures for maximum power as a dependent variable and groups as independent resulted in statistically insignificant values ( $\text{sig.} > 0.05$ ) for both the DJ 40cm test and the DJ 60cm test. The linear correlation between the "Drop Jump 40" and "Drop Jump 60" tests as an intuitive assessment would be the connection that exists between the similarity of the test with drop-jump-drop DJ from a height of 40 cm and that of DJ 60 cm. The correlation between the tests was measured according to the Pearson product moment. The results showed a high correlation coefficient ( $r = 0.924$ ) and statistically significant ( $\text{sig.} < 0.0005$ ). The presented results of drop-jump performance in the DJ40cm and DJ60cm tests differ from each other but also between the two groups taken in the study to be compared. Strength and power variables were tested for statistically significant differences between the two teams. Several factors, including a training program design (the type of exercises, training duration, training frequency, volume and intensity of training), subject characteristics (age, gender, fitness level, sport practice) and methods of testing different types of vertical jumps may be responsible for the conflicting findings concerning plyometric training. Some training studies have found that plyometric training based on DJS does not significantly enhance jump height or lower limb power, while other reports showed a large variability in the magnitude of such enhancement. It has previously been reported (10) an average relationship between strength / measuring power in squat jump performance from place to place and CMJ counter-action jump (movement) in the volleyball team. This platform consists in obtaining more data to the evaluation of the volleyball players, force ( $F \text{ max kN}$ ) and power ( $P \text{ max kW}$ ), during the vertical jump.

## 5. Conclusion

Volleyball & Basketball players despite their plyometric training time over the years, showed a low level of air time flying DJ interpretation. Improving the ability to jump is a major training goal for many sports, and drop jump is the well-known training method used to achieve this improvement. Individually the players need to improve their jump performance in order to achieve a better personal record. Compared to the reference table of the Reactive Forces Index (1.5-2.0RSI) for the Drop Jump test, we came to the conclusion that the level of Volleyball & Basketball players in Albania obtained in the result of the TA / TCs Index represents a moderate level of training, at the level of players prepared for moderate plyometric intensity. The values that were reported as high as possible showed that the athletes of both sports did not develop regular plyometric training.

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## **Exploitative Innovation and the Impact of Realized Absorptive Capability and Technology Orientation**

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### **Abstract**

This paper aims to identify the impact of Technology Orientation on the relationship of Realized Absorptive Capability and Exploitative Innovation. Using a sample of 194 firms located in Albania, we empirically test the mediating role of Technology Orientation. Nowadays, Innovation is not anymore a new phenomenon. In the literature a lot of studies have seen it with a close connection to technology. In some other study, in case of a dynamic environment, firms with realized absorptive capability are more predisposed to absorb technology and to be able to be update with it. Since technology is considered as an auxiliary tool to innovation, we considered it specifically for exploitative innovation which can increase even the efficiency of firms. The focus of this study is placed on knowledge-intensive sector in order to better capture the effect of these variables. The results demonstrate that the Technology Orientation has a full mediating role on this relationship. The Realized Absorptive Capability has not any impact on Exploitative Innovation in case of the lack of Technology Orientation.

**Keywords:** Realized Absorptive Capability, Technology Orientation, Exploitative Innovation, Albanian firms, Knowledge based industry.

### **Introduction**

The business environment has become increasingly sophisticated and restricted. Therefore, it is complicated, given the fast changes in business environment nowadays, for an organization to create all the required knowledge to obtain the required innovation. One of the earliest authors that has write about innovation is Schumpeter (1934), he referees to it as a new combination of existing resources. As pointed out by Teece (2007), resource-based theory laid the micro foundations of the necessary skills to maintain firms' superior performance in a dynamic environment with high innovation. In the same line (Hu, 2014) determines that a

higher organizational ability to acquire and utilize new information leads to a higher capacity to launch innovations.

There is no doubt that the importance of innovation is directly related to performance as Drucker (1985) describe the innovation leads to changes that creates a new dimension of performance. So, most of the literature that investigate on innovation concepts and its role in firms' success, gives an importance role of innovation and frequently cites it as the key element of superior firm performance (Han, Kim, & Srivastava, 1998; Hurley & Hult, 1998; Weerawardena, O'Cass, & Julian, 2006).

### **Content details**

Previous literature classified the innovation along two dimensions: (1) degree of novelty of new or existing technologies, products, and services that firms introduce into market before their own competitors (it may have already been available in other markets); and (2) degree of novelty of new or existing technologies, products, and services that firms introduce, but are already available from competitors in firms' market (Popadić M., Černe, M., 2016). This can also be associated also to the concept of incremental and radical innovations (L.A.G. Oerlemans et al, 2013).

Among the literature on innovation an important role was given to the concept of exploratory and exploitative innovation. The notion of exploratory and exploitative innovation is seen as continuum of the concept of exploration and exploitation (Popadić M., Černe, M., 2016). March (1991) introduced the two concepts as follows: exploration includes things captured by terms such as search, variation, risk taking, experimentation, flexibility, discovery, and innovation. Exploitation includes such things as refinement, choice, production, efficiency, selection, implementation, and execution. The concept of exploration–exploitation is scarce with respect to technological innovations and thus is needed. In past, exploration–exploitation was linked through mergers and acquisitions, alliances, and other strategic changes (Lavie & Rosenkopf, 2006), with little attention given to the innovations (Greve, 2007).

Popadić et al. in their paper in 2016 made a clear distinguish between exploration and exploitation in innovation context. In doing so, they considered exploration and exploitation as outcomes of innovation, and exploratory innovation was seen as synonymous with radical innovation, while exploitative innovation with incremental innovation. Exploratory innovations are radical innovations because they are designed to meet the needs of new markets (Benner & Tushman, 2003; Danneels, 2002). For example, development of a distribution channel that is new to the market is a form of exploratory innovation. In turn, exploitative innovations are incremental innovations and designed to serve existing markets (Benner & Tushman, 2003). For instance, improving the efficiency of existing distribution channels is a form of exploitative innovations.

Exploratory innovations require development of new knowledge (Benner & Tushman, 2002). They enable firms to scan a variety of opportunities from the environment and create capabilities that are necessary for long-term survival and prosperity (Uotila, Maula, Keil, & Zahra, 2009). Moreover, exploratory innovation transposes in new processes, products, or markets (Lumpkin & Dess, 1996). In turn, the goal of exploitative innovation is to build a firm's current competitive advantage by efficiently managing the firm's existing resources, skills, and capabilities to improve the designs of current products and services or to strengthen current

customer relationships (Lubatkin et al., 2006; Sirén, Kohtamäki, & Kuckertz, 2012). So, through exploitation, firms learn how to exploit existing technologies while through exploration, firms are more focus to experiment, and innovate (Levinthal and March, 1993; Jansen et al., 2006). In some study both exploratory innovation and exploitative innovation have a positive effect on firm performance for example, this is found at (Jansen et al., 2006; Li et al., 2008; Rothaermel and Alexandre, 2009; Junni et al., 2013).

According to previous studies in this field, many internal factors facilitate exploratory innovation and exploitative innovation. The main that can be mentioned are the Absorptive capacity (AC) in its two dimensions' potential absorptive capacity and realized absorptive capacity and the third variable Technological innovation (Mikhailov, A., & Reichert, F. M. 2019). Considering Teece (2010) the technological development is the key of success to captured customer needs as well as the value creation, if a new product or service is implemented in a firm, so in a dynamic environment this factor is very related with innovation. AC and innovation studies show that AC positively affects innovative performance. Cohen and Levinthal (1990, p. 128) define AC as "the ability of a firm to recognize the value of new, external information, assimilate it, and apply it to commercial ends". They stated that research and development (R&D) spillovers can increase the firms' ability to identify, assimilate and exploit knowledge from the environment. While Zahra and George (2002) provided another turn to the definition, they are separating the AC structure into two main dimensions: potential absorptive capacity (PACAP) and realized absorptive capacity (RACAP).

PACAP includes the acquisition and assimilation capabilities. It makes the firm open to the acquisition and assimilation of externally-generated knowledge (Lane and Lubatkin, 1998). On the other hand, RACAP involves the transformation and exploitation capabilities discussed earlier. It reflects the firm's capacity to leverage the knowledge that has been absorbed.

Based on Jansen et al., 2006 the absorptive capacity begins with knowledge acquisition from the environment and ends with its exploitation. Even if PACAP and RACAP have different roles, yet their effect is not isolated, but rather complementary. Both subsets of absorptive capacity coexist and participate in the improvement of firm performance. Firms cannot possibly exploit knowledge without first acquiring it. Similarly, firms can acquire and assimilate knowledge but might not have the capability of transforming and exploiting this knowledge for profit generation. Therefore, a high PACAP does not necessarily imply enhanced performance. RACAP involves transforming and exploiting the assimilated knowledge by incorporating it into the firm's operation (A.L. Leal-Rodríguez et al, 2014).

The focus of our study is the exploitative innovation as Albania's firm are much more oriented in incremental innovations based on the reason that the firms on this developing county don't have the possibility to change rapidly the technology and to develop the exploratory innovation but they are more focused to implement new technology and new process that requires their market, so they are investing in existing needs customers or markets, current and existing distribution channels. We want to investigate the impact of realized absorptive

capability on Exploitative innovation. In addition, this study sheds light on the mediating role of technology oriented on Exploitative innovation.

Hence, we pose the hypotheses and theoretical model as below:

H1. There is a significant relationship on Realized Absorptive Capability and Exploitative Innovation.

H2. There is a significant relationship between Realized Absorptive Capability and Technological Orientation

H3. Realized Absorptive Capability and Technology Orientation both impact positively Exploitative Innovation

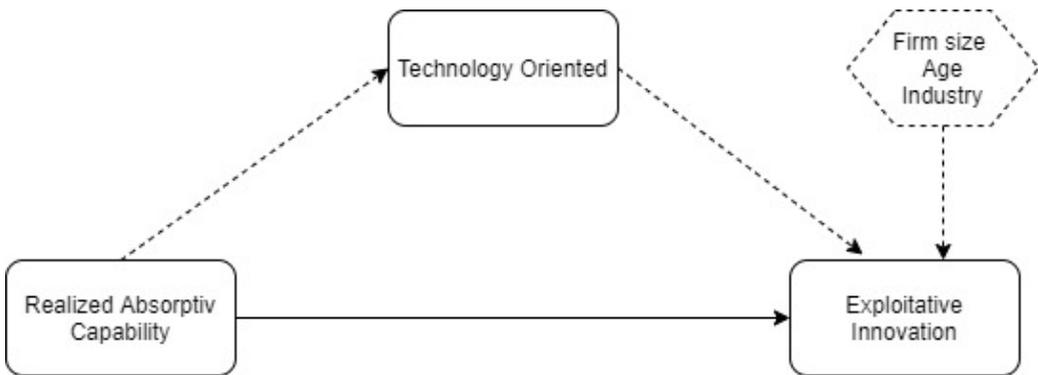


Fig 1: Theoretical structure model

## Method and procedures

The sample in this study consists of 203 firms randomly selected from a defined framework of companies registered in the national business center in Albania on 2018. This framework was focused only on intensive knowledge sectors. According to the definition of the Eurostat on NACE Rev.2 the sample has considered nine different subsectors in manufacturing and services. The main reason for selecting only the intensive knowledge sectors was to capture the phenomenon under investigation about innovation (Von Nordenflycht, 2010). As Ashworth (2012) and Morollon, Loscos and Pardos (2010) explain the firms with high concentration of knowledge, information, technology and skills are more adapted to supplying solutions on a dynamic environment. Based on Bayesian outlier we removed nine cases, so the final analyze is made for 194 businesses. The most data are taken directly by the owners, administrators or firms managers, when we have been explained all the questions face by face. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 was used to analyze the data.

## Dependent variable

Exploitative Innovation based on (Jansen et al. 2006) is measured on four questions with seven-point scale, related only with the new product and services. The manager was asked to rate if their firms refine the provision of existing products and services; if they implement regularly small adoptions to existing products and services; if they introduce improved, but existing products and services for the local market and if the organization expands services

for existing clients. The four-item construct yielded a Cronbach Alpha of 0.752 (standardized Cronbach Alpha coefficients), follows in accordance with the recommended criteria (Nunnally, 1978) and (Hair et al., 2006) show that coefficients of 0.7 or more are considered adequate.

### **Independent variable**

Realized Absorptive Capacity is operationalized on six items based on (Camisón & Forés, 2010; Flatten et al., 2011). The six items generate a Cronbach Alpha of 0.855 that is a very good indicator for the construct. The firm managers have been asked to measure the items from 1 (if they were strongly disagreeing) to 7 (if they were strongly agreeing). They are asked for: 1. The ability that their employees have to structure and use newly collected information, 2. If the employees are used to preparing newly collected information for further purposes and making it available, 3. Are they able to integrate new information into their work; 4. Do they have immediate access to stored information, e.g. about new or changed guidelines or instructions; 5. Are they regularly engaged in the development of prototypes or new concepts; and 6 do they apply new knowledge in the workplace to respond quickly to environment changes.

### **Mediated variable**

Technology orientation is the independent variable that we have operationalized based on Zhou et al (2005). The three items that are used for this construct are based on the activity that firms are using. So the managers had value the: 1. the use of the most advanced technology in the development of new products; 2. Easy acceptance by the organization of technological innovation which is undertaken based on concrete results of a research work and 3. Technological innovation is easily accepted in the management of specific projects undertaken in the organization. The items generate a Cronbach Alpha of 0.742 that is a good indicator according to (Hair et al., 2006).

### **Control Variable:**

Manufacture or service – this variable is measured as a dichotomy variable, the business are divided on service and manufacturing based on classification of NACE2.

Age - is the number of the years that the business has on the market.

Size of business – is measured by the logarithm of the employees that has the business.

### **Empirical model**

Following Baron and Kenny (1986), a system of three equations is used to assess the mediational role of realized absorptive capability:

$$1) Y = \beta_{10} + \beta_{11}X + e_1$$

$$2) Me = \beta_{20} + \beta_{21}X + e_2$$

$$3) Y = \beta_{30} + \beta_{31}X + \beta_{32}Me + e_3$$

Where, in this article Y is the dependent variable representing – firm’s performance, X is the independent variable – the technology orientation and Me is the mediator variable-realized absorptive capability.

### Construct validity

To analyze the items that are used in the questionnaire we performed a factor analysis with varimax rotation (see appendix A). To test the validity of our independent perceptual variables is used KMO and Bartlett’s Test that is significant and has an adequacy measured of Sampling 0.783. The two components accounted 61.89% of the variance and loadings are above the acceptable standard of 0.32 proposed by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007).

The results for Technology Orientation loaded reasonably high, exactly (.633, .860, .890). Also four the construct of Realized Absorptive Capability the items reasonable high (.843, .776, .871, .759, 785, .835). About the Exploitative innovation the items loaded also high (.852, .610, .800, .774).

### Results

We have considered only 194 business after we have eliminated the outlier. The respondents on this study were the owners, administrators or managers of the business where 35.1% of the respondents were female and 64.9% were male. Around 80% of business were located on Tirana, the capital city of Albania, and the other businesses were located in Durres that is also a city with a lot of businesses because of the impact that has the location of port in this city. In Albania, based on Instat (2020) around 41% of the businesses are located inside of this two cities. Most of the businesses interviewd are service focused and only 28.4% are manufacturing businesses. Even if the sample is randomly selected, the representation of the population is at a good level, referring to the age and division into production and service according to Eurostat (Nace2), as shown in the table below:

**Table 1: Comparison in % between Sample and Campion**

	Based on NACE2 (%)		Age (%)						
	Manufacture	Service	1-5 year	6-10 year	11-15 year	16-20 year	21-25 year	26-30 year	Over 30 years
Sample (194)	28.4	71.6	32.1	25.2	16.8	11.8	10.1	2.5	1.5
Campion (3493)	29.3	70.7	23.11	23.11	18.09	16.08	13.06	5.05	1.5

Sobel test is performed to see the significant of the mediation effect on this equation. Based on the value of skewness and kurtosis the variable define as a normal distribution. The value of VIF are greater than one so this indicate a lack of multicollinearity. The following tables summarizes all the regression results for the three hypotheses:

**Table 2: Regression results for H1 and H2**

	Dependent variable: Exploratory	Dependent variable:
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Variable	Innovation H1			Technology Orientation H2		
	B	S.E	Beta	B	S.E	Beta
Constant	4.792***	.417		3.575***	.442	
Realized Absorptive Capability	.186*	.072	.182	.331***	.077	.297
R Square	.033			.088		
Adjusting R Square	.028			.084		
F	6.609			18.613		

\*0.01 ≤ p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\*p < 0.001, †0.05 ≤ p < 0.1

**Table 3: Regression results for H3**

Variable	Dependent variable: Exploitative Innovation H3								
	(RealizAC-TO-EXIn)			(RealCA-TO-EXIn)			(RealCA-TO-EXIn)		
	B	S.E	Beta	B	S.E	Beta	B	S.E	Beta
Constant	3.694** *	.45 7		3.627** *	.45 5		3.360** *	.54 2	
Realized Absorptive Capability	.084	.07 2	.083	.060	.07 2	.059	.052	.07 5	.051
Technology Orientation	.307***	.06 4	.336	.304***	.06 4	.332	.314***	.06 4	.348
Industry (service/manufacture)				.310†	.16 3	.129	.373*	.16 9	.157
Firm Size							.070	.05 3	.099
Age							-.002	.00 9	- .015
R Square	.136			.152			.169		
Adjusting R Square	.127			.139			.146		
F	15.042			11.361			7.219		

\*0.01 ≤ p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\*p < 0.001, †0.05 ≤ p < 0.1

*Hypothesis 1:* Realized Absorptive Capability has a positive impact on Exploitative Innovation. The R-square indicates that around 3.3% of the variance variable can be explained in this model.

*Hypothesis 2:* Realized Absorptive Capability has a significant positive impact on Technological Orientation. The R-square in this model indicate that around 8.8% of the variance can be explained in this model.

*Hypothesis 3:* In the model that we can see both Realized Absorptive Capability and Technology Orientation, they don't have both significant impact on Exploitative Innovation. Only the Technology Orientation has a significant positive impact on Exploitative Innovation. The R-square in this model indicate that around 15.2% of the variance can be explained in this model.

Based on (Baron and Kenny, 1986) as it is a significant relationship between the Realized Absorptive Capability on Exploitative Innovation (equation 1) and there is a significant relationship between Realized Absorptive Capability to the Technology Orientation (equation 2) we come to the conclusion that Technology Orientation is a complete mediator in this relation because the effect of the independent variable (Realized Absorptive Capability) is not

significant on the Exploitative Innovation (equation 3) when is taken in consideration also Technology Orientation.

## Conclusions

Our study aims to investigate the relationship between realized absorptive capability and exploitative innovation in 194 firms focused on knowledge intensive sector on Albania. As well known in many studies. technology is often seen as the main input of innovation or even as an essential element to make it successful. At the same time, as it is emphasized by the resource based theory, the firm cannot gain sustainable competitive advantages without dynamic capabilities in such a dynamic environment. Viewing the technology orientation as an important variable on innovation this study has concluded that no matter how important realized absorptive capability is, they cannot be transferred their potential to exploitative innovation without the mediation role of technology. So, based on this empirical study, the firms that follow the market and also tend to be innovative must be conscious that the main element on this process is the access of technology or how they are oriented on technology to achieve their goals. Also the study has managerial implication, they should know that no matter how many resources and potential a firm has, if technological orientation is lacking the resources may be left unused.

## Limitation

No studies come without limitations, so some limitations of our research should be noted. One of the limitations of the study is related to innovation, our study includes only exploitative innovation and does not include the explorative innovation. Another limitation of this study is the lack of other variable that explain exploitative innovation. Finally, in the future study more data are needed to ensure that the captured effect is the same.

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### Appendix A: Factor Analysis with Varimax Rotation

Items for independent variable	Factor*		
	F1	F2	F3
We frequently refine the provision of existing products and services	.000	<b>.852</b>	.152
We regularly implement small adoptions to existing products and services	.084	<b>.610</b>	.334
We introduce improved, but existing products and services for our local market	.114	<b>.800</b>	.051
Our organization expands services for existing clients	.052	<b>.774</b>	.123
We use sophisticated technology in developing new products	.112	.322	<b>.633</b>
Technological innovation which is undertaken based on concrete results of a research work, is easily accepted in our organization	.218	.187	<b>.860</b>
Technological innovation is easily accepted in the management of specific projects undertaken in organizations.	.221	.090	<b>.890</b>
The employs have the ability to structure and use newly collected information	<b>.843</b>	.057	.096
The employs are used to preparing newly collected information for further purposes and making it available	<b>.776</b>	.057	.088
The employs are able to integrate new information into their work	<b>.871</b>	.053	.096
The employs have immediate access to stored information, e.g.	<b>.759</b>	.105	.115

about new or changed guidelines or instructions			
The employs regularly engage in the development of prototypes or new concepts	<b>.785</b>	.044	.188
The employs apply new knowledge in the workplace to respond quickly to environment changes	<b>.835</b>	.049	.217

\*Underlying the dimension as three factor: F1 - Realized Absorptive Capability; F2-Exploitative Innovation; F3- Technology Orientation;

## Exports and Internationalization in Albania

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### Abstract

Exports of goods represent one of the most important sources of foreign exchange income that alleviate the pressure on the balance payment and beyond. Exports are the key for the future success in the Global Economy. The aim of this study is to show the importance, the trends and the development of exports in Albania before and after 90's. This study brings together an overall review of exports in brief, regional trade relations and international enlargement as well. There is also an evidence of the latest shift and developments of exports before and during Covid 19 pandemic. Simultaneously we have tried to offer a broad and concentrated literature review, mostly based on international studies not excluding national ones, even though they are limited. We have also used different national and international sources to collect the necessary data in order to best achieve our goals and to reach useful conclusions for the future in the area of the exports.

**Keywords:** exports, internationalization, trade relations, pandemic.

### Introduction

The theoretical concept of this topic has been treated on the basis of some research in the economic field that deals with and analyzes in particular exports, different ways of its development, details of its expansion in the national and international market. Exports are the key to the future of the global economy. In particular, this economic activity has reached a value of 24.5 billion ALL in July 2020. International trade is becoming very important for all global economies as a way to survive the fierce competition that is increasing day by day. Global businesses are already attributing the key to their success to exports. Exports are one of the main routes through which businesses interact on an international scale. It is the initial stage of global development. Exports can also be seen as a response to the challenges of business survival in an unsustainable market. International trade is an important element of the global economy and is a key component of economic growth. Foreign trade is of particular

importance for the small economies, such as that of Albania. The performance of exports plays an important role in the perspective and sustainable development of the Albanian economy, and in the trade balance. The export growth rate in several years is an important indicator and its increase directly impacts the economic growth. It is quite important in the economy of a country to be familiar with exports with its advantages and disadvantages. In most cases, export is attributed to the success of the development of the companies themselves and the country as a whole. If we refer to Albania before 1991, Albania was a country with a centralized economy where all means of production were controlled by the state. The failure of this controlled economy has pushed the government to decentralize the economic decision-making process. Currently private businesses are a very important link in the economy as a whole. The cooperation of businesses and the state itself with other countries has caused the economic growth for the country to undergo successive changes year after year.

### **Regional trade relations toward liberalization**

For various reasons countries coordinate their economic policies. Coordination can generate benefits, which derive not only from tariff liberalization but also from the liberalization of labor and capital movement between countries. The benefits can also come from the coordination of fiscal policies and the allocation of resources to different sectors of the economy, as well as through the coordination of monetary policies. Regional trade liberalization or economic integration means the discriminatory elimination of trade barriers such as: tariff and non-tariff barriers between participating countries. Any agreement in which countries agree to coordinate their trade, fiscal, and/or monetary policies can be considered as a document of economic integration.

#### **Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA)**

A preferential trade agreement is probably the weakest or mildest form of economic integration. In a PTA, countries can apply tariff reductions although not eliminating them against a group of partner countries in certain product categories. This type of trade agreement is not allowed in WTO member countries, which are obliged to grant or grant the status of the most favored country to all other WTO members. Under the rule of the most favored country, states agree not to discriminate against other WTO member countries. Discrimination or preferential treatment for some countries is not allowed.

#### **Free Trade Area (FTA)**

A free trade area has as its main feature the elimination of trade barriers between member countries while each of these countries implements its own policy of trade restrictions on third countries. The North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA) established in 1995 and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) established in 1960 are examples of an FTA.

#### **Customs Union**

A customs union occurs when a group of countries agree to eliminate tariffs between themselves and to establish and implement a common trade policy towards third countries. The European Union is an example of this commitment.

## **Common Market**

The Common Market, being a Customs Union, based on the free trade of goods and services, has as its basic feature the complete freedom of movement of factors (labor and capital), between the member countries. The European Union was established in the form of the common market by the Treaty of Rome in 1957, although it took a long period of transition to its final form.

### **Economic Union**

The Economic Union is characterized by the complete unification of all economic policies of member countries: such as monetary, fiscal, trade and migration of factors of production.

### **Monetary Union**

The Monetary union is about setting up and applying a common currency alongside a group of countries. This includes the formation of a central monetary authority which will design the monetary policy for the whole group. The Maastricht Treaty, signed by members of the European Union in 1991, proposed the implementation of a single European currency (the Euro) since 1999. Perhaps the best example of an Economic and Monetary Union is the case of the United States. Each state has its own government, which sets policies and laws for its residents. However, each state submits control to the Federal Government for some broader aspects such as monetary policy, foreign policy, welfare policy, etc.

## **Internationalization**

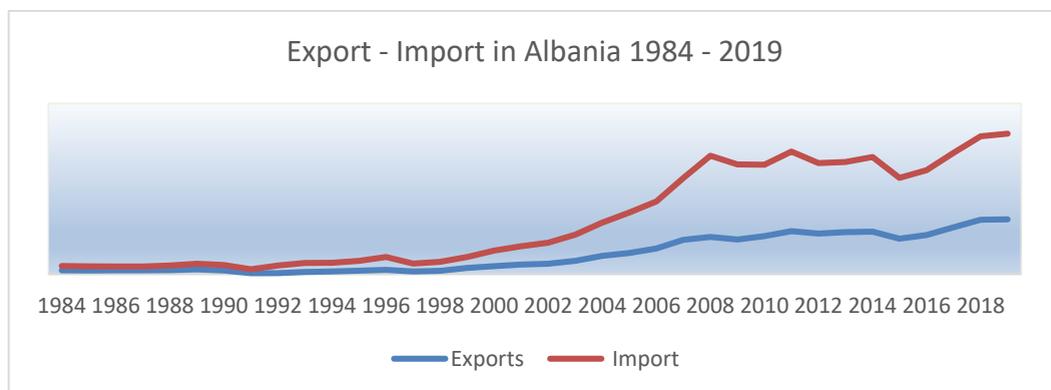
Internationalization is defined in different ways. The classic writers of internationalization have defined it as the step-by-step involvement in growing the firm in a foreign country and establishing successive operations in new countries. Welch and Luostarinen present a broader definition stating that internationalization is evidenced not only by the involvement of a firm of foreign operating methods but also by the number of sales of facilities, entry into new markets, the firm's organizational structure and personnel, international skills, experience and training. Beamish defines internationalization as a process by which firms become aware of the direct and indirect impact of international transactions on their future and in establishing and conducting transactions with other countries. Internationalization has two components: behavioral and economic. The three main frameworks that have been used to explain internationalization are: the Access Process, the Economic Access, and the Access Network which are beyond the scope of this paper. In terms of international economic expansion we can mention the export of monopolies, entry into foreign markets, the expansion of companies taking into account the cost of acquisition and transaction as its typical forms.

## **Exports in Albania**

Albania has experienced a difficult period of transition, characterized by efforts to establish a free market-oriented economic system. Foreign trade is a factor that affects a country's economic growth and reflects the increase in competitiveness. In this context, Albania has worked hard for the opening of the country and the liberalization of the market. Free trade agreements are one of the most important instruments for boosting exports by creating more liberal and preferential trade spaces compared to the status of the most favored nation. Albania has been a member of the WTO since September 2000 and pursues a non-discriminatory, transparent and liberal trade policy. Albania does not apply any export taxes

or quantitative restrictions. Albania currently has several free trade agreements in force and benefits from preferential tariffs in its trade with European Union countries, CEFTA countries, EFTA countries and Turkey. Developments in Albania's foreign trade have been characterized by mainly increasing trade flows, a fact which indicates an opening and intensification of trade exchanges of the Albanian economy and markets with world economies and markets. The levels of openness for Albania have followed a consistently positive trend.

Exports of goods represent one of the most important sources of foreign exchange income that ease the pressure on the balance payment and create employment opportunities. Albania's geographical location offers a trade potential, especially with the European Union market and the free trade agreements with all Balkan countries have created opportunity for trade development all over the region. Exports' opportunities in Albania have been increasing significantly, but still they are far from their real capacity. Mainly due to lack of marketing facilities (storage, processing, packing of products), low standards related to products safety, low level of competitiveness in the market of Albanian products due to low quality and relatively high cost of the Albanian products, and deficiency and low levels of production and industry.



Source: World Bank

Albanian foreign trade of goods for the entire period from (1984–2019) has shown an increase in both exports and imports. In the centralized economy, mainly from the late 1970s to 1990, Albania ranked second in the world in terms of chromium exports (after South Africa) and third for its production (after South Africa and the Soviet Union). While after the fall of the regime and the opening of the country, the level of exports decreased. One of the reasons was because industrial exports lost their importance with the bankruptcy of state-owned enterprises. After the 1990s, domestic exports accounted for a very small share and were mainly represented by agricultural products. This change came as a result of the radical policies undertaken in Albania, known as the Schumpeter theory (the theory of "creative destruction") which consists in the destruction of everything that has to do with the past and the creation of new structures. Based on this theory undertaken in Albania, enterprises and entire sectors of the economy were destroyed. This negatively affected the extraction and processing industry of chromium, copper, oil. The drastic decline in exports of minerals is considered as an important factor that influenced the reduction of export volume. With the entry into the market economy and the opening to trade in goods and services, the flow of

imports increased, as a result of the gap (lack of goods in the market), the growth of domestic demand and the inability of domestic production to responding to explosive needs. Although the trend has been increasing for exports, the volume of imports has been increasingly high making the trade balance negative over the years.

### The main partners in foreign trade

The main partners for Albanian exports are EU countries. The top exports of Albania are in Leather Footwear (\$ 358M), Footwear Parts (\$ 229M), Crude Petroleum (\$ 185M), Non-Knit Men's Suits (\$ 123M), and Ferroalloys (\$ 117M). The top imports of Albania are in Refined Petroleum (\$ 415M), Cars (\$ 211M), Packaged Medicaments (\$ 146M), Tanned Equine and Bovine Hides (\$ 110M), and Footwear Parts (\$ 100M).

After the 2000s the three main destinations of Albanian exports were Italy, Greece and Germany. In 2004, Albania completed the bilateral framework of Free Trade Agreements in the region. Exports to the countries of the Southeast European region, included in the process of creating a free trade zone, increased by 2.3 times compared to a year ago, expanding the Albanian export market in this area from 3 to 7 percent of the total of exports. Kosovo and Macedonia represent the largest market for exports of Albanian products. If we refer to the export destination of Albania in the last five years, the main partner remains Italy. Starting from 2019, the level of exports decreased which continues in 2020 due to the pandemic and its effects on the economy, however Italy remains the main destination of Albanian goods. Trade exchanges, for the seven months of 2020, with EU countries account for 63.3% of all trade. In the period January - July 2020, exports to EU countries account for 75.5% of total exports and imports from EU countries account for 57.8% of total imports. The main trading partners are: Italy (31.4%), Greece (7.8%), Germany (7.2%) and Turkey (6.7%).

### Top 10 Albanian export markets (2016-2019)<sup>1</sup>

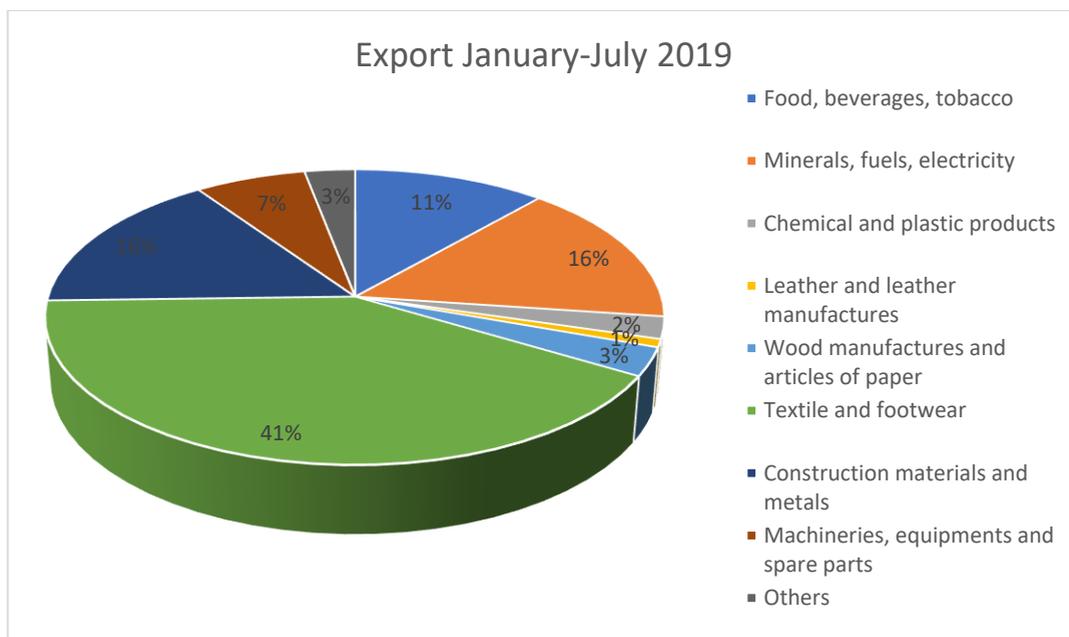
Destination	2016	Destination	2017	Destination	2018	Destination	2019
Italy	132,890.14	Italy	146,039.53	Italy	149,100.88	Italy	143,105.44
Kosovo	16,604.61	Kosovo	20,923.67	Kosovo	27,093.09	Kosovo	29,812.32
Greece	11,150.29	Spain	14,991.80	Spain	24,173.83	Spain	23,844.86
Germany	8,282.24	Greece	11,602.27	Germany	13,115.01	Germany	14,190.13
Malta	8,016.39	Germany	10,861.34	Greece	13,436.93	Greece	12,781.39
Spain	7,994.24	North Macedonia	8,431.00	North Macedonia	8,543.00	North Macedonia	8,567.00

<sup>1</sup> Exports in USD millions

		a		a		a	
North Macedonia	6,420.93	Montenegro	5,017.00	Serbia	8,035.00	Montenegro	5,482.00
Serbia	4,700.26	Serbia	4,833.00	Montenegro	5,690.00	Serbia	5,386.00
Montenegro	4,378.04	Romania	4,726.00	Romania	4,775.00	France	4,465.00
Bulgaria	4,378.04	Bulgaria	3,059.00	Czech Republic	4,002.00	Czech Republic	4,197.00

### Export Structure 2019-2020

The structure of exports is dominated by active processing products in textiles and footwear, oriented towards European Union markets. For 2019, exports amounted to 298.7 billion ALL, while imports amounted to 579 billion ALL. The most important groups of goods that Albania exported in 2019 are "Textiles and footwear", followed by "Minerals, fuels and electricity" and "Construction materials and metals". Even during 2020, the dominance items in the component structure of the export basket remain the same as in 2019, although the volume of exports has decreased by 16.8%.

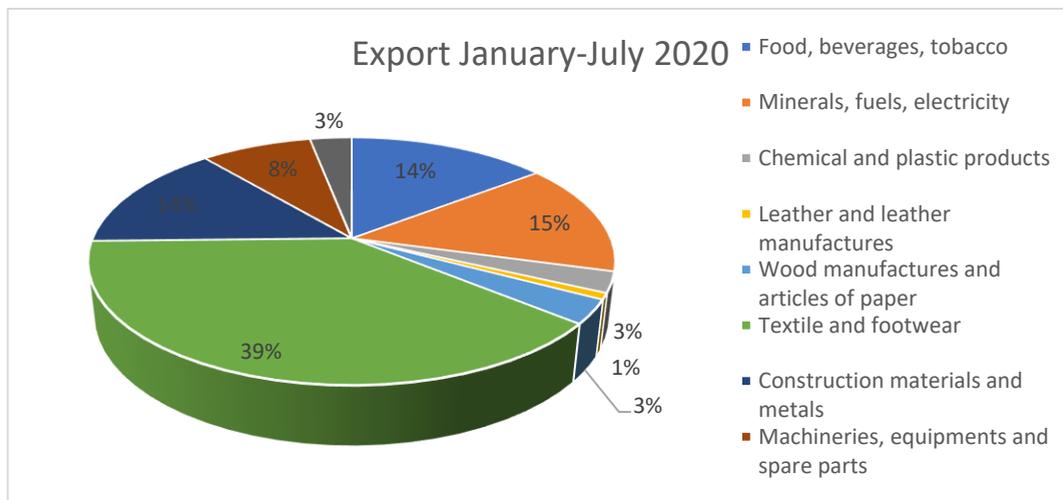


Source: INSTAT

Specifically referring to INSTAT<sup>1</sup> data, during the first quarter of 2020, the countries with which exports have had the largest decrease are: Italy (23.4%), Kosovo (25.5%) and Spain (10, 8%). While the countries with which Albania has had the largest increase in exports (January

<sup>1</sup> Albanian Institute of Statistics

- July 2020), compared to a year ago, are: Germany (10.1%), Serbia (8.1%), and France (29.9%).



Source: INSTAT

### Foreign trade during the Covid-19 pandemic

During the first two months of 2020 exports had a slight increase compared to the same period a year earlier. The main weight in the increase of exports is presented by the items "Textiles and footwear", "Minerals" and "Construction materials". After the spread of the pandemic in our country as well as in the whole world, within the framework of self-imposed measures, the supply was first hit by suspending any economic activity and then the demand in response to the uncertainty that the consumer was experiencing. All the created situation is reflected in the foreign trade of Albania. Exports in March 2020 experienced a drastic decline of 36% compared to exports in March 2019. This decline was due to the cessation of activities of tailors operating in our country, the decline in demand for "Minerals" and "Building Materials" which constitute the main items in the group of goods that Albania exports. Moreover, our main trading partner, Italy, was one of the countries with the most serious consequences of Covid-19. Imports in Albania during the pandemic period also marked a sharp decline, due to the decline in consumer demand, declining incomes due to rising unemployment, etc. In addition to changes in the volume of exports and imports, the contribution of commodity groups has also changed. Exports, during the first seven months of 2020 have decreased by 16.8% or 30,185,812,402 ALL compared to a year ago. The groups that have mainly influenced the annual decrease of exports are: "Textiles and footwear" with -8.8 percentage points, "Construction materials and metals" with -4.0 percentage points, "Minerals, fuels, electricity" with -3.4 percentage points. The annual change of exports was positively influenced by the group: "Food, beverages, tobacco" with +0.7 percentage points and "Machinery, equipment and spare parts" with +0.1 percentage points.

## Conclusions

From all the work and not only it is easily understood how important exports and international trade are for the economy of a country and especially for small countries like Albania. Exports are one of the main ways through which Albanian businesses interact with businesses on an international scale. Exports increase competitiveness between businesses and are attributed to the success of the development of the companies themselves. Lack of knowledge on exports has prompted governments to take steps to promote international trade to help businesses overcome bureaucratic and economic barriers. EU accession is an opportunity that will give an impetus to the Albanian economy to move forward, although there are also a number of barriers that complicate the export process, such as: internal barriers (infrastructure, corruption, various legislation between the two countries, etc.) and external barriers (relating to general limits such as the limit of permitted chemicals, testing of goods and certificates required, packaging, etc.) not to mention exchange rates as well. Albania's main trading partners are Italy, Turkey, China and Greece. A high part of exports in Albania is occupied by the textile and clothing industry and the highest part is occupied by the leather and footwear industry, which in recent years has experienced continuous growth. Emphasis should be placed on equalizing the flow of imports with exports in order to achieve a balance and why not increase the impact of exports on the country's economy. The Covid Pandemic 19 has brought a significant drop in exports to our country. It is advisable that the Albanian economy also relies on FDI as an indicator of economic growth.

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# The Main Concepts of Russian Political Discourse Implemented in the Presidents' Official Speeches: The President's Address to the Federal Assembly

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## Abstract

One of important genres of political discourse is the President's speech delivered in front of the Federal Assembly (the annual Presidential address to the Federal Assembly). The address, according to the dictionary definition is "an official document addressed by a state or social activist (or organization) to another activist (or another organization) connected with an important question" (Кузнецов, 1998, p. 932). In accordance with the classification proposed by J.I. Sheigal (2000) - division according to the nature of the intention - it belongs to ritual genres. The message is of institutional nature: the speaker acts as a representative of a certain public institution and as a person of a certain social status, which determines compliance with the established norms of the status, norms of the roles acted and situational-communicative status (Чудинов, 2012). The aim of an address to the Federal Assembly is to present by the head of state the assessment of the situation in the country and to outline the priorities of the internal policy to follow, in the President's opinion, by the government and the Parliament.

**Keywords:** Russian Political Discourse, Presidents, Federal Assembly

## Introduction

It is a relatively new discursive genre in the Russian political discourse. Its appearance is probably connected with the tradition of delivering reports at party congresses by the General Secretary, as well as the influence of the western political system. The first speech of this type was delivered in 1994 by B.N. Yeltsin (On the Consolidation of the Russian State (the main directions of domestic and foreign policy) and since then it has been delivered every year. In the period 1994-2002 the addresses had their names. Since 2003 they have not been named. The president is obliged to address the Federal Assembly by the Constitution of the Russian Federation [Конституция Российской Федерации, n.d., article 84]. The address is delivered in Kremlin (before 2008 in Marble Hall, since 2008 in St. George's Hall) in front of invited guests: members of the Federal Assembly, members of the government, members of the State Council, the chairmen of the Constitutional and Supreme Courts, the general prosecutor, the

chairman of the Central Electoral Commission, the head of the Accounting Chamber, representatives of the Russian Civil Chamber, the leaders of the country's main religions. The event is broadcast live by the state television and radio.

This speech is devoted to the analysis of concepts characteristic for Russian political discourse, verbalized in the addresses to the Federal Assembly. This analysis is based on five sample speeches of President *Vladimir* Vladimirovich Putin: from 2015, 2016, 2018, 2019 and 2020 (in 2017 the address was not delivered). The official website of the Kremlin was used as the source of lexical material. As we see, they are relatively large texts:

	2015	2016	2018	2019	2020
Russian version	6588 words	7740 words	12763 words	9795 words	7529 words
English version	7579 words	9738 words	13339 words	11911 words	9253 words

The analysis showed that the main concepts that are being verbalized in the Presidential speeches are the concepts of "Russia", "nation" and "power" ("authority").

The concept of "Russia" is verbalized in the analyzed material by a few lexical units.

	2015	2016	2018	2019	2020
Russian Federation	0	0	0	1	4
Russia	35	42	89	55	50
country	13	20	40	26	24
state	18	16	17	27	30
Fatherland	0	0	1	0	0

The first group is formed by the official names "Russian Federation" and "Russia". Other nominations can be divided into two groups: neutral and connected with emotional connotations. The nouns "country" and "state" are neutral. The lexical unit "Fatherland" is emotionally marked: it can raise sublime patriotic feelings, which is emphasized by the spelling used in saved texts (uppercase letters).

The aforementioned lexical units, being the realization of the concept of "Russia", are used with many various attributes.

The high frequency of using the pronoun "our" is drawing the attention. Its use in political discourse is associated with the integrational function ("we-discourse"). President tries to create the impression he is closely associated with citizens, Russia is his common homeland, and its good is a common goal.

Our actions will always be guided primarily by responsibility – to ourselves, to **our country**, to our people (2015).

The vast majority of civil servants are honest and decent people who work for the good of **our country** (2016).

I would like to emphasise that **our country**, with its vast territory, complex federal and administrative division and diverse cultural and historical traditions, cannot properly advance and even exist sustainably as a parliamentary republic (2020).

The realization of the integrational function is also served by the use of lexical units such as "whole", "common", "entire" and "one".

I just mentioned this in my Address, and **the whole country** will now follow the issue carefully (2016).

Allow me to underscore: thanks to years of common work and the results achieved, we can now direct and concentrate enormous financial resources – at least enormous for our country – on development goals. These resources have not come as a rainfall. We have not borrowed them. These funds have been earned by millions of our citizens – by **the entire country** (2019).

Let's remember that we are a single people, a united people, and we have only **one Russia** (2016).

We also find expressions such as "great", "huge", "vast", "the world's largest" in the analyzed speeches. They emphasize the place of Russia among other countries, they can evoke pride and positive connotations (related to the past and history etc.).

Colleagues, in every corner of our **great country**, children have to be able to study in a pleasant, user-friendly, modern environment, so we will continue the programme for the reconstruction and renovation of schools (2016).

Fourth, Russia is **a huge country**, and every region has its specifics, problems and experience (2020).

In our **vast country**, this combination of talent, competencies and ideas amounts to a huge ground-breaking resource (2018).

This is essential for enhancing a country's connectivity, and especially for Russia, **the world's largest country** with its vast territory. This is essential for strengthening statehood, unleashing the country's potential and driving national economic growth (2019).

The role of the independence of the state and the absence of external threats is emphasized by lexical units "sovereign" and "independent".

Colleagues, Russia has been and always will be **a sovereign and independent state** (2019).

Firstly, Russia can be and can remain Russia only as a **sovereign state** (2020).

We also find lexical units such as "powerful", "developing", "successful", "welfare" in the analyzed speeches, which may evoke positive connotations (their meaning is connected with success).

They need to see their children grow up and become successful in a **powerful, rapidly developing and successful country** that is attaining new development levels (2018).

If the younger generations accept this situation as natural, as a moral and an integral part and reliable background support for their adult life, then we will be able to meet the historical challenge of guaranteeing Russia's development as a large and **successful country** (2020).

And I find it possible to express my view and propose a number of constitutional amendments for discussion, amendments that, in my opinion, are reasonable and important for the further development of Russia as a rule-of-law **welfare state** where citizens' freedoms and rights, human dignity and wellbeing constitute the highest value (2020).

The realization of the concept of "nation" is served also by various lexical units.

	2015	2016	2018	2019	2020
citizens	7	3	12	6	24
Russians	1	0	1	0	0
fellow Russians	0	0	0	0	1
society	7	12	7	3	12
nation	2	0	5	2	2
people	34	54	66	68	46

The noun "citizens" is often used in analyzed speeches. It can evoke emotional reactions in recipients (patriotic mood connected with the duty to serve the homeland (a noun citizen has a few meanings, one of them is: a citizen - 1. A subject of state. Подданный какого-н. государства. 2. Conscious member of society, man; subordinating his personal interests to the public (ритор.). 3. Adult man Взрослый человек, мужчина (нов.). [Толковый словарь русского языка под редакцией Д.Н. Ушакова, <http://ushakova-slovar.ru/description/grazhdanin/11020>]). This noun serves at the same time the realization of the integrational function, calling for the unity of the nation. This function is also accomplished by the lexical units "fellow Russians" and "society" (people treated as a group, not individuals). In the analyzed texts, we can find also a noun "nation", which - according to some dictionary definitions - has some connotations with Soviet times, ("nation - in the Soviet era" [Толковый словарь русского языка конца XX века. Языковые изменения, 1998, 413]). The verbalization of the analyzed concept also includes the nouns "Russians" and "people".

The aforementioned lexical units are used with various attributes characterizing the inhabitants of Russia from various angles.

The attributes used with them connect members of the society with a country ("Russian citizens", "Citizens of Russia", "Russia's citizens", "people of Russia").

I am sure that public associations, parties, regions, the legal community, and **Russian citizens** will express their ideas (2020).

Their content and the targets they set are a reflection of the demands and expectations of **Russia's citizens** (2019).

Therefore, everything hinges on efforts to preserve **the people of Russia** and to guarantee the prosperity of our citizens (2018).

We can distinguish among them a group composed of lexical units such as "united", "unified", "our", "multi-ethnic", "all", fulfilling the integrational function.

Let's remember that we are a single people, **a united people**, and we have only one Russia (2016).

These parameters for development breakthroughs cannot be translated into figures or indicators, but it is these things – **a unified society**, people being involved in the affairs of their country, and a common confidence in our power – that play the main role in reaching success (2019).

Our efforts to enhance our defence capability are for only one purpose: to ensure the security of this country and **our citizens** so that nobody would even consider pressuring us, or launching an aggression against us (2019).

Family, childbirth, procreation and respect for the elderly have always served as a powerful moral framework for Russia and its **multi-ethnic people** (2019).

I want to emphasise that medical treatment should become accessible for everyone by the end of 2020 in all populated areas across Russia without exception and for **all citizens**, regardless of their place of residence (2019).

The attributes also differentiate citizens based on their age ("young", "senior", "people of pre-retirement age", "people of different generations and ages").

**Senior citizens** must have worthy conditions for a long, active and healthy life (2018).

**Young Russians** are already proving their leadership in science and in other areas (2018).

Let me remind you that this benefit is already available to pensioners and **people of pre-retirement age** (2019).

It is very important that the volunteer movement is becoming more popular, and it unites schoolchildren, university students, and **people of different generations and ages** (2020).

The next group of attributes is connected with a part of society, which needs state's help ("people with disabilities", "low-income people", "people who are alone and those facing problems in life").

In particular, it is necessary to take into account the individual needs of **people with disabilities**, and focus on their training and employment (2015).

While providing comprehensive assistance to **low-income people**, society and the state have a right to expect them to take steps as well to deal with their problems, including finding employment and taking a responsible attitude to their children and other family members (2020).

And, of course, we must raise the quality of healthcare and social support for senior citizens and help **people who are alone and those facing problems in life** (2018).

President characterizes the citizens, using a number of positive attributes, expressed by the adjectives such as "proactive", "concerned", "talented", "ingenious", "interesting", "goal-oriented", "educated".

Today, **proactive and concerned citizens** and socially-minded NPOs contribute to addressing crucial issues (2018).

My confidence is based on the results we have achieved together, even though they may seem modest at first glance, as well as on the unity of Russian society and, most importantly, on the huge potential of Russia and our **talented and ingenious people** (2018).

Our children and young adults are really **interesting and goal-oriented people** (2015).

Because new jobs, modern companies and an attractive life will develop in other, more successful countries where **educated and talented young people** will go, thereby draining the society's vital powers and development energy (2018).

President also associates the verbalizations of the concept of "nation" with fundamental values, important for all citizens ("democratic").

We have gone through major challenging transformations, and were able to overcome new and extremely complex economic and social challenges, preserved the unity of our country, built **a democratic society** and set it on the path to freedom and independence (2018).

The last studied concept is the concept of "power" ("authority").

	2015	2016	2018	2019	2020
power	1	2	0	1	2
authority	2	1	0	0	4
president	0	0	2	1	8

The basic means of realization of this concept are the nouns "power", "authority". The noun "president" is also found in analyzed speeches.

The mentioned nouns appear with various attributes. They can be divided into two groups. The first one is formed by the adjectives "legislative", "executive", "judicial", forming the phrases "legislative power", "executive power", "judicial power".

And we will draw the appropriate conclusions about the work quality and performance at all levels of **executive power** (2019).

The State Duma has bolstered its role as a representative body and **the legislative branch of power's authority** has strengthened in general (2015).

Elements of the second group are adjectives that characterize the verbalization of the concept of "power" due to the territorial scope ("federal", "municipal").

I believe that the Constitution must seal the principles of a unified system of public authority and effective interaction between **the federal and municipal authorities** (2020).

The analysis of the Presidential addresses to the Federal Assembly made it possible to conclude that the concepts that characterize this genre are the concepts of "Russia", "nation" and "power". The verbalization of these concepts is carried out with the help of the whole complex of various lexical units, neutral (for example "Russian Federation", "country") and related to emotional connotations ("Fatherland", "citizens" ").

Various characteristics of concepts are updated in the awareness of voters. They refer to fundamental values ("democratic"), to basic psychological needs of being free from external threats ("sovereign", "independent"), to patriotic feelings ("great"). Noteworthy is the high frequency of using the pronoun "our", referring to the implementation of analyzed concepts. This pronoun is a mean of expressing the integrative function (nation and country as one whole), with its help an impression may arise that President is closely connected with the citizens (which is a means of emotional manipulation). The president mentions various groups of citizens in his speeches (young and old, active in need of state aid), which may be a way of making the same impression (he is closely associated with all citizens).

The verbalizations of the concept of "Russia" is the most frequent in the Presidential addresses, which is connected with the aim of speeches: to present by the head of state the assessment of the situation in the country. It is worth noting that the realizations of the concept of "power" are very rare and they don't appear with attributes, connected with emotional connotations (positive or negative), they are only parts of common phrases (levels of power, institutions of power, official names).

It is worth noting also that electoral materials realize not only an integrative and inspirational functions, but also a manipulative one (by influencing the recipients' emotions).

## Competences and Tertiary Education in Italy: Challenges of the Fourth Industrial Revolution

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### Abstract

The advent of the fourth industrial revolution (or Industry 4.0) is more and more making more necessary to approach the centrality of the technological element to the value of the human being. The ongoing transformations inside the production systems of businesses, thanks to the most recent technology innovations (Big Data, IoT, Machine Learning, etc.), involve the educational processes and, particularly, the system of tertiary education which, especially in Italy, shall have to guarantee, to young people, the possibility to gain new competences, in order for them to adapt themselves to those scenarios which constantly change. Nevertheless, as it emerges from this paper, Italian tertiary education is too unbalanced on university paths, which are little connected with the world of work and, in particular, with the new working reality, whereas HTI (the Higher Technical Institutes), which have been created in order to train professional figures who are able to better meet the demand for skills 4.0, are still a niche phenomenon.

**Keywords:** Industry 4.0, tertiary education, competences, person, digital technologies.

### Introduction

According to Klaus Schwab (2016), the founder and Chairman of WEF (the World Economic Forum), the fourth industrial revolution (or Industry 4.0) is something which human beings have never had to confront with before now. If the previous industrial revolutions were determined by individual inventions, the new industrial revolution originates from various innovations which are converging among them: AI (Artificial Intelligence), IoT (Internet of Things), Additive Manufacturing (3D printing), Augmented/Virtual Reality, Big Data, etc. Many of these innovations – some of them still at an early stage, some others are developing – have originated some «combined» technologies, which may be used in different fields: physical, digital, biological fields. In addition to this, according to Schwab the fourth industrial revolution is different from the preceding revolutions for at least three reasons:

for the *speed*, since it evolves at a staggering rhythm (as it is demonstrated by the fact that we live in an interconnected world, which is made of newer and newer and higher and higher performance technologies);

for the *impact on the systems*, since it is a transformation which involves entire systems, Countries, sectors and, generally, the society;

for the *range* and *intensity*, since the transformations, which are consequence of it, lead to some changes in paradigms without precedent both at an individual level (not only *what we do* changes, but also *who we are*), and at a social level.

That being stated, a good part of the studies, which have been carried out until now, makes reference to a technological paradigm which is mainly used to explain the undeniable advantages, which have been generated by digitalization in the industrial production processes. Nevertheless, as it happened for the previous industrial revolutions, it is not only a transformation of the material environment but also, and above all, a social and cultural transformation. Therefore, in order to understand and face the challenges of this new industrial revolution, it is necessary to approach the centrality of the technological element to the value of the person.

Anyway, what does focusing on the person's value mean?

In order to answer this question, first of all, it is necessary to consider the technology as a human fact. In fact, technology has not only to be intended as a product of the human being, but as something which retroacts in a logic of circular causality, thus generating fundamental evolutionary and epistemological slippages in the human being:

Kelly (2011) wrote that:

our genes have co-developed together with our inventions. (...) The technology has domesticated us: at the same speed with which we redo our utensils, in a certain way we redo ourselves. We are co-developing with our technology and, therefore, we have deeply become co-depending on it. If all the technology disappeared from the planet, our species would not survive more than some months. At this point, we are a whole with technology (pages 40-41).

Technology contributes to the education of the person's cognitive categories, thus conditioning his/her development: «The evolution of the technology has become the person's evolution. If today the biological evolution is static, the cultural evolution is faster than ever: but the separation between the two evolutions is artificial, since the two processes have by now intertwined in a 'biocultural' or 'biotechnological' evolution» (Longo, 2001, p. 42).

It is undeniable that the digitalization processes are changing the nature of many employments and this lets us suppose that in the future:

There will not be any precise and well-defined professional profiles, but rather macro professionalism types with variable "borders", which are able to re-position the different forms of knowledge all along the cycle and in the networks which feed the production, thus generating a transformation of profound knowledge (which is inalienable from the person who has it) in multipliable and generative knowledge: even before technical competences, reason and creativity, logic and imagination shall be used in order to mix, without any fear, forms of knowledge which are objectively verifiable and imaginative hypotheses, "certain" data and "uncertain" data (but possible), rational requests and emotional and sentimental impulses (Costa 2017, p. 3).

Therefore, for the future professions it is conceivable that, like competences and technical know-how, it will be important to acquire more complex competences, which are not always certifiable and which may not be codified.

Therefore, if, on one side, the ongoing transformations are transforming the production systems of industries (thanks to the connection between physical and digital systems, to the complex analyses through Big Data, to the real-time adjustments, etc.), on the other, they involve the educational processes and, particularly, education and training systems which shall guarantee, to young people, the possibility to gain new competences in order to adapt themselves to those scenarios which constantly change.

What are the competences which are necessary to be gained in order to face the transformations which are triggered by the fourth industrial revolution?

Among others, one of the hypotheses of this paper is based on the assumption that, in order to govern the changes of the fourth industrial revolution, it is necessary to consider some professional figures with a well-structured mix of competences (technological, managerial competences, leadership, emotional intelligence, creative thinking, the capacity to govern the change, etc.). It is necessary that the competences of the consolidated professions (technical, management and relational ones) integrate with the new digital skills (ability to communicate and interact in social networks, greater collaboration in less hierarchical and structured, more technological and dynamic work environments).

The issue of competences involves educational systems and, in particular, tertiary education which should train people who are able to face the challenges of the future. Anyway, is the Italian system of tertiary education able to guarantee the acquisition of competences which are appropriate for facing the ongoing changes?

The thesis that this paper illustrates is that if, on one side, the system of tertiary education is able to train highly-skilled people, on the other it is too unbalanced on university paths which are little connected with the world of work, thus contributing to increase the digital mismatch, that is the gap between the competences, which have been acquired during the time and following the traditional educational path, and those competences which are required in the world of work, above all by those highly-digitalized businesses. From this point of view the Higher Technical Institutes (HTI), since they are paths which allow to directly acquire field professional abilities – through practical experience and, therefore, through the participation at stages inside the business – may train post-secondary level professional figures, who better meet the demand of the world of work.

### **The question of competences**

For many years the question of competences<sup>1</sup> has been dealt with in different sectors of the organizational sciences (Consoli-Benadusi, 1999), in psychological-cognitive and sociocultural studies (Billet, 1996; 2001), in those studies which deal with the problem of the assessment, certification and in the work policies (Auteri-Di Francesco, 2000), and it is finally intended as the innovatory criterion of the school policies (Ajello, 2002). For these reasons it

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<sup>1</sup> In this study the term 'competences' means «Ability to use knowledge, skills and personal, social and/or methodological abilities, in work or study situations and in professional and personal development», while the term 'skills' means «Ability to apply knowledge and use know-how to compete tasks and solve problems». Link online: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events-and-projects/projects/validation-non-formal-and-informal-learning/european-inventory/european-inventory-glossary>

is a polysemous concept, always in progress and, therefore, with difficulty it is definable in an univocal manner. As it has recently been suggested by Giancola and Viteritti (2019), in the ambit of public and scientific debates, competences appear as a 'boundary object', that is as «an issue, a concept, an object which connects but also which distinguishes meanings and actors, a field for interest which creates agreement but also a field of differentiation, a symbolic artifact ... which is not lacking in tensions and conflicts» (Ivi, p. 12).

The authors identify four ambits inside which the issue of competences has been dealt with (Ivi, pp-13-14):

in the first ambit, which concerns the organizational advice and the human resource management, competences make reference to a way of looking at the relationship between the individual and work and have been used in order to evaluate the relationship between the business innovation and the capacity of workers to react to changes. In fact, it is a parameter which is suitable for selecting, developing and positioning people inside the organizations;

in the second ambit, reference is made to the relevance of the issue in the academic debate in many disciplinary ambits: psychological, sociological, pedagogical, economic, organizational and managerial ambits;

the third ambit concerns the work and training policies, with particular reference to the issue of the soft skills (Rey, 2003), of the employment prospect (Di Francesco, 2004) and of the competences for the training systems (Benadusi-Di Francesco, 2002):

the fourth ambit concerns the field of European policies and for the training. In this respect, reference can be made to the Recommendations of the European Parliament and to the indications of the European Commission where competences are represented as an added value for different ambits (educational systems, labour markets, etc.).

Certainly competences acquire a particular focus in the ambit of the development processes of Industry 4.0, since a future is delineating, in which there will be some significant changes in the world of work. According to Gavosto and Molina (2019) technological innovations, which are linked to the developments of digitalization occurred during the last years, concern two sectors: on one side, robots, which are capable of «carrying out more and more complex tasks, which are coordinated in the ambit of a physical structure which limits the interaction with the external world» (Ivi, p. 175), on the other, the artificial intelligence which makes reference to the «capacity of algorithms to repeat human behaviours, the creative ones and those which are dictated by the good sense» (ibidem). Many tasks, which until a short time ago, were considered as far from the competition of machineries, are at risk, since they are becoming digitalized tasks, both manual tasks, as the driving of heavy vehicles or the physiotherapeutic assistance, and intellectual tasks, such as, for example, the formulation of medical diagnoses on the basis of the reading of radiologic examinations (ibidem). Therefore, what are the competences which are useful in a future in which production processes will be more and more digitalized and interconnected?

Frey and Osborne (2013) identified some tasks which might be replaced by robots and computers with difficulty: that is, the tasks which imply a high tactile sensitivity, those tasks which suppose a certain creative intelligence and, finally, those tasks which are based on social intelligence, that is, on the capacities to interact with people on the basis of their emotional sphere (Gavosto-Molina 2019). As Bianchi affirmed (2018): «Today the high segment of the

labour market requires competences which may more and more fully use the technological instruments offered by the scientific development, but also relational and creative competences, that is competences which may elaborate and arrange original solutions and of unexpected facts, but, above all, which may interact with the surrounding environment, thus transforming it» (Ivi, p. 84).

Also in the study which was conducted by WEF, in 2018, some “key” skills were identified, which are considered as fundamental in order to make the difference in the world of work: «Skills continuing to grow in prominence by 2022 include Analytical thinking and innovation as well as Active learning and learning strategies. The sharply increased importance of skills such as Technology design and programming highlights the growing demand for various forms of technology competency identified by employers surveyed for this report. Proficiency in new technologies is only one part of the 2022 skills equation, however, as ‘human’ skills such as creativity, originality and initiative, critical thinking, persuasion, and negotiation will likewise retain or increase their value, as will attention to detail, resilience, flexibility and complex problem-solving. Emotional intelligence, leadership and social influence as well as service orientation also see an outsized increase in demand relative to their current prominence» (WEF 2018, p. 12).

In addition to hard skills, intended as all knowledge and relative abilities/capacities which are used in order to play a professional role, soft skills are very important, that is those personal, interpersonal and intercultural competences which allow people to take part in the social and working life effectively and constructively.

Soft skills focus on the centrality of the person, the identity of whom: «refers not only to all those technical abilities, but also to his/her human capital to be created and to be recreated in the course of his/her life» (La Rosa-Gosetti 2005, p. 33).

Already some years ago some studies (Luzzatto-Mangano-Moscato-Pieri 2011; Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli 2012; Mangano 2014) had remarked a lack of soft skills and greater knowledge in disciplinary ambits by graduates. As it emerges from the last surveys by *Excelsior* with regard to the business employment needs (of industry and services), Italian businesses consider soft skills as the necessary “endowment” in order to best carry out each individual job and they greatly contribute to the definition of the “profile”, which is required for the hiring. In particular, there are five soft skills that Italian businesses consider for the hiring: written and oral communication skills, group-working ability, problem-solving ability, the ability to work autonomously and, finally, the ability to adapt and to be flexible.

Today all this acquires greater importance in the light of the digital turning point which, by significantly involving the different ambits of the individual and collective life, has led to the need for a competent use of digital technologies and of the Internet. The demand for competences in the world of work adjusts continuously to the change and, during the last years, it has been more and more connected to the digitalization processes.

In the survey of the *Sistema Informativo Excelsior* (Excelsior Information System, one of the main sources of information on labour market forecast), which was conducted in 2018<sup>1</sup>, an

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<sup>1</sup>The survey was conducted by *Unioncamera* in cooperation with ANPAL (National Agency Labour Active Policies).

increase of the demand for digital highly-skilled personnel by businesses may be observed. In the survey a focus was on e-skills, in order to seize and qualify the ongoing evolutions in the job application in the era of the digital economy. The survey mainly involved non-farm businesses and with employees and the level of importance of the following e-skills for the professional figures was asked to them:

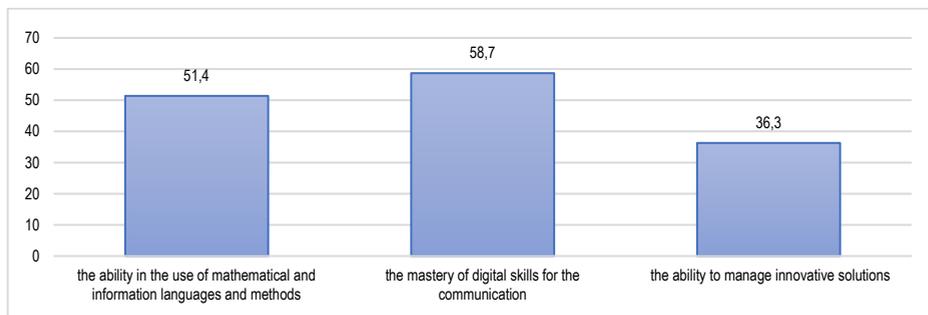
the ability in the use of mathematical and information languages and methods in order to organize and evaluate qualitative and quantitative information;

the mastery of digital skills for the communication (the use of the Internet technologies, the ability to manage and produce visual and multimedia communication tools);

the ability to manage innovative solutions by applying technologies 4.0 (robotics, big data analytics, the Internet of things, etc.) to business processes.

In 2018 Italian businesses with employees planned about four million new labour contracts. Among the mostly required e-skills (Graph. 1), there was the use of the Internet technologies and the ability in the management of visual and multimedia communication tools (58,7%). Then, the ability to use mathematical and information languages or methods (51,4%) in order to succeed in organizing and evaluating the information which is necessary for carrying out the job. Whereas, the request for specific competences for the management of innovative solutions and technologies is more contained (36,3%). As it may be read in the report, this «is understandable if we take into consideration the most specialized character that the use of robotics, Big Data Analytics and IoT have, above all, in those businesses which are part of the advanced manufacturing sector» (Ivi, p. 13)

Graph. 1 – Request for e-skills in the revenues expected in 2018 (% on the total amount of the revenues)



Source: Data processing by Unioncamere - ANPAL, Excelsior Information System (2018)

Certainly the request for digital skills involves all the professional groups<sup>1</sup> (Graph. 2), from managers to the technical jobs, from the artisans and skilled workers to not qualified jobs, and the percentages of the request increase when the professional level grows. In the case of “Managers”, for example, there is the request for both the mastery of digital skills for the

<sup>1</sup> The professional figures are created as if they could be connected to the categories provided for by ISTAT (the Italian National Institute of Statistics) Occupational Classification (CP2011), and it is adopted for the representation of data of the statistical tables in the different Excelsior publications.

communication (96,8%) and the ability to use mathematical languages and methods (90,7%), even if there is also a significant percentage of requests with regard to the ability to manage innovative solutions (72,1%). Also, as far as “Intellectual, scientific and high-skilled professions” are concerned, there is a greater request for the mastery of digital skills for the communication (90,1%) and the ability to use mathematical languages and methods (81%), as well as it is important to consider the introduction of resources which are able to manage innovative solutions (65%). Even if at a lower level of qualification a lower request for digital skills corresponds, to all the professional figures businesses tend to request for «specific competences and abilities which may fully accept the challenge to seize the opportunities offered by the new productive and organizational paradigm» (Excelsior, 2018, p. 25).

Nevertheless, if, on one side, there is an increase in the professional figures with high digital skills, on the other, for businesses it is more and more demanding to find them<sup>1</sup>. Such difficulties would seem to derive from both an insufficient quantitative offer and from levels of knowledge which are not appropriate because of the lacks of the education system.

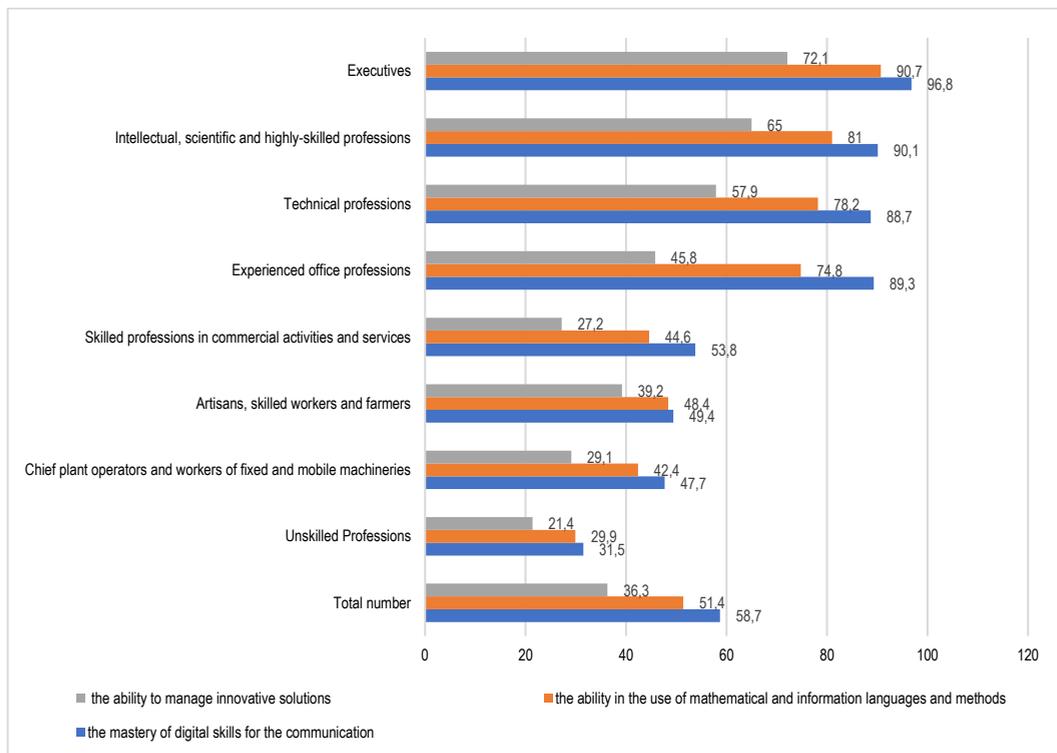
This is also confirmed by the fourth edition of the Observatory of the Digital Skills – ICT Professions (2018), which was conducted by Aica, Anitec-Assinform, Assintel and Assinter Italia in cooperation with Miur and Agid. In the survey it emerges as if, on one side, in Italy there is an acceleration of businesses towards digitalization, on the other, it is hard to find personnel with technological skills, which are necessary to support such transformations.

From the Report it is possible to notice the gap between supply and demand of experts in communication technologies. The estimates, which are based on the Web Job Vacancy for ICT professions, show a need for graduates for businesses, which ranges from 12.800 to 20.500, whereas at the university about 8.500 students should graduate (therefore, with a gap of 58%). In addition to the digital skills also the demand for soft skills increases: «It is important to highlight the importance that soft skills are going to have in the business requests: in Commerce the Soft Skill Rate is equal to 35,1%, in Services is 32,2% and in Industry is 28,3%. The significance level of soft skills is equal or greater if compared to the average of sector in the professions with higher DSR (Digital Skill Rate), respectively with 5% in Commerce, 36% in Services and 35% in Industry. Among the most significant soft skills which are extracted from job posts, there are the following: to adapt to the change, the knowledge of English, problem solving, team working, to analyse problems and to find solutions, creative thinking, public speaking, time management, to communicate with clients» (Observatory Digital Skills 2018, p. 10).

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<sup>1</sup>The difficulties of finding some personnel are distributed differently on the whole national territory. For example, in Trentino Alto Adige it is difficult to find personnel with abilities to use mathematical and information languages and methods (45,7%); even if the percentages remain high in almost all the regions of Central and Northern Italy. Moreover, always in Central and Northern Italy, it is also difficult to find personnel who is able to manage innovative solutions. Whereas, as far as the mastery of digital skills for the communication is concerned, the difficulty to find the personnel seems to be more homogeneous on the national territory, except for the regions of the North-East, in particular, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, where the highest percentage is observed (37,4%).

Graph. 2 – Request for e-skills for a big professional group (Val. %)



Source: Data processing by Unioncamere - ANPAL, Excelsior Information System(2018)

From the carried out analysis two tendencies emerge, which are correlated and that is right to highlight: firstly, the impact of technologies (more and more interconnected) which will perform some tasks, that so far have exclusively been performed by the person; secondly, the ongoing transformation in the typologies of competences requested by businesses to their workers, with a clear slippage towards soft skills.

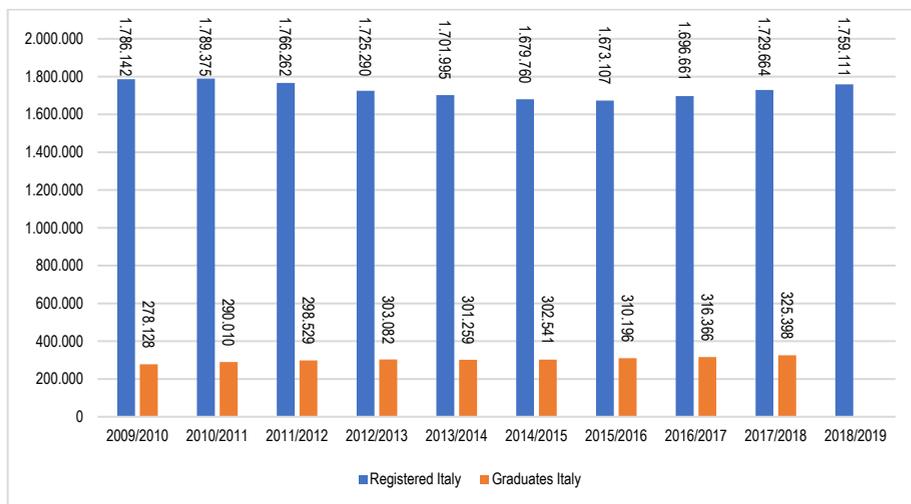
Predictions on the future of work and the emphasis on competences have inevitably questioned the quality of education systems once again. It is necessary to train people with competences, suitable for surviving in an environment which is permeated by digital and the Internet technologies, and who are able to adapt themselves to the processes of technological innovation. Is the Italian tertiary training and education system ready to face such challenges?

### **The Italian tertiary education at the time of the fourth industrial revolution**

A study, which was conducted by Molina on behalf of *Fondazione Agnelli* (2017), with regard to the situation of the Italian industrial context and to the necessary competences of the human capital for the fourth industrial revolution, highlights two fundamental aspects: the competitiveness of those who have a high qualification if compared to those who did not obtain it; the added value of those who attended graduation courses for the development of soft skills which, today, are considered essential in the professional life. As it may be read in

the report, those who attended the university have a greater propensity to look for and attend training activities also in adulthood, they have a greater ability of overall view or of a systemic vision, they have a greater autonomy in performing tasks and in assuming responsibilities, propensity to work in a team, to relationships with close people or with people who are hierarchically distant, etc. It is certain that, if compared to the international context, the advantages in terms of job and income prospects deriving from the tertiary education in our Country are reduced (above all for those who have concluded an educational path since a short time), both because of the difficulties in the transition between education and work and owing to the structure of the Italian production system, which is dominated by the small-sized business and specialized in traditional production sectors, which certainly do not encourage to invest on skilled job and knowledge. Nevertheless, given the request, by businesses, for an advanced education and for the need to develop soft skills and high digital skills, from this point of view, the tertiary education paths are fundamental in order to face the future challenges.

However, if in the almost totality of OECD Countries the tertiary qualification does not necessarily correspond to the university degree and a “differentiated model” prevails, in Italy, instead, for historic reasons which may not be examined in depth in this paper<sup>1</sup>, a “uniform model” prevails in which the tertiary education is mainly based on the university. The Italian educational system in the tertiary level is organized as follows: Universities (polytechnics included) and equivalent institutions, high-level arts and music education institutions and Higher Technical Institutes (HTI). By narrowing the field only to universities and HTI, between the two institutions an enormous difference may be observed in terms of number of students and of those who have obtained the qualification. As far as the universities are concerned, if we consider the last ten years (2009/2010–2018/2019), there were about 1.700.000 students, whereas graduates increased from 278.128 of 2009/2010 to 325.398 of 2017/2018 (Graph. 3).



<sup>1</sup>With regard to this issue, reference is made to Bertagna’s study (2011).

Graph. 3 – Registered students and graduates in the Italian university. Years 2009/2010-2018/2019 (Absolute Values)

Source: Student National Register – MIUR (Ministry of Education, Universities and Research)

By analyzing the disciplinary choices on the basis of the grouping in four study areas – health, scientific, social and humanistic areas<sup>1</sup>– in the academic years from 2014/2015 to 2018/2019 the courses of study of the social and scientific areas mainly prevailed. If compared to the social area, it is about half the number of students of the course of study relating to the humanistic area (294.648 in 2014/2015, 322.038 in 2018/2019), and still less of half the number of those of the health area (237.367 in 2014/2015, 225.122 in 2018/2019) (Graph. 4). This data reflects also on the total number of graduates (Graph. 5) who, in the years from 2014/2015 to 2017/2018, prevailed in the social and scientific areas, with a prevalence of the male gender only in the scientific disciplines.

Instead, as far as the employment condition is concerned, some data shows as the university degrees obtained in STEM<sup>2</sup> (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) scientific disciplines offer better guarantees if compared to non-STEM paths. The employment rate of Master's Degree STEM graduates (two-year Masters Degrees and Single-Cycle Masters Degrees), who were interviewed in 2017 after five years since they had graduated, is equal to 89,3% (4,1% more than non-STEM graduates), and the greater employment possibilities concern the graduates of the economic-statistical (94,8%) and engineering groups (94,6%).

Graph. 4 – The composition of students for macro study areas. Years 2014/2015-2018/2019 (Absolute Values)

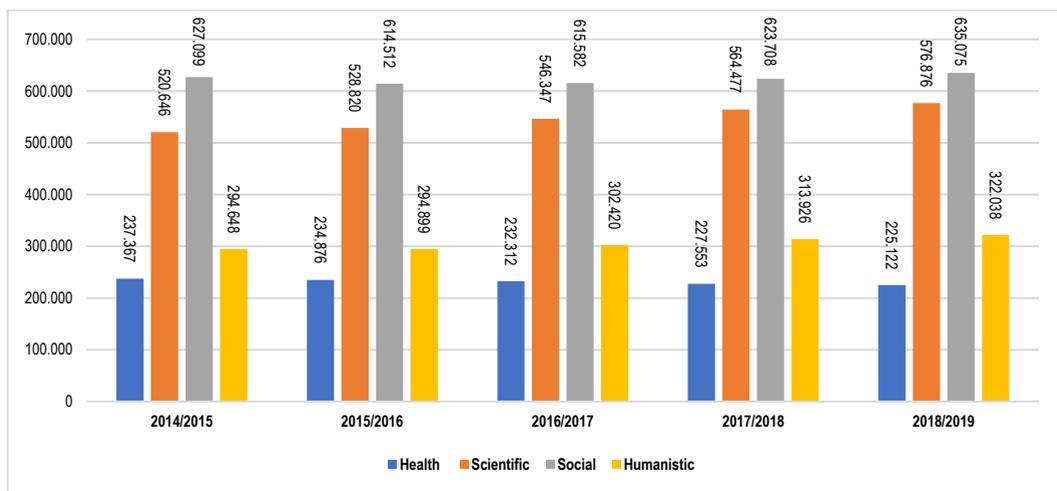
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<sup>1</sup>It is the grouping proposed by the Student National Register of MIUR,

<https://anagrafe.miur.it/cerca.php>

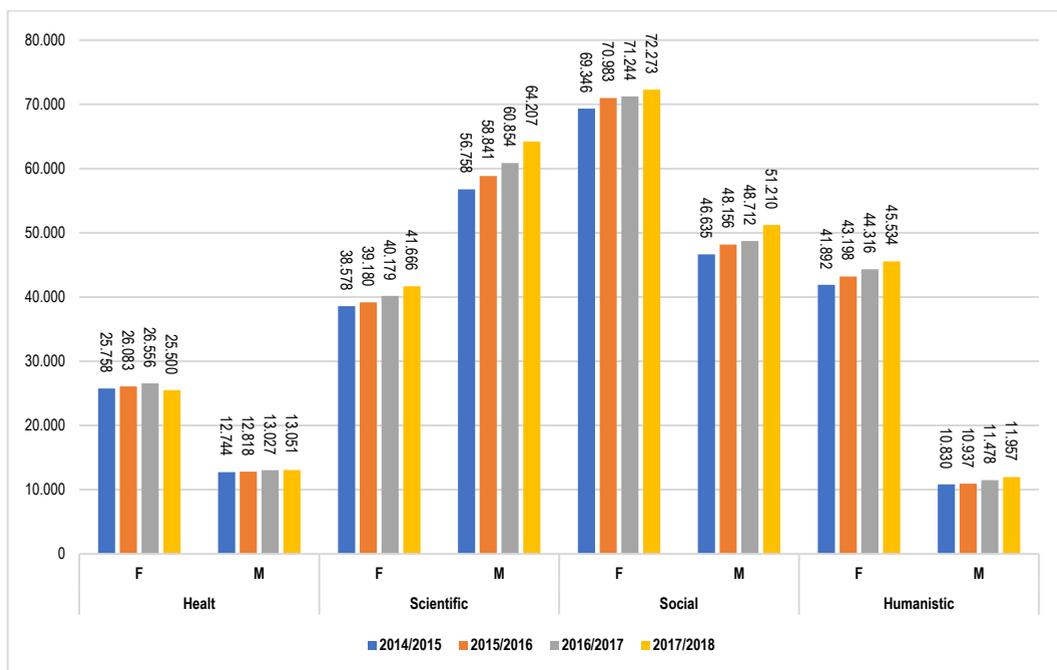
<sup>2</sup> According to MIUR, the following graduation classes are considered STEM Masters Degrees (Bachelor's and Master's Degrees):

- all those relating to the groups of architecture and engineering except for those classes of Bachelor's Degree in Industrial Design and Master's Degree in Design;
- the graduation class of the chemical-pharmaceutical group, except for the Single-Cycle Masters Degrees in Pharmacy and Industrial Pharmacy;
- the graduation class in Statistics (Bachelor's Degree), Actuarial and Financial Statistical Sciences and Statistical Sciences inside the economic-statistical group (Master's Degree);
- the graduation class of the geo-biological group, except for the Master class in agricultural biotechnologies;
- the graduation class of the scientific group, except for Information Methodologies for the humanities (Master's Degree);
- the graduation class in Human Nutrition of the medical group (Master's Degree);
- the graduation class in Techniques and Methods for the society (Master's Degree);
- the graduation class in Diagnostics for the Conservation of Cultural Property (Bachelor's Degree) and in Conservation of Architectural and Environmental Property, Sciences for the conservation of Cultural Property and Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (single-cycle) of the literary group (Master's Degree).



Source: Student National Register – MIUR

Graph. 5 – The composition of graduates for gender and macro study areas. Years 2014/2015-2017/2018 (Absolute Values)



Source: Student National Register – MIUR

Nevertheless, as it has previously been highlighted a “digital mismatch” remains, that is a misalignment between the competences one has at the end of the education system and the request for them coming from the world of work and, in particular, by those businesses which

have invested in technologies 4.0. From this point of view HTI seem to be more appropriate in order to train people with a cultural sound basis and solid technical-scientific skills, who are flexible and able to manage the production processes and to promote the innovation (Cedefop 2018). HTI are, in fact, a new educational segment of the Italian tertiary education, they were born about ten years ago aiming at providing for a qualifying tertiary path and, in particular, aiming at facing the difficulties of Italian businesses to find, on the labour market, people with competences which are appropriate for the transformations imposed by the new digital technologies.

HTI are created on the basis of the organisational model of the *Fondazione*, that is the model of involvement in cooperation with businesses, universities/scientific and technological research centres, local bodies, school and training system. Paths are biennial or triennial (4/6 semesters – for 1.800/2.000 total hours). The stage is obligatory for 30% of the total hours and at least 50% of the professors come from the world of work. The work experience inside a business may be made with an apprenticeship contract of high training and research. The final qualification is a “Higher-Education Technical Diploma” with the certification of the competences corresponding with the fifth (V) level of the European Qualification Framework.

Educational paths of HTI consist of six technological areas: 1. sustainable mobility; 2. energy efficiency; 3. new life technologies; 4. innovative technologies for cultural property and activities; 5. information and communication technologies; 6. new technologies for the Made in Italy. The professional figures and the jobs connected to these areas are structured for sector and skill training and conceived in such a way to guarantee people’s identity and the manageability by businesses and by the educational system. In this respect, as Butera affirms, any job and profession «includes a great variety of roles at different levels and with different contents but they are all characterized by a strong knowledge of theories and techniques of the professional field, by excellent specific operational competences, by the domain of digital skills, by problem solving and creativity, above all by the ability to cooperate, by knowledge sharing, extensive communication and promotion of the community» (Butera, 2018, pp. 4-5). According to the author, HTI train to deal with humble and complex jobs, through apprenticeship stages and phases of important responsibility, the territorial and business training mobility, the acknowledgement of human and professional qualities, by conciliating technique and culture, theory and practice, person’s training and vocational training. From this point of view they appear as paths which go beyond the traditional contraposition between schools which “teach how to think” (such as, for example, generalist universities) and schools which “teach how to make” (such as, for example, technical and vocational institutes) (ibidem).

In the 187 (one hundred eighty-seven) paths of 2018 there were 4.606 students overall (Table 1). Most of them chose the area of the New Technologies for the Made in Italy (1.957), and the area of the Sustainable Mobility (844). Whereas the smaller number of students was registered in the area of the New Life Technologies (372).

By analyzing the dropout rate, on the whole 20,7% of students did not complete their studies (Table 1). The technological area of the Energy Efficiency is that area in which more frequently the school dropout is observed (30,1%), the areas of the Sustainable Mobility (22,9%), of the Innovative Technologies for cultural property and activities – Tourism (21,8%) and of the New Life Technologies (21,2%) follow.

Table 1 – Number of students for technological area and dropout rate in HTI paths of 2018 (Absolute Values and %)

Technological area of the path	Registered students	Dropouts	Dropout Rate
	N.	N.	%
Energy Efficiency	429	129	30,1
Sustainable Mobility	844	193	22,9
New Life Technologies	372	79	21,2
New Technologies for the Made in Italy	1.957	346	17,7
Information and Communication Technologies	476	90	18,9
Innovative Technologies for cultural property and activities – Tourism	528	115	21,8
<b>Total number</b>	<b>4.606</b>	<b>952</b>	<b>20,7</b>

Source: INDIRE (2019)

The regions where the highest dropout rate is observed are Calabria (46,2%), Sicily (37,5%) and Molise (31%), whereas those where the dropout rate is lower are Umbria (4,2%) and Sardinia (10,4%). Nevertheless, after about ten years since their appearance, in our Country, HTI seem to be a niche phenomenon. As it emerges from the analysis carried out by INDIRE, more than 100 Foundations are present and, even if they seem to offer good guarantees from the occupational point of view, the attending students represent only 2% of the total number of the registered students in the tertiary education system. Students who attend HTI-paths are about 13.000, a discouraging piece of data if compared with other European Countries where young people, who attend qualifying tertiary training paths, are more numerous: in Germany 764.854, in France 529.163, in Spain 400.341, in the United Kingdom 272.487.

Moreover, from the monitorings which have been carried out, there is a representation of Italy divided into two parts with rather marked differences between paths, which are real excellences, in regions such as Lombardy, Veneto, Piedmont, Umbria (particularly, in the technological areas of mechanical engineering and sustainable mobility), and critical and problematic paths in regions such as Calabria and Sicily.

## Conclusions

In the context of the fourth industrial revolution Italy struggles to keep in line with the most industrialized Countries. The adoption of digital technologies in the production systems and, particularly, in the so-called technologies 4.0, is making the request for high-skilled professional figures increase which, however, businesses struggle to find. This represents a real paradox if we think about the young unemployment which, in our Country, has reached an emergency level. In order to improve this situation, first of all, it seems necessary to adopt governmental provisions aiming at supporting a greater connection between the education world and the world of work. The challenges of this new industrial revolution have, in fact, greatly highlighted the weak points of our tertiary education system, which is exclusively based on university paths, that are notoriously less qualifying if compared to HTI ones. Even if these latter appear as high-qualification schools which train “super specialists” with skills 4.0 and, therefore, who are ready to be introduced in the world of work, above all in some areas of the Country they show some criticalities that make the development problematic.

In conclusion, the transformations, which are engendered by the fourth industrial revolution, impose an adjustment of the Italian tertiary education system which, today more than ever, must give people the possibility to reach those competences which are mostly required in the world of work and, therefore, must contribute to the promotion of innovation, economic development, growth and improvement in the citizens' wealth.

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## **Distant Teaching: A Way to Face COVID-19 Pandemic in a Public University**

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### **Abstract**

In México, first COVID-19 patient was identified in February and from March 23 on confinement measures were taken by the government, including the suspension of activities at universities. This paper objective is to explore the challenges that professors of a public university faced while moving into a distant teaching practice in the pandemic context. Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana is located in México City and up to the pandemic, most of its faculty lacked experience with online education, so the Emerging Distant Education Project was implemented. A qualitative design was developed and in-depth interviews were made to gather information from members of the Business Administration Faculty. Main findings show that in a short time, professors managed to redesign the courses and to develop materials, while training themselves in the use of educational platforms, videoconference and communication devices. Among positive experiences they mentioned widening their teaching skills, the positive and helpful attitudes from students, technical support from the institution and the achievement of learning objectives; while on the negative side they mentioned that math contents demanded an extra effort in order to secure students comprehension. Technical problems with the internet and the lack of a proper learning environment were cited as barriers to students' optimal academic achievement. Most of professors defined their experience as "a challenge". In conclusion, professors took on and overcame the challenges in order to continue classes and to achieve the academic objectives of the term.

**Keywords:** distant education, COVID-19, public university, higher education, pandemic

### **Introduction**

More than six months after the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the "coronavirus" (COVID-19) a pandemic, it continues to spread throughout the world. As of October 7, there were 36 million confirmed cases in 193 countries and more than one million deaths (rtve.es,

2020). In many countries, including those with apparent success in controlling the disease, infections continue to increase (BBC, 2020).

The pandemic arrives in México on February 28 when the first patient is identified in México City (CDMX), and the second in the state of Sinaloa (Gobierno de México, 2020). From that moment on, the Undersecretary of Prevention and Health Promotion, Hugo López-Gatell R., urges the population to take safety measures such as: use of antibacterial gel, frequent hand washing, avoid physical contact with other people, drink purified water, do not share food, use sanitizers at all times, among other preventions. However, the country continues with its daily life, and it is until March 16 when the Ministry of Health (SS) announces the implementation of the “National Healthy Distant Journey” as another preventive measure. Thus, as of March 23, non-essential activities are suspended, mass concentration events are rescheduled, academic activities are suspended at all educational levels; those measures would conclude on April 19, and lasted until May 30; starting on June 1, the “new normal”, according to which activities would gradually be renewed; as a matter of fact, contagions continue in almost the entire country at the beginning of October (Gobierno de México, 2020). Despite the measures taken by the government, as of October 7, in México a total of 794,608 cases and 82,348 deaths were reported (Navarro, 2020).

In the field of higher education, this emergency caused the massive closure of activities, having to take Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) a series of measures to comply with government instructions; Therefore, in an abrupt and obligatory way, face-to-face academic activities were suspended, giving rise to distant education, trying to provide teachers and students with the information technology and infrastructure that would allow them to continue with their academic activities (Sánchez, M., et. , al.).

The transition from face-to-face and school-based education to non-face-to-face modalities, made both teachers and students leave traditional classrooms, to necessarily become users of technological tools to interact remotely with each other, highlighting the needs of infrastructure that HEIs have, (Sánchez, M., et., al.); as well as the shortcomings on the part of teachers and students.

In this context, the present study had the general objective of exploring the challenges faced by the professors of a public university when transitioning from face-to-face education to the distant modality, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic in México.

#### Distant education

Undoubtedly, distant education has meant a solution to the growing demand at different educational levels, as well as to the displacement needs of a large number of people, resulting in greater autonomy in students, since there is a less dependence on the teacher, in general terms. This was already seen as a trend prior to the current COVID-19 pandemic.

In general, it is stated that distant education should represent an ideal complement to face-to-face teaching. In this sense, the available technology should be used in a rational way, with the expectation of being able to increase efficiency and effectiveness in terms of coverage, as well as the attendant costs.

According with the above, it is necessary to highlight the relevance of distant education, as an instrument that enhances the propagation of knowledge. This is particularly important in societies where the demand for education and training is increasing.

In that order of ideas, more than as mutually exclusive options, traditional and distant education must harmonize their respective challenges, in a dialectical process where educational institutions adapt their methods according to existing and available technologies, and in turn these respond to those dynamics. (Alfonso, 2003)

Padula (2003, p. 1) defines distant education as:

“... A non-face-to-face educational methodology, based on multi-directional mediated communication (which implies wide possibilities of participation of dispersed students, with a high degree of autonomy of time, space and commitment), on the teacher’s orientation (given in the design), on the choice of the appropriate means for each case considering the subjects and the possibilities of access of the recipients, and on the tutorials”.

Its flexibility stands out as a very favorable characteristic of distant education, which allows many people to access the courses, without having as a restriction the time or space to do so (Padula, 2003).

A problem within distant education is its comparison with traditional education and with those who are in charge of a process in this area. On one hand, there is the position of those who affirm that only the face-to-face is of quality, treating it as a matter of mutually exclusive alternatives, and on the other, those who consider that the first can give a necessary plus to the second (Sangrà, 2002).

Among the relevant aspects to consider in distant education are the means used, “namely: Direct human contact (face to face). Texts (even fixed graphics). Audio. Television. Computing”. (Bates, 1999, p. 34). As well as, the development of the instructional design, which is not always given due attention, the evaluation processes and the cost of communication, which in the case of face-to-face education is not a variable to be considered (Dorrego, 2016).

Distant education represents an option that is gaining more importance every day given the need of many countries to expand enrollment at different educational levels, and the central role that education plays in the social and economic development of countries (Aparici, 2002).

On the other hand, the Covid-19 pandemic has put educational systems to the test around the world, and has accelerated the digitization of teaching-learning processes and promoted distant education, and its use will most likely increase in the future.

### **Institution under study**

The present study was carried out at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana-Unidad Xochimilco (UAM-X), which is a public university located south of México City (CDMX). 18 undergraduate and 32 postgraduate degrees are taught there. This unit is characterized by its educational model called modular system, in which each module is made up of four components, Theory, Research, Workshop and Mathematics. The teaching-learning process of the module as a whole revolves around a research question that corresponds to a problem of reality, which the student will face in their professional practice.

In order to give continuity to academic activities, the UAM put into practice the Emerging Remote Teaching Project (PEER in Spanish), starting in May of this year, whose central strategy is to teach courses mediated by technologies, and with full curricular validity (PEER, 2020). Likewise, to support students who did not have computer equipment and / or internet connection, scholarships were awarded in kind (tablets and SIM cards); while the teachers attended virtual courses on educational platforms, technological resources used for teaching work; and they were provided with Zoom licenses.

### **Methodology**

The confinement derived from the Covid-19 pandemic made it necessary for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to develop strategies to continue their academic activities in a distant mode. As mentioned, in the case of UAM-X, the PEER was implemented, based on which the following objective was formulated:

Know the challenges faced by the professors of a public university when moving from a face-to-face teaching-learning process to a remote teaching process in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

To this end, a case study was carried out using an exploratory qualitative design. The information was collected through in-depth interviews with six professors of the Bachelor's degree in Administration from the trimesters of the Basic Professional Core (4 to 12). The interview guide included the following dimensions:

Previous experience with online courses

Didactic strategies used and coverage of learning objectives

Positive and negative aspects of having taught the course remotely

Modification of the way of approaching the module based on their experience with remote teaching

Evaluation of the experience of having completed the term remotely

Suggestions to improve remote education in the institution

### **Analysis of results**

The analysis of the results was carried out based on the dimensions of the topic guide, identifying the most significant testimony phrases of the professors.<sup>1</sup>

Half of the interviewees indicated having previous experience in distant education, mainly in training courses, or of short duration; and the most experienced, in fact, started his teaching career at a virtual university. This situation shows us the diversity and the level of previous experience existing among the professors at the time of implementing remote teaching.

For the development of the courses, the teachers made use of different didactic strategies that included virtual classrooms, means of communication such as mail, chat; as well as different ways to promote interaction with and between students, such as forums and videoconferences

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<sup>1</sup> The analysis was carried out by referring to the components of the modules, which as mentioned are four: theory, research, workshop and mathematics.

through Zoom. Although some teachers indicate that they tried to make their class as close to the classroom as possible, there was a trend towards an asynchronous mode. Likewise, the teachers emphasized the need to develop materials, to provide students with access to various ways of acquiring and reinforcing knowledge and skills, which required them to dedicate additional time to these activities, which on the other hand, also strengthened and expanded his didactic strategies, as can be seen in the testimony sentences (Table 1).

Table 1 Testimony phrases Teaching strategies

<p><i>"... give the closest thing to the face-to-face."</i></p> <p><i>"... I made their work easier by thinking about the difficulties of the boys to investigate and start working."</i></p> <p><i>"I learned a lot, I prepared a lot of material."</i></p> <p><i>"I will continue to use Excel to develop the exercises"</i></p> <p><i>"Important expansion is virtuality"</i></p> <p><i>"I assumed that most of the acquisition of knowledge by the student was going to be self-taught. And that I had to produce material that was clear, easy, accessible, so that the students could assimilate it in a self-taught way".</i></p> <p><i>"And basically, they are two types of materials, class notes made in Word, ... and the other tutorials."</i></p> <p><i>"I used Excel and the virtual zoom room they assigned us as a tool. WhatsApp and email".</i></p> <p><i>"I had to divide them because they were like 50 students; I gave each one just one hour".</i></p>
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Source: self-made

A strategy that they also used was to divide the students into small groups, as well as to reduce class hours, which in some cases were four, to facilitate interaction and understanding of the topics.

Regarding the coverage of the learning objectives, the respondents indicated that these were generally covered; however, depending on the content, in some cases they had to modify the program and focus on the central themes. For some mathematics content, the fact that the students had a computer at hand facilitated the resolution of exercises and this resulted in a decrease in the time required for learning. Another point that contributed to understanding the topics was the development of tutorials, so that students could watch the video over and over again and study at their own pace.

Regarding the research component of the module, each quarter the students go to an organization in which they develop their research work, which in this occasion was not

possible. However, the professors point out that they looked for alternatives, such as studying widely known companies, or questions that could be solved by collecting information on the Internet. In other cases, they tried to advise companies owned by people close to the students. In the opinion of the respondents, the investigations were very interesting and the learning objectives were achieved. On the other hand, professors mention that the role of the student became more active and this is something that should be promoted when returning to the classroom (Table 2).

Table 2 Testimony phrases Coverage of learning objectives

*"In all cases the general learning objectives were achieved. Perhaps in the scope of the agendas in some cases the content was shortened".*

*"... I reduced the objective, that is, I reduced the particular objectives, in the pursuit of the fulfillment of a general objective, I consider the main..."*

*"I did not cover the program. But since they have learned to solve linear programming problems, they did learn ... "*

*"... I selected content to cover the program in nine weeks"*

Source: self made

Among the aspects that negatively affected academic activities are technical failures in relation to the internet connection, mainly in the case of students; as well as the lack of an adequate teaching-learning environment. For some students it was difficult to have a quiet place and they also had to share equipment and connection with their relatives. Likewise, the aspect of socialization, of coexistence with their companions was lost; and for teachers remote education represented a greater workload.

As positive aspects of remote teaching, the teachers coincide in that the most important thing is that the activities were continued and the students did not see their studies interrupted, and in the case of those who were studying the last trimester, they were able to complete it. Likewise, the fundamental aspects of the modular system were strengthened as the level of responsibility and autonomy of the students increased; and in the case of teachers, their role also changed. To the above, it is added that it was possible to avoid infections (Table 3).

Table 3. Positive and negative aspects of remote teaching

*"The most positive aspect was that we got out of the problem and did not miss the quarter"*

*... The most important for me was that the fears I had regarding teaching, of giving a course in virtual mode were dispelled".*

*"... Avoid contagion, be able to continue, and in this case complete their studies" (12th quarter students).*

*"Greater responsibility on the part of the students, open to learning new things, trying to solve. They applied the strengths of the modular system".*

*"The good thing is that I equipped myself, and learned technical details ..."*

*"Technical problems ..."*

*"... I had problems at the beginning of the quarter, because I didn't have a strong enough internet connection."*

*"... I was very tired"*

*"... many hours in front of the computer"*

*"... a lot of stress, this change is very complex"*

*"Since I didn't ask them to turn on the video, I couldn't see their faces, their reactions. I don't know how much they really learned ..."*

Source: self made

In general terms, the teachers consider that taking the courses remotely does not significantly affect the acquisition of knowledge by the students, but it does affect a comprehensive training, by losing contact on a personal level and the possibility to participate and develop oral expression skills.

Table 4 Effects of remote education on the training of students

*"... Neither remotely, nor in person, let's say learning is optimal. We are not able to make the most of the talent and capacity of the students".*

*"... Student participation, oral expression can be affected".*

*"I don't think it affects their learning; it is not the course that decides whether the student is good or bad, they are immersed in a dynamic and when something like this happens they do not like change".*

Source: self made

The professors also indicated that upon returning to face-to-face classes they would continue to use some of the remote education learning strategies, such as the virtual classroom, tutorials, prior sending of materials, participation in forums, among others; since they consider that face-to-face and distant education complement each other. Similarly, one of the interviewees pointed out that from now on, education should be hybrid, since it is not necessary for students to stay at the university for so long, and this would also contribute to increasing enrollment. However, there is a preference for teaching classes in person.

When the interviewees were asked to rate their experience with remote education on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest, the ratings were located in a range of 7.5 to 10, with 8

being the most frequent, which reflects that it was a good experience. However, it required a significant effort, especially for professors without previous experience in remote education, also considering that there was a short time available to prepare the courses. Hence, when asked to describe their experience with a word, they mentioned wonderful, resilience, open minded, satisfaction, interesting, challenging, complex, contingency.

Finally, to improve remote education, the interviewed professors suggest:

- Standardize the educational platforms to be used and train teachers regarding activities that students can perform asynchronously.
- Promote self-taught learning among students and train them in the use of educational platforms, and in general in the use of information and communication technologies applied to the teaching-learning process.
- Use an educational platform of their own to facilitate access to students and make them feel part of the university.
- Give teachers courses on how to evaluate students in remote mode.
- Greater support for teachers with licenses, rubrics, teaching materials developed by specialists.
- Promote activities that avoid the dehumanization of the teaching-learning process.

## Conclusions

The Emerging Remote Teaching Project fulfilled the objective of giving continuity to the academic activities of the institution studied, in the context of the pandemic, and avoiding infections. However, it represented an additional effort for professors, particularly for those who were not familiar with this modality, since they had to move from face-to-face to remote teaching in a short time.

The main challenges that teachers faced are related to the need to redesign / adapt their courses, generate didactic and evaluation strategies according to remote education, and learn or reinforce their knowledge regarding virtual classrooms and ICT applied to education.

On the other hand, they also had to overcome situations derived from inadequate conditions to carry out academic activities such as failures in the internet connection and lack of computer equipment on the part of the students and themselves; as well as teaching their classes in an environment of uncertainty, and in some cases, facing situations related to the contagion of Covid-19 from relatives, colleagues or close people.

In general terms, it was a process that demanded an open mind, a collaborative attitude and a high degree of resilience on the part of the teachers, as well as the students.

Regarding the institution, the lack of an adequate infrastructure to teach distant courses was revealed, so it would be advisable to standardize the use of virtual classrooms, create a bank of teaching materials and rubrics; as well as a continuing education program for professors and students, which remains after the contingency.

The pandemic came to make clear the need to incorporate new study modalities, which is why the institution is recommended to take advantage of the momentum, and to generate plans

and study programs in hybrid or distance modality, as well as to move towards new forms of teaching and interaction between professors and students.

Regarding the research activities carried out by students, given that it is currently not feasible to go to organizations, it is recommended to establish agreements to interact remotely, as well as to carry out professional practices in the telework modality.

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## Religion as An Instrument of International Relations: The Attempt of Byzantine Catholics to Spread in Albania, 1895-1939

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### Abstract

The effort of Byzantine Catholics to win converts among Albanians had a historical legacy. Before the 20th century the main group of Byzantine Catholics among ethnic Albanians was the Albanian diaspora in Italy, in a compact community known as the Arbëreshë, descended from Orthodox Albanians who fled the Balkans after the Ottoman conquest. Their two-century presence in Southern Albania (in the Himara region) was interrupted, only to be renewed after the birth of Albanian nationalism in the late 19th century. This time, the Byzantine Catholic presence in Albania was interlinked with the complicated political circumstances surrounding the independence of this European nation. As Greece, aided by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, attempted to assimilate the Orthodox Albanians, the Byzantine Catholics found the opportunity to spread among Orthodox Albanian nationalists. But after the independence of the Albanian Orthodox Church, Byzantine Catholics tried to win converts among Hellenophile Orthodox Albanians. This paper analyses the efforts of Byzantine Catholics to spread in Albania from the perspective of the broader political interplay between Albania, Greece, and Italy, and discusses the reasons for their eventual failure.

**Keywords:** Byzantine Catholics, Uniates, Albania, Italy, Greece, Balkans, International Relations, Soft Power, Religious Diplomacy

### Introduction

The Byzantine Catholic presence in Albania dates back to the 17th century, when missionaries from the Arbëreshë colonies in Italy arrived in Southern Albania. The Arbëreshë were the descendants of the large group of Orthodox Albanians who, beginning in the late 15th century after the Ottoman conquest, fled Albania and Greece and settled in Southern Italy. This period coincided with the Council of Florence (also known as the Council of Florence-Basel-Ferrara), when the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches declared their reunification – a decision that was nullified by the Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarchate only in the second half of the 16th century. The Orthodox Albanians who would later be known as the Arbëreshë, therefore, settled in territory that was under the jurisdiction of the Church of Rome at a time when the Western and Eastern churches considered themselves united. When the East-West Schism was reinstated, this community were left under the authority of the pope, since the Orthodox patriarch no longer had any jurisdiction in Italy. Thus, the Arbëreshë are a unique case in which the Byzantine Catholic population emerged neither from the Uniatist movement

nor from any split, but rather from the temporary reunification of the two churches.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, Arbëreshë missionaries settled in Himara, in Southern Albania, where they attempted to bring the Orthodox Albanians closer to the pope in Rome. During this period we find cases when the liturgy was conducted in Albanian, and Arbëreshë monks also founded an Albanian religious school in Himara in the 17th century, which may well be the first documented school in which Albanian was the language of instruction. These missions, however, were later aborted, and it was not until after the beginning of the Albanian National Renaissance in 1878 that Arbëreshë missionaries returned to Albania.<sup>1</sup>

A massive Islamization of Albanians took place during the Ottoman conquest, which left the nation divided between Islam and Christianity, with different religious factions. Southern Albania was almost evenly divided between Orthodox Christians and Muslims, the latter being mostly part of the Bektashi Order (*tariqat*). Central Albania was overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim, with a significant presence of Orthodox Christians and a small group of Roman Catholics. The north-east was overwhelmingly Catholic, and there was also a Catholic presence in the north-west, although this region was overwhelmingly Sunni Muslim. This composition created the opportunity for new religious groups to settle in Albania. Protestants developed a small presence in the south-east, while Byzantine Catholics again came back to Albania, starting in the area of Shpat, in the Elbasan prefecture.

In this paper, I will analyse the presence of Byzantine Catholics (Uniates) in Albania from the start of the Albanian National Renaissance to the eve of the Second World War from the perspective of the interplay of international relations. During this period, Orthodox Albanians were trying to establish their own independent Orthodox Church, in direct conflict with neighbouring Greece and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which worked on behalf of the Greek state to strengthen Greece's aim of assimilating Orthodox Albanians to the Greek nation and expanding its territory to Southern Albania. This aim was in direct conflict with the interests of neighbouring Italy, which had significant influence over the Byzantine Catholics. Thus, while discussing the Byzantine Catholic effort to win converts in Albania, I will also examine the political situation and the influence of the relations between Albania, Greece, and Italy, as well as other regional factors.

### **Byzantine Catholics Before the Creation of the Albanian Orthodox Holy Synod, 1895–1929**

The first instance of the Byzantine Catholic (Uniate) presence in Albania after 1878 and the beginning of the Albanian National Renaissance occurred at the end of the nineteenth century. In 1895, Archimandrite Germanos, the nephew of Visarion, the Orthodox Metropolitan of Durrës, informed the Catholic Archbishop of Durrës, Primo Bianchi, of the existence of a Uniate movement in the Shpat region of the Elbasan prefecture. Bianchi told him that the Catholic Church would support this movement. At the end of 1896, representatives from Shpat explained the reason for this initiative in a letter addressed to the Great Powers in Constantinople, in which they demanded their ethnic rights: "Being Albanians and in the centre of Albania, we do not understand Greek or Bulgarian or any other language and can

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the Arbëreshë missionaries in Southern Albania, see Murzaku, 2009, 37, and Shuteriqi, 1976, 5–28.

only be educated in Albanian.” (Pollo, 2003).

In July 1897, Archimandrite Germanos, heading a delegation from Shpat, met with Archbishop Bianchi. On behalf of the Shpat villagers, Germanos submitted a formal request to adopt Uniatism. A month later, another Orthodox parish in Elbasan sent a similar request to Bianchi. The movement caused panic among diplomats from countries with interests in Albania. The Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Greek government could not allow their influence over Orthodox Albanians to be weakened in favour of Italy, which preferred a Uniate population. Archimandrite Germanos was immediately dismissed, and it was decided to reward anyone who opposed Uniatism. Montenegro and Russia also lodged protests with the Ottoman Sultan, who similarly did not wish to see a Byzantine Catholic presence in Albania (Llukani, 2005).

Italy and Austria–Hungary, however, supported the movement. On 19 October 1897, the Austro–Hungarian consul in Shkodër described the Uniatist movement as a momentous achievement of the Albanian nation:

“The motivating reasons ... are national aspirations; the people want to be Albanians and not Greeks; they want Albanian and non-Greek schools. The Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople, based on the Hellenic-national consideration, suppresses these aspirations,” he said. “The inhabitants of Shpat expect that they as Uniates will enjoy the protection of the Catholic power of the protectorate in Albania, i.e. our protection.” But officially, Vienna did not support [the Uniates] and remained neutral, while, according to the signed treaties, its protectorate stood only for the Catholic population and not the Uniate one. However, the consuls secretly helped the movement, even though nothing was supposed to happen publicly. (Llukani, 2005)

The Ecumenical Patriarchate accused Metropolitan Visarion of Durrës, who was Albanian, of spreading Romanian and Albanian nationalist propaganda, and Uniatist religious propaganda, in Shpat through his nephew Germanos and of trying to turn Orthodox Albanians towards the Roman pope and away from their dependence on the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Visarion died three years later, with no action ever being taken against him. Still, the birth of Albanian nationalism in his jurisdiction led to a Greek historian describing him as the “worst choice” to lead the Durrës metropolis (Nikolaidou, 1978, 308–309).

In 1898, the Russian consul of Manastir (today Bitola in Northern Macedonia) visited Shpat accompanied by the metropolitan of Berat, who had assumed the role of protector of this area, although it was under the jurisdiction of the metropolitanate of Durrës. He promised that Russia would pay the Ottoman military tax of the inhabitants if they did not convert to Uniatism (Pollo, 2003).

In June 1900, Bianchi, the Catholic archbishop of Durrës, accepted twelve families as converts to Uniatism and chose Germanos to be their priest. At the same time, he asked the Ottoman government for permission to build an Albanian church and school in Elbasan for the Uniates, but the Sultan rejected the request. On 28 November 1900, Germanos stated that, 457 years after the Albanian national hero Skanderbeg created the Albanian principality and started a close cooperation with the pope for the sake of Christianity, “my approach to the Holy See is not the whim of a child but is based on a noble moral, national and religious programme”. He accused the Ecumenical Patriarchate of being solely an instrument of Greek politics, with the goal of Hellenizing all the non-Greek peoples under its jurisdiction by imposing the yoke of the

Greek language and civilization, in violation of its clerical duties. He demanded the immediate establishment of Albanian churches and schools. (Pollo, 2003)

The village of Paftal in Berat also asked Bianchi to accept them as Uniates. Given the Greek policy of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Greek state, this was a great blow to the Orthodox Church, as the movement seemed to be spreading further south, approaching the territories that Greece claimed as its *terra irredenta*. The Ottoman Empire, however, working closely with the Greek hierarchs, and with Russia and Montenegro, sent military expeditions to defeat the Shpat uprisings in 1903, a decision that played an important role in reducing the tide of conversion to Uniatism. In 1906, another eight Orthodox villages in Elbasan adopted Uniatism, in protest against Greek policy, but only a year later, in May 1907, all Albanian Uniates declared, under pressure, that they had renounced their new religion and returned to Orthodoxy ("Greek danger", 1908, 165–166).

Albania's declaration of independence in 1912, and the swift expulsion of Greek hierarchs who were advancing the Greek national interest, led to the creation of the Albanian Orthodox Church in 1922. Thus, the Uniate movement lost the primary reason it had flourished in the first place: the national Albanian cause.<sup>1</sup>

The issue nevertheless revived at the end of 1928, shortly before the Albanian Orthodox Church created its first Holy Synod, amid a political struggle between Albania and Greece over the recognition of the Albanian Church's independence. The Greek press reported that many Albanian Orthodox priests had converted to Catholicism due to the lack of an ecclesiastical order and the weakening of the Orthodox tradition caused by the dispute over the Albanian Orthodox Church. The press went on to accuse the Albanian king, Ahmet Zog, of supporting the spread of Uniatism. But these reports were exaggerated. Two priests in the Saint Koll neighbourhood in Elbasan, Father Naum Peçini and Father Jovan Toda, had in fact declared that they would embrace Uniatism, but the state in no way supported them. The basis for the priests' decision was secular: they had demanded to be given a salary, as their income did not ensure their livelihood. When the elders of the local church objected, the priests had retaliated by declaring that they would become Uniates and receive salaries from the Catholic Church ("Only two priests", 1928, 3).

### **Byzantine Catholics after the Creation of the Albanian Orthodox Holy Synod, 1929–1939**

The first Archbishop of Albania, His Beatitude Visarion Xhuvani, was a fierce opponent of Uniatism. On 12 April 1929, Archimandrite Germanos passed away from heart disease, which he had suffered from for a long time, and the Uniate Church was shaken. But the heaviest blow came later that year when Father Naum Peçini returned to Orthodoxy. Archbishop Visarion, who had persuaded the priest to reconvert, made him the chief priest of Elbasan in September. Visarion noted that Peçini had returned to rescue the Orthodox harbour, as a loyal soldier and convinced believer ("The Death of Papajorgji", 1929, 3).

A second issue that attracted Visarion's attention was the opening of the Uniate Church in Elbasan in late August 1929. He objected, declaring that there could be no Orthodox church outside the Albanian Orthodox Church. At the opening of the church, Father Petro Scarpeli, an Arbëreshë missionary who had been sent to Albania only a few months before, held the liturgy

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<sup>1</sup> On the independence of the Albanian Orthodox Church, see Bido, 2020.

in Greek and preached in Albanian that the only salvation was the pope in Rome. Now that the Albanian Church was on a secure national Albanian foundation, the Uniate priests appeared to be trying to lure the Hellenists. This was the reverse of the situation of a few years earlier, when the Uniates had targeted Albanian patriots. Visarion Xhuvani did not stand idly by. He held a liturgy at St Mary's Church in the Kala neighbourhood of Elbasan, on the very day the Uniate Church was inaugurated. The archbishop threatened to excommunicate any Orthodox who went to the Uniate Church, which he described as "the work of the devil, a cancer that tends to undermine Albanian autocephaly" ("Preparations for the inauguration", 1929, 3).

His Beatitude sought the government's help to stop the Uniate campaign. He demanded the expulsion of Father Petro Scarpeli and any other Uniate hierarch sent from Italy. Visarion reasoned that the Uniates had no sincere followers and were trying to increase their ranks by giving material goods to poor Orthodox families (Orthodox Church, 17 September 1929). The mayor of Elbasan, Zyhdj Karagozi, supported this reasoning and reported that Scarpeli, who was concentrating his activity in the Shpat area, was paying twelve boys to sing in the church choir (Elbasan Prefecture, September 1929).

The archbishop, relying on the state's readiness to defend the Albanian Orthodox Church amid the political interplay with Greece, managed to convince the government that Uniatism should be stopped. He accepted the king's vow that the state would prosecute anyone who tried to proselytize Orthodox Albanians by offering material benefits. The archbishop reasoned that the Uniates represented a danger to Orthodox Albanians, as they were trying to divide the faithful with the main objective of damaging Albania's national interests and the unity of the Albanian people. He ordered priests and believers to protect and preserve the Orthodox religion, national unity, and social harmony. The Holy Synod of the Albanian Orthodox Church viewed the suppression of Uniatism as a key victory of their first year of existence ("The State Will Fight", 1929).

When Scarpeli attempted to go to Gjirokastrë, the Albanian government took action and ordered a halt to all efforts to expand the Uniate movement to other areas (Ministry of Interior, 10 September 1929). The Secret Office of the Ministry of Interior ordered the banning of all Uniate liturgies in Elbasan (18 September 1929). At the request of Visarion, the Uniate church was closed only a month after its opening (Orthodox Church, 3 October 1929). The Archbishop of Albania warmly thanked the government for its actions (4 October 1929). He also succeeded in stopping Scarpeli from baptizing a local Elbasan Uniate infant in late 1929 (Elbasan Prefecture, 27 October 1929). The Uniate priest, however, did not give up and continued to hold the liturgy behind closed doors, without ringing the church bells, until matters were settled (Elbasan Prefecture, 17 April 1930). As soon as the Interior Ministry learned about Scarpeli's secret liturgies, it ordered the banning of any Uniate liturgy, even personal ones (1930). The priest was instructed not to pursue efforts to get closer to the youth of Elbasan. Despite his objections, he had no choice but to accept the government's decision. He called the action against him intolerable and illegal (Elbasan Prefecture, 22 December 1930).

The Albanian state no longer recognized him as a priest and said he would only be allowed to work under the auspices of the Albanian Orthodox Church (Ministry of Justice, 1931). The prefecture of Elbasan was ordered to keep track of any suspicious movements by Scarpeli and stop any attempt to reopen the Uniate church (Ministry of Interior, 4 April 1931). The order was lifted only once, on Christmas in 1931. The Uniate priest received permission to hold a

liturgy in the Latin rite. But the church then also held a liturgy in the Byzantine rite; this led to prosecution by the government, which resulted in a fine (Ministry of Interior, 25 December 1931).

Not only were there efforts to spread Byzantine Catholicism among the small group of Albanians who still wished to hold the liturgy in Greek, but Uniatism also continued to be used as a threat from Albanian nationalists. With the creation of the Albanian Orthodox Church, a fierce debate broke out between pro-Albanian and pro-Greek sides in the southern Albanian region of Himara, which had historically seen the first presence of Byzantine Catholics. The pro-Albanian party was based in all the villages, with the exception of Himara and a small part of Dhermi. The pro-Greek party of the village of Himara refused to hand over the local church to the Albanian Orthodox Church, causing clashes between the two groups. On 19 October 1934, the elections of the church elders took place, with pro-Albanians winning a majority. His Beatitude Visarion nevertheless agreed to reappoint Father Spiro Kokaveshi, known as pro-Greek, as the local archpriest. The pro-Albanian majority of the population, however, threatened to become Uniates if Kokaveshi was renamed, which led to a new pro-Albanian priest being appointed (Himara Subprefecture, 19 October 1934).

The struggle against Uniatism prevailed for a time, thanks to the watchfulness of His Beatitude Visarion and the support of the Albanian government. Visarion proclaimed his success in avoiding the Uniate danger as an achievement for the good of Orthodoxy and the nation. Over the next three years, there were only a few isolated cases of Uniatism re-emerging, and they had little consequence. Visarion reported all the cases and found support in the government. When a child was born to the Uniate family of Nas Papanastasi on 7 February 1934, the archbishop demanded that measures be taken to prevent Scarpeli from performing the baptism. The prefecture of Elbasan summoned Nas and asked him to renounce Uniatism, which he had been practising for years, but he refused to convert to Orthodoxy. The archbishop also denounced Scarpeli's efforts of to erect a shrine in the Catholic cemetery of Elbasan. The prefecture was able to prevent its construction on the grounds that the land had been purchased for a Roman Catholic cemetery and not a Uniate church. Scarpeli and his followers tried to erect a chapel within twenty-four hours but were stopped by the gendarmerie, who demolished the newly erected building (Orthodox Church, 10 May 1934).

The only effective way Scarpeli could continue his work was by distributing scholarships for studying at Catholic schools in Italy. Scarpeli had been advised to stop spreading Uniatism and he had agreed. Nevertheless, he continued to distribute the scholarships, telling the parents of the prospective students that he was an Orthodox priest. By 1935, he had sent six students from four families to Italy. The number was small, despite the priest's willingness to give scholarships to virtually anyone. When the government became aware of what he was doing, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs refused to issue passports to the students (Elbasan Prefecture, 6 March 1936).

The Greek embassy in Tirana decided in January 1935 that Uniatism was not a serious threat, since the vast majority of Orthodox believers would not fall prey because the Albanian government did not support the movement. The Greeks judged Albania's strong opposition to be sincere. The circulars that the Interior Ministry sent to the prefects, which described the Uniates as "enemies of the homeland and organs of the Vatican and Italy", had convinced the diplomats from the neighbouring countries that the pro-Italian party in Albanian politics,

represented by Eqrem Libohova and Abdurrahman Krosi, was quite small and could not prevail over the nationalist anti-Italian group led by Vasil Avrami, Abdurrahman Dibra, Xhafer Vila, and Archbishop Visarion (Kondis, 1995, 222-223).

The last of these cases, prior to the Second World War, in which the Uniates tried to win converts occurred in 1938, a year after the Albanian Orthodox Church was finally recognized as independent by the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The Uniates temporarily succeeded in persuading some Christians in Vlorë to convert, including both a Himara priest named Father Petro and Tol Arapi, the police commissioner and a former member of the High Ecclesiastical Council. Among the other converts were Gaspër Pali, a doctor from Shkodër; Sofi Klio, a merchant from Gjirokastrë; and Ilo Biba, a tailor from Vlorë, all of whom were Vlorë residents. The leaders of the mission – Petro Scarpeli and a newly arrived Arbëreshë priest named Bonati – made the same arguments to the mayor of Vlorë that Italy was using, namely, that promoting Uniatism was in the national interest because it combatted both Slavic and Greek influences. The prefecture nevertheless ordered the removal of the priests, while the government levied a fine in the amount of one month's salary on Police Commissioner Tol Arapi, who was later dismissed. All the other converts were similarly deprived of one month's salary and transferred out of Vlorë. Meanwhile, the Himara priest Father Petro reconverted to Orthodoxy and delivered a sermon in which he advised all Orthodox not to be misled the way he had been (Batku, 1938).

It is clear, then, that the Albanian government strenuously opposed the Uniate movement, fearing that it would lead to a strengthening of Italy's political influence in Albania. But after Italy invaded Albania in 1939, the Italian authorities saw political benefit in the possibility of uniting the Albanian Orthodox Church with the Vatican. Such a union would put an end to Greek propaganda, right on the eve of the Greco-Italian War. Also, in the judgment of the Italians, increasing the number of Albanian citizens under the direct influence of Rome and creating a balance against the many Muslims who supported pan-Islamism were reasons enough to promote union between the two churches.

## Conclusions

Byzantine Catholics had had a presence in Albania since the 17th century thanks to Arbëreshë missionaries. The Arbëreshë themselves, however, were not Uniates in the strictest sense of the term; they were Orthodox who had fled to Italy at the time of the Council of Florence and as such were subject to the jurisdiction of the Roman pope in a united Christianity. When the Orthodox Church denounced the Council of Florence, they remained without any other formal affiliation, except that of being the only true Orthodox under the pope's authority. The Arbëreshë presence in Albania, especially in the Himara region, during the 17th and 18th centuries played an extremely important role, as they instated Albanian in schools and churches for the first time in the nation's history. The Arbëreshë presence was then interrupted, only to revive not long after the birth of Albanian nationalism, which coincided with Greek territorial claims on Southern Albania and the Ecumenical Patriarchate's alliance with the Greek state. The Byzantine Catholic presence in Albania was also of political importance for Italy, which was seeking to spread its influence not only to the Catholic northern part of the country and Albania's political elites, but also to the Orthodox south. Thus, this case study enhances the idea that religion was used in international relations as political instrument of a state actor like Italy in order to push for its political aims in Albania.

This leads us to two main conclusions. First, Byzantine Catholics tried to gain the support of the underdog in the Albanian–Greek battle over Albanian Orthodoxy. Initially, the spread of the Uniatist movement in Albania was concerned with enhancing Albanian nationalism. Italy, as a vital defender of an independent Albanian state, was interested in eliminating the Greek influence on Orthodox Albanians. Meanwhile, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, which directly supported Greece, did not allow the liturgy to be performed in Albanian and pushed Orthodox Albanians to declare themselves as Greeks. Thus, the first group of Uniates in Albania, before the country's independence, were Orthodox nationalists who saw affiliation with Rome as a way of escaping Greek influence. But once the Albanian Orthodox Church was established, the Byzantine Catholics shifted towards the small group of Orthodox Albanians who wanted to hold the liturgy in Greek and thus were defying the now-powerful Albanian Orthodox Church. In this new balance of power, the Byzantine Catholic position shifted against the Albanian nationalists.

The second conclusion is that because the Byzantine Catholics supported the less influential group, they were destined to fail. In the first period, it was the Ottoman Empire that blocked their aspirations, as it did not wish to alter the status quo favouring the Ecumenical Patriarchate. In the second period, it was the Albanian state that prevented the Byzantine Catholics from spreading, as it viewed them as a threat to the Albanian Orthodox Church, which was under the state's protection. Consequently, Byzantine Catholicism never gained much momentum, at least not until the Second World War, when Italy occupied Albania and tried to convert the entire Albanian Church to Uniatism.

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# The use of irony between Puerto Rican migrants in Nicholasa Mohr's "In Nueva York"

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## Abstract

Nicholasa Mohr was born in New York in 1938 to Puerto Rican parents. Her writings depict the struggles and hardships of Puerto Rican migrants in the United States. After World War II, Puerto Rican migration to the U.S. grew dramatically. "In Nueva York" was first published in 1977 and it comprises eight different stories in which various characters interact. The purpose of this paper is to analyze the ironic replies uttered in the characters' conversations. Why are the characters ironic? How is irony created and how does the hearer react? The traditional view of irony is that it communicates the opposite of what is being said. However, irony is not always the result of flouting the Gricean quality maxim. Attardo (1999) suggests that irony actually violates co(n)textual appropriateness. Yus (2016) identifies seven contextual sources of irony. Moreover, according to the echoic account of irony, the speaker conveys a reaction or a feeling towards a previous thought or statement (Wilson and Sperber, 2012). Irony is usually perceived as being less aggressive than a direct contradiction when one is conveying a dissociative attitude, it can be a face-saving strategy, it preserves deniability and it can also have a humorous effect. Besides criticizing, it can be noted that in "Nueva York" irony is used as a binding catalyst between the characters.

**Keywords:** pragmatics, irony, humour, Nuyorican literature

## 1. Introduction

Irony has always had profound and puzzling effects in human interaction. The purpose of this article is to detect the ironic utterances performed by Puerto Rican characters in the fiction book "In Nueva York". What kind of speech acts are performed during irony? Why are the characters ironic? How do other characters react to ironic utterances? Which are the contextual sources of irony in the mentioned book?

Nicholasa Mohr was the first Latina woman who published her literary works in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She is a member of the Nuyorican movement, which is a cultural and intellectual current that originated in the late 1960s as a form of artistic fight for the rights of the poor Puerto Rican working class. Its representatives are writers, poets, musicians and artists who are Puerto Rican or of Puerto Rican descent. Puerto Rico was under the rule of the Spanish Empire until the 1800s. Since 1898 it is an unincorporated territory of the U.S. Because of economic scarcity, there were several waves of migration from Puerto Rico to New York.

In contemporary novels, irony is used to challenge cultural assumptions (Giora, 2002, p. 284). According to Kotthoff (1999), self-irony is used by women to divert mockery away from themselves so that it targets the norms which they protest against. Fiction is a rich source for understanding how messages are transmitted and received and all the more in the light of the new world some of the characters wake up to.

The purpose of this case study is to identify the linguistic forms of the ironic utterances and to search for an explanation on how they are produced and interpreted by the characters.

## 2. Literature review and methodology

Grice (1975) noticed that irony appears as a result of flouting the truthfulness (quality) maxim. The intended meaning is reached by inferring the opposite of what is being said.

Giora (1998, p. 2) states that according to the classical view of irony “[...] irony is a special form of language use, by which what is said (sentence meaning) is used to communicate what is unsaid (speaker’s meaning). An example of that is “We go for a picnic and it rains. I say: *What a lovely day for a picnic*” (Sperber & Wilson, 1995, p. 239). She views irony as an indirect negation. By “flouting the graded informativeness requirement (rather than the truthfulness requirement), the ironist negates without using an overt negation marker” (Giora, 1998, p. 4). Actually, [...] “the literal meaning serves as a reference point which allows the computation of the difference between the expected state of affairs (referenced literally) and the ironized situation” (Giora, 1998, p. 9). Therefore, the salient contextually literal meaning may not be totally suppressed in order to grasp the ironic meaning. The salient meaning may be actually part of it.

The pretence account of irony as described by Clark and Gerrig (1984) explains that “the speaker of an ironical utterance is not herself performing a speech act (e.g. making an assertion or asking a question) but pretending to perform one, in order to convey a mocking, skeptical or contemptuous attitude to the speech act itself [...]” (as cited in Wilson & Sperber, 2012, p. 21).

However, there are ironies which do not violate the truthfulness requirement as in “*You sure know a lot*, said to someone who is arrogantly and offensively showing off knowledge” (Glucksberg & Brown, 1995, p. 4). Moreover, Wilson & Sperber (2012, p. 21) state that irony does not necessarily involve pretence and that the ability to understand pretence is not key to understanding irony.

For Wilson & Sperber (2012, p. 5) irony is “echoing a thought (e.g. a belief, an intention, a norm-based expectation) attributed to an individual, a group, or to people in general and expressing a mocking, skeptical or critical attitude to this thought”. Therefore, believing the opposite of what is said is not the point of the utterance, but rather the attitude that is transmitted to the interlocutor. Both negative and positive comments may contain irony. Furthermore, irony is actually a reaction to a certain thought held by others or by the speaker at another point in time (Wilson & Sperber, 2012, p. 12) and it arises from dissociative attitudes. The attributed thought may be an indirect reported speech act or a widely shared cultural view.

Attardo (1996) suggests that co(n)textual appropriateness is key to deciphering irony (as cited in Giora, 1998, p. 3).

Yus (2016, pp. 198-203) explores further the matter of context and he identifies various contextual sources of irony.

#### 1) Source A: general encyclopaedic information

It refers to general commonsense assumptions and knowledge on the world the speakers live in, their culture and their collective beliefs and social stereotypes (Yus, 2016, p. 198).

#### 2) Source B: specific encyclopaedic knowledge on the speaker (Yus, 2016, p. 199).

Sometimes, irony is more common between friends, as they know each other's likes and dislikes, opinions, beliefs, habits. According to Padilla Cruz (2012), friends share a mutual cognitive environment which can help the interlocutor guess what the speaker intends to communicate (as stated in Yus, 2016, p. 199).

#### 3) Source C: recent actions

Contextual source C refers to "knowledge, still stored in the hearer's short term memory, of events or actions which have just taken place or have taken place very recently." (Yus, 2016, p. 200)

#### 4) Source D: previous utterances

Contextual source D refers to "previous utterances in the same conversation or coming from previous conversations; utterances which were said before (or some time in the past)." (Yus, 2016, p. 200)

#### 5) Source E: speaker's nonverbal behaviour

"The nonverbal behaviour can be vocal (tone of voice, intonation...) or visual (gestures such as winks, raised eyebrows or smiles...)" (Yus, 2016, p. 201)

#### 6) Source F: linguistic cues

Linguistic cues are "lexical or grammatical choices by the speaker which work as linguistic cues about the speaker's ironic intention." (Yus, 2016, p. 201)

Some examples of ironic cues are the superlatives, connoted words such as "genius" or phrases such as "a nice...", "a fine...", "bonito..." or "menudo..." (Yus, 2016, p. 202)

#### 7) Source G: physical surroundings, that is, "information coming from the physical area which surrounds the interlocutors during the conversation." (Yus, 2016, p. 203)

Alvarado Ortega (2012, p. 17) states that irony is not necessarily a verbal aggression. It is rather a communication strategy, which can be related to politeness. This strategy may include or exclude the interlocutor from a group. Humorous ironies are planned in narrations, so they are narrative strategies. The effect of humorous ironies is positive with respect to certain situations, as they strengthen the bond between the speakers by creating complicity between them as it can be seen in their laughter (Alvarado Ortega, 2012, p. 17).

Giora (1998, p. 9-11) also points out other functions of irony: it is a mitigated form of criticism, it is used by powerless groups to push forward subversive ideas and among friends it is used in order to communicate a difference of opinion. It can be also considered a form of playful humour (Hymes, 1987).

A shortcoming of this analysis is the fact that since the object of analysis is a written piece of literature, the researcher cannot tell the tone of the characters unless it is mentioned by the writer. The tone of voice is key to understanding attitude.

Eight cases of irony have been identified in the book "In the Nueva York" and they are individually analyzed in the following section of the article, by taking into account the above mentioned perspectives on irony.

### 3. Analysis

#### 1) Short story: *Old Mary*

"I had to do some last-minute things, that's all." She held out a small paper sack. "I had to get some stockings to wear tonight."

"Well, you better get dressed, Ma. They are gonna be here soon and then all them people are coming later. **You invited an army for tonight.**"

"And what about your bother Federico? Has he called or anything?" (Mohr, 1993, p. 21)

In this case irony is performed through the assertive speech act "You invited an army for tonight". Instead of communicating the opposite of what is being said, it actually exacerbates what is being said through the use of a hyperbole. The son criticizes his mother for having invited so many people to the party. Therefore, the irony is based on a recent action (contextual source C). The mother does not react to the irony.

#### 2) Short story: *I Never Even Seen my Father*

"Acabaron? Finish?" he asked, smiling.

"Sure." Yolanda took a cigarette and held it out to William. "Smoke? Go on, take it."

"Later-después, after work – yo – me smoke." He put the cigarette in his shirt pocket. "Gracias, thank you". He smiled.

"Hey, it's O.K. You're welcome. Enjoy it." Yolanda smiled and nodded as she watched him clear away the dishes and carry the large basin back into the kitchen.

"I told you he's nice."

"**Man, I think I got problems and then I look at him.**" She shivered slightly, as if shaking off a chill. "**Anyway, he ain't afraid to smoke and stunt his growth.**"

They laughed out loud. (Mohr, 1993, p. 45)

The assertive acts from the above paragraph are ironic "Man, I think I got problems and then I look at him" and "Anyway, he ain't afraid to smoke and stunt his growth". The first irony is actually a self-irony and it is based on the narrowed mutual cognitive environment of the two friends (Yolanda, the speaker, had been taking drugs and she had been living in the sewers) and on the surrounding environment (William, the waiter, is a dwarf). Therefore, contextual source B and contextual source G are activated. Self-irony has the effect of increasing the speaker's image (Yolanda) in the eyes of the listener (Lillian). In the second case, irony is based both on contextual source G (William, the waiter, is a dwarf) and on general encyclopaedic knowledge (source A) as it refers to the well-known fact that smoking has harmful effects on

child development. She implicitly compares William, a man who is short in stature, to a child. It is necessary for the readers of the book to share the same knowledge on smoking and to grasp the implied comparison in order to understand the irony in the second utterance.

In the first case, the listener has no reaction. However, the speaker herself shivers as it brings back unpleasant memories. In the second case, both the speaker and the listener laugh out loud, revealing in this way that it had been a humorous irony. Mockery has the effect of increasing mutuality between the interlocutors. There is also language alternation or code-switching between English and Spanish in the dialogue between these Puerto Rican characters.

### 3) Short story: *I Never Even Seen my Father*

“Well, right now I am with my mother, but she’s got more problems than me. Like it’s still the same there, so I don’t know how long I’m gonna stay. I’m looking for a place around here on the Lower East Side. You know, I’m used to it here and I got friends here. My probation officer is a pretty nice woman; she’s trying to get me into a school-work program. This way I can make some bread. You know, under one of the antipoverty programs. **And, like I told her, I been a poverty program all my life, right?** So what else is new?”

Lillian laughed. “You’re still the same Yolanda. Listen, come to see us, O.K? You haven’t been up to my house for a long time?”

“Yeah, sure.” (Mohr, 1993, p. 46)

“And, like I told her, I been a poverty program all my life, right?” is an assertion followed by a short directive act that requires the confirmation of the listener through the question tag “right”. In this paragraph, the self-irony is of echoic nature as it refers to the same idea repeated by the speaker to someone else. Irony is based on a previous utterance (contextual source D), but also on specific encyclopaedic knowledge on the speaker (contextual source B). Lillian automatically retrieves background information about Yolanda as they are friends. It can be noted that this ironic reply is backed by the rhetorical question “So what else is new?” Self-irony is meant again to increase Yolanda’s image in Lillian’s eyes. It triggers Lillian’s laughter. This reaction is not meant to hurt Yolanda’s feelings, as it is followed by Lillian’s invitation to her place and Yolanda’s acceptance. The effect of self-irony is that of strengthening their friendship.

### 4) Short story: *The English Lesson*

“Tsk, tsk, los pobres! But, can you imagine, then? A professor from a university doing the job of a porter? My goodness!” Lali sighed. “I never heard of such a thing!”

“But you gotta remember, it’s like Mrs. Hamma said, this is America, right? **So...everybody got a chance to clean toilets! Equality, didn’t she say that?**”

They both laughed loudly, stepping up their pace until they reached Rudi’s Luncheonette. (Mohr, 1993, p. 64)

In the above paragraph, Lali and William are talking about another character, Stephan Paczkowski, a professor of history of music at the University of Krakow. He and his wife, who was of Jewish descent, had to flee from Poland, together with their seven year old daughter,

and, upon their arrival in the U.S., the only job that he could find was that of porter in the maintenance department of a hospital. Stephan, Lali and William are taking English classes with Mrs. Hamma. "But you gotta remember, it's like Mrs. Hamma said, this is America, right?" implies the idea of the American dream.

"The American Dream is the belief that anyone, regardless of where they were born or what class they were born into, can attain their own version of success in a society where upward mobility is possible for everyone. The American Dream is achieved through sacrifice, risk-taking, and hard work, rather than by chance<sup>1</sup>."

However, reality contradicts this beautiful ideal, as it can be noted in William's ironic reply concerning how equality is applied: "So...everybody got a chance to clean toilets!" This ironic utterance is an expressive speech act which indicates the utter amazement of the character and it is based on general encyclopaedic knowledge (source A). The ironic reply "Equality, didn't she say that?" communicates the opposite of what is being said, as William wants to point out the fact that inequality pervades the American society, and it is echoic at the same time, because it refers to an utterance performed by Mrs. Hamma (contextual source D, previous utterances). William communicates a dissociative attitude towards what their teacher had previously said "Mustn't forget Mr. Paczkowski; everybody here must be treated equally. This is America!" (Mohr, 1993, p. 60). The function of the two ironic utterances is to criticize and point out the falsity of the American dream. The reply "Equality, didn't she say that?" is composed again by an assertive speech act, followed by a directive speech act based on the question tag "didn't she say that?" Both characters laugh afterwards. The effect of the irony in the above paragraph is that of creating complicity between the two characters, as they mock their teacher's words. Their mimicry strengthens their friendship which grows gradually into love as the action unfolds. "Irony serves as a mark of intimacy between speakers and listeners, and brings them even closer together" (Gibbs and Colston, 2001, p. 190).

##### 5) Short story: *The English Lesson*

"But I want" – Lali was holding her sides with laughter- "some guarantee of this. I got to know".  
"Please, Miss Lali." William was laughing so hard tears were coming to his eyes. "**After... after all, you now a member in good standing...of the promised future.**"

William and Lali broke into uncontrollable laughter, swaying and limping, oblivious to the scene they created for the people who stared and pointed at them as they continued on their way to Rudi's. (Mohr, 1993, p. 72)

William is actually imitating Mrs. Hamma and this makes them both laugh in the end. The ironic utterance "After... after all, you now a member in good standing... of the promised future" contains a repetition of "after" which puts emphasis on what is being said, while also showing that it is difficult for the character to speak, as he is laughing at the same time (contextual source E- nonverbal communication). "After all" is a connecting idiom that indicates that a conclusion is about to follow. In this reply, irony is also based on contextual source D, that is, a previous utterance (uttered by Mrs. Hamma) and on general encyclopaedic knowledge (source A), since "the promised future" is a reference to Psalm 132: 11-18 in the

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<sup>1</sup> American Dream, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/a/american-dream.asp>, accessed on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October, 2020, 12: 50.

Bible. Through this assertive speech act, William may be also saying the opposite: since they have a migrant status there is actually little they can do for themselves, so there is no promised future for them. They had migrated to the U.S. with hopes for a better future. The writer of the book criticizes through their mimicry the discrimination against (im)migrants in the U.S. in the '70s. Irony becomes the nucleus of their critique.

6) Short Story: *The Perfect Little Flower Girl*

"Well – Vivian shrugged – "what the heck, when I was twenty, I wanted to be a bride. I wanted to be Sebastian's bride. **Sixteen years later, it's happened, in a way**". Vivian smiled at Raquel. (Mohr, 1993, p. 93)

In the above quotation, the source of irony is threefold: specific knowledge on the speaker (contextual source B: Vivian and Sebastian had a relationship in the past), recent actions (contextual source C: Vivian and Johnny, Sebastian's lover, got married) and speaker's nonverbal behaviour (contextual source E: Vivian's smile). The smile helps Raquel, the interlocutor, understand the irony behind the assertion. In the story, Johnny and Sebastian form a couple, while Vivian and Johanna form another couple. Vivian and Sebastian had a love affair back in college. Sebastian asks Vivian to marry Johnny so that Johnny could enroll into the army. Vivian's self irony implies that by marrying Johnny she is marrying Sebastian as well. Her goal is to increase her own image in Raquel's eyes. Johnny and Sebastian are very close to Raquel, so Vivian wants to get close to her as well.

7) Short Story: *The Operation*

"Wait a minute-"another boy said. "We seen some girl, remember? They was playing rope over by the end of the schoolyard."

"Go on. The lady said she's seven, stupid. Them girls was way older, like tweleve and thirteen. Ave María, man, bendito, Lefty, you don't know the difference between girls seven years old and thirteen! **No wonder we lost the game!** You out to lunch, friend". The boys began to laugh. "Sorry, lady, we ain't seen her." (Mohr, 1993, p. 103)

Angie is looking for her daughter, Jennie, who is seven years old and who has disappeared. "No wonder we lost the game!" is an expressive speech act which shows the amazement and even amusement of the speaker. He can't believe that the other boy can't tell the difference between young and teenage girls and he even blames him for having lost the game. This ironic utterance is based on contextual source C (recent actions) and it is meant as a critique because it is followed by the directive speech act "You out to lunch, friend". The boy is asked to get in touch with reality. The downtoner "friend" mitigates the illocutionary force of the directive speech act. It is used as a face-saving strategy.

8) Short Story: *The Operation*

"[...] You're pretty smart, ain't you? How old are you anyway?"

"Seven".

"Seven? By gosh. Look at that! You know how old Captain Nate is? Guess. Jennie shrugged. "I'm seventy!"That's right. So you see, we got that in common. Seven and seventy! **Only a**

**couple years difference, right?** Jennie laughed. "Well, now, we better get going back outside. Your mother's gonna be worried, I bet. And it's getting dark." (Mohr, 1993, p. 117)

Jennifer Matilla is found by an old man, Nathaniel Abrahamsen, who suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder after fighting in the army. He is impressed by her wits and he decides to help her. The irony "Only a couple years difference, right?" communicates the opposite of what is being said in a playful manner, as it is preceded by the word pun "Seven and seventy!" This playful irony is meant to win the girl's trust. He belittles the age difference between them, because he wants her to accompany him. This irony is based on contextual source B, that is, specific encyclopaedic knowledge on the speaker. With respect to its form, an assertive speech act is followed by a directive speech act which contains the question tag: "right?" The reaction of the girl is that of laughter.

#### 4. Conclusions

It can be noticed from the described examples that the function of irony in these short stories is to criticize other characters in some cases ("You invited an army for tonight", "No wonder we lost the game!"), but also to bring the characters closer in other cases. Irony can act as a binding catalyst "So... everybody got a chance to clean toilets! Equality, didn't she say that?"/ "Sixteen years later, it's happened, in a way", and, surprisingly, it can also be a communication strategy that is used in order to gain someone's trust: "Only a couple years difference, right?" Self-irony has the purpose of enhancing the speaker's image in the eyes of the interlocutor.

The ironies identified in the eight analyzed cases are performed under the form of assertive or expressive speech acts. The following pattern is detected: the assertive speech acts are followed in three cases by question tags (directive speech acts). The question tags may be interpreted as rhetorical questions, as they don't really require an answer from the interlocutor. Another rhetorical device used in one of the cases was the hyperbole ("You invited an army for tonight!". The usual reaction of the interlocutor is that of laughter, which shows that the irony has been processed correctly.

Some cases of irony can be explained by resorting to multiple theories and various contextual sources overlap when irony is performed. The contextual sources that predominate are contextual source A (general encyclopaedic information), contextual source B (specific encyclopaedic knowledge on the speaker) and contextual source D (previous utterances).

Through this book, which was initially published in 1977, Nicholasa Mohr activates for the rights of Puerto Rican migrants in the U.S. Irony is a stylistic device used to criticize the American society, as it can be seen in the dialogue between William and Lali. The Puerto Rican culture is a dominated culture that tries to preserve itself within the American dominating culture. Irony promotes group cohesiveness and it can be humorous and even playful (between Jennie and Captain Nate/between the soon to be lovers: William and Lali).

Since it is anchored sometimes in various contextual sources, irony may be difficult to grasp. An irony which is correctly processed is a valuable resource in conversations as it revalidates the speakers' mutual cognitive environment.

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## **“Fortnite” and New Kids’ Sociabilities**

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### **Abstract**

In this paper, we'll be researching the influence of digital games on contemporary kids' sociabilities, based on the assumption that the online universe allows exchanges and social ties in a digital context, with potential evidence on the dynamics of face-to-face interaction. In this perspective, Fortnite videogame will be our case study, which since 2017 has been dominating the entertainment industry and has become a social phenomenon, attracting millions of players using several types of digital devices. Fortnite presents elements that infer a paradigm shift in the videogame industry, directly interfering in the playful world of kids and, consequently, in the way this audience socializes. The interactive and fictional narrative, the expression of freedom and multiplatform creativity, as well as the monetization model by microtransactions are some of the additional factors we will analyse, which reflection also starts from conceptualizations about sociability and a brief literature's review on the aimed subject.

**Keywords:** Childhood; Adolescence; Sociabilities; Digital Games; Fortnite.

### **Introduction**

The advance of new communication, information and entertainment technologies has led to emerging digital activities of new generations, whose daily routines have been radically transformed. Even before literacy, children learn to use technological devices with ease, allowing easy access to a previously unknown and unexplored world by this audience. One of the factors refers to the change on the scenario in which kids are exposed to mass media, that is, the contextual spectrum has expanded from the living room of their homes to everywhere:

Unlike any other point in time, young children are exposed to media content via multiple devices in multiple locations and in multiple formats, potentially leading to a new blooming, buzzing confusion. This technology explosion is shifting the use of screen media from a centrally located television set in the family's living room to anywhere and everywhere a child might be (Barr & Linebarger, 2017, p.xii).

Young kids keep preferring toys of digital nature, so there is a progressive decrease of traditional recreational activities (Fantin, 2006) and sociability, understood as a process of

interaction and social relationship between individuals (Férreol, 2007), is ruled by the virtuality of online digital communication devices. Lauricella et al. (cit. in Barr & Linebarger eds, 2017, p. 9) mention that we are starting to understand the effect, use and learning that children get from this new universe of apps:

We are beginning to understand the content available to young children via this new media platform, but the effects - both positive and negative - of exposure to and engagement with app content are far from known. Much more research is needed to understand how children use these apps, what they learn from them, and how the opportunity to create and design their own content influences development, learning, and creativity (Lauricella et al. Cit. In Barr & Linebarger eds, 2017, p. 9).

Huston (cit. In Barr & Linebarger eds, 2017, p. Viii) says that we are currently starting to get some interesting answers about that. According to research on psychology and social sciences' fields, for instance, several issues have been occurring, especially when there is excessive exposure to technologies. Concerns regarding sedentary lifestyle, technology dependence and learning difficulties in the school environment are some indicative factors of those issues. There are also the dangers of exposing privacy, the absence of direct physical contact, difficulties surrounding personal relationships and the development of experiences with the real world (Postman, 1999; Buckingham, 2006; Zanolta, 2007).

Until the 1990s, studies about relationships between media and the universe of kids and teenagers, predominantly focused on TV content and audiences. It included the influence on behaviors and a special focus on children protection, considering they are susceptible to media manipulation. In this perspective, Postman (1999) warned of the risks of television, due to an increasingly accelerated childhood towards the adult world and pointed to a "death of childhood".

These concerns, currently directed at online digital media infrastructures, present polarized views. On one hand, a pessimistic notion of the influence of technologies and, on the other hand, the enthusiastic idea of the "communications' revolution", which conceives new electronic media as liberating and empowering.

Tapscott (1998) says that the technological expertise of the internet generation, made kids master several mediums and devices over adults, for the first time in history. This would then be a more creative, critical, globally oriented and even smarter generation than parents or compared to baby-boomers, who boosted culture, social life and the consumer goods' markets of their time.

Thus, there is an idea of a radical change in childhood activities, which, due to the interactivity and active control of their environment, favors their social, motor, cognitive and linguistic fast development than previous generations; configuring it, according to Tapscott (1998), not in the "end of childhood", but in a new world to play. Buckingham (2006), in turn, does not present such an optimistic point of view about the technological presence in kids' lives. But he also avoids exaggerated negativism about media influences. He states that "such debates in general do not allow more than a limited choice between great despair and hurried optimism" (p. 9).

From this perspective, considering that childhood is a "stage of life that has an important dimension of social construction" (Pinto, 1997, p. 33) and that "culture and representations -

also in the form of electronic media - are the main arenas in which this construction is developed and sustained "(Buckingham, 2006, p. 10), we propose in this work a reflection on the role of electronic games in contemporary kids' sociability. For that purpose, Fortnite video game is our case study, which has been revealing significant success since 2017 and becoming part of the playful universe of millions of kids in different countries.

## 2. Video Games in the Sociocultural Context

Video games, directly linked to the entertainment industry, have become a spotlighted cultural media object in contemporary society. Like cinema, the games' industry consolidates itself as art and pop culture. A story that began in the 1960s, today has an important impact on culture, revealing itself to be a fruitful and promising sector for several related areas to communication, computer engineering, audiovisuals, among others. As presented by Cabral (1996), video games "offer those who manipulate them, the possibility of inserting themselves into a 'reality' that is richer in emotion than that which they will certainly find in their own experience, particularly when it does not correspond to your creative potential "(p. 93). Thus, electronic devices and games, increasingly improved to meet the objectives of this market, have dominated kids' attention, teenagers and even adults, also due to the everywhere factor, specifically the omnipresence of mobile devices. Additionally, as an artifact, electronic games have a communicative, operative, informative, appealing and persuasive dimension (Vasco Branco cit. In Zagalo, 2009, p. 11), therefore, allied to the omnipresence factor, it proves to be a powerful and influential instrument widely used by the mass media.

Zagalo (2015) highlights the transformations that occurred in the art of video games, which left the place of digital substitute for analog games and expanded their action from linearity and repetition to abstraction and generalization, by including narrative and stimulating creativity.

Video games depend on narrative for the simple reason that they want to convey ideas, moral values. The video game creator, unlike the analog game creator, does not dedicate himself to the creation of systems of rules to manipulate player's attention, but rather seeks to convey ideas, express feelings, confer meanings (Zagalo, 2015, p. 66).

In this way, the narrative's meaning fulfills actions with sense in video games, which, due to the game characters and own experiences, stimulate not only the mastery of the game, but also develop a mental construction of the players' own world. Adicionaly, there is the broadening of the concept of playing, by including the idea of having fun, which comes up freely, spontaneously and without rigid predeterminations.

As mentioned by Planells de la Maza (2019), the expansion of the technical and creative possibilities of video games has allowed a wide playful conformation, which admits different variables defined, to a certain extent, by the players themselves.

In this respect, the wide open video game's nature makes it possible to bring the richness of analog games to the digital universe, however, while still presenting serious internal tensions to adapt the narrative in this context, needing to simulate changes in the fictional world so that the actions can make sense to the players.

Unlike cinema or literature, in which it is possible to mentally organize the role of all

narrative elements and the space in which the facts develop, as Garcia (2018) recalls, the video game narrative is composed of living beings in constant change and adaptation and therefore obey the needs of the players. In this way, the “transmedial worlds” change according to the activities of the players and are, therefore, made for and by the user.

Unos jugadores que como comunidad alimentan su mundo narrativo para hacer más y más grande. Pero este mundo no podría ser transmedial si no utilizara diferentes medios para desarrollar ya no solo su narración, también para hacer crecer su universo narrativo. (Garcia, 2018, p. 10).

In this sense, that is also a scenario of convergence and participation in which consumers become “prosumers” - “followers who not only consume a certain story, but who also create their own content, from the original, to grow the narrative world that they love so much” (Garcia, 2018, p. 13). Therefore, communication via digital social networks and streaming channels have become a space for communicative fusion and proliferation of the strategies of video game developers. The necessary engagement for advertising and loyalty of the video games' audience is guaranteed by strategies of the producers and developers, based on transmedial actions, which involve the most varied means and personalities. Influencers, youtubers, instagramers, among others, have become references for this industry.

It is also important to highlight the business model of the video game sector called free-to-play (f2p), which consists of allowing free access to the game and later propose the purchase of special items, characters or properties, sometimes to enhance player's performance, with an attractive cost to encourage purchase and guarantee profits. This billing model with microtransactions, driven by digital social networks and mobile technologies has become an example of success in the gaming consumer market.

Planells de la Maza (2013) points out that f2p breaks with certain previous consumption logic, encouraging free access to the game, but limiting the complete experience to the fictional playful world by paying for the various elements of the video game. This system, which differs according to the modality, has a huge commercial and playful impact, since it allows a theoretically free game, but supported by the product's fans, who choose which games will survive and which ones won't. Considering this new commercial model, “true digital literacy focused on video games, emotions and honest consumption models” is essential (Planells de la Maza, 2013, p. 727).

### **3. Sociabilities in the Fortnite Play World**

Baechler (1995, p. 65-66) defines sociability as a modality of the social universe that is defined by the “human capacity to establish networks, through which the units of activities, individual or collective, circulate the information that express their interests, tastes, passions, opinions”. According to the french sociologist, the occurrence of sociability in social life, as well as their sociological objects, have great diversity and can be identified in established relationships between individuals. These relationships can be born due to generated networks, by more or less solid and exclusive ties (kinship, neighborhood, class, etc.) and through deliberate networks, that is, networks in which social agents find themselves by choice, pleasure, common interests (salons, circles, clubs, etc.).

From this perspective, the concept of sociability is directly linked to the various forms of social interaction, from the most elementary “face to face” (Gofman, 1992), shared in the

same space-time context, to “mediated interaction” (Thompson, 1995), in which agents can be located in different contexts of space and time, whose interactions are being developed through communication's technological devices.

The expression of sociability occurs according to the social group, the intensity of the relationships, the type of structure or concrete conjunctures. As Thompson (1995) points out, due to media's development, interactive situations have been multiplied and becoming more complex, in many cases, defined by the hybridity of their elements.

This context created new forms of interaction and allowed new action forms with different properties and consequences. The development of the internet, in turn, “not only constitutes a new mean of communication, but it is also a new mean of production and interaction, valid for both public and private activity” (Sotomayor, 2006, p. 2).

In this virtual world spectrum, in which video games move comfortably, a true phenomenon in the entertainment industry has stood out since 2017. It is called Fortnite - an online electronic game that has become a worldwide fever among kids, has gained more than 125 million players in less than a year and was the main responsible for the historical revenue of Epic Games (North-American developer of electronic games and software), which ended the year 2018 with three billion dollars of net profit (Silva, 2018). In 2019, Fortnite stood out as one of the most popular video games, consolidating itself in the competitive landscape through several marketing strategies and partnerships with world renowned brands and companies.

Created in 2011, Fortnite redefined the video games' scene because it pioneered the creation of real multiplatform experiences. In 2017, it was released "Save the World" mode (available for Microsoft Windows, macOS, PlayStation 4 and Xbox One) and "Battle Royale" mode (available on the same platforms in addition to the Nintendo Switch, iOS and Android devices). This second mode of the game is pointed out as the reason for the resonant success. “Battle Royale Multiplayer Fortnite is the most popular game in the world, with more than 250 million players” (Marr, 2019, p. 1). In 2020, Epic Games revealed the surpassing of 350 million players.

The fact is that Fortnite has entered the kid's universe in an impactful way. There are those who say that it is not just a game, but “it is a way of being and asserting oneself” (Vasconcelos, 2018). It is possible to play in teams, with conversation between players and sharing sounds and images, which provides interaction and fun between friends without the need to leave the space of their own homes. It is also possible to play with strangers who are connected all over the world, which can be a facilitator for expanding relationships and learning other languages. However, this type of interaction is not absent from certain risks like cyber-bullying and violation of moral principles, which parents must be aware of.

Serrano (2018) highlights the game's aesthetics and design as one of the main keys to its success, as Fortnite combines the colorful and naive style of the cartoon with the fast pace of the survival game (one against a hundred), also with the possibility to build protective structures, that encourage creativity and quick thinking while in battle.

The narrative of Fortnite's "Battle Royale" is another key factor, as it is often unpredictable and surprising. Epic Games uses environmental narrative, which tells stories based on visual and sound details, equivalent to the staging of cinema and theater, in which the context

speaks for itself. There is no clear story, no narrator or definite characters, however, with each new season different items are added in a logical sequence, with a new theme, shrouded in mysteries and with connections to the real world. For instance, the actual season is based on **Marvel superheroes characters**.

The change from one season to the next one is always marked by impactful events, which makes millions of players enter the game, with a set date and time, to witness together the great event that changes the game's world in real time. Fortnite is part of the free-to-play model (also called GaaS - game as a service), but what differs it from other free video games is the complete access to the fictional playing world without the need for payment and "none of the elements that are included in purchases brings competitive advantage over other players" (Serrano, 2018, p. 10).

However, Fortnite was designed to provide users a virtual adventure experience that involves several aspects of real life, such as clothing and objects' possession, actions such as dances that, in addition to acting in a playful sense, confer status, because they are only conquered by the "winners" or by those who paid to have such elements.

In this sense, dancing rare moves, having the coolest accessories of the season, having many "kills" and "wins", using epic and legendary "skins", etc., are prominent elements in this game in which self-affirmation is, indeed, part of the "rules". These codes reach the physical world through verbal and non-verbal language, rising to new forms of sociability, inclusion (or exclusion), and to the definition of identities among kids.

Epic Games also knew how to keep the attention of a new generation that has grown up with the Internet and is used to boasting on social media networks like Facebook and Instagram. Skins and emotes may be purely cosmetic and optional items, but they are the foundation of Fortnite's success. Epic Games was able to keep up with the trends, launching funny dance emotes and creating "noise" around the game with each new Season. (Loureiro, 2018, n/p).

Repercussions promoted by influencers, youtubers and streamers are fundamental to the success of Fortnite, which is also spread by famous athletes and artists. Ordinary players themselves carry out free advertising by creating, for instance, channels on the YouTube or Twitch video platforms, exclusively to share their plays. The content creation, coupled with frequent updates of paid items, build expectations of what will come next and assures the maintenance of the players' interest.

A carried out study by the National Research Group (NRG) of United States of America in March 2019, refers that Fortnite goes far beyond the profile of a video game, configuring itself in a new social media for the teen audience (10 to 17 years old), from which the video game fulfills an average of 25% of free time. With a sample of 1500 consumers, that research revealed that Fortnite has become more than an electronic game, being often referred to as a "third place" for making new friends and creating social bonds.

Although the Battle Royale mode is highly competitive in nature, many young Fortnite players use the game as a place to socialize with others and to express their authentic selves, purchasing "skins" to customize the look of their in-game avatars, performing dance modes and engaging in an increasingly immersive virtual world. (NRG, 2019, p. 5).

The survey also shows that Fortnite "steals" time from all leisure activities, significantly

changing the way consumers spend their free time (21% of total free time among weekly players of all ages). Aiming for an exclusive combination of benefits from games, social media and streaming platforms, Fortnite is seen as the video game that offers consumers a different experience: "Consumers say its the best place 'to be my authentic self and to connect to what everyone is talking about, making me feel like I'm not alone'" (NRG, 2019, p. 9).

Fortnite is thus identified by users as having a positive impact on their lives, because unlike traditional social platforms, indicated as causing isolation and loneliness, the video game offers interactivity capable of creating a sense of community, feeling of action and control, in a virtual experience that contributes to forgetting real life problems.

It is important to mention that Fortnite is part of a group of phenomena defined and provided by the globalization of the economy and culture, but its uses are inserted in specific cultural contexts, with variables according to the age group, gender, social capital among other factors that define unequal access to technologies. However, this scenario has revealed the emergence of new ways of integration of childhood in socio-cultural life all over the world, notably marked by the distance from public spaces and traditional ways of participating in culture, as discussed by Fantin (2006).

Permeated by the products of the media industries, the world builds an arena of very important meanings for the formation processes. This arena escapes the spatiotemporal limits of face-to-face interaction and creates new forms of interaction between people and, consequently, people with culture, nature and the world. This also changes children's play, which is increasingly linked to the media (Fantin, 2006, p. 14).

Therefore, we consider it necessary to understand the context in which childhood and adolescence are inserted to reflect on the new forms of emerging sociability. When mediated by new technologies or online electronic games, to which this communication specifically refers, there are individualization and socialization movements confined to relationships without physical contact. On the other hand, a context of action, communication, experience and learning is perceived through the interaction with technologies, but also through the playful relationship with other children in virtual spaces. Thus, as presented by Cabral (1996), we are focused "to reject the idea that technology stimulates non-social or antisocial behaviors, we understand that it is another type of relationship and sociability, from a distance, what lies ahead" (p.93).

## 5. Final Considerations

The communicational and media context that we are living today leaves no question about the development of new forms of sociability, guided by living together in cyberspace. From this perspective, Sotomayor (2006) points to a social model that is organized around elective communities of interest or "specialized communities", better known as "sociability networks with a variable geometry and composition, according to the interests of social agents and according to the size of the network" (p.5).

When we focus on the universe of online electronic games in general and on Fortnite in particular, we perceive an environment whose reality is rich in emotions and creative potentialities, setting up an attractive playful context, especially for kids. In this way, it is an alternative place of new and free spaces for adventure and virtual sharing, which acts in the creation of new forms of sociability and the construction of identities.

Fortnite is certainly not the only video game to feature today with an important integration among its audience. But, as we already mentioned, this video game provided a redefinition of the scenario of its industry, through the creation and fusion of several elements (complex construction and strategy mechanisms), acting on several fronts to attract, engage and keep players. In this sense, we infer that the observation of the elements that make up Fortnite, its integration in the audience and especially its use by the players, is important to understand the new sociability model that is being built, especially by kids.

It is relevant to note that this other type of sociability that occurs outside the geographical limits of traditional communities does not exclude, but coexists with, face-to-face interactions. In this sense, despite the technical mediation, the ephemerality and the anonymity possibility in communications, it is likely to establish affinity bonds that can result in solid relationships, which can go from online to offline (Silva, 2007).

These social networks are flexible, because their models of social interaction are built and reconstructed by the individuals themselves, through technologies. On the other hand, ways of social support in this configuration have a greater tendency to fragility, considering the low demanding level regarding the commitment of its members (Sotomayor, 2006).

When reflecting on the virtual as a new imaginary territory for kids, Pasín (2009, p. 5) argues that “cyberspace is also a magnificent receptacle from which youth can develop interactions based on common affinities, tastes or passions”. Thus, the spatial distance is not an obstacle to the building of more solid bonds, nor to the development of new communities.

Plus, the current context offers several creative and democratic opportunities and has the potential for kids' protagonism, since through access to the means of communication and cultural expression they can reflect their views and perspectives (Buckingham, 2006).

However, we are also in agreement when Buckingham (2006) emphasizes that interventions in terms of social, educational and cultural policies are necessary in order to include kids themselves in the process of social and cultural change, giving them a more independent agency, taking them not just as passive recipients and not denying their active role in creating their own culture.

More than presenting answers, the present reflection tried to ask about what kind of kids' sociability is favored by online electronic games, with emphasis on Fortnite. In this sense, we exposed different perspectives for new analytical developments or empirical research, aiming to understand the meaning of the actions of the inserted agents in the referred social context.

Such an undertaking is, indeed, a challenge that requires the use of methods that include observations in different environments (online and offline) of sociability related to video games. However, research in this area is necessary and fundamental for the understanding of our culture so strongly impacted by digital technologies.

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## The construction of the national identity in relation to the West

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### Abstract

During the 20s and 30s, Albanians began creating their nation and they needed to build their historical identity. The history of Albania has an early relationship with the Western and Eastern Christianity, but since this state was for five centuries under the rule of the Ottoman Empire, most of the Albanian people were Islamized. The history of Albanians also has a long relationship with their political empires and their respective religions. During these years the ruling elite of the country sought to build the identity of its nation-state as a refusal of the Oriental culture in order to achieve the political and cultural reconciliation with the West. It is this viewpoint which serves as the grounds of building their national identity.

**Keywords:** national identity, Oriental culture, west, empire, religions, etc.

### Introduction

When the first Albanian state and its institutions were established, their legal form was based on the Western constitution. In general, the political and intellectual elites of the country, in addition to rejecting the Oriental culture, were also attempting to build the state and to guide the society towards the culture and civilization of the West. We can notice in their political and cultural discourses, that we have three main lines of discourse, which are similar and at the same time different from one-another.

One includes Mit`hatFrashëri, Noli, and to some extent Faik Konica, who oppose the Oriental world, but do not express admiration for the Western culture and political systems. A special discourse is that of EqrembeyVlora, who was not influenced by the Renaissance romanticism. Neither does he judge the Ottoman principles, nor does he demonstrate passion for the Western life and culture. He is an impartial critic of past events which influenced and conditioned many elements of the lifestyle of Albanians, but he is also rational for the new political situations that had been created. He considers the Albanian neither less nor more, but only as a product of these historical conditions and he takes into account all the elements of his life in such definitions, in this line of development.

The other line is radical, inspired by the Renaissance where they feel polluted and disgusted by everything oriental, eastern, admiration and identification with the culture of the developed Europe. According to them, everything oriental shall be destroyed, since it is the source of our national evil, the cause and consequence of the historical tragedy of Albania. For this reason, according to them, any mentality of this old world must be hidden in order to build the New Albanian World. Such an attitude characterised by a revolutionary zeal declared the war against the Orient and the Oriental Culture, as an incompatible and inseparable war up to

the death. Their callings were zealous and costly, with idealistic illusions, looking at two worlds, two cultures, two civilizations that were essentially opposite and would categorically exclude each other. This line of lectures was represented by Branko Merxhani with his journalism, KristMaloki with his essays, Anton Harapi and Mehdi Frashëri.

There must have been other lines of communication, but these ones were more mediated and they influenced the construction of the meaning of our history and national identity. This way of building discourse contributed to the construction of our national identity, but not without drawbacks and shortcomings.

### **Rejection of the Oriental culture in the absence of the Western Orientation**

Mit`hatFrashëri, a political and intellectual personality of the 30s, wrote; "May the administration be hated forever, cursed be the hour that brought the foot of the Asian to Albania, that made us stay five centuries less developed than our friends, five centuries passed over us like a black shadow, a heavy stone on the mind and our consciousness, a time of darkness that extinguished every sense of humanity, every quality of the honest man( Frasheri 2003, pg. 404)."<sup>1</sup>

The opinion of Mit`hat is an extension of the same line of thought as that of the Renaissance. Mit`hat brings the same Turkish and Asian as the Renaissance. He calls the Turkish Empire as the producer of darkness and a desert for our nation, but even this does not bring any positive definition for other civilizations, e.g. the European one. Faik Konica, an opinion maker and career diplomat of the 30s, well educated in well-known universities of the West, tells a story about a boy from Tirana; "If there were many people like that tyrant, intent foreigners, would easily understand that the nation of Diocletian, of the philosopher Julian, Justinian, a nation that had its own civilization, where the ancestors of the French and English wore buffalo skins and lived in caves, may be declining, disfigured, impoverished, but it is not an African crowd.(Konica ; Levantines)"<sup>2</sup>

Konica stands in the national chastity of the Renaissance for the early Albanian civilization, and there is no affection for the French or English civilization, nowhere, even at this time, nor is there any mention of the notion of Europe or European civilization. F.S Noli, a bishop and enriched cultural background, mentions with admiration for the Persian civilization, where this civilization through the Arab-occupied Spain nurtured the European Renaissance, which became the foundation of later modern culture; "From the ninth century to the sixteenth century AD, Persia had a cultural birth, knowledge and literature that generated great philosophers, scientists and poets, such as Firdus, Avicenna, Omer Kajami, Attari, Saadi, Rumi, Hafiz Shirazi, Xhami and Hatifi. From this glorious East, which springs directly from the Greco-Roman citizenship, was born the Arab East, which through Spain influenced Medieval Europe and prepared the great Italian East, the mother of modern citizenship (Noli, f.269)."<sup>3</sup>

Noli finds the foundations of modern civilization beyond Europe, in early Persia and its civilization.

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<sup>1</sup>Anthology of Albanian thought, Plejad 2003, p 113.

<sup>2</sup>F. Konica ; Levantines

<sup>3</sup>F. Noli; Rubairat ; f.269.

However, Noli also describes the Oriental cultures with negative connotations when talking about his political opponent Ahmet Zogu: "Ahmet Zogu remains surrounded by armchairs, and surrounded in his cave by a crowd of evil people, and he is like a joker who claims Occidentalism and liberalism, when it nurtures in its heart the darkest ideals of the Oriental culture( Noli, 1972. pg. 69)."<sup>1</sup>

Noli does not say specifically which orientation he is talking about, but it means the Turkish-Arab orientation for the following reason: The first labels his political rival Ahmet Zogu, who was raised and educated in Turkey, the second, Noli was a bishop of the Orthodox faith, and the third was influenced by Orientalist theories.

E. B. Vlora, an intellectual and well-educated person of the Turkish administration, in his book "Memories" does not obscure the Turkish Empire, and the conflict between Albanians and Turks as a consequence of the Tanzimat Reforms, when the Turkish administration began to be centralized (Vlora. 1925 f.154). Albanians by that time had enjoyed the full self-governing autonomy; "Throughout the long feudal period, the Ottoman administrative system had left the Albanians a full internal self-governing autonomy. In their country they could act as they pleased. Suddenly with the Tanzimat Reforms, they had to end all this and the Albanians, in a very template way, had to be pressured in the role of obedient subjects. It is natural for Albanians to oppose such a request and in this case to become aware that they were in a better position, that they are Albanian and not Turkish. It would have been excessive at the time to take nationalist positions.

It is true that the Albanian who has not been remembered for a long time, has lived his life, has preserved his identity, but the genuine sense of national belonging begins to develop only shortly before the middle of the last century( Vlora. Kujtime 1885. F.159)"<sup>2</sup>.

We do not find the Romantic Renaissance at E. B. Vlora, but we see him as the narrator of a historical episode without the spirit of the idealist. The way he defines the empire has no negative connotations, nor does he seem to have the spirit of an idealist. He is not talking about national ideologies, but about an ethnic ethnicity, different from the Turks, and this feeling awoke you when the Tanzimat Reforms limited administrative autonomy. E.B.Vlora tries not to obscure any kind of ethics; Christian, or Islamic, Oriental or Western, and perceives the Albanian as a product of this environment that combines different cultures. He expresses such an attitude when he quotes a saying of F. Noli; "This strange country does not average any friends in the world. Here often the Bey may be a villager, anyone clothes of a beggar would find oneself an equal and magnificent knight as the other ones. Here is the boundary between the European and Asian way of life, between German and Latin social concepts, between Christian and Muslim ethics, here you can see the palette where all the colours and shadows are intertwined, all the reflexes of the past and the present(Vlora. Kujtime 1885 f.156)."<sup>3</sup>

Here E.B.Vlora supports the opinion of Noli, where the Albanian is considered a product of the political and cultural environment, but at the same time, they identify the ethics that have created his psycho-social and human personality.

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<sup>1</sup>F. Noli, vepra V

<sup>2</sup>E.B.Vlora Kujtime Vellimi I Parë pg. 154-159

<sup>3</sup>Same source

## **The rejection of hatred of the Oriental culture and the worship of the West**

The well-known publicist for the time, BrankoMerxhani, brings Turkey to the renaissance point of view: "Turkey that until yesterday has been our enemy, our commander and our tyrant. In the heart of every Albanian patriot there are deep feelings of resentment and hate against the Turkish. "This empire has people our race under the yoke of slavery for centuries, it has stopped us from progressing and from breathing." ( Merxhani. Demokracia 16 shtator 1934.)<sup>1</sup> BrankoMerxhani is radical and idealistic in building the national identity.

According to him, Turkey is a symbol of evil and tyranny, an obstacle to social and national evolution. This publicist, in the light of Orientalist theories, reflects two completely opposite cultural worlds, the Oriental culture and the Occident( Merxhani. Iliria 24<sup>th</sup> June 1934)<sup>2</sup>. "Our task - the task and mission of neo-Albanian youth - is to understand and preach the radical differences that exist between life and Oriental thought and Western life and thought

According to Merxhan, we should feel disguised from everything oriental and adopt the western mentality and life as well.

Mehdi Frashëri, a political scientist and career politician, says that the Muhammadan religion was the reason that did not allow Albania to develop. "The religion that the Ottoman Turks brought with them and spread in Albania embraces a religion contrary to European customs. The most important reason for the lack of progress of the Albanians lies precisely at this point. ( Frasher. Year 2007. pg 404)."<sup>3</sup>.

Generally, Frasher brothers use the paradigm: "Muhammadan religion" not "Islamic religion" and this is more due to the fact that they belonged to the Bektashi sect and do not easily attack Islam as much as Muhammadan religion. When Islam crossed Europe, it would encounter Eastern and Western European Christianity, so Europe had no other unified custom than religious conduct, Christianity. However, Mehdi Frashër was a career politician and gave the political connotation under the logo: "To turn Albania away from the West." Even our national hero Skanderbeg is described by Mehdi as a symbol of the West, as a defender of Christianity and Western civilization. "These fierce wars of Skanderbeg against the Ottomans were fought in the name of Christianity, it was a great and heroic defence of European civilization, against Asian barbarism, so the figure of Skanderbeg has a global face, because it lasted 25 years. ( Frasher. Year 2007.pg.392)."<sup>4</sup>

Mehdi also affirms the fact that the Islamic religion has spread through the sword, "where there is a sword there is a religion", ( Frasher. year 2007.pg.404)<sup>5</sup> which means that Islam has spread violently among Albanians. He also presents Skanderbeg as our national hero. "In the days of Skanderbeg, the Turkish-Ottoman occupation was strictly opposed by the

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<sup>1</sup>B. Merxhani Iliria 24<sup>th</sup> June 1934

<sup>2</sup>Mehdi Frashëri , political essay, Albanian problems. Quoted from 'anthology of Albanian political thought' pg. 404

<sup>3</sup>Same source pg. 404

<sup>4</sup>Same source pg. 404

<sup>5</sup>Same source pg. 404

Albanians, to the extent that these wars truly form the epic of the nation( Frasherri year 2007. Pg.408).”<sup>1</sup>

Here the author expresses himself based on the renaissance discourse, when it is known that the notion of nation began only after the collapse of political and religious dynasties, as well as the post-industrial era in Europe, after the French and American Revolutions. In Skanderbeg's time, the nation and the national identity were not turned into secular ideologies as it was known that Europe and Europeans at that time were under the pressure of religions. Mehdi further advances the Renaissance, when it deals directly with Islam as a religion and the problems that Islam caused in relation to the Albanian identity and in general.

In the same essay he writes: “Now the question is: Has Islam hindered the Albanian people on the path of progress or not? The answer is yes. Then comes the second question: does Islam, at its essence, move backward or not? This issue raises a problem not only from the Albanian point of view, but also more from the general point of view. " Already the period of the 30s "reveals" another reason for the regress of Albanians: Islam as a doctrine.

It does not deal with the spirituality of Islamic doctrine, but with Islam that inspired or hindered the Albanians towards progress. He reserves the right to attack the Islamic doctrine and attacks the Turkish Islam, considering it a distorted Islam at the hands of barbarians. According to Mehdi, the Arab Islam of the Prophet Muhammad was fundamentally different, distorted by fanatical clerics: During the time of Pejgameri the Arab women were free, they used to live with their men, they would go to the market, and they would also bring water and bread to the army during the war (Frasherri 2007. pg. 434).”<sup>2</sup>

Even Mehdi attacks the Turks because of the kind of Islam used for the purpose of occupation, considering it as a cause of the separation of Albanians from European civilization. "The Albanians accepted Islam, imitating the Ottoman Turks, enslaved their wives and thus a deep and wide gap was created between Albanians and European civilization( Frasherri . 2007 pg.435).”<sup>3</sup>

Mehdi also affirms the fact that the Islamic religion has spread through the sword, "where there is a sword there is a religion", which means that Islam has spread violently among Albanians. He also presents Skanderbeg as our national hero. "In the days of Skanderbeg, the Turkish-Ottoman occupation was strictly opposed by the Albanians, to the extent that these wars became the main drive of the nation.

The reason that Mehdi Frasherri opposes Turkish Islam is that he belonged to a Bektashi sect which was more liberal and the Albanians of this sect nurtured the aspirations of European Albania.

Anton Harapi, one of the most prominent philosophers of the time, accuses the long Turkish rule of weakening the social feeling of the Albanians; "The weakness of the feelings for society does not stem from the Albanian spirit, but rather the fruit and the result of the close circumstances and the ghastly circumstances that the poor Albanian suffered, and yet we

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<sup>1</sup>Same source pg.435

<sup>2</sup>A.Harapi. "Prej nganisemi e nga do kapemi" pg.463

<sup>3</sup>Same source pg.465

know well that until the Albanians are educated about the concept of the social life in the real sense we are in danger, as a nation and state( Harapi. 1994. F.463)."<sup>1</sup>.

He expressed the following in his essay: "The nationality is a fact in human life, it is established farther in the nature of the human being, it lives with man and is carried by us in the bones, until we get to the grave(Harapi. 1994. Pg. 465)." <sup>2</sup>

Harapi on the one hand says that our social and national feelings are weakened due to the environment, so the historical context is affective, while on the other hand, he defines nationality as a feeling that originates from human nature itself, is born with it and accompanies man throughout life, until he passes away. Harapi comes out with a contradictory stance regarding the notion of national feeling. The nation is not born with man, man is born without national, ethnic, or religious affiliation, but human nature with the inner tendency, to manifest its identity in the most potent way, refers to ideologies.

The nineteenth century required a new test for Albanians: To stay in the east or to escape from the east to the west? This provoked a debate about time and involved political and intellectual elite. The magazines and newspapers of that period were more involved in the debate between the war of the Young and the Old, and it was referred to more as a war between the generations, which is really an eternal war and related to human nature as it is in the evolutionary premises themselves and innovators of human nature. The analyst and researcher of this period, Krist Maloki, took off the cloak of age and the biological essence of this conflict and he presents the given conflict based on the cultural and civil compatibility. His essay: "Oriental or Occidental" shifted the debate to other levels.

His discourse is typically oriental: "The war between the Elderly and the Youth has ended forever, but the toughest war that awaits the Albanian youth is the ante portas war! This war is distinguished by its direction against an invisible enemy, but even more important in its resistance and for the salvation of the nation. The next war is the war of the Albanian Youth against the enemy in his heart, it is the war of the creative mentality against a destructive mentality, it is the war of the worldview of light against a worldview of darkness, it is the war of Albanian Occidentalism against the Albanian Orientalism.

Two hostile thrones break the heart of our nation today. It is good to tell the Albanian boys where their tents and trenches are found

## Conclusions

In 20s-30s when this discourse was articulated by the aforementioned authors, the political elite of the time built the European perspective of Albania. Turkey had been officially declared the cause of our national evil. Albania is recognized as a state independent of Western powers. The Congress of Lushnja becomes the western political edifice. Ahmet Zogu, the most important political figure of the time, Prime Minister, President, and then 10 years a king, tried to shape the political Albania of the time as Western. Even culturally, he tried to orient it in this direction. Although labelled by political opponents such as Anatolian, Oriental, Ottoman, Turkish, etc., the state, from the point of view of constitutionality, built it in Western style, regardless of the way of governing. Ahmet Zogu came from a tribal door of feudal lords of the

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<sup>1</sup>Oriental or Occidental? Krist Maloki

<sup>2</sup> Same source pg.465

Mat region, he knew very well the oriental foundation of the people and ruled Albania in an oriental way, but formally he tried to sell the state and Albania only as Western. Under the reign of Ahmet Zogu, in idealistic intellectual circles, the tents against Orientalism began to be fortified. Philologists, mainly from the German and Austrian spheres, begin to elaborate on knowledge that proves our historical and ethno-linguistic connections with Western civilization.

Mostly Albanian students educated in Austria, but also in other Western Universities, proclaimed the nation secular ideology. The most active ones, KristMaloku, BrankoMerxhani, Anton Arapi, spat with disgust on everything oriental. Mit'hatFrashëri, Mehdi Frashëri, Faik Konica, are more restrained. Konica exalts the West in all his philosophical literary essays, but does not completely ignore the Eastern World. Likewise, Mehdi and Mit'hat attack the Muhammadan hadiths and sometimes the Islamic programmatic doctrine, but do not touch on the Islamic doctrine that preaches spirituality. The latter two in relation to the national do not throw away everything oriental. The only one who sees things more objectively is E.B.Vlora. We do not see anywhere the brilliance of the idealist in building the national team. He does not expel anything as bad and does not feel polluted by anything oriental, but on the contrary, in the personality of the Albanian he sees all cultures and eras intertwined equally. The Albanian, according to him, testifies internally to both the Orient and the Occident, strangely, he carries both at the same time. Despite the different ways of articulating national identity, the discourse of this period essentially expresses a common tendency, to give a new configuration of our national identity to the multitude of other national, cultural, or religious identities. What is important about my research is that in all cases, our ethnic identity is seen in relation to others, bound and influenced by others, and perhaps even influential on them.

External factors, especially geopolitical ones, are subject to pressure, influence and modification on our identity. Our national identity is constructed by the new relations that Albanians create with the new world of the West, which is essentially a social interaction. Europe had been a place of enlightenment and technological innovation for more than four centuries, but we as Albanians seek to identify through it only when the Turkish empire fell in the Balkans. Ahmet Zogu as the king and the most educated elite of his time, through this kind of articulation justified the political power and guaranteed the sovereignty of the state. This is one more reason to believe that national identity is constantly being formulated and reformulated to meet the interests of political actors, which then proves the hypothesis that identity is in constant transformation, not a model given once and for all. This identity becomes a product of circumstances and environment, is formulated and reformatted in relationships with others, and changes significantly through sociology. This leads us to believe that collective identity, in this national case, is less born than acquired from a reciprocal relationship. The Albanian elite, which produced the dominant discourse, articulated the whole discourse on identity in favour of Albania's political and cultural rapprochement with the West, as it realized that a reciprocal act was needed.

The leading elite of the time in the 20s and 30s essentially aimed to ensure the political survival of the group, (in this case the ethnic group) in the new geopolitical environment that was created. Already the discourse that dominated the public opinion would raise the demonizing image of the Other, the Turk, the Anatolian, the Oriental and would build the image of the West, where we as Albanians would get closer and closer to it thinking that we belonged

only to the West. In my view, constructing the historical identity of our ethnicity in this way has three main drawbacks,

First, the identity of our state is conceived within the nature of the international system. This identity is formatted in such a way as to justify the sovereignty of the newly created Albanian state. This identity is formed mainly on political and less cultural premises.

Second, this way of conceiving our identity presents identity in a fulfilled standard, without internal analysis of change.

Third, identity remains unique, ignoring all the historical controversies and processes that influence it.

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## **The Urban Dimension of the Albanian Cities of Transition Was Damaged as a Result of the 'Big Government' and Not Its Absence: An Assessment in Relation to the Construction Permit!**

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### **Abstract**

The main Albanian cities and inhabited centers have suffered great damage of urban and environmental dimension in the years of transition. These implications of rapid and intensive development have produced cities that offer a very low quality of urban life to their citizens. What requires immediate political and legal intervention is to create the preconditions for Albanian cities to change by improving their potential in relation to the quality of urban life they offer to their citizens. One of the basic aspects, where this political goal can be achieved, is the function of controlling the construction development in these cities, in other words the function of building permits. Formal construction, or construction that has been subject to political-administrative decision-making, has faced increased pressure from the government to obtain a building permit. The performance of the government, regarding the function of construction permitting, is presented as very bureaucratic and corrupt. The technical, administrative and legal rules through which the administration exercises in the construction permit process have been very difficult for private entrepreneurs to implement. This has produced, firstly, the phenomenon of informal construction, and secondly, the change in the focus of entrepreneurs in the formal construction sector. In great administrative difficulties and obstacles, private entrepreneurs have shifted their focus from the aim of offering high quality products and low price in the market, to the goal of obtaining a building permit while ignoring the quality of the buildings they have developed. In this sense, what is required is the facilitation of technical, administrative and legal procedures and rules for obtaining a construction permit, which would ensure the reduction of the informal sector and refocus of the formal sector on quality and competitive price in a free market. This is a basic precondition for the situation of cities not to deteriorate further, and that paves the way for the improvement of their situation in the future.

**Keyword:** big government, small government, classical liberalism, modern liberals, the left, the right, development control, construction permitting.

## Introduction

During the years of transition, the demographics of Albania have undergone strong internal migratory movements, in two main directions: from the countries of the northern and southern regions to the central region; and from rural areas to urban areas of the same country (INSTAT, 2004, 2014; King and Vullnetari, 2003; King, 2010; Vullnetari, 2007, 2010, 2012). This phenomenon has produced strong changes in the spatial structure of the country, especially in relation to the demographic distribution across the cities and inhabited centers of the country (Faja, 2008; Aliaj, 2008).

The cities and inhabited centers that have experienced a large and immediate increase in the resident population as a result of these movements, are mainly the major cities of the country, and especially the city of Tirana, Durres and their surroundings (INSTAT, 2004, 2014; King and Vullnetari, 2003; King, 2010; Vullnetari, 2007, 2010, 2012; Fuga, 2012). These cities have been multiplied, in these years of transition, in terms of indicators of total resident population, housing density and construction intensity (HIS Alumni et al., 1998; Faja, 2008; Aliaj, 2008). Rapid and intensive construction development, as a result of demographic changes, have produced urban and environmental damage in the main cities of the country (Fuga, 2012; Aliaj, 2008).

There have been two ways of accommodating this increased demand for new construction. First through the informal market, where 350-400 thousand families have addressed their needs by building their apartments and buildings without the permission of legal authorities (WB, 2012). The second way is through the formal market, where families or enterprises in the housing and building construction sector have addressed their request for construction development through the institutions charged by law for this governing function (Aliaj, 2008; Imami et al., 2008).

In this paper we will focus on the second type of development (formal construction) because it is in his interest to assess how transition governments have performed in this sector. In this sense, we will not address the informal market and the demand for new housing and buildings addressed through it. However, as we will see later, there is a link between the ease or difficulty of obtaining a formal building permit, and the size of the informal market.

First in this article we will make a brief theoretical presentation on the characteristics and distinguishing features between the 'big government' propagated by leftist approaches such as 'proper governance' and the 'small government' which according to classical liberals is more productive for a rapid and sustainable economic development. We will further address the connection between formal construction in transition Albania and two other aspects of sustainable development: environmental development and the quality of citizens' urban life: and overall economic development. As we will see, this rapid construction development has produced urban and environmental damage in Albanian cities and inhabited centers, while contributing significantly to the national economy.

Recognizing that the urban and environmental dimension is more important and in turn can produce even higher economic costs, we have attempted to understand what was the cause of the damage it produced, focusing on the ease or difficulty of equipping a building permits. As we will see in this article, the "boom" of new construction and their negative impact on cities and residential areas has not come as a result of the ease of obtaining a building permit from

the authorities charged by law for this governing function. So we cannot blame the government for acting like a Smithian 'small government' inspired by the 'laissez faire' concept. On the contrary, long bureaucratic procedures, costly in time and money 'will be the real reasons that produced this unacceptable urban reality.

### **The 'big government' vs. the 'small government', presented in theoretical context!**

There are two tools used by 'big governments' to reduce individual freedoms. They must be kept in check, because their enlargement makes the government bigger and its damage to society even bigger. The first, to use a Spencer concept, is "hyper-legislation" (Spencer, 2005, pp. 104-157). Speaking of the futility of redundant regulations and laws, Spencer would argue that "Although it no longer occurs to us to impose coercion on people for their own spiritual good [matters of religion], we continue to think that it's our duty to impose it on them for their material good: we do not see that one is as useless and as impermissible as the other. Countless failures have not yet been enough to draw this lesson" (Spencer, 2005, p. 106).

So, although every day companies face countless failures, the same companies believe that an act of Parliament and an institution with a certain staff of officials, set up specially or enlarging an existing institution, is enough to implement or tighten the society to implement this law, and whatever set goal it has to achieve (Spencer, 2005). According to Spencer, it makes no logical sense that on the one hand we acknowledge that the state is performing poorly, the need for legislative changes proves that the government has failed, and on the other hand we give it more power, through new laws and increased administration.

In contrast, for the classics of liberalism, according to Friedman's argument, there are two pillars of the functioning of a free society, which must be understood as separate, "[1] the daily activities of the people and [2] the usual general structure within which they develop" (Friedman, 2005, p. 28). In Friedman's argument, people's daily activities are like the actions of participants in a game or competition, and like any good game or fair competition, it requires its members to know and accept the rules of the game in advance, and it also requires even a referee to interpret and enforce the rules of the game. Referring to Friedman in the same way, a good society requires its members to know in advance and agree to all the general conditions under which the government will govern the actions and relations between them (Friedman, 2005). Whereas, the structure in which daily human activities and activities take place, is the legislation.

And in this sense, it is basic, for a free society, for individuals to know in advance and agree with the laws through which, the government as an arbitrator will arbitrate their daily activity (Friedman, 2005, p. 28). But for Friedman, this is not enough, the laws should not change, or "Most of us [libertarians] consider only making minimal modifications to them, although the cumulative effect of a series of minimal modifications can lead to a dramatic change in the character of play in society" (Friedman, 2005, p. 28). So even Friedman, although acknowledging that the government, in the role of an arbiter in the game of individuals, can make changes to legislation, they should be small and not repetitive because individuals and society are harmed.

Beyond "hyper-legislation", another instrument of 'big government' is 'hyper-administration', which is also harmful and costly to society and taxpayers (Spencer, 2005; Friedman, 2005). Spencer considers hyper-administration as an integral part of his concept of "hyper-

legislation", and it makes sense, because the expansion of the scope of governance starts with the drafting of a new law, but that the "set goal to be achieved" there must also be an institution or agency to enforce that law (Spencer, 2005, p. 106).

For Spencer, the transfer of political power from the sovereign to the representative deputies, from the deputies to the executive, from the executive to the responsible ministry, from the responsible ministry to the institutions, agencies and inspectorates, from these to the employee in charge of this issue, is a very long operation, which by operating, through many successive levers and gears, consumes through friction and inertia a part of the driving force (Spencer, 2005). This process due to its complexity is so bad in itself, that it is a good system due to its simplicity, according to which society directly employs individuals, private companies or spontaneously created institutions (Spencer, 2005, p. 121).

In this argument, Spencer would list some shortcomings of the state administration, which prevent it from performing the same functions that the private sector would perform faster. According to Spencer "Bureaucracy is slow" and this harms the individual and the enterprise (Spencer, 2005, p. 121). When a private agency drags things, people solve the problem by no longer using that agency and contracting another. As for procrastination by government departments, the solution is not simple because you cannot leave the government (Spencer, 2005). Also, "Bureaucracy is mindless" (Spencer, 2005, p. 122). According to Spencer, in the natural way of ordering things, the individual tends to move towards the function that best suits him, those who succeed in the work given to him are held accountable in relation to the skills they show or carry, and the man who fails is fired and forced to move towards something simpler, but that suits his abilities.

But, it happens completely differently in state bodies because there the selection does not go according to meritocracy, but according to the affiliation of background, age, intrigue, behind the scenes and servility, as Spencer would say "A family idiot, I will always find a church post, if the family has strong ties" (Spencer, 2005, p. 122). If we refer to Spencer again, "Another characteristic of bureaucracy is that it consists of excessive spending" (Spencer, 2005, p. 122), in relation to the high salaries of incompetent officials, or to overcrowded structures occupied them. As he would underline "These public agencies are not subject to any influence like the one that forces the private enterprise to be economical, businesses and commercial entities are successful by serving society at low cost" (Spencer, 2005, p. 123).

In the same context, Spencer would add, "Another shortcoming of the bureaucracy is its inability to adapt. Unlike the private enterprise, which, in order to respond to urgent needs, rapidly changes its activities: unlike the shopkeeper, who for a request that comes out suddenly, immediately finds a way to fulfill it" (Spencer, 2005, pp. 123-124). But also the state administration, in general, is presented with a high level of corruption, because they are not exposed to competition through meritocracy to keep the job and at the same time, there can be no creative spirit, and this is another damage that the great state brings with hyper-administration. While private groups have initiative and bring innovation in the sectors they develop, state institutions are static and moreover become an obstacle to development (Spencer, 2005, pp. 125-126).

## **Formal construction as a cause of the condition of inhabited centers and its impact on the national economy**

The argument in defense of the thesis that it was the leftist "big state", the hyper-legislation and hyper-administration that shape it together with the corrupt bureaucracy that characterizes it, (Spencer, 2005; Friendman, 2005), that brought this unacceptable reality of other cities and territories of the country, in this article is related to the process of obtaining a construction permit in the main municipalities of the country. It must first be acknowledged that the main cities of the country have experienced a population densification and an intensification of buildings, especially in their central areas (IHS Alumni et al., 1998; Imami et al., 2008; Fuga, 2004, 2012; WB, 2007, 2018).

Fuga, while scanning the way cities develop, would point out that "in our urban micro-environments [structural units of the city], especially in the main areas [large cities] of the country, we have a narrower and more populated area denser than before" (Fuga, 2012, p. 13).

All of the demographic shifts presented earlier met their housing needs, either through the informal market or through the formal housing construction market (IHS Alumni et al., 1998; Imami et al., 2008; WB, 2007). In this article we are interested in building permits and in this sense we will focus on buildings created by the formal market. Because, it is generally the formal housing construction market that is related to the construction permit, and the buildings offered by this market are also the problem we are talking about.

The intensification of buildings in the main Albanian cities, a phenomenon that is inevitably associated with population densification, has damaged the structural units of the city (IHS Alumni et al., 1998; Aliaj, 2008). In the case when these construction developments have come through the formal market, ie as a result of construction permits by public authorities, these urban damages blame the governing performance (Imami et al., 2008; Fuga, 2004, 2012).

The damages of construction dynamics, in the urban dimension of cities and the quality of urban life of citizens, are numerous and extend from the deformed spatial structure of the country to the damage to the infrastructural structure (engineering and social) of inhabited centers (WB, 2007; Aliaj, 2008). The impacts of this demographic densification and construction intensification are also felt in the environmental aspects of the urban quality of life in major cities (Fuga, 2004, 2012; Imami et al., 2008), and issues related to the social structure and level of democracy in the country. (Thomson, 2007; Imami et al., 2008).

The issue we need to analyze here is: it was the 'small government' inspired by classical liberalization that granted building permits easily and without strict and austerity rules; or the "big state" bureaucratic, slow and corrupt (Spencer, 2005; Friedman, 2005), which produced this damaging urban and territorial reality? As we will present below, the process of obtaining a building permit for individuals or entrepreneurs has been very difficult and very costly, and has gone through very long and costly processes in the first place '.

First, I would like to point out that there is a strong link between building permits and the economy in general and the ease of doing business in particular, which is the primary catalyst for economic growth rates (WB, 2015, 2018, 2019). Building permits enable construction, which is a very important business worldwide, especially in developing countries like Albania, where according to INSTAT the construction industry occupies 17% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (INSTAT 2019).

This contribution of the construction industry started in the first years of the transition, where in the first five years alone it almost doubled, as IHS Alumni, et al. would point out, "construction would rise from 6,6% to 11% of GDP in 1996" (IHS Alumni, et al., 1998, p. 55). Even in developed western countries, construction is a strong contributor to GDP, in the EU it gives 10%, and it is also a strong employment accelerator, where in the EU in 2018 it manages to employ about 5 million people (Schmid, 2018).

Fuga, while talking about the construction sector would underline that "in these past years, a series of conjunctural circumstances make the residential construction sector one of the most developed sectors of the Albanian economy, and perhaps it still continues to remain this way. This sector, for better or worse, has provided a very significant part of the Gross Domestic Product of the country, guaranteeing a satisfactory economic growth in its quantitative indicators" (Fuga, 2012, p. 195).

In fact, this contribution of the construction industry would be noticeable in the first years of the transition, which IHS Alumni et al. would present in 1998 "Construction from 6.6% of GDP in 1991, has increased to 11.6% of GDP in 1996" (IHS Alumni et al., 1998, p. 55). This growing expansion of this industry would continue in the coming years and as the World Bank would underline in 2007 "Services and construction are the two largest private employment sectors" (WB, 2007, p. 15).

In 2018, the three largest sectors of the Albanian economy are agriculture with 20% of GDP, construction with 14% and trade with 13.5% (Reiter, Schwarzhappel and Stehrer, 2020, p. 12). These latest statistics for the Albanian economy showed that the construction sector in Albania also surpassed the trade sector. Moreover, the construction industry is a locomotive for many other economic sectors, such as other businesses that supply it with raw materials, technology and machinery, but also for the fact that it is the construction industry that produces buildings with economic functions and for other entrepreneurial activities.

Thus, the construction industry is an important contributor to the national economy (IHS Alumni, et al., 1998; Fuga, 2012), and as such it should be treated with care by state institutions; on the one hand, it is precisely this construction boom that has negatively impacted the condition of Albanian cities (Aliaj, 2008; Fuga, 2004, 2012). In this context, this does not mean that since there is such a contribution to the economy, we must accept "construction as an economic goal in itself", because the damage it produces in the urban and territorial dimension of the country, are often more costly than the benefits from it.

### **The difficulty of obtaining a building permit as an expression of the left 'big government' and its characteristics**

We have tried to clarify two issues so far: first, that it was construction (including formal construction) that contributed positively to the Albanian economy on the one hand, and very negatively to the condition of Albanian cities; and second, it was the governing performance, in the manner of exercising the construction permitting function, that bears responsibility for both of these formal construction contributions. What we are interested in further understanding is the question of how governance was introduced in the performance of this governing function. Did they perform, as right-wing 'small governments' inspired by the Smithian 'laissez faire' concept within a minimalist legislation and administration; or as left-

wing 'big governments' influenced by the hyper-legislation and hyper-administration that characterize this type of government (Smith, 2005; Spencer, 2005; Friedman, 2005)?

To answer this essential question in the most argumentative way possible, we will turn to the World Bank, which compiles and publishes the annual 'Doing Business' report. This report assesses 10 aspects of doing business in 189/190 countries of the world and is a very important document for the economies of developing countries, which need foreign investment, such as Albania (AIDA, 2019). International entrepreneurs and investors refer to that report before creating interest in investing their money and knowledge in a particular country. If we consult with it, Albania is always in the last places, and generally due to the difficulties and high costs that an individual or an entrepreneur needs to be provided by the authority with a construction permit (WB, 2015, 2018, 2019).

Regarding the indicator of construction permits, Albania in the 2015 assessment dropped 35 places from a year ago. In the evaluation of that year's report, Albania was ranked 97<sup>th</sup> from 62<sup>nd</sup> a year earlier (WB, 2015). This negative ranking continues in the following years, and in 2018 Albania was ranked 63<sup>rd</sup> out of 190 countries for doing business easily (WB, 2018). Compared to a year ago, the country improved by two positions, while remaining the penultimate in the region. The first in the region remains Northern Macedonia, which is ranked 10<sup>th</sup> in the world and has been a strong competitor in recent years for Albania, attracting not only foreign investors (WB, 2018) but also attracting Albanian private investors. The indicator where Albania performs worse is obtaining a construction permit, in which it ranks 151<sup>st</sup> (WB, 2018), with a decrease of 54 countries from 2016.

This report, in addition to helping countries understand what needs to change to improve the business climate in the country, indirectly gives us an idea of what the level of legislation and bureaucracy is. For 2020, Albania accompanied by Bosnia and Malta were ranked last in Europe for the business climate, deteriorating 9 out of 10 indicators measured by this report. Albania was ranked 82<sup>nd</sup> globally, down 19 places compared to 2019 (WB, 2019). In addition to these negative records, Albania is also ranked in the countries with the highest deterioration from a year ago, especially the indicator 'construction permits' has deteriorated further, dropping from 151<sup>st</sup> a year ago (WB, 2018) to the 166<sup>th</sup> country this year (WB, 2019).

The World Bank's annual 'Doing Business' reports, and their assessment of Albania in the 'building permits' indicator, prove that it is not the 'small government' inspired by the Smithian 'laissez faire' concept in the context of a minimalist legislation and administration. It was not the lack of rules or the ease of obtaining a building permit that accompanied a 'small government' that brought about the devastating construction boom we are talking about. In contrast, it was exhausting bureaucracy, high financial costs, and corrupt decision-making as characteristics of 'big government' and centralized socialism (Spencer, 2005; Friedman, 2005). As the specialized reports of the World Bank show us, the numerous regulatory barriers and high costs in time and money to obtain a construction permit have made it difficult for entrepreneurship in Albania in recent years. The World Bank's annual 'Doing Business' reports, and their assessment of Albania in the 'building permits' indicator, prove that it is not the 'small government' inspired by the Smithian 'laissez faire' concept in the context of a minimalist legislation and administration. It was not the lack of rules or the ease of obtaining a building permit that accompanied a 'small government' that brought about the devastating construction boom we are talking about. In contrast, it was exhausting

bureaucracy, high financial costs, and corrupt decision-making as characteristics of 'big government' and centralized socialism (Spencer, 2005; Friedman, 2005). As the specialized reports of the World Bank show us, the numerous regulatory barriers and high costs in time and money to obtain a construction permit have made it difficult for entrepreneurship in Albania in recent years.

The rules, technical, procedural and legal conditions that a development enterprise must face have remained in the conservative meanings of experts and public bureaucrats, who find it difficult to understand the new reality in the field of construction and urbanistic development (Aliaj, 2008). Administration and governance as a whole have not understood the new role they have to play in the reality created after the fall of the socialist system that relied on centralized planning (HIS Alumni et al., 1998). Derraj in 2008 would underline that "Regarding the construction or transformation of the territory [development enterprises], this process still continues to be based on the criteria and technical norms for the construction and transformation of territories defined in the urban literature of the '70s" (Imami et al., 2008, p. 55).

There were two causes that produced this difficulty in obtaining a building permit: the inability of officials to change their meanings and approaches and to adapt to new realities; and secondly, the preferential decision-making for construction permits, trafficking in influence, and even bribery (Aliaj, 2008; BB, 2007). In this context, the World Bank would underline "Corruption appears as a problem especially of large cities, and especially in the construction sector" (WB, 2007). Because the 'big governments' that the leftists consider to be the "right governments" have another characteristic; the larger they are, the greater the level of corruption in them (Spencer, 2005).

As will be stated Aliaj preferential decision-making of government officials during the transition period "if the architect / urbanist planner [architects of state administration], or decision-makers themselves want to favor a particular property, it is enough for them to determine that parcel as a construction area; maximize the utilization coefficient; to increase the number of floors "(Aliaj, 2008, p. 181), and further " Otherwise, to devalue a certain property / land it is enough to define it as a garden, school or something else with a public / social function "(Aliaj, 2008, p. 185).

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

Although the role of government in the construction permitting function is mandatory (HIS Alumni, et al., 1998; Aliaj, 2008; Faja, 2008; Imami et al., 2008), referring to the World Bank, Albanian governments have much to do about by facilitating the technical, procedural and legal rules through which an enterprise is provided with a construction permit (WB, 2015, 2018, 2019). It was the difficulty that made the left 'big government', through its bureaucratic and corrupt characteristics, the process of obtaining a building permit, which produced about 350-400 thousand informal buildings in these years of transition in Albania (BB, 2012). If the technical, procedural and legal rules were more 'liberal', individuals and enterprises would not turn to informal construction.

But, also, formal construction would not be under the pressure of bureaucracy and corruption. Found in this pressure created by the 'big government' and its many rules and high costs, formal construction was not in competition for the best quality and price in the market, but in

competition to obtain a permit. building. The difficulty of equipping one changed the target of entrepreneurs in the construction sector, and this produced major urban and environmental damage to Albanian cities during the transition.

A 'small government' driven by a liberalizing, modernizing and decentralizing approach would not have recognized so much technical incompetence and misuse of public money at this high cost in the territorial and urban dimension of the country. Construction permits must be recomposed in a simple administrative procedure, where the authority charged by law with this task, within a minimum time, responds to applicants whether their property development application is approved, conditionally approved or not approved at all. This is a very simple action if the civic demand was evaluated only in relation to the previously approved urban projects and territorial planning.

But for this to work, we would first need planning instruments, which we do not have even though we have funded them two or three times (HIS Alumni et al., 1998; Aliaj, 2008). Basically, the left 'big government' has no interest in making these plans, because then it would be much clearer to every citizen, owner, or entrepreneur what is being built and where it is being built. If this were to be clear to anyone, then the government official would not have what preference to offer, in exchange for the envelope with money. The same situation with building permits, if they are worth as much as a simple administrative procedure, as a liberal 'small government' would aim, at the same time and to the same extent the "power" of the official falls who has the "supernatural" power to give you a building permit.

Although we tried to argue that it was difficult to obtain a building permit as a presentation of 'great governance' and its characteristics, we think this is a topic that needs to be addressed in more depth. In this sense, we suggest scholars in the fields related to economic, legal, governance and public policy issues to address in the future this very important issue for the development of the country. We also recommend that public institutions charged by law with duties in this sector, make proposals and legal and sub-legal regulations to liberalize and facilitate the procedures for obtaining a building permit.

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# The Urban Dimension of the Albanian Transition Cities Was Damaged as a Result of the 'Big Government' and Not Its Absence: An Assessment in Relation to the Planning Instruments!

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## Abstract

Albanian inhabited cities and centres have undergone chaotic developments in the years of transition, and this has come as a result of development not based on previous territorial and urban planning. Thus, construction, urban and territorial development in the transition years has not been the result of the implementation of previously approved territorial and urban planning instruments. This has come as a result of the lack of territorial and urban plans (local or national), which would precede construction and urban development with the aim of making this development smart, sustainable and comprehensive. In this context, we have made an observation in attempt to find the reasons for the lack of territorial and urban planning instruments in relation to governance. Our concern is focused on the question: has the scope of governance been so narrow that it has left out the task of drafting and approving territorial planning instruments; or was their absence for other reasons? As will be presented in this paper, transitional governments have not lacked: neither sectoral legislation that obliges the implementation of planning instruments; nor public institutions charged by law specified by duties in this field; nor public budget funding and foreign donors for their design. In contrast, it has been the characteristics of the left 'big government' and the public irresponsibility that characterize what have hindered the drafting and adoption of territorial and urban planning instruments.

**Keywords:** big government, small government, classical liberalism, modern liberals, territorial and urban planning instruments.

## Introduction

One of the most basic concerns of the Albanian transition society is the way in which Albanian cities have changed as a result of fragmented and unplanned development. This is a concern that affects the quality of urban life of every Albanian citizen, but even after three decades it has not been addressed from a political and governmental standpoint. In this article we are interested to understand the political and governing reason of this very unpopular product of construction and urban development of Albanian cities and inhabited centres.

In this sense, we will start with a very brief presentation of the theoretical difference between the political left and right regarding the role and extent of governance. This will give us a general understanding of the concept of 'proper government measure' according to the two poles of the political spectrum. As we will see, for contemporary liberals the 'right measure of

government' is 'big government', while for classical liberals it is 'small government'. The difference between these two concepts lies and is expressed in three elements: the scope of legislation, public institutions and budgetary funding for performing a specific governing function.

Further, we will see how the chaotic and fragmented development of cities and other inhabited centres has come as a result of the lack of planning instruments or the widespread inadmissibility of their parties, in cases when they existed. In this context widely accepted by many authors, whom we will refer to throughout the article, we will try to assess the political and governing reasons that explain the lack of planning instruments or the widespread inadmissibility of interested parties. As we will see later, transitional governments have lacked neither sectoral legislation, nor public institutions with tasks in this sector, nor funding for the design of planning instruments.

The reason for the lack of planning instruments and the practical result of development in their absence, has not been the 'small government' of a classical liberal approach; but on the contrary, it has been the statist 'big government'. Hyper-legislation, hyper-administration and over-financing have accompanied numerous processes of drafting territorial planning instruments, but have failed to produce the appropriate and widely accepted instruments. It is these types of instruments that can ensure a smart, sustainable and inclusive development, which would provide cities and residential centres that offer a higher quality of urban life to citizens.

### **The difference between the political left and right in the role and size of government**

After three anti-authoritarian revolutions inspired by John Locke's Second Treaty of Government, which brought the Constitutional Monarchy to Britain, American Independence and the First French Republic, the liberalism he advocated is an apotheosis of individual freedom and unequivocal contestation of authoritarianism (Locke, 2005, p. 20). Since then, classical liberalism has contributed to a constant struggle for the inalienable rights of the individual and a political system based on: legitimacy, limitation, separation and accountability of power (Locke, 2005, pp. 77-218). Many political philosophies or their application to various governments in the history of the world, have modified its principles and gone further to the ideological axis "left-right". This has happened, starting with the liberalism of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Spencer, 2005; Friedman, 2005), or that of the late 20th and early 21st centuries with Habermas and Rols (Fuga, 2003). For this reason, in this article, we have accepted the principles of Classical Liberalism as a benchmark through which we will assess the ways in which transitional governments in Albania have addressed territorial and urban planning issues.

The essential difference between the left and the right lies in the fact that while the left is for a large government, the right is for a small government (Spencer, 2005; Friedman, 2005; Fuga, 2003; Biberaj, 2000; Gjura, 2015; Civici, 2013; Lami, 2013). This essence of the difference between them, formulates the divisions in all other secondary aspects. The concept of "big government" defended by the left as 'government of the right measure', needs and at the same time seeks for: a broad governance scope, which reduces the role of the individual in society; concentration of governing functions in the hands of the highest level of government; extensive network of state institutions that need hyper-legislation to exercise these governing functions; and consequently high state expenditures for the administrative maintenance of

these institutions, and the exercise of these functions (Friedman, 2005; Spencer, 2005; Civici, 2013).

Some of the general notions of the left for 'big government as government of the right measure' come to us from the late 19th and early 20th century liberal approaches, which called for the expansion of governing activities and centralization of governance functions and scope (Spencer, 2005; Friedman, 2005). As well as the Habermasian philosophy that introduced the concept of "civil rights" or "positive rights", which, being in addition to Locke's "natural rights", obviously force the government to enlarge in order to protect them, but also reducing the role of the individual at the same time. Likewise, and with the same requirements, comes the Rolls concept of "corrective law" which overlapped "liberal law" to achieve a "right to justice" (Fuga, 2003).

Whereas, the concept of "small government" that is defended by the right as 'government of the right measure', detached from Spencer's opinion, requires: "reduction of forced cooperation and expansion of voluntary cooperation... narrowing of state authority and expanding the space where every citizen can act uncontrollably... protecting individual freedoms and against coercion by the state" (Spencer, 2005, p. 19). For Locke "The power of society or of the legislature which it creates can never be presumed to extend beyond what is necessary for the common good" (Locke, 2005; p. 162). According to him, a state is obliged to govern according to stable and in force laws, proclaimed and recognized by the people and not through improvised decisions; to do justice with impartial and fair judges, who must resolve disputes through these laws; and use community force within the country only to enforce such laws (police) and abroad to protect the community from foreign attack and occupation (Locke, 2005).

If we were to refer to Friedman's approach, on the tasks of government we could quote "the basic roles of government in a free society [are]: to provide a means by which we can modify rules, to mediate differences between us in terms of ensuring the enforceability of the rules by those few who would not otherwise play the game "(Friedman, 2005, p. 29), and " its [government's] main function should be to protect our freedom, both from enemies abroad and from our fellow citizens: to maintain law and order, to guarantee the implementation of private contracts, to promote competitive markets "(Friedman, 2005, p. 2).

These definitions on the fundamental importance of individual freedom and the role of the state, also present the first task of a libertarian which is the preservation of freedom, which for Friedman "is a subtle and delicate tree" and to control the role and size of government, which according to him if not controlled can turn into a Frankenstein that destroys the freedom of the individual and the society in whose protection it was created (Friedman, 2005). Because, according to Friedman, "Government is necessary to protect our freedom, it is a means by which we can exercise our freedoms; however, because of the concentration of power in political hands, it is also a threat to freedom" (Friedman, 2005, p. 2).

While Spencer, referring to the political opinion of Jeremy Bentham, who was an English philosopher, jurist and social reformer who was considered the founder of modern utilitarianism, would underline the role of the state "Bentham tells us that the government fulfils its mission by creating rights to give individuals, the right to personal security; the right to protection of honour; the right to property" (Spencer, 2005, p. 80). So, if the government grows, in terms of increasing its role in the social sphere and the governing sphere of activity,

what happens in reality is that the government 'swallows' our freedoms. This phenomenon is also distinguished by Spencer when he stated that "Unlimited power over citizens, which, quite reasonably, was attributed to a ruling individual because it was believed that he represented God, is now attributed to a ruling group about which no one says that represents God" further presenting the harms of not rightfully limited power and the need to limit the role and measure of government (Spencer, 2005, p. 99).

The same view is held by John Stuart Mill, in his book "On Freedom", on the need to set boundaries for government, although it may be "elected by the people and accountable," as self-government would be conceived at the time, or "the power of the people over the people themselves." For Mill, governments must be kept in check because "Like all tyrannies, the tyranny of the majority was and still is considered scary, mainly because it operates through acts of public authority" (Mill, 2005, p. 9). In short, the size and role of government should be kept in constant control, because it not only tends to reduce citizens' freedoms, but also that for this purpose, it uses public instruments and authorities, which are financed by taxpayer money. As Mill would underline, "Power itself is illogical. The best government has no more right than the worst. Power is just as harmful or more harmful when exercised in accordance with public opinion than when exercised in opposition to it" (Mill, 2005, p. 23).

### **Territorial and urban development of the transition and lack of territorial planning instruments**

Today's Albanian cities and all territories adapted for development present a series of problems and urban imbalances which is evidently negatively affecting the quality of life of citizens (WB, 2007; Fuga, 2004, 2012; Aliaj 2008; Imami et al., 2008). There are two instruments that a government uses to exercise control over urban and territorial development, and they are: planning instruments, or different types of urban and territorial plans; and development control instruments, the most important of which is the construction permit (Faja and Alimehmeti, 1983; IHS Alumni et al., 1998; Imami et al., 2008; Faja, 2008; Aliaj, 2003, 2008). The whole process of urban and territorial development administration takes place on these two pillars, and these are the state controls, although with different names at different times, that have been established by the Albanian laws since that of 1978 (Official Gazette, no. 3, 1978) to that of 2014 (Official Gazette, no. 137, 2014). In this article we will observe the issue of urban condition of cities from the point of view of territorial and urban planning instruments.

The urbanization that included the country was the development unprecedented by the previous planning and this was one of the reasons that produced this massive damage to Albanian cities during the transition period (Misja and Misja, 2004; WB, 2007; Aliaj, 2008; Imami et al., 2008; IHS Alumni et al., 1998). In this context, IHS Alumni et al. would underline that "Insufficient planning and coordination, in the medium or long term, will result in higher costs of urban development" (IHS Alumni et al., 1998, p. 13). Governments, both central and local, failed to design planning instruments, according to their level of governance and in accordance with their governance functions (IHS Alumni, et al., 1998; Aliaj, 2008; Imami et al., 2008; WB, 2007). The World Bank in 2007 would point out that "The few master plans [planning instruments] that exist date back to the time of communism and do not meet the requirements of the time for land use and are ill-adapted to the market economy." (WB, 2007, p. 53).

Derraj would also talk about this situation in 2008 when he would underline that "in Albania at the moment it is difficult to talk about an effective administration of the territory [through previously approved plans] by the authorities as at the central level, as well as in the local one" (Imami et al., 2008, p. 52). According to Derraj, the processes of urban and territorial development "are based [only] on technical norms which record the distances between the facilities to be built, the allowed density, as well as what are the administrative steps that construction should follow" (Imami et al., 2008, p. 52). In short, Derraj emphasizes that development has been allowed based on certain conditions of urban design and in the absence of urban or territorial planning. While emphasizing that "the territorial development of a country should be based on plans, which are organically linked to each other" (Imami et al., 2008; p. 53).

The lack of urban and territorial plans would be presented by Fuga in 2012, when while talking about the great increase of the population in Tirana and its decline in the rest of the country, he emphasizes that the time has come "to make these policies [urban and demographic] with national and local plan" (Fuga, 2012, p. 154). Simply put, Albania of rapid economic, political, social, cultural, demographic development, and in this sense also construction, as a result of the separation from the nails of socialism of central planning, lacked throughout the years of transition the instruments of territorial planning, such as development policies, plans and regulations, which would orient this rapid development towards sustainability, but also would influence this rapid development to be both smart and comprehensive at the same time.

In support of this argument, suffice it to say that the last General Territorial Plan, then called the General Regulatory Plan of the Capital, was approved by the communist government (IHS Alumni, et al., 1998; Faja, 2008; Aliaj, 2008). It was drafted by the Institute of Urban Design in 1989 and approved on 1 February 1990 by the Government led by Prime Minister Adil Carcani (Kotmilo and Kotmilo, 2017; Aliaj, 2008). Even today, Tirana does not have a Territorial Plan to precede a comprehensive, smart and sustainable development, which will help us build another Tirana from what we have, as Aliaj would point out in 2008 "Tirana refers to to date an urban plan, which was not only drafted 20 years ago, but was conceived in the time of another system" (Aliaj, 2008, p. 106), but also IHS Alumni, et al., 1998, when they emphasized that "The existing Regulatory Plan [of Tirana], not being oriented by real objectives, could not master the development of this situation" (IHS Alumni, et al., 1998, p. 28).

Even Faja in 2008 would present that all Albanian cities were developing in the years of transition in the absence of planning, because their last plans were drafted in the years of communism (Faja, 2008). This situation of unplanned development previously planned, is identified for all major Albanian cities and is such, in the absence of planning instruments, for both levels of government (Imami et al., 2008; pp. 52-55). The central government has failed to develop territorial planning instruments in relation to the development sectors that belong to it as a field of activity, such as national infrastructure or the distribution of the population throughout the territory. In 2008, Derraj would underline that "In Albania we continue not to have a Spatial Plan at the national level" (Imami et al., 2008; p. 53).

Also, local governments have failed to draft and approve general, sectoral or cross-sectoral instruments of territorial development for the territories in their jurisdiction, or partial urban studies for their structural units, in accordance with the General Territorial Plans (Aliaj, 2008; Imami et al., 2008). In this context, Derraj would state that "Most Albanian cities

(municipalities) operate with Regulatory Plans approved before the '90s" (Imami et al., 2008, p. 53). Simply put in the form of a sentence, beyond the propaganda presentations that the parties have prepared on this topic, in transition Albania there was a lack of development planning (IHS Alumni, et al., 1998, pp. 28-29; Aliaj 2008, p. 106; BB, 2007, pp. 53-54).

### **Lack of planning instruments and legislation, institutions and public funding for this governing function**

While the lack of planning instruments, or urban and territorial plans, is evident, and that this has produced a lot of damage to the urban and territorial dimension of the country, the question is what were the causes of their lack. Were they missing as a result of the libertarian 'small government', and in this way should we develop a left 'big government', which will provide us with the missing plans? To understand this we will return to the classics of liberalism, and specifically Spencer, who when explaining his concept of "Hyper-legislation" as a phenomenon of the 'big government', introduces hyper-legislation and hyper-administration as its characteristics. (Spencer, 2005, pp. 104-158). Both of these are associated with high costs for financing the exercise of hyper-administration activities, in the implementation of the hyper-legislation for which they were created (Friedman, 2005; Spencer, 2005).

Observed in this context, in order to blame the libertarian 'small government' for the lack of urban and territorial plans, we need to find a lack of public funding, legislation and institutions for doing so. Contrary to this scenario but in line with reality, a lot of money of Albanian, European or American taxpayers has been spent: on maintaining state institutions and agencies with specific tasks and functions in territorial planning; in national and international tenders and competitions with the aim of drafting these plans. For the drafting and approval of planning instruments, as separate projects, there was no lack of funding, part of which was funding in the form of grants or loans of international institutions (IHS Alumni, et al., 1998; Aliaj, 2008).

IHS Alumni, et al., In 1998, while talking about the need to address the unplanned development situation would introduce that "In response to this planning situation, USAID has supported a Land Management Program focused on concrete issues, including existing staff and the community as baseline data", or further "The Austrian Government was also active in preparing a Plan for Tirana" (IHS Alumni, et al., 1998, p. 29). Aliaj would present this fact more clearly, when he underlined that "Since 1989, when the last regulatory plan was approved, various donors have funded at least 7-8 planning initiatives helping to draft regulatory, strategic and specific plans for the region and the city of Tirana" (Aliaj, 2008, pp. 106-107).

Although none of these planning documents have served in practice, in most cases they have not been approved by the political authority of Albanian governments, payments for foreign or Albanian consultancy have been made (Aliaj, 2008). As Aliaj would point out, while writing on the topic of public costs for territorial planning "Without mentioning the absurd fact that the Albanian government has paid these consultations from funding such as donations or loans (in this case they must be paid through taxes), strangely it does not de jure accept the final products of this assistance, even though it has reimbursed the service money for foreign consulting firms ?!" (Aliaj, 2008, p. 107).

Only for Tirana, three instruments of general territorial planning have been financed: The plan of the administration of Mayor Rama, which failed to be approved at the final level in the National Council of Territorial Regulation of the Republic of Albania; The plan of the administration of Mayor Basha, which was drafted by the local administration in a comprehensive process, and was approved by the decision of the National Council of the Territory on February 15, 2013; and the Plan of the administration of Mayor Veliaj, which was drafted under the direction of the Italian architect Boeri, was approved by the Municipal Council of Tirana on December 29, 2016, and further approved by the decision of the National Council of the Territory on April 20, 2017. (National Agency for Territorial Planning [AKPT], 1993-2017).

There are few cities for which the process of drafting the Local Territorial Plan has been funded only once. Most, are the cities for which the plan has been funded more than twice. For the Tirana-Durrës Space, two funds have been provided for Spatial and Regional Studies (AKPT, 1993-2017, 2015). Coastal tourist areas, from Velipoja in Shkodra to Ksamili in Saranda, have been budgeted at least once by the Master Plan, not to mention the Kavaja Rock, Golem, Karpen, which have been paid three times for tourist planning. The South Coast from the Bay of Vlora to the Cape of Stillo, have been funded three 'Master Plans for Tourism Development and Coastal Protection', part of which have been approved by the Territorial Adjustment Council of the Republic of Albania or the National Territorial Council (AKPT, 1993-2017; Imami et al, 2008).

In addition to funding initiatives to design territorial planning instruments, there has been no shortage of public institutions that have been established and funded to perform planning functions. Under the Ministry of the line of the Territorial and Urban Development sector, the 'Institute of Urban Studies and Designs' (ISPU) has functioned, which has been organized and has functioned with the task of drafting National and Local planning instruments. According to Article 8 of Law 7693/1993 'On Urban Planning' (Official Gazette, 1993), but further also in Article 13 of Law 8405/1998, 'On Urban Planning', it was determined that "ISPU is the state body at the national level that drafts urban studies and designs defined in the urban planning regulation "(Official Gazette, 1998), while in chapter V of the urban planning regulation approved by VKM no. 722, dated 19.11.1998, defines the role and tasks of the ISPU, among others "ISPU is a specialized state body at the national level in the field of spatial planning and urban planning studies at the national, regional and local level" (Official Gazette, 1998 ). Following the adoption of Law 10119/2009 'On Territorial Planning and Development', the National Agency for Territorial Planning [AKPT] was established (QBZ, 2010) which performs similar tasks.

Public institutions set up and funded to exercise duties and responsibilities in the field of urban and territorial planning have also existed at the local level of government. The three laws mentioned above oblige the Local Government Units to include in its administration units with duties and responsibilities in the urban planning sector (Official Gazette, 1993, 1998; QBZ, 2010). To take the example of the municipality of Tirana, it includes in the organizational structure of its administration a General Directorate of Territorial Planning and Development, which includes four directorates with 10 sectors, and dozens of officials who are paid from taxes to perform planning tasks and territory control (Municipality of Tirana [BT], 2020).

## Conclusions and recommendations

As we briefly presented earlier in this article, the lack of territorial planning instruments has not come as a lack of governance, or as we have called it because of the "small" libertarian government. The failure in planning did not come from the lack of a state, but from the leftist 'big government', which allows itself to maintain non-existent institutions and waste the public money of Albanians and the generosity of internationals, without giving any product (Aliaj, 2008). It was the leftist 'big government' with its own characteristics, such as extensive bureaucracy and preferential decision-making of political and administrative leaders (Spencer, 2005; Friedman, 2005), that prevented the drafting of territorial and urban planning instruments, which allowed unplanned development.

This is in line with what Aliaj would say when writing about the reasons for unplanned construction "due to the inability of post-communist governments to provide legitimate alternatives to citizens who already have a legitimate right to free movement" (Aliaj, 2008, p. 96). But, more here, the statist mentality of the public administration influences, as if Aliaj would say "To this is added the almost conservative mentality of professionals, who still today have not managed to overcome the limitations of the mentality and education of the period of centralized economy" (Aliaj, 2008, p. 96).

In contrast, a "small" and effective libertarian governance, at both levels of government, guided by modernizing, liberalizing and decentralizing approaches and principles is a need for the aim of designing, approving and implementing territorial planning instruments in comprehensive democratic processes of interested parties and affected by potential developments in the territory under study. Such governance would reduce the role of governments (central and local) in planning processes and involve citizens or interested parties in these processes. It also increases the level of democracy and empowerment of the citizen in political decision-making processes and contributes to a construction development widely accepted by all development-affected parties. Development based on planning instruments designed and adopted in a comprehensive and democratic process, provides three essential characteristics. It is sustainable, in economic, social and environmental terms; it is smart; and comprehensive with the aim of realizing the economic and political freedoms of the citizens.

Despite the modestly important conclusion we have reached in this article, it must be acknowledged that addressing this topic requires further observation. In this sense, we recommend researchers in the field of urban sociology or political science focused on public policy, to use this 'doorway' opened by this writing, to understand more on this very important issue of national and social development. We also recommend political parties, both in government and in opposition, to conduct political analysis to understand more, but also to include the modest conclusion of this article in their election or governing programs.

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## Dark Side of Collaborative Planning Process

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### Abstract

This article attempts to review and explicate beginning of the political concept, largely as articulated by exponents of the Rancière's political philosophy, in terms of the collaborative/communicative planning theory. The paper can be read in a sequence of a larger argument about neo-liberalization of planning theory and it makes more urgent the existing critiques of collaborative planning. I develop how the ideal of inclusiveness, produces an important exclusion problem that must be considered. So at the very core of the article is an attempt to recompose of the rigidly historical view about people in the planning process, to break out from idealism of conventional planning theory to make space for the insights of radical thinking about real people who have no part in anything. The article argues therefore that the idea of inclusiveness in collaborative/communicative planning always goes unrealized.

**Keywords:** Collaborative/Communicative planning, Beginning of Politics, People.

### Introduction

For political philosophy to exist, the order of political idealities must be linked to some construction of city 'parts'; to a count whose complexities may mask a fundamental miscount, a miscount that may well be the blaberon, the very wrong that is the stuff of politics. What the 'classics' teach us first and foremost is that politics is not a matter of ties between individuals or of relationships between individuals and the community. Politics arises from a count of community "parts," which is always a false count, a double count, or a miscount (Rancière, 1999, 6).

This article calls for a return to critical perspective in contemporary collaborative planning theory and analysis, but rather than traditional critique, it argues for a critique predicated on the '*beginning of politics concept*' that articulated by exponents of Rancière's political philosophy (Rancière, 1999). The passage to this concept emerges from the twilight of classical political philosophy where a relationship between individuals and the community 'is not a matter of politics'. The problematic aspect of that politics is determined in the first place by one fundamental fact: community 'parts' and its count. Aristotle sees three: the wealth of the smallest number (*oligo'i*), the virtue or excellence (*arête*) from which the best (*aristoi*) derive their name, and the freedom (*eleutheria*) that belongs to the people (*demos*) (Rancière, 1999, 6). The variant theoretical landscape of Rancière focuses primarily on this count and conceives the constitution of the community parts entity as a false count or miscount.

*Beginning of politics* as a new concept of political philosophy refers to those who do not participate in the decisions that order their political lives, the demos, as 'the part that has no part in anything'. (Rancière, 1999). The goal of traditional political thought is to justify and ensure that *has no part continues to have no part* and this is when the politics, as an alternative way of thinking, begins. In fact, *beginning of politics* happens when the curtain goes up on a scene in which political philosophy becomes its own critique and counts part of those without part. Collaborative planning practice as a form of urban policy formulation and analysis is largely linked to political philosophy in the shaping of its ideals and values. Accordingly, this article argues that collaborative planning process is inherently political, because policies determine who will participate in the planning process.

This article is aimed to explore familiar interpretation of planning theories to allow more radical thoughts. Up until the early 1980s, the typology of the major planning theories showed influences of the theory set forth by Faludi (1973) which emphasized the distinction between substantive and procedural theory of planning (Allmendinger, 2000, 2002). According to this typology, planners and policy-makers should be involved with procedures and tools of planning. At that point in history, planning theory was dominated by systems that upheld rational approaches which gave planning processes priority over the possible results (e.g. Underwood, 1980; Friedmann 1987; Forester, 1989). Some like Thomas (1982), Reade (1987), and Paris (1982) were among the critics of this approach who saw it as rooted in an apolitical and technical foundation. Nonetheless, the typological substance-procedure distinction remained in vogue and continued to inform planning theories. Beginning with late 1970s, some studies (see Faludi, 1987; Feldman, 1997; Fainstein, 2000; Allmendinger, 2000, 2002) introduced different planning theories which address different elements of planning in descriptive and normative ways. Collaborative planning – dubbed by some as 'communicative planning' – emerged as a sequel to procedural planning theory by special highlight on public welfare goals (Healey, 1997, 2003; Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998; Hillier, 2002). This new paradigm helped wrest the newer rediscovered versions of planning theory from their origins in positivism and substance-procedure distinction irreversibly. At the same time, collaborative planning theory, itself, has been refuted as a tool for propagating neoliberal ideology (Purcell, 2006, 2009; Gunder, 2010) since it ignored power relations and structures within societies. The critics hold that such planning would turn individuals into partners for the private sector in reproducing capital while the real members of the society<sup>1</sup> are denied any share and abandoned. *Beginning of politics* concept can be employed to criticize (assess) collaborative planning through a new realization of *realpolitik* (Rancière, 1999, 2004a; 2004b) and new approach about people in planning process; an approach molded in a way to restore individuals and politics in their true senses and expose the faults in collaborative/communicative planning.

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<sup>1</sup>. real people mean demos, "the part that has no part in anything" (Rancière, 1999:8). People, not real people, return to their place in society. Rather than the real people(demos) it is the elites, those who represent the people. If planning policy such as collaborative planning is to be democratic and not dominated by the point of view of one group (elites), it must be a policy that takes account of and provides voice for the different groups that dwell together in the city without exclude real people from participating in determining their actions or the conditions of their actions (Young, 1990).

A direct critique of collaborative planning- without stumbling into a simplistic anti-planning approach<sup>1</sup>- is a necessary step forward in understanding of realpolitik and real participation<sup>2</sup> in planning process. Our intention here is not to reduce collaborative planning's status as a valid and valued area of academic study; it is rather to explore and reassertion of people in collaborative theory's dominant position through Rancière political philosophy (1999; 2001) with special highlight on *beginning of politics* concept. For at least the last three decades, communicative/collaborative planning has been seen as 'an important direction for planning theory with significant potential for practice that will continue to dominate academic debate' (see, for example, Alexander, 1997; Innes, 1995; Allmendinger and Tewdwr-Jones, 2000). The argument of this article is specific to planning theory and practice. It contends that the ongoing neo-liberalization of urban political economies (Purcell, 2009) makes the existing critiques of collaborative planning more urgent.

### **Beginning of Politics Concept**

In Disagreement, politics is examined from the perspective of what you call the 'distribution of the sensible'. I call the distribution of the sensible the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it (Rancière, 2004a, 5).

This quote can be set as the departure point in outlining the *beginning of politics Concept* and its subsequent epistemology. Jacques Rancière began his career as an Althusserian and structuralist Marxist only to style himself as distinct later on (Resch, 1992; Stolze, 1998; Morfino, 2005). Using the very negative brunt of Althusser's thought, Rancière pursued a somewhat relentless and aggressive impulse to wrest himself away from Althusserian tradition: especially, Althusser's theoretical elitism (Benton, 1984; Badiou, 2005; Balibar, 2009) and its emphasis that the world of scientific discovery is eternally separated from that of ideological (mis)understanding which envelops the masses. In countering this claim, which grants theoreticians a distinct position and allows them to speak for masses and understand truths on their behalf, Rancière tries to clarify that subjectivization aspect which restores the speech rights back to *the excluded* (the inferior classes), the rights to transform the cosmological perception of social arena. (Žižek, 1999). Early structural Marxism headed by Althusser (1971) stresses the ideological strain of the subject and assumes it as a concept; meaning that subject indicates a sort of non-entity or negation, that no subject exists, and that only a concept of scientific 'process' can actually exist.

In fact, Althusserian theory intends to sever politics from both science and ideology: the truth is that ideology is not a political concept but rather a state-oriented notion (Butler, 1997; Badiou, 2005). Subject, in an Althusserian definition, is determined by the states. Accordingly, no political subject can be realized since revolutionary politics does not fit into a given state

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1. For example, experimental urbanism approach is a recent attempt have been made to articulate a broad shift towards 'experimentation' in urban governance. (Cowley and Caprotti, 2018)

2. Bargaining power of people within the planning process that might ultimately lead to transformation of planning ends. In this sense, the value of their participation does not lie in the fact that they are participating. Real participation has a special highlight on the role participation plays. That role will begin to move us from passive to active equality, and will thus form the bridge to the politics I want to defend here, a politics that is counts part of those without part (May, 2008).

(Rancière, 2011). Therefore, politics is distinct from ideology. On the other hand, science is nothing but the conceptual structuration of its objects, a relationship impossible in politics as it must be constantly purged from objects and objectivism. Thus, politics is different from science. Given this reasoning, politics does not have a clear position in structural Marxism which refutes subject as being ideological or conceptual. Rancière does his best to discover the subjectivization of masses within politics so that he can restore the truth about populace (the excluded) or the politicized subject impeached by Althusser. This is the very genesis of beginnings of the concept of politics (Dean, 2008; Žižek, 2006).

How and when did *Realpolitik*, or politics in its true sense, come into being? This is the ultimate question which Rancière (1999, 9-10) is trying to answer as well as its origins. When *demos* emerged as an active body in ancient Greek *polis*, Rancière believes, it enjoyed no clear position or stable place (an inferior class, at best) in social fabric. Thus, it needed to enter the public realm and express itself as loud as nobles and ruling classes; in other words, it needed recognition as a side in political struggles and power relations.

In explaining the 'beginnings of politics' concept, we should note Rancière's definition of political community where we can join a discussion on virtue of the politics. Here, virtue is based the concept of advantageous/disadvantageous actions and justice is nothing but appropriate distribution of shares between sides of this pair in various social strata. In other words, every individual must apply the logos, the standard for justice and for a sense of right and wrong, to those schemes of things or expedencies that render the individual and the particular an integrated part of the state. Put differently, it is the just state that set shares of the advantage or disadvantage for every section of a given community.

In Rancière's view, this definition of justice does not clarify the political order (Hewlett, 2007). He contends that politics began to emerge only when we do away with measuring gains and losses and turn to identifying the best ways to distribute common things, balancing individuals' shares in public arena, and deciding their entitlements. Under this new approach, the political arrangements are not subject to terms between providers and consumers of goods and services and the ruling body is on a par with the community by virtue of recognizing and legitimizing the individual members within the political arena while politics concerns the relations formed between the members on one hand and the community on the other hand (Rancière, 1999).

### **Notion of Fundamental Miscount in 'Beginnings of Politics'**

Another deciding factor in beginnings of politics idea is known as 'fundamental miscount' (Rancière, 1999, 6) which is used to refer to the rights of members in communities and their entitlement to gain and loss according to their established standing and/or professions. To understand this notion better it is convenient to consider the three political regimes: oligarchy of the rich, aristocracy of the nobles, and democracy of the masses (This can remind of the Hobbes' argument for a powerful absolute monarch and how he sliced the three, in his view, failed systems up to that point in time 16-17 century). Wealth and affluence, bloodline and nobility, and freedom are three criteria that determine the position or place of individuals within these regimes, respectively. Wealth creates certain social standing based on numerical economic relations while aristocracy looks up to virtue of excellence as its source of identity. But the broaching the question of here is that what does freedom promise? This is the point where the notion of miscount appears (May, 2008). On the one hand, either naming

conventions or laws are established to set individuals' status or society is categorized into many classes (various occupations). On the other hand, freedom cannot be brought under labels or classified according to certain professions. In fact, if it can be subjected to any analysis or calculations, then it is an instance of *miscount*. Freedom, in truth, is a hollow phenomenon that checks and constrains trade's equality measures and debtor-creditor regulations and, consequently, divides the oligarchic system, preventing it from ruling masses by diminishing of interests and debts. In sense of what is proper to demos, freedom refutes identification with obligatory epithets, allowing the masses to get rid of certain qualifications –wealth or virtue– and to stand as an un-classifiable entity. Politics comes into being when there exist some unprivileged groups or poor classes whose introduction as subjects throws the ruling institutions into discontinuity.

The clash between the poor and the rich does not establish politics; rather, the very struggle per se creates and constitutes politics and disrupts the rule of the privileged and grants the poor an identity as subjects. Put more accurately 'politics exists as far as the natural order of governance is being disrupted by the institutions associated with those devoid of shares.' Thus, democracy can be described as the process whereby the unprivileged classes (nobody) turn into the society at large (everybody) and the disruption of the social arrangements based on authoritarian system (Rancière, 1999, 11-13).

To understand the notion of *miscount*, it is necessary to dig deeper into the *axia* or the title of social classes. In Rancière's eyes, the founders of political philosophy (Plato and Aristotle) defined justice in line with each social class. In *Nicomachean Ethics* (NE, 1131a, 1131b), Aristotle gives a definition of justice: justice is that situation where one receives no more than their share from useful assets or less than their share from harmful assets. This justice has to do with distributing proportionate shares, mean shares for each and every one. Obviously, this definition gives no indication of political order. Politics begins precisely when we stop comparing gains and losses and turn instead to distributing shared affairs, balancing shares, and determining the rights of individuals; put differently, the latter means determining the *axia* or the titles under which individuals can claim their rights in a given community (McDowell, 2009; Pakaluk and Giles, 2010). In of justice, as we mentioned above, the political arrangements are more than mere arbitrations between providers and consumers of goods and services. In fact, the equality created and maintained in such political arrangements differ from that governing the exchange of goods and services. In case of defining justice based on advantages and disadvantages, the logic in determining equality is in fact the logic of arithmetic and geometry. Arithmetic equality governs the trade negotiations and legal instructions while geometric similarity is responsible for proportions and correspondence of shares of social classes (Rancière, 1999). Thus, *axia* or titles of social classes (oligoi/aristoi /demos) follow norms that adjust social shares according to *axia*: in accord with the value of the virtue each *axia* has for the community.

This is the process whereby the concepts of arithmetic and geometric equality are introduced into definitions of virtue of social justice that leads to enumeration of various classes that, in Rancière's view, conceals 'fundamental *miscount*,' which itself establishes politics. In the second scenario where equality stands for something other than that governing exchange of goods and repaying misdeeds, *axia* is used to mean the right to be a member of a community rather than to be enumerated and to receive a share accordingly (Segvic, 2009). Anyhow, such an enumeration would give rise to politics as it invariably includes fundamental *miscount*.

Aristotle presents three axiai but he introduces problems: wealth (of oligarchs) is based on arithmetic relations and equations yet in what has freedom to offer for a community? What particular characteristic does render freedom exclusive to masses? How can it be determined by an enumerating system? This is where fundamental miscount happens. In fact, it is not possible to determine the character of freedom or to enumerate it as it emerges as a hollow entity in order to constrain and check the exchange calculations and effects of debtor-creditor regulations.

Put briefly, freedom is born to disrupt oligarchy by preventing it from exerting power through granting and withholding gains and losses. In this way, masses are undivided with no wealth or virtue and, consequently, are not oppressed incessantly by those who may happen to enjoy these privileges and who naturally rely upon this in eliminating those 'without any shares'. This is exactly what 19<sup>th</sup> century liberals expressed: they believed in inferior-superior duality or elites and masses. A modern tempered version of this belief is that only social classes exist (miscount): majority and minority, professional-social categories and interest groups (Laclau, 2000). Then, we're exclusively dealing with those classes that we must treat as partners. As such, this necessity remains intact in politicized and/or conciliatory forms of governments (arbitrary society) while unprivileged groups are ignored or denied. Only a fraction of existing groups is recognized and no politics exists and must be so. Agamben (2000, 32), see people as a polar concept and believe that this concept always already contains within itself the fundamental bio-political fracture. It is what cannot be included in the whole of which it is a part as well as what cannot belong to the whole in which it is always already included. In this context, any interpretation of political meaning of the term people always indicates also the poor, the underprivileged, and the excluded (Agamben, 2000).

### **Collaborative planning as the new paradigm in planning**

Collaborative planning is a discourse shaping social atmosphere in a way that agrees with certain features of a society. This approach sets out the process in which all the participants reach a consensus about activities that secure reciprocal gain and develop capacities for mutual endeavor and cooperation. The term 'collaborative' in this new planning paradigm stands for a procedure set for certain goals which are not obtained by single agencies and demands the active involvement of plural stakeholders. The procedure includes three steps as stated below:

Specifying goals;

Specifying responsibilities;

Tapping into participants' resources and skills in accord with goals.

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<sup>1</sup>. 'From Athens in the fifth century B.C. up until our own governments, the party of the rich has only ever said one thing, which is most precisely the negation of politics: there is no part of those who have no part' (Rancière, 1999:14). But here we are faced with a question. Rancière seems to build his case for Politics revitalization on count of the poor as the people, and of the people as the community. ... 'As I interpret it, the demos—the political subject as such—has to be identified with the totality made by those who have no 'qualification'. I called it the count of the uncounted—or the part of those who have no part. It does not mean the population of the poor; it means a supplementary part, an empty part that separates the political community from the count of the parts of the population' (Rancière, 2004, 305).

Collaborative planning has been the dominant basis for the post-positivist planning theory from 1990s onward. This is accounted by the turn that planning theory took in 'late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century' (Healey, 2003). The transformation of planning theory can be identified for the shift in thinking away from the positivist epistemologies. The distinctions between the natural and social sciences is an essential element of new epistemology and maps out a sociological imagination deeply rooted in an historical rationality what could be termed as 'post-positivist position'. The first fruit of this position – and the first lessons of social science that embodies it – is the idea that positivist techniques and methodologies had not 'improved' planning practice, including the ability to predict behaviors. Collaborative planning represents a theoretical reaction to the technocratic approach for public policy-making and quantitative and positivist techniques (Allmendinger & Tewdwr-Jones, 2000).

After the decline of modernist and positivist methodologies (the most highly regarded in 1960s and whose traces are visible in rational comprehensive planning and also in rise of quantitative techniques and models), planning theory is influenced by post-positivistic theoretical outlooks shaped by Habermas. Following this shift, collaborative planning has entered in planning theory and can be explicated in terms of the following (see Julian, 1994; Healey, 1997; 1998; Fainstein, 2000; Gunder and Hillier, 2007; Brand and Gaffikin, 2007):

A move away from individualistic tendencies (in vogue in 1980s) and toward social behaviors (in vogue in 1990s);

Emphasis on bottom-up processes as well as local processes;

The demand to fill the gap left by the rational comprehensive planning and the substantive theory of planning.

In fact, interactive process and participatory approach or governance are two main elements of collaborative planning, with an objective to enhance the qualities of space and territories (Healey, 2003). Brownill and Carpentier (2007, 403) argues that 'collaborative approach adherents also stress the emancipatory potential of such dialogue [multi-dimensional model of dialogue] in that planners lose their privileged position in determining decisions and their claims to expert knowledge and become one voice among many'.

Both collaborative planning and its comparable US counterpart, communicative planning (McGuirk, 2001; Gunder, 2010), draw on Habermas discourse ethics and the concept of communicative rationality as a normative principle which aims to evaluate and challenge the qualities of interactive practices and policies (Healey, 2003). About policy making process as a normative principle, Also, Young (1990, 272) believes that if 'city politics is to be democratic and not dominated by the point of view of one group, it must be a politics that takes account of and provides voice for the different groups that dwell together in the city without forming a community'. Diversity is one of the conditions that lead to collaborative process be rational: 'participants are diverse, representing the variety of points of view on the issues' (Innes, 2016).

### **Collaborative planning: background theories**

Collaborative planning approach is influenced by Habermas's '*linguistic turn*' and '*communicative action theories*' (Habermas, 1984, 1987). Prior to 20<sup>th</sup> century, philosophers didn't attend much to language, regarding it as an instrument for expressing mental states and

impressions and believing that the most it can be done is to make language more vivid and pure. Tides turned in 20<sup>th</sup> century when de Saussure introduced terms like 'langue/parole' and signifier/signified into French world and thus divested language from having any direct and clear relationship with outside reality. Later, his ideas were built upon by structuralism, post-structuralism, and deconstructionism in curiously novel ways. In English speaking world, the interest in language began with Wittgenstein's philosophical ideas. In *Tractatus* (TLP 4.116-4.12), he defined language as representation of outside world and, later, as in conjunction with image of life. In case of German world, Heidegger, in defiling the supernatural from inside, he discovered a supernatural language, which he assigned to poets. In the tradition of critical theory and pragmatism in which Habermas was raised, there was no tendency toward problems of language. In particular, Adorno, influenced by Walter Benjamin's philosophy of language and history, held that reason and nature were oppressed in philosophical discourse and the relationship between words and objects has turned incidental and that language has lost its communicative force (Miller, 2007).

Habermas's take on language is a revolt against Adorno who saw our age bereft of any communication. He rejected Adorno's interpretation that Enlightenment mind is only an instrument. In fact, language is the cornerstone of communicative reason, too. Habermas's linguistic turn and his emphasis on communicative mind can be put forward as the origin of collaborative/communicative planning (Fainstein, 2000).

The theory of *communicative action* should also be taken into account as contributing to collaborative planning. In Habermasian view, this theory belongs to reconstructive sciences that seek to identify the principles governing human interactions. He calls such science as reconstructing general pragmatism<sup>1</sup>. Habermas (1979, 3) argues that general pragmatism is tasked with identification and reconstruction of circumstance for possible general understanding or of general prepositions of communication. In this way, not anyone who desires to join the process of consensus (collaborative planning) can be free of four credits:

Comprehensibility (What do you say?)

Truthfulness (Do you really mean it?)

Rightness (Do you have the right to say it?)

Truth (Do you say something true?)

According to the following table (1), theory of collaborative planning can be located in 'Our' world of society which is characterized by the following features:

**Table (1): Realms of truth in 'our social realm'**

Speech act	Validity claims	Communicative aspects	Realm of reality
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<sup>1</sup>. For more information about communicative action and evolution of society, Habermas, J.1984. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume 1*. Cambridge, Author's Preface. / Habermas, J. 1979. *Communication and the Evolution of Society*, trans. T. McCarthy, Boston: Beacon Press, Chapter.1.

The real representation	Truth	Cognitive: objective attitude	External natural world
Intersubjectivity based on mutual understanding and free recognition	Rightness	Interactive: attitude base on adjustment	"Our" social world
Speaker mentality	Truthfulness	Emotionally attitude	own internal nature
-	Comprehensibility	-	Language

Source: Habermas, 1979, 68

As indicated, intersubjective communication is designed for rational mutual understanding and rooted in normative virtue of consensus. Consensus steering can thus be seen as a way of ignoring antagonism or suppressing strife, because this form of governance prevents public disputes from unfolding and becoming important in planning politics (Pløger, 2008).

Collaborative planning as the facilitator of neoliberal ideology<sup>1</sup>

It is claimed that collaborative planning is an interactive process in the community that focuses on and is based on social justice and consensus with the intention to improve the quality of atmosphere and realms (Healey, 2003). Like its American counterpart: communicative planning, the collaborative planning is based on Habermas's '*discourse ethics*' and his '*communicative rationality concept*', the latter being a concept for evaluating and challenging social bilateral actions qualitatively (ibid). With Efforts to pursue goals envisioned in collaborative planning and informed by the historical hurdles on their path, active researchers in collaborative planning seek to identify circumstances in which aforementioned processes can come into being with characteristics such as comprehensibility, truthfulness, legitimacy, rightness (honesty) as well as openness, inclusivity, creativity and reflexivity. As such, collaborative planning is an ideal type for planning process that is based on the effort toward agreement established through securing consensus between actors by free, disciplined, communal counseling, a consensus prior to any agreed action between parties. Young (1990, 167) proposes 'politics of difference' against consensus. The politics of difference is certainly not against coalition. This politics of group assertion, however, takes as a basic principle that members of oppressed groups need separate organizations that exclude others, especially those from more privileged groups.

It is difficult to regard the collaborative planning erroneous because of the fact that it is introduced as a locally democratic planning and as a tool for empowering the community. Yet, there is evidence that collaborative or communicative planning, either according the established definition or intentionally, has been utilized in concealing and facilitating the ascendancy of the ideology of contemporary market forces (Jackson, 2009; Swyngedouw,

<sup>1</sup>. Pløger (2008: 52) observed that '[i]t was through the city that societies developed ideas about how to discipline life through space'. Planning disciplines city life in a manner consistent with neoliberal market logics (Gunder, 2010, 308).

2007; Taylor, 2009). Further, the most of recent public involvement based on Habermas's *discourse ethics* has been more integrated into power structure than being an emancipatory force (Bickerstaff and Walker, 2005).

Collaborative planning, in most countries especially England, has been formed by focusing on inclusivity of local communities. Yet, they have ended depoliticizing most of the established conflicts, stifling disagreements, and legitimizing state values and private profits (Baeten, 2009). Here, communities capable of uniting and fighting for rare resources will drop age-old hostilities and turn into justified, rational, wise, responsible workers who are in good terms with the government and its subsidiary branches.

The error embedded in this kind of consensual game with its emphasis on particular local demands of communities is that it finally ends up removing and alienating the parties opposing the profit-seeking. In this phase of planning, through depriving the traditional demands like equity and fairness, politics/antagonism duality is ignored and, in the meantime, the obvious right to oppose authoritarianism is marginalized, leading finally to what Rancière (1999) calls Post-democratic government based on policed rule. In this, both collaborative and communicative planning play key roles in providing the grounds, facilitating and legitimizing state policies (in form of policy regulations, development plans or development programs). This is an instance of the damage planning is capable and reveals the need for a novel ideological critique, one that Habermas (1984), believing in a decline of criticism of ideology, dubbed as un-presentable.

Bengs (2005) argues that planning theory offers simplistic ideology that meets the neoliberal globalizing aspirations of states through a top-to-bottom collaborative planning concept, is formed based on empowering key stakeholders and meeting their demands and offering these members the way to achieve their goals, especially in a (neoliberal) 'hegemonic way'. Bengs (2005) asserted that planning and its theoretical scope includes solutions unrelated to existing problems. As such, the chief advantage of the collaborative planning is that it facilitates the neoliberal economy, especially for brokers in real estate market. Given Habermas's take on communicative planning, the following questions can be asked: given that actors of communicative planning operate within the system, are they able to take basic (fundamental/radical) actions? Are they able to counter the dominant ideology that affects them irreparably? Would be this kind of planning able to expose the shenanigans of liberal empires disguised beneath the liberal ethical communication? (Roy, 2006)

In addition, some researchers (Brand and Gaffikin, 2007) believe that collaborative or communicative planning is based on established assumptions about how the world is or how it should be. However, communicative planning continues to uphold the distributive values and displays a proclivity for realism in case of the necessary measures at time of radical changes in economic/social structure: measures such as modern cooperation and partnership between state and market. So, these measures make collaborative planning easily ignores power concepts, which always color both formal and informal discourses and formal structures.

collaborative planning shed the lights on the local territory and, consequently, fails to appreciate wider global influences to the extent that occasionally contributes to globalization. Purcell (2009:141) argues that collaborative planning acts as a mechanism for legitimizing the logic of neoliberal market and competitive agents. The ideology of collaborative planning sets

it as a sinister (deceptive) and hegemonic entity. 'What the neoliberal project requires are decision-making practices that are widely accepted as 'democratic' but that do not (or cannot) fundamentally challenge existing relations of power. Communicative planning, insofar as it is rooted in communicative action, is just such a decision-making practice'.

Communicative or collaborative planning tends to include groups of all sizes. Thus, some scholars (Brand and Gaffikin, 2007; Gunder, 2010) refer to a kind of rebellious (revolutionary) planning and (radical) planning as the proper ways to fulfill this tendency that are also capable of checking and determining neoliberal ideology. Another proposition is known as urban regime theory (Feldman, 1997; Imbroscio, 1997; 1998) which assesses the dominant ideology and which offers greater degree of challenging the power, knowledge, subjectivity, and space than collaborative and communicative planning. Habermas's communicative planning would fail to secure consensus through the language: language is incomplete and is associated with lack of knowledge resulted from the opposition between the un-definable antagonism outside the imaginary and symbolic realms; an antagonism in the Real (Hillier, 2003).

A criticism of collaborative planning based on beginning of politics concept

... The mass of men without qualities identify with the community in the name of the wrong that is constantly being done to them by those whose position or qualities have the natural effect of propelling them into the nonexistence of those who have 'no part in anything'. It is in the name of the wrong done them by the other parties that the people identify with the whole of the community. Whoever has no part-the poor of ancient times, the third estate, the modern proletariat-cannot in fact have any part other than all or nothing (Rancière, 1999, 9).

Rancière maps out<sup>1</sup> a political interpretation of people that is deeply rooted in an historical view applies equally well to critical social science and to radical political thought. As seen by some scientist of political philosophy (Sager, 2005; Bengs, 2005), Rancière's departure point in rediscovering the people refers to the vital theoretical disagreement between political philosophy and politics: the former is not a theoretical exposition of the latter; rather, it is an effort to nullify the socially disruptive and unsettling effects of the latter. The dissensus lies in the fact that a socially virtuous and prosperous idea requires the subjugation of elements of society to total principle that tends to enumerate the elements.

There exists a paradoxical component in this enumeration, a component which emerges as a total without losing its character as an element. Laclau (2005) believes that the notion of community in the classical Greek philosophy refers to a sort of encounter in interpersonal relations based on mathematic principles – geometric harmony – that assigns a particular task to each element in a virtuous and prosperous community where the ultimate role is played by the geometry. This enumeration or distribution breaks open as soon as it faces something not subject to rules of enumeration: that is, the emergence of demos or the public who style themselves as a whole while being an element. The reason for this behavior has to do with nature of freedom that evades identification: it signifies a realm where demos or public stands as an adjectival evaluative principle for members on the whole (masses) and the sole defining

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1. May, T., 2008. *The Political Thought of Jacques Rancière: Creating Equality*. Edinburgh University Press Ltd.2008: p.4.

feature – the only communal function - of a particular group of demos that serves to incarnate the whole. This is disruptive to the geometric harmony of virtuous community. As such, the real people, in Rancière's view (Hewlett, 2007), means those who aspire toward being the whole, those *no part in anything*, since the evaluative principle for identification (freedom) lacks the required capability or the obligatory features.

The real people are those who do not fit in any class and (neo)liberal ideology is equally unable to set them as partners or accomplice, grant relevant shares or assign tasks (something it is able to do with other social classes thanks to their convenient place and standing within geometrically harmonious structure of community). Thus, the members without *part in anything* – the poor in ancient times, third class or proletariat in modern times – are treated as non-existent and this is exactly what Rancière names as real people in *realpolitik*: such members are satisfied with either nothing or everything. The process of collaborative planning also depoliticizes the social conflicts to large extents, conceals many others, and legitimizes the values upheld by state and private sectors, turning the participants in this process into partners while stifling the voice of the real people (Laclau, 2005).

Politics, in Rancière view, is the search for the mass of men without qualities identify with the community and is not the search for intersubjective understanding and agreement. Every agreement or 'consensus exists as a temporary result of a provisional hegemony, as a stabilization of power ... that always entails some form of exclusion' (Mouffe, 2000).

Ideal of inclusiveness is the aim of communicative action, but such inclusiveness can never be total: because when the decision about the principles of communicative action is made, people return to their place in society. 'It is the elites, those who *represent* the people, rather than the people themselves, who have a part' (May, 2008, 48). This return excludes 'the part that has no part or place in society' from participation or communicative action and covers up that exclusion with illusions of inclusiveness. In theoretical terms, every 'we' necessarily implies a 'they' (Mouffe, 1999; Hillier, 2003). Therefore, the real people and *beginning of politics* concept show that the ideal of inclusiveness in collaborative planning must always go unrealized<sup>1</sup>.

## Conclusion

Through reasoning, school of collaborative planning directs democratic measures toward a fair and just outcome. This interpretation of civic justice, which is basically intended as a postmodernist assertion of cultural politics in support of difference, can be criticized from two points: first, this school fails to appreciate the impossibility of creating really ideal discourses in presence of sheer economic-political inequalities; second, the unfair outcomes can be accrued by relatively fair processes. Put differently, formation of collaborative planning, with its emphasis on inclusivity toward local communities, ends up depoliticizing the social conflicts and legitimizing all state and private values. Collaborative planning eliminate conflictual relations of power that stifling the calls of who have no part in anything.

Laclau and Mouffe (2000: xvi-xvii) believe that the present conjuncture, far from being the only natural or possible societal order, is the expression of a certain configuration of power relations ... The Left should start elaborating a credible alternative to the neo-liberal order, instead of trying to manage it in a more humane way. This, of course, requires drawing new

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<sup>1</sup>. Mouffe, C. 'Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?' *Social Research* 66(3): P.745–58.

political frontiers and acknowledging that there cannot be a radical politics without the definition of an adversary. The flaw in this consensual game with its focus on local particular demands is that it finally leads to removal and alienation of parties opposing flow of profit.

Function and the nature of people in Rancière's political philosophy reflect a dialectical oscillation between two opposite poles: on the one hand, the people as a whole and, on the other hand, the people as a subset and excluded bodies. This gap always already is, as well as what has yet to be realized; it is the source of realpolitik and what is neglected in collaborative/communication action and neoliberalization hegemony. In the big picture, neoliberalization cannot proceed without actively managing the mentioned gap it generates.

According to Rancier, people would be posited as political subjects. As far as it can be used to assess collaborative planning, the significance of his theory lies in its restoration of public political energy. After the Second World War, history has rarely witnessed demonstration of public powers, which demands a scene beyond the desires of ruling classes or political parties. Political subject, as Rancier understands it, establishes the effective energy for initiating political action and is not an instrument in hands of special groups. In fact, it is a process that turns into the creative energy, which destabilizes status quo. Thus, it is not possible to analyze it through causation models, even that proposed by classical Marxism. On the other hand, reviving the politics and people inside bureaucratic processes have deviated into being an instrument for negotiating among powerful classes and in touch with interests of ruling classes and social formations.

Through collaborative planning, public energy is utilized to create states while the beginning of politics concept posits true politics as distancing the states or independence of politics from states. Such independence is an unpredictable organizer in political-social arena and resorts back to public political energy; this process does not take place in case of collaborative planning and political energy is consumed and compromised in the counseling and cooperating with power groups and property owners and fails to develop immanently. Both the attractive critical insight of the beginning of politics and its continuing need to be forcefully defended against distracting mystification have contributed to its exaggerated assertion as populism.

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## A Closed Circle of History

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### Abstract

The two theories served to us, one is scientific and the other religious speak of the origin of the homosapiens-man. The first in the Bible reveals that disobedience and sin work very quickly in human nature. The only one in the vast, distant universe we know of. Another branch describes a man who gradually evolved into a conscious being, less and less like an animal. A frequently asked question is why only man has a developmental question in intelligence, and other species cannot advance. Such a man resembled an animal in his characteristics, he was a hunter, a warrior, a conqueror, he lived in a tribe and nowhere is the virtue of empathy, tenderness, solidarity mentioned. Rare isolated specimens are still found in some tribes on the African continent, which live in harmony with nature and which we do not consider "civilized". When that civilization began it was hidden in the fog and Egypt, Rome, Greece, Byzantium, etc. are mentioned. But the word civilization is hardly associated with the "dark Middle Ages". The notion of civilizations makes many proud that we live in an advanced world and that we possess so many rich sources of technology, scientific discoveries, the development of computers, the Internet, satellites, space travel. The other side of the coin that is not mentioned in the current "civilized" world is in the form of violence, destruction, scandals, deviations and the like. The two theories served to us, one is scientific and the other religious speak of the origin of the homosapiens-man. The first in the Bible reveals that disobedience and sin work very quickly in human nature. The only one in the vast, distant universe we know of. Another branch describes a man who gradually evolved into a conscious being, less and less like an animal. A frequently asked question is why only man has a developmental question in intelligence, and other species cannot advance. Such a man resembled an animal in his characteristics, he was a hunter, a warrior, a conqueror, he lived in a tribe and nowhere is the virtue of empathy, tenderness, solidarity mentioned. Rare isolated specimens are still found in some tribes on the African continent, which live in harmony with nature and which we do not consider "civilized". When that civilization began it was hidden in the fog and Egypt, Rome, Greece, Byzantium, etc. are mentioned. But the word civilization is hardly associated with the "dark Middle Ages". The notion of civilizations makes many proud that we live in an advanced world and that we possess so many rich sources of technology, scientific discoveries, the development of computers, the Internet, satellites, space travel. The other side of the coin that is not mentioned in the current "civilized" world is in the form of violence, destruction, scandals, deviations and the like. If we look at how much violence, wars, rape, slaughter, torture, crime, corruption, fraud, discrimination, intrigue, inhumanity there is in our immediate vicinity, if we really consider ourselves a "man" as a higher being, it will provoke a series of reactions of

disgust and questionnaires. . Most believe that they do not fall into that category, that they are moral, honest and exemplary members of society. Many wonder why in a developed society so much deviant behavior. It's not just about pure open manic, psychopathic behavior from the newspapers, but about "respectable" people who represent their countries, people in suits with ties, cell phones and briefcases, people who dictate and determine the fate of everyone by social rank below them. It's about co-workers who will intrigue from petty envy, meanness, malicious remarks, underestimation, discrimination, and insulting people, or you at work. It is about families where violence takes place on a daily basis both physically and mentally, with quarrels, high tones, breakups, physical assault or spouse or children, to extreme deviations in the form of incest, rape. Families, aware of the ugliness of their lives, shamefully hide everything from the public, creating an image of an exemplary society and their lives. Violence reigns in the 21st century. Nasija is not in the form of cutting off, heads, burning witches, throwing lions, piling, cutting hands, but the germ of evil exists in the individual and most people no matter how good they think of themselves. The people of the 21st century are slaves to labor, material acquisition, taxes, the impossibility of treatment, discrimination on the basis of any diversity, the publication of lies in the media, the so-called crucifixion, which causes irreparable damage to man. People of the 21st century fall into debts, loans, have no job, work for an unworthy salary, live on the streets, in homes for the poor. The gap between the rich and the rejected is too big. And civilization speaks of progress over time several thousand years ago. The idea of rule is the same, subjugation, domination, manipulation, exploitation continues, but the methods ar

**Keywords:** closed, circle, history

## **Blackface, Bullying and Freedom of Expression: What Legal Education Means for Law Student Welfare**

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### **Abstract**

Today, law student safety is a serious but often missed objective in American law schools. According to a recent survey, the typical American family wants to know their law student is safe even more than they want their law student to acquire a first-rate legal academic experience. Despite the importance of law student mental health to student performance, and cultural objectives unique to legal education, law students are not only highly vulnerable to acquiring mental health challenges during law school but are prone to be overlooked, and perhaps blamed or condemned for their mental health challenges, albeit unintentionally. My work asserts that despite the chief objective of law schools being to educate knowledgeable, competent, legal professionals, and provide them with the necessary skills to resolve complex legal essentials for corporations and government, as well as advance social justice, and to promote equal treatment for all, inherent in the nature of legal education, is a seemingly widely accepted risk of compromising law student mental health. Relying on qualitative studies and journalistic reports, my work will demonstrate that law students experience high incidents of personal depression, anxiety, extreme sadness, loss of interest or desire, feelings of guilt or low self-esteem, disturbed sleep or appetite, low energy, poor concentration, and a myriad of other mental and physical calamities, all of which greatly exceeds that of the law faculty, and surpasses levels experienced by medical and graduate students at American schools of higher education. My work further acknowledges that law student anxiety and depression are inextricably linked to the rigorous academic demands of legal education. Still it argues and set forth that law student mental health is related to avoidable conditions and patterns in the law school environment that enable or fail to account for the law student's inexperience with coping with intense stress, emotional uncertainty, geographical isolation from loved ones, strained financial resources, poor job prospects, family strife, drug or alcohol abuse, homelessness, or lack of a culturally responsive learning environment. Granted, the legal profession is not for everyone. My work argues that law schools cannot turn a blind eye to the plight of law students as if no degree of accountability and responsibility lies with the law school. Indeed, law schools, albeit unintentionally, may be some of the chief investors in patterns of conduct that compromise the physical, emotional, and mental safety of law students. Recognition of a law school's duty to students, in my view, requires law schools to resist the rhetoric of self-exceptionalism. Law schools, have an obligation, reluctantly or not, to concretely curtail repeated patterns of professional abuse, neglect, dereliction of academic duties, social domination, and student exploitation, that are uniquely embedded in the culture of legal education. Simply put, law student safety

needs, coupled with the intricacies and unforgiving consequences of today's competitive legal job market and high cost of legal education, warrant that law schools resist the impulses that prioritize institutional-preservation and subordinate student mental health under the guise of teaching students the harsh realities of the legal profession and preparing them for legal practice. My work argues that student physical, emotional, mental and academic safety should, and must become a critical component of legal education.

**Keywords:** Blackface, Bullying, Freedom of Expression, Legal Education Means, Law Student Welfare

## Methodical Approach to a Literary Character

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### Abstract

A literary character is a structural and semantic element of the whole literary work. Depending on the point of view from which it is observed, the dominant spiritual-scientific background and the genre in which it appears, a literary character is also called a hero, character, figure, agent or actor. It is an instance of a literary text that is one of the structural elements of a literary work, but at the same time it is an independent system. The terms "literary character" and "character" are often identified, but at the same time differences are discerned in the context of the use of these terms. In this sense, the character is generally understood as a broader concept, while the character is attributed to people where a certain individuality and relative stability in change is assumed. The vagueness of the term character is conditioned by its general use in everyday speech in the ethical and psychological sense as a positive or negative definition of an individual and a description of his certain mental characteristics primarily those related to attitudes, emotional relationships and motivations. It is precisely this use of the term character in everyday speech, in the teaching of literature, that makes the term itself close and topical to students. Therefore, character as a structural part of a literary work is often imposed as a starting point for the interpretation of a literary work in the teaching of literature. However, this vagueness of the notion of character in the traditional analysis of character in literary works is reflected in the way that the characters of a literary work are often reduced to an assessment of their ethical attitude or attention is paid to whether it is a positive or negative character. In this way, the fictionality of a literary character is lost sight of as a phenomenon that exists exclusively in a literary work that only "gives" it ethical properties and psychological characteristics. Unlike traditional literary-scientific analysis, the newer science of literature in character analysis regularly focuses on the process of characterization, which has had a significant positive effect on the methodological approach to the literary character in the teaching of literature.

**Keywords:** literature methodology, literature teaching, literary character, characterization, interpretation

## Binding International Norms, Jus Cogens

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### Abstract

Article 53 of the Vienna Convention of 1969 states that a treaty is considered invalid if it is in conflict with existing norms of jus cogens, and under Article 64 of the treaty becomes invalid if it conflicts with a norm youngest of the same nature. The case Nicaragua against the United States made clear that the notion of jus cogens is steadily entrenched in international law, however, is still necessary to determine accurately that power rates referred to in Articles 53 and 64 of the Vienna Convention. Jus cogens norms include more those norms relating to morality or natural law than with traditional positivist rates derived from State practice. In general, this includes making aggressive war, crimes against humanity, war crimes, sea piracy, genocide, apartheid, slavery, and torture. Jus cogens norms are norms of customary international law which are so important, it can not be changed through treaties. Under the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties, any treaty that is contrary to jus cogens norms is invalid. Jus cogens norms are not listed, there is no catalog, their determined by any authoritative body, but these rates come from judicial practices and political and social attitudes, which are not values static. Jus cogens norm of unconditional right international, accepted and recognized by the international community norm from which no deviation is permitted. Unlike the common law, which traditionally requires the consent and

It lets change obligations between states through treaties, norms jus cogens can not be violated by any state "through treaties international or local regulations or special customary, or even through general rules of customary not have the same normative force.

**Keywords:** jus cogens, binding international norms, Vienna Convention, customary international law, international treaties

## **‘More than One Red Herring’? Heterogeneous Effects of Ageing on Healthcare Utilisation**

**Cristina Vilaplana**

University of Murcia

**Joan Costa-Font**

London School of Economics

### **Abstract**

We study the effect of ageing, defined an extra year of life, on healthcare utilisation, disentangling such effect from other alternative explanations such as the presence of comorbidities and endogenous time to death (TTD). We exploit individual level longitudinal end of life data from several European countries that contains records of medicines use, outpatient and inpatient care as well as long-term care. We report three sets of findings. First, corrected TTD estimates are significantly different from uncorrected ones, and influence the effect of both the extensive and intensive margin of hospital admissions and length of stay, as well as home and nursing home care use consistently with a ‘red herring hypothesis’. Second, the effect size of TTD exceeds that of an extra year of life, which in turn is moderated by individual comorbidities. Finally, corrected estimates suggest an overall moderate effect of ageing, which does not influence (both the internal and external margins of) outpatient care utilisation. These results suggest the presence of ‘more than one red herring’ depending on the type of healthcare examined.

**Keywords:** time to death, ageing, healthcare utilization, hospital care, medicines use, home help use and comorbidity, endogeneous time to death (TTD). comorbidities.

## **Sovereignist Populism: from Post Fascism to Post Communism - and Back?**

**Federigo Argentieri**

Prof. Dr., John Cabot University, Rome

### **Abstract**

This paper will elaborate on the origins and main features of the current political trend known as sovereignist (or identitarian) populism, relying on past and contemporary studies ranging from Gino Germani to Yascha Mounk. The latter identified in Argentina's Peronism the first example of this ruling pattern and elaborated on the level of its kinship and the differences with Mussolini's fascism, which Perón had known well as military attache to Rome. Interestingly, since 2010 Hungary's Viktor Orbán was the first to proclaim principles that somehow echoed Perón's, albeit over 60 years later, endeavoring to have them implemented in a country that had exited recently from Soviet-type communism: in so doing, he is ever more frequently establishing a connection with Horthy's regime of the 1930's, which had a close alliance with Mussolini. Irrespective from the point of departure, therefore sovereignist populism appears to be inevitably attracted by fascist(oid) examples and patterns, without however coinciding with them.

**Keywords:** Sovereignist Populism, Post Fascism, Post Communism

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**Doing School Participation: Creative Ideas for Improving Educational Methods****Alexandra Galbin**

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**Abstract**

School participation involves children, teachers, parents and community members. Outside the family, school remains the main institution that shapes and defines children's childhood. Unfortunately, not all the children have the chance to grow in a healthy school environment. Based on social constructionism paradigm, the purpose of this paper is to explore how children's perspectives can be useful in understanding why many of the children aren't happy at school, confident about their lives, and secure. Focus groups with children from rural area were organized, being preceded by two participatory research techniques, drawings and cardboard with pictures, in order to encourage children to express themselves. The research paper highlights children's ideas regarding their involvement in school activities, decisions, and recommendations for improving school climate. The ideas generated by children can be a tool for teachers' self-reflection, in order to develop educational methods that positively influence school participation.<sup>1</sup>

**Keywords:** school participation, creativity, education, social constructionism

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## **Analysis of the Energy Efficiency of District Heat Suppliers in Hungary Through Network Losses**

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**Beatrix Varga**

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### **Abstract**

Nowadays in Hungary, district heating is provided by 89 companies in 93 settlements, which supply more than 1.6 million people with heat. The sector is considered to be of national economic importance and it is therefore vital that this service is implemented effectively. A measure of efficiency is network loss, which value is on average between 12-13% in the sector. The aim of this study is to investigate whether there is a significant difference between the efficiencies of district heat suppliers. The empirical basis of the study is made up of the individual technical data of district heat suppliers from the years 2012-2017. The analysis was carried out with statistical methods that are suitable for exploring the relationships between qualitative and quantitative indicators.<sup>1</sup>

**Keywords:** Energy Efficiency, District Heat Suppliers, Hungary, Network Losses

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## The Use of Social Media at the Workplace and Employees' Innovative Behaviour Among the Millennials

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### Abstract

Innovative success is able to realise organisational effectiveness in answering to the challenge of globalisation. The main contributor to organisational innovation are employees who have creative ideas and innovative behaviour. Several past studies have identified the drivers to employees' innovative behaviour that focuses on the individual factor and organisational context. However, this study emphasises on the importance of the use of social media at the workplace in motivating employees' innovative behaviour based on the Technology Acceptance Model. The use of social media has led to a change in organisational management, starting from the creation of a business model to the convenience of communicating, cooperating, searching for information and sharing knowledge. The year 2020 aims to witness the Millennials starting to dominate the vocational world and pioneering the organisational innovation. The millennials are raised in line with the technological advancement, and they are comfortable dealing with various kinds of technology at work. Thus, the objective of this study is to test the use of social media that can instil innovative behaviour among the millennials at the workplace and the millennials' job characteristics as the mediator of the relationship. The data collection method is done through the online distribution of the questionnaire to employees aged between 25 and 40 years old in several public and private organisations in Malaysia. The data obtained was tested using the partial least squares structural equation modeling method and the study outcome shows that there is a significant relationship between the use of social media at the workplace and the millennial employees' innovative behaviour, and the millennials' job characteristics serve as the partial mediator of the relationship. This study is able to add empirical evidence to the body of knowledge about the advantages of the social media in forming the innovative behaviour of the employees, and in practice, the organisation has to be sensitive to the pattern of work carried out by the millennials which is consistent with the technological advancement.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Innovative Behavior, Millennials, Technology Acceptance Model

## Enhancing University Students' Social Responsibility Through Service Learning

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### Abstract

Research found that connection between university students and local culture, for example history, is fairly low. Education can be sustained through revitalizing and remodeling the historical heritages. How to shorten the distance between university students and the society and to make them connect more with their own culture and social responsibility have become important issues in higher education. Service learning gained its attention in the U.S. higher education in the 1960s. Though, in Taiwan, implementing social services into curriculum has been a strong focus for second and tertiary education since 2001, research on whether providing service learning can help enhance students' cultivation of citizenship is absent from literature. Hence, the goal of this study is to find out whether university students' social responsibility can be enhanced through service learning. A project supplemented to the curriculum of a course, Special Topics on Cultural and Creative Industries, in a Department of Applied English was conducted during the semester. A group of students from the class volunteered to help with a military kindred village, Xiang-Kuan Second Village, situated just outside the university campus. Statistically, there were 879 military villages and not many of them are preserved well or even exist now. Military village built massively after the Kuomintang's retreat to Taiwan after 1949 to accommodate the soldiers was a unique feature of Taiwan history. By applying students' major, they designed an English leaflet which helps foreign tourists find the village and understand its historical background. Although students felt frustration during the process, they had great sense of achievement after the final leaflet was created and distributed. Additionally, an interactive wooden board was created to help visitors understand the history of the village more vividly. Through the social learning, students not only gained the abilities to conduct a project, but also understood their local culture and history. Furthermore, students' social responsibility was enhanced through providing the social services to the society.

**Keywords:** social responsibility, service learning, military kindred village

## **Factors Affecting Consumers' Usage Intentions of Car Sharing Services Based on Sharing Economy**

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**İbrahim Kırçova**

Prof. Dr., Yıldız Teknik University

### **Abstract**

Sharing economy is a new economic model that uses information network technologies to optimize use and redistribution of unused or underused resources. Thus, it can be stated that the sharing economy is an emerging internet-based business model. Car sharing, which is also within this context, refers to the services that companies provide short-term access to their vehicles parked at certain points of the city (e.g. Zipcar, MOOV), ride-sharing services that allow a group of people to share their vehicle with others (e.g. BlaBlaCar) and ride-hailing services where driver and passenger are matched through an application (e.g. Uber). The inability of supply to meet the demand, especially in metropolitan cities, increasing vehicle ownership costs, and consumers' expectations of faster and more comfortable service with more affordable costs are the main drivers of consumers to use car sharing services. In addition, it is also important that consumers support sustainable modes of transportation that cause less damage to the environment, and companies' efforts to develop business models that contribute to the environment by reducing air pollutions. Although studies are limited in sharing economy area in Turkey, they have mostly been done in the field of tourism and accommodation services. Researches show that car sharing services in Turkey, especially in big cities, are increasingly being used and preferred again. The study aims to propose a model for determining the factors affecting consumers' usage intention in Turkey and to debate the proposals for the future of car sharing services in Turkey.

**Keywords:** sharing economy, car sharing, usage intention, technology acceptance model

## **National Character of Names in North-Eastern Poland During Russian Partition**

**Leonarda Dacewicz**

### **Abstract**

The paper presents the inventory of names and their national nature in north-eastern Poland during the Russian Partition (the second half of the 19th century). Given names of Christian origin still hold a relatively strong position, as they are firmly rooted in the Polish culture. From the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when Poland lost its independence, there have been noticeable patriotic attempts to partially restore the traditional, native Polish given names of Slavic origin. The paper offers an analysis of political and cultural reasons of the changes in the inventory of given names in north-eastern Poland, with an apparent influence of the Russian language and its naming culture.

**Keywords:** National Character, Names, North-Eastern Poland, Russian Partition

## **Internship of Tertiary Students: Exploring Their Employability and Self-Efficacy**

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### **Abstract**

Nowadays internship has become one crucial part in higher education institutions (HEIs) in the world. In Taiwan, almost all vocational high education institutions regard internship as one major component of their curriculum; some even take internship or practicum as one compulsory course (Wan, Yang, Cheng & Su, 2013). Internship offers students a great chance to link what they learn in school with real life job practice, and it helps students effectively and efficiently adapt to their future job (Lee, Chen, Hung & Chen, 2011). For general universities in Taiwan, they are aware of this internship trend, and are eager to adjust their current curriculum structure and make room and time for internship courses. Students, during the time they study in universities, are encouraged to take internship (or practicum) courses. Internship courses are offered with flexibility: 2 credits, 3 credits, 6 credits, or 9 credits. To have internship courses function well, Ministry of Education in Taiwan (MOE) has set up regulations, trying to distinguish internship from students' part-time jobs, and further help students to actually learn well during their internship. Although many internship studies have been done, very few studies can be found focusing on the employability and self-efficacy of internship students in universities. This study is aimed at tertiary internship students' employability, self-efficacy, and their correlation. The results suggest a high level of employability and a medium level of self-efficacy of the internship students. Among the employability factors, students showed a relatively low in professional knowledge, and a high in dedication and cooperation. In the self-efficacy factors, students showed a lower self-efficacy in the social self-efficacy factor. A positive and significant correlation was found between employability and self-efficacy of those internship students. Suggestions related to the design, practice and improvement for internship programs are provided for policy makers, educators and curriculum designers in HEIs at the end of this study.

**Keywords:** internship, employability, higher education, self-efficacy, college students

## CORONA Cool Parties: A Sociological Look

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### Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has generated profound social, economic and even interactional changes among individuals. The potential implications of COVID-19 in the health of infected people (who may be symptomatic or asymptomatic) are scientifically accepted. However, there are various situations in which individuals not only do not comply with the indications of the health authorities (such as confinement, the use of a mask and physical distancing from other individuals, just to name a few) but also organize and/or join real parties, attended mainly by younger generations. In some of these parties, the COVID-19 topic even emerges as a *leitmotiv* and a theme, as if the parties were a catharsis to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this presentation, the authors aim to contribute to the sociological understanding of this situation.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Coronavirus, social perceptions, generational practices, COVID-19 parties

## The Social Innovation Potential of the Northern Hungarian Region

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### Abstract

In the last two decades, a new direction has appeared in the study of innovation processes in the literature. Researchers are paying more and more attention to social innovation beside the classical Schumpeterian approach. Social innovation is new solutions (product, technology, organizational solution) that can effectively meet market needs that are not or hardly met on a market basis, innovation can lead to new or more advanced skills / relationships, and contribute to a more efficient use of resources. However, there is no uniform definition of the concept. The issue of social innovation is particularly important in the case of the Northern Hungary region, because it can bring hope for some peripheral areas and a new approach to solving problems. High technological innovation potential and performance do not necessarily go hand in hand with high social innovation activity, so in the case of peripheral regions there is a hope for social innovations even in the absence of technological innovations.

**Keywords:** social innovation, Northern Hungary, peripheries, inequalities, technological vs. social innovation

## COVID-19: Contagion and Stigmatization

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### Abstract

The pandemic caused by COVID-19, as a disease triggered by the transmission of the virus from one sick individual to another, shapes the whole economic and social life and even the (non) social relations established between groups and the social interactions between individuals. By mobilizing Goffman's proposal to analyze situations of stigmatization in which individuals are incapable of holding full social status due to a certain socially perceived characteristic, the authors seek to contribute to the analysis of the COVID-19 disease under the lens of contagion and stigmatization. It is concluded that the heuristic capacity of Goffman's classic proposal allows, still today, to contribute to apprehending the social processes involved in COVID-19, which are sometimes relegated to the background but are essential for a broader understanding of this problem and consequent definition of measures to be taken.

**Keywords:** stigmatization, contagion, pandemic, COVID-19, social situation, Goffman

## Mobile Applications and COVID-19 Pandemic Control

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### Abstract

The pandemic caused by COVID-19 has motivated a profound mutation in the way people are expected to interact with each other. In technological terms, mobile applications are being developed as software to be used generally in mobile phones or smartphones that will allow, according to their advocates, to record, analyze and inform both users and health authorities by providing information that enables them to take decisions and measures deemed appropriate. These applications, in principle and according to the public, can be downloaded free of charge, for the most part, if this is the user's wish, always on a voluntary basis. This communication seeks to discuss the relationship between mobile applications for recording interactions and physical (or considered social) proximity and the control of the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighting the social, political, economic and ethical aspects involved.

**Keywords:** Mobile applications, APP, COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2 virus, Coronavirus, digital implications, individual and social autonomy, ethical implications

## The “New normal”: A COVID-19 paradox?

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### **Abstract**

It is now known that the COVID-19 pandemic has generated profound changes in each other's perceptions, as well as in social interactions. The overall public discourse mentions the need to learn to live in a “new normal” reality. This presentation problematizes and discusses this idea of new normality as a paradox resulting from these new conditions and situations of existence.

**Keywords:** new normal, COVID-19, social norms, social perception, social practices

## Motivations and Self-Perceived Career Prospects of Undergraduate Sociology Students

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### Abstract

Sociology undoubtedly plays an important role in the world of sciences, as it provides an opportunity to examine the society in which we live and our social relationships using widely accepted means with real scientific value. As Giddings has noted, 'sociology tells us how to become what we want to be' (Giddings, 2011). However, discussions of the social sciences can be controversial, as they are sometimes perceived as 'inferior' to natural sciences. To alleviate this discrepancy, it is essential to supply professionals with useful knowledge in the field of sociology, understand their motivations and ensure the best career prospects for them. In this pilot study, 18 sociology B.A. students answered seven open-ended questions in the form of a short essay regarding their motivations in terms of faculty choices, initial expectations and the fulfilment thereof, their aims in the study of sociology, preferred areas of employment, willingness to undergo further training, five-year plans and their opinions about the prospects of newly graduated sociologists in Hungary compared to graduates from other areas in terms of the usefulness of knowledge gained, perceptions of their professions and earning opportunities. According to the results of this study, the future plans of the participants were very different, but all of them believe that an undergraduate sociology degree provides extensive knowledge about the functioning of society and has helped them to form attitudes that they consider to be extremely valuable on the labour market.

**Keywords:** career prospects, education, motivations, sociology, undergraduate programme.

## The Concept of Narration in the Place Brand Identity

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### Abstract

The place branding as an integral part of competitive place development strategy became a topic for municipalities and cities of Latvia relatively recently, at the beginning of 2000. In particular, the issue of place identity exploration in Latvia has become a key subject, linked to the sustainable demonstration of the attractiveness of the place, narration of unique benefits in order to increase place's economic value and social welfare in behalf of place residents and other stakeholders. The author seeks answers to a range of interdisciplinary research questions related to the topic of place branding - how to create a place brand identity that is relevant to place residents and express the sense of place (identity); what are the main conditions of place brand development and what intangible and/or tangible attributes of identity provide convincing place brand identity narratives? The empirical part of the article is based on the methodology of qualitative research, in-depth semi-structured interviews with Latvian place branding experts, and analysis of the content of brand identities of Latvian cities and municipalities. The research insight was how place branding as a strategic marketing process is mastered by the local municipality and involved stakeholders, provides a critical view on the local practices, and strengthens the appreciation of the importance of place brand identity narratives.

**Keywords:** narrative, place branding, identity, sense of place, storytelling

## Person and Personality – Dichotomy and the Proper Name

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### Abstract

In this article we will try to show how the binary structure of the novel is also contained in many small elements that can be found throughout the story. The main story line is told in two main parts: Frankenstein's story and the Creature's story. We will show how the author uses small dichotomies/binarisms in order to incorporate them in the bigger frame of the divided story. These dichotomies are mostly incorporated in proper names which mainly show the opposite of the character of the person (Victor – the beaten; Felix – the unlucky; Justine – unjustly murdered...).

**Keywords:** dichotomy, binarism, Freud, proper name, person

## The Issue of Genre in Pekić's Early Opus

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### Abstract

The paper presents the analysis of genre definition of Pekić's prose. Genre definition of the prose work *The time of miracles* is mainly analysed and explained, which theoreticians define differently, determining it as a chain, stories, but also as a novel. The analysis of the corpus, that is, the works *The time of miracles* and *New Jerusalem* is conducted through the prism of Bakhtin's theory on the novel, with a brief resistance of Lukacs' theory to Bakhtin's when it comes to the analysis of Pekić's prose. After the explanation of the characterisation of *The time of miracles* as a novel, we deal with chronotope, as genre definition, where the most common chronotopes that we encounter in Pekić's prose are indicated. The novelties that Pekić brings to Serbian literature are reflected in one complete novelistic image, a parallel world, documented by historical sources, the witness' stories, archeological sites. Generally speaking, the central point of his work is occupied by problematising man's position in the world in general – so, also in the past, present, but in the future as well. And precisely that and such his relation towards culture and existence – erudite, problematising, predictive, revealing – is “analogous to the correlations between chronotope within the work“ (Bakhtin, 1989, p. 386).

**Keywords:** postmodernism, genre, novel, Bakhtin, Pekić

## **Employers' Expectations of University Graduates as They Transition into the Workplace**

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**Georgia Lynn Yamashita**

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### **Abstract**

Research on work readiness indicates employers are increasingly pointing out that soft skills are as important as discipline specific knowledge and technical skills when hiring recent university graduates. However, many university students think excellent grades are the main reason they get the jobs. The disconnect between what employers expect and what students imagine is significant to the extent that many recent university graduates are unable to be employed in the jobs they want, and many employers have challenges dealing with recent university graduates who are not work ready. In 2018, a soft skills pilot study was conducted with internship supervisors who work with the Human Development and Family Studies Program at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. An online survey was sent to 65 internship supervisors, and three focus group sessions were conducted as a follow-up of the survey. In 2019, Phase 2 of this study polled 76 employers who participated in a university career fair on what soft skills they expect university graduates to have at the time of hiring. This paper reports on findings to two questions: 1) What employers think of undergraduate university students who have completed an internship with them, and 2) What soft skills employers expect of recent university graduates who are transitioning into the workplace. Findings indicate that in addition to soft skills, employers also regard personal attributes and qualities as equally important at the time of hire.

**Keywords:** Soft Skills, Employability Skills, Work Readiness

## **The Comparison of Classical Ethical Theories in Ancient Greece Philosophy and Islamic Philosophy: The Example of Aristotle and Ibn Miskavayh, Tusi and Kinalizade**

**Emine ÖZTÜRK**

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### **Abstract**

In this study, I will make an analysis of the comparison of classical ethical theories in Ancient Greece Philosophy and Islamic Philosophy. The analysis of the comparison of classical ethical theories in Ancient Greece Philosophy and Islamic Philosophy depends on three philosophical and psychological concepts. These concepts are first of all, the thought in other words the ability of thinking, secondly the desire, in other words the ability of desire, as Freud said libido, and thirdly aggression the ability of anger. These three abilities in one person reveals one virtue in society, this virtue is the virtue of justice. And this study will tell about how we can reveal the virtue of justice in one society by applying these three abilities and virtues in one person. Because these abilities correspond to three virtues in classical ethics. These three virtues are thinking, chastity and courage. And this study will analyze the thinking, chastity and courage in Ancient Greece Philosophy and Islamic Philosophy.

**Keywords:** Comparison, Classical Ethics, Theories, Ancient Greece Philosophy, Islamic Philosophy

## The Global Economic Impact of Terrorism

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### Abstract

In general, when analyzing the costs of armed conflict, the literature most often relates to civil wars or interstate conflicts. The moment of September 11, 2001 marked the beginning of a new concern in the economy, namely the economic cost of terrorism. Terrorism is a form of conflict in which acts of violence are directed at non-combatants or civilians who are usually unrelated to the political target of the group that committed it. This article analyzes existing data on the costs of terrorist acts that are committed by non-state parties or subnational groups. In this article, we will also look at the impact that terrorism has on the world economy (including both developed and underdeveloped states). We will find that although it has a significant impact on the global economy, the most devastating effects of violence are felt by underdeveloped economies whose poverty and inequality do not allow for a rapid and sustained response to terrorism.

**Keywords:** terrorism, economy, cost, impact, violence

## Characterization in William Shakespeare's Julius Caesar

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### Abstract

Julius Caesar, one of Shakespeare's finest tragedies, has baffled readers, critics and scholars alike for centuries. It still remains one of the most read plays written by William Shakespeare and it has been part of high school curriculum in many English speaking countries world-wide. One of the most important features of it is the ambiguous and ambivalent portrayal of its characters and this paper endeavors to elaborate on the kaleidoscopic characterization in Julius Caesar by exploring its main characters with a special focus on the two tragic heroes of this play: Caesar and Brutus. Also, the paper will deal with some other important aspects of the play such as its political implications, its characteristics as a problem play and a tragedy of moral choice by building upon a wide corpus of critical criticism on Julius Caesar, and finally it will attempt to work out the play's relevance to the 21<sup>st</sup> century readers and audiences.

**Keywords:** kaleidoscopic characterization, tragic hero, political play, problem play, a tragedy of moral choice, monarchy vs. republic, liberty vs. tyranny.

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## Monetary Policy in Argentina from the Inflation of the 1970s to the Default of the New Millennium

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**Valentina Sgro**

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### Abstract

Since the end of World War II, Argentina has been through an uninterrupted series of financial/fiscal and monetary crises that have gradually eroded the credibility of the economic institutions of the country. In the period from 1970 to 1990 alone, the Argentine economy experienced seven currency crises and three banking crises. The main objective of this contribution is to investigate the reasons for economic policy choices that, since the military dictatorship of Colonel Perón, have led the country to default, causing unemployment, the run on banks, popular uprising.<sup>1</sup>

**Keywords:** Monetary policy, Financial Crisis, Argentina.

**JEL Classification:** N16, N26, N46.

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<sup>1</sup> Even though the two authors share the article's setting, please note that paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 are by Valentina Sgro and paragraphs 4, 5 and the introduction are by Vittoria Ferrandino.

## **Possibilities for Modernization of Conciliation Board Procedures in the Countries of Central and Eastern Europe - Online Dispute Resolution and Electronic Communication**

**Balázs Hohmann J.D.**

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### **Abstract**

Conciliation bodies are the main European forums for alternative dispute resolution for consumer disputes, providing an institutionalized opportunity to remedy consumer infringement cases quickly, cheaply and efficiently. The institution has excellent dispute resolution efficiency not only in Hungary, but also at the international level, which greatly contributes to the enforcement of the consumer protection legislation of the countries concerned. The scientific examination of the work of the bodies and the legislation related to them, the number of domestic and international scientific works resulting from them are modest, while the efficient operation of the bodies depends not only on practical and legal factors, but also on the theoretical basis. Although legislative reforms in this area have led to a number of innovations and modernizations, they have left untouched a number of theoretical and practical issues that also pose significant problems in law enforcement, such as the satisfactory settlement of cross-border disputes, electronic communication and even communication, that it is possible to involve artificial intelligence, other software solutions in decision-making or online dispute resolution within the framework of the procedure. Applied research on the operation of conciliation bodies covered bodies and bodies in Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. Due to the large number of consumer legal relations, the significance of these research results in the national economy cannot be considered negligible either. The research supported by the ÚNKP-20-3 New National Excellence Program of the Ministry for Innovation and Technology from the source of the National Research, Development and Innovation Fund.

**Keywords:** consumer disputes, alternative dispute resolution, conciliation bodies, ODR, artificial intelligence.

## **Strengthening the Importance of the Citizen in Territorial Government: A Necessity for Development and Modernization of Albania - A Libertarian Approach to Territorial Issues**

**Gentian Kaprata**

European University of Tirana

### **Abstract**

Albania is a developing country that has embarked on the path of transition from a society of monist governance and centralized planning economy to a society of liberal democracy with free market economy 30 years ago. It is not moving at the pace it intended in the early 1990s, because of the etatist mentality of the country's political elite, but often also of experts in certain sectors. This has happened in these years also in the sector of territorial planning and development, where etatist understandings have impeded the empowerment of citizens in the processes of drafting territorial planning and development decision-making. This has led to development taking place in two different ways, on one hand governments have attempted to control development by forcing citizens to interact with the territory according to the rigid rules imposed by the government, and on the other hand the citizens have carried out construction developments in a fragmented manner, and without any harmony between each other and the obligations of government. In this paper we aimed to build another approach for future development in an Albania aiming at integration into the European Union. This path should be development based on previously adopted territorial planning instruments, drawn up in democratic and parliamentary processes. Governance must understand and accept the new and different role it played 30 years ago in territorial development issues, and recognize citizens as co-actors in the processes of drafting territorial and urban planning instruments.

**Keywords:** individual freedom, government power, classical liberal, citizen empowerment, citizen involvement in planning processes.

## Social Movements in Europe, from the Past to the Present

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### Abstract

Over time, the concept of social movement has evolved as society has changed, but has always implied collective action in the public space. The form of social contestation has changed, according to the conjuncture of each historical period. In 18th century, the transition from the Old Regime to Liberalism provoked movements considered by some authors as “primitive” or “premodern”, as they were spontaneous, sporadic and depoliticized. Industrial society of the 19th century gave rise to the labor movement and trade unionism, which from then on organized the social movements. In the 20th century there were changes and innovation in the collective way of acting, there was the emergence of a series of social movements that differ from the traditional in terms of the objectives and actors involved, such as the pacifist, ecologist, feminist movements, acting on the fringes of parties and unions. The 21st century has witnessed a set of movements that begin on social networks, such as Generation Scratch, Outraged, Occupy Wall Street, Screw the Troika, and quickly outgrow local scales to become global. Through the use of a theoretical and conceptual framework derived from the theories of social movements and taking into account the current transformation of collective action that has been witnessed in the 21st century, we intend to verify if we are facing a new social phenomenon or another phase of “repertoire” change.

**Keywords:** social movements, past, present, evolution, repertoire

## **Decentralization of Government Functions, a European Principle of the Albanian Modernization Process: A libertarian approach to territorial issues**

**Gentian Kaprata**

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### **Abstract**

Albania, for 30 years, has entered the phase of transition from a society organized into a one-party central governing regime to a democratic society of a free market economy. But the pace of moving in this direction and modernizing the country is not the expected one, because the centralized proclamations of the political elite and expertise have not allowed liberal approaches to enter Albanian legislation and governing practices. This has been the case in particular in the sector of territorial planning, where central governments have aimed and managed to not allow the actual decentralization of the governing function of drafting and adopting local territorial planning instruments. This has resulted in a shortage of local instruments, in general, but even when managed to ensure they are presented far beyond the needs, problems and objective local imbalances. This is because their distance mapping from the actual municipality for which they were designed failed to recognize the specifics and characteristics of each of them. The result has been evident; in both cases, planning has been inexistent to drive sustainable, smart and inclusive urban development processes. In this paper we aim to build another approach for future development in Albania, a country which aims at integration into the European Union. This path should be development based on previously adopted territorial planning instruments, drawn up in democratic and parliamentary processes as a local political activity. Central government must understand and accept the new and different role than the one it played 30 years ago in territorial development issues, and that the process of drafting and adopting local territorial planning instruments should be a function of local government itself.

**Keywords:** classical liberalism, etatism, centralism, decentralization, central government, local government, territorial strategy, local instrument of territorial planning