

Network Society

Evolution of Views: Concepts, Images, Metaphors

Imagine there's no heaven
It's easy if you try
No hell below us
Above us only sky
Imagine all the people
Living for today ...
Imagine there's no countries
It isn't hard to do
Nothing to kill or die for
And no religion too
Imagine all the people
Living life in peace ...

You may say I'm a dreamer
But I'm not the only one
I hope someday you'll join us
And the world will be as one
Imagine no possessions
I wonder if you can
No need for greed or hunger
A brotherhood of man
Imagine all the people
Sharing all the world ...

(John Lennon)

»Imagine!«

The ›Third Wave‹ by Alvin Toffler was published in 1980, that is why John Lennon had little chance to read it. Nevertheless, his famous song

»Imagine« (1971) may be an appropriate musical epigraph. It can be used to describe not only Toffler's book, but also publications by the authors who have been traditionally called »optimists-futurologists« (»utopianists«) and »technocrats« (D. Bell, Z. Brzeziński, J. K. Galbraith, M. McLuhan, M. Castells, J. Naisbitt, etc.). They used different terms to name the society that would emerge in the future (post-industrial, technotronic, information, knowledge), but they all pointed to its global nature as the result of *technification/cybernation, informatics and network development*. Without denying the challenges of such society, the optimists-futurologists and technocrats proposed that humanity would solve these problems, particularly, with the help of new digital and computer technologies. The new type of economy (»based on knowledge«, »informational«, »super-symbolic«, »service«) was supposed to lead to the »bright future«, the end of bureaucracy, and the triumph of democracy. The opposite turn of events was not considered as the »non-hierarchic communication networks« would be able to provide every employee, even in the beginning of his/her career, with direct access to the necessary knowledge, as well as high-level administrators, to make »cooperation in action« possible [Тоффлер 2001:218]. Finally, the idea of the biggest-ever »sense organs extension« (M. McLuhan) and »qualitative brain improvement with the help of electronic computing machines« (A. Toffler) were proposed. Computers, being »the only means against fragmented information culture« would help all the people, not just »several super-technocrats«, to evaluate themselves and the world more seriously [Toffler 1980], and therefore, preserve their own integrity and identity. »Nor must this computerization (or, more properly, informationalization) of society mean a further depersonalization of human relationships«; »people will still hurt, cry, laugh, take pleasure in each other, and play – but they will do all these in a much altered context« [Toffler 1980:353].

The key metaphors, created by optimists-futurologists and technocrats, concerning the environment and the work/home surroundings are: »global village«, »global metropolis«, »electronic cottage«. »Global village« is a vivid expression, reflecting McLuhan's concept of the »digital return to the Paleolithic age«. This concept claims that under the influence of numerous digital media, people would regain the ability to esthetically perceive the world around themselves, as their ancestors had once done; they would become members of a new television communality on a global scale [McLuhan 1964]. »Global metropolis« is a metaphor proposed by the American futurologist Herman Kahn. It is an alternative to the »global village« and, according to the author, is more appropriate for identifying the current processes of urbanization and the new (»mosaic«) type of culture, which is being created by mass media. It is the big »city«, not a »village«, that turns out to be a place for combining cultures and ethnoses [Kahn, Bruse-Briggs: 1972].¹ Toffler's »electronic cottage« is an alternative to both previous terms. It represents the fundamental structural element of the forthcoming phase of the modern society, that allows a family, using computers

1 It is important to note the following. The metaphor of the »global city« is no less popular than the »global metropolis«. When Saskia Sassen first proposed the term »global city« (Sassen, S. 2001, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*. 2d ed., Princeton: Princeton University Press), she considered it from the positions of sociology, global economics, and urban studies. The information-communication aspect was part of it, however, it did not play a leading role. Because this paper analyses the evolution of views about Network Society, the author purposely considered only those concepts, in which the information-communication approach predominates (M. McLuhan's »global village« and H. Kahn's »global metropolis«).

attached to cable-satellite communication networks, to rationally and consistently manage production processes, without wasting time on moving from home to work. Such »sedentary« life and work in an »electronic cottage« would consolidate the family, improve the household, bring extra-time for entertainment and help to retrieve the sense of membership in society [Toffler 1980]. By providing different visual representations of the information-network society's spatial structuring, the variants mentioned above do not relate »antagonistically« to the existential and social human entity nor do they threaten personal integrity. They neither destroy human identity, nor deprive it of freedom. Essentially, village, metropolis, and cottage are the most traditional places for most people to live and work. It is only their sizes (they have become global) and technological equipment (it has become digital and computerized) that have changed. All of them appear to be factors in creating amazing new opportunities for individuals.²

Such optimistic views on the information future of humanity were dominant in social philosophy, social studies, and futurology during the last third of the 20th century. There were two booms caused by 1) the advent of the internet in the 80s, which led to the appearance of such metaphors as »networking society«, »Network-Society«; 2) the development of digital technologies and wireless communication in the 1990s. Information campaigns organized around new super-technologies, evoked the wave of mass enthusiasm about their democratic and »humane« potential. We can say, that history repeated itself as the path of mass media development was always »scattered with illusions about the liberation role of the new media« [Dijk 2001]. At the turn of the Millennium, the appearance of the new – »network« – generation (»NET-Generation« or »N-Generation«) was declared [Tapscott 1999]. It was different not only in terms of its »inborn« interest in computer technologies and users' skills, but also because of its high level of tolerance towards different races, cultures, and religions. The representatives of this particular generation (N-Geners) were seen as the most active agents of the Society-Network, capable of building the future without global international conflicts. Are they not the ones John Lennon sang about?

The »Electronic Nomads« Epoch

However, the forthcoming global society was described differently by futurologists-»anti-utopianists« (»technophobes«); existentialists; Frankfurt School theorists; life and culture philosophers; post-structuralists and post-modernists; some present-day sociologists, economists, and researchers in the field of social communication and new media (Aldous Huxley, George Orwell, Karl Jaspers, Herbert Marcuse, Jean Baudrillard, Felix Guattari, Gilles Deleuze, Paul Virilio, Simson Garfinkel, Laurence and Andrew Wachowski, Jacques Attali, Alexander Bard and Jan Soderqvist, William J. Mitchell, etc.). The artistic, philosophical, and scientific concepts

² These three metaphoric images, which have become metaphoric terms, are popular nowadays, though, their meanings have changed a little. For instance, today's »global village« consolidates »digital natives« [Prensky 2001], rather than »primitive viewers«, as at the times of McLuhan. The best possible example of »electronic cottage« is Google corporation offices – »dream work places«, located all over the world. Together they represent »global village«. Creative design and incredible perks help to consolidate »family«, that here is represented by the IT-company (>9 Unusual Google offices with unique features« – bigpicture.ru/?p=436597).

3 A. Bard and J. Zoderqvist believe that reputation and trust are the most valuable assets on the Net; they help to attract attention which is much more difficult to obtain, than money. Money is the result of attention, not vice versa. Attention is the only strong currency of the virtual world. That is why strategy and logic of the netocrats are not of capitalistic, but of attentionalistic nature [Bard, Soderqvist 2002].

4 E. g., K. Jaspers, as early as in 1931 described the tendencies of development of social relations in his book »The Origin and Goal of History«. He characterized the forthcoming age as »technical«, because the influence of the progress was felt in every social sphere, as much as the global problems brought by it. He wrote that the world became accessible, the space – allotted. Technical inventions were being created thank to planned labor, rather than accidental separate discovery. Everything was interconnected [Jaspers 1953:22]. Jaspers insisted that the problem, that was at the bottom of the social existential crisis, resided in the fact that people began to share slogans, means of communication, and entertainment, rather than certain all-pervading spirit [Ibid, 39]. Jaspers was not even aware of the fact, that he characterized future Society-Network, he described it as global, based on technologies, divided into communities, obeyed certain rules substitute for reality. Individuals get into social nets, share their thought, and become more important in the eyes of the society. That helps to achieve their »existential« goals.

5 In an information society, people will tend to abandon excessive notions of integrity in consciousness, rather than of schizophrenic bends. Integrity will be considered a weakness, rather than an ideal. [Bard, Soderqvist 2002].

6 »Advanced technologies will create a class of products and goods that will empower individuals as never before, while shattering traditional bonds to country, community, and family. [...] Men and women will no longer be the naked nomads of the earliest sacred order societies, wandering from well to well, searching for water to survive. [...] The privileged residents of both the European and Pacific spheres, and of the richest regions of their peripheries, will be empowered, liberated nomads bound by nothing but desire and imagination, greed and ambition. This new nomadic elite is already forming, severing its ties with any particular place, whether nation or neighborhood. [...] Services of all kinds are being transformed into objects, their functions increasingly designed to be portable, to be nomadic. Thanks to the portable telephone, the nomad can continue to conduct his public and private life with others no matter where he happens to be, whether driving a car, strolling on a beach, flying in an airplane. [...] Nomadic man will labor ceaselessly, because the natural divisions of day and night and of time itself will have been banished. [...] The nomadic objects [...] are united by a single governing principle: they are designed to manipulate information – images, forms, sounds – at great speed, transforming services performed by people for other people into objects, at once portable and usable, produced by industrial processes. [...] At the end of this cultural

they presented may have differed significantly from one another, but they all had one thing in common, namely the lack of any »rosy expectations« in the »portraits« of the post-industrial stage of human development, as well as an understanding of the ambivalent nature of technologies that are capable of spinning out of human control and managing them, both directly or secretly. Most of the authors mentioned above realized the dominant roles of informational, symbolic, and reputational³ types of capital in this society as opposed to knowledge. The reason was that computer technologies can find, systemize, and keep information, but not actually produce any knowledge. Knowledge is a product of human intelligence. Therefore, we intend to consider the »information« society, not the »knowledge« one.

Even though some of the authors mentioned did not use the terms »information« or »network« society, the characteristics and problems examined in their works turned out to be very recognizable.⁴ The ontology of the forthcoming society is defined there as »information-communicative«, »self-organizing«, based on the principles of chaos and order; as an »organized simulacrum space«, a »virtual reality«, or a »real virtuality«. The structure is characterized as »hierarchic networking«, »risomatic«, »neural«, »fractal« and »matrix«. Anti-utopianists observe the effect of *time and space compression* and actualize the parameter of *speed*. They underline a super-complex character of this society not only from the point of its ontology, structure, and *time-space-speed* data, but also from the point of a great number of issues and contradictions in it, such as existential crises, compartmentalization, and the falsification (destruction, »diversification«) of identity;⁵ indeterminate limits between real and virtual; the simulacrization of consciousness; contradictions between the unconscious (instinct) pursuit of sorting information (linearity) and the non-linear character of information flow; the substitution of real interpersonal communication for virtual communication; universal electronic controls and the manipulation of public and individual consciousness; computer addiction; the unpredictable consequences of qualitative changes on the brain caused by the influence of digital and electronic technologies; the impossibility of controlling data flows and information trash; »digital inequality«; information wars; hackishness; constant attacks from computer and media viruses; electronic terrorism; universal access to on-line porn; hierarchies within Society-Network (its »class« or »cluster« character), etc.

We have, thus far, a number of metaphoric representations of this society: *super-complex/super-sophisticated society; society of risks; society of total control; Big Brother society; simulacrum society; virtual society; viral society; society of digital natives and immigrants; NETocracy.*

The key metaphors for space and the living/working environment in the »anti-utopian« Society-Network paradigm are: *virtual space, cyber space, augmented reality, maze, web, matrix, logic prisons, social networks, fields of presence, information high-ways, digital hubs, digital dupli-*

cate copies of cities, global digital agora. These spaces, or ›arterials‹ and ›intersections‹, are inhabited by constantly migrating »nomads«⁶ (Felix Guattari, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Attali, William J. Mitchell), who arrange »virtual camp-fires« now and then.⁷

Who is the real electronic nomad? This is the so-called Netocrat. Netocrats⁸ migrate between cities, types of activities, and communities all the time.⁹ The higher the network status of a netocrat is, the higher the level of his mobility appears to be. This virtual return to nomadic times, which we owe to the digital networks, is very peculiar, as the idea of a constant home does not represent some kind of »standing point« any more, which stimulates further experiments with different life styles. A new sense of »homelessness« is both desired and forced; it seems to be a burden and an opportunity at the same time. For a real netocrat, the internet home page is the only accepted stationary existential support. It is true under one condition: its constant upgrading [Bard, Soderqvist 2002]. Constant non-virtual home is for *consumetariat*, which is considerably safer, but still easily falls under the influence of mass media and of what is left from the government and other desperate tax authorities. Therefore, the metaphor and the very idea of an »electronic cottage«, as the place of existence and the symbol of being a part of the new elite, in the »anti-utopian« paradigm turns into its polarity, i. e., becomes a symbol of being a member of the lowest class in the Society-Network. The question we face here is –which paradigms and which elements will dominate in modern society? Do we already live in the Society-Network?

»The Rubicon Has Been Crossed«

In spite of the fact that there is no particular *single* moment of transition into the »Society-Network« for everyone (for some people it will never happen), many theorists and practitioners in the sphere of social communication connected it with two events: the world premier of the first movie in »The Matrix« trilogy by the Wachowsky Brothers in 1999 and terrorist attack on September 11, 2001. There was no single acknowledged political analyst and journalist in the West, as well as a philosopher, who has failed to mention them.¹⁰ The reason why people paid so much attention to the greatest terroristic attack in the heart of the capitalistic world – in the USA – is obvious, the reason why people were hypnotically fascinated by »The Matrix« needs to be understood. Could we assume that it can be explained by the fact that every reflecting person, living today, sooner or later comes to the point of thinking about the ontology of his existence from the positions of its »reality« or »virtuality«?¹¹

In this context, the main movie character, programmer Thomas Anderson, who is also the hacker Neo, and is associated by the critics with Socrates and Jesus Christ, appeared to resemble many thoughtful people. Just like

mutation, one can imagine that man himself will become a nomadic object. Covered with artificial organs, he will become an artificial organ himself, to be bought and sold like any other object. Fantasy? We are extrapolation of present tendencies? Let us examine the possibility more closely« [Attali 1991:130]. Mitchell wrote that, by 2000, many employees (and their employers) found out, that the only things they needed for work were cell phones and laptops. It did not matter, whether they were working in an office, a hotel room, a client's office, on board, at home or on vacation. The number of such employees will grow along with the further development and diffusion of nomad technologies. A »mobile employee« will be a common concept of the XXI century [Mitchell 2004].

7 Mitchell wrote, that in traditional nomad societies, constantly kept fires were the mobile centers of the social lives. In the age of wireless technologies, people have the opportunity to create places for meetings. And only the members of certain groups, connected by digital communications, are aware of those places [Mitchell 2004:210].

8 Netocrats and *consumtariat* are two main classes of the Society-Network. The first ones are on the top of the social scale. Due to having intellect, knowledge, and relation, they manipulate the attention of the second ones. They force the *consumtariat* to actively consume internet-advertising, that, in its turn, make them purchase goods and services. The authors of these metaphoric terms are Alexander Bard and Jan Soderqvist [Bard, Soderqvist 2002].

9 Five of the ten best-sellers, written in Japan in 2007, were created on mobile phones. – lifehacker.ru/2013/08/19/city-nomads.

10 Jean Baudrillard, Gregory Bassam, Michael Brannigan, Christopher Grau, Slavoj Žižek, Jean-Pierre Zarader, James Lawler, Jonathan Sanford, David Chalmers, Thomas Hibbs, and other contemporary philosophers wrote their essays on »The Matrix« [Irwin 2002]. A philosophers' round-table entitled »Desert of Reality« was organized on June 22, 2003 at the Centre Pompidou in Paris. The agenda was to discuss the Wachowski Brothers' trilogy. In Russia the debates on »The Matrix« were started later in time, than in the West.

11 The first social models of the society on the basis of the term »virtuality« were proposed by the German scientists Achim Buhl and Michael Paetau [Buhl 1997; Becker, Paetau 1997] and the Canadians – Arthur Kroker and Michael Wienstein [Kroker, Wienstein 1994]. In Russia the first researcher who started investigating virtuality was Dmitry Ivanov [Иванов 2000]. It is important to mention, that in the late 1990s and early 2000s Russian social philosophers and sociologists were not pessimistic about the virtualization of the social life, probably, due to the fact, that Russia was not overwhelmed by the Internet at the time. D. Ivanov suggested, that the fall of the reality, proposed by Baudrillard and Lyotard, was not apocalyptic at all. It is just that the »old« reality is being replaced by the »new« reality. We use the term »virtual reality« to describe the world which is being

through the process of »losing its objectiveness«. Virtual reality makes people deal with simulations, rather than with objects. The reality of the Modern era was an institutional structure full of objects which was making the practice not dependent on aims of individuals. Surrounded by the social reality of the institutions, individuals perceived it as a natural givenness he had to live in. In the Postmodern era, individual is involved in the virtual reality of simulations and perceives the environment as a game, realizing its conventionality, the ability to control its parameters, and the possibility to exit it [Иванов 2000].

12 David Mitsuo Nixon wrote that after watching »The Matrix« he started thinking about the possibility for himself of living in one. »It's possible that I am (or you are) in the Matrix right now«. Could it be, that everything he was feeling, tasting, and seeing was just a part of »illusion, generated by the computers«? Could it be that he was just a body, floating in a cocoon, filled with pink jelly? This hypothesis was so frightening and interesting, that it was worth being given a name. In order to simplify mentioning it, he called it »The Matrix Possibility« [Nixon/Irwin 2005:28]. It is worth mentioning, that William Irwin, the editor of the book of essays »The Matrix and Philosophy«, thought that the idea of living in the Matrix is based on a fundamental mistake and, at best, represents an attempt of a metaphysical riot. Jean Baudrillard, the alleged author of the idea of »The Matrix«, denied his involvement in creating the movie's scenario. In his opinion, »The Matrix« is a movie about the Matrix, which could have been made by a matrix itself, as it is a weird object, naïve and distorted at the same time, which does not draw differences between this and an other world. The Matrix creates the image of monopolistic power of the present world order and thus promotes itself [Бодрийяр – jungland.net/node/953; The Matrix Decoded: Le Nouvel Observateur Interview With Jean Baudrillard. – www.ubishops.ca/ baudrillardstudies/vol1_2/genosko.htm].

13 Among other things, I. Zasursky wrote the following about »real virtuality« [Засурский И. – evartist.narod.ru/text3/34.htm], and A. Kroker and M. Weinstein wrote the following on »virtual reality« [Kroker, Weinstein 1994]. There must be no doubts that we are aware of the opinion that puts in question the »principle novelty« of the information society ontology [Webster 2002]. However, that does not prevent us from having an opposite opinion.

Thomas Anderson (Neo), many people have been living in two parallel worlds – real and virtual (social networks, demiurgic on-line games) for a long time. Besides their real names, they have various »nick names« and »avatars« and realize different strategies of »off-line« and »on-line« behavior. But they have always realized the boundaries between those two worlds. The story of Neo made them call into question the reality of their everyday lives and illusoriness of their »virtual« lives (on the Net). It came as a shock to Neo, that his real comfortable life was nothing but an illusion created in his mind by an intelligent computer system. The same happened to those who, just like Neo, had been living in two parallel worlds. It turned out that their surroundings were just a »Matrix« created in order to hide the truth. This truth is that they are just slaves born in the prison of their minds. They were deceived by the »computers-slaveholders«, consuming biological energy and making people believe that they live real lives.¹² All the doubts and reflections made them perceive the events of 9/11 as a sequel of the Wachowski Brothers' movie.

The release of »The Matrix« may not be the moment, but a symbol of crossing the Rubicon – i. e., the transit from actual existence to the Society-Network, which cannot be explained just in terms of the framework of »virtuality« or »reality«. It is more of a crucially new ontology – »virtual reality« or »real virtuality«,¹³ whose network communication architecture gets more and more complicated with each passing moment. With every such moment we feel ourselves living not in a »network Heaven« promised by the futurologists- utopianists, but »dead-plugged« or »caught« by the same Net.

»Endless Loop« or »Pandora's Box«

Actual life in Society-Network turned out to be more complicated and controversial than any utopia or anti-utopia. Some have already realized this, others have yet to face it. The speed and density of the information flows, as well as the necessity to join them, do not allow the majority of »electronic nomads« to even concentrate on those issues. In order to do that, nomads should stumble at something in those flows, that may cause »existential« or, at least, »cultural« shock. This point is examined in the book »Present Shock: When Everything Happens Now« (2013) by American media theorist Douglas Rushkoff. Many experts see it as the sequel to the book »Future Shock« (1970) by another American futurist-utopianist Alvin Toffler. It goes without saying that we are living in the world described many years ago in his novel, but this world is not absolutely identical to the one in the book.

According to Rushkoff, the current society is less interested in creating a better future. The *present* is more important for it. All its requirements must be met *here* and *now*.¹⁴ There is so much information in the current

digital world, that there is not enough time to transfer it into knowledge or, much less, into wisdom. Rushkoff introduces a new term: »narrative collapse« referring to the new type of on-line content that does not require the art of telling linear stories anymore. All it requires is the ability to draw connections between any fact or idea and any other fact or idea. Cause-and-effect relationships can be left behind the frames of the content. Rushkoff finds amazingly sharp metaphors to identify the essence of the Society-Network phenomena. E. g., electronic mail inbox in his works is called a »big unfinishable loop«.¹⁵ Being a recognized expert in the field of new technologies and new media, as well as an author a dozen well-known and serious books,¹⁶ Rushkoff analyzes various sides and issues of the Society-Network. But after reading this book, the question remains: is digital schizophrenia (»digiphrenia«)¹⁷ a pathology of the current Society-Network, or is it just one of its substantive characteristics? This reflection is very important, as many people who have read the book also have experienced the symptoms of this phenomenon.¹⁸

Network Technologies: Do They Serve Us or Do We Serve Them?

Douglas Rushkoff's evolution of opinion on network information society is very illustrative as he used to be a »digital utopist« in the middle 1990s and believed in the role of digital technologies and the Internet in uniting the whole world and making it a better place. In the early 2000s, he was already a writer and a public activist, open to the appearance of the social networks as convenient business tools and joining people by their interests or in case of need. And now, in February 2013, he publically announced the closing his account on Facebook because of the contradictions between his core values¹⁹ and the principles of the network functioning. He took a strong stand in accusing Facebook of many vices, including taking action on behalf of »friends«, therefore, distorting the performance of real relationships. The primary insight is that Facebook has never been a real social platform. It has always been and still remains a technology, that uses social interaction and personal information (places of residence, brand preferences, sexual orientation, etc.) for purposes of earning money for »third parties« – big corporations – and, indeed, for Facebook itself. »If you are not consumers, then you are product« – assumes Ruskhoff. The real Facebook users are the marketing consultants. At the end of his announcement, the writer reminds us, that Facebook is not the whole Internet, just one web-site, though extremely popular.

Another »shock,« and disappointing verdict for the society were brought in the book »Database Nation: The Death of Privacy in the 21st Century«²⁰ by Simson Garfinkel, American expert in the fields of digital forensics and usable security. Though it was first published in 2000, the WikiLeaks' scandals²¹ have made it even more actual today, than it was at that time. The

14 »It's not enough to get a nightly report on the news, we need our devices to inform us as soon as it happens. No time to digest or verify; we want it from the source and unfiltered. We need a web cam pointed at the Vatican to watch for a puff of white smoke. We need »Google Glass« in our eyes. We need twitter feeds, and we certainly don't have the time or the space to add the »e« in »txting« [www.rushkoff.com/blog/].

15 Douglas Rushkoff: »Looked at in terms of flowing and static information, the email inbox is one, big, unfinishable loop. It is not a book or document that can be successfully completed. It is a flow. Sure, we can mark or move emails that are important, create priorities and sorting routines. But the initial choice to have email at all is to open a loop. The choice to open a particular email, though, constitutes entry into something more like static information. The problem is that the sender may have spring-loaded a whole lot of time and energy into that message so that clicking on it is like opening a Pandora's box of data and responsibilities. A week of the sender's preparation can instantaneously flow into our present.« – [www.rushkoff.com/blog/]

16 Among those are the books »Media virus. Hidden agendas in popular culture« [Rushkoff 1994] and »Program or Be Programmed: Ten Commandments for a Digital Age« [Rushkoff 2010]. The first book reveals the essence of such phenomenon as »media virus«. The second book describes the »profile« of the digital world with the following characteristics: 1) the time does not exist in the digital world; 2) the place does not exist there either; 3) every act there requires chose; 4) digital world provokes simplifying; 5) digital world is scalable and abstract; 6) digital world is impersonal; 7) digital world is contact oriented; 8) digital world aims to the truth; 9) digital world is open to everyone; 10) digital world belongs to programmers.

17 In Rushkoff's works, digital schizophrenia is a disordered state of psychic activity, caused by tensity between artificial reality, created by digital attacks, and true reality of a person living in harmony.

18 Micah Sifry – is an American writer, editor, and blogger who wrote a review on D. Rushkoff's book in the middle of 2013 where he called himself a »digital schizophrenic«. This review is so interesting that is worth attention by itself [Sifry, M. Book Review: Our Computers, Ourselves. Living With Present Shock. – techpresident.com/news/24079/book-review-our-computers-ourselves-living-present-shock].

19 »Why I'm quitting Facebook« By Douglas Rushkoff, CNN, February 25, 2013. edition. cnn.com/2013/02/25/opinion/rushkoff-why-im-quitting-facebook.

20 The first thing the author of the given paper did after reading the book by Garfinkel was covering the webcam on her Macbook.

21 Julian Assange's The World Tomorrow: Official Trailer. – Russia Today. 13 April 2012. Retrieved 25 September 2012. – www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMIDuLA57Kg; CNN: Manning Verdict Won't End Government Transparency in a Digital Age. – www.rushkoff.com/blog/2013/7/30/cnn-manning-verdict-wont-end-government-transparency-in-a-di.html

22 Among those threats are: losing control over the process of development of computer technologies; vulnerability of biometrical systems as means of humane identification; systematic fixation of every event with creating data that can be used for different purposes; constant eavesdropping and sound recording; inappropriate use of medical records; uncontrolled advertising; conversion personal information into goods; genetic autonomy; intellectual property micromanagement; treating every person as a potential terrorist; improving and using intelligent machines.

23 Being an expert in the sphere of computer security, Simson Garfinkel himself was once deceived by the intelligent machine >Teng<. He was exchanging letters two-three times a week for two years with somebody he was considering to be a system administrator of one of the largest banks in Singapore. Turned out, it was a computer program, developed to find American users who could share valuable information [Garfinkel 2000].

24 After turning 16, Julian Assange started hacking under the nickname »Mendax« (from the Latin »Mendax«) which was based on the Horace's oxymoron »splendide mendax« – »honorable liar«.

25 Julian Assange's The World Tomorrow: Official Trailer. – Russia Today. 13 April 2012. Retrieved 25 September 2012. – www.youtube.com/watch?v=TMIDuLA57Kg; CNN: Manning Verdict Won't End Government Transparency in a Digital Age. – www.rushkoff.com/blog/2013/7/30/cnn-manning-verdict-wont-end-government-transparency-in-a-di.html.

26 imaginepeace.com/archives/19347.

27 In total, 130 names are mentioned in this book. [Митчелл 2012:326–327].

author declares the final death of privacy in the »society of total control«, which is what the Society-Network appears to be today. Whereas some modern technologies may be used in order to protect personal information, most of them are intended to do the contrary. Garfinkel reveals the basic threats to the privacy, whose wide distribution leads to disaster.²² Particularly, he proposes that in case of the »riot« of the intellectual computers, an artificial intellect would be capable of creating a coherent picture of the world thereby interpreting and imitating humane consciousness so convincingly, that it might leading a person to misunderstand the nature of the original signals.²³

The evolution of Simson Garfinkel's opinion on technologies in the Society-Network is represented in the following: in the early 1990s (approaching the network information society) he was sure of their »neutrality« (technologies may be used for both violating and defending the privacy); in the early 2000s he emphatically stated that technology was not neutral and that violating privacy was in the very nature of technologies. The stories of the »honorable liar«²⁴ Julian Assange and his »fellow soldier« Bradley Manning and Edward Snowden prove that there is an irrepressible conflict between the people's right to be informed and the information protection performed by the government in order to provide »public security«.²⁵ It is difficult to compromise between the freedom of speech and privacy protection. It appears to be symbolic that particularly Yoko Ono-Lennon honored *Julian Assange* at her Courage Awards for the Arts Ceremony in 2013, does not it?²⁶

The book »Me++: The Cyborg Self and the Networked City« by famous Australian-born architect, urban designer, and expert in social communication William Mitchell (1944–2010) is another example of profound and systematic analysis of how network wireless and global digital communication influence on people's everyday life. According to Mitchell, the Electric Big Bang of the 90s led to developing today's universe of the digital nets – cyberspace, which was aimed to replicate, improve, and, finally, replace physical space as the main place of our residence. However, by 2000 it became clear that physical space and cyberspace are interconnected. They influence each other and constantly exchange their functions.

William Mitchell was one of the first to recognize the necessity to study modern architecture, design, city infrastructure, life style, electronic communications, and digital technologies not as separate issues, but in their interrelations. The book »Me++: The Cyborg Self and the Networked City« was the result of such an approach. The author considered concepts and metaphors by different researchers, theorists, and philosophers of different ages,²⁷ put those into the current context of the Society-Network, and gave them »new life«, pointed out new directions of their »evolution«. For instance, Plato's Theory of Ideas is one of the bases for understanding cyberspace (»world of ideas represented in numbers«) and related physical

artifacts («world of things born from digital files»). The »Me++« metaphor itself is a vivid expression referring to McLuhan's finite »extension« of man. »Electronic nomadism«, on one hand, is integral with nomadism described by Guattari and Deleuze, on the other – argues with Toffler, who had forecast »sedentary« life in »electronic cottage«.

Almost all the issues of the anti-utopian paradigm of information network society representation were somehow reflected in this book, which can be rightfully called the »encyclopedia of life in the Society-Network«. The author almost objectively considers the basic attributes of this life, paying attention to its advantages and disadvantages. The calm tone of the narration does not deprive it of a certain dramatic spirit; for instance, we can mention »logical prisons« as a metaphorical reference to Michel Foucault. It defines »banned zones and restricted areas in cyberspace, as well as in real world«. Those zones are being built »not of stones and bricks, but of access check lists, software, and digital devices«.²⁸

One of W. Mitchell's main points was that the Society-Network provides brand new patterns of interactions between cities, their inhabitants, and digital information [Mitchell 2004]. Wireless communication creates a »constant state of presence« which embraces and changes public and private environment. Now, regardless of the real place of residence, one can manage a business (including illegal ones), educate oneself, gamble at the stock market, participate in auctions, purchase goods, etc. All those activities are accompanied by leaving »digital prints« (markers of presence) which make it possible to trace and control individuals.

Nevertheless, being more of an optimist than a pessimist, William Mitchell states that there are some »conservation areas« in the Society-Network for realizing dreams and satisfying the needs of a human, not a cyborg,²⁹ despite all the metamorphoses, changing the very substance and the structure of the sociality and caused by wireless networks and digital technologies. »The death of space«, interpreted, as a fast and non-limited growth of network inter-dependence zones, will make people form social communities. The integrity of those communities will be »based not on force and fear, but on the ancient principle of reciprocity, used in the frames of new models of using the space and on a scale never before possible. Those will be the nets of the ethical interrelatedness which allow a great amount of people, unfamiliar with each other, to »normally live together« and, moreover, »productively cooperate« [Митчелл 2012:278].

So, is it possible, that John Lennon was right? »Imagine!«

28 The guards in such »jails« exercise their authority in denying the access or holding over at the digital check points [Митчелл 2012: 266–267].

29 Such »conservation areas« will be represented by stores, cafes, restaurants, music halls, museums, theatres, that will offer unique goods and services. It will not be possible (or it will not make sense) to order those goods and services via the Internet. The examples of such unique things are rare sorts of coffee, haute fashion and cuisine, marvelously performed live music, original master-pieces, instead of digital copies, etc.

Biographical Notes

Specialist in the field of ontology and epistemology, Doctor of Philosophy (Dr. habil. habil.); Candidate of Pedagogical Sciences (PhD); the Head of the Department of Social Communication of the Psychological Faculty in National Research Tomsk State University (TSU); the Head of the »Connect-Universum« International Scientific and Practice Conference Organizing Committee; the Member of the Siberian Branch Counsel of Russian Association for Public Relations. The Head of the Laboratory of Human new media technologies (TSU); member of the Association »European Universities Public Relations and Information Officers« (EUPRIO). Author of more than 80 scientific publications on the theory and practice of social communication, including five books: *Genesis and History of Public Relations: Interpretational Analysis*; *Genesis of Public Relations Reconstruction Methodology*; *Introduction to the Theory of Communication* (as a co-author); *Scientific Knowledge on Public Relations (PR): Philosophical Analysis*; *Post-Non-classical Practices: Experience of Conceptualization* (as a co-author).

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Recommended Quotation

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