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The link between social capital and representation in cyberspace

Abstract

The paper argues that social capital presents one of the most attractive concepts exploited in public discourse in the late 20th and early 21st centuries, treated by sociology as a social resource that aids or obstructs individuals' access to other resources - economic, natural, social and political ones. Bearing in mind that communication and connection between people is increasingly moving from physical to virtual space, thanks to the advancement and development of technology, in this paper we examine the connection between social capital and the representation in the cyberspace, that is, the connection between social capital and online identity. The question is whether virtual connection with others has the same power of connection that is realised in face-to-face communication and that occurs in real world, and to what extent Internet interaction affects social capital. The paper also examines whether online interaction is a kind of up-graded face-to-face interaction, rather than its replacement, as well as whether persons active in offline world are equally active in online world of communication.

Key words: *social capital, Internet, social networks, sociality, cyber space.*

Introduction

Nowadays, social networking services have become so influential that it can be said that communication has largely shifted from real world to virtual one. Danah M. Boyd and Nicole B. Ellison define social networks as web services that allow individuals to: (1) “construct public or semi-public profiles

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within a restricted system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they are connected *online*, and (3) review their list of connections and those made by others within their systems.² “With this in mind, social network users are often in situation where the services suggest friends to them. In that way, the friends of our friends very simply become our friends too, based on what we are interested in or have shown we like. In that way, the software identifies and invites us to follow the same or similar users and events. It is believed that there are hundreds of such services and is among the most famous there are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Myspace, YouTube, Skype, Viber, LinkedIn, Cyworld.

The first social networking services appeared in the 1990s. Bearing in mind that the use of the services is very simple and does not require a great deal of IT knowledge, so-called *online* communication attracts a large number of users of different ages, even though the young represent the population that mostly uses the Internet as a means of communication, information and entertainment. In order to access one of the services, it is necessary to open a profile to present oneself to the service. Each service has its own rules according to which it works, but a common principle of functioning can still be drawn - a social service user finds users in virtual space whom he/she starts following or sends a friendship request to and as soon as that person accepts the request they become virtual friends. “Their choice is made on the basis of previous acquaintance from *offline* life, but also by making contacts, on various grounds, between persons who have never met before.”³ Thus, like networking in real life, also in virtual space, individuals or groups network to pursue different interests. Therefore, it is clear that social networks exist in virtual space, as a new type of space, other than urban (physical) space. Networking in virtual space is much more comprehensive than that realised in physical (urban) space, because, thanks to modern technologies, it is easier to be present in every part of the planet today, and the world is becoming, as many theorists have estimated, a “global village”.

When it comes to social capital, it is important to emphasise that it is one of the most attractive concepts exploited in public discourse in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. In sociology, social capital is primarily defined as a normative concept that facilitates collective action through a system of norms and networks. Sociology regards social capital as a social resource that supports or obstructs individuals’ access to other resources - economic, natural,

² Boyd, Danah M. and Nicole B. Ellison, “Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship”. In: *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. Vol. 13, no. 1. 2007. p. 211.

³ Boyd, Danah M. and Nicole B. Ellison, “Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship”. In: *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. Vol. 13, no. 1. 2007. p. 211.

cultural and social. When it comes to the term social capital, Patnam means social networks, norms and trust that enable participants to act more effectively to achieve common goals.⁴ Coleman believes that social capital is “defined by its functions”⁵, and this concept exists to achieve certain goals, which otherwise would not be possible to be achieved equally without social capital. Social capital can be defined as a set of informal values or norms that exist among the members of a group that allows co-operation between its members⁶. Social capital can be briefly defined as stakeholder networking, i.e., “investing in social relations with a view to reap benefits.”⁷ Wayne E. Baker views social capital as a resource derived from specific social structures and used to pursue specific interests. He considers that social capital “is made and created due to the changes in the interrelationship of multiple actors”.⁸

In this paper we raise the question: does virtual connection between people have the power of connection that is realised in face-to-face communication and that occurs in “real world”, that is, urban (physical) space? The answer to this question will also give us the answer to the question of whether social capital has equal power in both virtual and real worlds. John Field points out that *online* interaction is so widespread that we cannot dismiss the possibility of its great influence on social capital⁹. On the other hand, cyberspace offers new opportunities for creating communities based on shared interests and preferences, not the coincidence of spatial distribution.¹⁰ Thus, we are talking about two types of space where communication and interaction of people in the 21st century take place: cyber space and urban space.

⁴ Patnam, D. Robert, *Kuglati sam, slom i obnova američke zajednice (Bowling Alone, The Rise and Fall of American Community)*. Novi Sad: MediTerran Publishing. 2008, pp.20-21.

⁵ Coleman, S. James, *Foundations of Social Theory*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. 1990, p. 302.

⁶ Fukuyama, Francis, “Social capital and the modern capitalist economy: Creating a high trust workplace”. In: *Stern Business Magazine*. Vol. 4, No. 1, 1997.

⁷ Nan Lin, *Social Capital. A Theory of Social Structure and Action*. Cambridge: University Press. 2001. p.19

⁸ Baker E. Wayne, “Market Networks and Corporate Behaviour”. In: *American Journal of Sociology*. Vol. 96, no. 3, pp. 589-625. 1990. p. 619.

⁹ Field, J, *Social Capital*. London and New York: Routledge. 2008. p. 119.

¹⁰ Kevin Robins, “Kiberprostor i svijet u kojemu živimo” (*Cyberspace and the World We Live in*). in: Featherstone, M., Burrows, R.(ur.) *Kiberprostor, kibertijela i cyberpunk: Kulture tehnološke tjelesnosti. (Cyberspace, Cyberbodies and Cyberpunk: Cultures of Technological Corporeality)*. Zagreb: Naklada Jesenski i Turk. 2001. p. 213.

The role of virtual social networks in establishing interpersonal relationships

In modern society, social relationships are transformed from those built in real (urban and rural) communities to relationships built in virtual (cyber) space and virtual communities. "The Internet is changing the contours of our daily lives - deleting the boundaries between the global and the local, creating new channels of communication and interaction... Although it provides exciting new experiences in exploring the world, the Internet is threatening to change human relationships at the same time."¹¹ Talking about the impact of the Internet on human interaction, Giddens (Anthony Giddens) points out the existence of two opposing sides. On one side, there are those who believe that the Internet enables the creation of new electronic relationships that substantially enhance existing real-world relationships achieved through face-to-face interaction. Proponents of this mindset essentially believe that the Internet is expanding and enriching social networks among people. The Internet can primarily affect distance and separation, because it allows these two issues to be resolved and overcome. The Internet also allows for new types of relationships: „anonymous“ online users can meet in chat rooms and discuss common interests. Contacts in cyberspace sometimes evolve into true electronic friendships or even into live meetings.¹² Mark Buchanan believes that the Internet and the World Wide Web that evolved from it are among the most impressive achievements of our civilisation and represent a turning point in the history of society. "In order to build a small world, you need only a few connections between distant points or distinctly connected hubs."¹³ Buchanan points out that in the real world, people are by no means randomly connected, but the grouping of social ties always takes place systematically. "As social beings, we are a part of the neighbourhood, businesses, schools, villages and professions. Through my work, I know colleagues and they know not only me but each other ... The point is that people are not randomly connected all over the world,"¹⁴ but belong to some virtual groups, communities and networks. Thus, the authors who emphasise the positive side of the Internet's impact on human communication, interaction and association take into account the number of participants, the breadth of the network of connections, and the frequency of stay and activity on the web.

¹¹ Giddens, A., *Sociology*. Belgrade: The Faculty of Economics, 2003. p. 474.

¹² Idem, p. 475.

¹³ Buchanan, M, *Neksus: Društvene mreže i teorija malog sveta*. (Social Networks and a Small World Theory) Smederevo: Heliks. 2010. p. 212.

¹⁴ Idem, p. 27.

However, there are some authors who, when mentioning the impact of the Internet, highlight its negative effects, such as the increasing social isolation and automation of individuals¹⁵. Others find that the Internet reduces face-to-face communication, further distancing people from one another¹⁶, or that the Internet completely changes the way people interact and join one another, causing difficult adjustments to particular categories of people¹⁷. Also, there is an attitude of the author that the Internet introduces technics and technology as mediators of interaction, which reduces the immediacy, freedom and direct participation in interaction and co-operation between people.¹⁸ The advocates of the negative effects of the Internet have in mind direct communication (face-to-face), fear of changing the organisation of groups and communities, and the concern about excluding certain categories of population from new forms of communication and interaction.

In the transfer of relationships, the Internet plays a key role in the interpersonal networking of individualised individuals. Petrović and Tomić-Petrović point out that the Internet, as a means of interpersonal communication, has two basic functions: transmission and procreative one. "When it comes to the transmission function, then the Internet is understood as a technological channel for mediating targeted distance communication between predetermined interaction entities. On the other hand, when it performs its procreative function, the Internet goes beyond the role of a channel for mediating communication and transforms into virtual space for social interaction.¹⁹ "The Internet is the means by which broad intergroup bonds and intergroup relationships are developed, which contribute to the creation of social capital.²⁰ Forums are the best example of making new connections and interaction between people, as participants have the opportunity to easily and quickly find information that interests them or to share their opinions on different topics with other users.²¹

¹⁵ Giddens, A., *Sociology*. Belgrade: The Faculty of Economics, 2003. p. 475.

¹⁶ Barlow, J. P., Birkets, S., Kelly, K., & Slouka, M. "What are we doing online?" *Harper's*, August, 1995. pp. 35-46.

¹⁷ Kevin Johnston, Maureen Tanner, Nishant Lalla and Dori Kawalski, "Social capital: The benefit of Facebook "friends" *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 32(1), 2013. pp. 24-36.

¹⁸ Chad Petersen, Johnston Kevin A., "The Impact of Social Media Usage on the Cognitive Social Capital of University Students". *Informing Science: the International Journal of an Emerging Transdiscipline*, Annual 2015.

¹⁹ Dalibor Petrović and Nataša Tomić-Petrović, „Internet u funkciji kreiranja društvenog kapitala njegovih korisnika“ (Internet in the function of creating social capital of its users) XXX Symposium on new technologies in postal and telecommunication traffic. pp. 87–96. Belgrade: PostTel. 2012.

²⁰ Lelia Green, *The Internet: An Introduction to New Media*. New York: Berg. 2010.

²¹ Mark Poster. *What's the Matter with the Internet?* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 2001.

Thus, with the appearance of the Internet, social relationships are transformed, they are increasingly focussed on an individual, and thus new forms of sociality are becoming more individualised. Zygmunt Bauman calls these new forms of sociability “general privatisation of life,” referring to “fluid life” and “fluid modernity.”²² Time and space are one of the most significant dimensions of virtual society and play a significant role in establishing interpersonal relationships. The development of technology has influenced these dimensions the most. Thanks to the Internet, transportation in space and time is very efficient. Jonas Larsen and John Urry believe that time-space compression allows a large number of long-distance connections to be maintained, including close relationships.²³ Kastels speaks of a networked society, exclusively as a global one, based on the power of communication and technological development, all of which enable the triumph of networked individualism. “Technology is an integral part of the economy, society and culture. It is derived from and serves them, although not everywhere and in the same way to everyone.”²⁴ Influenced by new media and communication technologies, information networks lead, according to Kastels, to the emergence of a new culture that is “timeless” because it rests on “timeless time.” Kastels meant here a time that has no limit, a time that is not measured, that is constantly “filled”, in which there is no pressure of its flow.

Jan Van Dijk thinks that time in the “Internet society” is becoming more and more important, and it is gaining a whole new meaning, and in some situations, the essential, existential one. Dijk believes that “virtual social communities” present associations of people who are not bound by time, place, physical and material circumstances, and they appear in an electronic environment through mediated communication. On the other hand, “organic communities” are bound by time, place, and arise in the natural environment through physical contact and face-to-face communication.²⁵ Virtual social communities are “loose bonds of people that can break up at any moment. For example, leaving a group on the Internet is very simple and difficult to notice.”²⁶ Dijk believes that members of the virtual community are usually bound by a common interest, while in everything else they are almost com-

²² Zygmunt Bauman, *Fluidni život (Fluid Life)*. Novi Sad: Mediterran Publishing, 2009. p. 10.

²³ Jonas Larsen and John Urry, „Networking in Mobile Societies“. In: *Mobility and Place Enacting Northern European Peripheries*. pp. 89-101. London: Ashgate Publishing Ltd., 2008.

²⁴ Manuel Kastels, *Informacijsko doba: Ekonomija, društvo i kultura Uspon umreženog društva. (Information Age: Economics, Society and Culture; A Rise of Networked Society)* Zagreb: Golden marketing, 2000. p. 16.

²⁵ Jan Van Dijk, “You have one identity’: performing the self on Facebook and LinkedIn”. In: *Media, Culture & Society*, 35(2) 199-215. 2013.

²⁶ Idem, p. 166.

pletely different. Wood and Smith²⁷ point out that mutual interest is a key link between the members of the online community. They do not always share common values, but are connected by mutual influence. Members of the virtual community have no common geographical space, no face-to-face communication, no joint meetings, yet communicate and establish interaction that leads to information sharing, commerce, provision of various services based on shared understanding and connections in cyberspace.²⁸ The basis of the virtual community is “constant communication”.²⁹ Virtual communities give people a sense of inclusion and belonging, especially among those who seek out like-minded individuals without being tied to the same physical and geographical space. Thus, in virtual communities, the emphasis is on the quality of the community rather than the proximity and face-to-face relationship.³⁰

Thus, the Internet is changing the traditional patterns of sociability and bringing about a new form of networking, relationships, lifestyles, all of which carry with it the fear that individuals will increasingly live in their isolated antisocial electronic worlds that will have less and less contact with reality. Thus, the question of whether the Internet, as a space for social interaction, helps maintain existing relationships and networks that were created and developed in the real world, or threatens to disrupt these relationships, fragment individuals and establish dominance of electronic relationships, remains open to this question, because it is difficult to offer a rounded and complete answer. It seems as if every society, community, group or individual can have their own experience and offer their own answer, which according to the influence of the Internet can be both positive or negative, depending on the general social circumstances that dominate a given society and relationships, and, after all, on each individual's personal approach to new social flows.

However, cyber communication has its advantages that cannot be ignored, which are primarily reflected in the speed of establishing interpersonal relationships, as well as breaking down geographical barriers. As the Internet and social networks evolved, so did their role in society in establishing relationships. Thus, the Internet was a place where different information, leisure and communication space could be obtained in a very fast and easy

²⁷ Andrew F. Wood, Matthew J. Smith, *Online Communication: Linking Technology, Identity, and Culture*, Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2005. (Questia.com).

²⁸ Idem, p. 123.

²⁹ Howard Rheingold, *The virtual community: Homesteading on the electronic frontier*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley. 1993.

³⁰ John Fernback, “There is a there there: Notes toward a definition of cybercommunity”. In S. Jones (Ed.), *Doing Internet research: Critical issues and methods for examining the net* (pp. 203–220). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 1999.

way, and today it is more and more often a place where all these needs can be met, including existential ones, because there are more and more ones who work online today, make money and provide material livelihoods. It seems that the critics were not so loud when the factories where millions of people went out to make money and provide livelihoods, and traditional forms of sociability back then were taking its new shape. All the major inventions that changed the world brought about a great change during the time they were made, starting with a wheel, a printing press, internal combustion engine, nuclear energy, television and the Internet. The Internet is a specific invention that immediately after its appearance made it clear that many things will no longer be the same. With its appearance, everything gets an *e-dimension*, so on the Internet we can communicate, have fun, travel, work, be cured and educated. In analysing and researching the impact of the Internet, the idealisation of any party should be avoided because the virtual community is not an evil that will destroy the sense of association, which should be blamed for identity fluidity, nor is the organic community ideally free from experiencing any change.

The influence of the Internet on social capital

Communication and connectivity between people is increasingly moving from the physical (urban) to the virtual space, all thanks to the advancement and development of technology, so that billions of people are active on social networking services every day. There are different reasons why individuals use social networks, but each of these reasons has the effect of increasing social capital. Ellison believes that the more connections social network users make, the more social capital they accumulate.³¹ With this in mind, it is clear that social capital is produced on the Internet and online, which, it can be said, corresponds to real social capital in its form, but its essence is somewhat different. There are three views in the literature about the role of the Internet in the formation of social networks: the first speaks of the Internet forming and further developing social capital by transforming existing (urban) into virtual social capital³²; the second view is that the Internet reduces social cap-

³¹ Nicole B. Ellison, Charles Steinfieldand, Cliff Lampe, "The Benefits of Facebook 'Friends': Social Capital and College Students' Use of Online Social Network Sites". In: *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*. Vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 1143-1168. 2007.

³² Javier Mignone, Henley, Heather, "Impact of Information and Communication Technology on Social Capital in Aboriginal Communities in Canada". *Journal of Information, Information Technology, and Organizations*. Vol. 4. 2009. P. 127-143; Blanchard, A. "Dispersed virtual communities and face-to-face social capital". In M. Huysman & V. Wulf (Eds.), *Social capital and*

ital by separating people from family and friends through the challenges of entertainment, information and games³³; the third view is that the Internet is a complement to social capital by adding a new form of communication, which expands the space of relationships and contacts between people³⁴. In this paper we stand for the first position, i.e. that the Internet is developing, transforming and expanding social capital, i.e., developing a new type of social capital, which can be named *virtual social capital*.

If we consider social capital as a social resource based on specific social values that facilitates the access of individuals, groups and organisations to other social or economic resources, virtual social capital, in its form, corresponds to real social capital. However, given that it is created in virtual space, because of that spatial dimension, its essence is however different, because it manifests itself in a different way. With virtual capital, the most important issue is its manifestation, because the specificity is what happens in virtual space. If we get in touch with someone in virtual space, we are members of some *online* groups, we sign an *online* petition, we collect help for a sick person, all this can be experienced in real space. Virtual social capital is used as a resource to develop real social capital. Social capital is convertible with other types of capital, so trust, connections, contacts, solidarity can be successfully converted into profit making, that is, economic capital. Thus, the accumulation of social capital in virtual space is increasingly used for its transformation into economic capital, and a real example of this are *influencers*.³⁵

Who are influencers? These are people who are influential, affirmed and have built a personal brand. These can be famous musicians, actors, athletes and many other celebrities in their industry, but an influencer can also be someone who has successfully profiled themselves on social networks (YouTubers, bloggers), gained a large number of followers and thus became influential. Thus, influencers use their profile on one of the social networks (most

information technology. Cambridge: The MIT Press. 2004.; Jolynne Bachelor, Bolton, Kristin Whitehill et, al. "Computer Utilization, Social Capital and Basic Social Service Accessibility in Central America". *The Innovation Journal*. Vol. 17. Issue 3, 2012.

³³ Marleen Huysman; Volker Wulf, *Social capital and information technology*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2004.; Ye, Qiang; Fang, Bin; He, Wei; Hsieh, J. J. Po-An. "Can Social Capital Be Transferred Cross the Boundary of the Real and Virtual Worlds? an Empirical Investigation of Twitter?". *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*. Vol. 13. Issue 2. 2012.

³⁴ Wenhong Chen, Jeffrey Boase, and Barry Wellman. *The global villagers: comparing internet users and uses around the world*, University of Toronto: Department of Sociology, 2002. (Google Scholar); Petersen, Chad; Johnston, Kevin A. "The Impact of Social Media Usage on the Cognitive Social Capital of University Students". *Informing Science: the International Journal of an Emerging Transdiscipline*, Annual 2015.

³⁵ Eng. *influencers*. These people are also called *social media influencers* in English, i.e. *influencers through social networks*.

often it is Instagram) to advertise a particular product, place, and the like, and earn huge sums of money in that way. The impact of this type of advertising has been recognised by many, and more often they use this type of advertising to present their products than a classic advertisement, such as television commercials, hoardings advertising, and the like. Dijk also talks about this, stating that celebrities can monetise their online connections and turn social capital into economic one. For example, Madonna, by advertising a particular manufacturer's shoes on one of the social networks, receives some compensation from the company that makes the shoes.³⁶

Bearing in mind that the Internet is the new medium of communication and socialisation, one important question arises here - how can Internet users increase their social capital by investing in *online* activities? Thierry Penard and Nicolas Poussing sought answers to this question. Building on Mark Granovetter's discourse on strengths and weaknesses³⁷, they distinguished between two types of Internet activities (1) the use of the Internet to maintain existing social networks with close friends and family (*strong-tie investments*); and (2) the Internet for the purpose of maintaining connections with acquaintances and forging new connections with virtual acquaintances (*weak-tie investments*)³⁸. On this basis, they assumed that there were two types of *online* investment in social capital - investment aimed at maintaining social capital and investing with the aim of creating a new one.³⁹ They also tested their assumptions through research and came to the conclusion that social interaction via the Internet is a kind of face-to-face interaction upgrade, not a substitute for it.⁴⁰ These authors have come to the conclusion that people who are active in the *offline* world are also active in the *online* world of communication and socialisation. This is how people with high social capital in real life use the Internet to further accumulate it.

Without disputing the impact that virtual organising, networking and interaction can have, we will again refer to our thesis that capitalisation of virtu-

³⁶ Dijk, Jan Van, "You have one identity": performing the self on Facebook and LinkedIn". In: *Media, Culture & Society*, 35(2) 199-215. 2013.

³⁷ Granovetter distinguishes between strong and weak relationships, and is known for the discourse that weak relationships are more beneficial to an individual than strong relationships. His discourse on the power of weak ties is based on the view that acquaintances, who are actually bearers of weak ties, connect individuals with other social circles much more effectively and successfully than can be done by family, relatives or close friends, moving in the same or very similar circles (Granovetter, Mark, *Getting a Job: A Study of Contacts and Careers*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.1985).

³⁸ Thierry Penard and Poussing, Nicolas, „Internet Use and Social Capital: The Strength of Virtual Ties“. *Journal of Economic Issues*, 44(3): 1-30. 2014.

³⁹ Idem, p. 6.

⁴⁰ Idem, pp, 17-19.

al social capital is possible through its conversion into real social capital, with the remark that this boundary of virtual and real is already slowly disappearing. Namely, in order to get into an emotional relationship with someone, we need to log off first; if we want to have coffee with a new friend we have met on the Internet, we also need to log off. If we want to be actively involved in solving a community problem, we also need to disconnect and activate in the real world. However, today, more and more coffee parties are organised on Skype or Viber, so the content remains the same, and the relationships are getting a new - virtual form. Therefore, virtual social capital is something that undoubtedly exists. It can experience its application by converting to real social capital, but also exist in virtual space, as the boundaries of the virtual and the real are increasingly flexible. Thus, like virtual networks that extend their domain, virtual social capital also becomes “real” in another context.

Conclusion

The impact of the Internet is not to be viewed in a positive-negative relation, but to be viewed in the light of the changes it has made when it comes to interpersonal relationships. It can be debated whether the Internet leads to social isolation and exclusion, whether it is dominant in the function of connecting people, or, nevertheless, its mediating role is crucial, because these are the changes that the Internet has brought. The Internet is a channel that enables establishing new social relations, long-distance quick relationships over the net, but also maintaining close bonds. In this way, broad inter-group bonds and inter-group relationships are created, which contribute to the accumulation of social capital. Virtual social capital in its form corresponds to real social capital, but bearing in mind that it is created in virtual space, this spatial dimension makes its essence different, because it manifests itself in a different way.

While we understand social capital as a social resource based on specific social values that facilitates the access of individuals or groups to other social or economic resources, with virtual capital the key issue is its manifestation, because specificity is what happens in virtual space. Thus, in virtual space, one can get in touch, be a member of a group, sign an online petition, all of which can be experienced in real space, so that virtual social capital is used as a resource to develop real social capital. Thus, it is concluded that virtual capital can be applied by its conversion to real social capital, but also in virtual space, because the boundaries of virtual and real are becoming more flexible. Like virtual networks that extend their domain, virtual social capital becomes “real” in another context.

Bearing in mind that social capital is not wasted by its use, on the contrary, the more we use it, the more it accumulates, this type of capital needs to be constantly renewed and invested in, in order for it not to lose its efficiency. If we do not use the connections and resources of social capital, there is a real possibility of losing them. Social capital is a public good that serves both those who make the effort to build networks, connections and trust, and the wider community in which they operate, whether it is a real or virtual community. As we have already concluded in the paper, the Internet communication and socialisation have expanded so much and become a part of everyday life to millions of people across the globe, thus it is difficult to imagine that it has no significant impact on social capital. Whatever the motives for using the Internet and social networks are, one thing is for sure - the connections that are made in this interaction are certainly used to increase social capital, no matter how much the Internet can automatise individuals and reduce the time spent in social activities in a real environment. It is confirmed that those who are active and rich in social capital in the organic community are also transferring it to cyber space, thus the Internet and social networks serve to further accumulate social capital.

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