

Cloakroom communities and the cyberspace: Towards a concept of “pseudo-environmental” niche

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Abstract

Debates about the so-called ‘virtual’ communities and ‘virtual’ identities most of the time revolve around concepts as disintegration, spread of cynicism, estrangement, alienation, in-authenticity and the likes. Authors that base their theories primarily on the new technologies often tend to point at the social isolation of the individual and other peculiarities of technology which presumably lead towards increase in individualization and furthermore have long-term devastating influences on what is traditionally thought of as *community*. Such outlooks are overlooking other aspects of social life and should be subject to serious criticism about their technological-determinism. One of the main purposes of this paper is moving beyond and presenting a wider outlook on the new technologies, like the internet, through changes in production and contemporary capitalism. This is elaborated through imagined communities of Benedict Anderson and followed by a short sketch of Zygmunt Bauman's work on these issues. He is one of the first authors to point out that most of the spaces built for consuming paradoxically lead towards isolated experience, even though they are collective *per se*. It is therefore urgent to ask ourselves whether the individualized instrumental networking which mostly forms fragile communities and offers several optional and changeable identities is really a change in itself, or a symptom of other vast social changes in the post-Fordist capitalism. Can this be seen only as a radicalization in the development of these processes? In the second part a concept of pseudo-environmental niche is proposed, which could be useful for understanding contemporary changes and reactionary communitarian responses that are proposing a return of ‘genuine’ communities. This is done through theorization of ‘worldliness’ as lately conceived by Paolo Virno. This is followed by deconstruction of mythological aspects of community life and a proposition to revise our understanding of community. Question of community is in author’s view an eminent question of politics and democratic life.

Key Words: Cloakroom communities, imagined communities, identity, Zygmunt Bauman, Paolo Virno, pseudo-environment, worldliness, post-Fordism, capitalism.

1. Introduction

When talking about new technologies and the internet, one can see a standard pattern known from before.¹ Internet is still regarded either as a possible saviour or, in a more pessimistic view, as something that will only make things worse, further disintegrate communities and so on. This paper rejects both these views as inadequate, but does acknowledge them as important indicators of where does the society stand and what could be seen as the main social antagonisms in it. In my view, these antagonisms can be tackled only by political means in the broadest and most democratic sense of these words. When approaching them from other perspectives, there is a big danger of somehow mythologizing them and providing inappropriate, even reactive solutions.

Conceptualizing ‘community’ has always been a slippery terrain, which is one of the reasons why I will be not offering any ‘proper’ definitions of what it should mean; I am however opposed to communitarian understanding that at least implicitly regards community as some kind of homogeneous amalgam. As it will become clear, I contend that this is a regressive response to the dangers of the ‘world’. We can also see another, utopian conceptualization of the ‘virtual’ community; by this view, the ‘virtual’ is somehow separated from the ‘real’, creating another world. As this can in fact never be realized, this view at the end of the line just avoids tackling (or at least trying to properly approach) those problems.

2. From pseudo towards imagined communities

James R. Beniger’s concept of pseudo-community is often reckoned as a pessimistic outlook on the consequences of the new media for traditional communities. His concept is in essence questioning impersonal communication and idealizing face-to-face relationships, while mass media and other developments in technology have supposedly started to erode intimate community relationships, sincerity and authentic closeness distinctive of the *Gemeinschaft*.² Interpersonal relations are suddenly confused with mass messages, and for Beniger, “the change constitutes nothing less than a transformation of traditional community into impersonal association - toward an unimagined hybrid of the two extremes that we might call *pseudo-community*”.³ Besides being completely outdated because of interactivity as an elemental part of digital communication,⁴ Beniger’s theory should be put under high degree of scrutiny because of its technological determinism. Technology as such is not autonomous and especially does not arise from social vacuum, so there is a need to look at the wider structural changes in the society that stimulate or at least parallel developments in technology.

It should be noted however that consequences allegedly brought in by technology and supposed in-authenticity of social relations that are mediated through technology, still hold firm grip on how people understand the internet and virtual spaces. This technological determinism resonates especially in the popular and journalistic discourses, where social relations on-line are still considered as something like a *loony* product of person's imagination. As I will try to point out through this paper, the virtual-real dichotomy is in fact completely false and this question should be approached from a different perspective. To talk about *virtual* community can also be viewed as somehow odd and brings to the fore many paradoxes which so commonly plague different conceptions of 'community'.

Benedict Anderson's 'Imagined communities' are well known amongst authors writing about virtual communities, as they are paving way to look at them as a construct which has its origins in communication.⁵ There is no doubt of Anderson's exceptional originality in this case, as for him "the most important thing about language is its capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect particular solidarities".⁶ Useful term for describing this is "communification", communication can be according to this view formative for community; people without direct interpersonal relations imagine themselves as members of community through communication of symbols and cultural artefacts of a particular kind, which can arouse deep and strong attachments.⁷ For Anderson all of the communities are imagined, perhaps even those that are most tightly knit together; they should be distinguished by the style in which they are imagined, not by their genuineness or falsity.⁸ One should make no mistake however, on the one hand imagined should not be confused with imaginary, and on the other hand Anderson points out that "the imagined world is visibly rooted in everyday life, [...] fiction seeps quietly and continuously into reality, creating that remarkable confidence of community in anonymity which is the hallmark of modern nations".⁹

Anderson's approach could in its basics be regarded as social constructionism, similar to Anthony Cohen's, who outlined his views on the concept of 'community' in his book 'The Symbolic Construction of Community'.¹⁰ According to Graham Day, "the social constructionist spotlight is turned more on the ways in which communities are brought into being through the interpretive activities of their members, and registered among the concepts which they use in everyday talk and interaction".¹¹ This is important, as subjective dimensions of community creation and existence are pushed to the fore, while Cohen also insists that there should be no assumptions regarding homogeneity of individual meanings about them.

3. There is no 'virtual' community

This *everydayness* is also of considerable importance when we approach the problems concerning the cyberspace. As Mark Nunes has shown, we can find a lot of similarities between the questions concerning 'space' and problems with the conceptualization of community.¹² Drawing from the findings of Henry Lefebvre, Nunes is trying to re-approach the modern dichotomies by showing that space is not a thing, but basically a social process. Consequently, cyberspace is not where we go with technology, but something that we live. As Nunes eloquently puts it, "the user interacts with networked technology as a medium, rather than as a computational device".¹³ Much of the latest social events should serve as a prime example of how internalized and naturalized amongst its users computer mediated communication already is.

Moreover, it is highly disputable to even debate about 'virtual' communities as such. Either there is in fact no such thing as a *Virtual community* or this is probably the first example in the Western history that a community, which is imagined through a specific type of media or technology, is also so widely perceived and named after this same '*product*' enabling the imagination. Nobody becomes a part of a 'virtual', but of a certain, very specific kind of community. 'Virtual' community should after all be nothing else than community in its own world on the internet, right? Is there a TV community? And how could these communities be under any circumstances real, if they are apparently in fact virtual, which is almost a binary opposition of the real, the (so to say) non-real? The word alone carries with itself an obvious connotation of something that is fictional and it is quite perplexing to still find these debates go on. There either is a community or there is not, because they are all going through certain processes of imagination. In fact, we could say that these are just upgraded 'apparatuses' enabling the unconscious imagination process. No community is separated from the 'real' social circumstances; they might just be trying to somehow avoid them or suppress them in the background.

For Vincent Mosco, "it is when technologies [...] cease to be sublime icons of mythology and enter the prosaic world of banality - when they lose their role as sources of utopian visions - that they become important forces for social and economic change".¹⁴ This time is, at least in my view, for most people using them, already a long gone history. Computer (the same as mobile phone) and the internet have already become 'invisible' for its users in their everyday use, contributing to the imagining process.

Artificial contrast between the two supposedly separated 'worlds' is fundamentally mistaken, as virtual is never autonomous or independent, it is instead always dependent (through physical structures, socio-economic and socio-cultural processes, languages, everyday life and existence etc.) and merely another part or aspect of the everyday world.¹⁵ Drawing from Nunez's conclusions we could say that it is exactly the cyberspace which can serve as

the best example of the power of communication itself, for if it is to carry any force it *must* have some ‘material’ consequences:

Communication *takes place* as a set of relations, one that *involves itself* in the medium. [...] Cyberspace is enacted and articulated in the relational interactions of individuals involved in CMC, and mapped as a nexus of material and semiotic processes. The problem of space posed by cyberspace foregrounds the degree to which the spaces of everyday life in a network society are produced by a dynamic relation of material and semiotic processes.¹⁶

There is a relational connection and mutual influence between material form, conceptual structure (e.g. communication, utterances, semiotic structure) and lived practice (e.g. everyday life, language context, experience) which for example enables our own understanding of space as a social product. This conception goes beyond dichotomy between materiality and metaphoricity that has plagued the modern imagination: this is a dialectic that cannot be separated from the everyday world and its practices. Much of the same could be claimed for our comprehensions of ‘community’. There cannot be a community which on the one hand has no chance of seriously changing our everyday lives, and on the other hand does not reproduce itself through this same everyday living; community which at least potentially has no effect on material conditions of our common being; and there is no community that can exist without communication in the broadest sense of this word. Community, like (cyber)space, is a result of these inseparable relations.

Many boundaries of different communities according to Cohen exist only in the eyes of their members, as they share the same symbols through certain cultures, but give them particular meanings that may or may not be seen to the people ‘outside’ or even in the same way between themselves. These symbolic meanings can be of special importance to every member and consequently help to maintain the existence of a particular community. Boundaries, which are constituted through symbols and concepts, form what we could call ‘special’ communities, and they can also be mediated through the internet. There is something special about every particular community and this makes it distinctive for their members who can quickly internalize its life and culture. Communities are therefore largely based on subjective experiences of their members, on the language and communication of symbols which keeps communities alive. People express themselves and unconsciously believe in the actual existence of a certain community.¹⁷

It is a fact that most of the communities will never be as strongly connected and taken-for-granted as the communities of the national states

were; but it is says a lot that even nations are historically imagined. As I will argue in the next chapter, time of these given identities and communities may already be gone, they have both become more changeable and a part of a personal project. But whilst communities indeed are subjectively constituted, we should under no circumstances forget about before-mentioned wider structural frameworks in the society that are either aiding the existence of solid, 'inbred' natural communities, or latently working against them.

4. Cloakroom communities in the time of liquid modernity

To expose the structural outline which is typical of the contemporary society, we will use Zygmunt Bauman's sociology of liquid modernity that can lay good grounds to our understanding of the vast social transformations that have happened in the last decades. This is of course not to say that Bauman's concepts are flawless or not worthy of critique.

Even though Bauman started his work in the last decade of the previous millennia adopting the concept of post-modernity, he later more or less refuted this bankrupt notion and denied most of the emancipatory possibilities of the post-modern authors, while also acknowledging that "capitalism and modernity live on, rather, in the permanent revolution of liquid modernity".¹⁸ He carried on with his research adopting the metaphor of 'liquidity', still stressing much of the same urgency for the individual freedom and social plurality as before. The latter part of his work is perhaps best signified by his book 'Liquid modernity', where he acknowledges that revolutionizing is not a break with routines like it was before, but has become a normal practice of contemporary society. It is indicated by flexibility, insecurity, uncertainty, unsafety, and precariousness. Stable orientation points and reliable reference frames have, according to Bauman, become almost non-existent: "the destination of individual self-constructing labours is endemically and incurably undetermined, is not given in advance, and tends to go numerous and profound changes".¹⁹

This means that most of the people do not know where exactly do they stand; it is much easier to change form, the same as it goes for liquids, than to keep the planned life-patterns in linear paths towards a certain goal. These changes in social structure also leave very visible marks on communities and identities, Bauman insists. Identity has become centre of attention for individuals in liquid modernity, they have become a personal project; people buy them in identity-supermarkets and try to avoid any fixations, carrying them "like a light cloak ready to be taken off at any time".²⁰ Similar arguments stand for communities that are being more and more connected (via memberships) to personal identities. Following Bauman's argument, we could say they are surrogates of communities, which are metaphorically named 'cloakroom communities', maintaining that they need a spectacle with either ecstasy or panic to hold together for a very short

time. Their temporality and briefness means they add little new quality to life as they last as long as the excitement of a certain performance. Their quantity therefore replaces any possibilities of quality.²¹

These are ghost communities, phantom communities, ad hoc communities, carnival communities - the kinds of communities one feels one joins simply by being where others are present, or by sporting badges or other tokens of shared intentions, style or taste [...] it is the 'momentary *experience* of community' that counts.²²

Even though communities are becoming more and more like projects, this short outline should not be seen as overtly pessimistic prospect for the future. As a robust critic of modernity, Bauman defies oppressiveness of traditional conceptions of communities that are very commonly idealized as some lost model that should be retrieved. Unity, homogeneity, and sameness cannot be found in his conceptual repertoire; on the contrary, this is by no means the type of ideal community we should be searching for. It should consist of reflection, criticism, experimentation and never be immune to argument; no agreement should ever be 'natural' and 'self-evident'. Changes in the consumerist society are therefore not necessarily a regression for the 'community' according to Bauman; they are just a different type of something we ought to avoid in our quest for a safer and liberated life.²³

Community of common understanding, even if reached, will therefore stay fragile and vulnerable, forever in need of vigilance, fortification and defence. People who dream of community in the hope of finding a long-term security which they miss so painfully in their daily pursuits, and of liberating themselves from the irksome burden of ever new and always risky choices, will be sorely disappointed.²⁴

5. Human nature between the "environment" and the "world"

This more and more 'liquid' state of social conditions recurrently throws people in the 'world', where they indeed belong by nature of their bioanthropological constant. Human being is separated from other animals by its openness to the "world", Paolo Virno maintains; by high degree of undefined potentiality which originates from the unspecialized character of Homo sapiens. Human animal, which is in its foundation a *linguistic* animal, can be in essence seen as an undetermined being with no predefined instincts, contrary to other animals. While environments are closed and stable, worldliness is a state of potentiality, "a vital context that always remains

partially undetermined and unpredictable”²⁵ Human beings by their nature lack fixed, univocal environment, so they can at the utmost build themselves pseudo-environments of automatism and repetition. This, by nature risky instability of disoriented animal when without stable reference frames, can bring to the fore both: dangers, as well as freedom and creativity.

There is always something indefinite about the world; it is laden with contingencies and surprises; it is a vital context which is never mastered once and for all; for this reason, it is a source of permanent insecurity. While relative dangers have a ‘first and last name,’ absolute dangerousness has no exact face and no unambiguous content.²⁶

Human potentiality means that ‘evil’ is derived from the same biolinguistic conditions as ‘virtue’, basically from human emptiness; it is what separates man from animal and enables human beings different possibilities. Contemporary changes in the capitalism and other wider social transformations have brought these basic human virtues of communication to the fore, meaning that this biological invariant has now become a possible territory of social conflicts.²⁷

This is a vast change from the times of industrial capitalism and Fordism, which was full of pseudo-environments that were exceptionally limiting impacts (and also possibilities) brought by the potentiality of the ‘worldliness’. Today, on the contrary, people are continuously exposed to all the risks and uncertainty of the world because of the incredible mutability of forms of life and wild flexibility of work and working conditions. This is perfectly exposed by Richard Sennett, for whom the main motto of the new capitalism has become ‘No long term’. This produces not only weak social bonds, but also corrodes trust, loyalty and commitment. “What is peculiar about uncertainty today is that it exists without any looming historical disaster; instead, it is woven into the everyday practices of vigorous capitalism. Instability is meant to be normal”²⁸.

It should come as no surprise, as we have already tried to point out, that it has become increasingly difficult to talk about substantial, solid communities under such conditions; they once offered important reference points, pseudo-environmental niches, as we can put it, where people could find shelter and a hiding place. In the conditions of the buoyant laissez-faire capitalism what is left are only extremely temporary pseudo-environment niches. People are constantly oscillating between them and the world, which is best illustrated by ever-present possibility of the state of exception.

Robert Putnam, one of the leading best-sellers of community restoration in America, could therefore not be more wrong, when he writes that we cannot search for answers in capitalism (and then, with a blatant

determinism, blames most of the problems on the TV), “a constant can’t explain a variable”, he claims, when describing faltering American communities.²⁹ Like there have been no major changes in capitalism in the past decades; that the constant has been completely unchanged?! In its essence, social imbalance is inherent to capitalism. Neo-liberal bio-linguistic capitalism with extremely flexible work, has more or less completely substituted capitalism of Fordism and Taylorism, with their jail-like pseudo-environments of factories and Keynesian Welfare state, which provided people with at least basic safety-nets. To a certain extent, this could be seen as a restitution of certain aspects of traditional societies. Communication is a quintessential part of post-Fordist society, but it has become the most important source of capitalist profit, it is used and abused on all possible levels. Most of the contemporary (via language) netted-communities are condemned to profit-making, capitalist extortion; things Bauman feared the most.

6. The end of community (...myth)?

What we should acknowledge is that community has always been in a sort of transition, there has never been a fixed definition of community and neither has there been a common understanding of what is an ideal type of it. Even for the earliest sociologists writing on this question, community in its traditional sense has been in a state of decline and crisis; they mostly agreed this was because of capitalist industrialization and modern society of less tightly-connected city-life. Their response to this was not one-sided; for Tönnies, the decline of a pre-given *Gemeinschaft* was a pre-requisite for creation of the public sphere. In spite of all these predictions, authors are still debating about possibilities of communities and their disintegration; the latter are mostly blaming technology and warning against communities imagined through CMC because they cannot be understood as *the right* ones.³⁰

We collide with several profound problems here. I have already tried to at least implicitly answer the questions regarding the definition and ideal type of community. Closed, limited communities, with basically no real reflexivity, that are at least implicitly proposed by several communitarian authors (like Amitai Etzioni), can in my view be seen as a reactionary and regressive response, seeking some never achieved mythological community life of a once-upon-a-time dream. Such vision of community is of course repressive towards differences and fails to grasp where the social antagonisms actually stem from. As Barry Wellman has put it, “for those who seek solidarity in tidy, simple hierarchical group structure, there may now be a lost sense of community”.³¹ For the past couple of decades, he has been proposing to move beyond conception of community which takes as its starting point local primary bonds, territorial units and solidarity. His network analytic perspective of ‘community liberated’ is closely related to the social

constructionist perspective and bodes well with the '*virtually*' imagined communities. These are what we could now call 'communities as networks'.

As several authors have tried to point out,³² it is a distinctive contradiction to search for freedom in a unitary community of communitarian type. But nevertheless, it is still continuously seen as some kind of saviour that could bring all of it: liberation, safety and salvation for declining democratic life.³³ We could easily reject these propositions as nonsense, but we would neglect important messages arising from these authors. "To understand a myth involves more than proving it to be false. It means figuring out why the myth exists, why it is so important to people," Vincent Mosco claims.³⁴ Even though myths fall short of reality, they are more than 'fabrications of truth'; they help people deal with contradictions in life that are in fact never resolvable in its entirety. The recipe prescribed by the communitarian authors is basically a reactionary response, inadvertently exemplified by implicit promotion of religious-communities as simply one-of-the-many-others; because people are being repeatedly exposed to the world and its dangers, there needs to be a solution! But their solution involves myths, which materialise in social practices and divide Us versus Them, We versus the Other; they also promote homogeneity and repetition.

What is peculiar about this proposition is the fact, that it can actually solve the problem of human exposedness to the 'world'; well, at least to some extent. This is basically a return to Welfare state, which was from its start robbed of a public sphere. Even more interestingly, alternative conception of virtual-utopianism can also provide some sort of solution, but is again mystifying the actual problem and avoiding the real answer. Words of Howard Rheingold, one of the prophets of the wonders of the 'virtual' communities, in one of his latest interviews, say a great deal about this. In answering the question about on-line relationships, he points out that one needs to think critically about them and curb his enthusiasm, but they can help in many instances, for example to the people that live "in a scary part of town, where they don't want to leave their apartment at night".³⁵ This is of course a banal example. As I have tried to explain through this paper that this separateness never actually happens, so these authors are basically proposing to turn a blind eye on certain aspects of the social life, that in this example lie outside of the virtual spaces. What connects both of these proposals, at least in its fundamentals, is that they are trying to resolve political questions without politics, by completely avoiding it. Moreover, they are also trying to more or less avoid the 'world' as such.

7. Concluding remarks: pseudo-environmental niches

We have no space nor time here to elaborate what should be our goals, but it is necessary for us to acknowledge that community in its traditional sense is not the right answer for the instabilities and burdens of

today's society, neither can *hiding* from social circumstances through the virtual spaces resolve these contradictions and antagonisms. Through this paper, we have, perhaps unintentionally, answered two questions: 1.) Why is it that a part of social scientists is searching for a return of communitarian type of (in its essence) homogeneous community, quite commonly blaming technology, not structurally embedded social antagonisms; 2.) Why is it that another part of researchers is seeking in the opposite direction; through the 'lifesaving' technology and as much as possible from-the-dangers-of-the-world disconnected virtually-imagined communities, which in essence try to evade actual encounters with those social antagonisms.

While the first 'camp' is able to provide quite solid pseudo-environmental niches, as it is inadvertently also engaged in a fight over social antagonisms, but is because of that constructing a unitary sovereign (like traditional national state for example), the second one is not even touching those conditions, enabling them to constantly put an outside pressure on the created niches, making them extremely temporary and changeable, hardly providing any stable (sometimes symbolic) boundaries and actual safety. "Lacking access to an environmental niche that would prolong its body like a prosthesis, the human animal exists in a state of insecurity even where there is no trace of specific dangers," Paolo Virno writes.³⁶

But to be more precise, today's pseudo-environmental niches are in their fundamentals deferring democratic political means, offering hiding places from the scary dangers of the 'world', while in fact actual freedom lies right there; niches are ignorant substitutes for direct political activity and inclusive participation. When talking about myths, we should note they are not only post-political, but also pre-political, sometimes pointing in the right directions of where the problems lie. They cannot however offer the correct answers for their solution. It is of special importance for us to embrace difficulty, of why the 'world' could *become* so problematic, while an author of sublime statue like Hannah Arendt put it at the fore of her 'political programme'? We can find only one answer: there are basically no 'common places' in the 'world', even though Arendt was always writing about the common world: this must be regarded as a prerequisite for political activity and for the public sphere. It is an illusion that both freedom and safety, not opposing each other, can be reached without political means at the same time.

Potentiality of human beings does not mean that we need a unitary project as the sovereign State or (similarly) a communitarian type of community, that automatically forces homogeneity and represses differences; nor do we need authoritarian, non-democratic institutions that are not subject to direct political control. This kind of perspective *a priori* presupposes humans not as potential, but as dangerous beings; as if this potentiality is necessarily 'problematic', evil, even though it is exactly this potentiality that can create a democratic society. In this case, the question of community in its

essence becomes political question of creating *friendships without familiarity*, as Virno would put it, of primarily creating commons, not the unity.

Notes

- ¹ See: V Mosco, *The Digital Sublime: Myth, Power, and Cyberspace*, The MIT Press, Cambridge and London, 2005.
- ² J R Beniger, 'Personalisation of Mass Media and the Growth of Pseudo-Community', *Communication Research*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1987, pp. 352-371. J R Beniger, 'The Control Revolution', *Technology and the Future (5th edition)*, in A H Teich (ed) St. Martin's Press, New York, 1990, pp. 51-76. S Jones, 'Understanding Community in the Information Age', *Computer Media and communication: A Reader*, in A P Mayer (ed) Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1999, pp. 226-233.
- ³ J R Beniger, 'Personalisation of Mass Media and the Growth of Pseudo-Community', *Communication Research*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1987, pp. 354.
- ⁴ See C A Scolari, 'Mapping conversations about new media: the theoretical field of digital communication', *New Media & Society*, Vol. 11, No. 6, 2009, pp. 943-964. According to Scolari the first response of researchers when digital media arrived was to apply what they already had. This explains why Beniger's pseudo-communities are still popular after all these years.
- ⁵ B Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Verso, London, 1991.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 133.
- ⁷ C Calhoun, 'Indirect Relationships and Imagined Communities: Large-Scale Social Integration and the Transformation of Everyday Life,' *Social Theory for a Changing society*, in P Bourdieu and J S Coleman (eds), Westview Press, Boulder and San Francisco and Oxford, 1991, pp. 108-109.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- ⁹ B Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, Verso, London, 1991, pp. 35-36.
- ¹⁰ G Day, *Community and Everyday Life*, Routledge, New York, 2006, pp. 154-163.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 156.
- ¹² M Nunes, *Cyberspaces of Everyday Life*, University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota and London, 2006.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. xiii.
- ¹⁴ V Mosco, *The Digital Sublime: Myth, Power, and Cyberspace*, The MIT Press, Cambridge and London, 2005, p. 6.
- ¹⁵ J Malpas, 'On the Non-Autonomy of the Virtual', *Convergence*, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 135-139. For a similar line arguments see also: M Nunes, *Cyberspaces of Everyday Life*, University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota-London, 2006.
- ¹⁶ M Nunes, *Cyberspaces of Everyday Life*, University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota and London, 2006, p. 12.
- ¹⁷ See A P Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, Routledge, New York, 1985.
- ¹⁸ Z Bauman, 'The 20th Century: The End or the Beginning?', *Thesis Eleven*, No. 70, 2002, p. 15.
- ¹⁹ Z Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2000, p. 7.
- ²⁰ Z Bauman, *Identity: Conversations with Benedetto Vecchi*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2004, p. 30.
- ²¹ Z Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2000, pp. 199-201.
- ²² Z Bauman, *Consuming Life*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2007, pp. 111-112.
- ²³ Z Bauman, *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2001.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- ²⁵ P Virno, *Multitude: Between Innovation and Negotiation*, Semiotext(e), Los Angeles, 2008, p. 17.
- ²⁶ P Virno, *A grammar of the multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary forms of Life*, Semiotext(e), Los Angeles and New York, 2004, p. 32.
- ²⁷ For a more detailed explanation see: P Virno, *A grammar of the multitude: For an Analysis of Contemporary forms of Life*, Semiotext(e), Los Angeles and New York, 2004. P Virno, *Multitude: Between Innovation and Negotiation*, Semiotext(e), Los Angeles, 2008, pp. 9-66. P Virno, 'Natural-historical diagrams: The 'New Global' Movement and the Biological Invariant', *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2009, pp. 92-104.
- ²⁸ R Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character: the personal consequences of work in the new capitalism*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1999, p. 31.
- ²⁹ R D Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Simon&Schuster, New York and London and Toronto and Sidney, 2000, p.282.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.* See also: S Doheny-Farina, *The Wired Neighborhood*, Yale University Press, New Haven-London, 1996. J R Beniger, 'Personalisation of Mass Media and the Growth of Pseudo-Community', *Communication Research*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1987, pp. 352-371. L Dahlberg, 'Democracy via Cyberspace: Mapping the Rhetorics and Practices of Everyday Life', *New Media and Society*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2001, pp.163-166.
- ³¹ B Wellman, 'The Community Question', *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 84, No. 5, 1979, p. 1227.
- ³² e.g. Z Bauman, *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2001. R Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character: the personal consequences of work in the new capitalism*, W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1999, pp. 136-148. R Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*, Penguin Book, London-New York, 2002, pp. 219-256. M Hardt and A Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, The Penguin Press, New York, pp. 202-208. etc.
- ³³ See again for example: R D Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, Simon&Schuster, New York and London and Toronto and Sidney, 2000. R D Putnam, 'Bowling Alone: America's Declining Social Capital', *Journal of Democracy*, Vol. 6, No. 1, 1995, pp. 65-78.
- ³⁴ V Mosco, *The Digital Sublime: Myth, Power, and Cyberspace*, The MIT Press, Cambridge and London, 2005, p. 29.

³⁵ H Rheingold (interviewee), 'Howard Rheingold Interview - USA'. Link: <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/digitalrevolution/2009/10/title.shtml>>

³⁶ P Virno, 'Natural-historical diagrams: The 'New Global' Movement and the Biological Invariant', *Cosmos and History: The Journal of Natural and Social Philosophy*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2009, p. 97.

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