

Discourses of Pornification: From Civil Society to ‘Porn Society’

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Abstract: This paper examines how the concept of civil society relates to the porn/sex industry as well as to individual internet users who actively participate in e-moves aiming at exchanging pornography content and information/views on commercial sex. By describing the porn portal bourdela.com, and presenting evidence from a conducted discourse analysis on the reviews/evaluations which the commentators post, there will be an effort to apply the concept of pornification to the everyday use of on-line communities. Hence, it will be suggested that this leads to the formation of a certain kind of civil society which one can call ‘porn society’.

Keyword: Pornification, civil society, irony, postfeminism, depersonalization.

1. INTRODUCTION

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, a growth of on-line processes focusing on pornography and commercial sex, especially escorts’ services, is witnessed¹.

This 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, Virden III and Amin 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, Wasserman and Kern 2004: 76). 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).

Although, much has been written about the political economy of porn and sex industry, there is a 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 still 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

¹ For the purposes of this study, pornography is defined as “sexually explicit texts, photos, and moving images that are produced specifically for the arousal and gratification of a largely male audience” (Heider and Harp 2002: 291-2). One should also keep 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”.

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, a new dimension takes place: “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 and exchanging sexually explicit material for free, suggests a ‘democratization of pornography’². Indicative of this process is the case of bourdela.com.

2. BOURDELA.COM AS A PORN-SITE AND AS A SEX-COMMUNITY

Bourdela.com 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 catalogue of brothels, classy whores/bordellos (studios), strip bars, hotels which are designed for day visits, 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 the portal’s 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, or by the amount of money he is willing to spend. On the other hand, bourdela.com’s members can discuss and exchange views, information, opinions, photos, video clips, and hyperlinks of video files at the well-structured forum. 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.

That being so, the owners of bourdela.com have the opportunity to provide a forum where, among other things, the free exchange of pornographic material (basically by posting links to file-hosting sites) is allowed. The latter suggests 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 in sites which host only a single forum, i.e. planetsuzy.org. As a result, bourdela.com visitors can benefit from the posting of the links that lead to downloadable porn material, a specific provision which, along with the ease of navigation through the site and the above mentioned provided options, may partly interpret bourdela.com’s notable success. Actually, according to alexa.com, one of the most famous Web Information Company, bourdela.com holds the 374th place in Greece’s website traffic ranking (December 2013) - gained even the 66th place (September 2008). Today (December 2013), bourdela.com has more than 130,000 members and as far as their participation in the forum and the indexes is concerned, there are more than 4,500,000 posts/comments over 20,000 threads and almost 40,000 reviews.

All of these lead to the conclusion that bourdela.com must be analyzed both as a porn portal and as an on-line sex-community. As for the former, one should take into account Thomas and Wyatt’s (2000) contribution as it is appeared in Jacob’s (2004) work. For the latter, “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, a remarkable amount of advertisements of brothels and escorts’ agencies is noticed. It basically has 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

² 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).

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.com's income derives from the sex industry sector, the owners have the opportunity to provide, among other things, a forum where internet users can exchange of sexually explicit material and talk about all matters - including non sexual ones.

Sure enough, bourdela.com's case could be studied by reflecting on how its on-line sex-community, which is formed through the porn portal and the e-forum, can be conceptualized. In fact, this approach may focus on two levels/facets of participation. The first one would consider the selective incentives which mostly concern the members and the single visitors of the site as well. These incentives have to do with the provision of free 'pornographic goods' 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). Even though more research is needed so as to develop an analytical context of the forum's function and the dialogue's attributes³, this paper focuses only on the existence of the particular, latent on-line sex community which is methodologically included in the analytical framework of interactive social networks in general. On that account, the issue of the community's categorization as a 'civil society organization' is raised.

3. 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 important introduction to the edited volume *Real Civil Societies*. 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 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).

It is generally agreed 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, Mouzelis' methodological guidelines will be adopted. 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).

³ See, for instance, Muhlberger 2005; Muhlberger and Weber 2006.

This is what can be done by presenting the specific case of an on-line porn-community hosted by a profit-oriented website. By highlighting the mutually beneficial linkage between a market's agent and a group of internet users with collective consciousness, a certain kind of 'dark' civil society can be analytically formulated. In this context, 'porn society' is proposed 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 society as a concrete institutional order (b) has a 'dark' side. Therefore, 'porn society' is a civil society in sense (b).

4. PORNIFIED DISCOURSES

In order to shed light to the particularistic character of *bourdela.com*'s latent association, one should not only focus on the ontological dimension of an on-line sex community, but move forward and examine how the individual internet users discuss, exchange views and assess their experience of having sex with escorts. Moreover, their reviews/evaluations and forum comments are indicative of the way in which concepts such as sexualization, commodification, and objectification relate to the notion of sexual democratization and the vision of 'liberated' sex in interactive porn networks. In sum, how the notion of pornification (Paul 2005; Paasonen, Nikunen and Saarenmaa 2007) can be applied to the everyday use of specific social networks and on-line communities.

More specifically, the polysemic concept of pornification, as all key concepts in the social sciences, is also a contentious and controversial one. It has recently been brought to the fore of analysis - especially in the context of cultural and media studies - and it basically indicates the integration of discourses and discursive practices which are associated with pornography into the mainstream culture and media (McNair 1996, 2002). The, otherwise called, pornographication of the mainstream, which for some has resulted in the prevalence of the raunch culture (Levy 2005) and the hypersexualization of society (Kammeyer 2008), is related to the usually more frequently reported social phenomenon of the sexualization of culture which mainly refers to the continuously growing presence of mediated sexual representations in the public sphere (Attwood 2006, 2009).

So basically, by conducting a discourse analysis like this, there will be an effort to extend the work of some scholars and researchers, such as Ronald Weitzer (2005), who also consider that web forums and sites to post reviews on escorts provide an excellent medium for exploring the behavioural norms, justifications, and beliefs of clients of prostitutes, who are often referred to as johns (Holt and Blevins 2007) or punters (Soothill and Sanders 2005). At this point, it should be mentioned that this study was undertaken in the spirit of the methodological assumption that social scientists should try to interpret deviant phenomena rather than being too anxious to correct or change them (Soothill and Sanders 2005).

On this account, previous researches were mainly focused on what and how men write about their experiences. For example, results show that johns' texts describe specific sex acts the women were paid to perform, particularly as a way of reliving the experience; their online writings reveal that they are not all alike or looking to use women in the same way; and johns often claim they like or even love women, but write about them using mostly misogynistic and pornographic language (Hughes 2004: 123-4). In fact, some johns report very good experiences, which are mostly known as the GFE (girl-friend experience), meaning service with elements of romance and intimacy that go beyond mechanical paid sex (Weitzer 2005: 223-4), an intimate engagement which, in brief, Elizabeth Bernstein (2001: 399; 2007: 474) calls 'bounded authenticity'.

More precisely, in *bourdela.com*'s case, when referring to various types of prostitutes and sex acts, reviewers and forum posters do not use the distinctive argot that is mostly used in similar English language websites (Holt and Blevins 2007: 340). Johns' terminology, though highly alienated from time to time, does not consist of unusual terms and bizarre abbreviations, with the exception of PSE (porn-star experience), meaning a surprisingly satisfying experience of passionate and wild sex that exceeds johns' expectations. Needless to say, those who stress that the 'reconfiguration of erotic life' (Bernstein, 2001: 397) in light of porn, or the social construction of sexuality through pornography, is an irreversible trend, could use the PSE as evidence.

Even though a quantitative study could be conducted, a qualitative one was preferred due to the extensiveness of the dialogue which takes place in *bourdela.com*⁴. On that ground, the use of critical discourse analysis as methodological tool could give the opportunity to study the often opaque/latent relationships of causality and determination between discursive practices and texts on the one hand, and wider social and cultural structures and processes on the other, so as to explore how the opacity/latency of these relationships between discourse and society is itself an empowering factor - a factor securing power (Fairclough 1995: 132-3).

Hence, evidence from this analysis suggests that ‘beside and beyond’ the formulated ‘ideal mode of we-ness’ which is based on the particularistic value of a shared sex taste and aesthetic, and is cultivated in a hedonistic, consumerist context that democratizes access to goods, there is a tendency to objectify and depersonalize women overall in view of the sex workers’ ‘sincerity of intentions’. In other words, johns highly appreciate the contractarian fashion in which their dealings with the escorts take place. They contrast this with the non authentic forms of interpersonal exchange which, according to them, primarily happens with young women in Greece nowadays who are not engaged in commercial sex.

Above all, scepticism comes from the fact that the previously mentioned johns’ perception of escorts is not an isolated view of the women working in the sex market, but a standpoint formed dialectically in relation to the specific group of young women in Greece nowadays who are, unreflexively and indiscriminately, referred as *ελεηνίδες*, a word fusion of *ελληνίδες* (greek women) and *ελεεινός* (disgraceful). Suggesting is the almost 60,000 posts/comments, read almost 900,000 times (December 2013) thread “What’s up with these *ελεηνίδες*?”, where the first comment (4/2/2008) introduces the members to the spirit of the discussion: “Following multiple discussions in various threads, there has been mentions many times of the race that bears the name *ελεηνίδες*!!!! I invite you to deposit personal experience with these, bitter disappointments, but also great memories!!! Whoever dares from us!!!!” (my translation).

Through this thread johns express in a glaringly mocking, contemptuous and sarcastic way their stable, immutable opinions as far as greek women’s behaviour is concerned. For the most part, they insultingly and sarcastically accuse greek young women of caring nothing more than securing a wealthy life through their choices in personal life and trying to combine it with an intense sexual life which is monologically and unambiguously linked with having sex with well-endowed men. Derisive humour becomes johns’ expressive way to reveal their thoughts about the latter. In other words, by withdrawing particular cases from the limelight and their personal experiences with them they constantly relate, in a scornful fashion, all women’s behaviour with commercial sex’s logic of economic interest and pornography’s aesthetic of actresses’ insatiability of big penis. So, in a sense, it is kind of apparent to stress the objectifying, antifeminist nature of johns’ hip oriented agreement on this issue. But the fact that the individual forum participants adopted this kind of discourse to comment on women’s stands might be indicative of the ways in which irony, in general, is embraced as a certain element of the pornographication of the mainstream. At that rate, some initial thoughts about this can be said.

5. IRONY, POSTFEMINISM AND DEPERSONALIZATION

Irony, as particularly described by Hutcheon (1994), is a complex concept which, because of “its semantic and syntactic dimensions, cannot be considered separately from the social, historical and cultural aspects of its contexts of deployment and attribution” (1994: 17). The latter means that the discursive aspects of irony indicate an open interpretation process which is basically attributed in the eye of the beholder (Hutcheon 1994: 111-8; Phiddian 1995). Thus, on the one hand there is the strategy of ironic redeployment which gives the opportunity through the ‘restaging and resignifying’ of meanings to parody the hurtful discourses in order to target every hate speech, but on the other hand irony may well serve the purpose of distancing from commitment or engagement (Hull 2003: 524, 530). This being so, the establishment of a safe distance from

⁴ Certainly, and despite the fact that previous attempts were descriptive in nature (Soothill and Sanders 2005; Holt and Blevins 2007; Castle and Lee 2008), along with the new opportunities for research come moral, epistemological and methodological dilemmas for the researchers. For example, as Soothill and Sanders (2005) stress, there are certain considerations in terms of conducting ethnographic research in an environment that is neither tangible nor accountable. What also seems to be at the heart of this debate is what material is considered public and what is considered private. Moreover, because johns usually try to present themselves positively, there is a chance that imagination or exaggeration runs through their reviews. Therefore, certain doubts about how reflexive are johns’ reviews and comments are raised.

anything that seems to be ‘uncool’ and the ‘doesn’t mean what you think it means’ perspective of irony⁵, despite its liberating potential, function through the very extremeness of the sexism as evidence that there is no sexism (Gill 2007: 159-60), as well as through the unsettling of the codes of pornography (McRobbie 2004). It is precisely in this sense that irony becomes “a way of ‘having it both ways’, of expressing sexist, homophobic or otherwise unpalatable sentiments in an ironized form, while claiming this was not actually ‘meant’” (Gill 2007: 159).

Furthermore, one should also stress that irony, as Hutcheon (1994: 17) puts it, “happens because what could be called ‘discursive communities’ already exist and provide the context for both the deployment and attribution of irony” in conjunction with the exclusion of those who don’t get the ironic intentions. According to Epley (2007: 54), such a discursive community which is characterized by its ironic embrace is the hipsters’ one⁶. The latter, by articulating no-collar labour practices to cultural practices of taste, place their culture above and apart from the mainstream (Epley 2007: 52-3). The key point here of this latent community which depends on irony is the different consumption practices. Hipsters consume commodities and media texts in an ironic orientation so as to be free to choose whatever they want but at the same time still holding on to their values (Epley 2007: 53-5). It is at this point that the ‘I know it is sexist and because I know, I can enjoy’ hipsters’ logic (Epley 2007: 55) matches perfectly with the rhetoric of autonomy which is cultivated through postfeminist media culture. As a result, some first round thoughts on how the postfeminist orientated irony may well be associated with hipster oriented sexism can be raised.

For Gill, “postfeminism is best understood as a distinctive sensibility, made up of a number of interrelated themes. These include the notion that femininity is a bodily property; the shift from objectification to subjectification; an emphasis upon self surveillance, monitoring and self discipline; a focus on individualism, choice and empowerment; the dominance of a makeover paradigm; and a resurgence of ideas about natural sexual difference” (2007: 147). Contemporary media culture should be characterized as postfeminist due to the entanglement of feminist and anti feminist ideas (Gill 2007: 161). To stress this, she invokes McRobbie’s idea of the ‘double entanglement’ which on the one hand refers to “the co-existence of neo-conservative values in relation to gender, sexuality and family life [...] with processes of liberalisation in regard to choice and diversity in domestic, sexual and kinship relations”, and on the other hand “encompasses the co-existence of feminism as at some level transformed into a form of Gramscian common sense, while also fiercely repudiated, indeed almost hated” (2006: 60).

Having all these in mind, one can easily understand that the issues which are raised here have to do with the ability of the ‘hipster johns’ to express sexist and anti-feminist claims under the guise of irony in a postfeminist environment which legitimizes the former on the basis of a partial acceptance of feminist ideas and a discourse of individuation, freedom to choose and self-empowerment. In this sense, it is fair to say that besides the liberating aspects of humour and irony, one should bear in mind that the, latent or not, expressions of pornifying, anti-feminist, objectifying stands lead, somewhat, to the construction of hostile to women societies. So this is where issues such as pornification, objectification and the social construction of the new femininity in western societies are raised.

In order to face these issues, one should recall Rosalind Gill (2003; 2009) and Feona Attwood’s (2006) work. For the latter, the ‘new woman’ figure of the autonomous, active, assertive subject has become the dominant figure representing young women (Attwood 2006: 86; Gill 2003: 105). Furthermore, parallel to the construction of the neo-liberal feminine subject where sex is stylish, a means of creating identity, and a quest for individual fulfilment (Attwood 2006: 86), we are witnessing, as Gill argues, a shift from sexual objectification to ‘sexual subjectification’ (2003: 103), which must be understood as

⁵ From this perspective, irony matches perfectly with the way that the famous philosopher Slavoj Žižek (1989) redefines the original approach of Peter Sloterdijk (1983), according to which cynicism when one does not to believe in something, but she behaves as if she believes in it. People in late modernity behave in this manner, with a cynical attitude, particularly as a syndrome, which affects their perception of their own world. The cumulative effect of this practice is the overall legalization of the existing social, political and cultural systems through this pervasive distrust. For the more critical approaches, this encourages social apathy, the deconstruction of public sphere and the prevalence of a culture of lack of substantial public dialogue and civility. In other words, it means the prevalence of an individualistic and confrontational culture which, ultimately, promotes the dimensions of social alienation.

⁶ For the most part, as hipsters is referred a subculture of young, urban middle class adults and older teenagers with special musical interests mainly in alternative rock that appeared in the 1990s and is characterized by its tendency to criticise the mainstream culture (Haddow 2008).

pleasurable and self-chosen (2009: 107). From this point of view, sexual objectification can be presented as freely chosen wish of female agents who can somehow choose to use beauty and sex to construct, in Anthony Giddens' (1994) terms, their biography.

However, even if this 'sexual subjectification' appears to be the result of 'rational actors' will', johns' distinction should still be rejected as profoundly objectifying, though non-essentialist - or better quasi-essentialist - since its sweeping claims refer at first place to the conduct of the majority of young greek women. More specifically, johns appear not to question gender equality. They make a distinction between young women nowadays in Greece and older women. According to the majority of johns, where the latter proved able to manage a balance between their sex and social life, the former find difficulties in pursuing a way of life that could combine intense sexual life and the safety of a, permanent or no not, relationship with a rich man. Therefore, it would be misleading, in a sense, to adopt, in aprioristic fashion, a universalistic and categorical reasoning that johns depersonalize women only on the basis of exercising power due to sex/gender differences. What seems to mediate women's depersonalization in the bourdela.com' case is the presumably sexist, anti-feminist social construction of the new femininity in Greece. In other words, the social construction of a society with androcratic elements seems to reflect better the social reality in which johns express their opinions rather an essentialist situation of patriarchal values which overbear a society.

Additionally, one could also claim or assume that this depersonalization is, in all probability, a defence mechanism since many johns imply, and often state clearly, that they face great difficulties in competing men more rich and well-endowed. They take as granted that greek young women prefer to date only with rich men or with men that their physical sexual skills are reduced to the existence of a big phallus. So by accusingly judging them of sluttish behaviours and ironically highlighting young women's monological persistence on affluent life and big penis they try to justify their antifeminist stances, rather than seek ways to reflexively overturn the current alienating social reality of consumerism and sexism. It could be said then, in other words, that johns face serious difficulties in deconstructing a reification of the 'man with big dick' and the 'man with lots of money'.

6. CONCLUSION: CONTEXTUALIZING 'PORN SOCIETY'

Bourdela.com is a porn-portal in which the collaboration between a profit-oriented website and an on-line sex-community is witnessed. The term 'collaboration' is used so as to emphasize the mutual 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 an 'unconventional' company such as bourdela.com, nor web's political economy in general, is the most noteworthy issue. The most significant part is the formation of the 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' the facet of pornification which refers to discourses and/or associations which are primarily non-state, non-market, and sexually explicit oriented.

Moreover, beyond the conceptualization of such e-forums and e-moves, there is a 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 analyses about the weak or underdeveloped - for various historical reasons - character of greek civil society (Mouzelis 1986; Sotiropoulos and Karamagioli 2006) are added, then there might be a partial explanation why bourdela.com is probably one of the most 'unaffectedly vivid' on-line communities in Greece. As far as the objectifying character of such e-moves is concerned, one could generally point out that while the concept of objectification can be used in an essentialist manner, as a pre-constituted anti-feminist reality, it can also be used in a non-essentialist manner, as symbolically constructed by both the first-order discourses of those directly involved in commercial sex (johns, escorts, etc.) and by the second order discourse of intellectuals, feminists, opinion leaders, policy makers, public dialogue participants, internet users etc. - in proportional manner to the concept of economic interest (Mouzelis 2008: 30).

Therefore, besides the extraordinary dimension of bourdela.com's on-line community, it would be quite interesting to explore in the future 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 [and commercial sex] 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". Hence, one could say that in a country where such social movements are practically weak to oppose to the pornification culture, 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 this sense, the problem is not solely the formation of particular 'porn societies', but the development of 'societies of porn'.

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