



OPINION¹

from Prof. Svetlozar Kirilov, PhD, Sofia University .

(*scientific position, scientific degree, name, surname, educational / scientific institution*)

for obtaining the educational and scientific degree "Doctor" in scientific field 3.5. Social Communications and Information Sciences.

with a dissertation on the topic: "Activism and Slacktivism: Effectiveness of achievement of social causes (Civil society in Bulgaria, 2013-2022)" ,

presented by Zarina Vasileva, full -time / part-time / free doctoral student in the Department Press-Journalism and Book-Publishing of the Faculty of Journalism and Mass Communication

with supervisor Prof. Greta Dermendzhieva, PhD

I. Evaluation of the qualities of the dissertation text

The doctoral thesis of Ms. Zarina Vasileva has been focused on significant problem, offers valuable reflections and demonstrates good analytical level. The position of the author is clearly defined and supported by evidence in the development of the text. Zarina Vasileva sheds light on both positive and negative understanding of slacktivism interpreted as activity related to social causes, which initially is online. She argues that slacktivism can be construed positively: "...slacktivism is not lack of activism but a new type of activism, which causes social changes and can lead to achievement of personal goals... Slacktivism is not lack of personal act...it is conscious behavior and... achieves specific outcomes" (p. 9 of the PhD thesis). Research limitations are correctly mentioned.

The dissertation is based on solid theoretical foundations. Zarina Vasileva discusses a variety of theories about human activity in the first chapter. The range of theories is very broad and it rightly serves to support the reflections of the author about human activity in online environment. The author sheds light on negative definitions of slacktivism as "activities, which support social or political causes in a way that does not requires much efforts and does not attain real results" (p. 23). However, the PhD thesis utilizes positive understanding of slacktivism as deliberate behavior, which leads to valuable social outcomes.

The text contains interesting review of theoretical approaches to civil society and its historical development in Bulgarian lands – charitable and education societies, etc. The doctoral

¹ Note: The text in italics offers reference points for evaluating the research results. Recommended volume of the opinion - 2-3 standard pages



candidate also analyses newer campaigns in the Internet and correctly demonstrates possible negative consequences related to disinformation and manipulation, such as protests against the Istanbul Convention, National Strategy about Children, disinformation related to vaccines and COVID-19.

The third chapter analyses two specific types of civic activity: protests and charity. The light is cast on a variety of protests since the late socialism in Bulgaria in the 1980s. Specific attention is devoted on protests after the advent of the Internet. The acts of voluntary help and charity are discussed as well as positive effects of online campaign for help and donations in the cases of flooding in the village of Biser (2012), Varna and Dobrich (2014) or support for Ukrainian refugees.

The doctoral candidate emphasizes as her conclusion that “digital technologies does not influence civil society to be lazy and to react only online” (p. 277). On the basis of theoretical reflections and empirical data about online initiatives for social causes, Zarina Vasileva outlines that the digital infrastructure creates opportunities for new types of activities, which can achieve positive social outcomes. She also concludes that personal causes, especially those related to charities and healing of children, have more chances to be supported compared to social causes.

II. Contributions of the dissertation research

One of the contributions of the doctoral candidate is her analysis of factors that cause whether online activities would have positive or negative effect for society. Among these factors she underscores online information to be true and the level of media literacy in particular society.

Zarina Vasileva analyses concrete campaign in the Internet in favor of social causes, especially related to charity and medical treatment of children and adults and identifies factors on which depends the success of campaigns. Knowing these factors can be used for securing success of future campaigns supporting noble causes.

The study of interactions between social online networks and traditional media is another contribution of the doctoral candidate. Many of social campaigns begin online, in social networks but Zarina Vasileva rightly argues that their success to great extent depends on participation of traditional media (press, radio, television), which are more prestigious and have reputation of valuable sources of information. Online campaign are more effective when traditional media also published the information from social networks and when professional journalists contribute to the writing and publishing of texts that appear in social networks. The author analyses concrete cases of interaction between social networks and traditional media in recent campaigns.

III. Notes and recommendations

If the candidate decides to publish her dissertation as a monograph, I would recommend more analytical approach in presenting concrete social campaigns. However, by and large, the dissertation demonstrates good analytical level and solid grounding of conclusions.



IV. Publications and participation in scientific forums

Participation of the doctoral candidate in academic forums and submitted publication are sufficient and fulfilled requirements for awarding of academic degree.

V. Conclusion

The doctoral dissertation of Ms. Zarina Vasileva is valuable, contains important ideas and arguments, and contributes to the studies of online communication and journalism. The author seemingly possesses active civic position, which also adds to the value of the text. My final assessment of her work is positive and I will approve decision Zarian Vasileva to be awarded with the educational and scientific degree "Doctor".

Jury member: Prof. Svetlozar Kirilov, PhD

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