

Network Society

Evolution of Views: Concepts, Images, Metaphors

Abstract

Only yesterday the Network Society existed solely in a form of fictional images, metaphors, and futuristic concepts created by such figures as Karl Jaspers, Marshall McLuhan, Alvin Toffler, and the Wachowski Brothers. The appearance of the internet, digital technologies, and social networks has evoked a wide response. People felt mass enthusiasm and hopes about democratic, educational, economic, and ›service‹ super-potential of the upcoming Network Society. The Rubicon has finally been crossed: today we are living in that society. Its ontology cannot be fully described solely within the framework of ›virtuality‹ or ›reality‹. Perhaps, it is getting closer to ›virtual reality‹ or ›real virtuality‹ as the communication architecture of this ontology is becoming more and more complex with every passing moment. With every such moment we feel ourselves not to have arrived in a ›networking Heaven‹, but rather as if we were ›caught with the same Net‹. What do we have to expect from tomorrow in such society? What are its basic risks? How can we reduce their number in order to make a harmonious environment for the existential nature of man?

The speed and density of information flows, as well as the necessity to be constantly connected to them, does not allow the majority of people, who live in the Network Society, to concentrate on the issues mentioned above. The author of this essay has volunteered to take on that task. The theoretical terms of this essay are based on the analysis of concepts, images, and metaphors developed by Manuel Castells, Alexander Bard and Jan Soed-erqvist, Simson L. Garfinkel, Douglas Rushkoff, William J. Mitchell and other philosophers, sociologists and experts in the spheres of social communication, media, and architecture. Since the subject under analysis is represented not only by the scientific concepts of the Network Society, but also by its images and metaphors, this paper will also examine scientific, journalistic, and fictional sources.

Keywords

Communication architecture

Ontology of network society

Electronic nomadism

Electronic cottage

Electronic metropolis