

From Interculturality to Meta-Globalized Migrated Societies. The New Social Media Aspects

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Abstract: *This paper seeks to investigate how new social media have become increasingly challenging tools of our everyday lives in today's meta-globalizing and multicultural societies and attempts also to investigate the impact of using new social media on the intercultural adaptation process. They provide a context where people across the world can communicate, exchange messages, share knowledge, and interact with each other regardless of the distance that separates them.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Around 135,000, or 10% of migrated and educated Greeks, were living abroad (BRAIN DRAIN) and that was before the crisis began. They simply cannot find jobs in a service-oriented economy that depends only on low-paid cheap labor. In Greece we meet “a mosaic of immigrants” that comes from countries with a different cultural, social, economic, historical and political background. It is a fact that such a cultural “attack” led to problems of their coexistence with the native population, that were related to their diversity in areas of our daily life such as, for example, what's their position in the evolution of the country, in the Greek labor market and in the distribution of the national economy as well as their social and financial presence in the developing process of regional/ local communities.

Migration can be described as the movement of people away from one location and towards another, either due to necessity, or attraction to the new environment. In the context of social media, we define two kinds of migration: site migration and attention migration. Social media has shown a considerable growth over the past years. With numerous social networking sites popping up every day and the limited amount of time and resources each person has, social media users have to make decisions on which sites to spend their time. Using a variety of social media sites, we present some interesting migration patterns in order to facilitate further research on solutions which could prevent or encourage such migration. Immigrants are going to go where there are jobs and where the cost of living is relatively low. The issue is that immigration in Greece is actually dropping, thought they are still around 1,200,000 legal and illegal immigrants. In Europe we talk about how we're going to be like USA. We're not going to be like USA, simply because their population-growth rate is going positive. Migrated people are affiliated with the region (localism), but even more with the community they're in. Migrated people they don't prefer to live anymore in mega-regions, they actually prefer living in smaller communities, in order to cut the huge big city's expenses.

2. DISCUSSIONS

Being successful in any commercial, philanthropic, or government enterprise requires anticipating future changes and positioning your organization to address them successfully. These changes can come in many forms, such as changing regulations, technological advances, or changes in consumer demand, based on intercultural and multicultural issues and of course in their social media power. Migration is considered to be a global social phenomenon and, as a result, it is also an intercultural phenomenon. Greece, within twenty years, were changed, in a violent way, from countries with a tradition in the phenomenon of sending out immigrants and also of an influx of refugees into countries of uncontrolled influx of immigrants, but at the same time, of the illegal immigrants with no way out, **and no specific strategic plan**. The post-globalized economy and the technological development remain more than ever marked by the daily diversity of the exchanges and the continuous increase of inequalities both among the economies of the various countries and also among the different cultural and social groups. But the modern conditions for the intercultural relations – which are now careful as far as the mediations and the interactions are concerned – show that it has started, more or less everywhere in the world, a process of recovery of the individual cultures, a fact that is considered to be a precondition for discovering standards of development that are less submitted to the terms (which are) dictated by the global labor market and the violent development. We can assume that the social, political and economic context about the cultural rights constitutes a field of communication and of mutual exchange among people with different cultures. The handling of our concerns as regards the

economic immigrants demands a clear redefinition of our goals. The knowledge and the understanding of the unfamiliar, the tolerant but experiential practices in a multicultural society, with a parallel opening towards the outside world, can provide harmonically cohesive. According to an intercultural approach, a minority's culture is important and demands recognition and acceptance. The importance of a minority's cultural identity is recognized. Recognition and acceptance is attributed to it, without our being controlled from the practices and habits of the dominant, archetypical culture. Nowadays the contacts between individuals that come from different cultural backgrounds as well as linguistic and cultural backgrounds are usual. The intercultural communication is assured through contacts in the working place, economy, science, education, media, entertainment, tourism, but also in the place of immigration, of individuals or populations that they are massively moved as economic immigrants, refugees or people who request asylum. In Greece as well as in the Mediterranean zone we meet "a mosaic of immigrants" that comes from countries with a different cultural, social, economic, historical and political background. It is a fact that such a cultural "attack" led to problems of their coexistence with the native population, that were related to their diversity in areas of our daily life. The cultural decentralization of a nation is not equivalent to a denial of its cultural autonomy but, on the contrary, with self-determination and self-evaluation, it recognizes that its autonomous cultural identity needs to be strengthened and to be expanded by others. Culture defines the language and the way of life, the human relations and the technical means such as the tools, food and clothes as well as the ways of thinking, feeling and perception, the religions, the taboos, the duties, the sexual practices, the ways of entertainment, the traditions, marginalization – racism or even the economy.

The economic activities are performed in order for the economy to work. The economy works in order to meet the needs, the aspirations that are determined and demanded by the society, on the basis of its own viewpoint about everyday life. It includes many other activities that are not taken into consideration by the dominant, economic system, because they don't produce considerable recorded economic wealth. Someone could say that the meta-globalized economic culture is mainly a monetary culture that excludes everything that is non-measurable since the traditional economies are equal to what is the etymology of the word: oikos (house, home) and nomia/ (management), in other words, the management of the household. The intercultural identity of the cities in Greece is also reinforced in the 21st century with the integration of the economic immigrants as well as of their intercultural load in the social, economic and political structure of each modern city. In a cultural approach, we have to bear in mind that the universality of a city doesn't depend only upon the small or the large flow of the people and of their cultural products, but it also depends on the interpretation of the concept of the multicultural management as well as of the intercultural communication, by the people who live in the so-called 'global cities'. In general, it can be said that there are many gaps in the research investigating the effects of immigration on the Greek economy and society. Most attention of researchers has been directed to the effects on the economy, probably because these affects are more obvious and of high interest to most people and to those responsible for the economic policy of the Government and other public organisations. Other areas are much less researched. It is interesting to note that some researchers have studied not the effects of immigration on the Greek economy and society, but rather the situation of immigrants, economic and otherwise, and their relationship with the Greeks. The history of migration flows in and out of Greece since 1950 covers three quite distinct periods. First, the period from the mid 1950's to 1974 which is characterized by net emigration. Second, the period from 1975 to approximately 1990 which is characterized by return migration of previous emigrants and political refugees of the post-war period (1946-1949) who were allowed to return home. Third, the period since 1990, is characterized by massive illegal immigration. This period is characterized by emigration initially to the United States, Canada and Australia (from 1955) and later (1958 onwards) to Western Europe and mainly to West Germany. During this period, 416.000 emigrated to transoceanic countries and 813.000 to West Germany. Emigration to other countries, i.e. Belgium, Sweden etc. was much smaller. Not all of these migrants stayed in their destinations. Many returned within a short period of time. Others returned and left again for the same or for new destinations. In any way, the amount of emigration was very substantial given the size of the population and the labor force of Greece. The volume of gross out-migration had reached a total of about 1155.000 people during this period, which is approximately 13% of the Greek population. Net out-migration is, of course, less but is impressively high.

- The knowledge and the understanding of the different, the tolerant but experiential practices in a multicultural society, with a parallel opening towards the outside world, can provide harmonically cohesive societies. A cultural obstacle is external and it can be overcome when two or more people experience a difference in values, conditions or expectations through the appropriate behaviors. The cultural shock is internal and it is a reaction to an unfamiliar stimulus. The cultural shock can be activated by the experience of someone coming up against a cultural obstacle. The cultural shock is a personal experience while a cultural obstacle is an overall experience that is common to all people. Since 1990 the number of illegal immigrants to Greece has risen dramatically. This inflow of labour into the country is associated with the collapse of the communist regimes in Albania, former Yugoslavia, the former Soviet Union etc. There have been estimates of the size of illegal immigrants ranging from 350.000 to one million. However, the 2001 census of population gives a total number of 762.000 foreigners in the country. It is obvious that the 1990-2000 decade is the opposite side of the 1960-1970 decade.

- The basic statistics of immigrants are as follows: Of the total number of all foreigners, 438.000 (57,5%) are Albanians, 35.000 (4,6%) are Bulgarians and 22.000 (2,9%) are Romanians. The remaining 35% consists of immigrants coming from countries such as (in descending order) Ukraine, Pakistan, Georgia, Moldova, India, Egypt, etc. Of all immigrants to Greece, 413.000 (approximately 54%) have come with the intention to work. Of those, 249.000 are in Greece with their families and 164.000 without. The majority of immigrants, that is 325.000 (or 79%) who come to Greece to work have located themselves in urban areas, whereas the remaining 88.000 have settled in rural areas.

The words ‘social media’ can sound a bit scary for some; they were for me anyway before I started to look into it all. Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and more! However, rather than being anything scary, it is actually a really useful tool for anyone in the world as well migrant people. Intercultural communication takes place when people come together from different cultures. Sounds simple, but it isn’t. Since communicative misunderstandings, such as a particular term spoken, facial expression, gestures, intonation etc., arise from specific culture characteristics, communication across country borders requires special tact and a high degree of sensitivity. Due to global job sharing and increasing migrant mobility as well as the development of new communication technologies we now have more and more contacts between persons of different cultures (email etc.); overcoming ethnocentrism is indispensable: Open yourself to other cultures and get to know the manners and customs of foreign countries. This is possible by travelling to the respective countries AND by collecting expertise in intercultural communication within your own country, e.g. by participating in intercultural workshops or evening classes at the adult education centre. It is also big fun discovering the possibilities of the intercultural communication together with a team of colleagues: How do you say “Hello” for example in other countries? While the Germans are shaking hands, the Mongols touch themselves at the tips of the nose; the Japanese do not touch but bow to each other. The Dutch give three pecks on the cheeks while the Hawaiian people remain silent and stay motionless. No culture, neither, of course, the Greek or other culture, is in danger of being lost or of being assimilated by other cultures as far as there are cultural exchanges and as far as people are searching for their identity and for their otherness in the image of the “other” which is a fact that applies to every multicultural society. The idea of the “intercultural culture” is presented in the humanities with a liberal sense and a democratic dynamic. The different cultures give meaning to the individual culture of each person within the limits of the nation and the collective experience, the intercultural relations and the ex-changes. Each national culture doesn’t differ basically from the rest; however, the way with which the various characteristics are organized differs, articulated in the social process and evaluative placed in the hierarchy. So, the idea of culture requires that we should reach at higher level of its understanding and of its evaluation that are related to values and beliefs, at levels that, basically, are transformed into the closed core of our culture and, undoubtedly, it is more difficult to change. The aesthetic perception of the public is examined under a multicultural and intercultural perspective. It is useful for the people of different cultures to share common aesthetic criteria. Science and tradition are united, the first explores the second and it strengthens the cultural exchanges. The tradition gives form and duration in the human life and with its return it becomes more tolerant and more open in its dialogue with the “other”. Someone cannot fight against racism and xenophobia only at a moral level and with condemnation. We have to study, to verify and also to investigate these problems. The racist tendency is not out of the blue, it isn’t providential and occasional. It is a result of a thought that is based on specific ideas that were developed by intellectuals and then they were injected on the public opinion.

Every form of racism and of xenophobia, for example against the Jews, the Afro-Americans, the Arabs, the Kurds the Palestinians, Roma, and even against the economic immigrants of our countries is a result of a mental process of some certain “intellectual” circles. Racism is reinforced through ideas, theories and viewpoints. However, the thing that should concern us is that the xenophobic climate is moving from the extreme right-wing parties to the relative democratic and extreme left-wing parties having devastating effects on our Mediterranean public opinion but also at an international cultural level. A real intercultural dialogue is possible only if the conditions that concern the equality of the cultural diversities are fulfilled. This view supports and expects the equality of all the people and cultures, showing respect for their different cultural identities. For this reason, it bases its goals on creating situations where there would be freedom and equality, laying the foundations, in this way, for dialogue and consensus among people.

The human community doesn’t recognize or it doesn’t require any physical area, but it aims at the creation of a space where all the cultures will be respected and will have equal opportunities to take into account the cultural contribution. New social media is an important part of migrants because it promotes the interconnectedness and interdependence of our culturally diverse world. Media for social interaction allows for people to communicate and engage with information that is quickly accessible on the Internet. In today’s society, there is an increasing number of Internet users so new social media has become more popular in daily patterns and routines. The communication that occurs in these online contexts promotes interactive dialogues that build understanding of different points of view. “New social media means that everyone is a publisher and everyone is a critic”. People use social media for many reasons. First, the need for connection and interaction with other people is evident. People as well as migrants desire to fulfill a sense of belonging through support from relationships with others. After obtaining physiological and safety needs, people strive to achieve Maslow’s third need of belonging. New social media provide this opportunity where people can communicate with others and belong to different

networks via virtual communities on the Internet. In relation to interacting with others online, people use social media to gain knowledge and learn about different opinions and perspectives of issues, topics, and events. An example of social media that promotes the exchange of messages between people across the world is Facebook. Facebook was created in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg, whose mission was to bring people together with different backgrounds and encourage interaction. There are over 500 million users in the world with a population of 6.8 billion which means that about 1 out of 14 people have a Facebook account. One impact that social media has on intercultural dialogue is providing a common medium for exchanging messages, and many people around the globe can use the Internet to communicate and collaborate. There are more than 70 translations available on the site, and about 70% of users are outside the U.S.A. According to Mark Zuckerberg, "If Facebook were a country, it would be the 6th most populated country in the world." This social networking among numerous countries enriches social lives through ignoring the factor of distance. Social media brings people together with different backgrounds and encourages interaction. It is obvious that in this context of the equality of the diversities, groups of people with a different way of life, through the equality and dialogue, can learn various things one from another and also to build a democracy that would represent all the opposing voices. The defending of the characteristics of the cultures ensures always the answer that is needed in today's society of the misleading which is a fact that will allow them their effective integration and participation in our societies. Cultural differences influence communication, behavior, and values. There are differences in the way that people who identify with different cultures, based on both national identity and gender, manage their communicative behaviors within SNSs (social network sites). The multicultural world is enhanced by the experiences of sojourners, immigrants, and others who successfully make the transition from one culture to another" (Kim, 2001). Intercultural studies focus on the interactions between people from different cultural backgrounds, and according to (Gudykunst, 2003), adaptation is a "dynamic process by which individuals, upon relocating to an unfamiliar cultural environment, establish (or reestablish) and maintain a relatively stable, reciprocal, and functional relationship with the environment" (Gudykunst, 2003). The stages of intercultural adaptation are important to consider when drawing connections to social media use. The four stages are honeymoon, crisis, adjustment, and biculturalism (Chen & Starosta, 2005). During the honeymoon stage people experience initial euphoria with being abroad in a different country. The crisis stage consists of hostility and frustration with living in an unfamiliar culture. Then there is gradual adjustment and recovery, and biculturalism is the full adjustment and adaptation. According to (Kohls 2001), culture shock is the "psychological disorientation most people experience when they move for an extended period of time into a culture different from their own." Culture shock is a distress that everyone feels during intercultural adaptation that can influence their communication and behavior. In addition, communication is an important feature in this intercultural process. Since numerous people migrate to study, work, and live, talking with others before and after is beneficial. Having as much knowledge possible about the host culture and intercultural process influences the adjustment and emotions. "Emotional regulation allows individuals to engage in clear thinking about intercultural incidents without retreating into psychological defenses. If so followers do not have the ability to regulate or control their emotions, they will be unlikely to adjust well because they will be locked into their automatic or habitual ways of thinking and interacting with the world" (Matsumoto et. al, 2006). Having control over emotions affects the ability to engage in learning and understanding, while being more open and flexible in adjusting to living in another culture. "Only through global communication competence can people from different cultures communicate effectively and productively in the globalizing society" (Chen & Starosta, 2005). Thinking globally has become such an integral part of our lives in today's globalizing society as we have become more interconnected and interdependent with cultures around the world (Vicere, 2004). Consequently, the Internet has become one of the most popular media used by immigrants, where they can electronically communicate with their family and friends in their native countries as well as with the local people in the host countries. In an online environment, the host social communication and the ethnic social communication are important components that can facilitate or impede adaptation (Chen, W., 2009). Social media has a social, physical, and cultural influence on intercultural adaptation. The culture of a nation doesn't stop in its physical boundaries, but it is transformed by exceeding the physical boundaries of another nation and this movement is perpetual. The contradiction of the modern world, internal certainty – existential anxiety, is responsible for the existence of the feeling of the constant threat from the cultural, social absence and the lack of communication. The concept of the globalization, however, should not be confused with that of the Interculturality and also neither with the concept of the Multiculturality. Culture is not only knowledge, but intuition and mainly participation. Interculturality is equivalent to the constant quest for the "other", but also to his simultaneous surpassing, it becomes an end in itself. The intercultural quest is constant and it aims at the joining of innumerable cultural combinations. And remember, using your mind is contagious. Don't wait someone else to infect you, be a carrier, because, after all, mind is a terrible thing to waste.

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