

## Introduction

Nowadays, a variety of cultural, political, and social developments have led to the disappearance of traditional social bonds. Nevertheless, the social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are using the term “community” as their core/ fundamental attribute. “Every day, people use Facebook to share their experiences, connect with friends and family, and build communities.”<sup>1</sup>

Departing from a personal experience of being a part of a community that got censored in Instagram, this research attempts to investigate the notion of agency in social media platforms, and formulate questions, problematics and paradoxes on the concept of community. From a personal point of view marking the entry - and also my position towards this research-, I’m gradually zooming out, looking at the macro-scale of the problem I have initially stated, I’m attempting to delve into a deeper understanding on the semiotics<sup>2</sup> of community and how the promise of connection and inclusivity lead to a paradox of exclusivity. The question that is raised after the analysis : If communities have always been places associated with exclusion as much as inclusion, why do social media platforms still use the term “community” to be perceived by their users as tools of connection, inclusion? Is it possible that social media platforms can facilitate a common ground for communities to grow or do social media actually reinforce this double animosity ?

To be able to answer to this question, first we need to understand how communities are constructed and constituted in social media, and what is good about community that still keeps us attached to this idea. In the first part I am attempting to dissect, and create an anatomy of the social media network, what it consists of, what are the basic components and how these components interact. It is important to understand the possibilities and the limitations of the social media platforms, to understand how agency plays an important role, and how the essence of community is formulated. What is the sense in the community when someone else controls and defines its limits ?

The second part deals explicitly with the notion of community, dealing with its connotations. The community

as well as platforms has its own components and design strategies, being a socially deployed and constructed term, creating an anticipation of a concept with specific characteristics that is meant to evoke certain values and fulfil emotions. Presenting it as a design object, as an archetype with a primal symbol of “inclusivity”, I’m introducing the paradoxes lying within the concept of community that lead to the impossibility of community, or how I call it “ the illusion of community” . Is it possible to imagine a concept that interrupts normative accounts of community and calls on us to recuperate community not as a passive idea -one that has already been constituted- but as an active one ?

The third part introduces the importance of the illusion. Juxtaposing a set of differently employed illusions, I’m arguing how our idea of community falls into an illusion as well. How is our sense of community similar to the phantom limb sensation ?

There is a focus on deconstructing the system of the social media, in order to unveil how the illusion of community actually is reproduced, and how certain concepts – such as the concept of community – are being used as a branding tool, by fetishising the word, by elevating it in an inanimate object worshipped for its supposed powers of connection. This essay, strongly influenced by the existing social media critique discourse, attempts to alter the prevailing narrative that ends up in a banal lamentation or nostalgia. The research aims to open a discourse about the position of community in social media, question the agency of the user, and create a robust understanding of community by combining personal observations and social media literature intersecting with philosophical inquiry.

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<sup>1</sup> Facebook.com. 2020. *Community Standards* | Facebook. [online] available at : <https://www.facebook.com/communitystandards>

<sup>2</sup> how the meaning of community in social media is created and distributed and communicated and therefore how we perform and interpreted “community”