

# THE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION OF VIOLENCE IN CONTEMPORARY CAPITALISM

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## Abstract

This article analyzes the problem of violence in contemporary capitalism. Slavoj Žižek defines violence as a complex phenomenon functioning both on institutional and subjective levels. Žižek states that almost all contemporary social life is permeated by violence at some point or another and bases his conclusions on the critique of capitalism and its tendency to produce disposable populations throughout the history. According to the philosopher capitalism simultaneously produces and exploits violent outbursts in order to restructure itself and to get rid of unnecessary elements. In contrast, Henry Giroux and Brad Evans focus on disposability as a philosophical concept. They specify that certain conditions must be met in order to dispose of unnecessary elements. Violence must be normalized and become seductive in order to create a spectacle of violence, which in turn will obfuscate the exploitative principles of neoliberal capitalism. In other words, they are focusing on the problem of mediation of violence. Even though there are vast amounts of research done on the relation between capitalism and violence, there is very little research done on how exactly capitalism produces and incorporates this phenomenon, and how it is mediated in order to achieve positive results. This article seeks to define what contemporary practices are being used to normalize violence in contemporary neoliberal capitalism.

**Keywords:** violence, neoliberal capitalism, new media, disposability, Žižek.

## Introduction

At the beginning of his book dedicated to the phenomenon of violence Slavoj Žižek gives advice on how to read news articles of such a discourse. “The lesson is thus that one should resist the fascination of subjective violence, of violence enacted by social agents, evil individuals [...]” and one should try to comprehend the complexity of the phenomenon in question.<sup>2</sup> He argues that thinking about violence is problematic because “there is something inherently mystifying in a direct confrontation with it: the

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<sup>2</sup> S. Žižek, *Violence: six sideways reflections*, New York: Picador, 2008, 11.

overpowering horror of violent acts and empathy with the victims inexorably function as a lure which prevents us from thinking.”<sup>3</sup> This lure can be seen in a philosophical critique of phenomenon of violence, when the latter is misplaced by critique of some other phenomenon instead, thus stepping further away from direct critique of violence.

Such a maneuver has always been present when philosophy tries to explain the phenomenon of violence. For example, Hannah Arendt separates violence from power, force, strength and authority.<sup>4</sup> What is unique to violence is its reliance on implementations, whether it is a person or institution violence always relies on technology at hand. Arendt states that “violence, being instrumental by nature, is rational to the extent that it is effective in reaching the end that must justify it.”<sup>5</sup> According to this logic violence can be used both by a person and an institution and its legitimacy will be drawn *a posteriori*. In Arendt’s theory violence as a philosophical problem is subordinated to the problem of legitimacy.

The same problem has been analyzed by Walter Benjamin in his article *Critique of Violence*. Benjamin raises a “question whether violence, in a given case, is a means to a just or an unjust end.”<sup>6</sup> He separates law-making and law-preserving functions and adds another concept of divine violence. While the first two can be defined by a clear goal of exploiting the power of law upon its subjects, the latter is an unsanctioned revolt against such powers and is not defined by a clear goal, “it is not a means but a manifestation.”<sup>7</sup> As in Arendt’s book the problem of violence is subordinated to the problem of legitimacy and cannot function as a philosophical concept powerful enough to sustain its uniqueness.

Nevertheless, both of these examples represent an important shift in the development of violence as a philosophical concept. First of all, it is no longer attributed only to individuals or institutions but can be exploited by both. Second, there is a certain kind of violence that avoids any justification (as a mean or by the ends) and functions only as a reaction to the injustice of particular times. This means that violence can never be understood in retrospect but must be analyzed in the totality of current predicament. As well as that it cannot be done without the critical analysis of technological implementations at hand for violent purposes.

Such is the main thesis of this article – hat there is a close connection between violent outbursts, contemporary neoliberal capitalism and the discourse of violence in new media. A critique of neoliberal capitalism and violence will be presented in the first part of the paper based on Slavoj Žižek’s ideas. His theory of violence will be supplemented by Henry Giroux and Brad Evans concept of ‘disposability’ in the second

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>4</sup> H. Arendt, *On violence*, San Diego: HBJ book, 1970, 43.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>6</sup> W. Benjamin, *Reflections: essays, aphorisms, autobiographical writings*, New York: Schocken books, 1978, 277.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 294.

part. The concluding part will summarize the relation of capitalism and violence, emphasizing its virtual dimension and concentrating on the importance of new media.

It takes little effort to draw a link between neoliberal capitalism and violent outbursts. Unable to fulfill the promised peace and economic security and at the same time to transform any public interest into private matter it separates those who are privileged (and are able to accumulate and defend their wealth) from a relatively new class of precariat, the latter living in uncertainty. Such uncertainty about one's future, which is so important to the young, transforms into woe and rage, either against oneself or towards others. At the same time these acts are hot topics on the internet. I will argue that new media functions precisely as an implementation for violent purposes and focus on the issue of the discourse of violence and its functioning in the new media. This approach enables to understand violence in a broader sense. Not only how one consumes such a discourse, even gains pleasure from it, but how such production and consumption of violence is a structural necessity for contemporary global order.

### The three manifestations of violence

In 2008 Slavoj Žižek released a book called *Violence* in which a conceptual model of this phenomenon was elaborated. According to Žižek, violence is not an accidental byproduct of neoliberal capitalism but a structural necessity, and “to chastise violence outright, to condemn it as “bad” is an ideological operation *par excellence*, a mystification which collaborates in rendering invisible the fundamental forms of social violence.”<sup>8</sup> This presupposes a paradoxical situation where the failures of capitalism obscure its deficiencies: ‘bad’ violence turns into ‘good’ capitalism.

Žižek states, that “this paradox signals a sad predicament of ours: today’s capitalism cannot reproduce itself on its own. It needs extra-economic charity to sustain the cycle of social reproduction.”<sup>9</sup> Such a charity sustains the ideology of peace and prosperity, since it always comes second to the crisis and has an advantage of “presenting a solution.”<sup>10</sup> The very same logic is applied to phenomenon of violence. It

<sup>8</sup> S. Žižek, *Violence*, 206.

<sup>9</sup> Here Žižek does not make the same mistake which Karl Marx did by hastily denouncing capitalism in favor of socialism. This inability to reproduce on its own should be interpreted from a Hegelian point of view, as a constant tension between capitalism and its negative. In this example extra-economic charities, deemed by Žižek a socialist act in our current order, are the negative of capitalism upon which the system will either fail or reproduce. In this article the position of capitalisms negative is inhabited by violence. *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>10</sup> A vast amount of examples of such crisis and ‘solutions’ are presented in Naomi Klein’s book *Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*. In it Klein in depth analyzes how privatization of public sectors results in private gains instead of effective public service and security thus creating above mentioned state of uncertainty. At this point charities made by billionaires,

has become the negative of capitalism, it is both inside, as its 'invisible' product, and outside, as mediatized byproduct. This is the dialectics of violence in contemporary capitalism: it is needed just to show that it can be solved, hence create a non-violent society. But before continuing this way there is a need to present the exact model of violence that Slavoj Žižek elaborates in his book.

Philosopher suggests to split violence into three, though intertwined, parts. The first one, called systemic violence, corresponds to the tragic outcomes of contemporary neoliberal capitalism.<sup>11</sup> For example, the poor handling of damages caused by hurricane Katrina shows the inability of private companies to handle national scale problems, leaving behind victims, which otherwise could have been avoided.<sup>12</sup> Another example would be the financial breakdown of 2008, or the 'housing bubble crisis' that left millions jobless and homeless all across the world, forcing nation states to implement austerity measures resulting in further cuts in the public sector.

Then there is symbolic violence that is inscribed in the language itself. Žižek argues that "this violence is not only at work in the obvious – and extensively studied – cases of incitement and of the relations of social domination reproduced in our habitual speech forms: there is a more fundamental form of violence still that pertains to language as such, to its imposition of a certain universe of meaning."<sup>13</sup> For Žižek language functions in exactly Lacanian way, it is a naturalized superstructure providing coordinates for one's existence. Thus new media is important in relation to the discourse of violence: there is no necessity for a correspondence between a violent act and its mediatized presentation. The latter is more important, an act of inscription of violence into one's worldview.

At this point otherwise progressive Žižek's theory comes to a deadlock. Theoretically he is capable of explaining why discourse of violence is a structural necessity, but no research is done to explain how exactly it affects the subject in order to achieve a desirable result. For this I will turn to the other philosopher, Andre Nusselder, and his book on new media called *Interface Fantasy: A Lacanian cyborg ontology*, released in 2009.

Andre Nusselder argues that "there is a gap between the object and its 'exact' representation, and in this gap the (unconscious) functioning of fantasy takes place, as imaginary and metaphorical (trans)formations of data into new forms of reality."<sup>14</sup> Let's elaborate this statement while focusing on the functioning of symbolic violence. First of all, the dis-

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who accumulated their wealth by exploiting this very system and created this uncertainty, serve to reproduce the same conditions of gain and profit, a soil for upcoming crisis to come.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>12</sup> N. Klein, *The shock doctrine: the rise of disaster capitalism*, New York, Metropolitan books, 2007, 4.

<sup>13</sup> S. Žižek, *Violence*, 1-2.

<sup>14</sup> A. Nusselder, *Interface Fantasy: A Lacanian Cyborg Ontology*, the MIT press, Cambridge, 2009, 20.

course of violence is experienced by the subject as a social crisis, providing the tension between his own ideological reality (peaceful, neo-liberal capitalism) and an act itself (its negative). But this tension, paradoxically, does not invoke doubts about the system. As Nusselder states, in this gap the “functioning of fantasy takes place” and the subject starts transforming this “data into new forms of reality”, data being the discourse presented on the screen.

Following the Lacanian tradition Nusselder adopts a concept of a virtual subject, but he says that the “*I* to be found nowhere in reality, cannot avoid “actualizing” itself continuously in new formations, or in (on) new technological interfaces.”<sup>15</sup> In regard to violence such *I* would vacillate between ever-changing images – ones of peace, others of violence – in the new media, thus becoming the decentralized subject of neoliberalism. The crucial point here is that there is no ‘normal’ disposition, – binary and highly mediatized split of good and evil, and vacillation in-between, is the ‘new normal.’ In other words, in neoliberal capitalism the production of violence and the production of subjectivity correspond.

An important thing to notice is an ideological construct of peaceful and prosperous current world order. The third millennia started with a naming. Be it a postmodern society, informational society, or post-ideological era, – the proliferation of words that describe our current predicament is rather more confusing than explanatory. The end of great ideologies that marked the 20<sup>th</sup> century in parallel signaled the end of violence, previously orchestrated by nation states. Once closed borders were opened up in hopes of new cooperation, prosperity and the ongoing peace.

These names, that signify the difference of our new era, seem to obfuscate the uncomfortable truth that even though political, economic and ideological regimes have in fact changed, violence still permeates current global order. Violence did not disappear, nor was it hidden from the public eye. Quite the opposite: highly mediated images of violence flow in vast communicative networks around the globe by means of new media. One can easily switch from an online article about tomorrow's weather and read about mass killings that occurred few hours ago somewhere far away. And the latter article most likely is rich in photographs and videos if available, links to other tragedies, comment sections and so on. It is interactive.

But such articles appear to be less than explanatory. Spanning from theft to murder, religion to terrorism, poverty to insurgency and so on they produce a certain discourse of violence, a discourse that tells that violence “just is”. For example, school shootings in the USA is a repetitive and ongoing practice usually done by terribly disturbed youth, enabled by an easy access to guns. On the other hand, gun laws in USA are linked to the principles of neoliberal capitalism. It means such subjective outrages must be analyzed in a broader perspective. Unfortunately, media

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 8.

tends to highlight these tragedies from the perspective of individualism, turning a blind eye to structural influences.

So systemic violence and symbolic violence are in a complex relationship: systemic produces a platform for violent outbursts, while symbolic, by the means of new media, imposes a certain universe of meaning, inscribing and normalizing violence as its unavoidable part. Slavoj Žižek calls these two parts objective violence, because they create concrete conditions for an act, in other words, the systemic provides the tool, the symbolic explains how to use it. The third part is subjective violence. It is “acts of crime and terror, civil unrest, international conflict”<sup>16</sup>, as well as physical harm, rape, murder, all in all, a physical act performed by a person or, at times, by a group.

But philosopher warns that the third one is only the tip of an iceberg, the most visible part. Objective violence is much harder to identify because it functions on ideological ‘zero violence’ criteria, presenting itself as a peaceful and prosperous system. While producing crime, insurgency, police brutality, murder and so on neoliberal capitalism ‘victimizes’ itself by means of highly mediatized images of subjective violence, as if these acts happened spontaneously and are manifestations of unexplainable evil. Spread around the globe through vast networks of new media it creates a universal feeling of fear and uncertainty, an operation which was well established throughout the ages in order to control populations. Thus while objective criteria remain buried beneath the seduction of well-crafted violent imagery, one is not certain what to be afraid of, or, to quote Howard Philip Lovecraft, “the oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear, and the oldest and strongest kind of fear is fear of the unknown.”

I would like to stress that all three parts distinguished by Slavoj Žižek are never separate. For example, murder can be an outcome of poor living conditions and thus a product of systemic violence; rape can be a product of patriarchal ideology and thus a product of symbolic violence and so on. The philosopher states, that “[...] when we perceive something as an act of violence, we measure it by a presupposed standard of what the ‘normal’ non-violent situation is – and the highest form of violence is the imposition of this standard with reference to which some events appear as ‘violent.’”<sup>17</sup> By such means thefts or religious conflicts in poor regions are separated from western military intervention to ‘stabilize’ the situation, the former is violence while the latter is not.

Such separation strongly depends on the ways that these acts are enlightened, that is, on communication industries. One’s worldview in contemporary postmodern societies is determined by the flows of data in the new media and involves violence as its unavoidable part. Even though that much is true and is not much of a surprise this statement is frequently left as a conclusion, which it is not. There is a need to analyze how exactly violence is communicated and why there is a certain subjective enjoyment in watching the suffering of others.

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<sup>16</sup> S. Žižek, *Violence*, 1.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 64.



In his recent book *Absolute Recoil: Towards the new foundations of dialectical materialism*, released in 2014, Slavoj Žižek argues that it is not enough to construct an ideological vision of reality and transmit it to the audiences. He uses the term 'overdetermination' which appears to be useful for the analysis of violence.

[...] *overdetermination is not illusory insofar as it retroactively fills in the gaps in the chain of causality. The solution is thus not to establish a grand evolutionary narrative explaining or describing how higher modes of being emerge out of lower modes (life out of the chemistry of "dead" matter, spirit out of life), but to approach head-on the question of how the prehuman real has to be structured so as to allow for the emergence of the symbolic/normative dimension.*<sup>18</sup>

Here lies the answer to the question of normalized violence. The very dimension of 'human' is based on its negative – 'prehuman'. Charities, mentioned at the beginning of this part, are just one side of the same coin: they sustain the fantasy of capitalism without crisis. While the opposite side is its negative, an excessive waste of capitalism, those deemed unworthy of charity, subjects that can be disposed of. So as the coin flips one always vacillates between The Human and The Monster (prehuman). To recall Nusselder's quote, this very gap becomes the space for subjective fantasy, a screen that protects one from The Monster and appreciates The Human.

### The visible and the disposable

Before continuing the analysis of new media and exact representations of violence it is necessary to supplement Žižek's theory with the concept of 'disposability'. In his interview to *www.historiesofviolence.com*, and namely for their project *Disposable Life*, Žižek proposes an idea that in neoliberal capitalist societies about 80% of the population are potentially disposable, as he says "of no use."<sup>19</sup> This can be easily drawn from the principles of private business, where the owner is interested in making more money and paying less for it, the sweatshop scenario. According to Žižek, these people are simply economically unnecessary and that is that. But, as seen previously, media plays a crucial role in handling the newsfeed on these unprivileged populations, meaning that their "usefulness" is not of economic nature.

Once again, this draws the critique of violence closer to the function of violence in new media and critique of implementations. In 2015 philosophers Brad Evans and Henry Giroux released their book called *Disposable Futures: The seduction of violence in the age of spectacle*. While accepting the basic premise of unnecessary populations they go further

<sup>18</sup> S. Žižek, *Absolute Recoil: towards a new foundation of dialectical materialism*, London: verso books, 2014, 28.

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.historiesofviolence.com/#!full-lectures/cq5w> [watched 2016 07 19: 1:08]

in revealing the exact functioning of this phenomenon and introduce the term 'disposability'.

*It centers our attention more on the verb 'to dispose', thereby moving us beyond the unavoidable production of excess waste [...]. In this regard, disposability conveys the violence of human expulsions as it concentrates on the active production of wastefulness [...]. We recognize the pedagogical nature of neoliberal wastefulness in that it suggests not only the power to dispose economically and politically of those considered excess but also to create those affective and ideological spaces in which the logic of control rooted in economic and governing institutions, is rooted as well in the construction of subjectivity itself.<sup>20</sup>*

This is complementary in regards to Žižek's theory of violence. He is hasty in concluding (or taking for granted) the passive state of 'disposable futures.' While in Evans and Giroux model it is a passive-active agency, at once being used and being disposed of. While Žižek can provide a theoretical background for the analysis of violence, he misses the point how certain subjectivities or populations are deemed disposable. And because of this he misses the link to the new media, the nexus where subject and violent imagery meet in order to create a new universe of meaning or reproduce an old one. Without this a critical analysis of violence remains half performed.

In the aforementioned quote the philosophers state that they "move beyond the unavoidable production of excess waste", which indicates a virtual (it is virtual because economically they are still unnecessary) dimension in which disposability takes part. At this point the importance of new media becomes evident. *In media res*, these populations are useful as far as their role on the screen is being acted out in accordance with neoliberal ideology. They become either negative examples of bad behavior or signs of social crisis that requires new interventions (always done in favor of capitalism) or both. All in all, it instills uncertainty in the mind of the reader leaving questions unanswered because no real objective criteria are being analyzed, those being of neoliberal capitalist ideology. Instead one gets vast flows of data, frequently filled with racism, war propaganda and hatred. Subjects turn to these flows to quench their fear and as a result they become addicted to the discourse of violence.

To sum up, Žižek simply ignores the important role new media plays in the production and control of violence. Giroux and Evans claim that "the violence we are exposed to is heavily mediated, and that as such we are witness to various spectacles that serve a distinct political function [...]"<sup>21</sup>, and later they add that "these spectacles of violence curate and enforce modes of thinking that render challenges to the system – social and environment justice activism, for example – as dangerous, if not criminal."<sup>22</sup> In other words, mediatized discourse of violence can be and

<sup>20</sup> B. Evans, H. Giroux, *Disposable futures: the seduction of violence in the age of spectacle*, San Francisco: City light books, 2015, 48.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.



is used for purposes of social deterrence and economic production. It is not that certain populations are being discarded and remain invisible in their suffering, quite the opposite: they are the data in new media teaching the user 'a history lesson.'

### Virtual violence

A statement that new media 'teaches' one a lesson should be understood critically and can only be fully comprehended with the advent of new media. What separates it from the old is the level of interaction. Old media, for example, newspaper, telephone, cinema and so on "usually only have one interface for showing the object, new media often have several interfaces."<sup>23</sup> New media 'teaches' not by showing the object but by allowing the user to 'learn' about the object. At the same time one can watch a live stream, for example, from recent failed coup in Erdogan's Turkey, then participate in a discussion on the same topic with other users, read an article from his/her trusted source to get further information and so on. Anyway, the crucial point is that one participates in the transformation of data into meaning, the level of interactivity.

Let's recall a quote from Nusselder's book about a subject, who cannot avoid 'actualizing' him(her)self in (on) the technology at hand. Immersing oneself in the 'order of things', in language, becoming oneself by means that are exterior to subject define the process of attaining an identity. By transforming data that is free floating in the space around the subject one constructs an order of those signs, a virtual image that represents one to the world and to him(her)self. This is the basis of Lacanian symbolic and imaginary identities. But if we consider this process in the light of new media we can recognize that immersion into some kind of order has become far more complicated. Imagine a scholar from the Middle Ages whose identity is fixed on religion and several books at hand. Though restricted on data it is strongly tied to it, a very fixed identity. And one can as easily imagine a different scenario of nowadays, a person who has access to vast amounts of data is unable to construct any meaningful order from it.

So if we take into account that the process of becoming an identity is dependent on the technology at hand, and if we take into account that new media provides many interfaces, many 'windows' into oneself, we can draw a conclusion that in our informational societies this becoming is a never ending process. Andre Nusselder explains that "the subjectivity at stake concerns the *interaction* of user and system, of human and technology, of real and virtual. It is to be found at the human-computer interface as an *environment*: in between the known, rational world of control of the (human) Self and the computerized, 'imaginary' world of the (machinic) Other."<sup>24</sup> The trick in his argumentation is that 'in between' is supposed to separate the real world from a computerized 'imaginary' one. But before that he states that the subjectivity is

<sup>23</sup> A. Nusselder, *Interface fantasy*, 5.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

already found in the “human-computer interface as an environment”, which means that the relation between these ‘two worlds’ is dialectical, the separation can be made only after the collision of digitized information and material reality.

The same applies to mediatized violence. The ideological split between non-violent capitalism and its violent negative can be achieved only after certain circumstances, where these two phenomena coincide, are established. If the former parts focused on macro level of violence, neoliberal production of excess waste (resulting in subjective violence) and control of fear by means of new media, the focus of this part is on the construction of subjectivity in relation to mediatized violence. For most people living in postmodern societies of digitized information a computer screen has become a window (to be more accurate, many windows) into reality. But, as explained earlier, data can be manipulated, so the question arises, how far one can manipulate a ‘real event’. At which point will the user start getting the feeling that what he/she is reading is too far from reality?

According to Nusselder, “although the computer screen may not touch upon ‘the real thing,’ it does induce a ‘real sense of presence.’”<sup>25</sup> He comes to a conclusion that a computer screen functions as a fantasy, which at once promises the subject to fulfill one’s desire and offers protection from The Real.<sup>26</sup> In other words, the real question is not the one of manipulated data and its correspondence to the real event. With the advent of new media these manipulations focus on one’s desires, coming directly in touch with the deepest core of subjectivity. And the answer to be found is not on the level of manipulation in regard to a real event, but on the level of presentation in regard to subjective desires.

Thus Nusselder concludes that a desiring subject who participates in virtual exchanges of data, which in turn represents symbols, images, identities, all in all – signifiers, or *object petit a*, to use a Lacanian term, does not differ from a person who participates in exchanges of data by means of words, gestures, touch and so on.<sup>27</sup> This does not mean that new media change noting and the interaction among human beings was simply transposed. Rather it means that virtual environment of new media is able to function as a platform to realize one’s desires.

But let’s get back to violence. According to Žižek, “when the media bombard us with those ‘humanitarian crises’ which seem constantly to pop up all over the world, one should always bear in mind that a particular crisis only explodes into media visibility as result of a complex struggle.”<sup>28</sup> The important part is the reduction of complexity of an event in the media, and not providing a single explanation, but many. As the saying goes, the best way to lie is to tell the truth...nowadays, a carefully edited truth.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 101.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 107.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>28</sup> S. Žižek, *Violence*, 2.

Furthermore, mediatized violence has little to do with the Lacanian Real, it is not supposed to traumatize, but to seduce. Any power structures that influence and shape the discourse of violence in new media do it in order to normalize the effects that violence has on subject. Through the repetition of violent imagery, like the one of planes crashing into twin towers on 9/11, and through the interactive nature of new media people are invited not only to watch, but to participate in the spectacle of violence. Thus Nusselder states that “the subject of the interface can never get at ‘the real thing’ because the structure of the screen itself condemns it to representations. And yet it finds a form of enjoyment precisely in this circling around the ‘real thing,’ or constantly and repeatedly doing the same thing over and over again.”<sup>29</sup> Needless to say that such circulation around the ‘real thing,’ which is nothing else but subject’s effort to rebuild a platform for his or her desires, goes very well with neoliberal capitalist ideology.

Thus we see what the purpose of violence in neoliberal capitalism is and how close it is related to the functioning of new media. As well we analyzed how the discourse of violence works in the new media and its relation to subject and its desire. This whole process of producing subjective violence, mediatizing it and making it the core of subjectivity is what allows for capitalist order to maintain and control its negative. Thus Žižek states that “therein resides the fundamental systemic violence of capitalism, much more uncanny than direct pre-capitalist socio-ideological violence: its violence is no longer attributable to concrete individuals with their ‘evil’ intentions, but is purely ‘objective,’ systemic, anonymous—quite literally a conceptual violence, the violence of a Concept whose self-deployment rules and regulates social reality.”<sup>30</sup> Such self-deployment wouldn’t be possible without modern structures of communication networks and connection points where different users reduce the complexity of their predicament to the game of virtual identities. And it would not be possible if computer environment did not provide a real sense of presence, a presence of I, being there, as Nusselder states, “incorporated in technologies is the age-old desire for presence, of which virtual reality technologies are the latest ‘material’ manifestations.”<sup>31</sup>

## Conclusion

This is my first conclusion of the paper. Violence is always ‘the real thing’ in neoliberal capitalism, the split between rational order and digitized reality. But, as stated above, this split only comes after the digitization, which in turn means that ‘the real thing’ in advance is already subjected to technology. Thus violence becomes a point where binary and ideological split between reality and fantasy takes place. It is a dialectical

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<sup>29</sup> A. Nusselder, *Interface fantasy*, 141.

<sup>30</sup> S. Žižek, *Absolute Recoil*, 30-31.

<sup>31</sup> A. Nusselder, *Interface fantasy*, 26.

totality, presenting contradictions in a meaningless order thus forcing the subject to put them in place.

According to Nusselder, “Lacan considers human reality, in its most fundamental form, to be a ‘game’ also—as shown by his saying that the principle of reality is the principle of collective fantasy.”<sup>32</sup> In its most fundamental form mediatized violence is a game too, but the one where death, war and guns are parts of identity. One can rarely find a computer game without any violence at all, moreover, most popular games involve murder, terrorism, war and so on. It is doubtful that players of such games are violent in reality, but that is not the point. User can become violent in virtual dimension, pretending it is not real, once again solidifying the split of real-unreal. And he/she can do it by constructing an avatar, a virtual identity, corresponding to the desires, which otherwise are forbidden by law.

Here comes the second conclusion. New media provides a promise of a forbidden desire fulfilled. Forbidden desires are always related to contemporary order and its negative. The negative of capitalism becomes a positive of virtual identity. This is why Evans and Giroux can talk about seduction of violence, it seduces user by deceiving to be a window to The Real, to fulfill ones hidden desires. Not to say that it does not deliver. Internet became so full of violent pornography that United Kingdom had to ban some acts from being depicted by British pornography producers.<sup>33</sup>

This maneuver is related to the third and final conclusion. According to Žižek, “in pornography, the gaze qua object falls thus onto the subject-spectator, causing an effect of depressing desublimation.”<sup>34</sup> What he means is that any virtual product aimed at subject’s desires can never be fulfilled and causes one to separate from, rather than identify with, the identities at play. But, as stated above, the process of attaining an identity is closely related to technology at hand, forcing the subject to try once again, become addicted to desires unfulfilled. The same logic can be applied to the phenomenon of violence. The final conclusion is that the production of violence in new media is in relation with one’s desires, but in a negative way. It induces a split in a conceived reality forcing one to produce its own cohesive image, which would neutralize and at the same time incorporate violence. But because the “subject of the interface can never get at ‘the real thing’” such cohesive image of reality always lacks fulfillment, causing one to repeat the same procedures again. This is how a seductive dimension of mediatized violence is constructed, closing the circle of circulation of violence in contemporary capitalism.

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 45.

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/a-long-list-of-sex-acts-just-got-banned-in-uk-porn-9897174.html> [watched 2016 08 04]

<sup>34</sup> S. Žižek, *Looking awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture*, London: MIT press, 1992, 111.