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YOUTH INTERNATIONAL



IDENTITY
YOUTH

IN **MODERNITY**

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The project “Youth identity in modernity”

Identity has a lot of faces, some of them hidden, some of them visible – personal, cultural, social, national, virtual identity. The project „Youth identity in modernity” focuses the attention on two problematic aspects of youth identity in nowadays society:

1) youth identity in the light of modern media and communications in the technology advanced society and

2) youth identity modification during the recent political and economical transformation processes in South-Eastern Europe and in the context of European integration.

AIMS:

- to exchange experience how to use modern media and communications to facilitate the identity expression and self-labeling in the space of modern media;
- to give the participants a chance to share positive experience in the light of new media and technologies
- to encourage young people participation in the integration processes in Europe and to explore the identity transformation during that processes;
- to give young people from the South-Eastern Europe the opportunity to explore the problem with identity that have been cause from the political, economical and cultural transformation in this region;
- to explore the relations between the emigration in South-Eastern Europe and immigration processes in Western Europe; the attention of the participants were focused on problems related with identity finding and “escape of identity”;
- to train young people from minority organizations (or organizations working with minorities) how to use modern media for identity presentation;

Some input about identity

Identity gives us an idea of who we are and how we relate to the others and to the world, in which we live. Identity marks the ways, in which we are the same and the ways, in which we are different. How are identities connected with the world of media and the images, which surround us? There are a lot of sites on the web where people express their identity.

Identity has many aspects - some of them visible and some - hidden (invisible). One way of looking at the different dimensions is to imagine yourself as an onion. Each layer corresponds to a different part of your identity.

LAYERS:

1. ETHNICAL AND NATIONAL IDENTITY - the place where you were born, where you live now, belong to a minority or not; a region with shared history and common cultural concern.
2. SOCIAL IDENTITY - the feeling of belonging to a particular social group and the role you play in the society (student, doctor, lawyer, banker and teacher).
3. PERSONAL IDENTITY - the part of your identity that you may be able to choose - fan of Ricky Martin, member of political party, style of clothes.
4. VIRTUAL IDENTITY - in the Internet everyone could freely choose her/his social, cultural and sexual identity - an old man could be teenager, a girl could be a boy. In this way the individuals construct a new untraditional "virtual identity".

Identity defining and self-awareness or some levels of identity constructing process

When I was preparing the following lecture, my intention was just to outline two of the most common youth identity features: national and global ones. It was so obvious: national and global identity features were the strongest and the most broadly shared among all levels of youth identity.

Now, when I have to organize all my notes and thoughts in a systematic way, I know I have to revise my primary statements. In the beginning I knew I just had to present the basic elements of the national and global identities and later on – just to discuss them. Soon after I realized that there was not any more such ‘sure’ and stable identity features. Others expected from me to hear a ready-made reply about what his/her identity is, but nobody wanted to accept the fact something outside one’s body and mind could ex-



ist and that one thing can impose or organize in a more or less rational way one's identity. Any modern term – nation and its symbols, institutions, authority etc – was deconstructed. Young people, participants in the discussion, were creating their virtual identities – virtual communities in which the only real and important thing was their close and potentially close social circles – friends, colleges (including the institution in which they are working), virtual relations, established through internet. Any more general reality in which they participated but on which they could not influence was not of big importance for them. They believed they were living in a world made by them, in which nobody can influence and impose rules. So the following text is about the things that some young people do not want to accept as part of 'the real world'.

The two identity features presented here: national and global identities, are just **ideal types** of identities because in one moment we do not live only with one type of identity. At one moment one-body can be simultaneously a child, soldier, boy-friend etc. But at that very moment only one of these features has more significance, defined by the moment situation. That does not mean the other features are lost. Neither space, nor time can be a condition for losing one's identity because the identity cannot be lost. It can be transformed, it can be from no significance at that moment but it cannot be lost: somebody is no more a soldier but that past living condition had influenced in some way on him and his mind keeps the memory of what means to be a soldier and it can recollect it, even just as a feeling.

First and foremost we have to define here **what** 'identity' **means**. Concerning any general interpretation of the 'identity' as a term it is all that is given to us through our family education, school education and common sense development, i.e. the tradition. All these outside us 'ruling institutions' give us the most general idea how our identity is formed. The other part of the identity is the internal

feeling about the personal identification. Personal identity is developed through the constant play between external and internal authorities. It is very interesting that even researchers of the postmodern or net identity use this 'play' attempting to describe the new identity. Though, we have to accept the fact that there are some very stable terms for defining national and global identities. I prefer these two levels as the most independent from any private living condition

Identities may be safe and 'unproblematic' only **inside a secure social space**. The setting of the spatial limits will organize the other categories - the borders themselves, the others and ours, institutions, authority etc.

Borders are the most important phenomenon concerning nation-state or even any social group identity. They have Janus-faced character: they **include and exclude**. The problem is that there is something or somebody who defines the process of inclusion and exclusion. It could be a person, a ruler or authority representative but it can be also the history, tradition or culture of the inner-group. **The inclusion/exclusion process is flexible** and its already set borders can be moved. They are not permanent but they are organized around **a center/centers**, which is/are stable and unmovable. These centers can be real or symbolic and can be set rationally from outside or can be internal and unconscious.

And because the identity transformation is a slowly process there are moments in which previous, old identity constructs and new ones are re-covered and complemented one another. As example, in the transitional period from nation-state to unified - without borders - Europe, 'Europe' is accepted as dimension of national identity rather than a project of unification. The instability of that unificational project is still actual because shared memories, traditions, myths, symbols and values, may possess subtly different

meanings and significance for different communities in the area conventionally named 'Europe'.

The Western world, from the beginning of the Modern times and especially nowadays, needs **the Otherness** to construct its own identity. The Other is "preserved and cultivated" because its understanding will distinguish the West and create its identity. Knowledge of the 'Other' makes the distance here: someone can be closer or farther if we have the knowledge of him. Thus we can choose the 'Other'. Distinction is always based on objective facts – *language, territory, law, religion and economic and political system* – as well as in terms of *ethnicity and culture*. So if one wants to be defined by the others as European, one has to share in different degree one or another element of the common European tradition. That means that the historical past could be an obstacle for full integration in the Western European economic and political model of development. Nowadays the EU rests on the culture of constant negotiations and compromises. Participating in the EU can be seen as an attempt by European states "to overcome history", to close a chapter of history and open a new one - to close the chapter of historical enmities and open that of cooperation and integration. These are the new forms of political culture, which has to be accepted by everyone who wants to be Member of the EU: the states are giving up national sovereignty in favor of common institutions. However, the result is again a territorially bound, political unit, just like a nation-state. Internal borders are being torn down while common external borders are being erected. The European Union would in fact be unimaginable without external borders. Political changes for the last five years have born this care. The future enlargement differs accession (full or partial) of the other who will pretend to be equal with you and your group. So the process of constructing new identity has two moments: to accept the other who is also inside the borders as you are and to accept the other who is outside them. At political

level European Community integration can be understood as an activist response to the new conditions of competition brought about by globalization, whereby nation-states appear incompetent and domestic markets inadequate. European integration is a politically driven process in response to and anticipation to these new conditions.

Presentation of that transformation from nation-state to the Europe 'without borders' is just an example of how one objective process can and do influence personal identity. On the level of everyday living the integration is expressed as symbolic transformation: national currency is no more from any significance, national flag is no more set above the EU flag but national language and national traditions as element which directly influence one-body are still strong and significant. Nation state identity slowly is becoming part just from the historical memory, developed and imposed by educational institutions. Today the virtual identity is much more important. Here we have to keep in mind that 'virtual identity' does not mean only the inter-net identity but also any kind of fluid-community identity.

In the beginning we have to define again the boundaries if there are any in the virtual community. We are going to use such terms as local and global. Locality can be defined as one of all sub-global forms of social organization, which can include regions, nations, places, tribes, communities etc. But in that way local is just a reflection of the global, which can be fragmented into small pieces and later organized in new way. That means globalization is **a process which happens constantly** and cannot reach its logical end or at least at that moment. **Multicultural man [woman]** is a radical departure from the kinds of identities found in both traditional and mass societies. He [She] is neither totally part of, nor totally apart from his [her] culture; he [she] **lives**, instead, **on the boundary**. Living on the boundary means permanent choice. But at the same time living on the boundary means that we can

choose any communicational situation, which will form our identity. The inside community does not have any right to impose its

own identity. In that way the choice of one's own moment situational identity becomes a **play of naming**. The names become the only secure things of one's moment identity. The best thing here is that they can be saved and preserved but at the same time there is another option: Do not save the name. **Time** is no more a chronological, one direction-oriented process. Today does not have its yesterday and tomorrow. Time becomes a constant brand new present. So through the new global identity we live in permanent real time and our historical narratives are just virtual. The virtual reality is not the reality of any place, this is the reality of time: of the absolute present. So what is important is that around us. But at the same time – there is not anything real around us. In the global age everything can be suspended and nothing is secure and stable. Redefining is the most common way of living today. The PC constitutes a new way of time interpretation, it changes even our communicational models: we can change both synchronic and asynchronic any kind of information. We are changing even our time and space-thinking. What means real time? What means to come inside the net or to be on-line? How do you feel when somebody tells you: ok, I am leaving? Leaving where? Just offline. That means that the "line" is just the other name of the net reality. Just the 'line' reality. Now the information and communication can be counted – in bytes, Kbytes or even Mbytes.

If we can measure the information and communication that means we have a pretty different situation. The problem here is where we are and who we are in that **situation of unification and total acceptance**? Which are those secure elements through which I can set myself in the global society. Do I have a private space, a personality or I can change and be changed by anybody else?

The virtual reality is both public and private space. It cannot be defined neither only just as public, nor just as private one. Everybody can be a part of it if he/she knows the rules. Probably this is the only feature of the virtual reality, which makes it closer to any modern community. The global reality has its **own rules**, which every participant has to know. It has its **own language** different then the everyday language. To communicate there one's has to learn it. Its knowledge gives the moment feeling that one's is part of the global society. This is simulation of the great freedom. But this makes things easier because in that moment of belongingness into the biggest society tolerance and acceptance of the Other becomes easier too. Later this feeling can be projected in the real life and to develop new vision of the Other. Just a small note: in the modernity the Otherness is accepted as dangerous. There two opportunities: to transform the Other into something exotic, a pure object or to make the Other trivial, visible, namable. The second strategy is the postmodern one.

In the modernity '**who are you?**', "**what are you doing?**', '**What kind of man are you?**' – all moral, political and existential chices and actions were those criterias, which had built his identity.

Today '**how you look**', '**your style**', '**how you present yourself**', '**your image**' are these features which make one's identity. The postmodern identity (or the on- line identity) is constructed theatrically through playing roles and different images. The modern identity is localized around the public or private sphere; *the postmodern identity is centered around the image and consumption (if we understand measuring of information as a consumption too)* Nowadays we do not make fundamental choices because we live in a simulated, imagined play. We can stop that play at each moment we want to come back to the historical time. The net reality gives us the opportunity to choose our reality, it does not impose itself as the only one 'real reality' and that cre-

ates the feeling of total freedom.

Finally, **'where is the youth?'** Ok, but who care how old is somebody in the virtual reality? In the real reality, that of the historical time and space, the youth is just a metaphor of the future but it cannot creates rules, it just can accept them for the possibility to be able tomorrow to crate its own rules.

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Balkan Identity Reexamined

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<http://www.nettime.org/nettime.w3archive/200011/msg00055.html>

“Do Identities Exist and Who Has Them? Some Reflections on Balkan Identities,”

Can we describe this common identity?

The Balkans, as a geopolitical and socio-psychological term, usually means something wild, dark and obscure - at least when seen by the Western eyes. I will take Serbia as a paradigm. Serbia is often seen as irrational and savage. And there is some truth in it. But I don't see it as something bad. Serbia itself simply provokes and challenges the world to consider the very nature of the civilization.

Under the pressure of the Christianity, the Western civilization deeply suppressed what psychoanalysts call Id. Instead of accepting the existence of the Shadow in the man and the society, and trying to make a balance with it, the West either missed the chance to recognize the Shadow in itself, or to affirm it. The Western sexual revolution of the sixties was a cool thing, but it stopped in the middle of its way - it did not deal much with the emancipation of the individual or the other side of the instincts. It rather propagated sexual freedom in its reduced form of another Western instant and short-cut wise sayings of the the-road-less-traveled kind, and similar obscurities. Serbia is (or WAS before October 5, 2000 - as optimists would like to believe) the Reign of the Shadow. But this fact, at least, recognizes the existence of the Shadow - which is the first step towards an attempt to solve the Shadow problem. I believe it's more honest than denying the Shadow. Denying and suppression lead to the internal contradiction, which is exactly what happens to the West ever since Colombo. And this is very dangerous, especially now. NATO-Serbia conflict in 1999 was a conflict between a powerful schizo and a stubborn savage. (And the truth was victim, as usual.) Well, at the end, how could we describe the

Balkan identity?

Maybe as the last oasis of sincere intolerance.

How can we define a coherent cultural and social identity of the Balkan area baring in mind its characteristic as a cross-road of different civilizations?

There is no coherent cultural and social identity here. The Balkans is a complicated mixture of Orthodox, Muslim and Catholic. Balkan nations know nothing about each other: the Bulgarians have romantic stereotypes on the Serbs, the Croats believe that each Serb is a natural born killer, the Serbs from Serbia see the Bosnian Serbs as a bunch of primitive shepherds and bear hunters, etc. On the other hand, everybody here eat, fart and sleep. And over-react. And have many other tribes in their neighborhood. What's common here is that experience of suspicious neighboring. There is another important element of so-called Balkan identity: impossibility to be put in preset categories. It always gets on my nerves when I fill in some stupid on-line form for this and that: each form requires me to choose one of the preset categories for me, which I simply can't do. These forms were created by the Westerners, and the Balkanians don't fit in it.

Is there a global identity being developed in the Balkan area?

I would like that to happen. I would like that hypothetical new global identity to be defined as the resistance to the linear globalization.

Can we defend a broader sense of globalization that would protect traditions and different cultural identities as far as Balkan area and artists working in this area are concerned?

I don't think so. The tribes should remain the tribes. Interest, not love, is what can keep the peace - at least, the interest in living

peacefully. And what about the artists? They will network with other artists who do the similar things, no matter where are they from. "Globalization" should not be understood as a given homework to "protect traditions and different cultural identities".

"Globalization" should be a spontaneous networking with the similar individuals.

Do we need a closer cooperation between cultural and educational centers based in the Balkans?

That's what we need all the time - but it must be spontaneous, not a given task.

Are direct communication and cooperation links between Balkan cultural and educational centers strong enough?

I wouldn't say so - as far as I know.

How does multiculturalism and different religions affect communication and cooperation procedures between artists and cultural centers in the Balkan area?

When I communicate with some other Balkan artist, I don't think about his/her religion. This is the last thing I would think about. And multiculturalism is one of the most boring phrases the political correctness has ever invented. I see a person as an individual primarily, whose cultural background may become the object of my interest later - first I'm interested in somebody's attitudes, interests, taste, walk, voice, eyes, hands, legs (if female)... "Multiculturalism" is a word I can't even spell, and I don't use it.

What are the cultural links with other European centers?

I don't know. As far as my job is concerned, I have good links with some British and American and Australian artists. Some other Serbian artists I know are good with the people from Middle European countries, etc. I think it varies from one case to another.

Do Balkan artists express common needs?

Do they know which are their common needs?

Does there a Balkan cultural network already exists and, if it does, can we name it?

Some forms of Balkan cultural networks exist, but I think they are not efficacious enough. And can we name it? My counter-question is: why should we do that?

Would there be an interest in either creating a new one or re-shaping already existing Balkan cultural networks?

My answer would be YES. But this should not be a network just for the network's sake. This should not be just another art managers' network for taking money from the resigned West and for selling crap - this should be initiated by the artists themselves. And this should not be only one network.

Which, according to your opinion, should be the structure and the aims of this network?

The structure: a productive organization with its mailing list.

The aims:

- INFO! Art managers tend to manipulate the information, and the information must reach the artists and belong to them.
- Breeding new initiatives and projects, i.e. the art itself.

The aims should not be:

- Regional conflict resolution (it's a Utopia, and there are other means for that).
- Anything else outside and beyond the art itself.

Center and periphery of culture. How could we state our point of view on the subject?

Maybe I'm wrong, but let's try in this way: the Center is the place with the greatest concentration of artists, while the Periphery is the place with the greatest need for art. These two should meet each other, but it costs. Who will give the money?

Balkan vicious circles

By Ivaylo Ditchev

http://www.access.online.bg/civcnetwork/bt/balkan_vicious_circles.htm

No other region in Europe is as eager to catch up with modernity, as ready to turn the past into tabula rasa and leap into the future. By comparison, the Russian empire also tried to make up for the historical delay, yet its elites developed, starting in the 19th century, powerful ideologies defending the specific character of Russia and advocating Russia's particular way to modernity. In the Balkans, there is a striking consensus on the benefits of western-style modernization and the duty to become like what were formerly called the "civilized," and today just the "normal" people. After Romanian latinization throughout the 19th century, Turkey perhaps offers the most amazing example of such radical westernization: in the course of a single decade, Mustafa Kemal changed not only the political and religious outlook of the state, but also the alphabet, dress, attitudes to women and family names, implementing reform on a scale far grander than that conceived by his predecessor Peter the Great.

If "historical" delay is regarded as evidence and if there is no alternative to the imitation of a simple comprehensive model, modernization turns into a race where the prize is recognition by the dear West. Neighbours become rivals, all the more dangerous since they have identical weapons at their disposal: glorious past, historical injustices to redress, a population ready to accept anything.

Importation of the model becomes the privileged occupation of Balkan elites. Contrary to the situation in Russia, the party of the "native soil" is never equal to that of the "pro-westerners": one imported model can only be opposed to another. In the Bulgarian case, the Russian army model competes with French administra-

tion, and Austrian education with German engineering. This suggests why communism was such a success in the Balkans: it served as an overall role model offering simple and clear formulae for transition to modernity - from the village to the city, from family dependence to autonomy, from poverty to mass consumption. In this respect, communism was even a greater success than the German or Italian-made totalitarian model of the 30s which influenced many Balkan countries: if the latter models reinforced the existing social hierarchies, communism seemed to offer the utopia of a social elevator giving the last in line a chance to move up to the top.

That was because the communist ruling elite was not economically, but politically based, i.e. it was dependent on the situation rather than on stable social forms and rules.

The price of this healthy consensus, with few if any dissidents, was external projection of aggression targeting the figure of the enemy which seemed to fit into the regional cultural pattern. National consensus has hitherto observed a number of sacred taboos: in Serbia, you may not doubt that Kosovo is the cradle of Serbicity; in Romania, that Romanians are Latins; in Albania, that the Albanian people is at least as old as the Greeks; in Bulgaria, that Macedonians are Bulgarians; in Macedonia, that Macedonians have never been Bulgarians.

On the Balkans, identity is always imposed : you must be what you are said to be. In the etymological sense identity (idem, "this one") is an index that points at you and you, in turn, point at the others. Balkanites are not what immediate tradition handed down by former generations have made them, since they are eager to break with a shameful past and leap into modernity: thus they risk to become what neighbours call them. Hence, fighting the neighbours becomes a way of fighting themselves. The really shameful tradition - Ottoman, fascist or communist - is suppressed

by the tabula rasa impulse, the result being an “invention of tradition” (to use Hobsbawm’s expression) that is much more pronounced than on the rest of the continent. Symbolic victories in wars over names, heroes and myths mark the process of this invention.



“The concept of European identity”

Reverend Father Laurent Mazas

“The concept of identity” - Strasbourg, 17-18 April 2001

www.coe.int

The theme “European identity” is not new and its scope is vast, but the idea is firstly to try to outline an identity that is common to all the different peoples of Europe and then to come up with ideas for promoting - or preserving? - this common identity.

1. I will open the discussion with a few remarks of a philosophical nature about the very *concept* of identity. As we all know, the identity of a people is an extremely complex phenomenon. It is hard enough to define the identity of a person, let alone that of an entire population or, worse still, a group of nations. From their different historical, sociological, or psychological perspectives, the papers to be presented will highlight the extraordinary complexity of the different elements making up the European identity. No philosopher, and probably no politician either, can be content, however, simply with a description focusing on different elements and common “values”. If we really want to analyze this theme, we need to *interpret* the phenomenon, and “read between the lines”, so that the foundations of an identity can be laid bare, and we can study its purpose.

2. The identity of a given people comes from its culture, which is rooted in creative skills and in a capacity to adapt to both other human beings and natural surroundings. **More than that, different peoples exist ultimately because every individual human being is unique. The society we create with our fellow human beings is really only human to the extent that it has a cultural dimension, which develops as a result of specific historical and geographical conditions. It is owing to the multiplicity and complexity of these conditions that societies give shape**

to their human heritage through different cultural identities.

3. Culture is the prerogative of human beings. Because of our historical condition, and because the passage of time is part of our existence, we are both the children and progenitors of our own culture, and consequently of our own identity, an identity which takes into account the legacy of the past and its history, thereby rooting itself in a memory while at the same time hinting at progress and a future and resulting in a dynamic reality. For anyone studying a given people's identity, the immediate problem with a living, dynamic reality is that it resists analysis based on definitions and patterns, which can only ever produce an incomplete picture, and while showing itself in a particular light to one observer may simultaneously appear in a different light to someone else, with the result that there seem to be several different identities for one and the same reality. This has been a problem ever since the beginnings of western thinking, along the coast at Milet, in present-day Turkey, or in the Magna Graecia of Parmenides.

4. While the identity of a people reflects its particularity, it aspires at the same time to universality, through the best of its many qualities and thanks to the fact that it is rooted in human nature. A culture is not truly human unless within it there is openness towards other cultures and the universal. The requirements of particularity are the basis for the rights of specific cultural identities. The requirements of universality, on the other hand, underlie our consequent obligations towards other cultures and humanity as a whole. The problem with any study of the European identity is that it is concerned not with a single society represented by similar historical figures, moral codes, technologies and forms of artistic expression, but with a number of populations living within a vast geographical area where on occasions everything seems different in the extreme. Even within a given country there may be minority communities that aspire to live in a different way from the

majority, according to their own particular linguistic, ethnic or religious features or customs, but without wishing to cut themselves off from the political organization manifested in the legal entity of the State. Care must therefore be taken not to reduce Europe's identity to its mere political identity (real or still only desired). In the same way that all individual human beings are entitled to have their own identity recognized and respected - which in no way frees them from any of their obligations towards the rest of society - every cultural minority is also entitled to respect for its identity. It is a right which is inherent in the very nature of the minority, enables society as a whole to value it and facilitates its integration with all the different peoples. Conversely, failure to respect this right is a source of humiliation. It results in a strong sense of protest, and very often leads to shows of extreme violence.

It is thus a political responsibility, in individual countries and in major international organizations, each within its own sphere, to try to harmonize, promote and, where necessary, reconcile plural identities. But is it possible, you may ask, to integrate certain peoples whose identity characteristics are so very different from the majority culture? In many regions of the world, events of the past few months have clearly shown not only how relevant this thorny problem is today, but also the tragic situations that can develop. However, rejection of others usually stems from fear, and history teaches us that rejection, deportation, and radical exclusion have a destabilizing effect and lead to violence. Fear is a sign of weakness and often explodes into violence. A political authority capable, on the contrary, of having an educating influence, and keen to do all that it can to ensure that the values at the heart of European civilization remain the stable foundation for our modern changing societies will be rewarded with confident support. So there can be no policy for a European identity without an education policy. Yet while everyone agrees that such a policy is urgently needed, the growing interference of factors that are hard to control makes the task of developing such a policy very difficult.

What is needed is undoubtedly for all those in charge of society's means of communications, at all levels, to study this question in depth. Democracies are right to pride themselves on respecting freedom of expression. But when perverse or merely irresponsible players brazenly abuse it and pour scorn on a culture that has stood the test of time, or ridicule the officially recognized symbols of an inalienable identity, who can fail to see the urgency of honoring the words of Lacordaire which date back to the spring-time of the peoples of Europe: "Between the strong and the weak, it is liberty which oppresses and the law which liberates."

5. The identity of a given people can be traced back to a whole series of characteristic traits which, although the emphasis may vary, are always made up of components that complement each other: art, science and technology, language and moral code, customs and laws, religion. And all of these public forms of expression are rooted in the different dimensions of human life. The first dimension is that of *homo faber*, capable of producing beautiful or useful works of art or technology. Another is *homo amicus* and *homo politicus*, capable of establishing contacts with others, and of relating to them in a way governed by customs or laws and on the basis of particular languages and codes of morality. In addition, there is *homo sapiens*, capable of knowing and with a yearning for wisdom. Knowledge is an undeniable and essential part of a people's identity. Lastly, there is *homo religious*, capable of opening up to a transcendent relationship expressed in religious practices and rites and explained in terms of specific knowledge that can itself have a profound influence on the other areas of our lives and therefore determine our identity. We only have to look at the world as a whole, at history and sacred art to see the civilizing role of religion. However, religion is more than simply another aspect of culture. The tendency in some places is to regard religions, primarily those rooted in the Abrahamic revelation of a transcendent God (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), as no more than sys-

tems of cultural ethics. To a certain extent, sociologists can point to a real weakening of the influence of a particular religion in a given society or in the fringe of a specific population, but that can be no justification for refusing a culture and civilization the very possibility of religious fulfillment. This is a point made by the English historian Arnold Toynbee and incorporated by Cardinal Paul Poupard as an epigraph to his *Dictionnaire des Religions* (PUF, Paris, 1993): "So far there has never been a civilization that was not religious."

6. My last comment is unquestionably the most important. At the beginning, I said that it was possible to look at the identity of a people from many different angles, each potentially producing a separate identity. There are different ways of looking, because the phenomenon is so complex, because history is complex and because we, as human beings, are complex. And the way in which we perceive identity varies, and distortions are possible, even though the nature of the person expressed by that perception remains unchanged.

Any philosopher concerned with the question of identity who wishes to avoid getting stuck in a debate leading nowhere ultimately has to stop and address the question of purpose. It is the question generally missing from contemporary studies, even though, surely, nothing can be more important for a collective identity than that which gives it its purpose. It is not for me here to define the European identity, but, as I see it, the fundamental question we should be asking during this colloquy is all about its final purpose. Values and constant features can be identified in the same way that we unearth a statue in an archaeological dig and then display it, sometimes laughably, in a museum housing a few vestiges of the past. Defining an identity, however, is a task for the future, almost a "prophecy" for Europeans of tomorrow. After all, that is what it amounts to: building a Europe of people, and building it with and for all who live there.

I was fortunate enough to spend my childhood in Greece, and to this day I have fond memories of a beautiful May day when my parents took me with them on a trip to show Cardinal de Lubac the marvelous sanctuary of Delphi only a few kilometers from home. I can still see myself at ten years old pointing out to one of the greatest theologians of the last century the inscription carved into the stone: *gnothi sauton! Know thyself!* It seems to me now that Socrates' words are at the very heart of our European quest. Past centuries have constantly repeated this invitation to focus on humanity throughout Europe. So allow me, if you will, to repeat the invitation issued more than two thousand years ago by the father of maieutics, and to suggest that, as you think about the European identity, you try to look at it from the perspective of humanity, by which I mean the whole of humanity, with all of its many different facets. For it is humanity you serve, in all its mystery and complexity. The Europe you are to build will be a Europe for human beings, with all their different dimensions, steeped in a history and a culture which certainly has to be remembered, but which is also resolutely turned towards a new humanism, based on the ideals of freedom of the individual, fraternity among all the different peoples of Europe and the world, and respect for all of the many different identities, minority or not, that grace our continent.

Are there virtual communities?

By Leigh Clayton

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On a surface level the web is nothing more than an information and communication system, the main novelty of which lies in its lack of restrictions and ease of access. The “surfer” does not enter a new spatial dimension but merely downloads electronically stored information. But descriptions applied to this system suggest that it is much more than this. They speak of geographies, architectures, journeys, encounters with other minds and sexual experimentation. What we have is the empirical reality of the encounter with keyboard, screen and text conceptualised as encounters with and in a dimensional space which is a new frontier where human capacities can be tested and where an adaptation of human community must occur to release new potentials. On this frontier the ‘natural’ forces that we struggle against are those of the mind and the delimiting of the mind by the body. The monsters are those of our own imaginations released, as some see it, from ordinary social constraints. But it also represents a place in which a new form of human communal life can be developed just as on any frontier social interactions are modified to accommodate new and unusual circumstances. Those involved with creating and shaping this new space and those who ‘inhabit’ these communities claim that cyberspace has unique features which offer solutions to the individualistic and fractured nature of modern society. Some of the unique features offered by virtual communities are:

1. Electronic virtual communities are strategies for the survival of social groupings in the face of modern urban structures and developments which are based on commercial and political interests. Virtual communities can return us to personal interaction, a culture of intimacy in which the individual can communicate with anyone by e-mail, including the President of the USA, as equals.
2. Geography becomes irrelevant. All that is needed to participate

in a community is access to the web and each community can access wider networks to take part in world issues and debates. There is no centre to the network and no overall controlling body, so there can be no backwaters which are excluded from a central metropolis. Hierarchy is irrelevant as there is equal access. There can be no marginalisation because, given access to the net, individuals are free to form what associations they wish and to exchange information within a system that cannot be censored.

3. It offers freedom of movement for those who are physically confined. Those who are physically disabled, trapped in totalitarian societies etc. can communicate freely with others, without prejudice.

4. It offers a higher level of democracy through internet sites devoted to political debate and the potential for the canvassing of public opinion on a wide scale. It also offers the possibility of debate and voting on political issues.

How realistic are such claims? Does the terminology of the net describe a reality? It could be simply the case that this manner of speaking concerning *cyberspace*, conceals that there is, in fact, only the surface level, that this is just a fantasy of escaping from reality. In a sense it can be maintained that just in terms of physical interactions there is nothing new, nothing different. Yet the language used to describe this system uses spatial and relational terms. Those who use the web on a regular basis speak as if it actually *transports* them to new and distant locations; as if it brings them into *proximity* with new individuals and as if it enables them to transcend the realities and limitations of the body. So whilst in real terms (I use real here to denote empirical physical experience) there may be nothing new, in conceptual terms there is a set of beliefs, which have developed into a distinct set of concepts, about what cyberspace is. This will have an effect on the ethical stance that should be taken with regard to the system. In other words it is something different from accessing an electronic bibliography or an on-line database. It has rules and protocols for

behaviour which are very different to life in the flesh. Virtual life is different. It is different in its moral implications and in the nature of the individual's social experience

What does virtual life consist in? Let us take seriously the title and ask ourselves what kind of community is present. The web is not a virtual community of minds, it is, if we take it on its own terms, a multiplicity of such communities because it is host to a huge variety of different groups each with their own sets of connections. Furthermore, if we accept "virtual community" as a coherent concept, we can identify previously existing kinds of community which were virtual in just this way. This is, I think, an important point, because at least some of the liberties that the web offers, with the consequent loosening of moral responsibility some people so fear, have *always* been available to us. What the use of the web does is to encourage the idea that the *true* persona can enter cyberspace unhindered by the body which, in a sense, is left behind. Thus the screen becomes the vehicle for the essential persona and its senses.

However, it would be more accurate to speak of personae because, given the variety of interactions possible on the net and the diversity of means of communication available, it is possible to present oneself as multiple personae. The net is widely claimed to be more interactive than other media, but in one very important sense it is less so; I do not have to wholly engage myself but can present different personae according to the kind of site I enter or according to my mood. I can conceal my presence in a number of ways. Most importantly, these forays into what may be considered alternate existences need have no implications for life extraneous to the web. In this way many virtual communities lack any real moral dimension. Morality too is virtual.

How does this conform to previous types of community? I will begin by defining the concepts 'virtual' and 'community'. For the time being I shall assume that 'mind' is uncontentious. But I will return to the issue of the relation of the mind to the body because it is an

important tenet of many advocates of cyberspace that its most valuable contribution is its facilitating a transcendence of the body. Community is not a concept with a precise definition, except in its use in ecology. This use refers to the interdependence of groups of plants and animals inhabiting the same region. It would be possible to develop an ecology of cyberspace because the history of the web reveals the steady and rapid evolution of a complex and interdependent environment. Here, however, I am concerned with the international organisation of individuals into communities which has been a feature of the web from its beginning. In this sense, community can be defined in such a way that it gradually includes more and more scattered groups. Its narrowest definition is that of a group living in one locality, united by their location, shared aims and a joint responsibility which can be termed 'community spirit'. Casting the net slightly wider, it can be a group of people having cultural, religious, ethnic or other characteristics (eg all being philosophers) in common. It can refer to common ownership or participation, or a community of interests or, finally, the widest scope of all for my purposes, society in general.

Now, as I see it, we can attribute different types and degrees of ethical responsibility to these different concepts of community. This is a topic to be returned to. First I want to consider what is meant when we add 'virtual' to any of the terms used in discussion of the web. In popular speech and in serious assessments of the potential of this new medium we regularly speak of *virtual space*, *virtual reality*, *virtual community*, and so on. In common English virtual means 'having the essence or effect but not the form of' and in the specific case of virtual reality the dictionary defines it as 'a computer generated environment that to the person experiencing it closely resembles reality. In the case of virtual communities neither of these definitions is entirely acceptable. To see why, I want to return to my opening remark that the web is not the site of the first virtual community.

The concept, or in fact, existence of a virtual community of minds

is not dependent on new, which is to say 20th century, technology. From the time of the formation of scholarly or scientific societies and the distribution amongst the members of printed versions of academic papers, or the passage of letters from one to another, such virtual communities can be said to have existed. Thus virtual communities can be seen as having existed since the 17th century. Members of such a community are brought together by texts rather than in face to face encounters.

At first sight this appears to be merely a step from my first narrow definition of community — those in a given locality — to the wider one of shared interest. After all, the concept of community does not necessarily require physical proximity. Shared interest and, I suggest, some kind of responsibility or ethical code are sufficient conditions, and, moreover, capture important aspects of the concept of community. But this apparently simple broadening of the definition includes a radical change. What has been added is the use of a distance communication system in which ideas are encoded in some form — in earlier times in written or printed texts — which are then distributed amongst a like-minded group of people who decode or translate the information. Such a group might well have a physical location for meetings where everyone can participate, but physical attendance is not *necessary* for participation. Some members may never attend, but be participants in the discussion nonetheless. So, the location of the community lies not in physical space, but in the circulated texts and the participating minds. In other words it exists as the thought processes and perceptions of the participants and its architecture can be said to be textual. (The term 'structure' could be used here, but the popularity of 'architecture' in cyberjargon is precisely because of its suggestion of building a new world.)

This relatively old idea of a scholarly community readily fits a recent definition:

virtual communities [are] passage points for collections of common beliefs and practices that united people who were physically

separated. Virtual communities sustain themselves by constantly circulating these practices.

Once such a community ceases to circulate texts it ceases to exist. It is possible for such communities to exist across time. Academic societies link past and present thinkers by circulating and encouraging the study of historical texts. Similarly a library could be considered a virtual community, or set of communities, because it brings together, by a classification system, like minds. What is new in the case of virtual communities is that the technology is interactive, in that I can modify or add to what I find there, can be in real time and is constantly accessible and accessed. I can access areas, or pages/networks where, although I may be unable to interact with whoever is there at the same time (I may even be unaware of the presence of anyone else) I can nevertheless leave a trace of my presence, by altering something, even if it is no more than registering on a counter. Some sites require and are set up for real time participation. Interaction is constant because there will always be someone on line. It may be that on the narrower definitions of community cybercommunities may be more fully to be counted as such than anything else because they are contained, not within a specific geography, but within a specific textual or visual architecture based on shared interests or goals. At the very least they provide a new and efficient way to keep scattered communities in contact eg. the international community of persons of Indian origin. There are numerous sites devoted to Indian culture and linked by hypertext.

There are many ways to communicate on the web and the type of communication format you choose will dictate the kind of persona that you can create and the weight of responsibility that you attribute to your actions. The following are some of the kinds of communities and communication systems found on the internet:

E-mail - personal communications; discussion groups; news updates; Journals.

Newsgroups — unmoderated discussion and news postings, non-

personalised receipt

Text pages/interactive sites/ homage sites/ commercial/ professional

Text-based communities — Geocities — highly organised, ethical codes, community leaders etc.

VRML — walk-through participant construction, social environments (virtual cafes), game playing E-mail is a faster method of textual communication which combines aspects of letter writing with the informality of a phone-call. Geocities, on the other hand, consider themselves to be cyber-communities, composed of “homesteaders” and complete with community leaders and codes of behaviour. So E-mail carries no general ethical implications (unless one is posting to a discussion list where ‘netiquette’ proscribes certain forms of offensive language). But to create a web page in one of Geocities neighbourhoods is seen as carrying a burden of responsibility.

It appears that in the role-playing VRML sites (or the text orientated muds) ethical responsibility is most changed, or irrelevant perhaps. However, do these sites fulfil the requirement of possessing a shared code? Each grouping will have requirements for the behaviour of participants and those that transgress may be excluded, but these rules may not be those commonly endorsed in real society. Completely new or alternative personae can be created and deployed because this is life lived in “cyberspace”. Personae may never meet in flesh. So that a persona’s sex can differ from that of the biological persona’s. It is also possible to present oneself in such a way that one can appear to be a robot character, an illusion which allows eavesdropping since such characters are not consciously controlled by anyone after their creation. Such misrepresentation is always possible in any standard interaction but the form of cyberspace interaction, and the literature that describes it, encourages deception. If I write a letter, take a pen name or dress so as to conceal my identity, I must remain aware that whatever I do my bodily identity remains the same. But

because web interactions encourage the belief that one's consciousness can be detached from one's body, and since that consciousness (or the projection of that consciousness) is what my identity truly *is*, there can be no deception. I simply reveal myself as that which my mind knows itself to be, and released from bodily limitation I may even manifest multiple possible selves. Thus there is no deception; only liberation.

The most distinctive feature of cyberspace, therefore, is its apparent realisation of the dream of bodily transcendence. The citizens of cyberspace enter the geography of the computer and let their imaginations live there. If this is conceived of as a realm of pure mind/imagination, then pointing out that cyberspace is not real 3D space, or that there is nothing different about its relationships, is mere carping. The difference is that cyberspace is an interface with the imagination. It may be that I only interact with imaginary creations but, whereas with daydreams it is only my own imagination, and with books and computer games it is a fixed portion of others imagination that I interact with, cyberspace has this special feature : it is not a pre-determined environment, but the outcome of the ever changing contribution of others' to my imaginative life mine to theirs. In short, it is an environment which is continuously constructed and deconstructed.

The interesting metaphysical question is: how far can the mind exist without the body? My suspicion is that the mind cannot truly exist without the body, not just because it needs the body to sustain it and the sense organs to feed it, but because mind is a product of the total functioning of the body. If so, cyberspace cannot be more than another form of imaginative escape and is thus no substitute for the real world. This not to say that experiences within it are not real in their emotional and imaginative import. It is merely to say that it is not a space I can inhabit to the exclusion of the physical world. The language used by those who inhabit this space has emotional but not ontic significance. And whilst within this context a different approach to ethics may be permissible and even

necessary, such values cannot be translated into reality.

For instance, we could ask whether it is permissible for pornography to exist in this imaginative place. After all we cannot and do not police our imaginations. What is needed, as in the case of films, TV and video, is an answer to the question of how much of the imaginative experience is carried back into reality. One problem with cyberspace is that the images are scanned in so that *real* people are used for pornographic images, and cyberporn comes in a form that is difficult to keep away from the young.

A number of interesting questions are opened up by this brief consideration of virtual community. It is reasonable to ask what the connection is between the various personae I may manifest in my web interactions if the body is to be finally transcended. What could make all these me? It seems as if there is an implicit acknowledgement of the body in that what makes them me is that they are manifested by the one biological person. If you want to meet in the flesh, it is me you will meet. On the question of pornography the issue has already changed with the creation of idealised women in a variety of games; women programmed into the computer, not created as avatars by a biological person, male or female. Now we can also ask what objection we could raise to the use of such imaginative manifestations in pornography. No real person is subjected to any kind of abuse and they function merely as collective manifestations of a certain kind of imagination. If we wish to object we would need to show that the very act of participation somehow brutalised the personality making it more likely that the biological participants would carry their attitudes into the real world. The common-sense response is that we can all tell the difference between animations and real people. But the growing evidence is that not all of us can. The response that is made to cyberspace is emotional not epistemological. So that the question of whether the characters that I share this place with are real or not can only be answered by considering with what degrees of emotional force I respond to them.

What of the four claims with which I started? Will they hold up? It seems undeniable that whatever their effects in the real world, virtual communities do exist. There are people who spend large amounts of time logged-on and who lead emotionally stimulating and satisfying lives in cyberspace. Where you are and who you are *biologically* is irrelevant. Cyberspace does offer a life unavailable to people in other forms, but its communities do not function as communities in the way that is often claimed. You cannot live in cyberspace permanently; it remains a realm of the imagination only. This is not to say that it has no effects on real life, but these effects are dependent on the experiences brought back with us. And as with all forms of modern media, cyberspace may be changing our morality in ways that we do not yet understand. I leave open the question whether these changes are for good or bad. Only time will show us the answer. In the meantime it seems wise to take cyberlife seriously as a new and developing experience.



Media incentives for growing conformity to the detriment of individuality within the context of globalisation

Jan Suchacek

“We have witnessed more economical, social, cultural and technological changes during last 100 years than during the whole previous history”, Kenneth Boulding, economist

There are little doubts that the process of globalisation is one of the most significant characteristics of contemporary socio-economic reality. Recent years witnessed its quick evolution and global processes shape the relations on our planet more and more. This world became interconnected and complex in the widest sense. Such complexity implies the necessity of appropriate research and analyses at this field as it brings not only positive experiences but also various threats.

The massive impact of globalisation forces us to re-evaluate traditional approaches to everyday life. The present is increasingly penetrated by technocracy and bureaucracy. It is well documented that human beings consequently lose the interest, energy and will to participate actively in both private and public lives. This leads to the gradual losing of individuality and the growth of conformity. People yield to the intensity, quantity and complexity of social, economic, cultural and other factors and relations in daily reality.

Individuals finally strive just for the satisfaction of their own needs. Such apparent crisis of identity and identification is closely related with the loss of responsibility for the society, nature, environment and last but not least, self.

The main purpose of this paper is to clarify some aspects and continuities of growing conformity of individuals to the detriment of their individuality within the context of globalisation. While we are analysing the situation on the individual level, the explanation refers to the social, economic, political and cultural changes on the global level. This is a macro-micro problem but it is seldom stated as such and requires our special attention.

Globalisation as well as other major processes bears many pros and cons. In this paper, we are concentrating on one of the most relevant aspects of globalisation-the media-and closely related phenomenon of consumerism. We will attempt to examine negative aspects of the relation media-human identity as the society is traditionally more sensitive to the threats of various kinds. From this perspective the threats that stem from media can be perceived as quite distinctive although not so tangible.

And why were chosen for the analysis just the media and parallel consumerism? Media are now so persuasive and pervasive that they are able to erode national cultures and traditional values. Their news programmes are not merely reporting events but also helping to determine their course. Succinctly, the media have formed the virtual universe. They helped to create the phenomenon of consumerism and to spread it on a worldwide scale.

Global processes have far-reaching social, economic and cultural implications. Until now they could not be carefully investigated because there is a wide consent that the globalisation is at its very beginning. Moreover, the transformations of recent years have taken different forms in different places.

However, globalisation can generally be comprehended as a dominant general trend that changes the organisation of the society on the world level. From the economical perspective, it is a process

of change from national to global scale of integration of production, exchange and consumption. This process was enabled mainly by the technological informational revolution that provided the basic infrastructure for the formation of global economy (Sassen, 1991; Castells, 1993). Politically this gained the sufficient room with the end of the cold war.

The concept of “time-space compression” describes increasing movement and communication in space, widening of social contacts in space and the human perception of such changes. Growing spatial mobility and overcoming of spatial barriers are enabled by technological progress that concerns production, transport, communication and information technologies. According to Soros (1998) the globalisation is not complete, because it includes only the economy, but not the democratic decision-making. Nevertheless, in the literature there is a relatively strong accord that the process is natural, unavoidable, and into certain extent predictable and optimistic scenario assumes also its qualitative development ¹.

This process involves various players-firms, institutions and organisations, households and individuals. In principle, they can be involved in globalisation in two ways:

- I. Activities of some players can actively contribute to the formation of the process of globalisation. The typical example is when transnational company directs its activities into certain area; this has extensive socio-economic implications (from changes in the composition of jobs and consequent impacts on the individuals, to the connection of the territory with the global environment). Of course, the number of the processes that can more or less directly form the process of globalisation is quite limited. Another aspect has to be mentioned: globalisation processes induced by those players create global external environment in which such players operate. This group is relatively small and relatively pow

erful.

II. Most players, as well as their behaviour, are influenced by globalisation.

This conceptualisation draws us on the expression of the relation globalisation (changing global settings)-changing identity.

Regarding the topic of this paper the attention should be focused on socio-cultural dimension of global processes as it has direct implications for identity. "Interconnectedness" is the key notion that describes the relations in the contemporary world. As already stated, places become "closer" to each other because time and space tend to compress due to the advances of technology and mass media: the most distanted places are easy to access, and the world seems smaller. It is impossible to overlook such symbols of modern era as intercontinental flights or the internet.

As an individual becomes more and more involved in the process of increasing "mutuality" of the world and finds him or herself submerged in a great number of various dialogues and debates, he or she is exposed to the widest variety of opinions and viewpoints, often contradictory and moreover usually hardly reconcilable. The intensity, quantity and complexity of social, economic, cultural and other factors and relations in daily reality has a pervasive influence on the human identities. Identity becomes more vulnerable to the influence of the external factors. We can contemplate that not only the relationships between people and happenings transform, but the identities of people also undergo dramatic changes.

In this paper, we perceive the notion of identity in its essential sense, i.e. we concentrate on identity from the individual perspective. Therefore, the identity is comprehended as the search for the meaning of the individual in relation to the self and to the society. This is about looking for inborn characteristics. In other words, this

is gradual process of uncovering the nature. The same nature which provides us with the urge to live.

In the history the overall number of already mentioned “disturbing forces” coming from outer world was quite limited (at least in comparison with contemporary dynamism). This implies that the drawing on the individual’s nature was not so difficult as nowadays. Undoubtedly, there was higher probability, that people will relatively easily identify themselves with their jobs, social relations etc. World was quite unchangeable, the pace of life rather slow and the development somewhat sluggish. Not surprisingly, the particular individual identities of the time can generally be described as coherent and stable.

With the globalisation drive the concept of identity has undergone some significant shifts in its theorising. Some authors call it “the crisis of the identity”. Identity can no more be fixed and this contradicts with the way identity was perceived before the debates on globalisation became so widespread. In contemporary socio-cultural conditions, it is asserted, an individual is forced to be in the constant search for identities, he or she can not stay committed to one and the same identity for a long period of time. Obviously, in order to express the dynamics of these perceptions, it is pertinent to look at the outer changes of the world.

So, we can conclude that the substantial difference between the history and the modern global era is following: meanwhile formerly people found their identity (or more precisely approached their identity) with higher likelihood and exerted their reason and the nature, nowadays a majority of people resigned to the excessive and intensive stimuluses of both real and virtual worlds. The attention of people is too disturbed with many emotions stemming from daily reality. Overall orientation in the world becomes difficult more and more and human beings are embarrassed to express

their own opinion (which is not easy to create, after all).

Subsequently, the majority surrender to the attacks of modernity. Masses get increasingly tired, energyless and passive. They act to certain extent in unified manner, lose their individuality and adjust to the general atmosphere. Such adjusting isolates concrete persons from their nature. Conformity means in this sense acting in the way that most other people do. The former heterogeneity expressed in the plurality of behaviour of individuals is replaced by the homogeneity of the behavioural conformity.

In order to give particular and appropriate example that would confirm previous paragraphs we should focus on the media. Media play increasingly important role in altering our perceptions of space, time, and social identity. These changes have been discussed in a number of ways by journalists, scholars, and policy makers. For some, the new media environment offers the exciting prospect of a “global village.” For others, new modes of communication threaten existing socio-cultural relations. However, there is relatively strong accord that media as already stated are so persuasive and pervasive that they are not mere observers of events (very often world-wide) but also their “fashioners“. The mediation of the experience by the means of mass media has reached its peak, and its pervasive influence causes the substitution of the real world for the world of images, signs, and representations, when an individual no more gets involved in the relationship with the reality.

Media can be powerful instruments of societal changes for better or worse. To indicate their quite hidden power we will examine several negative aspects of their influence.

There is more and more encompassing consumerist behaviour or directly consumerist ethic. In such society the notion of identity

depends on the amount of money one can bring into the market. Status is defined by the brands and products one uses. Shopping, buying and consuming is the main way of expressing oneself and one's identity. But the consumption is not only about the needs. Brand symbolism, newness, appearance, fun and enjoyment are the norms that are exerted for the evaluation of commodities, people and interactions. This attitude is not in compliance with the rules of democracy and pluralism. Consumerist ethic and life-style are in sharp discord with the will to inform oneself and to think over information critically. Value oriented action is replaced by a certain kind of passivity.

Market in connection with media stimulates people to act and think in a consumerist way. People are required and expected to act in a consumerist way in almost every social relationship. They are apt to satisfy only their own needs. The common denominator of these processes is that human beings are forced to consume more than their real needs are. This takes place in sometimes more sometimes less sophisticated way. The power of advertisement is enormous. It is necessary to sell the service or product. Thus one can speak about forcing of the needs.

Globalisation brought also the intensification of economic competition. Rationalisation strategies pursued especially by big companies caused that people are compelled to work more hours and with higher efficiency. Their leisure time is diminishing which results in striving for the satisfaction of their own needs. From this point of view consumerist ethic can be seen as the ethic of tired and energyless people ².

Information is available in vast quantities, but its very abundance is confusing and real quality lacking. Some scholars call it "the inflation of words". The processes of economisation and rationalisation have penetrated the media. Media no longer func

tion as information carriers, but serve as the space for advertisements or mass-products that are very often shallow, but very easy to swallow. Their real informational value is practically negligible. All this just deepens the general passivity of people who are not required to use their own opinion, their own reason.

This results in the sad but true rule that form supersedes content. People from public as well as private spheres are confronted with that consumerist ethic, rationalisation and media hungry for superficial, but selling events. Politicians, economists and many other people working in serious businesses consequently adapt to media and consumerist rules and needs. Serious matters become drama, fun to look at, soap operas acted out passionately, consumed passively.

Not surprisingly, above mentioned deformation of social, economic, political, cultural and other relations influences the world in a negative way. Values gradually become empty shells, we are lacking the capacity to renew values, to reformulate them in a new circumstances or to revitalise them. The voracity of marketisation and mediasation is mirrored by a world with less culture, less values, less reflexivity, less opinions. People lose their individuality and identity and hide themselves under seemingly safe shelter of conformity.

This leads to the chain of causes and consequences that results in the vicious circle of living without responsibility. Decisions are often short-sighted and aim to the mere satisfaction of the needs in a short run. The measure of utility determines the behaviour. All this does not mean that our world is lost. The history of this planet is full of problems. This paper is just the reflection of certain, let us say less favourable aspects of the present.

Sooner or later we should ask ourselves, what is the strategy for

the future successful development of our planet. The general answer is the communication of various entities. This does mean among others the participation in the decision-making. Communication is substantial part of well-running communities.

It seems to be absurd that in the era of high technologies and modern communication systems the real communication becomes difficult more and more. Different interest groups pursue their own objectives. They are responsible just in the small territory bordered by their spheres of interest. Although in recent years we can contemplate the growing number of so-called “win-win” situations that provided real qualitative move, it is not sufficient. The way of thinking and acting has to be changed. Holistic approach should create an inseparable part of our thinking and behaviour. Again, I underline the word “interconnectedness” of the present.

There are numerous countereffects and responses to the negative impacts of global processes—from non-governmental organisations or various movements to the efforts of local governments to protect local cultures. Despite the undeniable progress in the global dialogue one can distinctively feel, that the main still remains to be done. Vast quantities of “corrective efforts” has the common denominator in the following recommendation: People have to think and act globally, in a socially and environmentally conscious way. Only in this way we can approach to the balance in very sensitive triangle social sustainability-economic sustainability-ecological sustainability. Above conditions are necessary for surviving and future sustainable development of our world. Why, it is our common future.

NOTES:

¹ The development of global processes might seem inevitable: a predictable form of technical or cultural evolution. On the other

hand some authors stress that in practice this evolution has been strongly influenced by the economic and political agenda of advanced industrial countries. After all, this fact is not so surprising. However, this gives us more complex and objective picture of reality.

² Some authors assert that the number of working hours is not increasing so much, however in strictly rationalised world there is not sufficient space for really creative work. People can hardly identify themselves with the work. And the final result is essentially the same as in the previous case: passive and tired people.



Program of the seminar “Youth identity in modernity”

3.11.2001

morning: arrival of the participants

afternoon: Official opening; the project “Youth identity in modernity”; expectations; presentations of the participants and “(In)visible faces” exhibition - exhibition of personal unconventional web sites, showing the different ways of expressing our own personality;

4.11.2001

morning: “Identity defining and self-awareness or some levels of identity constructing process” – lecture and discussion about the different aspects of identity (see the brochure);

afternoon: “Freedom of self-expression” – on-line discussion about possible ways for sharing experience using new media and information technologies for “free speech” of personal opinion (using the SCAS Chatroom);

5.11.2001

morning: “Media incentives for growing conformity to the detriment of individuality within the context of globalization”

- lecture by Jan Suchacek and discussions

afternoon: “Virtual identity” - on-line simulation game - using the tools of on-line communications in Internet – SCAS Chatroom – the participants have choose different identities; at the end of the game they have shared impressions of being someone else;
Social program - visits of ethnographical museums, art galleries, taverns and pubs;

6.11.2001

morning: “European faces – prejudices and stereotypes” - interactive theatre, which aim to simulate a situation, where the

participants could overcome the negative images and distorted visions about the different European countries;

afternoon: “Unisex” – discussion about the influence of nowadays technologies of the basics of human nature – the sex. The contours of the “Unisex identity” in all dimensions of our everyday life. **Middle evaluation** - sharing of impressions and conclusions.

7.11.2001

morning: “Youth emigration/immigration – escape of identity or forced mobility” – work in small groups - sharing of ideas and experience about the problem with the transformation of identity during the emigration/immigration processes;

afternoon: future project planning - work in small groups;

8.11.2001

morning: evaluation - filling in of questionnaires and sharing of impressions

afternoon: departure of the participants.



“Youth emigration/immigration – escape of identity or forced mobility?”

In the frame of the seminar “Youth identity in modernity” was held discussion about the transmission of identity during the emigration/immigration processes.

The recent political and economical changes in whole Eastern Europe and especially on the Balkans are the reasons for the alarming problem with the young immigration. One of the aims of the workshop “(In)visible faces” were to explore the relations between the emigration in South-Eastern Europe and immigration processes in Western Europe and the identity finding problem for young people.

The discussion on the topic “Youth emigration/immigration – escape of identity or forced mobility?” was organized in small groups. Every one of the participants had to present the situation in their country, the official policy and their personal experience.

The groups had the following questions to discuss:

1. Which are the main factors for the migration of young people nowadays?
2. Is migration a chance to start a brand new life in a new country – the Haven’s search?
3. Is migration a way to escape of national identity?
4. Does the feeling of national belonging increase greatly when somebody is forced to leave the home country (for political and economical reasons)?
5. Could national identity be inherited and educated in the family not living in the country of their origin?
6. What is the attitude of society to the immigrants in your country and what is the official policy?
7. Does the presence of foreign minority group endanger or force national identity?

We may focus on two main factors for the migration – financial and political ones (wars, national uprisings, ethnical conflicts, genocide).

Most of young people from the South-Eastern Europe emigrate searching better way of life. The unemployment and difficult economical situation in their countries force them to leave the origin countries.

The motives for the youth from Western Europe are better professional realization and searching of a different experience. Probably we should make difference between mobility and immigration. The globalization and the integration processes in Europe encourage the mobility, which is in fact the freedom to travel, work and live abroad. On the other hand the immigration is forced by the bad circumstance in former communistic countries (if we speak about the problem in Eastern Europe).

Go into the migration process as a chance to start a brand new life, we could point at difference between hopes and realities. A lot of young people go abroad with idealized images about the life. Often the mass media build unreal vision about the easier way of life in the West, showing the higher standard and the opportunities for better professional realization.

The groups concluded that it is hard to escape of national identity. Of course it is possible to develop a new, modified identity or even to create two identities. The integration of emigrants in the society costs more or less the changing of national identity.

If somebody forced to leave the home country for political and economical reasons, then the emigration is not a will. In most of the cases the reaction is focusing, defending on national identity.

The national identity could be inherited and educated in the family

not living in the country of their origin. Good example for that are Chinese or Arabic people abroad, which preserve their traditions very well. The attitude of society to the immigrants depends on national background. The image and the stereotype of some nationalities are more positive than of the others – for example in Spain the Latin-American people are more accepted in the society, because of the popular Latin American TV “soap operas”. The problem with integration of Gypsies exists in all over Europe. They are living mostly isolated in kind of a ghetto or in caravans, the unemployment among the group is very high.

Often the image of the immigrant is reflection of a fear of unknown and different. In fact exactly this fear is the root of stereotypes and prejudices. In this order come the problems with intolerance, discrimination, isolation or even violence.

Does the presence of foreign minority groups endanger or force national identity?

In most of the cases the answer is positive. The majority may feel explored or endangered from the increasing group of immigrants. But it is possible also to have tolerance, multicultural attitude.

“Freedom of self-expression”

(Discussion and work in small groups)

New media and communications offer young people the possibility to express their non-official and non-traditional point of view. The participants in the workshop had opportunity to discuss this topic in small groups and to thought about this questions:

1. How do young people use modern media (global networks - Internet and Intranet, multimedia installations, local and global TV channels) for self-labeling and self-expression?
2. Do modern media encourage the active participation of young people in the society and in which way?
3. What is the image of youth shown in Internet (positive or negative youth, resistant or passive youth)?
4. Do you think that the new communications are effective ways to promote ideas and to influence the society?
5. Where are the limits of freedom of self-expression in Internet and is there any censorship on the Web?
6. In which way do the personal websites help their authors to overcome their anonymity and to become part of the global world of Internet?

You could read some thoughts about the topic:

...freedom:

- interfered by all the patterns to fill being part of society with habits and traditions

...limits

- economical independence
- censorship
- standards
- INSIDE boundaries

...modern media

- an adequate solution for encouraging young people to participate in the society

...a stream line of keys...chat...chat

still chatting...getting closer to someone...

searching for an image, choosing your own identity
self-expressing, self-labeling!

...the virtual escape from reality seems to be working right!

...getting stimulated

...getting into communication

...however, chatting is a passive process, isn't it?

...Internet - Global World

...a global society of each man's societies

...globalization - harmonization of rules (we can't live without) of different nations in an Union

...being an active participant in the www.society by performing your own web_image

...chat rooms versus website
or ... where does anonymity end!

“Virtual identity” - online simulation game

The new communications as chat, e-mail, discussion rooms etc. give you the freedom and the tools to change the sustainable components of your identity. In Internet everyone could freely choose her/his social, cultural and sexual identity - an old man could be teenager, a girl could be a boy. In this way the individuals construct a new untraditional “virtual identity”.

The aim of online simulation game “Virtual identity”, that was held during the event “(In)visible faces”, was to give participants opportunity to choose some different identity. After the interesting and funny one hour chanting, the group shared the impressions of being someone else. The topic of the online discussion was “the sex” **(You could see some examples of it below).**

The participants had to discuss following questions:

1. How deep could you know each other through the Internet communication?
2. What would your virtual identity be if you were able to choose it now? (E.g. you are communicating in the chatrooms).
3. How do you feel? Is your virtual identity equal to your real personal identity?
4. Do you think that disabled people or minority groups could feel them in a privileged position? Do they change their image?
5. Do the virtual global world have similar rules like the real society? Do people have a special status, does someone dominant, is someone isolated, are there formed groups?

The group found that person chooses personality, which is projection, reflection or setting yourself. In fact in most of the cases you create the man that you want to be, or that you are but someone or something forced you to conceal your true face.

They share that the communication through Internet is easier than

face to face contact. Just because you can be absolutely anonymous you can express your self freely, to say whatever you want and how you want.

It is very important to have these opportunities for “free speech” if there are some factors, which restrict it. The new communications are the tool that provides you “tribune” avoiding the fear of repression, overcoming the disadvantages of the traditional media and way to define your self, your culture, your way of thinking.

The example of chat:

.....

[Hunny-Bunny] from leather or what?
[YAN] or other things or Heis romantic
[Adam] george, don't be shy
[Hunny-Bunny] candle light
[YAN] of course leather black
[george] yea
>> Sugar-babe has joined channel #infoviolence
[YAN] what about the music
[Hunny-Bunny] hi sweety
[george] love songs
[Adam] again?
[Hunny-Bunny] Eros Ramazotti
[Sugar-babe] hi everyone
[Lorka] welcome!!!
[george] * to you dear bunny
[Adam] welcome! say something interesting!
[george] helooo
[YAN] Ehoo
[george] celine dion is better
[Lorka] Where you from Sugar?
[Hunny-Bunny] I ll lick your nipples dear
[Sugar-babe] I like Rammstein!
[george] ok honey

[YAN] ehh I prefer Ramshtain
[Hunny-Bunny] or some Chopin?
[YAN] Bethoven
[Adam] i like bjork
[YAN] terrible voice
[george] every think what you like i like
AniF> Chopin is good but must be cold
[Hunny-Bunny] even?
[george] everything for you my bee
[Hunny-Bunny] ok come here and we ll manage it
[george] or you can here
[george] are you alone
[Adam] where is here?
[YAN] right now or we are going to wait the International evening
[Hunny-Bunny] will u suck me?
[george] my bad
[Hunny-Bunny] and where is it?
[Adam] in the international evening, it would be fun!
[george] right now
AniF> international orgy!!!! yeah
[george] you shuld know
[Hunny-Bunny] make it hot 4 me
[YAN] come on wait untill the Intern Evening we want to have fun
too\
[Lorka] I'm writing a song now
[Adam] yeah!
[Adam] another one???
[Lorka] yes
[Lorka] You want to read it
AniF> kewl! another songie!!!
[YAN] waht about sex sex sex
[Adam] what you get inspired from, lorka?
.....

“UNISEX” - confrontation game

The current society and the unlimited space of Internet undergo reordering and significant changes of visions. The battle of the sexes, the traditional moral steering mechanism and the old stereotypes are strongly modified and we see the contours of “Unisex culture”. The slight borders between male and female hairstyles, male and female perfumes, male and female accessories, between male and female professions, male and female roles in the business and family leads to melting into universal “uni”-culture.

This topic was discussed from participants in the workshop during the confrontation game “UNISEX”. The rules of the game are simple. First the room is divided in three sectors - I agree, I disagree and abstention. The group has to stay on one line and think about the proposed statements. After a while every participant takes the chosen position and explains the arguments that have in mind. The main aim is to discuss the topic and to convince the others to change position.

Statements:

1. There is no difference between male and female jobs.
2. Men and women have equal social roles.
3. There are no special males and female clothes, wear styles, hairstyles.
4. The “unisex culture” thrives only in the virtual space of Internet.
5. In the chatrooms women are men and men are women.

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