Anarchism and the New Greek Civil Society: Examining the Rise of Modern Athenian Youth Politics

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Abstract

Since the country's return to democracy in the mid-1970s, Greece's youth population has endured increasing disenfranchisement, a worsening education system, and fear of an unfruitful future. A weak civil society and political party involvement in student unions and other youth-centred organizations have ensured the concerns of this population remain effectively unrepresented and largely unaddressed. This, of course, does not mean that the youth of Greece have been politically disengaged or idle, as evidenced by the December 2008 riots.

The disaffection and anger expressed by Greek youth during the riots grew along with the spread and increasing incorporation of internet and mobile phone technology in their daily lives since the 1990s. From coordinating gatherings over text message to reading the blogs or chat-room postings of friends and strangers experiencing similar problems and enduring similar anxieties, the internet and mobile phones, and the publics they mediate, have become central to Greek youth sociality. It follows that individuals have also come to feel a part of a larger informal anti-establishment collectivity based on small interconnected groups of similarly affected individuals. This is having important political consequences.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork I conducted since 2003 among secondary school-aged children to young adults living in Athens, and among anarchists situated in the political dissident neighbourhood Exarchia, this paper examines the rise of a new mode of political engagement and civic action undertaken by the Greek youth population. It will first situate the spread of an anti-establishment ethos among the youth within a process of social change and modernization. This will be followed by an in-depth examination of the role of mobile and internet technology in youth sociality, particularly in the spread and mediation of various anti-state publics. Finally, this paper will examine the use of technology by domestic insurgent groups such as anarchist organizations, paying particular attention to recruitment and the coordination of public action.

This paper will posit the emergence of a new civil society representative of an anti-establishment youth community, and will outline a number of important implications for Greek social policy, activism, and processes of social and political change.

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Abstract: This paper is based on the research focusing on the uses and impact of different forms/media of communication on bicommunal relations in Cyprus. The broader research includes studies of three modes of communication: 1. interpersonal (i.e. face-to-face) communication, 2. communication through print and broadcast media, 3. communication through the new media (i.e. Internet).

The paper will present two case studies of online bicommunal communication form in Cyprus, that of Yahoo Group email and Facebook groups.

The email communication is analysed through the data produced by emails exchanged between a group of teenagers (16- 18 years old) from both communities after the end of a bicommunal workshop that took place in Prague in April 2001. Their email communication began immediately after their return in Cyprus through a YahooGroup created by one of the teenager participants.

In this first case study, the YahooGroup communication data are discussed in relation to parameters that could provide information about the impact of both the face-to-face communication they experienced during the workshop and the dynamic of their online communication developed in the YahooGroup context, after their return to Cyprus.

The second case study examines the groups that exist in Facebook in relation to bicommunal relations in Cyprus, i.e. groups with positive approach towards bicommunal relations, groups with negative approach towards bicommunal relations and groups which have both Greek and Turkish-Cypriot members and a neutral approach towards bicommunal relations. The focus here will be whether this form of communication and contact between strangers who get acquainted through the Internet, facilitates the development of bonds similar/analogous to bicommunal communication and whether the Internet can be seen as a medium that allows the development of alternative forms of the public sphere in which more unified bicommunal conceptions/perceptions of "being in Cyprus" can be emerged.

The Internet as a medium for bicommunal communication in Cyprus

7.1. Introduction

This chapter will analyse data produced in the online communication form of email and Facebook groups. Email was selected as one of the oldest and most popular Internet tools and Facebook Groups was also selected due to its popularity but at the same time as a representative of the most recent online communication tools.

There are three main research questions with which these communication forms will be examined: 1. Which is the dynamic of the Internet as a medium, i.e. the specificity of online communication. 2. Whether in the discussions developed between the two Cypriot communities in these online spaces there are forms of questioning of the hegemonic discourse that could be considered counter-public spheres. 3. How do the 'rituals' of these online communication forms affect the bicommunal communication? These might look as three separate questions but none of them could be posed separately since an isolated answer would limit the importance of what exists in online communication. If the first question is posed alone it could result to technological determinism, the second to a closed 'yes' or 'no' surface response and the third to a functionalist approach answer.

Even though the centre of attention here are Internet environments the purpose of the study is not to reduce the meaning of the counter-public spheres to these new spaces that the Internet provides. That is why, when I will talk about the online environments mentioned above, I will not refer to their meaning as environments per se but as online media or Internet tools; giving equal weight in this way to the use of the medium and the dynamic of its form. The basis of theory when examining the dynamic of the medium will derive from McLuhan (1965), Ong (1985) and Meyrowitz (1985), theory discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis but it will not be limited to the approach of technological determinism. In other words, the technology of the medium will be looked at as a tool with which people could create other

contexts in which to communicate and not as "the prime mover in social change" (Garnham 2000, p. 66).

That is why, when focusing on the potential use of the Internet as a counter-public sphere one needs to pay attention to who is using it and what they are using it for, taking into consideration this way equally all three elements i.e. persons, places and topics and not limiting to one of those which is also considered a deterministic approach that as Asen argues reduces the meaning of the counter-public spheres (2000, p.430). As mentioned in Chapter 2, Asen suggests that the 'counter' of the counter-public spheres lies with the process followed by the participants first, to recognise their exclusion and second, to set themselves against the wider public sphere (2000, p.440). For this reason, while the research will be examining the counter-public spheres that might be created in the context of the Internet, the focus will have two dimensions: first, identifying whether the participants of online discussions recognise that certain themes are excluded from the dominant public sphere/s and second, examining if in these online group discussions there are elements which indicate how the participants set themselves up as a counter public. In both case studies explored there seem to be, broadly, two kinds of bicommunal communication: one set of communication is based on what might be called lifestyle interests while the other is based on conscious political choice.

In the case of email communication during the period that direct contact between the two communities was difficult, a youth group was created out of a workshop organised in Prague in 2001. The bicommunality of the meeting evidently had within it the potential of political engagement since any bicommunal meeting in such context – i.e. a workshop in the broader field of conflict resolution – before the partial opening of the crossing points in 2003 involved politics but it is clear from the messages exchanged that the feeling of a group bonding dynamic among young people was also strongly present. Thus, we may call that group bonding dynamic a "lifestyle" form of commonality. But due to the fact that face-to-face communication was prohibited during that time the group dynamic acquired also a clearly political dimension –as a conscious political choice– which was evident, as we will see, in the reference to forms of a broader collective identity: to Cypriotism, or to forms of political activism – going to political meetings/lectures, setting up demands, conclusions of the seminars etc.

In the case of Facebook groups – which of course post-date the email conversations since Facebook was founded in 2004 – the continuity of the email data is not as apparent. Here there are distinct political and lifestyle groups. The political groups seem to be engaged in a form of public discourse either with people from the other community – thus setting up a form of counter public sphere – or within their own community –thus creating forms of counter publics. The lifestyle groups that are more numerous, 72% of the total groups that contain the word 'Cyprus', include people from both communities and may be a sign of a subterranean trend of de facto coexistence. Currently, in offline life there is of course direct communication, but the unresolved issues of the communal representation and integration of Turkish Cypriots in existing institutions of the Republic of Cyprus or efforts to set up new ones, often creates complications[1]. In the context of online groups and interests the coexistence of Cypriots seems to be a de facto reality. Clearly these groups are not directly related to politics – but by being open to both communities they are engaging in a practice that creates an alternative form of social life and potentially forms of public sphere.

7.2. Email Communication

As far as the email communication is concerned, the method used is similar to the one followed in analysing the interpersonal communication between the two communities. Thus, the data is analysed in relation to the categories explained in Chapter 5, since this specific email communication had followed on from a face-to-face contact of the group. These categories are:

1. First contact: cultural/political background- causes/ reasons for first contact with other community:
   - Personal/cultural background
   - Media images/discourses
   - Group influence/lifestyle/activism
2. Shifting images of the other community due to interpersonal contact:
   - Before contact
   - After contact
3. Ways of relating to the other community after the first contact:

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[1] Efforts to unite football are instructive of these problems.

- Personal contact
- Media-mediated contact
- Group/sub-culturally mediated contact

The categories have been slightly altered from the ones used in Chapter 5 in order to fit the characteristics of the data derived from an online context, notably that the data have not been collected through interviews – in which the participants described their experiences retrospectively – but they are actual instances of bicommunal Internet communication. For this reason it is possible that some categories are inappropriate, while other new categories emerge.

7.2.1. The context of the email communication case study

The data comprises the email exchanges between a group of 40 teenagers (20 from each community)16- 18 years old, from both communities after the end of a bicommunal workshop that took place in Prague from 16- 22 April 2001 – a period during which, as mentioned before, direct intercommunal communication was difficult to impossible. The workshop was organised by two bicommunal peace groups, Youth Encounters for Peace (YEP) and Seeds of Peace (SOP).

Youth Encounters for Peace – a name given by the young participants in their first workshop – was a bicommunal group formed in July 1997 as a project that aimed in bringing the youth of the two main Cypriot communities together. In 1997 three two-day workshops –YEP1, YEP2 and YEP3 – took place in Ledra Palace[2] in July, October and December in which 150 teenagers participated in total. Their plans for more face-to-face meetings and workshops were stopped after the December 1997 ban of all bicommunal meetings and for this reason, an electronic version of YEP was developed between 1998-2000 in which the participants communicated via email. A third phase of face-to-face workshops began again in 2000 in Pyla[3] and lasted until April 2003, during which YEP 4-15 took place. The workshops continued after April's 2003 partially opening of the crossing points until 2007 when the last YEP workshop took place No. 29. According to one of the main organiser's the workshops stopped due to both personal reasons of the organisers and because they also felt that

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[2] Ledra Palace used to be a hotel before the separation of the two communities with the Green Line. Now the building is in the no man's land area, under the UN's control and occasionally is used for bicommunal activities.
[3] Pyla is a village in the eastern part of Cyprus, in the district of Larnaca. It is the only bicommunal village located in the south part and even though in the United Nations buffer zone it is administrated by the Republic of Cyprus.

"these workshops had completed their circle" as he characteristically said explaining though that they are now working on something new.

Seeds of Peace is an international youth organisation found in 1993 that organises camps aiming to bring together youth from areas of conflict do discuss and experience coexistence. The organisation started bringing youth from Cyprus together in 1998 in camps and continued until the summer of 2003 – when the funding of the programme stopped for Cyprus – graduating annually about 100 youth from both communities. The participants of the camps continued their communication after their return to Cyprus via email and in face-to-face meetings and events that they co-organised with YEP like the Bicommunal Youth Festival which took place in Pergamos[4] park.

Prague workshop was an idea formed by the organisers/facilitators of the YEP workshops and the Seeds of Peace in their attempt to think of a way "for the participants to spend days and nights together without the need of moving back and forth to Pyla everyday having the chance this way to create something big" as one of the facilitators said. According to the same facilitator the idea for something big pre-existed the Prague workshop and that was organising a Bicommunal Youth Festival that would involve as many of the bicommunal groups as possible but it needed time and space to be elaborated and the Prague workshop provided both. Thus, if someone would ask for a tangible result of that workshop then that would be the Bicommunal Youth Festival at Pergamos park. The Prague workshop was fully funded and supported by the Seed of Peace but the facilitation and the coordination of the workshop was fully conducted by Cypriots of both communities.

The email communication of the participants began immediately after their return to Cyprus through a Yahoo group called «Pragueworkshop2000[5]» that was created by one of the teenager participants. The emails analysed in this chapter were sent by the subscribers of the Yahoo group to the email address[6] that was set up for the group and was automatically delivered to the email account of every subscriber, so the emails do not have the format of a personal conversation but the one of a public dialogue. It is important to make clear at this point that the quotes that will follow are taken from the

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[4] Pergamos is a village just outside Pyla.
[5] The Yahoo group was mistakenly named «Pragueworkshop2000» instead of «Pragueworkshop2001».
[6] <pragueworkshop2000@yahoogroups.com>

actual online conversation and because the young participants communicated in English – the common language used in order to communicate – instead of their native languages Greek and Turkish so spelling and other grammatical mistakes might exist. My access to this email communication was given by one of the facilitators of the Prague bicommunal workshop in his attempt to explain, in the context of his interview, the relationships created in such workshops while he was interviewed. After a discussion about the ethics that this material carries and because of the difficulty to locate and contact 40 participants of a workshop that took place 7 years ago, it was decided that the subjects studied would be considered as a group of which the facilitator, as the person in charge during the period of the workshop and their later online communication, would give permission for the use of the material. In addition to this, it was agreed that the conversations would be kept safe and used only for the purposes of this research and that pseudonyms would be used instead of real names in order to protect the participants' identity (for more about the ethics of this research see Chapter 4).

The emails analysed are from the first days of their return to Cyprus which shows the dynamic of the group immediately after the physical meeting but has limits for more long term implications. That is why this case study will be focusing on data that provide evidence of the relationship created by the workshop, data that indicate the image that members of one community have about the other, and data that show their desired group actions/ intentions in relation to the political situation of the island in the wider public domain.

7.2.2. Analysis

Topics discussed
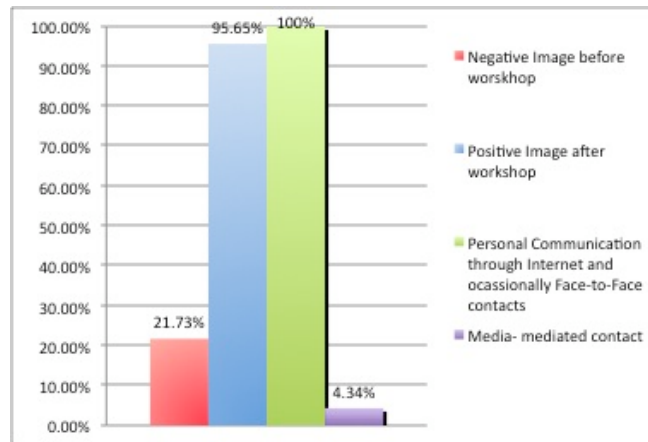
Graph 1

The topics the participants discussed in their email communication constitute another aspect of the data that is worthy of note since this transitional dynamic of the group is identifiable here too. The different kinds of topics they talked about on the personal level were oriented to: school matters (exams, homework, university concerns), picnic arrangements, flight and airport incidents, football, friendship/ bonding, language, weather, Internet tools (ICQ, MIRC, AOL, Hotmail), birthday wishes, Prague trip (photos, Czechs, funny moments), frappe[7] (coffees).

On the political level the orientation of the teenagers' conversations was to: Prague workshop (experience, impact, discussions/activities), peace package, political leaders, information about lectures and open discussions on the Cyprus problem, bicommunal activities, participation in a radio programme regarding the workshop, desire for the solution of the Cyprus problem/ peace in Cyprus, oppressed right to meet physically in their country, activism engagement, cooperation and future.

As the above indicates there were a variety of topics discussed but even though the email would be expected to facilitate personal communication more, yet it seems that in the absence of other means, it also became a forum for political engagement – or the transformation of personal discussions into more political public issues. If we now consider that in this case the email communication is a continuation of the face-to-

face communication then we might consider that the face-to-face communication, i.e. the Prague workshop, was constituted by a similar combination of personal and political topics of conversations. The significant thing regarding the categories of topics they talked about, at least in the email communication, is that the participants do not artificially separate the categories in their conversations. On the contrary, they merge topics from both categories in their conversations. For example Emre writes in one of his emails:

> I think Denktas bribed my computer because I have been disconnected from the Internet about couple of hundred times within five minutes and it is pissing me off! The message about frappe didn't go properly thanks to my medieval computer. As far as I remember I said it would be better to bring our food and of course frappe. In case some of you don't pls don't forget to bring the machine).

Onur's email is another example of combining topics from both categories:

> Hey how are you??? I hope everything is ok!! My exams were so good today :)))[8] I think Prague made me better!! I hope tomorrow I'll do well again […] and Stavros we are the best and we can do everything if we can be strong.. I believe [trust] you my friends.

Additionally, it is worth mentioning that the teenagers' desire to see each other soon many times its expressed with phrases like "I love you", "I miss you so much :o([9]", "I cannot concentrate on my exams all the time I think about you", "We should be together", expressions that would not be out of place in the context of a sexual relationship.

It seems that their email communication is a convergent of teenagers' innocence, libido, enthusiasm and activism. Thus, it is obvious that the online interactions of the group involved both personal and political dynamics that the textual analysis, which follows, will attempt to delineate.

Textual Analysis

The relatively big number of the emails sent to the "Pragueworkshop2000" Yahoo group during the first five days after the participants returned to Cyprus is the first

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[7] Frappe is a kind of Greek iced coffee.
[8] Emoticon for expressing smiley face.
[9] Emoticon for expressing sad face.

noticeable thing. 23 of the 40 workshop participants – which means 57.5% – sent a total of 41 emails in the first five days something which indicates the desire to communicate with each other or rather, the desire not to end their newly-established channel of communication. As the teenagers themselves reveal in their email conversation, only hours after their return home they run to their computers in order to 'reach' each other. Eser, a Turkish Cypriot participant states:

> It makes me feel really great to see all of your emails coming so fast this shows how strong a friendship we have built among us and it also shows that friendship cannot be limited with those stupid borders.

The above statement is evidence of the enthusiasm of the teenagers about the relationships that developed in the group during the workshop. Such an enthusiasm however is a common consequence when a group of people – bicommunal or not – and especially teenagers - spend some time and share some experiences together. Thus, the only thing one could interpret by the enthusiasm that appears in the above statement, and as shows in Graph 1 also by the positive image that the participants seem to have about the people of the other community after the workshop, is that the teenagers valued the bicommunal workshop in Prague as a good experience. At the same time though, the above sample of conversation is a first sign that the participants place their group relationship in the context of the political situation of the island. It is an indication that the Internet – and email specifically – was not simply used as a medium, or the only medium, of communication between the group after the end of the workshop but also as a way to overcome physical obstacles that could destroy or prevent the development of this relationship like physical 'borders'. Eser's words suggest that the Internet provides an environment in which relationships that start through face-to-face contact could be maintained even when physical contact is no longer possible. On the other hand, due to the fact that email does not provide an instantaneous communication the participants attempted to achieve a sort of instantaneous communication by exchanging several emails in one day that points out an attempt to achieve the instantaneous communication of face-to-face contact. The need for instant communication could be also the explanation for their decision –

which appears in their conversations – to switch to ICQ[10] instead of Yahoo Groups as their everyday communication tool. Thus, one could suggest that the Internet contact in this case was used for continuation and supplementary purposes but at the same time as a de facto substitute of the face-to-face contact.

Agathi, a Greek Cypriot participant, also comments on the frequency with which the emails arrived. She wrote:

> It's hardly been a day since we got back [from Prague] and we have rough arrangements for a picnic and a peace package.

Her statement however has three dimensions. First, it indicates the promptness of the communication the teenagers achieved, second it shows their wish to have a face-to-face contact and third it gives a hint of their intention to engage in activism since they try to develop further the ideas they initiated at the workshop by developing a peace package. Only hours after their separation the teenagers try to arrange their next face-to-face meeting. This is an addition to the position that in this case the Internet was used by the group as a substitute for the physical contact. On the other hand, the urge to arrange a picnic, i.e. a face-to-face meeting, immediately after their return could be justified by the fact that the participants were aware that any physical contact would be difficult to take place in Cyprus – at least for that time being. In other words, this rush for renewed physical contact could be interpreted not simply as an expression of their desire for a face-to-face meeting but as a reaction to their de facto situation that suppressed their desire. Whatever the reason though, it is yet another indication that the group's initial communication was built around the intense feeling of bonding and consequently their conversations were characterised by such a dynamic. Ilkay, another Turkish Cypriot teenager writes:

> It's really great to hear from almost all of you guys just in a day many times!! I wish it would be like this till the solution!:))).

Ilkay's wish to keep this Internet communication until the solution of the Cyprus problem expresses on the one hand the difficulty in meeting each other physically

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[10] ICQ is a homophone of the phrase «I seek you» and is one of the first instant messaging Internet programmes released in 1996. ICQ belongs to America Online (AOL) since 1998 and according to Time Warner by 2001 it celebrated 100 million registered users worldwide (Time Warner Press Release 2001, <http://www.timewarner.com/corp/newsroom/pr/0,20812,668719,00.html>, retrieved on 7th of June 2009).

under that time's circumstances and on the other hand expresses the concern that the intensify of the online communication will inevitably fade and that is why while expressing a faith in the certainty of the solution he implies the need a for a face-to-face contact too.

This feeling of bonding however appears to slowly change to a more political dynamic of the group. An interesting point that derives from the email data in relation to this transitional process is that of the feeling of one common identity. The group seems to have developed this feeling of belonging together and sharing the same identity of Cypriotism (Mavratsas, 1998) since they started talking in an inclusive way towards the other community. In their conversations it seems that "we" starts as the collective identity of the group but then develops into a larger collective identity that includes the Cypriots as a whole instead for simply the Prague workshop group or the ethnic community they belong. This can be interpreted from comments that oppose "we" with the "other" which instead of meaning those who are outside the Prague workshop group it means the outsiders of a larger scale that differ from the Cypriots and in this case are the Czechs or the Americans. The following quotations are samples of this transitional process that the group was undergoing; the pattern goes like this:

Emre, a Turkish Cypriot mentions while writing about the arrangement of the picnic:

> Since the weather is not like in Prague, I think a picnic is a great idea to conserve the warmth within the group.

A Greek Cypriot teenager, Stavros also comments on the Cypriot weather:

> I missed having my coffee here in not so cold Cyprus and I miss my friends too… so see you all really soon I hope.

Both Eser, a Turkish Cypriot male, and Efi, a Greek Cypriot female, make comments that refer to the coldness of the Czechs making this way an indirect comparison of the Cypriot identity of "we" to the "other". Efi mentions in one of her emails:

It's only half a day after we left Prague and I already miss it so Bad. (Except of the Czech smile of course ☺[11])

Eser in a similarly ironical tone (note the exaggerated use of exclamation marks at the end of the comment) writes:

I think we all agree that we had an awesome week together and we all learnt a lot from each other. Moreover we learnt a lot from the Czech people; for example we all learnt from them how kind and warm human beings can be!!!!

Then another Turkish Cypriot, Onur, writes: "We [TCs and GCs working together] are the best and we can do everything".

As we observe, a conversation which starts from a simple talk about the weather or a coffee builds up, and the weather or the coffee suddenly become significant elements of constructing an identity of "we" that differentiates the participants form the "other". What is important here is that both Greek and Turkish Cypriot participants made such statements about common elements between the two communities and the fact that nature (in the form of weather, for example) – which refers to the common home/habitat of both communities – becomes a point of reference which can be seen as a transition from the group identity of teenagers to a broader identification. Their comments demonstrate that in their minds one common identity for both communities has been constructed and it would be really interesting to see whether this idea was constructed before or after the workshop. Even though it is not possible to find this out from the email conversations available – since there are not any data referring directly to the beliefs the teenagers had in relation to the concept of identity before participating in the workshop– there are indirect comments that illustrate broadly the feeling/tendency of their beliefs about the other community prior to the workshop. For example Danae mentions:

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[11] An emoticon used in online conversations that according to Yahoo Messenger Emoticons (<http://messenger.yahoo.com/features/emoticons>, retrieved on 6th June 2009) it expresses a «straight face». Microsoft Office in an article on the emoticons notes for this particular emoticon «In a purely unscientific poll of the Office Online team, we couldn't agree on what the third symbol meant. Different people thought that it was a sign either of indifference, frustration, or grumpiness. You be the judge. MSN® Messenger officially calls it disappointed, so we'll use that description for this article» (http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/help/HA011196081033.aspx, retrieved on 6th of June 2009). The significance of this emoticon in the participant's comment lies on the fact that it expresses an unpleasant or at least a passive mood which contrasts with the participant's comment about the Czech smile that leads us to the conclusion that the comment was made ironically.

I got to know many things about our island's history and I am very satisfied because I never expected that we would ever get so deep in history.

Angelos, another Greek Cypriot writes:

When united all politicians and guns and prejudices cannot keep us from changing this situation.

Danae mentions that she learnt many things about the history of Cyprus that she did not know or she used to know differently and Angelos refers to prejudices that cannot and should not keep them apart. Questions arise from those interesting comments; what kind of prejudices could he refer to and where and how have they been created; what things about history have been unknown to Danae until the workshop and why? Possible answers to such questions could be given when one combines these quotations with data or literature analysed in previous chapters in relation to historical facts and mythistories of Cyprus (Chapter 3), to the interpersonal/ face-to-face communication (Chapter 5) and to print and broadcast communication (Chapter 6). One contextual reason for the observation that these sort of comments have been made mostly by Greek Cypriot participants could be that the period in which they grew up, the 1990's, were characterised by a resurgence of nationalism as a hegemonic ideology in the public domain[12] (Mavratsas 1998, p.99).

7.2.3. The Prague Workshop group's online deliberation as a counter-public sphere

The main conclusion of the above analysis is that the participants of the email communication want and try to maintain the bicommunal relations that emerged during the workshop in Prague. The participants' identity – that is teenagers of the two opposing Cypriot communities who want to enhance their cross-border relationship – is the first characteristic that suggests the emergence of a counter-public sphere in this online context. The reason is that such a group identity was excluded of participation in the dominant public sphere[13] of the Cypriot society – at least until 2003 – thus based on Fraser's argument it was a group with "[…] no arena

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[12] The reasons for this resurgence may be traced to the rise to power of the right wing on the one hand and of the international climate on the other – especially the impact of the Balkan wars of the early 90's.

[13] I refer to a singular dominant public sphere of the Cypriot society but it is important to note that since 1963 the Cypriot public sphere was seggregated between the two communities. Even though usually such a reference will mainly mean the Greek Cypriot community's public sphere – since as explained in the introduction of this thesis

for deliberation among themselves about their needs, objectives, and strategies. They would have no venues in which to undertake communicative processes that were not, as it were, under the supervision of dominant groups" (1990, p.66). The group's identity however is not the only characteristic that excluded the participation of the teenager from the dominant public sphere. The topics of the discussion were built up around themes that even today are considered taboo in Cypriot society. As seen in previous chapters (5 and 6) the dominant discourses in the education system, the church and the print and broadcast media did not include any public discussion of a multiplicity of mythistories instead of one; prejudices of the other and suffering of the opposite community. Even though there is evidence that the Prague workshop group was excluded from the public sphere in terms of its participants' identity i.e. the bicommunal status of the group and in terms of the topics they discussed i.e. ways to promote coexistence, according to Asen (2000) the counter of a counter-public sphere lies on the recognition of the group for its exclusion and on their act of setting themselves towards the wider public sphere. The group of teenagers initially developed in the workshop hosted in Prague in 2001 and maintained through a Yahoo group appears to have both of the characteristics identified by Asen. The participants often identify in their discussion things that keep them apart and things that make their communication difficult. Angelos, a Greek Cypriot participant, mentions in one of his emails:

> I only need you and I know that when united all politicians and guns and prejudices cannot keep us from changing this situation.

Another evidence of awareness of exclusion – in terms of topics discussed this time – appears in an email sent by Kalia, a female Greek Cypriot participant, regarding some public discussions organised by the University of Cyprus. She writes:

> There are also some other very interesting lectures about the causes of our conflict […] nobody assures us that what we will hear is absolutely correct or wise but still I think there are a lot to gain.

Kalia's assertion indicates recognition of the fact that their group's knowledge and beliefs on the issue of conflict are partially excluded from the ones discussed in

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this is the focus of the study – in this case there are evidences that this is was valid in both communities' public spheres.

dominant public discourses. She does indicate that that the lectures will be interesting – thus in some way she believes that they will be also promoting views she probably likes. In other words, Kalia has caution, but she insists that "there are a lot to gain" if they attend the lecture.

In terms of Asen's second "counter" element of the counter-public spheres, i.e. their action of setting themselves against the wider public sphere, seems to be also identifiable in the Prague workshop Yahoo group. The participants discuss their next possible moves in order for their group to have an impact on the wider public scene of the Cypriot society. The quote presented above regarding the group's intention to attend an open lecture organised by a public institution, the University of Cyprus, suggests that the group aims to set itself against the hegemonic discourses of the dominant public. It is important to make clear that it is not implied that the discussions hosted by the University of Cyprus did not allow space for debate but as it appears in Kalia's comment it was kind of expected for things "not absolutely correct or wise" to be heard when a formal institution would be involved. One reason for that expectation/ ambiguity for what would be heard, which is again contextual, could be that the formal agencies of that period –even the University of Cyprus[14] that was considered a progressive institution from its creation – were usually adopting (consciously or not) the hegemonic discourse of that time that according to Mavratsas was expressing the nationalistic ideology (1998, p.99).

Another example that highlights even more the group's intention to have an energetic role in the wider public is their discussion about the development of their own peace package as a proposed solution of the Cyprus problem. Emre, a male Turkish Cypriot participant who came out with this idea writes:

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[14] University of Cyprus was targeted from the beginning of its opening by the nationalists and thus the debate on the flag which follows and others were part of a campaign of nationalist 'intimidation'''one may say so as to 'keep the University in line. But there were academics who obviously were not liked by the nationalists – like the case of the Turkish Cypriot academic N. Kizilyurek which sparked a lot of debate – but he was hired and maintains his position until today; also, the very charter of the university which specified it as bicommunal, obviously irritated the nationalists but it still remains the same. An incident that illustrates though the concession to the hegemonic discourse by the University of Cyprus was in 1996 when after that time's prime minister of Greece Mr. Simitis visit to the university student demonstrations took place – excluding the students of the leftist Proodeftiki – that demanded to keep the Greek flag raised to the university. After days of public discussion between the University's Senate, groups of academics, the Attorney General of the Republic and the Minister of Education and Culture the authorities of the University decided to keep the Greek flag raised as the majority of the students wished (Mavratsas 1998, p.126-130).

[W]e came out with two pages of ideas as our solution to the Cyprus problem. My suggestion is to turn these ideas into some sort of a peace package by adding political vocabulary and offer it as an agreement that our Prague group has reached. Since we have done an amazingly creative and constructive job, why not offer these ideas to our politicians including Denktas, Klerides, Kofi Annan, George Bush, Tony Blair, Athens, Ankara and EU. Even the existence of such a peace package is enough to make them concerned and even scared to know that there are people working their guts out to create a better future.

7.3. Facebook Groups

Introducing Facebook

Facebook is a social networking Internet tool founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg and his co-students and roommates Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes while being students at Harvard University. The tool consists of a free-access website and social applications that anyone can develop. Facebook's mission as described by its company overview is "to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected"[15].

Millions of people use Facebook today to create their personal profiles/ accounts in order to connect with the profiles of their friends and share photos, links, videos, thoughts, join groups and chat. More specifically, according to the statistics[16] available in Facebook, there are 200 million active users from which more than 100 million users log on to Facebook at least once a day and an average user has 120 friends on the site. As far as its international growth is concerned, Facebook is translated in more than 50 languages –between them Greek and Turkish – and 40 more are under development and 70% of its users are outside the United States. The amount of growth and its popularity in general was the main reason for choosing Facebook for this research rather than any of the other social networking sites available. Even though there are not any statistical data available for the growth of

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[15]<http://www.facebook.com/facebook?v=info&viewas=586066524#/facebook?v=info&viewas=586066524> retrieved on 6th of June 2009.
[16] The statistical information is available online at <http://www.facebook.com/s.php?q=cyprus&n=-1&k=100000020&sf=r&init=q&sid=4270109a1f06fde408923a6f2f2a74ae#/press/info.php?statistics>, retrieved on 7th of June 2009.

Facebook and its users' engagement in Cyprus, it is rather obvious that at least in the last two years Facebook is the most popular social networking Internet tool in Cyprus too. This is evident from the growing number of newspaper articles on Facebook related matters in the last two years. Such articles, in the Greek Cypriot newspapers, are concerned with either the results of international scientific researches on the social consequences of Facebook, or with incidents that took place worldwide in Facebook or because of Facebook. On the local level, there have been articles that covered public forums on social networking in which Facebook was the protagonist, the representation of Cypriot media and political persons or parties in Facebook and most importantly social demonstrations that were organised through Facebook – like the demonstration against the "Tree-killings in the heart of the city", in March 2008 (*Sigma Live* article 15682, 23 March 2008[17]) and the demonstrations that took place in Nicosia and Limassol, in March 2009, against the decision of the Cyprus Criminal Court to acquit ten policemen who were accused of beating two students in December 2005 (*Haravgi*, 30 March 2009[18]).

The study of the communication facilitated by Facebook groups will start with a quantitative presentation of what exists in this context in relation to the bicommunal relations in Cyprus and the Cyprus problem in general. Then it will focus on specific characteristics of the Facebook groups and samples of the discussion produced in the context of the groups in order to identify any of the characteristics that according to the literature of counter-public spheres (Asen, 2000; Fraser, 1990) constitute a counter-public sphere.

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[17] Available at <http://www.sigmalive.com/news/local/15682>, retrieved on 7th June 2009.
[18] Available at <http://www.haravgi.com.cy/site-article-23697-gr.php>, retrieved on 7th of June 2009.

7.3.1. The context of the Facebook groups communication case study

This section examines the groups that exist in Facebook in relation to the bicommunal relations in Cyprus. In order to discover these groups among the vast number of groups that exist in Facebook, three keywords have been used in the Facebook groups search engine. The keywords used were 1. "Cyprus" in order to locate all the groups that contain the word Cyprus in their title or description, 2. the keyword "Κύπρος" – the Greek word for Cyprus – in order to find any groups related to the bicommunal relations, and the Cyprus problem in general, that use the Greek language and 3. the Turkish word for Cyprus i.e. "Kıbrıs" in order to trace any groups using the Turkish language on the same area.

The group themes that resulted from this search vary; there are groups with several approaches to the Cyprus problem, groups supporting popular singers, football teams, brands, political parties, sexual preferences or groups made specifically about an event that is about to happen in Cyprus. The theme of a group is most of the times denoted by its title: for example a group titled "Tango Cyprus" clearly defines its theme. In some cases though, the title itself is not enough to characterise the theme of the group; that is why Facebook groups are also labelled by a category that describes the type of the group and they are also accompanied by a related picture (see Figure 1 for more details).
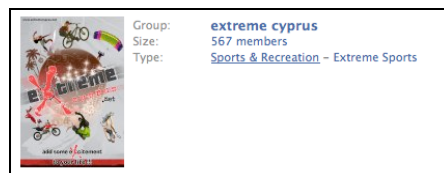

Figure 1

In spite of this, there are some groups that have a general title, no picture and are labelled with a category that does not explain the theme or purpose of the group (see Figure 2 for more details) so in these cases one needs to see a more detailed description of the group– if it exists – or read part of the discussion hosted in the group if possible in order to understand its purpose.
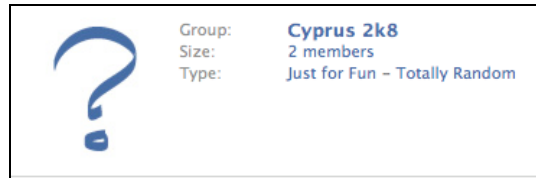
19

Figure 2

Someone is able to read part of the discussion hosted in the groups when the group is 'open' which means anyone can join it and any discussion going on there is open to public and second when the group is 'closed' which means that a request and approval is required in order for someone to join or see what happens in the group.

The groups discussed in this case study however are not all the Facebook groups that contain these three keywords but only the ones where their title or their description is somehow linked to the relations of the two Cypriot communities. The results of the three searches are automatically divided into three categories according to the language used in the groups, English, Greek or Turkish. Then, each of these categories is referred to in this case study in relation to the three categories they are consist of:

1. Groups with a positive approach towards rapprochement

2. Groups with a nationalistic approach towards bicommunal relations

3. Groups with a neutral approach towards bicommunal relations[19].

The purpose of this analysis is to identify whether the Internet – and in this case study Facebook Groups specifically – facilitate bicommunal communication in Cyprus in a way that they can be considered counter-public spheres. One of the main issues scholars often discuss in relation to the public sphere/s that the Internet could possibly be creating – is that the discussion produced online is often not the Habermasian one that rationally aims to a consensus; it is in other words supported that online discussions do not seem to have an impact to the offline life. Jensen concludes his paper on the public spheres on the Internet with the suggestion that the discussions developed on the Internet are similar to the Habermasian concept of the coffee house where the audience and the active participants are limited (2003, p.372).

In the case of Cyprus of course, the dominant public sphere is segregated between two different public spheres one for each ethnic community since 1974, thus the audience is limited per se. For this reason any 'coffee house' either offline or online which has a mixed audience – however limited in terms of size or reach – is worth an analysis since it appears to be at least more pluralised at least in this narrow ethnic – national sense. What makes the 'coffee shop phenomenon' remarkable when it appears in online environments such as the Facebook groups, is that the dynamic of the medium allows it to be used in order to form audiences or publics even under circumstances that it could not be possible (e.g. when physical interaction is prohibited). When one speaks about counter or alternative public spheres then one expects to be confronted with publics that do not have the classic form of public. Further, let's not dismiss the great dynamic of the Internet to merge the private with the public domain; such a dynamic is expected to have an impact on every aspect of a public sphere that might be formed in this environment. Dahlgren (2005) in his article on the Internet and the public spheres, points towards scholars identifying an alternative perspective about online discussions which places them in the category of "new politics", "life politics" or "sub-politics" – meaning democratic political discussions held outside the usual parliamentarian boundaries (p.154). Thus, when examining the groups in Facebook we will be focusing on elements that give evidence of "life-politics" and consequently signs of counter public spheres. At the same time, while studying the bicommunal groups of Facebook that are not per se political the focus will be on the conscious choice of the participants to coexist with the members of the other community. In these cases, their coexistence will be examined in relation to the concepts of Durkheim's ritual function (1912) and Couldry's media rituals (2003) since, as we will see, the participants' relationships are formed on the basis of their common 'ritual' functions that exist in such contexts, instead of their in-between interaction.

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[19] These are groups that have both Greek and Turkish Cypriots members but their theme is unrelated to the bicommunal relations or the Cyprus Problem.

7.3.2. What exists in Facebook in relation to Cyprus

7.3.2.1. Facebook Groups that contain keyword 'Cyprus' and are related to bicommunal relations or the Cyprus problem

Quantitative Presentation
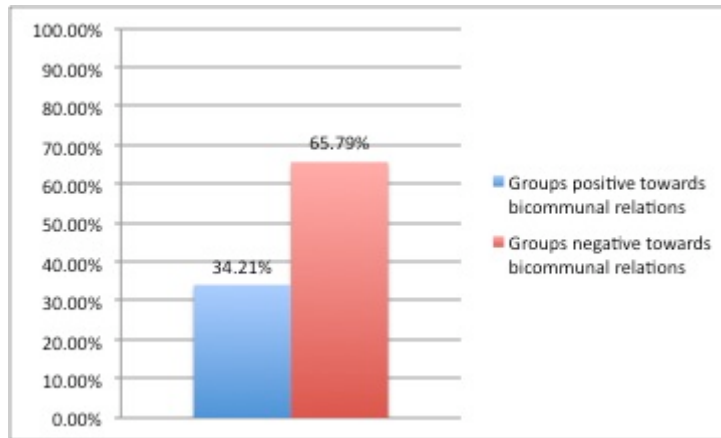
Graph 2:

Facebook groups which contain the keyword 'Cyprus' and are related to bicommunal relations in Cyprus or the Cyprus problem in general.

76 groups out of the 550 groups that contained the keyword "Cyprus" are somehow linked to the bicommunal relations in Cyprus; that means a percentage of 13.09% of the results.

It is worth noting that the 76 groups that are related to bicommunal relations are all open groups, so their discussions are public and anyone can join them. These groups were divided into two categories according to their approach towards the bicommunal relations, as this was expressed in their titles and/or in the groups' descriptions. The division indicates that 26 out of the 76 groups have a positive approach towards bicommunal relations and the rest 50 groups have a negative approach towards bicommunal relations which is translated into a percentage of 34.21% versus 65.79% (see Graph 2). As one would expect most of the groups of the first category have members from both communities since they support peaceful coexistence and groups of the second category have members from only one community. An interesting

element of the groups, which resulted from this search, is that they are using the English language. Something like this of course is expected to be the case for the groups with a positive approach towards bicommunal relations since English is the common language that the two communities can use to communicate. More surprisingly, however, English was also used by groups of the second category – those with a negative approach towards bicommunal relations.

Many group titles suggest that the groups of this category support nationalistic ideas, for example "Cyprus is Greek!", "cyprus belongs to turks", "Get the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus recognized as a country" or "Enough IS ENOUGH! STOP Assimilation of TurkishCYPRIOTS in north of Cyprus!". One could then suggest that the English language in these cases is used instead of the native language of the creators of the group in order to make a statement to the opposite community and to cause their reaction?

Then again, not all of the group titles of this category directly suggest/ refer to nationalistic ideas. For example there are groups with titles like: "SOS–LOSS OF RELIGIOUS & CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE OCCUPIED AREA OF CYPRUS", "Sign the petition if you love Cyprus!!" or "Justice for Northern Cyprus". In these cases, one could suggest that these groups use the English language as an attempt to make their message known to the rest of the (Facebook) world.

An observation is that 30 groups out of the 50 of the second category are created and facilitated by Greek Cypriots and the rest 20 are Turkish Cypriot oriented. This could have several explanations; a possible answer could be that the Greek Cypriot community is bigger in population than the Turkish Cypriot. However, it is worth paying more attention to the fact that this increased number of Greek Cypriot oriented groups is observed in the category of the groups that use mainly the English language. If combined with the argument above, this could possibly indicate a higher tendency of the Greek Cypriot community to call for an international support of their beliefs. This could possibly derive from the fact that in the internationally recognised Republic of Cyprus, which is represented only by the Greek Cypriot community since 1963, the Greek Cypriot community developed the rhetorical approach of appealing to the outside world as a representative of the constitutionally bicommunal Republic – in order to gain support – while internally there is a rather sectarian focus on the

Greek Cypriots as the sole 'victims' or the legitimised inhabitants of Cyprus. To make the argument stronger though, it would be good to crosscheck it when examining the groups that use the native languages i.e. Greek and Turkish in order to see if there are observations of this kind in these groups too.

Qualitative Analysis

In the case of the groups of the first category, i.e. the groups with a positive approach towards bicommunal relations, the creators/ administrators are usually, as one would expect, people from both Cypriot communities. In groups where this is not the case (in other words when the creators/ administrators are people from only one of the two communities), then in the descriptive/introductory message of the group there is a direct call for members of the other community too. For example the group "english school cyprus" has only Greek Cypriot administrators but in the group description they state:

> English School Bicommunal Group for all Greek-Cypriot Turkish-Cypriot students of the English School, Nicosia (Description of group *english school Cyprus*, accessed in March 2009).

A similar example is the group "MY HOMELAND IS CYPRUS!!!" with a Turkish Cypriot administrator but with a more indirect but still open call to members of both communities in the group description since it includes the translation of "My homeland is Cyprus" in both Turkish "BENİM ANAVATANIM KIBRISTIR!!!" and Greek "Η ΜΗΤΕΡΑ-ΠΑΤΡΙΔΑ ΜΟΥ ΕΙΝΑΙ Η ΚΥΠΡΟΣ!!!".

 Another observation worth discussing, as shown in Graph 1, is that the number of groups with a positive approach towards bicommunal relations is smaller than those with a negative approach. How is the fact that the groups with a negative approach are almost double the number of the groups with positive approach to be interpreted? One possible explanation could be that people of the two communities that want to create a group with a positive approach towards bicommunal relations will probably create one common group; on the contrary, people of the two communities that want to express their negative feelings towards the other community will create their groups separately in order to oppose to each other. On the other hand, based on the views of those arguing that the Internet is an extension of the offline life (Margolis and

Resnick, 2000 within Dahlgren, 2005, p.154) – it could be that the increased number of those groups mirrors the voice that dominates the offline public discourse of Cyprus. For this reason, this study will concentrate on the analysis of the discussions produced in groups that seem to support views that could be considered the counterpunch to the ones that dominate the wider public. A graphical representation of the groups the groups resulted the searches with the keywords 'Κύπρος' and 'Kıbrıs' – the ones that are not bicommunal but referred to the relations of the two Cypriot communities or the Cyprus problem in general will follow in next section.

7.3.2.2 Facebook Groups that contain keyword 'Κύπρος' or 'Kıbrıs' and are related to bicommunal relations or the Cyprus problem
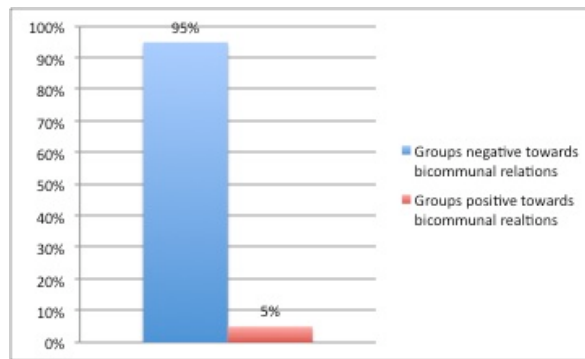
Quantitative Presentation
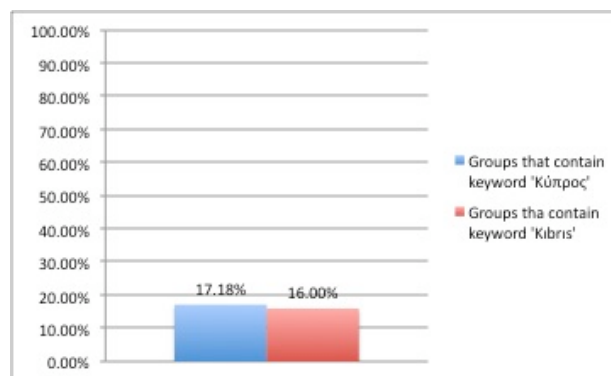
Graph 3: Facebook groups that contain the keyword 'Κύπρος' or 'Kıbrıs' and are related to bicommunal relations.
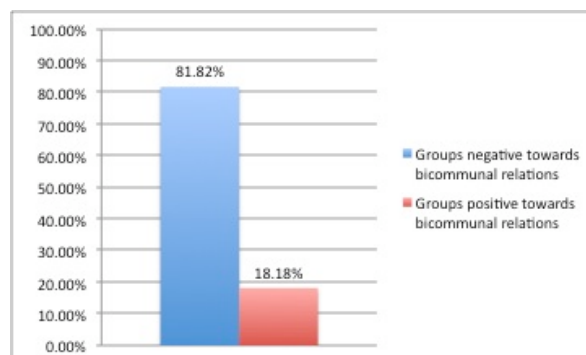
Graph 4: Facebook groups that contain keyword 'Κύπρος'.

Graph 5: Facebook groups that contain keyword 'Kıbrıs'.

Further, the groups with a positive approach towards bicommunal relations (34.21% out of the groups that are "Cyprus problem" oriented) that resulted from the search with the keyword "Cyprus" constitute spaces/environments open for public political discussions. More than any other group category they provide spaces in which members of both the Greek and Turkish Cypriot communities feel welcome to express and discuss their views since the positive approach of the groups as stated in their description and the use of the English language create good circumstances for democratic political deliberation.

Qualitative Analysis

Even though the approach of these groups is positive towards bicommunal relations this does not exclude anyone who does not share similar approach, beliefs or feelings towards the other community to participate in the group discussions. On the contrary, these discussions often include posts or comments of people with a different approach to the one shared by the group members. For example in a discussion hosted on the 'Wall' of the Facebook group "ONE CYPRUS - ONE CYPRIOT POPULATION" a Greek Cypriot participant writes:

THERE IS NO CYPRIOT NATION explain to me then, why all our ancestors (1930's and before) considered themselves Greeks? why all those Cypriots people singed up as volunteers to the Greek army and went to fight for Greece in the balkans wars, 1st and 2nd world war etc? Why those heroes were signing the Υμνος στην Ελευθερια[20] while they were being hung from the English? If you cant understand who

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[20] Title of the Greek national anthem.

you are how do you expect to be able to live with the turks? (Wall post from *ONE CYPRUS – ONE CYPRIOT POPULATION*, 04/01/09, accessed in March 2009)

This diversity of opinions that appears in these groups' discussions opposes the argument that online groups often lead to the formation of "cyber ghettos" (Dahlgren 2005, p. 152) open only for people with similar views, beliefs or concerns and the production of a monolithic discussion. On the contrary, what at least appears to be the case in the groups with a positive approach towards bicommunal relations, is that the discussions are characterised by heterogeneity even if the majority of the participants share common beliefs. Thus, in terms of inclusion and democratic participation these groups could be considered counter-public spheres.

In terms of the topics discussed in these groups, it seems that the participants often share information in order to enlighten the knowledge of the rest. The following post is a sample which demonstrates this enlightenment:

> During the Ottoman reign, the Turkish leadership did not come and take peoples land (and they could have easily done so). Even during the Turkish intervention in Cyprus in 74 (and just prior to it) Turkey had warned Greece (if im not mistaken) 4 times NOT to get involved in Cyprus, or else they would have to step in. Greece ignored these as "empty threats". In a sense, I do agree with Turkey's intervention in Cyprus. For the systematic killing of Turkish people had to be stopped. Even in my village, innocent Turks were killed ONLY because they were Turks! (and vice versa) Now that does not mean that I agree with the 30+ years of this "stalemate". The only way to solve this problem is to have only the "Greek" and "Turkish" speaking communities (as I believe first and foremost that we are Cypriots!) sit down and hammer out a deal. Both sides will lose much, but both sides will also gain as well! (Wall Post from *PEACE IN CYPRUS*, 10/05/08, accessed in March 2009).

What is worth paying attention on in the above sample is that the post is written by a Greek Cypriot participant addressing to another Greek Cypriot to whom he reveals that there have been Turkish Cypriot killings committed by Greek Cypriots prior to the 1974 war. As described in Chapter 4, the official Greek Cypriot mythistory does not include Turkish Cypriot killings committed by Greek Cypriots[21] and as a result

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[21] It is important to note that since the election of Mr. Christofias in the end of February 2008 there have been efforts to change the official approach towards the Turkish Cypriot community. One of these

many Greek Cypriots are unaware of such historical facts. The following post is an illustration of the one-sided mythistory used in the Greek Cypriot public sphere:

> […] I am not a historian We never had a chance to learn what had happened to the people living at the other side of the green line [i.e. the Turkish Cypriots]. We ALL have been taught we were the only one suffering. It's time to show, say or learn whatever truth is and whatever we do know.. I hope time is not very far to manage to build one Cypriot population.. I don't want to spend   rest of my life with this stupid conflict and restrictions in my country as all our olders did live.. (Wall Post from *Reunification   in Cyprus starts with truth and reconciliation*, 02/02/2008, accessed in March 2009).

In addition to the point of new information that can be shared between the participants, the discussions often host topics that are not discussed or are considered radical by the dominant public sphere of Cyprus. For example, the topic of establishing the Cypriot dialect as the official language of the Republic of Cyprus appears as a post in one of these groups:

> I think it is important for a united Cyprus if there is a written common language. A historic and unofficial one does exists. But it is considered a dialect and has not been written, preserved and honoured as a dictionary to my knowledge - at least not one accessible to both communities! If there was an available Cypriot dictionary, it will bridge the gap between the two communities. The cypriot language, which our ancestors used when living together, is the only true identity for cypriots. It is a lexical evolution which considers this Cypriot History through language, using Greek, Turkish, Arabic, Italian, as well as many other words of nations which have occupied our country over the last two thousand years! The language is something which is considered inferior by the right wing of the country because they know it is dangerous to contributing to a common identity. It is the only thing that is distinctively Cypriot! IT MUST BE WRITTEN (Wall Post from *ONE CYPRUS - ONE CYPRIOT POPULATION,* 02/12/2008, accessed in March 2009).

Despite their attribute of enlightenment, counter-public spheres are often challenged regarding their openness towards the wider publics. Fraser agrees that counter-publics are not ghettos or enclaves by definition even though she admits that "they are often involuntarily enclaved" (1990, p.67). The posts that follow illustrate this involuntary

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efforts is the Minister's of Education and Culture attempt to change the history of Cyprus textbooks and his initiative to create an atmosphere of reunification in schools.

enclave but at the same time they show the participants' desire for setting themselves against the wider publics (Asen, 2000, p.437).

> Both GCs and TCs need to know there is a HUGE movement or reunionists out there, and the tide is turning. We cant hide at Ledra Palace anymore, we have to take it out there. They need to know we are Cypriot and WE run the show, not the fasists and fake nationalists[22]. MEdia etc needs to present us publically, we need to be visible, and break the taboos once and for al, and get rolling (Wall post from *ALL TROOPS OUT OF CYPRUS!*, 23/12/2007, accessed in March 2009).

> "[…] let me share with you of my experiences... 10 years ago we formed bicommunal choire for peace in cyprus... it was formed at ledra palace but then denktaş banned the meetings... so we had to meet at pyla... for rehersals... they were difficult times but very warm... until the opening of 'gates' we gave few concerts... but not in cyprus... but with tha 'gates' the group lost their target or became the tool to some political parties... on both sides... so i gave up 3 years ago... and 2 years ago" (Wall post from *ALL TROOPS OUT OF CYPRUS!*, 23/12/2007, accessed in March 2009).

The first post highlights the need to get out of the 'enclave' they had to enclose themselves– in this case he is using the example of Ledra Palace – in order to make the public they form "visible" in the wider public sphere of Cyprus. In the second post, the participant draws the attention to the atmosphere created among the members of the bicommunal choir during the period of their 'enclave'. He describes that even their meetings in Ledra Palace – which is located in no man's land– were banned; but despite the difficulties he emphasises that the atmosphere in the group was warm and that they were focused on their target something that according to him, is not the case since the opening of the barricades. The participant's statement designates an aspect of the counter-public's act of enclave that has not been identified before. The fact that counter-publics, by enclosing themselves in enclaves, increase the internal tempo of their group; that is, the bonds between the participants become stronger and the feeling of the common identity they share is enhanced. Additionally, it identifies a certain degree of risk when a counter-public sets itself towards the wider public, the risk of losing its focus.

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[22] The Greek Cypriot participant probably means 'patriots' here instead of 'nationalists' here.

In spite of this risk though, these groups appear to be willing to place themselves outwards but in a way that would protect their entity. In the following two posts the participant proposes the organisation of a bicommunal workshop about the missing persons issue. What is important to note here is that she emphasises the significance of keeping the workshop on the "grassroots level" in order to keep it targeted on the needs of the process of finding information about the missing persons rather than on simply presenting new findings about this issue to a wider public.

> We need such a joint team [like the Cyprus Missing Persons Committee] to work quietly, low profile and it will take years and it will not include any `shows` or `sensation` but real hard work and danger and maybe years later, when the ground is appropriate, such a joint team could make it public their findings...

> the important thing about this issue as well as our group `Reunification in Cyprus starts with truth and reconciliation` is at this moment to see what are the needs on the ground... Instead of `idealistic` (we all are of course), if we can, together, work on prioritizing the needs of the process and seeing who can practically and voluntarily work on the needs to be identified, we can make progress without damaging the process. I am ready to facilitate a weekend workshop on this sometime in April - we can also have Achilleas and Emine Erk, if they are interested and others, as well as participants from missing families whom I have introduced to each other and who would be ready to work in a multi-cultural context without playing the game of `blame`... (Discussion Board Post from *Reunification in Cyprus starts with truth and reconciliation*, 14/02/2008, accessed in March 2009).

> [...] what I am suggesting is a workshop at the grassroots level of sharing the causes of this group and looking at the needs and concerns, including definitely the victims of the conflict I was talking about this group... (Discussion Board Post from *Reunification in Cyprus starts with truth and reconciliation*, 15/02/2008, accessed in March 2009).

7.3.2.3 Facebook Groups that contain keyword 'Cyprus' and have a neutral approach towards bicommunal relations

Quantitative Presentation
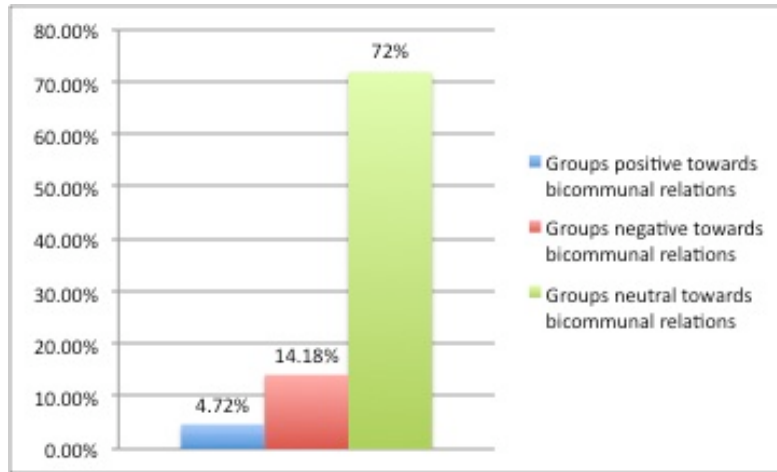
Graph 6: Facebook bicommunal group that contain keyword 'Cyprus'
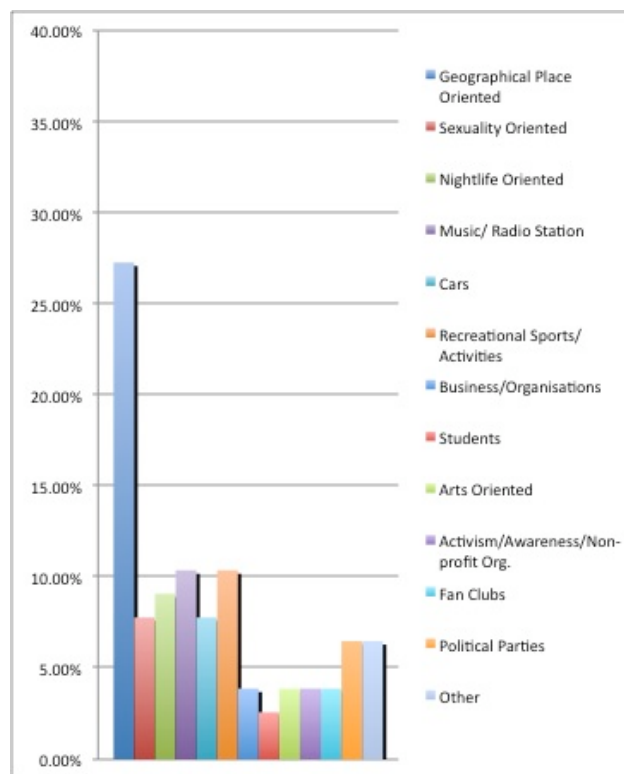
Graph 7: Themes of Facebook bicommunal groups that contain keyword 'Cyprus' and have a neutral approach towards bicommunal relations

Now as far as the groups that use the English language have members from both communities – and at the same time have a neutral approach towards bicommunal relations – are concerned, they arguably represent the de facto coexistence of the two Cypriot communities. That is why, it is interesting to see whether in groups where Greek and Turkish Cypriots coexist, bicommunal public communication also exists and at the same time to identify the purposes for which these groups are formed. The analysis will first focus on the general characteristics of these groups and especially on their themes. Then the attention will move to the public discussions produced in these groups – if any – in order to analyse the dynamic of the bicommunal communication in this context.

As shown in Graph 6, 14.18% of groups with members of both communities have a neutral approach towards bicommunal relations, a percentage that is higher from either of the other two categories, i.e. the groups with positive and negative approach accordingly; this percentage is even higher of the sum of these other two categories. This could be interpreted as a tendency of the majority of the Cypriot Facebook users to avoid political discussions or groups related to the Cyprus problem in general. It is good to have in mind that in Facebook most of the people use their real names and many times are accompanied by pictures of themselves. This happens due to the purpose of Facebook which is to be a web application for creating a social network; thus, people want to be recognisable to people that they might know in order to create their social network. Consequently, this means that a user's involvement in any political group becomes automatically public – which means having her/his real identity exposed – not only to her/his social network but also to the members of the group or, in the case of an open group, even to anyone else that might scan through the specific group.

Qualitative Analysis

These groups have a variety of themes, from groups dedicated to car brands like "Peugeot Cyprus" to groups about recreational activities like "Cyprus Shooting Club" or groups created for awareness purposes like "Dyslexia in Cyprus". One could suggest that this group theme variation indicates the high degree of converging interests between the two communities. As appears in Graph 7, the highest percentage (27,27%) of these groups have a theme dedicated to a geographical place. The

significant thing about the groups with such a theme is that some of them have titles that one would expect to be considered, depending on the case, as taboo words by one of the two communities. For example the group "Republic of Cyprus" in which one would expect to find only Greek Cypriot members seems to have Turkish Cypriot members too. A similar example is the group "LeFKoSa CyPRuS" which despite the fact that it is a group with a half Turkish name – Lefkoşa is the Turkish name of Nicosia – and as a result one would expect it to have only Turkish Cypriot members: surprisingly enough it has Greek Cypriot members too. Analogous cases are groups that have names of places in both the north and south parts of Cyprus; people of both communities join these groups independently of the locale of the place. It seems that the geographical places that these groups are dedicated to are elements that constitute the identity of the people of both communities that join them; these groups create/add a common feeling/element to these people's identity, that of belongingness.

Another group theme that is quite popular for the two Cypriot communities is that of music. Groups with such a theme are somehow related with certain types of music. The thing drawing the attention here is that in this theme category there are also groups about specific radio stations in the north or the south part of Cyprus. This is an important observation since it indicates that in certain cases the two communities form common media audiences. Such examples are the "Deejay Radio (Cyprus)" and the "CYPRUS CLUB BEATS" groups, which are related to Greek and Turkish Cypriot radio stations accordingly. The people of the two communities who join these groups seem to listen to these radio stations since they share similar music preferences without concerning themselves with the station's origin. Based on this indication, one could suggest that when these radio bicommunal audiences form groups in an environment in which interaction and dialogue is possible, what they create really is a kind of public sphere which runs counter to the one exists in the physical environment of the Cypriot society – the segregated public sphere in which interaction is not possible and the existence of the "other" is invisible. In other words, these audiences form counter-publics in which they can develop social bonds with each other, share their personal interests or even concerns in a way similar to what Durkheim (1912) described as a ritual solidarity function. This ritual solidarity might be the reason for the emergence of groups dedicated on other themes that appear proportionally high on Graph 7 like sexuality, recreational or extreme sports, nightlife and cars.

In fact, when looking at Facebook groups in general one identifies that one of the main purposes of their existence lies somewhere between offering ritual solidarity and media rituals (Couldry, 2003), meaning the creation of a public sphere that on the one hand encloses its members in a 'sacred space' in order to offer mutual understanding and enhance their shared beliefs and on the other, a space that offers to its members moments of publicity that counter the ones not offered in dominant the public spheres.

However, what deserves attention is the way in which the groups' members – Greek and Turkish Cypriots amongst them – share this ritual solidarity. Even though one would expect that this would be expressed through dialogue, a surprising observation occurs when one focuses on the public conversations hosted in the groups; the number of the posts in the public wall or the discussion board is very low proportionally to the number of the groups' members. For example, in one of the groups about homosexuality in Cyprus – called "Gay Cyprus" with 182 members – the number of the posts on its public wall is 39, from which 6 are advertisement posts and the rest do not seem to relate/ reply to each other. A similar example is the case of "Deejay Radio (Cyprus)", a group dedicated to a Greek Cypriot radio station. Despite the fact that the group has 828 members, there are only seventeen 17 posts in the public wall of the group that again are more like independent statements rather than posts that initiate a conversation. Even the post "Im Turkısh But ı like DeeJay Radio :) Enjoy" (Wall Post from group *Deejay Radio (Cyprus)*, 28/12/2008 accessed on 30/03/2009) of a Turkish Cypriot – or a Turkish living in Cyprus – member did not trigger any conversation.

How could this absence of conversational interaction be explained? A possible answer could be that through these groups people have the chance to add each other to their social network and consequently they might engage in conversations privately. Then again, if we attempt to see/interpret this absence of public communication through the lens of the Durkheimian ritual function, what happens in these groups is similar to what happens when people gather in religious spaces for ritual services; their relationship is built not necessarily through the interaction with each other but through their similar ritual acts towards the sacred. One could suggest then that the purpose of these groups is not the discussion that will lead them to consensus but the participation/ presence in a space in which their beliefs, preferences, distinctiveness become the main substitute of a collective identity.

7.4 Summing Up

An argument of this chapter is that in the case of de facto geographical divisions – as before 2003 – Internet communication can create virtual spaces for alternative forms of the public – even at the boundary of the personal and the political/public.

In this context, the medium can be said to help transcend the divisions of geography and state politics/policies and hegemonic ideologies.

With social networking tools it is evident that part of the discourse that exists outside the Internet is carried online also – as an extension of those arguments. It is also true however, that groups whose voices or discourses are excluded from the public domain/sphere can find here alternative forms of organising and debate, which places them – at least as far as this medium is concerned – on an equal footing with discourses sanctioned by power and hegemonic institutions such as the print and broadcast media.

In these senses, the new media are tools that allow more open debate – but this possibility has a lot to do with the possible use it can be put to.

The most interesting possibility might be groups in which people from the two communities coexist de facto on the basis of their interests – rather than as a conscious political decision to promote certain views.

In this case, the medium facilitates bicommunal coexistence and may say that forms of collective solidarity are born on the basis of rituals of participating in these groups and share a common 'sacred' interest.

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INTERACTIVE PORN NETWORKS IN GREECE
CONCEPTUALIZING A CERTAIN KIND OF CIVIL SOCIETY

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Interactive porn networks in Greece
Conceptualizing a certain kind of civil society

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This paper examines how the concept of civil society relates to the porn and sex industry as well as to individual internet users who actively participate in interactive porn networks aiming at exchanging information and opinions about escort agencies and the sex market in general. By comparatively describing the indicative Greek cases of a porn portal (bourdela.tv - meaning brothels.tv) and a similar e-forum (escortforumgr.com), we will try to show how the above relation leads to the formation of an alternative public sphere and a certain kind of civil society (its 'dark' side), which one can call 'porn society'.

Delineating the on-line context of porn

The diffusion of new information and communication technologies and internet's extensive use cultivated the idea that new social movements and non governmental organizations as well as a lot of citizens - irrespective of whether they belong to civil society organizations or not - could use the horizontal, networked structure of internet for the formation of a new public sphere vis-à-vis the state and the market, according to the principles of habermasian discourse theory. Parallel to this discussion, which mainly refers to the increasing possibilities for accountability due to the new medium and the new prospects that are opened for civil society in general, we witness a growth of on-line processes focusing on pornography[1] and commercial sex - especially escorts' services.

Explosive growth in the availability of sexually explicit material on the internet has created a unique opportunity for individual web users to have "anonymous, cost-effective, and unfettered access to an essentially unlimited range of sexually explicit texts, still and moving images, and audio materials" (Yoder et al. 2005: 30) by removing "the biggest obstacles to selling pornography and sexual services: shame and ignorance" (Coopersmith 2006: 1-2) - what has been also called as the three 'As': accessibility, affordability, and anonymity (Stack et al. 2004: 76)[2]. Generally, the porn/sex industry is a "fast-growing, multi-billion-dollar global business, whose parent, the much larger sex sector, includes everything from adult videos to strip clubs, escort agencies and brothels" (Cronin and Davenport 2001: 37-8).

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[1] For the purposes of this study, we are, like Heider and Harp (2002: 291-2), defining pornography as "sexually explicit texts, photos, and moving images that are produced specifically for the arousal and gratification of a largely male audience". We keep also in mind Green's (2000: 50) notice that "pornography is not an aesthetic kind, but a loosely related family of artifacts bound by analogy and function: it is mostly "masturbation material". On the definition of the term pornography see Rea 2001: 123-34, and Niesen's chapter: "Pornography and Democracy" (1999: 480-90) where, by exploring four democratic perspectives on free speech, he provides different conceptualizations of pornography, as well as Williams' (2004) important introduction to the edited volume *Porn Studies*.

[2] On the effects of porn consuming see for instance Stack et al. 2004; Hardy 2004; Yoder et al. 2005; Daneback et al. 2006.

Although, much has been written about the political economy of porn and sex industry, we need to study further the different forms of economic exchange which are practiced 'above and beyond the general economy' of pornographic and sexual e-markets (Jacobs 2004: 76) - the most common methods of which are charging memberships, passing traffic to other websites for a fee, selling advertisements, and offering products (Coopersmith 2006: 8). As Jacobs (2004: 67) correctly indicates "pornography moving freely across borders is foremost a capitalist vision, but the web's sexual potency is equally defined by web users […] who visit and maintain peer-to-peer networks, [on-line sex communities and one-click file-hosting websites] for producing and sharing sexually explicit materials". This "gift exchange supplements commodity exchange aims to construct a mechanism of social cohesion rather than economic utility or profit" (Jacobs 2004: 75).

Moreover, in the case of on-line porn content, we witness a new dimension: "the input, or information, that the consumer brings to the creation of the product in real-time, by, for example, requesting a specific ingredient or interaction" (Cronin and Davenport 2001: 36). In a sense, according to Coopersmith (2006: 11), "this technology can be seen as liberating and empowering, allowing individuals to actively create their own pornography, not just passively consume the work of someone else". What is crucial though is that the coexistence of the above mentioned tendencies of user generated porn content (irrespective of whether this is primarily limited to sexually explicit texts and information) and exchanging sexually explicit material for free, suggests a 'democratization of pornography'[3]. Indicative of this process are the cases of bourdela.tv and escortforumgr.com.

Bourdela.tv and escortforumgr.com as porn-sites and as porn networks

In order to understand where the specific porn sites and their on-line sex-communities lead, we must first of all present them, starting from bourdela.tv. The latter is a porn/sex portal which is addressed to internet users from Greece. It is basically an open website for visitors even though one must register as member to have access to certain services. Through the site one has the opportunity to: a) look at a full catalog of (205) brothels, (61) classy whorehouses/bordellos (studios), (53) strip bars, (69) hotels which are designed for day visits (5/2009), and citytours (information about escorts' visits to Greece), b) to read news from the sex industry, guideline texts for sex, love/sex stories, and related to porn and sex articles, c) participate in portal's chat and forum.

More precisely, the brothels and studios' indexes provide particular information: address, exterior photos of the place, access map, price, contact information, reviews and ratings from members of the site, and the average of all members' ratings. In addition, any visitor can search for his preferred place/service either through the offered areas (brothels, studios, strip bars, hotels), or by the amount of money he is willing to spend (brothels, studios). On the other hand, bourdela.tv's members can discuss at the chatroom, and exchange views, information, opinions, photos, video clips, and hyperlinks

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[3] This democratization grew from the "fertile base of evolving technologies that encapsulated the expertise and skills necessary to record, edit and distribute, thus enabling almost anyone to be a producer… [, and] is part of a larger trend of innovation from below by users (as opposed to innovation from above by manufacturers) and the rise of technical hobbies and do-it-yourself projects" (Coopersmith 2006: 10).

of video files at the well-organized forum[4]. In fact, anyone can read everything that is written at the forum, but only the members can create new threads (topics) and reply to the posts.

At this point, we must clarify something. In November of 2008, bourdela.com (bourdela.tv's first domain name) temporarily suspended its operation because of the arrest of the owner of the site after anonymous complaints which were made against him - as shown on the website. Through an announcement hosted at bourdela.com the second administrator stated that with his own initiative will continue the site in the new domain bourdela.tv - something that actually happened a few weeks later (December 2008). The changes that took place were mainly focused on the site's forum, where there was no longer ability to access the free pornographic material in the way that has taken place during the previous situation. This basically meant that the owners of bourdela.com had the opportunity to provide a forum where, among other things, the free exchange of pornographic material (basically by posting links to file-hosting sites) was allowed.

The latter suggested an exceptional case since in similar and analogous porn portals' forums we do not witness such availability. For instance, in freeones.com, one of the most known and oldest porn portals, there is no section for brothels, studios etc. While links that guide to downloadable whole sex-scenes or even entire porn movies are located either in sites which host only a single forum (i.e. planetsuzy.org), either in issued porn blogs (i.e. monsterboobs.blogspot.com). Nevertheless, although now bourdela.tv visitors cannot benefit from the posting of the links that lead to downloadable porn material, this specific provision partly interpret bourdela.com's notable success - along with the ease of navigation through the site and the above mentioned provided options.

Actually, according to alexa.com (one of the most famous Web Information Company), bourdela.tv holds the 138th place in Greece's website traffic ranking (May 2009) - as bourdela.com gained even the 66th place (September 2008). In particular, as Google Analytics (a free service offered by Google that generates detailed statistics about the visitors to a website) confirms, from 30th of June 2006 till 15th of September 2008 (basically when bourdela.com could allow the free exchange of pornographic material), bourdela.com had more than 2,000,000 absolute unique visitors, more than 7,500,000 visits and more than 80,000,000 pageviews. Today (May 2009), bourdela.tv has more than 74,000 members and as far as their participation in the forum and the indexes is concerned, there are approximately more than 600,000 posts/comments over 5,200 threads and nearly 7,000 reviews until now (adding data from the removed topics would approximately redefine stats to 900,000 posts/comments over 10,000 threads)[5].

All of these lead us to the conclusion that we must study bourdela.tv both as a porn portal and as an on-line sex-community. As for the former, we must take into account Wyatt et al.'s (2000) contribution as it is appeared in Jacob's (2004) work. For

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[4] The thematic sections of bourdela.com's forum are: About this site, General, Sex, XXX Hotels, Abroad, and International Forum.

[5] In order to assess the extent of participation, we can compare, for example, bourdela.com's forum with four open electronic discussion forums for the latest Constitutional Revision in Greece. Cumulatively, in the forum held by the party that is still in power (syntagmatikianatheorisi.gr), the Association of Greek Industries' one (anoiktoforum.gr), the forum created by a team of independent scientists and scholars (anatheorisi.org), and the forum of an organization which appeared from the initiative of 700 NGOs for the constitutional consolidation of civil society, called "Campaign: NGOs for Constitution" (mkosyntagma.gr), approximately 1,000 comments were posted.

the editors of *Technology and In/Equality*, "new online information architectures such as the 'portal' model […] give impetus to the idea of "pushing" content - including advertising - at customers rather than waiting for them to pull it down (2000: 37). They explain that the portal model is an important stage in streamlining Internet content so as to emphasize its commercial function" (Jacobs 2004: 80). In this context, we notice a remarkable amount of advertisements of brothels and escorts' agencies, which basically have to do with studios' advertisements where illustrative information about the place, the services, the time-schedule, and the women who work there are provided - along with photos of the place and the women.

Needless to say, it is reasonably expected from the owners of a commercial/business-related website to try to gain revenue in order to be able to keep their site up and make profit. Given that bourdela.tv's income derives from the sex industry sector, the owners have the opportunity to provide, among other things, a forum where internet users can talk about all matters - including non sexual ones. Practically, the same happens with escortforumgr.com. Despite the fact that the latter is not a porn portal but a single forum site and its statistics do not match those of bourdela.tv (i.e. more than 52,000 posts over 2,500 topics from almost 6,000 members in May of 2009), we witness a similar to bourdela.tv's forum structure and function where escortforumgr.com's members can exchange views, opinions and information about several issues - from the escort scene and commercial sex to sports and music[6].

Sure enough, the fact that we will not proceed to an extensive comparative analysis does not mean that we should not study bourdela.tv and escortforumgr.com's cases by reflecting on how the on-line sex-communities, which are formed through the porn portal and the e-forum, must be conceptualized. In fact, we think that our approach should focus on two levels/facets of participation. The first one considers the selective incentives which mostly concern the members - and the single visitors of the sites as well. These incentives have to do with the provision of free 'pornographic goods' (mainly sexually explicit texts - and escorts' photos in bourdela.tv's case) and information about the local or issued market of brothels, studios, etc. - all of them gathered in one website.

The second one refers to the dialogue which takes place 'beside and beyond' the porn and commercial sex matters in the strict sense, and concerns a variety of issues - from totally general (i.e. science and politics) to more specific topics related to every sexually or non explicit aspect (i.e. celebrities and health issues). Although, it is true that more research is needed so as to develop an analytical context of the forums' function and the dialogue's attributes[7], we must also focus on the existence of the particular, latent on-line sex communities which are methodologically included in the analytical framework of interactive social networks in general. In this context, one of the significant issues which are raised is the communities' categorization as civil society organizations.

Civil/porn society's conceptualization

It has been rightly pointed out that for the distinction between civil society as a normative project and civil society as a concrete institutional order one should see Alexander's

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[6] The thematic sections of escortforumgr.com's forum are: Escort Forum GR, Commercial Sex, Sites related to sex, International Forum, and Miscellaneous.
[7] See for example Muhlberger 2005; Muhlberger and Weber 2006.

important introduction to the edited volume *Real Civil Societies*[8]. Alexander makes clear that "only by understanding the 'boundary relations' between civil and uncivil spheres can we convert civil society from a normative into a 'real' concept which can be studied in a social scientific way" (1998a: 3). That is why he distinguishes two basic definitions of civil society. The first one considers civil society as a normative project - a solidarity community based not on particularistic but on universalistic features. In particular, civil society should be conceived as a realm of social solidarity based on a partially realized universalizing community (1997; 1998a). On the other hand, the second notion of civil society that Alexander adopts refers to a concrete institutional sphere which is analytically independent of - and, to varying degrees, empirically differentiated from - other institutional spheres such as the economy, polity, religion, science, and kinship (1998a).

The problem with Alexander's conceptualization of civil society is that the notion of civil society as a differentiated institutional sphere may clash with the idea of a universalistically-orientated solidary community - problem which Alexander seems to understand even though he does not provide us conceptual tools to overcome it. More precisely, the American sociologist has made clear that civil society "has never been fully realized in any actual existing system, and never will be… Civil society is not and has not been integrated, cohesive, and substantially solidary" (1998b: 8, 12). In addition, he has pointed out that "the dark and destabilizing underside of civil society was often ignored" and that civil society should not be identified with the entirety of social life - as Cohen and Arato (1992) do - because then the "various institutions and cultural patterns that must be much more carefully keep distinct" are 'misleadingly agglomerated' (1997: 122, 128).

All agree that a more delimited and differentiated understanding of the term 'civil society' is needed in order to study the complex articulation between particularistic and universalistic solidarities. For that reason - and for the purposes of this paper - we will adopt Mouzelis' methodological guidelines. For the latter "there is a theoretical need for the construction of a more neutral and at the same time broader concept [of civil society which]… will refer to discourses and/or associations that are predominantly non-state, non-market, non-religious or kinship orientated, and which may adopt both universalistic and particularistic values and orientations… [So], in order to explain rather than simply describe the intricate articulation between post-traditional universalistic and particularistic forms of solidarity in actual societies, collective actors (both within and outside the social/solidarity sphere) must be brought to the fore of the analysis" (Mouzelis 2008).

This is what we believe that can be done be presenting the specific cases of the on-line porn-communities hosted by profit-oriented websites. By highlighting the mutually beneficial linkage between two market's agents and a group of internet users with collective consciousness, we think that a certain kind of 'dark' civil society can be analytically formulated. In this context, we propose 'porn society' as a term which defines the existence of a particularistic rather than universalistic mode of 'we-ness' based on 'material/post-material values' related to porn consuming and sex services. On the whole, whereas civil society as a normative project (a) has no 'dark' side, civil

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[8] The basic part of the introduction to *Real Civil Societies* was Alexander's contribution to an edited volume three years later (2001).

society as a concrete institutional order (b) has a 'dark' side. Therefore, 'porn society' is a civil society in sense (b).

Framing 'porn society'

Bourdela.tv and escortforumgr.com are two websites in which we witness the collaboration between profit-oriented moves and on-line sex-communities. The term collaboration is used so as to emphasize the benefits which both parts have from this 'digital commingling' - profit for all (direct gaining money for the owners, saving money for the users). Nonetheless, neither the function of 'unconventional' companies such as bourdela.tv and escortforumgr.com, nor web's political economy in general, are the most noteworthy issues. We think that the most significant part is the formation of an alternative, or separate (Tumber 2001: 22), public sphere where internet users can both exchange pornographic material and talk about all matters - including non sexual ones. Considering Mouzelis' approach of bringing to the fore of the analysis any collective actor which may adopt both universalistic and particularistic values and orientations, one can call 'porn society' discourses and/or associations that are primarily non-state, non-market, and porn/sex orientated.

Furthermore, beyond the conceptualization of such e-forums and e-moves, we need to place them in a more general social context in an attempt to comprehend/interpret these processes. Perhaps Chadwick and May's (2003) approach could be helpful for that. For the latter, the development of any electronic environment is associated with the defined standards and special characteristics of a democratic system. If to this viewpoint we add analyses about the weak or underdeveloped - for various historical reasons - character of Greek civil society (Mouzelis 1986; Sotiropoulos and Karamagioli 2006), we might have a partial explanation why bourdela.tv basically, and escortforumgr.com secondarily, are probably two of the most 'unaffectedly vivid' on-line communities in Greece.

Hence, besides the extraordinary dimension of bourdela.tv (mainly) and escortforumgr.com's on-line communities in Greece, contrary to the much weaker or non-existent in other European countries similar moves, it is quite interesting to explore whether the weakness of universalistically-oriented civil society organizations (like feminist/anti-sexist ones) is related to the strength of interactive porn networks in Greece. For instance, as Allen (2001: 527) notes, "what might allow pornography to go from being a possible to being an actual site for resistance is precisely the resources that are generated by the collective power of feminism as a social movement". Therefore, one could say that in a country where such social movements are practically absent, internet's potential for the promotion of porn and sex industry's interests and the cultivation of a hedonistically-oriented environment, effortlessly comes as a self-fulfilling prophecy. In that sense, the problem is not the formation of a 'porn society', but the development of a 'society of porn'.

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Website Interactivity in the Greek Context

Abstract

It is generally accepted that the new interactive media have brought many changes in the advertising arena. Websites seem to be the most important interactive communication tool between companies and existing and potential consumers. A growing body of literature agrees that increased interactivity leads to an effective communication outcome. Another line of the interactivity literature argues that increased interactivity is not always beneficial. The present study is making an attempt to investigate individuals' attitude, as well as attitude-behavior consistency towards interactive website when the level of interactivity is manipulated in the Greek context.

1. Introduction

It is widely accepted that the new connective technologies have brought a new era: the Internet era. Considered as one of the most important digital medium in people's every day life, the Internet is increasingly adopted by individuals for business and pleasure (Ngini, Furnell and Ghita, 2002). According to the data released by the Internet World Stats, Internet users in Europe are up to 48.5% and represent the 24.8% of world users for the 2008. The users' growth from 2000 to 2008 was up to 271.2%. Based on the same source, Greek Internet users for 2008 are up to 46.0% of total population, recording an increase of 393.2% from 2000. Greek individuals use the Internet daily for communication, information sharing, entertainment, on-line shopping and e-banking (Greek Observatory for the Information Society, 2007). Therefore, the Internet has been influencing not only human's society in general, but also communication.

This fact reflects a relatively new area of research; the web-related studies. The interdisciplinary range of web research is broadening. Dimension of web use, web research and web sites are evolving and enhanced (Spink, 2002). Most companies have expanded their activities online mainly for supporting interactions with their consumers (Bidgoli, 2002). Furthermore, the Internet generally described as a mass communication medium (Morris and Organ, 1996) has been incorporated to the marketing plan. In particular, it is used as an additional advertising medium. Internet advertising is defined as "any paid form used to present and promote ideas, products and services for any profitable or non-profitable organization". Approved forms of Internet advertising include official websites, banner ads, splash screens, buttons, advertorials, e-mails, text or graphic hyperlinks. (Vlachopoulou, 2003; Yang, et al., 2003; Wolin, Korgaonkar and Lund, 2002; Rodgers and Thorson, 2000; Dholakia and Rego, 1998; Briggs and Holis, 1997).

All forms of Internet advertising are designed to motivate the consumer to visit the advertised website. Only if a consumer is interested in clicking on the ad does the communication process begin (Chatterjee, Hoffman and Novak, 2003). It is argued that in any Internet advertising strategy the point is to make web pages popular by driving consumers and gaining traffic to them (Aldridge, Forcht and Pierson, 1997; Dholakia and Rego, 1998). It is proposed that the website represents officially and globally the company (Aldridge, Forcht and Pierson, 1997; Yang, et al., 2003). It

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provides high levels of information regarding the company and the products or services offered (Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Berthon, et al. 1996; Perry and Bodkin, 2000; Yang, et al., 2003; Geissler, 2001). It is able to build and maintain relationships with existing and potential consumers (Perry and Bodkin, 2000). Furthermore, many academics consider the website as a tool for "after sales service" (Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Berthon, Pitt and Watson, 1996). Besides, statistics researches indicate that most money spent on the Internet is for the design and maintenance of the Web-sites (eMarketer, 2007, wnim, 2005). As a consequence, websites seem to represent not only the future of marketing communications on the Internet (Ghose and Dou, 1998) but also the most important form of interactive advertising (Sicilia, Ruiz and Munuera, 2005). Thus, it is of crucial importance firstly to understand the advertising nature and the consumers' attitude towards to this emerging form of online presence. It is important not only for academics but also for practitioners to understand which factors lead to positive attitude towards the website and as a consequence towards the web-based advertised brand.

The term "interactive" is often used as a synonym for the new media such as the Internet. However, academic research has brought into question whether or not increased interactivity is beneficial. Drawing on academic literature and research practice, the current paper discusses the notion of interactivity and its increasing importance for marketing practitioners and consumers. Its objectives are twofold. *First*, it aims at providing a concentrate definition of the debated notion interactivity as applied in the Internet marketing context. *Second*, it attempts to draw insights from the Greek context by outlining Greek visitors' attitudes and their attitude-behavior consistency towards a website when the construct of interactivity is manipulated in low, medium and high level. In doing so, the present study makes an attempt to investigate which level of interactivity (low-medium-high) in a website generates the most positive attitude towards the website.

The structure of the present paper is as follows: it begins by reviewing the literature on the key concepts of website interactivity and attitude formation. Then, the expected contribution of the paper is referred followed by the proposed hypotheses and the methodology chapter. The paper ends with the conclusions and directions for further research.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Interactivity

The internet, generally described as an interpersonal medium, seems to be distinguished from the traditional communication media mainly due to its interactive nature and as a consequence due to its ability to elicit feedback (Walther, 1996; Cassell et al., 1998; Steward and Pavlou, 2002). The concept of interactivity has been investigated in many field studies such as in computer mediated communications (Heeter, 1986; Rafaeli, 1985; 1988; Rice, 1984; 1987; Rogers and Rafaeli, 1985), in Internet and virtual reality (Biocca 1992; Newhagen and Rafaeli 1996; Steuer, 1992), in Internet marketing and advertising (Alba et al., 1997; Deighton, 1996; Ghose and Dou, 1998; Hoffman and Novak, 1996; Peterson, et al., 1997). Interactivity has been positioned as a process (Bezjian-Avery, et al., 1998; Cho and Leckenby, 1999; Ha and James, 1998; Pavlik, 1998; Steuer, 1992; Rafaeli, 1988), a function (Novak, et al.,

2000; Jensen, 1998; Straubhaar and LaRose, 1997; Carey, 1989), and a perception (Wu, 1999; 2005; Heeter, 1989; Coyle and Thorson, 2001; Schumann, et al., 2001).

Rafaeli's (1988) conceptualization of interactivity was the first applied to Internet research. Rafaeli, (p. 111, 1988) in his interactivity-as-process point of view proposed that "*interactivity is an expression of the extend that in a given series of communication exchanges, any third (or later) transmission (or message) is related to the degree to which previous exchanges referred to even earlier transmissions*". In the advertising arena, it has been defined, explored and conceptualized in several ways. Among the most predominant definitions is the one proposed by Bezjian-Avery, et al. (1998) as "*the immediately iterative process by which customers' needs and desires are uncovered, met, modified, and satisfied by the providing firm*".

In a broader but similar manner Deighton (1996) addresses interactivity as the potential to track down a consumer as well as her or his response on a stimulus. Moreover, Haackel (1998) argues that interactivity aims to build customer relationship online, collect consumers' data and offer customization through a 'person-to-person or person-to-technology' process. Hoffman and Novak (1996) in a user-centered approach focus on the extent to which the user has the ability to modify and form the content of presented information. Alba et al. (1996) considers interactivity as a constantly communication between two parties. Tse and Chan (2004) defines interactivity as a communication that 1) is two-way and real time 2) enables interaction between human and computers through a mediated environment such as the internet, and 3) in which the reaction of the two parties will influence their future reaction and behavior.

Empirical evidence indicates that actual interactivity differs from the perceived one (Wu, 2005; Lee, et al., 2002; McMillan and Hwang, 2002). Actual interactivity can only provide the potential to allow interaction. However, if, for whatever reason, subjects are not using interactive features, perceived interactivity can be low. Likewise, perception of high interactivity can occur even when the structures necessary for interactivity do not seem to be present (McMillan, et al., 2003).

Perceived interactivity is often identified as the psychological sense experiencing by the site-visitor throughout the process of interaction (Thorson and Rodgers, 2006; Wu, 2005; Burgoon et al., 2000; Newhagen, et al., 1995; McMillan and Hwang, 2002). Bezjian-Avery, et al., (1998) consider that three overlapping constructs are central to identify users' perceived interactivity. These constructs are direction of communication, user control and time. Wu (2005) recommends that actual and perceived interactivity should be considered simultaneously in order to obtain a comprehensive picture of interactivity. Nevertheless, functional interactivity and perceived interactivity are independent, though certainly related concepts (Tremayne, 2005). Moreover, it is proposed that an integrative approach should be used whenever a study of interactivity is designed (Wu, 2005).

2.2 Website interactivity

The interactive advertising has been defined as the promotional of ideas and information presented thought mediated means wherein are involved not only marketers but also consumers (Leckenby and Li, 2000). Therefore, an interactive

website as a means of interactive advertising provides the opportunity to companies and consumers to communicate with each other apart from time or distance (Berthon, et al., 1996). According to a medium-centered approach, Coyle and Thorson (p. 67, 2001) propose that in an interactive website there should be embedded mapping, speed and user control. Furthermore, an interactive website offers consumers the opportunity to control the type, the order, the flow and the lasting of the provided information (Ariely, 2000). Thus, the control of the communication process is up to the consumer (Schumann, et al., 2001).

Aderson (1996) agrees that the concept of interactivity is constituted by a multiple flow of information wherein the message is perceived as responsive, intelligent and on-demand accessible, the user rather that the sender has the ability to customize the content and there is an immediacy of feedback. Joghnson, Bruner II and Kumar (p. 36, 2006) agree that *"advertisers are more interested in how the technology can be used to add value to the communication process"*.

Therefore, in the present study, the interactivity is viewed as an application of the emerging –consumer oriented- marketing philosophy to the new multimedia environment. In particular, a website is perceived as an interactive one when it provides communication which is two-way, instantly, modified by the user, increasing the sense of "presence" in accordance with image manipulation and entertainment (Lombard and Snyder-Duch, 2001).

2.3 Level of interactivity

Moreover, websites offer different levels of interactivity, as long as it is not dichotomous (a medium is not just interactive or not) but can differ in level (from not interactive to highly interactive) as well as type (the user affects the form and the content) (Lombard and Snyder-Duch, 2001; Coyle and Thorson, 2001). Though, academics agree that there are three distinct levels when interactivity is explored; low – medium – high.

Recently studies agree that "interactivity" seems to have an impact on attitude formation. In particular, a growing body of empirical research considers that increased levels of interactivity in a message have a potential to generate an *effective communication outcome* (Ballantine, 2005; Chen, et al.2005; Sicilia, et al., 2005; Macias, 2003; Merrilees and Fry, 2003; Davaraj, et al., 2002; Coyle and Thorson, 2001; Cho and Leckenby, 1999; Briggs and Hollis, 1997; Maddox, et al., 1997). Consistent with the preposition that heightened interactivity is beneficial, are researchers who support that perceived interactivity is correlated with positive attitude towards the website (Wu, 1999; Newhagen, et al., 1995; Jee and Lee, 2002; McMillan, et al., 2003; Thorson and Rodgers, 2006). In particular, Ghose and Dou (1998) propose that there is a direct relationship between the level of interactivity and website ranking.

Conversely, one subset of the interactivity literature brings into question the widespread belief that there is a positive linear relationship between interactivity and attitude. It is proposed that enhanced levels of interactivity have negative impact while the consumer processes the advertising message, especially when it is visually complicated (Bezjian-Avery, et al., 1998) and erode the quality of his or her decision

(Ariely, 2000; Fortin and Dholakia, 2005). Moreover, Sohn, et al., (2007) conclude that "*an individual's attitude toward the site is not determined directly by the interactive features of websites; it is also depended on prior experience with websites dealing the products*". In other words, they claim that when expected interactivity for a website of a product category is low, then the attitude toward the website decreases as the level of website interactivity increases.

Limited studies have investigated the effects of the interactive advertising. In many field studies dual models have been approved for studying advertising effects (Chaiken and Trope, 1999). The most predominant dual model in marketing context seems to be the Elaboration Likelihood Model. More that 30 articles are published and referred directly to the ELM. Under this level of acceptance as a means of predicting advertising's effect on attitude change, the author feels confident that the theory is strong. Moreover, it is essential to testify a strong and approved theory in the new context of Internet advertising.

3. Contribution to the paper

A growing body of research and theory on the concept of internet and communication studies are able to provide a valuable framework for advertisers as they try to record both the benefits and limitations of employing interactive functions in a marketing and advertising context (Sicilia et al. 2005; Coyle & Thorson, 2001; Ko, et al., 2005; Macias, 2003 McMillan and Hwang, 2002; McMillan and Hwang, 2002; Ghose & Dou, 1998; Liu and Shurm, 2002). However, drawing on the interactivity literature, there is widespread the question weather interactivity is always a beneficial construct (Bezjian-Avery, et al., 1998; Sohn, et al., 2007; Sicilia, et al., 2005; Ariely, 2000; Fortin and Dholakia, 2005; Liu and Shrum, 2002). What remains relatively unexplored is the effect of a medium interactive website as compared to a high interactive. This study fills that gap. Except from the effectiveness of medium and high interactive websites, there are also investigated the low one in order to verify previous researches.

The present study makes an attempt o investigate whether the medium or high level of interactivity leads to an effective communication outcome towards the website. What is more, it is of great importance to testify whether the attitude formulated towards each level of interactive website will be in consistent with individuals behaviour in terms of pre-purchase and website revisit.

Though many studies have been conducted to assess the exact interactive functions employed in each interactivity level (see table 1, pp. 31-33 McMillan and Hwang, 2002), it is difficult to specify it, once the technological evolution is evolving. Features that were attributed as high interactive in the past may have not the same strength in the future. As the time passes by consumers' are getting more familiar with interactive elements and their expected interactive level seems to be developed in a progressive manner. In order to overcome this fence in the present study is adapted an integrative approach of interactivity concept and there are measured both actual as well as perceived interactivity (Macias, 2003; Wu, 1999; McMillan and Hwang, 2002).

4. Hypotheses Tested

Many studies have been conducted in order to examine the effectiveness of an interactive website as compared to noninteractive one. A number of researches has ascribed in the interactivity concept two-levels; low or high (Johnson et al. 2006; Macias, 2003; Coyle & Thorson, 2001; Ko, et al., 2005; Sicilia et al. 2005). Whilst others yielded that the interactivity construct has three levels, including the medium one (Sohn et al 2007). This difference may be attributed to the diverse definitions, conceptualizations, methodological approaches and research objectives. Nevertheless, it is argued that the low interactivity level does not pursue an effective communication outcome (Ballantine, 2005; Chen, et al., 2005; Sicilia, et al., 2005; Macias, 2003; Merrilees and Fry, 2003; Davaraj, et al., 2002; Cho and Leckenby, 1999; Briggs and Hollis, 1997; Maddox, et al., 1997; Cordes, and Levy, 1995; Ghose and Dou, 1998; Cho and Leckenby, 1999; Wu, 1999; Newhagen, et al., 2002; McMillan, et al., 2003; Thorson and Rodgers, 2006). This rationale leads us to propose the following hypotheses:

H1: Individuals exposed to websites of low interactivity will not formulate as positive attitude toward the website as those who were exposed to medium or high interactive websites.

H2: Attitudes towards websites that are high interactive will be more positive than those toward medium interactive.

<div style="text-align:center">

So, it is expected the following relation (1):

Ahst > Amst > Alst

Ahst: attitude toward high interactive website
Amst: attitude toward medium interactive website
Alst: attitude toward low interactive website

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Though, the employment of high interactive elements seems to be advantageous, it is still not always beneficial (Coyle and Thorson, 2001; Bezjian-Avery, et al., 1998; Sohn, et al. (2007 Bezjian-Avery, et al., 1998). Moreover, it is supported that the employment of high interactive functions will not lead to a greater consistency between attitude-behavior related to a website (Coyle and Thorson, 2001). Therefore, extending prior research, we hypothesize the following:

H3: Attitude-behavior consistency related to medium interactive websites will be higher than attitudes-behavior consistency related to high interactive websites.

<div style="text-align:center">

The following relationship is expected (2):

(A-B)mst > (A-B)hst

(A-B)mst : attitude-behavior consistency of a medium interactive website
(A-B)hst : attitude-behavior consistency of a high interactive website

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5. Methodology

5.1 Pretest Interactivity level

The method of experimental design adapted in the present study requires the completion of a pretest in order to ensure the successful manipulation of the interactivity level in each website. In particular:

There were designed three webpages with high, medium and low level of interactivity for one product. The objective of the pretest was to ensure that the level of actual interactivity is equivalent to perceived one. The interactive features employed in every level were recruited from the review of literature (Table 1).

Table 1. Interactive Elements Employed in each Website Interactivity Level

Features	High	Medium	Low
Mapping (Coyle & Thorson, 2001)	Present	Present	Absent
Product information (Coyle & Thorson, 2001)	Present	Present	Present
Product photos (Coyle & Thorson, 2001)	Present	Present	Present
Choice availability (Coyle & Thorson, 2001) Subpages (4) (Sohn, Ci & Lee, 2006)	Present	Present	Absent
Animation (Coyle & Thorson, 2001)	Present	Absent	Absent
Music (Coyle & Thorson, 2001)	Present	Absent	Absent
Graphics (Sohn, Ci & Lee, 2006)	Present	Absent	Absent
On-line communication (Sohn, Ci & Lee, 2006)	Present	Absent	Absent
Conduct info (Sohn, Ci & Lee, 2006)	Present	Present	Absent
One page document (Sohn, Ci & Lee, 2006)	Absent	Absent	Present
Enlarging photo image (Sohn, Ci & Lee, 2006)	Present	Absent	Absent
Mouse rollover effects (Sohn, Ci & Lee, 2006)	Present	Absent	Absent
Color selection of the product (Sohn, Ci & Lee, 2006)	Present	Absent	Absent
Contest	Present	Absent	Absent
Controlled photo rotation	Present	Absent	Absent

A plethora of usability studies has been contacted to define the construct of interactivity and further investigate it (McMillan and Hwang, 2002). Though, the central premise of the interactivity literature addresses its dichotomy nature such as actual vs. perceived (Williams, et al., 1988), objective vs. subjective (Rafaeli 1988), feature-based vs perception-based (McMillan 2000, 2002) as well as structural vs. experimental (Liu and Shrum 2002).

Though certainly related concepts actual interactivity and perceived interactivity are independent (Tremayne, 2005). Actual interactivity can only provide the potential to allow interaction. However, if, for whatever reason, individuals are not using interactive features, perceived interactivity can be low. Thus, perception of low interactivity may occur even when the structures necessary for interactivity seem to be present (McMillan, et al., 2003). Wu (2006) recommends that an integrative approach, including actual and perceived interactivity, should be considered simultaneously, in order to obtain a comprehensive picture of interactivity.

Therefore, in the present study are measured both, actual and perceived interactivity. Two experienced web-designers served as judges to verify the actual level of perceived interactivity in each website. Both confirmed that the versions with high, medium and low interactivity had the respective number of interactive elements. Apart from actual interactivity, there was also assessed perceived one for each webpage. Students recruited from School of Economics in marketing course (*n=60*) were exposed in webpages and answer to the structured questionnaire proposed by McMillan and Hwang (2002). The results confirm that each webpage provides the appropriate level of interactivity.

5.2 Website Features and Development

The selected product on which the website was constructed was a laptop. It was selected because it is a product moderate familiar with the sample. Moreover, it has been used in previous experimental studies (Meyers-Levy and Peracchio 1992; Sicilia et al., 2005). Information is an important attribute in this kind of product which is in high demand by the target population (McMillan and Hwang 2002; Sheehan and Doherty 2001). The web environment is dominated by product categories where some type of interaction is needed, including laptops (Huffman and Kahn 1998; Klein, 1998; Hwang, et al., 2003). Overall, it seems to be an appropriate high involvement product for the present experiment for both sample and communication medium reasons.

There were designed three websites with three different levels of interactivity for the laptop (low, medium and high) (Appendix A). The low interactivity website was a one-page static document containing only text information and photos of the advertised product. The medium was divided into five subpages and one front page. Moreover, some subpages were divided into more subpages. The front page showed only a photo of the product, introductory statements and buttons leading to the subpages, which contained more detailed information for the product, the company as well as contact information. This was done to provide visitors with more options for navigation than in low-interactivity condition in which visitors could obtain information only by scrolling down the page. Lastly, in the high-interactivity condition, the website has the same structure as the medium one, but containing additional interactive functions, including music with the ability to pause it, mouse rollover effects, color selection, more photos, photo rotation, enlarging photo images, online contest, and an option to directly contact the manufacturer. It should be underlined that the same amount of information was provided in each website.

5.3 Main Experiment - Procedure

The experiment was conducted in the University lab of School of Economics. Six 30-minute sessions were accessible for subjects to participate in the study, held over two weeks (9th January 2009 until 23rd January 2009). Each time session was randomly assigned in one of 12 conditions. At least 20 participants were scheduled for each session and they were randomly assigned to one of the 30 operating computers (same model) in the computer room.

The questionnaire of the present study was divided in two parts. The first part included the general instructions regarding the experiment, along with the questionnaire regarding demographics, web-usage time per week and web experience. The second part of the paper included two structured Likert-scale questionnaires.

Right before being exposed to websites participants were asked to read the instruction page about the experiment and fill in the first part of the questionnaire. The instructions were: *"You are about to be exposed in a website regarding a new brand of a **laptop** special designed for students. Take a close look at the website. You are able to browse the website as long as you wish. When you finish log out from the website and raise your hand"*.

The written instructions were also read aloud to participants. Then, the subjects were told to press enter and they were automatically exposed to the appropriate website, used as experimental stimuli. The goal was to make the experience more likely real life and increase the external validity of the experiment. Thus, participants were instructed to view the website for as long as they wished. Participants viewed the Web pages individually. In high interactive websites they were fitted with earphones to hear the music. As long as they fulfill their navigation they were asked to log out of the website and raise their hand. Then, a field researcher gave them separately the second part of the paper which includes the two questionnaires. They were instructed to fill in the form at their own time.

5.4 Sample

Key to conducting this experiment was having computer facilities that could adequately handle the audio and video requirements for running the websites smoothly. Eventually, a college campus with its abundance of computers and a population familiar with the technology was selected. Given this, subjects for the experiment were students attending a major Greek university (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Faculty of Law, Economic and Political Science, School of Economics), who participated in the study in exchange for extra credit toward their final course grade. Although student samples have limitations, they are more homogenous than a sample population, and thus are ideal samples for testing theoretical predictions about the relationships among variables (Calder, et al., 1981). Overall, two hundreds and fifty six students were attended to the experiment. In particular there were assigned more than 20 students to each of 6 treatments. After examining responses for inconsistencies or incomplete questionnaires 120 questionnaires were usable. Each subject was exposed to only one website based on his/her experimental group. A little over the half were female (53.3%), the majority of the sample was between the age of 18-21, representing partly the total population of Internet users. (Table 3).

Table 3-Descriptive Statistics of Sample

Total Sample	Students			Percent 100%	Frequency N=120
Gender			Male	46.7%	56
			Female	53.3%	64
Total				*100%*	*120*
Age		Min : 18	Max : 32		
		Mean : 20.93	Std. Deviation : 2.546		
			18-21	73.3%	88
			22-25	20.9%	25
			26-29	4.2%	5
			30-32	1.6%	2
Total				*100%*	*240*
Internet use per week			Hours spent on Internet		
			>2	20.0%	24
			2-5	22.5%	26
			5-10	27.5%	33
			10-20	16.7%	20
			<20	13.3%	16
Total				*100%*	*120*
Internet years		Min: 1	Max: 15		
		Mean: 4.93	Std. Deviation: 2,737		
			1-3	33.8%	43
			4-6	41.2%	47
			7-10	22.1%	26
			11-15	2.9%	4
Total				*100*	*120*

5.4 Measurements Dependent variables

5.5a Attitude toward the site measure
Consumers' attitudes towards the proposed websites are measured by the tool developed by Chen and Wells (1999). They proposed an Internet specific evaluative scale that can be used by any set of surveyors. The reliability, adequacy and robust of the measurement was tested and replicated to another study conducted by Chen, Clifford and Wells (2002). Moreover, it has employed in several studies. Therefore, it seems to be the appropriate measure for visitors' attitude toward the websites (Appendix B).

5.6b Behavioral intention measures
Two behavioral intention measures, one theorized to indicate higher commitment that the other, where used: intention to return to the website and intention to purchase. A person's intention to return to a website was considered to be a weaker indication of commitment than intention to purchase (Kim and Biocca 1997). To index purchase intention, participants used seven-point Likert scales to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the following three items, previously tested by Putrevu and Lord (1994) (Appendix C).

6. Findings

Table 4: Findings

	INTERACTIVITY			Statistical significance
	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	F= 11.640, p<.000
ATTITUDE	1.07	0.50	0.37	F= 10.762, p<.000
REVISIT	0.82	0.55	0.30	F= 7.049, p<.000
PRE-PURCHASE - BEHAVIOR	0.10	0.30	0.37	
(A-R)	0.25	-0.05	0.07	
(A-P)	0.97	0.20	0.00	

Factor analyses were employed for both depended measures. The attitude questionnaire loaded in one factor, while the behavior in two; revisit related to the website and pre-purchase behavior related to the product (*Croabach alpha in all cases Ca>0.80*). The independent variable was the interactivity level (low, medium, high) and the depended were the attitude toward the site, the revisit related to the site and repurchase behavior towards the product. To evaluate H1, H2 and H3 the ANCOVA (analysis of covariance) was used.

Hypotheses 1 and 2 suggested that participants' attitude towards the website will be more positive to high interactive websites as compared to medium and to low interactive. In evaluating H1 the level of interactivity seems to affect the attitude formulation towards the website. Individuals exposed to high interactive website (1.07) have a more positive attitude as compared to those exposed in low interactive website. It also holds true that individuals exposed to medium interactive websites are formulate more positive attitude (0.50) toward the website than individuals exposed to low (0.37). The second hypothesis proposes that high interactive websites lead to more positive attitude formation as compared to those exposed in medium interactive. Thus both hypothesis (H1, H2) as well as the relation 1 holds true.

Hypothesis 3 suggested that attitude-behavior consistency would be greater for sites that are medium interactive as compared to those with high interactivity. Here, the point is to examine the attitude-behavior consistency as function of interactivity. To do this, factor analysis were employed for the behavior questionnaire, which loaded to two factors (revisit and pre-purchase). So, two new depended variables were created. The first new depended variable is named as attitude-purchase (A-P) and represents the difference between a person's attitude toward the website (A) and intention to purchase the product exposed to the site (P). The second was referred to attitude-revisit (A-R) and represents the difference between an individual's attitude toward the site (A) and intention to return to that site. The assumption in both cases is that the smaller the difference, the more highly correlated the two constructs are. As it can be viewed from the Table (4), individuals exposed to medium interactive website expressed the greater attitude-revisit consistency (-0.05) as compared to high (0.25) and to low (0.07) interactive websites, with high interactivity to lead to the lower consistency between attitude and revisit. Regarding to purchase intention, individuals' exposed to a high interactive website seem to have the lowest correlation (0.97) followed by those exposed to medium interactive (0.20). It should be underlined the

fact that the low interactive website has the greater consistency between attitude and pre-purchase behavior (0.00). Therefore, the H3 and the relation 2 are both accepted.

7. Conclusion - Further Research - Limitation

The results of our study lend empirical support to three intuitive notions. The first is that the there is a positive linear relationship between perceived interactivity and attitude formation. The second is that a medium level of interactivity leads to greater attitude-revisit consistency. The third is that low level of interactivity leads to greater attitude-pre-purchase behavior consistency.

Findings (H1 & H2) in the present study seem to confirm previous researches according to which there is a positive linear relationship between perceived interactivity and attitude formation (Wu, 1999; Newhagen, et al., 1995; Jee and Lee, 2002; McMillan, et al., 2003; Thorson and Rodgers, 2006). The highest the interactivity level is, the more positive the attitude formation towards the site. Thus if the objective of the Internet marketing plan is to formulate positive attitude toward the website, the employment of interactive features seems to be the appropriate suggestion.

Equally importantly the paper has demonstrated that there is a nexus between medium level of interactivity and revisit of the website. Thus, the medium level is suggested to employ when the objective of the Internet marketing plan is not only to lead individuals to visit our site but also to retain them. In a recent study, Sohn, et al., (2007) accept the notion that interactivity is not always a beneficial construct. What is more, they propose the product categories for which consumers retain different levels of "expected interactivity" as a moderating variable that affects to the attitude toward the website. In addition, agree that interactive functions are not all positive for users (Sicilia, et al., 2005).

It is worth mentioning that the greater consistency between attitude and pre-purchase behavior is expresses in the low interactive condition. Moreover, for the same condition individuals hold the less negative attitude towards the site they expressed the highest pre-purchase behavior. This fact may be attributed to many factors. It is proposed that enhanced levels of interactivity interrupt the process of persuasion, especially when the advertising message is visually complicated (Bezjian-Avery, et al., 1998) and erode the quality of consumers' decision (Ariely, 2000; Fortin and Dholakia, 2005). Thus, individuals may not have the ability to process the provided information for the product due to many interactive functions. Or the employment of interactive functions, such as music and animation, lead individuals o process the product information with the peripheral route. Thus, individuals do not feel that they have accomplished the information/ pre-purchase stage adequately.

As it could be suggested from the above, the interactivity is not a panacea in the web environment. Higher levels of interactivity do not produce always the most positive communication outcome. Though it affects the attitude formulation positively, do not reflect high consistency between attitude and behavior. Therefore the following question is posed; are the implement of interactive functions always advantageous? Liu and Shrum (2002) propose that the rash to employ interactive elements into the marketing context should be mediated or tempered by fully understand both; what

interactivity can do well and more importantly what it cannot do. They also add that before adopting the latest technological trend there should first taken under consideration both its advantages and limitations.

The results of our empirical study point to the usefulness of the website schema construct for understanding consumer response to websites. Though, it seems of great importance to further investigate the nature and the effects of this new construct in a website. Determining whether these results are applicable to other product categories or services is one avenue of additional research. Further work on the current topic of interest is needed to investigate how consumers process the information provided by a website when its interactivity level is manipulated. Do they follow the central or the peripheral route of persuasion according to the ELM proposed by Petty and Cacioppo (1979). Another useful avenue of research would be the investigation of consumers' attitude towards the brand. Is there any consistency between attitude towards the website and attitude towards the brand? For which kind of products is the consistency greater; well-established or new ones?

Inherent within any study are potential limitations that affect the overall validity and reliability of the research. With regard to this research, a few limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings. One limitation is the use of a student sample in combination with a laboratory experiment. This type of experiment restricts the external validity when interpreting the results.

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9. Appendix

A. Interactive Websites

Level of Interactivity	Website address
High Interactive Website	http://users.auth.gr/~tzeni/lg1/
Medium Interactive Website	http://users.auth.gr/~tzeni/lg2/
Low Interactive Website	http://users.auth.gr/~tzeni/lg3/

B. Attitude towards the site I (Chen and Wells, 1999)

The following items assess your general favorability toward the website you just visited. Circle the number that best indicates your agreement or disagreement with each statement.

This website makes it easy for me to build a relationship with the company.	Definitely disagree Definitely agree 1…..…2…..........3…..........4………5
I would like to visit this website again in the future.	1…..…2…..........3…..........4………5
I'm satisfied with the service provided by this website.	1…..…2…..........3…..........4………5
I feel comfortable in surfing this website.	1…..…2…..........3…..........4………5
I feel surfing this website is a good way for me o spend time	1…..…2…..........3…..........4………5
Compared with other web sites, I would rate this one as	One of the Worst One of the Best 1…..…2…..........3…..........4………5

C. Behavior intention measures ((Kim and Biocca 1997). (Putrevu and Lord 1994)
Two behavioral intention measures are used: intention to return to web site and intention to purchase.
To measure intention to return to site subjects used to seven-point Likert scales to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the following items:

1. It is very likely that I will return to this site

Absolutely   absolutely not
1…..……2……....3…..…..4……....5…..…..6…..…..7

2. I will return to this site the next time I need a product.

Absolutely   absolutely not
1…..……2……....3…..…..4……....5…..…..6…..…..7

3. Suppose that a friend called you last night to get your advice in his/her search for a laptop. Would you recommend him/her to visit LG (inspired for students) web site?

Absolutely   absolutely not
1…..……2……....3…..…..4……....5…..…..6…..…..7

4. It is very likely that I will buy LG (inspired for students)
Absolutely   absolutely not
1…..……2……....3…..…..4……....5…..…..6…..…..7

5. I will purchase LG (inspired for students) the next time I need a laptop
Absolutely   absolutely not
1…..……2……....3…..…..4……....5…..…..6…..…..7

6. I will definitely try the LG (inspired for students)

Absolutely   absolutely not
1…..……2……....3…..…..4……....5…..…..6…..…..7

7. Suppose that a friend called you last night to get your advice in his/her search for laptop. Would you recommend him/her to buy a product from the LG (inspired for students)?

Absolutely   absolutely not
1…..……2……....3…..…..4……....5…..…..6…..…..7