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Phenomenology of the Everyday

Contents

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New Media in Everyday Life: Reassembling the Mediated Identity

New Media (Internet-based digital media and mobile devices) have changed the dynamics of everyday life and profoundly affected all spheres of human experience, transforming the processes of identity construction. This paper deals more closely with the process of identity construction in the age of New Media as reflected in the practices of computer gaming and analysis of everyday artefacts. Studying the everyday in sociology has a long but discrete history of influences that are today reflected in the idea of 'social existence among things'. A philosophical analysis of New Media denies the intersubjectivity and living personal identity online; even the passive enjoyment is impossible as the body becomes mediatized. One of possible 'ways out' is to use the concept of dialogue and investigate everyday life creative practices of active personal identity creation in *massively multiplayer online role-playing games* (MMORPGs), which are discussed at the end of this text.

In this paper, everyday life is analysed from the perspective of the sociology of everyday life. Everyday life practices are indicated as those that:

(1) constitute part of the routine activities,

(2) are experienced by individuals,

(3) are liable to observation.

The everyday practices can be reflexive or non-reflexive, individual or group activities. That they are experienced by individuals means that everyday life practices have a socially observable dimension, whereas their observability provides a link between the subjective meanings and

other individuals so that conclusions about everyday practices can b drawn and verified by others. The others are ultimately responsible fo accepting or rejecting the dramaturgy of each subject. Sociability work as a mechanism where individuals constitute each other's identity: ou of the dialogue the individual develops an ability to imagine him- o herself as if from aside.

In the following, we turn to the analysis of 'presenting the self' in Nev Media as a relatively new practice of creating meanings of oneself i an interactive manner. The basic methodology requires addressing tw scholars, Slavoj Zizek and Dietmar Kamper. However, to start with, w should briefly review what features of New Media make them a specifi setting for the process of self-presentation. When the specific feature of the New Media are located, their effect on identity constructio practices can further be analysed. Although some of these features ar actively and reflexively used by individuals, they exert an influence c their own on the practices of identity construction.

New Media: Nomadic Production of the Self

New Media can be described through such characteristics as bein *digital, individualized, interactive, and virtual*, and 'connecting man to many'.[1] This became especially evident with the arrival of Web 2. services in the late 1990s – early 2000s such as blogging platforms, soci networks, and cross-commenting via various social media accounts.

Another way of defining New Media was proposed by Lev Manovic who describes 'new media objects' – digital, dividable into the tinie: pieces which can be dealt with individually and reconfigured apart fror the whole.[2] According to Manovich, New Media follow five principle: of which the first two lay the basis for the other three principles. Nev Media principles are as follows:

1 Silverstone 1999: 11.
2 Manovich 2001: 49-65.

1) Numeric representation – all New Media consist of digital codes, hence they can be described numerically and they become programmable.

2) Modularity – the 'fractal' principle of assembling larger-scaled objects from smaller ones.

3) Automation of creation that makes it possible to *exclude the human from the creative process*.

4) Variability – not being fixed, existing in *multiple versions*.

5) Cultural transcoding – a *blend of human and computer meanings* as a result of a special relationship between the computing culture and everyday culture.

These principles, which involve technical features on the surface, produce *social consequences* that differentiate New Media from either interpersonal or mass media. Interpersonal media, on the one hand, are highly individual; they require subjects' co-presence and dialogue and they are limited to a few participants. Mass media, on the other hand, transmit the message from a single communicator to multitudes (which is an advantage over interpersonal media). However, mass media are restricted by their standardized messages transmitted to the audience. New Media, by contrast, combine the opportunity to exchange individualized messages and to do this on a mass scale not limited by individual co-presence.[3] However, even given that in New Media the limitation of participant numbers can be overcome and individualization of messages can be achieved, we cannot say whether New Media preserve the mode of dialogue characteristic of the interpersonal communication. While mass media are predominantly monological in their communication mode, the hybrid nature of New Media leaves space for experimentation and finding new ways of maintaining dialogue (= the intersubjective meaning creation) online.

Digital media objects produce an on-demand culture; they can be recalled independently of time and place. While the 'old' media (TV, radio, newspapers) content was transmitted to consumers as finished, fixed products, and while it required the audience to sit and watch or listen at a specific time and place, the digital media culture does not limit media products in the same way. New Media communication is 'nomadic' and mobile,[4] it is not fixed itself and it requires no fixing to the situation of communication. As an extension to this, the subjects themselves are welcome to mediate parts of their everyday experience, piece by piece, as they move along their everyday practices. Checking social networks on smartphones, posting online and providing feedback to friends' news, including the smallest details of everyday life (such as a photo of breakfast), has become routine. New Media themselves depend on a constant feed of news, emotions, and information from the users, precisely because they are built on interactivity, discussion, and what is generally described as 'user-generated content'. Hence, New Media produce machine-generated prompts to their users encouraging them to share their immediate impressions and experiences ('Tell other people what you have been up to', 'What's new?', etc.).

New Media are always nearby, and media exposure never stops completely. Even at night, when individuals go to sleep, their synchronized selves stay online and continue receiving feedbacks and messages from other users. As part of the integrated media environment, waking up in the morning may be the starting point for a new wave of projecting one's feelings online, exchanging messages, and other emotional work. To maintain the pace and keep the 'online self' alive, one has to feed new information with some regularity, day in – day out. By pushing subjects into this new routine, the *medium* of New Media penetrates the air with the easiness and menace of Foucault's distributed power.

When mobile media tools are at arm's length, the creative subject acquires *new instruments of self-expression and constructing self-identity* that the nomadic digital media can offer.[5] First, in New Media, the *range*

3 Crosbie 2002.

4 Hills 2009: 107-112.
5 Marshall 2004.

of accessible media content is many times larger than in traditional (mass or interpersonal) media. It is possible to collect various materials (texts, video, music, etc.) around any topic and group them together online. Most often, individuals post personal information items, as well as the books and films they like, which they afterwards organise around the topic of their selves. Second, New Media enable *contact with media content at any time and place* and at the users' own convenience. As a consequence, the media content is not only usefully 'always at hand', but it is also ubiquitous and calling for consumption and participation at no structured time and place (especially in respect of user-created services, e.g. YouTube). Third, the individual, the self as a consolidated unity, gets an extensive *new dimension of self-expression*, of articulating one's self-identity via constant expressing, shaping, and personalizing one's digital collections.[6] The users respond to these new opportunities by *habitually* producing, sharing, and consuming their own content and images through numerous services available in the social media: blogs, social networks (often several), or virtual worlds (e.g. Second Life). This new dimension of self-expression occurs online, but it feeds into and contaminates all the incarnations of the self, both online and offline. The meanings and shaping of identity which happen online have their own impact on the personal identity construct as a whole.

Digital culture has been consecutively opening new ways of not only representing but co-creating the self via 'avatars', 'online identities', and 'virtual selves'. How much the virtual selves are new and really different from our 'offline selves' is an open question. However, the opportunity to start from scratch online opens up a horizon of opportunities for the creative shaping of the self (there is a famous adage illustrating the case: 'On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog', which dates back as far as P. Steiner's cartoon of 1993).

Mobile devices have acquired important functions serving not only to communicate but also to mirror and save one's self-identity by documenting one's social and personal life and keeping significant memories in the digital form[7] – in photos, location maps, and friends' reactions (cf. the organization of personal Facebook pages as 'timelines'). The digital nature of New Media objects, their interoperability and technical replicability allow for easy multiplication not only of personal devices but also of services obtained online (communication, reading, listening to music, etc.). In its basis, replicability is a technically enabled innovation, but it has significant social consequences by providing a direct emotional link between individuals and their digital representations via technical devices. Smartphones and tablets are *convergent media centres*. Although still habitually used for calling, they are meaning-loaded objects containing 'all necessary information' about their owners and their identities, employing all the feelings in their media collections.

Following the digital logic of New Media, personal identities become discrete, dividable into small recorded pieces of personal experience that are conveniently stored in personal digital devices. Individuals record those pieces as photographic snapshots of important moments in their lives, or as valuable images of themselves and their significant others; they store work-related and personal documents and readings on their devices and produce their own amateur or professional digital content to share with other users and get their feedback as part of the everyday routine.

This kind of view is rather unproblematic. It documents the transforming effect of the digital media on the way in which personal identities are dynamically created in time. However, the proliferation of mobile devices, which was originally proclaimed as liberating the consumers from the fixed place and time of analogue media, ended up by reinforcing, fixing and saving the presentations of self-identity through personal preferences of the multimedia consumption and data storage.

6 Hills 2009: 115.

7 Hills 2009: 116.

In addition, the 'dark side' of extending self-identities and images publicly online ('mobile privatization', according to Raymond Williams) lies in *importing public information and public activities into the zone of privacy*, with its fuzzy edges of the public and the private.[8] The public world is literally smuggled into the private zones, and vice versa: private zones are smuggled out into the public world, since the same New Media devices are used to communicate individuals' identities – not only to the world but to the individuals themselves, as auto-communication.

Summing up this section, New Media contents are dividable into very small pieces, which are fed by the interaction of individuals, and have a wide reach in communication. However, the technical characteristics of New Media tend to transform social practices, at the same time enabling piece-by-piece dynamic extension of the self into online and turning personal communicating devices into emotionally laden mediators for constructing one's personal identity.

The following critical questions, however, are not clear from this perspective: (1) Is the dialogue of the interpersonal communication preserved in New Media? (2) How much of the interactivity in New Media provides the necessary intersubjective space for constructing reliable meanings? To address these questions, we turn more closely to the philosophy of New Media developed by Slavoj Zizek and Dietmar Kamper, the former being a famous philosopher, the latter a marginal one, both of whom have produced helpful ideas explaining identity construction online.

Slavoj Zizek's New Media: Meet The Interpassive Subject

The starting point for our philosophical dive is Slavoj Zizek and his commentaries on New Media and their effect on the self.

Slavoj Zizek was born in 1949 in Slovenia, then part of Yugoslavia. He studied philosophy and sociology in Ljubljana where he graduated in Philosophy. Later he studied psychoanalysis in Paris VIII with J.-A. Miller, a famous academic interpreter of Jacques Lacan. Since his young years, Zizek has been publishing in political journals. Big success came to him in 1989, after the publication of the book The Sublime Object of Ideology *where ideology is criticized not as false consciousness (as Marx believed) but as unconscious fantasy. Zizek has appeared in numerous articles since then as well as in several documentaries. His work has been acknowledged worldwide, and the* International Journal of Žižek Studies *was founded in 2007.*

The major influences in Zizek's work come from the philosophy of Karl Marx, G.W.F. Hegel, and the psychoanalysis of J. Lacan. From the first two, Zizek developed his engagement with the dialectical method that builds on the contradictions of development and an intellectual attention to the issues of ideology in the analysis of even mundane subjects. However, the language of Zizek's analysis cannot be fully understood without an acquaintance with Lacan's concepts.

Zizek uses Lacanian psychoanalysis as a methodology to refer to the current events in culture and media. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the three 'registers', or 'orders' – the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real – are important for understanding identity. The Imaginary is based on the early 'mirror stage' of human development when a baby learns to recognize its own image in the other object, the mirror. The Imaginary 'is a realm of surface appearances which are deceptive'.[9] Identification is part of this order of deceptive reflection via the Other, which is why the Imaginary is also about alienation (since it is produced by the Other). The Imaginary is

reproduced by the relationship of the subject to the image of its body *(as mirrored by the Other). The Symbolic order is predominantly the realm of language, but language has its place both in the Imaginary and the Real. The Symbolic is the 'realm of radical alterity', the Other and the Other's discourse.*[10] *According to Lacan, the Symbolic is also 'the* world of words that creates the world of things'.[11] *By contrast, the Real is undifferentiated; it resists symbolization and imagination, which constitutes a constant problem for the subject (i.e. the individual).*

According to Zizek, the basis of the subject is Descartes' cogito, yet not as a transparent and conscious substance, but as an empty space, a void. The immediacy of the world, Zizek explains, has to be compensated by symbolization (i.e. by the order of the Symbolic), whereby the empty cogito is filled with subjectivization. Subjectivization 'is where the subject is given an identity *and where that identity is altered by the Self'.*[12] *However, the problem lies in the fact that, according to Lacan, self-identity is impossible. The truth of the subject (i.e. the individual seeking for identity) is out there, in the Others to whom the subject relates, and there is no 'core' or meaningful 'substance', no 'real self'.*[13] *The 'big Other' that structures socially our personal identities is the identity-giving Subject.*

Slavoj Zizek is renowned for his ability to write on the most debated and 'hot' topics like films (The Matrix), riots in Paris suburbs, or, in the 1990s, the Balkan war in the discourse of European intellectuals. Zizek largely writes on the everyday challenges of popular culture, interpreting the most mundane and irrational phenomena of the everyday (e.g. the adoration of cats and kittens among the users of social networks). More wide-scale contributions of Zizek's include 'light' psychoanalysis of cinema classics.[14]

10 Myers 2006.
11 Lacan 1977.
12 Myers 2006.
13 The 'Self' is what fills in the void of the subject, see Myers 2003: 45. As Myers puts it, the Self is the aspect of personality 'fully recognized by everyone else' that determines the individual's position in society (Myers 2006).
14 Fiennes & Zizek 2006.

The themes regularly recurring in his numerous writings and speeches are ideology, the Imaginary, and the Real. Due to his ability to respond to the burning social and pop-culture challenges, Zizek has gained much international attention, with the resulting Žižek Studies *as a research strand of its own.*

In digital communication, Zizek addresses the problem of 'real' interactivity. Behind the frantic activity of active media users, Zizek[15] sees the delegation of the subject's enjoyment to the Other, as if the Other could do it better and instead of the subject itself. Zizek takes the examples of TV shows with recorded bursts of laughter, or the VCR that records a TV series for its owner to be watched and enjoyed later (and never watched in fact), while the owner stays late at work. A more specific example is an intellectual's satisfied sighing after having copied a whole book in the library, as if the copy machine had already read it for him or her.[16] Here, the recorded laughing and VCR are objects that 'feel' the joy instead of us, while we misperceive their actions as our own *jouissance [enjoyment]*. Zizek writes:

> Although I do not actually watch films, the very awareness that the films I love are stored in my video library gives me profound satisfaction and, occasionally, enables me to relax and indulge in the exquisite art of *far'niente* – as if the VCR were in a way watching them for me, in my place [...] In the case of interpassivity, I am passive through the Other. I concede to the Other the passive aspect (of enjoying), while I can remain actively engaged [...] This allows us to propose the notion of false activity: you think you are active, while your true position, as it is embodied in the fetish, is passive.[17]

Here, Zizek confronts one of received ideas that New Media open up a perspective of engagement with public life by transcending the

15 Zizek 1998.
16 Pfaller 2003.
17 Zizek 1998.

individual's status of passive observer. However, instead of transcendence, the philosopher sees interpassivity there. The concept of interpassivity (as an alter ego to interactivity) was suggested by Zizek to denote the act of 'believing or enjoying through the other',[18] the deprivation or 'delegating the pleasure or consumption to the interpassive media' (machines, people, animal, etc.).[19]

Zizek uses the concept and brings it further by stating that interpassivity deprives the subject of substantial identity.[20] Since, according to Lacanian psychoanalysis, there is no real self, interpassivity is another name to the work of the Symbolic by the Other. The individual is dependent upon the Other for personal identity. In the best case, this is a mutual dependency which lies far from identity creation by means of lively interaction, as interactivity is typically portrayed. It is worth remembering that the Lacanian subject is empty, and thus there is no subjective phenomenological experience that could fill its void; there is only subjectivization dependent on the Other.

For Zizek, interpassivity is the 'uncanny double' of interactivity – a concept that is still widely used by champions of social media as a proxy for liberating the self and for growing freedom. Zizek makes the point that digital media rob the self of its only allegedly unalienable attribute, the self's *passive feelings*. One may recall a popular practice of bloggers taking shots of their new clothes and sharing them online. One function of such routine is to share the moment; however, even when the reason is mundane routine, the Other could be expected to be the real recipient of the pleasure. When posted on *Instagram*, even ordinary food should taste better if many people see and like it online. This argument poses a serious problem for maintaining the self in the New Media environment without completely delegating the work on the self to the media, the apparatus of the Imaginary. Here comes another critical point purported by Zizek, *mediatization*.

18 Zizek 1998.
19 Pfaller 2003.
20 Zizek 1998.

When discussing the message and attraction of the film, *The Matrix*, Zizek[21] problematizes the new experience that can be found online and he puts up the issue of machine control over online experience. He builds a metaphor of constitutional monarchy, i.e. reducing the monarch to its symbolic function. Those who steer the machinery behind our virtual bodies become their real owners. The owners of physical human bodies then are only 'constitutional monarchs' in the situation of online communication. This is the basic reason for the hysteria and constant irritation of users concerning privacy regulations when social network companies issue new rules appropriating personal content. We do not want someone else to determine the patterns and content of our online behaviour; otherwise we would not be doing it to such a great extent worldwide. However, in most cases there is an invisible big Other who only becomes visible when new rules are introduced and users recognize that they literally have to obey someone else in their online interaction.

The notion of mediatization was originally used to designate a 'gesture by means of which a subject was stripped of its direct, immediate right to make decisions'. Furthermore, a progressing computerization of our everyday lives, for Zizek, means that the subject becomes increasingly 'mediatised, imperceptibly stripped of its power', 'caught in the network of electronic media'.[22] In such a position, the Other (as the 'real monarch') holds the key to our subjective experience that can be stolen or manipulated by the 'machinical Other'.[23] The subject itself is then reduced to a void; it is not in control of identity creation.

The self suffers from delegating the function of creating personal identity to this 'mechanical Other', through keeping significant digital photos on a mobile phone, or posting on a Facebook account. *Thus, on the one hand, the media extend the individual's ability to produce the images of the self, but on the other hand, they also appropriate and control the resulting self which is the socially recognised part of the individual.*

21 Zizek 1999.
22 Zizek 1999.
23 Zizek 1999.

Since private life is mediatized and appropriated by the media, its counterpart, the public space, is, consequently, also in danger. When the masks are down, no more 'frontstage' appearances (Erving Goffman) are possible. The self loses its necessary boundaries between the private and the public. As Zizek puts it: 'We are often told that privacy is disappearing, that the most intimate secrets are open to public probing. But the reality is the opposite: what is effectively disappearing is public space, with its attendant dignity.'24

The disappearance of public space is part of a symptom of changing relations of the subject to the body in the New Media environment. Mediatization of personal experience online and the unbounded passion for personal communication online are features of these new relations.

When public and private space cannot be further differentiated, personal experience starts to serve different functions. Intersubjectivity as a process of meaning-making between the subjects is in danger: if subjects can be deprived of their subjective feelings and if the contents of the selves (the process of exchanging subjective meanings) lose anchors in social reality, the shape of identity is blurred and destabilized, and the subject is captured inside this mechanism of mediatization. In New Media, the fixed time or place of communication is put into brackets, and the social context tends to slip out of the individual's control. While the number of symbolic attributes of the Self may extend, the power of the subject to manage them is not increasing. It means that *the subject loses the vital capacity of regulating the process of building personal identity*, but, once inside the trap, there is no way out: online identities start to perpetuate themselves through endless mediatization of experience.

Documenting the mediatization of the self and the captured self can be shown in individuals' posting significant attributes of personal life in blogs. *Blogging* presumes publishing personally important pieces of information that, retrospectively, serve as bricks in the computer-mediated ways of building personal identity. Users post for their readers (who are partly their offline friends) and for themselves, often re-reading their own posts afterwards as parts of a whole mechanism of identity construction. Revealing the contents of one's pockets or bag is one possible strategy that bloggers use to fix the discrete moments of their identity (Fig. 1).

Figure 1. *In My New Bag*. A blogger reveals the inside of her bag. In the text accompanying the picture the author lists the contents of her bag where her mobile telephone is number 4 (out of 9) and the iPad is number 7.

The hierarchy and presentation of what one carries around on a day-to-day basis reveals the symbolic significance of mobile media for constructing one's personal identity. The characteristic photos can be analysed as snapshots of the 'backstage' (Erving Goffman). Though beautifully arranged, such photos belong to the 'backstage' since they depict components of one's public 'mask' and its instruments (as presented to the public), i.e. cosmetics, a mirror, an organizer, or an iPad (plus the fact that there must be at least one more camera in order to be able to make such a photo). (A detailed scheme for the semantic analysis of visual materials was presented by Sztompka.25)

While cosmetics, a mirror, and containers for lenses are the classical 'scaffoldings' for presenting the self in front of the public, digital mobile devices make their way into this private environment making this world of 'backstage' a candidate for publicly sharing with the others. Thus, the old notions of public, private, and the self as an active subject and the master of one's identity are seriously questioned in light of Zizek's theory about New Media.

Dietmar Kamper's New Media: The Deadliness of the Body's Image

The bodily experience and its transformations in the age of New Media have been the focus of the German thinker and anthropologist Dietmar Kamper (1936–2001). A post-structuralist and a historical anthropologist, Kamper established an important link between German and French thought (Lacan, Foucault, Baudrillard) that he developed commencing in the 1970s. He contributed to various disciplines (historical anthropology, philosophy, pedagogy, and sociology), which makes his methodology and his language more complex.

Kamper was a transdisciplinary thinker and often preferred the genre of obscure writing in trying to find his own language of expression. His works are valuable since they touch on unconventional subjects of social thought such as laughter, imagination, fantasy, philosophy of the flesh, aesthetics of the lifeworld, 'body thinking' (Körperdenken), and the extension of the body by medicine, technologies, and artificial intelligence. Kamper's work caused numerous debates in Germany during his life course, but since his death in 2001 his heritage has been rediscovered in other countries (cf. a book of selected essays published in Russian in 2010, a special edition of Brazilian communication review GHREBH in 2012, etc.).

Kamper was born in Erkelenz, North-Western Germany. He started his studies in Cologne to become a teacher of physical culture. After working for a year, he continued his studies in Tübingen and Munich where he studied pedagogy and literature. He gained a doctoral degree in phi-

losophy, while his habilitation work was in pedagogy. During these years, Kamper was involved in creating open anthropology and studying the issue of human nature. After habilitating in Marburg (1972), then the biggest and leftist department of social sciences in the Federal Republic, he was elected dean of this department and vice-president of the university (1977–1979). In 1979, he became a professor of cultural sociology and a member of a centre for the studies of historical anthropology at the Freie Universität in Berlin where he subsequently worked.

The intellectual background for Kamper's thinking was founded on the German classics, G.W.F. Hegel and I. Kant – but also on French poststructuralists. First of all J. Lacan, whom Kamper introduced to the German scene in his Marburg seminar in 1971.[26] In addition, Kamper admired romantics for their intermediary position between philosophy and literature studies. In the 1970s, Kamper's students brought him the news about Lacan. Kamper and some of his colleagues developed a lasting interest in contemporary French philosophy; Kamper exchanged letters with Foucault and invited him to lecture in Germany; he made friends with Baudrillard. However, poststructuralist ideas were not especially welcomed in the largely Marxist environment of Kamper, and therefore he worked further alone on the aesthetics and mediatization.

The physical body, its transformation in experience with New Media is the starting point for Kamper. Here, the link with Lacanian psychoanalysis and the importance of relations to one's body can be traced. According to Kamper, constructing a personal identity with New Media implies an element of suffering: our body constitutes the centre of subjective feelings, but media usage steals those feelings of the body. Kamper also comes to the idea of interpassivity in his own manner: to him, watching the TV turns the body into a mere *appendix to the media.*

Another important idea for Kamper's thinking about the body in New Media is the deadliness of images. He writes that the Other is absent from the Imaginary, that it is only the spirit that touches itself, to the

26 Maresch 1999.

result that no material is left. Then, Kamper proceeds, the spirit visiting itself in the Imaginary is the way of the dead God while the Imaginary is fed by the body that 'makes a career as a corpse'. The living body that can live and die falls out of symbolic circulation. According to Kamper, the living body belongs to a specific time and place, to the feeling of closeness of touch (*Nahsinne des Tastens*) and to the attending feeling (*hörendes Spüren*). Kamper claims that the 'body-corpse' is tremendous since the audiences, lost in seeing, believe they see their alter-ego in this corpse. By contrast, the image (e.g. a photo) is for Kamper a manifestation of the 'zenith of the bodiless Self'.[27]

Kamper is very critical of the images and the fate of the self in New Media. He writes that the images develop very fast but they do not change anything. Hence, all images, including digital ones, are 'dead' and the image itself is a substitute for 'death'.[28] Kamper adds with irony that although digital images embody the fact of an omnipresent and almighty fantasy, in digital images 'man has finally come to himself' – he is a pure self (*Selbst*); the loss of the Other is final.[29] In other words, in digital media the Other is not to be found, which has to do with the loss of dimensions of the living body that turns it into a plain, dead image, up to a digital point. According to Kamper, the body is not sufficient by itself; it needs the Other for producing identity. However, there is a trick: our body belongs to the Real and it is inaccessible to any media (the Imaginary), while the meanings belong to the Imaginary, and the Self can only by created by the Other (the Symbolic). When the Imaginary is devoid of the Other, no 'real' meanings could be produced anymore.

By the time of the arrival of New Media, a whole stream of New Media philosophy had already been there, and Kamper was part of it.[30]

Kamper's thinking helps to understand what becomes of a body when it is captivated in the prison of snapshot images. In a number of essays, he disclosed the logic of this transformation.

The problem of the body lies in the fact that individuals incessantly produce and consume their own images. According to Kamper, people have never been the masters of images. But today the *media are de-mediatized*, i.e. they lose their connecting status as media. After having been the means of attaining a goal, they 'dissolve in complete omnipresence',[31] which is close to Foucault's idea of dispersed power.

The tragedy of the body is that the alleged liberation in the artificial online world ends in coercion of imagination. Bodies that had been transformed into images of bodies now take their sophisticated revenge by building a *'prison of images'*.[32] People are relentlessly coerced to transform themselves into images (avatars, online profiles, etc.) that fall into established limits and that are capable of satisfying the requirement of growing visibility. As a result of growing visibility, however, people are losing the multidimensional bodiliness (*Körperlichkeit*) of their lives.[33]

Kamper promotes Vilém Flusser's idea of transforming the *subject into a project:* 'as subjects, we rely on our artefacts; as projects, we can be sincere'.[34] Kamper also claims that the ability of *imagination* is the only remedy against the almost perfect prison of images. The multidimensionality of the body can be inscribed into Flusser's 'anthropological quadrangle' that includes the body-space (3 dimensions), surface-image (2 dimensions), writing-line (1 dimension), and time-point (0 dimension).[35] As a result of mediatization, the body loses its multidimensionality of experience (Table 1).

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27 Кампер 2010c: 89-90. Here and further, citations from Kamper's works are taken from the Russian edition of his essays. The original titles of essays are provided in the reference list.
28 Кампер 2010c: 91.
29 Кампер 2010c: 91.
30 Савчук 2012: 39.

31 Кампер 2010a: 55.
32 Кампер 2010a: 56.
33 Кампер 2010b: 63.
34 Кампер 2010b: 71-72.
35 Кампер 2010b: 73.

Non-sizeable	3 dimensions	2 dimensions	1 dimension	0 dimension
Living body (*Leib*)	**Body**	**Image**	**Writing**	**Non-time** (*Unzeit*)
Feeling (*Spüren*)	Listening/ speaking	Seeing	Writing/ reading	Counting
Skin	Ear/ voice	Eye	Eye/ hand	Brain
Space-time	**Space**	**Plain**	**Line**	**Point**

Table 1. Kamper's Reconciliation of Flusser's Anthropological Quadrangle (Body, Images, Time, and Space). Source: Кампер 2010b: 81.

According to Kamper, the living body (*Leib*) is spatially indivisible; it is pre-sizeable and non-digitizable.[36] The speaking and listening body, the interacting body is placed into the 3D space, whereas the image is only about seeing, and it is 2D; writing, on its part, is a line, and since digital codes can only be perceived by the brain, it does not constitute any spatial dimension.[36] By matching those dimensions of body, image, writing, on the one hand, and time, space, point, on the other, Kamper sketches a huge *gap* lying between the *living body*, its *images*, and its *digital representation*. The latter is organized in discrete time points, and there is a void between any two such points, which makes it even harder to understand how continuity is possible in the digital world where the body loses its multidimensionality, thus nearing the zero-dimension. As Kamper notes, we all are engaged with communication because we cannot accept our 'being to death' (*Sein zum Tode*). He writes that we have to seek immortality in the Other and to calm down with the knowledge of our death. From this search for immortality, Kamper believes, rose the codified world of culture which, instead of linking us, isolates us, and online communication does not bring relief. The world of culture threatens us with a prison of deadly images, instead of becoming a bridge between people.[37]

36 Кампер 2010b: 82.
37 Кампер 2010b: 73.

The crucial problem with the images is that, according to Kamper, the Other is absent in the Imaginary. Such a position of Kamper, however, can be explained by his reference to the loss of the multidimensionality of the living body in images. Kamper is thus less optimistic than Zizek about identity construction online. While Zizek points to the delegation of satisfaction to the Other (other users; the media), Kamper is not convinced that the images still have sufficient dimensions to include the Other at all. As a result, the living body goes out of use. What is left in the 0-dimensional world is the radical non-responsiveness of the world and personal isolation.[38]

Like Zizek, Kamper posits passivization as a disciplining principle of behaviour in New Media communication. As Kamper puts it, feeling is about 'being passionately not dead', being a joined dreaming.[39]

Kamper concludes that the body inevitably suffers from being put into and consumed as digital images. The idea is to bring back the passion of the Other to the body 'bracketed' in the images, so that social exchange could take place and the 'prison of images' could turn into a 'bridge' to the Other, necessary for identity creation.

Rescuing the Self Online: Intersubjectivity vs. Dialogue

We have established that intersubjectivity is in trouble in the age of New Media; that digital media 'rob' the self of pleasure and the necessary Other; that the public space is disappearing, and the situation does not seem to hold promise for recovery. However, when the everyday is approached from a different perspective, producing personal identity still seems to be possible with New Media.

Having in mind the online situation of intersubjectivity mentioned above, one could draw a helpful methodological line between inter-

38 Кампер 2010b: 85.
39 Кампер 2010c: 89-91.

subjectivity and M. Bakhtin's *dialogue*. Bakhtin's dialogism implies the logic of distancing, the logic of relations and becoming – in contrast to the continuous being. Dialogue is the opposite to causality and to identifying determination.[40] Dialogue is, first of all, a co-being; it represents a tension, a relation. It co-evolves between protagonists, neither of whom is completely determined by external factors or the Other, so that an *opening for the uncertain* is always there.

As Bakhtin notes: 'A single voice ends nothing and resolves nothing. Two voices is the minimum for life, the minimum for existence.'[41]

Dialogue has the productive force of constituting the self that emerges in the space between speaking subjects. The original senses of intersubjectivity and dialogue are close, if not coinciding. However, if the subjects are susceptible to mediatization, which bereaves them of personal or active enjoyment, the '-logue' part is rather free from this risk, since it reflects the objectively existing speech exchange, responding to the preceding words but not being totally predetermined by them. Kamper recognized that the body as a space, an interval, *requires* constant unfolding through speaking, listening, and feeling.[42]

Dialogue requires an open horizon of unfolding characters which could not be performed by exchanging machine-dependent images. Dialogue should be partly spontaneous and in this way creative. Even specially programmed machines, like that in J. Searle's *Chinese room*, cannot guarantee either a dialogue, or mutual sense-making that feeds our impressions about the lifeworld and helps maintain sociality. All of this makes a difference between machine exchange and interpersonal communication (cf. a call to an automated client service and talking to a real person at the support service). The focus on each other's meanings and creative responses to them may be independent of the media connecting human beings, but those could never be truly realized by machines.

40 Кампер 2010c: 102.
41 Kristeva 1967: 446.
42 Бахтин 1994: 473. Bakhtin 1984: 252.

A way to discover such activity still available in the age of New Media is to find the loci of communication that allow individuals to be creative, to react spontaneously to each other's actions, and to use the multiple dimensions of their bodily feelings.

One such locus could be found in certain modes of the social network communication which, in contrast to blogging or self-made services like YouTube, provide a gradation of 'frontstages' and 'backstages', occasionally producing the dignity necessary for the public space. Properly regulated and used, even social networks could possibly become new public arenas, or everyone's 'third places'[43] where communication among the welcoming strangers is open and relaxing, providing the necessary 'togetherness'.[44] Since individuals can spend their time in a randomized company and their everyday statuses are partly blurred in computer-mediated communication, is it possible that multifunctional social networks succeed in maintaining the public places online? On the one hand, they have capacities for it. They provide a place for discussion where individuals not crossing each other's ways in 'real' life may engage in a conversation on a topic of their mutual interest.

Yet, on the other hand, online social networks tend to unite people who already know each other. Moreover, they are to be blamed for reifying the individuals' identities in reproducing them through visual images (Flusser's two dimensions from Table 1) or even written images (one dimension). Social networks hold a strong inclination towards reducing dimensions of the Other, so that the interlocutors have to put extra effort if they want to turn an exchange of making-sense messages online into a dialogue and then to maintain it. Thus, the potential of social networks for dialogue requires effort by the participants against the 'flattening' of their images.

43 Кампер 2010c: 93.
44 Oldenburg 1989.

Another, more specific, but probably less corruptible option for the 'New Media third places' are computer games,[45] specifically the kind of games involving multiple players around the world who play in real time together within groups known as 'guilds', 'clans', etc., – MMORPGs. Game spaces in MMORPGs are co-created by their participants through acts and conversations, and, therefore, they could have an advantage over other modes of communication for recovering subjectivity (with inter-subjectivity in it) and, probably, for the dialogue. The following arguments can be drawn.

First of all, game presumes oscillating between different meaning structures (according to Huizinga, games create their own realities with special rules not applicable to common social worlds). Games keep a certain rule-based structure which enables producing new meanings and fixing them so that the subjects learn to switch between different, separate worlds of meanings.

Second, within the gaming space, masks are necessarily worn, which in this context is beneficial to both creating the public space and developing the private self. As Zizek puts it: 'Precisely because it is only a game, I can enact there an identity which is much more my true self.'[46]

The close link between the everyday and the lifeworld, as an environment for *praxis* proclaimed by M. Heidegger, finds its continuation *in everyday gaming* activities of digital media users. Through discovery of the game world players can have new, phenomenological experiences, since the rules and the creatures inhabiting these worlds are necessarily different from common everyday reality. Thus, constant players create 'another everyday' for themselves, often indulging in meaning creation online more willingly than offline.

In contrast to practices of individual internet surfing and even social network commenting, online massive multiplayer games provide an environment of real-time co-presence[47] and open-ended two-way communication. Obviously, the content of this communication can vary from the technical to the purely emotional. However, the possibility of intentional two-way communication in MMORPGs is still open.

Practice is both the starting point and final goal of the everyday. In this respect, gaming, i.e. playing computer games for several hours a day in a row, is an everyday practice for players. Besides, it involves developing an online character whose personal traits may unfold within the companies and tasks of the game. An alternative strategy is maintaining the gamer's 'true' identity online and working on it as part of the gaming character. Such online identity is still discrete; it is not a personality on its own. However, it has points of reference anchored in the social community in which it is involved. *Identification* serves as a form of synthesizing different flows of experience. Various forms of identification constitute parts of the *Self*, the socially recognised part of a personality. The Self is commonly understood as the core of personality, but it is a phantom that never really solidifies (if we follow Lacan). The act of synthesizing the flows of experience is the *subject*. But, as shown above, this synthesis is largely fed by *the big Other*, which is the source of our identities and the mirror in which to recognise our subjectivization. Through the process of identification, the self learns how to produce subjectivization and fill its void while feeding the Others' identities in return.

In the process of gaming, players exchange messages, often in an environment involving indefinite numbers of users who are somewhere on the verge of private and public contents and who may reveal parts of their 'true' identities. Within the process of gaming, players may work on certain parts of their identities in interacting with the Others in real time. Before starting to play, gamers put gaming masks on their virtual selves, and they act as players in a classic Goffman's situation of the 'frontstage'. However, the new situation is different, since both frontstage and backstage are occurring online and can be regulated, at least initially, by the user.

45 Simmel 1971: 128.
46 Сергеева 2010: 84.

47 Fiennes and Zizek 2006.

Interviews with gamers are a first-hand source of materials for inquiring what kind of environment online games provide. Gaming is considered to be a matter of personal choice. Generally, it is not a socially desirable behaviour and it could intentionally be kept secret. When setting off to talk to a gamer, one may end up interviewing acquaintances or even siblings, without having really known this side of their personalities. Gamers are a varied population group, and the analysis of even a few interviews may deliver contradictory or at least varied information.[48]

When reflecting on the everyday experience of the play, gamers admit to being either extremely interested in the process and playing – 6 hours a day on weekdays – or alternatively, they note having lost interest in the game, spending just 1 or 2 hours a day playing, or playing longer, but only at weekends.

Online games vary in settings and rules. All players have their favourites. An important feature of gaming is the interaction among playing groups such as 'guilds' consisting of up to 40 persons from around the world. Political upheavals and secessions among the guilds make up a significant part of players' attraction.

An important feature of MMORPG communities is that they do not end in the virtual world of the game. Players are involved in intensive cross-platform communication through Skype, chats, and local participants' forums, where communication is more intensive and more emotional than in social networks. Gamers also meet up offline in the cities where they live, sometimes to find new friends, but primarily for the sake of good team play and team building. However, members of the same guild do not have to know each other in person and may live in different countries. The free-floating spontaneous communication in MMORPGs, as reported by gamers, resembles the 'third places'

48 Zhao 2004.

described by Oldenburg.[49] First, gamers note in the interviews that the exchange within the game is that of equals, that their social statuses do not affect the preferences for communication. Second, age and occupation do not seem to carry much difference when selecting a role in the game. Gamers in their early 20s report that they started playing at the age of 14–16 when their families bought computers for home use. But they also admit having met players in their 40s, with family and a job, who play with them side by side.

Some of the interviewed players admit that the game develops into a habit 'worse than that of taking drugs'. Gamers attest to the fact that spending 4–6 hours a day online for them is a way of relaxation, possibly infringing on other activities – but still rewarding. What kind of communication do gamers have online?

By engaging into the 3D virtual worlds, human beings partly *regain the multidimensionality of their bodies which is usually lost online*. Acting in virtual worlds like 'The Second Life' or playing in MMORPGs requires using the voice and ear, which restores the multidimensionality of bodily experience as well (since speaking and listening is much more than a zero-dimensional point, or a one-dimensional line). However, the passive pleasure of interactivity can be so strong that a considerable proportion of players end up playing long hours daily. The engagement of the Other in a game (where the Other is constituted by many people with whom the player interacts) justifies the extra time spent online, feeding the gamer's subject. Even though the partners in the game may change during 5–6 hours, gaming is still very attractive to the individual. Heavy gamers (playing 5 hours a day or more) do not pretend that they are engaged in a socially important activity. In the interviews, they state that they do it for the sake of pleasure. However, they emphasize that gaming is their choice and that it brings to them the expected pleasure. In such a situation, this pleasure is experienced by gamers themselves;

49 In describing gamers' practices here, I refer to the interviews assembled by the students of 'New Media' course at the Belarusian State University, 2011–2013.

it comes from engagement with the Other, but it is not delegated to the Other.

Interestingly, there are no striking intergenerational differences in this process. The applicability of these arguments is not limited to the 'digital natives'[50] who grew up in the New Media environment. The degree to which personal identity is constructed online is related to the amount of *media consumption*, the *individualization* of New Media communication, but not directly to the age or gender of individuals. Some gamers acknowledge that for their friends with physical problems, playing MMORPGs boosts their well-being since they do not experience the casual discomfort in communication. Thus, the free-floating communication of MMORPGs is beneficial to those individuals who, for various reasons, suffer from inequality offline.

Along with these positive experiences, the virtuality of online games also exerts evident *negative influence on the bodily experience* of the players. The images of the best players as lonely and undernourished or, vice versa, lonely and overweight individuals, provide an argument of their own.[51] Evidently, the social environment of the player is an influential factor here, and it should be maintained as an indispensable part of personality development.

Although physical engagement in MMORPGs can be carried out with multi-dimensional physical equipment for seeing, moving and hearing, in most cases the reduced version is used, when the player sits in front of the computer. In this case, Kamper's definition of the body being an appendix to the media is, unfortunately, accurate. In contrast to the TV-set having pleasure instead of the subject, in online games the pleasure is that of the gamer. However, this is overwhelmingly the pleasure of the brain (the only feeling left in zero-dimensional space, according to Kamper), so that the rest of the body is indeed more dead than alive. In the case of MMORPGs it means that the Other is not lost (there are

50 Oldenburg 1989.
51 Hills 2009: 115; Prensky 2000: 1.

plenty real players there), but there is no full personality anymore who could develop a personal identity, only a brain with a hand, a pair of eyes and ears.

As a result, the person sitting in front of the screen, who had probably wanted to get real pleasure, may end up developing a virtual incarnation which would be having pleasure of the virtual world instead of the user's real self, sitting like a stone by the desk and clutching a gaming console in his or her hands.

Thus, the balance and dynamic of the Self, the subject, and the development of personal identity face serious obstacles in online communication. The most arguable feature of two-way online communication and MMORPGs in particular, is the opportunity to establish a dialogue and the easiness of losing the dialogical connection to the Other and indulging wholeheartedly in the alienating circle of delegating the pleasure to the 'virtual Self' or other players, both of which are the Lacanian Other, not the individual's self.

The positive side to personality construction in New Media is the opportunity to correct for the routine barriers of self-expression as experienced by people socially isolated, struggling with physical problems or having problems with self-expression. For them, MMORPGs provide an encouraging and sociable environment at some stage.

However, like any other cure, online gaming is only positive when combined with social life, family and work, and when the goal of interaction is sociability. Coming together with people, online or offline, is part of human nature and it contributes to personal well-being. Just like the artist who needs an audience, the individual is dependent on the Other for constructing his or her personal identity. As held by the media theories of Zizek and Kamper, the problem with New Media is that the subject cannot involve the whole of his/her non-verbal body in the communication whereas bodies constitute the ontological source of personal identity. As a result, New Media, when misused as a foundation for personal

identity construction, are generally unstable. Whenever New Media are used as an addition to social life, as an outlet for the work on some part of identity, they can be successful since they involve many other individuals ready for the conversation and looking for new feelings and extraordinary experience on a day-to-day basis.

Taking this into account, one could further question the functions of the various digital media in the process of constructing personal identity and the fate of intersubjectivity in the age of New Media.

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Phenomenology of
THE EVERYDAY

Novus Press

The everyday is what is closest and most familiar to everyone, and yet it tends to escape our attempts to seize it. The everyday is daily routine, but it may also open for encounters with the extraordinary. It may be perceived as both authentic and inauthentic being. This intriguing ambiguity has made the everyday one of the most vividly discussed philosophical topics.

The book includes a general introduction to the everyday in contemporary philosophy, as well as a number of specialized articles. These articles provide short presentations of important 20th and 21st century thinkers of the everyday. The pertinence of their approaches is visualised in empirical studies of the everyday and its representations in photography, film, theatre, childhood narratives and painting.

When we have assembled these articles under the title *Phenomenology of the everyday* it is both in the stricter sense of the philosophical endeavour launched by Edmund Husserl, that provides us with a guiding line rather than a strict prescript, and in the wider sense of a description of significant features of a phenomenon that concerns us all and that nobody can reject as irrelevant.

The authors of the articles are junior and senior researchers from Belarus and Norway: Espen Dahl, Darya Hirhel, Ina Nalivaika, Aliona Pazdniakova, Ellen Schrumpf, Anna Shirinova, Jan Ove Tangen and Mikkel B. Tin.

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