PHILOSOPHY OF SHARED SOCIETY

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"Sapere aude. Dare to think."
– Immanuel Kant

Abstract. Insights on *shared society* reflect the nexus between collective actions and durable policy for the common good. The study's core subject is the deeper understanding of the *shared society* in theory and practice. It helps overcome conflicting perceptions and divides. The main focus is on reasoning challenged by dynamics in democratic societies. The article aims to highlight its framework avoiding simplistic variations of main theses, but presenting new insights into the applications of this theory. It examines the ontological essence within cross-cutting varieties and dimensions of its profile. The philosophy of *shared society* is also represented in several practical perspectives. These vectors reflect various motivations and perils as links to practice. These links are: reflections on conflict resolution at municipal level in Germany, electoral participation and vote-buying practices in Bulgaria, EU economic integration and reforms to promote a shared and cohesive living.

Keywords: shared society; democracy; integration; elections; conflict resolution; cleavages

Introduction

Shared society a priori is a universal symbol, an overarching vision for the future and an ideal in its moral foundations. The term is brought into the orbit of applied scientific research, with its broader scope of public policies, relations, norms, practices and attitudes. It is enhancing development of a sustainable democracy, overcoming challenges and crises. The concept entails a transformative potential of integrative processes vs. fragmentation and atomization. It stimulates development and change, adaptation and progress. Like any similar social phenomenon, shared society evolves

from dynamic centrifugal forces. They trigger discontent and conflict and improve by positive integration and collaboration. It maintains adaptability responding to emerging challenges and generating energy for development. It rather stimulates integrity, than conflicts, cleavages and atomization. The inquiry outlines several questions. How can states overcome gaps, inequalities and polarization? How do the counter divides, nurtured by opposing narratives and negative discourse? Why does 'A' often generate a 'non-A' in society, even when all conditions for sustainable and consolidated democracy at place? What is lacking to ensure the flourishing and evolution of a cohesive and integrated model? How to appraise human achievements and envision the progress and development of society? Why are favorable indicators insufficient to maintain peace and democratic values? The main aspects outline the political processes beyond their own conceptualization and reasoning.

Cartography of Meanings and Principles of an Evolving Concept

In the spirit of time with is urgent need of peace, integrity and human understanding, we seek ways beyond disruptions. We reflect the conscious choice of not being just "an island in its entirety" but being "part of the main" (Donne) contributing to its diverse unity. The research aims to explore dimensions of the evolving concept in social sciences of 21st C. and its positive impact. The concept is first defined as an umbrella terms for a society "*not owned by one group, but belongs to everyone". "There is a common shared responsibility to maintain it and make it work for everyone*" (McCartney 2021). In its framework, it is conceived within 3 dimensions. 1) Dignity, rights, and effective empowerment. 2) Shared living or "conviviality" with recognition of pluralism and involvement. 3) Responsibility of all for the common good (Club de Madrid 2011). They provide adaptability and compatibility to local, national, regional levels or ambivalent groups.

Within its philosophical foundations, it is inspired by conceptual contributions from: shared living, moral imperative, equality, common good and fairness, power sharing, multiculturalism, participatory democracy, intentionality, conflict transformation and relationality. These ideas form its philosophical foundations. The concept reveals intricate links to its ancient roots in etymology and diverse applications. Closer in meaning is the term shared life applied by Aristotle, that comes from the word συζῆν (pron. syzin, suzēn). Its etymology evolves from συζάω – v. to live together, n. ζωή – life (human) meaning in Greek, living together, cohabitation. The idea of 'shared living' in Aristotle's philosophy represents conscious, virtuous life and true happiness (eudemonia). It reflects common values that citizens deliberate upon together. Aristotle applied the notion of 'shared living' as a reference

to conscious, virtuous life, and the true essence of happiness (eudemonia). It reflects common values upon which citizens jointly deliberate (Nicomachean Ethics): "by their living together and by conversing and communicating their thoughts to each other" (Aristotle 2009). The philosopher illuminated the idea as the essential foundation of human political life in the polis. As human ability to share one's most vital activities with others (Brill 2020).

In Hebrew the word "society" הרבחה (*HaHevrah*), has also an ancient origin. It shares a common root with friendship, fellowship, connection, community, pronounced (*Hevra*). „Shared" has the same origin as "participation". Today, it is almost a colloquial term among communities. They often use in public discourse and education. People hope it will bring peaceful relations in the Middle-East. Thus, the philosophy of the term opens up new avenues of exploration and cross-cutting insights between ancient and contemporary conceptions. It serves as a bridge between politics and affective bonds that shape communities, challenged by emerging risks and disrupted by internal fractures. Some of its elements relate to prominent topics in social ontology, theory of action, and standard theory of agency. These include analysis on intentions of social groups, collective actions and intentionality, the performative practices (Searle 1995,Tuomela 2007). In the field of ethics, its principles can reveal values and recommendations for the political morality in society. Kant postulated the '*moral compass*' as the guiding principle for community interactions (Kant 1948). The conceptualization of the common good, from the perspective of the pragmatism and John Rawls, contributes to its framework. It offers a sophisticated formulation of maintenance of civic relationships. It provides for "patterns of practical reasoning, as a way of thinking and acting, constituting appropriate form of mutual concern among members" (Raws 1999, Peirce 1998, Finnis 1980). Rawls enlightened the status of 'citizen' under social justice as fairness principle. He outlined the importance of mutual recognition on the basis of this shared status. He considered that this is "what we owe to each other as a matter of justice" (Rawls 1999). The social scientific discussion of theories continues with the concept of 'social unity' in a polity. It brings to the debates "*joint activity approach* and provides a more dynamic understanding and inclusive sense of solidarity" (Sevinc 2022). The phenomenology is another contribution with insights on values and politics as an activity. It contributed with the analysis of solidarity bonds and effective forces of the acts of persons. *"Sharing a community with others and sharing the responsibility for the community with others is the context in which the person is formed and realized* (Scheler 2021). The foundations include also the psychological approach of the '*shared social burden'.* The theories include conceptualization of shared common grounds, sense of belonging and togetherness, national identity and multiculturalism

(Taylor, Habermas 1984). Even though the concept is evolving, it still requires further interdisciplinary contributions. It highlights the scholarship added value from power-sharing in divided societies, resilience, or conflict transformation theories. Another layer in the conceptual framework is the importance of power-sharing in divided societies. It formulates approaches to overcome constrains of identities. The consociational theory represents a form of democracy to resolve a conflict rather than let violent wake of a failed peace process (Lijphart 1969). Divided societies develop „antagonistic segmentation of society, based on terminal identities with high political salience". Social life tends to occur within, rather than across, ethnic cleavages (Lustick 1979). Several concepts also enrich its fundamental layers. Among them is the '*sharing cultur'* of social networks that creates an alternative pathway for citizens in engaging manner. It provides an adaptive capacity towards more sustainable, resourceful, and inclusive mode resources. It depends on the specific local and social design that influence its formation. (Katrini 2018). The *'sharing economy'* contributes with its peer-to-peer practices and principle: "not owned by one, but rather owned by many". The '*knowledge society'* brings in the idea about its capital, "*because the social world is present in its entirety in every* action" (Bourdieu 2005).

The term goes even beyond related theories and existing practices as dialogue, inter-ethnic coexistence, or protection of human rights protection, as a holistic and cross-sectoral approach (Kuttner, Eiran 2021). Ferguson brings in 3 core values or interrelated processes to building practices. They are: recognition, redistribution and representation. He elaborates that values reflect a mindset and political behavior in social interactions, aspired as outcomes collective action (Ferguson 2008). Thus, a key question emerges: *If shared a society is a kind of alternative to a divided one, then what do we need to build it?* The approach focuses on the relationships, collective action practices, and the level of connectedness of all citizens. To some extend, the approach may be accepted as a normative and prescriptive agenda in the programs of institutions. Yet, it is a vision for everyone, highlighting leaders' commitment and responsibility to achieve desired goals. Its reflects policies' measures on arrangements, safeguards, and inter-community development. These principles are essential pillars for the public policy practice especially in EU countries.

These principles are essential pillars for the public policy practice especially in EU countries. They are considered a focal point for agenda-setting of the UN, OECD, Club de Madrid. However, they are truly applied in local practices and initiatives as priorities for future generations. Shared society advances strategies of political leaders, like the Plan for Prosperity and Reforms in Peru. It is also a guiding principle in the campaign of British

Prime Minister Teresa May, after Brexit. In the 2017 governmental program, it presents a focus on responsible governance. It promotes "a society that respects the bonds of citizenship and strong institutions; a society with a commitment to fairness at its heart" (May 2017). Civic sector education initiatives and youth engagement aim to move beyond current relationships. These include Shared Island-Ireland/UK, Givat-Haviva Project-Israel, Sharing Society-Bilbao, Parlamentarios-Peru. They also aspire to overcome fluidity and fragmentation through collaboration. They aim to promote active participation and deliberation. A deeper understanding of differences provides an incentive for a certain paradigm'-shift. It moves towards a relational form of collaboration. In this mode of cooperation the "*partners co-construct their reality as equal participants continuously*" (Kuttner 2017). Practices advance a balance between government and citizens, in a responsible and informed decision-making process. They take into account the legitimacy and positive outcomes, based on joint contribution of stakeholders, rather than partial interests of some groups.

The *shared society* approach from a peace and conflict studies perspective

This contribution follows with reflection on shared society in peace and conflict studies. These reflections are based on research on this concept in German municipalities (Hussak et al. 2021; Groppe/Hussak 2023). The main argument is that, the approach is an integrative and multi-level model in increasing polarization. It is suitable for municipalities where conflict resolution is important, but has its limits.

Long-term data show that polarization has increased in Europe and worldwide, particularly in the last decade (Casal Bértoa, Rama 2021; McCoy et al. 2022). Friedrich Ebert Foundation's Mitte Study on anti-democratic attitudes in German population, reveals that right-wing populist attitudes is gaining ground. They have reached mainstream society (Zick et al. 2019). Among other things, polarization leads to an increase in conflicts and violence. It brings a decline in the functioning of democracy and governance, a division of society as a whole (McCoy et al. 2022). It has negative consequences for individuals, society, and democracy (Carothers and O'Donohue 2019). According to McCoy et al. (2018), polarization is a "process whereby the normal multiplicity of differences in a society increasingly aligns along a single dimension" – that is relationships between individuals, society and the political system are disrupted and rigidly opposed due to a loss of trust and a lack of communication.

These effects of polarization are also central to peace and conflict studies. They provide valuable methods for dealing with conflict and violence. In

particular, the concept is useful for dealing with conflicts in polarized and divided societies. Conflict transformation initiates reflexive processes on behaviors, attitudes, and socio-political structures. It assumes that behavior, different attitudes, and structures are seen as phenomena that arise through the (inter)action spaces of individuals and groups, which could also be transformed. Thus, its methods contribute to transforming the one-dimensionality of polarization. According to Botes (2003), "Conflict transformation refers to the process of moving from conflict-habituated systems to peace systems." The focus lies on "systemic change or transformation" (ibid.), with different emphases on where transformation is applied. These range from transforming actors, issues, rules, and structures (Väyrynen 1991) to the personal, relational, structural, and cultural levels (Lederach 2000). The levels of analysis can contribute to addressing conflicts and violence. These contexts need a broader approach, as discussed in the below.

Shared society concept developed in increasing political polarization, growing inequalities, tensions and violence. as an integrative socio-political strategy aimed at developing an inclusive society. It describes a society where equal opportunities, protection against discrimination, participation, respect for diversity and individual dignity are fulfilled at all levels of society (McCartney 2021). Starting point is thus a positive approach. Its founding principles are integrity, equality, anti-discrimination, and participation. Despite or rather because of tensions. It sees diversity to overcoming exclusion, violence, inequality, and polarization. Thus, the approach overlaps to some extent with conflict transformation approaches. It goes beyond existing concepts by addressing society and the political system as a whole at all levels (Kuttner and Eiran 2021). The following example at municipal level illustrates the differences in approach.

Cities are key actors in the political system. They have direct connection to people, define and put in place policies at the local level. Tensions related to polarization can also manifest open conflicts at the local level. This immediacy requires an appropriate and systemic approach to polarization. The approach responds to erupting conflicts and different structural city and regional levels. Thus, this approach can support cities to overcome violent tensions and polarization. It also supports cities in analyzing barriers to a *shared society* and drivers of polarity.

Three key dimensions stem from the above principles at the city level. They are: joint structures, enabling environment, and integrity. Joint structures reveal the responsibility for equality and diversity in political structures. They show protective policy instruments, procedures, and political frameworks against discrimination and diversity. An enabling environment

is the progress towards equal access to resources and opportunities. At the socio-economic level it includes support structures for marginalized groups. Social cohesion is the progress towards a shared vision through interaction, political participation, and reconciliation of divergent interests and hostilities through conflict transformation forums and activities and structures that seek to support the interaction of people with different interests. The three dimensions are interrelated in the implementation of such policies (Hussak et al. 2021)

Clearly, ongoing and inclusive conflict transformation and community dialogue forums are important tools for cities against polarization. Yet, there is a need for more proactive strategies to address the underlying drivers of polarization. This approach can support cities for inclusive strategies and self-reflective learning processes. It will provide guidelines to dismantle their discriminatory structures and engage with diversity.

Electoral Political Behavior: Value Orientations of People Voting Under Pressure as an indicator of the state of the shared society

A shared society requires people to share common values. These values shape people's political views and behavior. Electoral participation is the most important and prominent aspect of citizens' behavior. Election violations in vote-buying and pressure have become a prominent issue in Bulgaria in last decades. International and national monitoring experts focused on electoral integrity in the country. They published several reports and analyses on the nature of the violations, determining trends and factors. The experts' attention was understandable, because it undermines public trust in representative institutions. It poses a significant security risk for citizens and the democratic model of Bulgaria. (Kashukeeva-Nusheva 2015) We should explore this problem through the *shared society* concept. The perils to democracy create deep divisions and destroy the anatomy of society.

In 2023, a research team conducted a survey among voters involved in vote-buying practices, corporate and family voting. The team aimed to investigate motives and cultural incentives voting behavior determination. This is regardless of citizens' environment. The main focus was on 3 indicators: 1) First, mechanisms that exert pressure on these voters. 2) Second, psychological experiences of people who are under pressure. 3) Third, attitudes towards key value categories and dilemmas that matter in politics. These values include freedom of choice, security, dignity, common good and self-interest. They include as well the role of the community and the place of the individual in it; respect for democracy, the rule of law, and political leaders. The main purpose was to discover the psychological experiences of people. We aimed to explore the orientations towards value categories mentioned above. We also studied the

correlation between value orientations and vote buying practices – corporate and family vote. We applied two research tools in the research process. The first is a face-to-face interview with guiding questions about the pressure mechanisms. The second – psychological experiences and evaluations of the respondents. Second, a survey with a questionnaire with closed questions. It aimed to determine several aspects. First, the hierarchy in the motives determining the electoral behavior of the respondents. Second, choice in dilemmas – "freedom /security", "collectivism/individualism", "indulgence/ power distance". (Maslow 1987, Hofstede 2010).

The survey showed an unequivocal reaction of all respondents. They fear and worry about revealing that there is a pressure to vote against their free will. People's psychological experiences, when pressured in the electoral process, vary. They may feel fear, humiliation, despair, or a cynical attitude toward reality. Their perceptions reveal readiness to oppose pressure and reveal truth about pressure. They may either reveal complete indifference. Sample results show significant differences in the political culture of minority Roma community. We compare these differences to the rest of the respondents in 4 themes. They are as follows: 1) *Perceptions of individual independence. 2) Dependence on the community. 3) Importance of integrity in the electoral process. 4) Impact of institutions.* It is important to emphasize the potential of differences to provoke significant polarization. They can also compromise the possibilities of a vibrant shared society. The results highlighted two dominant types of phenomenon of "vote-buying and voting under-pressure". The first type is the reaction of the helpless person, not subject of his life, but the object of someone else's will. According to it, human dignity comes to the first plan. It underlines that voter is not respected as a free human with own will, rationality, and feelings. In this reaction, a person feels humiliated and in doubt whether he can have self-respect. We can define this reaction as internal immigration.

The risks to shared society emerge from isolation of people and lack of public trust. Feeling of desperation, hopelessness, refusal of active participation and self-control are follow-ups. We defined the second type of reaction as the reaction of the cynic person. According to respondents, the electoral process is 'just a deal'. The focus is on self-interest and the search for security in the material and physical sense of the word. There is a strong refusal to reflect on the common good. The respondents do not accept electoral fraud for dishonest politicians. They do not want to believe that practices contradict honesty, justice, and dignity. The survey shows that this reaction is dominant among minority community.

The perils to the shared society are two-fold. The first relates to strengthening and affirming opportunistic attitude to the common good. It

also reflects understanding that each person must contribute to the common good. The second one relates to polarization intensification and outbursts of extreme nationalist manifestations. Here, the main risk concerns the spread of stereotypical understandings. They refer to minority perceptions not to share values of freedom, human dignity, free political choice, and integrity. Citizens draw two conclusions. First, that behavior undermines trust in politics and destroys democracy. The corrupt politicians come to power with the help of bribed voters. Second, that citizens can protect democracy by excluding the minority from political life. This conclusion is paradoxical, as it views democracy protection by non-democratic means. Such an attitude represents a serious threat to democratic development. It also threatens the philosophy of the shared society. We find more significant differences in the answers on values that are moral barrier to vote-buying in elections (see Table 1).

Table 1. Why should a person not sell their vote in elections or be pressured to vote against his/her will?

Citizens selling their vote/ voting under pressure	*Citizens demonstating intolerance to vote buying*
1. person will lose self-respect	1. person will elect politicians who will not respect law and will work against public interest
2. person will eventually lose his/her rights and freedom	2. corrupt politicians will come to power and will get the money back from society
3. person will lose his/her human dignity	3. eventually lose rights and freedom
4. corrupt politicians will come to power and will get the money back from society	4. person will lose his/her human dignity
5. person will elect politicians who will not respect law and will work against public interest	5. person will lose self-respect
6. not democratic, does not correspond to personal political views and will destroy democracy	6. not democratic, does not correspond to personal political views and will destroy democracy

People who face pressure and vote buying may lose self-respect and human dignity. They also risk losing personal rights and freedoms. In their minds, values relevant to the common good remain in the background. People intolerant of vote-buying attach paramount importance to integrity of politics. They also focus on acting towards achieving the common good, protecting the rule of law and democracy.

The survey results show that vote-buying and pressure in elections threaten democratic development. This phenomenon undermines public trust in the representative institutions. It also creates prerequisites for deepening tendencies of violating fundamental rights and freedoms. This creates new 'red lines'. It increases polarization. It has the potential to hinder practical implementation of the philosophy of shared society. The study's results provide grounds for further analysis and conclusions. They show potential for strategic actions in several directions. These include: 1) introducing civic education programs in schools. 2) Improving literacy in minority communities. 3) Investing in small settlements to fight hopelessness and provide opportunities for people.

The Philosophy of Shared Society in EU Economics

The analytical perspective of *shared society* is also relevant to the EU economics. The European Coal and Steel Community (1951) and the next two communities of Rome, contribute to conflict transformation in Europe. The internal market and currency development contribute to cohesive society in the EU. The Green Deal, Digital Compass, Economic and Monetary Union reforms continue this process. The EU economic integration and reforms are a model for regional organizations around the globe. Thus further expanding the opportunities for the development of a *shared society*.

The definition is consistent with the basic tenets of the EU integration process. The following table illustrates the Club de Madrid' s definition and the EU founding treaties, values and principles (Official Journal of the EU).

Table 2. Comparison between the definition of shared society
and EU integration process

Definition of shared society of the Club De Madrid	*European Union integration process concept and values*
A Shared Society is a cohesive society.	The social policy and the cohesion policy are among the core common policies of the European Union. The development of highly competitive social market economy that aim at full employment and progress is one of the EU core values. Another principle of the EU is that the Union shall promote integrity.
It is stable, safe. It is where all those living there feel at home.	One of the EU main principles is that the Union shall offer to its citizens an area of freedom, security and justice. A core value of the EU is that the Union shall promote peace, its values and the well-being of its people. Another value of the EU is that the Union shall contribute to peace, security and sustainable development. The Union shall promote also solidarity.
It respects everyone's dignity and human rights while providing every individual with equal opportunity.	The Union shall combat exclusion and discrimination. It shall promote justice and protection. It shall promote also equality between women and men. The text of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. The development of the single market. The establishment of the single currency and the Economic and Monetary Union. The EU common competition policy, ensuring equal opportunities.
It is tolerant. It respects diversity.	United in diversity is the motto of the European Union. Another core EU value is that the Union shall respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity. The Union shall ensure that Europe's cultural heritage is safeguarded and enhanced.

A shared society is constructed and nurtured through strong leadership.	The European Council is the EU institution that defines the general political direction as well as the priorities of the Union. The European Parliament represents the interests of the European citizens. The members of this parliament are directly elected by the EU citizens. The other EU institutions also ensure a strong leadership in the Union.

Sources: Club de Madrid, 2011; Treaty on the European Union and Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union

The establishment of European Communities in the 1950's aims to bring economic and social prosperity in the European Union. Building a Coal and Steel Community, serves as conflict resolution for peace and stability in the European continent. The integration of the Economic Community and EU internal market is another achievement that helps to build this model in the Union. Among the cornerstones of that market are free movement, European citizenship, and EU workers' social rights. The EU internal market freedoms - of goods, services and capital, contribute further to the EU integration process (Shikova 2011). All these freedoms and EU terms allow a smooth establishment of shared society in the Union. The single currency of the Union also aims to contribute to the shared society in the EU. It complements the effects and achievements of the internal market. In fact, the completion of EU single market in the early 1990's enhanced the need and the efforts to establish of the Euro as a single currency. Although, only 20 out of the EU-27 members have adopted the euro, we should remember that the Euro is meant to be the single EU currency (Juncker 2017). The Euro is the second most popular currency in global trade and foreign exchange markets. It ranks high in global financial transactions, capital and foreign exchange reserves. Currently, around sixty countries and territories outside the EU peg their currencies to the Euro or even use it as their own currency. These countries are: Montenegro, Kosovo, Andorra, San Marino, Monaco, Vatican and others (Council of the EU; ECB 2023). These facts ease the stabilization of the global economic and foreign exchange relations.

The current EU reforms aim to enhance further the European integration process. In fact, they also contribute further to the spreading of the concept within the EU. One of these horizontal reforms is the European Green Deal (EC). This policy has an ambitious goal that Europe becomes the first climate-neutral continent. As a cross-sectoral policy, it develops measures in the energy, transport, agriculture, taxation sectors in EU. The digitalization in the European Union is another key reform to bring tangible results soon. The impact of post-pandemic recovery fostered further the EU digital single market and digital society. The European Commission

Digital Compass 2030 is the main focus of the current EU reforms in the digital sphere (EC 2021). The compass explores the European way for the current Digital Decade. The EU policy in digitalization also contribute for establishment of shared society in the Union. It aims to develop a cohesive economic model and provide equal opportunities in the digital area. Economic and Monetary Union reforms are important milestone for fostering the EU integration. Fiscal union development and integrated fiscal rules among EU member states are some of the measures. The European Semester and stronger coordination of economic policies of the member countries is another one. Another ‚brick' in the EU construction is the establishment of a financial union with the common banking and capital markets (EC 2015). Current reforms in the EU integration process and these achievements have wider importance for Europe. have a significance not only on the European continent. They serve as a model for regional integration in many other parts of the world, making the concept even easier to spread around the globe.

Conclusion

The shared society as a category of analysis and as a social practice refers to the issues of social transformation and political cooperation for the sustainability of democratic political systems. This serves as one of the responses to fragmentation, cleavages, inequalities, discrimination and polarization. Examples of local initiatives illustrate the possible positive effect on the global social environment through a "butterfly effect". Shared society may "tilt the balance" towards an equilibrium and improve human lives in the *longue durée* (Braudel/Wallerstein 2009).

Socialization in a social environment based on the values of the shared society reproduces the attitudes towards mutual concern and responsibility of citizens in conditions of effective policies for social inclusion. The philosophy of the shared society is not only a conceptual being, it has its multidimensional manifestations in social practice. This contributes to social integrity and well-being for all.

Acknowledgements

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