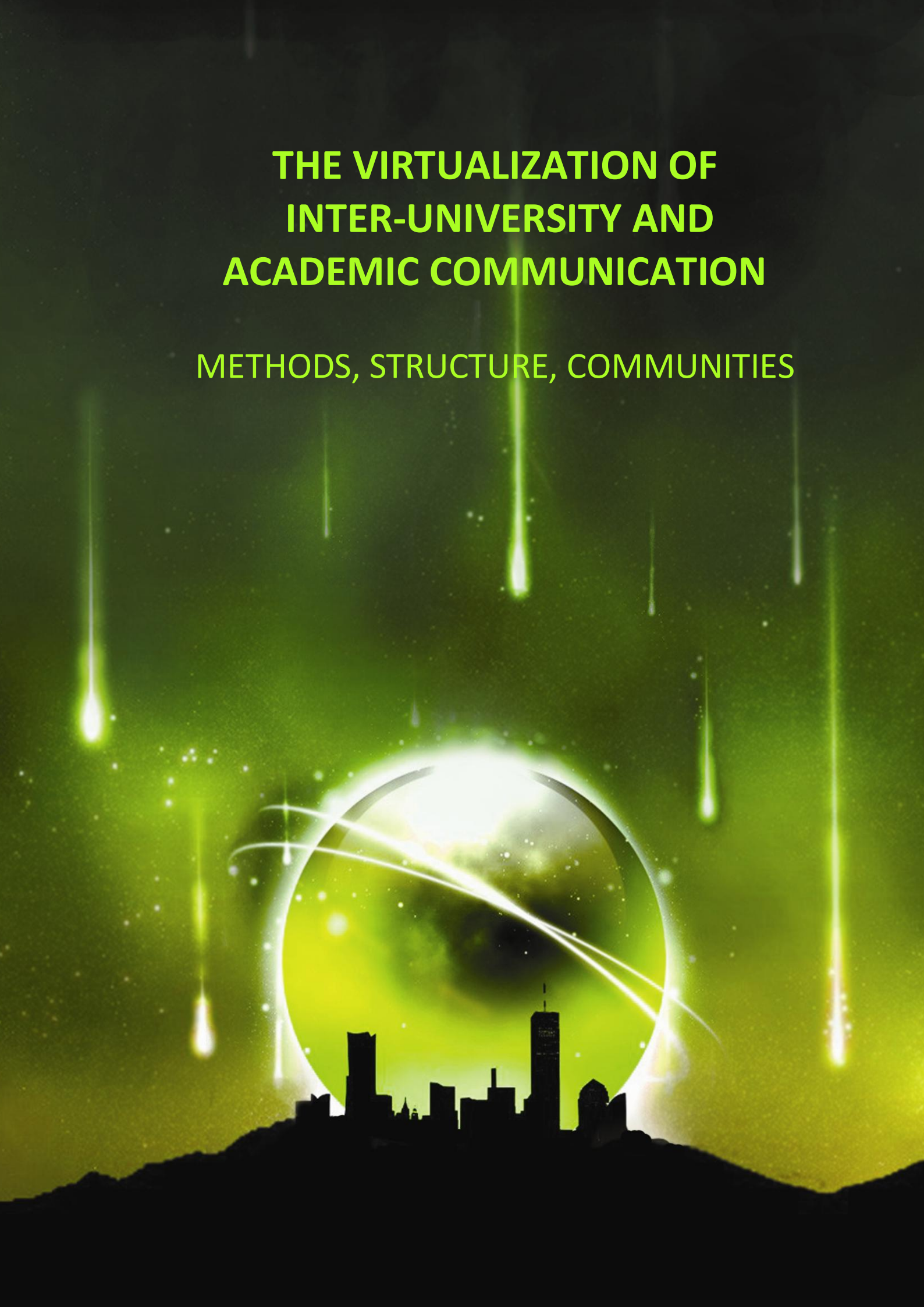


THE VIRTUALIZATION OF INTER-UNIVERSITY AND ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION

METHODS, STRUCTURE, COMMUNITIES



SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL SOCIOLOGISTS

**THE VIRTUALIZATION OF
INTER-UNIVERSITY AND
ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION**
METHODS, STRUCTURE, COMMUNITIES

Academic and research publication

Nikita Pokrovsky (HSE),
John Round (HSE/ University of Birmingham),
Alexei Boklin (HSE/George Mason University),
Editors

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FOREWORD

NIKITA POKROVSKY

**THE UNIVERSITY
TRANSFERRING TO
THE VIRTUAL REALITY**

One may say with a great deal of certainty that he/she who possesses contemporary infocommunication technology possesses the world, to paraphrase the famous statement

Two notions merge apparently in the term ‘infocommunication’, that of information and communication. Thus, now it is not enough to simply possess information or to generate it. It is necessary to execute its transfer and circulation in the given environment and to due to objective checkpoints.

Meanwhile, these rather abstract truths relate directly to the university education practice and the realization of scientific projects. Once there was a conceptual motto ‘No sociologic research exists until it is reflected in the mass media.’; presently we have to speak of complex programmes of the scientific/academic knowledge circulation and advanced examination in a complicated informational and communicative space with the use of various forms (‘formats’). By doing so present-day authors of scientific and educational products at the same time become their distributors possessing all the means of communication. On these conditions the teaching process in universities transforms into an infocommunicative one and demands complicated adjustments which were not present among the university assets earlier.

The recent ISA World Congress of Sociology (Gothenburg, 2010) raised the problem of infocommunicative presence of sociology in the world to a new height. According to Prof. Michael Burawoy, the International Sociological Association’s new president, electronic media has become cardinal for the leading organization of world sociologists. These include electronic bulletins of different forms which reach the remote centres and faculties of sociology via the Internet; ‘Universities in crisis’ website turning into a field of discussion of higher education prospects; ‘portraits of sociologists’ – the platform of the world leading expert sociologists who address wide strata of the global community



through electronic communications. The ISA programme of adaptation to the contemporary communication system emphasizes the importance of this direction as well.

There is a peculiar dimension of infocommunicative transformation in the sphere of the humanities and education connected to virtualization. During this process the crucial social institutes lose their tangibility in a material sense, their objective nature, empiricism as provided by human perception, and transfer into electronic, digital, media, communication form.

Traditionalist consciousness associate the notion of ‘University’, firstly, with an idea of a number of buildings (campus), lecture halls crowded with students guided by tutors. All this is imagined as having a certain material form and necessarily implies bodily presence. Today we often have to discard such stereotypical view on the university. The university remains a hardly adjustable system where virtual (i.e. mediated by digital technologies of the information transfer and control) relations and processes begin to play more significant role.

The university transfers gradually and partly into ‘the virtual’ in the following sense: the teaching process overcomes geographical distance and often does not demand that the subjects involved are present at a certain time and in a certain place. Communicative relations in the university environment pass into another quality – the infocommunicative online.

This process is of an objective nature. It is not a tribute to the current trend of innovation. On the contrary, the outlined tendency augments sufficiently the efficiency of academic activity and opens crucially new horizons.

* * *

A team of sociologists working for the Department of General Sociology (National Research University–Higher School of Economics) under the guidance of Prof. N.Pokrovsky met a challenge to examine the process of university and academic communication, virtualization in the contemporary world, to simulate this phenomenon, to test it experimentally. Each of the articles presented here touch upon a certain aspect of the virtualization teaching process in the contemporary university. Some aspects occur as self-apparent, for example, computer applications and the digitization of text publications, the use of visual media aids for representing texts and accompanying lectures. Such facts as the extension of the ‘student-tutor’ dialogue on academic problems via Internet are of quite common occurrence now. However, some more radical innovation is connected to the distant learning development in the form of online teleconferencing and satellite telecasting.

Current results of the programme dedicated to the research of these phenomena are also represented in the given publication.



PART 1
INFOCOMMUNICATION AND
VIRTUALIZATION OF
THE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION



DMITRY POPOV

**THE VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY.
FOR A DEFINITION OF
THE TERMS**

The vehement development of the communication technology at the border of the 20th -21st centuries caused a qualitative change in society. The ‘virtual reality’ term has become a kind of symbol of the contemporary age. Virtuality presupposes the presence of vast possibilities for manipulating and building simulation structures in all the spheres of society – economy, politics, education.

Scientific texts often employ the ‘virtual worlds’ term, which stands for the zones of peculiar concentration of symbols, values, societies. They consist of simulations and often do not have a strong connection to the material referred to. Perhaps it is worth mentioning that this approach differs rather drastically from what we observe in Plato’s theory of forms which presents the ideal as a kind of framework for material reality, its ontological basis concerning every real object. According to this classic philosopher, forms ‘animate’ objects of the material world. Thus, for example, the form of the tree acts as the necessary ‘essence’ of each actual material tree. Plato spoke of the ontological basis of reality, while we seek to show, discover and examine the human ability to replace the actual using virtual forms.

The modern conception of what is ‘virtuality’ is deeply different from the above-mentioned approach. Virtuality is not an ontological basis of the reality, but a social ability of the human to construct specific ‘forms’ of material objects or, to use Baudrillard’s term, to create simulations.

The notion of virtuality in its modern understanding appeared in the 1970-1980s. In his article “Simulacra and Simulations” Jean Baudrillard introduced the key notion of ‘simulacrum’. He considered the process of the sign’s ‘evolution’ from a simple reference to the state of ‘a copy with no original’, characterized by the unlimited distribution of its own copies which are not related to any reality at all. This process generates a new state of reality named hyperreality (Baudrillard, 1981). Viewed in terms of such a conception, contemporary culture is thus created by means of communication, so the reality



produced by TV and computer screens is indeed the actual reality, and from the standpoint of the participating viewer nothing exists beside it. Baudrillard described in colour the consequences of such a transformation of the reality, balancing constantly on the verge of semiotic self-destruction.

Gilles Deleuze focuses on the fact that virtual is not opposed to the real, it is real in the first place. ‘The scholastic conception of the virtual presents it as something ideal, for example, God is virtual, which, of course, does not mean he is possible, he is real to the full extent’ (Deleuze, 1998). Virtual images are no more separable from an actual object than the latter – from them. The actual and the virtual coexist and enter into direct circulation which leads constantly from one to the other. The relationship of the actual and the virtual form the circulation continually, but in two ways: either the actual refers to the virtual as to another object in the extended circulation.

In my opinion, Rob Shields offered a fairly successful definition of virtuality as a schematic table:

	<i>Real</i>	<i>Possible</i>
Ideal	Virtual (e.g. memories)	Abstract (e.g. concepts)
Actual	Concrete (e.g. material objects)	Probable (e.g. risks)

In his renowned work ‘Becoming Virtual’ Pierre Levy opposes the virtual to the actual or concrete, noting at the same time that the virtual is as real as the concrete (Levy, 2008). Shields accepts this opposition (real vs. virtual), but extends it, adding an opposition by the second axis: the virtual as real (existent) is opposed to the abstract as possible (nonexistent).

The real is concrete (material) and virtual at the same time. Likewise the ideal is not only virtual, but abstract as well. A ‘virtual office’ is not an office in its traditional understanding, not a room, but an effect of the office, so to speak, a new form allowing to conduct office work with the use of distance and online technologies.

It should be acknowledged that the given definition is broad enough, while we are interested in a certain aspect of human activity, namely social interaction.

Contemporary social science employs widely the phenomenological definition of reality given by P.Berger and T.Luckmann: ‘There exists one reality among many others representing the reality par excellence. This is the reality of everyday life. The reality of everyday life appears to be an intersubjective world which I share with other people. It is due to its intersubjective nature that everyday life differs from many other realities which I am aware of. I am alone in the world of dreams, but I know that the world of



everyday life is as real for me as it is for other people.’ (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) Therefore, ‘the real world’ is a relatively small space which can be perceived live, here-and-now. Everything else appears to be virtual.

Sociologists could not but pay attention to the vehement development of digital information technology, gaining a virtual nature as it progresses, and rather simulating than reflecting the reality. The books of Manuel Castells (2000, 2001) should be acknowledged among the most prominent works in this sphere.

Researchers of virtualization emphasize that its logic conquers a large number of new platforms and penetrates into the spheres of economy, politics, family, etc. There are changes taking place in the everyday experience of interpersonal interaction. ‘The prospect of relations between people taking form of relations between their images is in fact the prospect of the society virtualization,’ says Russian sociologist D.Ivanov (Ivanov, 2000). In the given context virtuality is a specific sphere of social relationship.

Society gains essential characteristics of virtuality. In this case virtualization can be defined as replacement of reality with its simulation, not necessarily using computer equipment, but certainly using the logic of virtual reality.

Every social subsystem forms parallel ‘virtual worlds’ where one can find virtual analogues of the real society’s reproduction mechanisms. Researchers of virtuality view the surrounding reality as multiple ‘strata’ forming a complex multidimensional space. In this space images and symbols may occasionally possess no less importance than objects of the material world. Each material and social object may become a simulation. Virtual corporations, TV studios, democracy, money, and so on – the list can be continued ever on.

Today we encounter people perceiving their own life, their personal history in the ‘traditional’ sense as often as before. Such a view presents time as a linear phenomenon, and events as a chain of logical and consecutive actions. Visual objects (e.g. photos) can become links of the chain and help build a straight line. In this context it is interesting to refer to the speculations of E.Petrovskaya presented in ‘Antiphotography’ (Petrovskaya, 2003). She implies, in particular, that the world is constructed based on clichés, hence ‘my photo’ can be replaced with ‘any photo’, meaning a photo representing complete strangers in the familiar environment. Eagerness to recall, to address personal histories, predetermines ‘social emotion’. This is an entirely different approach. In this case time is no longer linear, it is diversified, multiple. That is, time is no longer an indicator of processes and facts for the virtuality producer/consumer.

At the same time properties of the geographical space alter as well – it becomes flexible. Virtuality grants everyone instant access to all events and places without physical movement. ‘*Anything, anywhere, anytime* – that is the motto of the industry creating and distributing images,’ states N.Pokrovsky.



‘Geographical factors play less significant role now than they used to just recently. Geographical space is less and less paramount to us. The Internet reduces information distances between people to a minimum. Time has also undergone some change and ceased being objective, now it is no longer an indicator of processes, facts, it is something different for a modern person. Media development following scientific and technical progress caused the fact that information is one of the most vital resources for a person now.’ (Pokrovsky, 2007)

Jean Baudrillard presented an interesting evaluation of the Iraqi campaign as a ‘war that did not take place’, ‘the dead war’. In his opinion, logic of the current events is neither war logic, nor is it peace logic, it is rather some ‘virtual improbability’ of warfare. Therefore, the Iraqi campaign is the first war in history where the virtual prevailed over the real (Baudrillard, 2004).

Simulative activity is obtaining such a scale that we can speak of the loss of the consistence of social structures and feeling of illusiveness and the instability of social existence.

The Virtual University

At least two schools of research treat the notion of the virtual university in absolutely different ways. The first speaks of the simulation of university educational and science practices. Academic status turns into a function of the competence image creation which deserves financial backing. The activities of scholars and students become more focused (in terms of time and effort) on the creation and presentation of the image needed to succeed at the competitions for grants, scholarships on international education and orders for consulting service, etc. Hence in the last decades the prime role has been attributed to these very social technologies which are adequate to simulate competence: research foundations, grants, consulting, conferences, international study programmes, permanent education (Ivanov, 2000). The implementation of the social roles of the scientist, professor, student turns virtual along with the replacement of substantial objects and real actions with the corresponding simulacra. Consequently, the hierarchy of scientific degrees and academic ranks (academic community), scientific discussion (conferences, contests), division of science labour (research/education organization) virtualize as well; i.e. the university and the research laboratory as social institutes become virtual.

Alongside, the other school applies the terms of ‘the virtual university’ and ‘the virtual education’ to demonstrate that the educational process is executed by the means of technology resulting in an altered perception of time and space (Willoughby, 2003; Brooks, 1997). This is the approach I will apply further in the present article.



Nearly every university has found opportunities for experimenting in the virtual education sphere. Some of them are driven by the urge to raise the quality of education, others try to discover new financially effective ways of expansion and attracting more students. In a broader context the virtual university and virtual education imply knowledge transmission via some technical mediating ambience, e.g. the Internet or other information and telecommunication media. Students and tutors do not interact in a single geographical spot, their communication is separated spatially (sometimes also temporarily) and mediated technically. The most widespread forms of the university education virtualization are:

- technological virtualization, i.e. the training process is mediated by technological systems, for example, Internet distant learning platforms, multimedia options and other information and communication technologies;
- geographical virtualization, i.e. the student audience is spread across a large territory and never (or almost never) gathers in a single place.

It is important to evaluate various models of the virtual university in order to understand what strategies are actual, stable and efficient; what are the most important and valuable for students and tutors and what conditions are needed for the successful realization of these models.

The use of technology as mediator between a student and a tutor is nothing new. However, the complexity, diversity and ubiquity of technological educational ambience form an intrinsically new approach to the traditional conception of education. Thus I will consider some basic forms of virtualization in the sphere of the university education.

The web extension of traditional education

Here technology is not created to replace completely the methods of education which has existed for centuries. Internet options such as libraries, discussion forums, digital course material, software environment for educating games supplement ordinary in-class lectures, seminars, consultations. This approach is widespread, introducing these means into the training process has become a kind of a norm in the university community. Each respectable university seeks to present digital learning management system (LMS) which enables to facilitate 'tutor-student' communication drastically.

Traditional distant learning

Some of distant learning forms appeared long before the emergence of the Internet. Teaching aids (textbooks, readers, lecture video records, software) were sent to students permitting them to shape the training process at a distance. However, this form of education was on the periphery of the university life until recently. New broadcast channels for the data transmission changed the situation



for the better. Videoconference systems allow the direct interaction between students and tutors in the form of interactive audiovisual communication. Conducting lectures, seminars and other academic classes simultaneously in several places becomes possible in a technological sense.

Interactive web education

A number of universities (e.g. the University of British Columbia, Duke University, NC, and others) have introduced web platforms which allow them to form a completely virtual educational environment, available 24/7. The completely virtual New School University in New York (<http://www.newschool.edu/>) is one example of the most efficient realization of this model. A student gains access to entirely virtual courses, discussion platforms, services aimed at interaction with tutors (consulting, examinations, etc.). Interaction environment may also be subject to simulation, e.g. involving technology similar to the popular 3D online games. For example, the University campus exists in the 3D online game environment called SecondLife (<http://sl.nmc.org/>). Thousands of participants joined this experiment (Johnson, Levine 2008).

The choice of the model, technological means and strategies of the virtualization technology introduction is ultimately up to a certain university which aims at solving its own challenges and problems. At the same time, speaking of the university education one should note that students stay in a specific academic environment, the academic community, which usually implies a long-term stay in one geographic spot, in a single place. One of the factors that impact the education results is the students' interaction with each other and with university representatives (Astin, 1993). That is, we speak essentially of the very academic environment and its positive influence. The physical absence of faculties, departments, and the entire university infrastructure means in fact that in the minds of the majority that the university does not exist. Therefore, the question of virtualizing education shifts to another plane and may be expressed in the following way: 'Are virtual academic environments and virtual university communities possible?' Considering the successful experiments, such as the above-mentioned Second Life campus and the virtual New School University, the virtualization of the university environment appears quite possible and achievable.



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VARVARA POLUDINA

**THE SOCIAL TOPOGRAPHY
OF THE INTERNET/RUNET**
(in the prospect the infocommunication
technology development in the education
sphere)

This article is dedicated to the social communities of the Runet and to the dynamics of their development. I am going to consider the Runet rather than the Internet as a whole as the virtual environment development has its peculiarities according to national cultures. This fact was mentioned by Evgeny Gorny [6] who, for example, compared the phenomenon of the virtual personality in the West and in Russia respectively; as well as by Roman Leibov [14] who contrasted some metaphors describing the Internet in the English and Russian language systems. This does not mean that there are no common tendencies characteristic for the Internet on the whole. My standpoint is that the dynamics of the development of Runet communities depends, on one part, on the global processes in the web (e.g. significant increase of the rate of videotraffic), and on the Russian peculiarities, on the other part. On the whole, the notions of ‘the Internet’ and ‘the Runet’ are not opposed in the given article.

The Internet is an object of rapid development, therefore it is not appropriate to consider it in stasis. All kinds of change happen there every 3-4 months, from functional to system changes. That is why I accentuate the dynamics of the Runet social communities development – they are being transformed continuously. For example, at the present stage of development the presence of social networks, blogs and other ways of interaction is a social phenomenon. Hereafter, by the end of 2009 researchers have noticed that the number of ‘closed’ topical communities of the Runet has increased on the platform of certain sites as well as at multiuser portals [15]. What will happen to these communities later, what is their genesis, their internal structure, the mechanisms ensuring the group unity, how stable are they, how are their members recruited?



This article makes use of the group paradigm described by Piotr Sztompka [22] which includes the following varieties of social communities: population, statistical category, sociological category, social category, social group, and lastly, social organization. Thus I perceive it is necessary to consider the development of the Runet social communities with the use of the elements of several sociologic paradigms – structure functionalism, symbolic interactionism, phenomenology of the theory of structuration.

The population is the entire mass of the Runet users; the statistical category is the mass of the Runet users with similar features (social/demographic profile in particular) and the sociological category is the mass of the Runet users with the similarity of essentially important features. The social category is the mass of the Runet users that do not only possess the similarity of essentially important features, but also realize their community and their difference from other communities. As to the social group, it is the mass of users who do not only possess and realize all of the above-mentioned features, but also interact actively with each other. The social organization is the last element of the given hierarchy – the Runet users bound with social relations within the social organization.

Considering the Internet's social communities, including the Runet ones, we are interested in the processes of their crystallization and deconstruction. Herein crystallization is interpreted as the process of the social community becoming more complicated (evolving from population to organization), and deconstruction, on the contrary, when its becoming less organized.

Most attention is paid to distinguishing social groups of the Runet, i.e. such communities members of which do not only possess similar features (including essentially important ones), who do not only realize that, but also interact with each other. My argument is that the demarcation lines between the varieties of social communities are more vague in the Internet than in the real life, therefore social category and social organization are also subject to the research.

The processes of social community development may be determined by an enormous number of factors, however, media communication is one of the crucial factors. Communication is the process of the information transfer when two or more subjects interact. Plain information transfer is when it is unknown if the addressee received it, is not an act of communication. If we speak of social communities, regular and conscious communication appears at the level of social group with its members involved in interaction. Nevertheless, it is worth distinguishing at least two levels of communication – interpersonal communication and media communication. Problems of interpersonal communication are elaborated using approaches of symbolic interactionism (Charles Cooley, George Herbert Mead, Herbert Blumer), of the phenomenological direction of sociology and of existentialism (Edmund



Husserl, Alfred Schütz, Jean Paul Sartre, Martin Heidegger, Karl Jaspers, José Ortega y Gasset). When speaking of mass communication, in the first place one should consider Harold Lasswell, Paul Lazarsfeld, Marshall MacClewes, Niklas Luhmann.

In this research Internet media communication (and the Runet in particular) is understood as any online communication taking place in the ‘public zone’ – chats, forums, blogs, social networks, and in a broader sense – between the visitors of a site, etc. I exclude strictly interpersonal communications from the research, those taking place through email or in private correspondence through communication services. Although one should realize that there are borderline forms. Following Niklas Luhmann, we consider media communication as something that partakes in the formation social of communities and provides for their autopoiesis. Globalization has lead to the emergence of local social structures possessing self-reproduction property which makes sociologists to search for new approaches towards their study [11].

The Runet social communities: subculture becoming population

We cannot consolidate people into a social group based only on the fact that they all have access to an Internet-connected computer and perform interactions in the virtual space in some way. Are the Runet users a population or no more than a statistical group yet? From my point of view, despite the low rate of the Internet penetration in Russia (about 37% that does not represent the entire population of the country [28]), the appearance of the mass user on the web, as noted by experts, may attest that the Runet users community is deconstructing from a statistical group (as it used to be when the web access had a high index of correlation with the age, income, gender, region of residence, level of education) to the population. Thus, we can study the issue of formation of the virtual population including minor communities, though this process is just beginning to evolve over the course of time.

At the dawn of the Internet age researchers spoke of a subculture of the Internet users [20] characterized by ideas of ‘cyberpunk’, which are close to the philosophy of postmodernism in many aspects. As was mentioned above, now we should talk about this phenomenon using the past tense, however, the knowledge of history of the Internet communities is necessary for the understanding of the present-day situation.

Cybernetic ideas of society

The preconditions of the Internet social communities’ development date back to 1940-1950s, before the existence of the Internet. In his work ‘Cybernetics: or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine’ Norbert Wiener, founder of the cybernetic direction of sociology, debunked the



stereotype that society possesses access to a larger volume of information than an individual as it is larger than he/she is. It is possible to form such communities where members would have equal access to the whole. However, in a society based on the purchase and sale concept substitutes primary means of connection distribution with the secondary ones (such as advertisements, etc.), and in doing so restricts the access to information, states Winer [3]. This direction of critical attitude is well-developed by theorists pertaining to the Frankfurt school and by other Neo-Marxists. Wiener's standpoint was shared by the first subculture of the Internet users.

Situationism, psychedelics, cyberpunk

Next to Winer one should explore the work of Marcel Mauss, Georges Bataille and Guy Debord, representatives and followers of the theory of situationism (1950-1960s). They proposed a different approach towards economic relations. In its scope information comes out as something exchanged freely, as a gift, according to the principle of potlatch, to use the situationist term. For example, Marcel Mauss studied social behaviour of Indians, and it was then when he observed the given phenomenon. Further, if we refer to the ancient history, to the contemporary works of L.Vasilyev in particular, in his book 'History of the Orient' one can find information on the principle of 'gift and gift-back', characteristic of all the ancient societies in the course of their development. Therefore, when modern researchers name the web communities 'neotribes' [7], we should take it into account.

However, while social scientists paid tribute to the situationist approach for a little while the following period of 1960-1970s was marked with postmodernist reflection connected to the simulacra concept as introduced by J.Baudrillard. Mainstream philosophers presented their ideas of restrained information distribution as a natural phenomenon (such as adepts of psychedelia, post-structuralism, etc., as listed by M.Verbitsky in his book 'Anticopyright').

The next turn of development was in the late 1970s with the emergence of the punk movement generating new ideas of declaring independence from the cultural and primarily musical environment, that lasted to the early 1990s. From this moment we can observe growing commercialization of every single thing and, finally, the latest turn – the second half of 2000s, the present time [18].

The Runet mass user

Although the first Runet communities declared their independence it took almost 10 years, however, for several user subcultures to emerge on the Internet, and then for the mass user to appear in the web following its commercializing



[18]. What is (s)he like, in what way is (s)he different from his/her predecessors?

One of the main differences is that the mass user takes part in the infocommunication process only as a ‘copymaker’. While the first users were the creators of something new, the mass user creates nothing, he/she simply consumes – downloads and/or copies someone else’s pictures, musical records, movies, words, etc. So the act of copying comes out as interaction, copying is symbolic; thus, when studying the Runet social communities consumption of a media means by the mass user is of typical nature.

However, the genesis of these communities ascends to the society of ‘potlatch’ to which I have paid so much attention above. In this regard I distinguish the phenomenon of perceiving information as goods. My earlier research showed that the majority of the Runet users view it as a free information source (in the spring of 2010 the large-scale web poll was conducted with the sampling of 508 respondents among the active Internet users (97% of them use the Internet every day).

The Runet statistical groups

In the autumn of 2009 the TNS Russia company conducted research concerning the social/demographic profile of Runet’s audience. According to their data Runet’s monthly audience, above 12 years old, consists of men and women of 25-34 years old. The rate of the Runet employed users comprises 59%. In the Russian Federation the majority of Internet users consider their income as ‘average’. In the quantitative representation the Runet users are chiefly students (6.2 million) [19].

If we compare the Runet users community with the entire Internet community, we find that the rate of people with higher education within the former is represented much more when compared to the Internet community [27].

My earlier research showed that such parameters as gender, age, belonging to a subculture, affect the choice of the Internet as the primary media source. The research was conducted on movie consumption. In spring 2010 we conducted a large-scale web poll with 508 respondents among active Runet users (97% of them use the Internet every day). We searched for the interrelation between the variables of social and demographic characteristics of respondents and their choosing the Internet as the primary way of watching movies. As a result of the implemented analysis the null hypothesis stating that these aspects are not related is discarded at the level of value $p \leq 0,01\%$; $\text{sig} = 0,01$ in what concerns such characteristics as gender and age. Men are more eager to address the media via the Internet than women; the same can be said about the age group of below 24 years old, which manifested as the most active in terms of Internet-



based movie consumption. As to the level of income there is an insignificant relationship: the lower is his/her income, the more a respondent uses the Internet, however, this relationship is a weak one – weaker than pictured by site owners.

Categories of the Runet communities: sociological and social

Within the Runet user community one can also distinguish a great number of sociological categories. In this respect three issues seem important. First is the matching of the Internet and the real world. What sociological categories are not presented in the worldwide web? Why? Will they appear there in the future?

Second, various sociological categories are represented in the web in a different way. In this question we face the fact that sociological categories and social categories prove to be very close, the border between them is obscure. For example, it is well-known that people who face the information security problem due to their official duties (these are system administrators, hackers, web designers, etc.) choose to upload minimum personal information in the web, as their job make them realize how easy it is to gain access to the information that a common user deems as closed from outsiders. Meanwhile those people who are less competent in the sphere of the Internet technology are not inclined to ponder over the issue of personal information privacy. They often write very personal things in their public blogs, do not ban the access to Facebook photo collections with quite intimate content, etc. Surely they are to become victims of both hackers and people from various topical communities built up around ‘trolling’. The participants of such communities pick up photos from other people’s accounts which, from their point of view, demonstrate their author’s stupidity (photos of people with angel’s wings – so-called ‘ass-an-angels’; ‘toilet fairy’ – shots made in a toilet) and upload them in the community website, then the audience discuss authors’ and models’ level of intelligence in detail. It is hardly possible to concern system administrators or ‘ass-an-angels’ (who are not aware of having such an identity though it has emerged as a result of technically-mediated communication delayed in time) as social groups or categories. We rather speak of a sociological category. However, the community members making fun of them form a community at the border of social category and social group. It is impossible to call them a regular social group as their contacts and interactions with their fellows bear regular and conscious character only for a certain part of the community, passive audience is always present.

Third by order, but not the least important is the selection of the most significant sociological categories for a single period of the Runet development. Significance is often attached to one or another sociological category during a flare-up of some kind. This statement can be exemplified with a recent conflict around keeping large dogs as pets which flared up in the web space about a year ago. As a result of this conflict sociological categories of dog owners and dog



enemies gained significance. As a result of the discourse new word forms and bias came into being. Dog enemies labeled dog owners as ‘shanechkas’, a highly offensive word meaning stupid, pathetic and possibly hysterical person in the Runet slang. To choose a cat as pet was leveled with the negative attitude towards dogs. On the whole the Runet community broke up into two factions at war because of a seemingly childish question about whether you like dogs or cats. On the whole, the aggravation of a sociological category significance is mostly connected with political problems, as the Runet is still on the whole politically concerned. The fixation of significant sociological categories in the dynamics of their development may be of interest for the research of the Internet’s population formation and its interaction with the real world. No small part is played by the media communication in the matter of attributing significance to various sociological categories.

Above I mentioned the obscure character of borders between the various types of social communities. Is it possible for a negative reference group not only to partake in forming identity of an individual via virtual socializing [22], but to form entire social groups as well? This question is very urgent for Runet, since the amount of negative content there is over the top. To my mind, the answer to this question cannot be but ambiguous. It is probable enough that there are sociological and social categories in the web treated negatively by the majority of population. For example, law enforcement officials, government officials, but first, this is also subject to debate, second, they are rather external categories as compared to the virtual space. There are some peculiar ‘outsiders’ among pure web categories as well. If we go to lurkmore.ru website we can find a typology of web characters in this section. This typology is nothing but a list of sociological and social categories, namely ‘nerds’, ‘geeks’, ‘trolls’, etc. There are such characters among them that evoke an ambiguous attitude (some reward ‘nerds’ with positive sanctions, others punish them with negative ones), while there are also characters scorned a priori, for example by the term ‘dumb c**t’. Moreover, social sanctions may alter in the course of time. In early 2000s researchers of virtual identity mentioned that such a type as ‘troll’ was always punished with negative sanctions [1], while now the attitude towards ‘trolls’ is slightly different, and in some situations ‘trolling’ is met with positive sanctions. Thereafter the research of social sanctions change also seems promising considering various categories and groups.

The Runet social groups

Internet social groups are of interest since their behavioral component acquires a sort of two-dimensional representation. Contacts and interactions necessary for a community to become a social group may occur in the web as well as extend beyond its borders. In the past special attention was paid to the



web acquaintances moving into offline – a lot of variations take place here: meetings of members of forums, fanclubs, dating sites, etc. Now this fact does not pose such an interest as when Runet was a novelty, a new bauble [1]. Presently the boundaries between the virtual and the real world fade for active web users, the Internet becomes familiar, though this does not become less peculiar.

Those groups which do not communicate offline are evidently different from the groups whose communication is multidimensional. It is interesting to consider the factors that impede offline communication beside geographical distance. It is also interesting to find out which groups are more stable: single-dimensional (purely in the web dimension) or multidimensional ones (online + offline). Does the loss of offline dimension necessarily lead to the deconstruction of a social group?

Communicating within Internet social groups – is it a means or a target, is it possible for a group to stagnate causing ‘the development of a tradition-bound sacred society characterized with neophobia’ [16]?

Among social groups large, average and small ones are conventionally distinguished according to their size, though their boundaries are obscure, especially in the Internet. The dynamics of Runet’s development shows that the size of a group is subject to fluctuation, depending on a number of factors. Discovering the factors which determine size fluctuation of social groups in the virtual space seems a promising direction for sociological research.

When speaking of Internet social groups, many researchers name ‘intellectual sects’ [15], ‘neotribes’ [7], and others. An intellectual sect does not mean a sect in its traditional understanding, rather a topical community built up on the basis of a secret, exclusive knowledge. Researching this phenomenon also poses interest.

It is obvious that to describe the Internet social groups is as interesting as to identify them. When the Internet had just emerged in Russia, its users were a rather homogeneous group, I have already mentioned that when putting up the question on the web users population. Nowadays there is a great number of social groups in the Internet, in the Runet in particular – from a group of colleagues who organized a chat to the participants of an alternative political party talking at their forum.

Classification of the Runet social groups

Here I to refer to Piotr Sztompka again, as well as Robert Merton and Georg Simmel. Merton distinguished 26 criteria for classifying social groups [17], Sztompka selects 8 basic criteria among them: 6 objective criteria – size, stability, way of recruiting new members, intensity of participation, benefit from the membership in a group, level of organization; 2 subjective ones – an



individual's identity with the group and the attitude of an individual to the group [22]. All of these criteria are important to describe Internet social groups, while the virtual ambience in turn adds new planes to the understanding of these criteria.

For example, recruiting new members may provide more evidence and can be more technically-mediated than it is in the real world. This phenomenon can be observed at forums, in communities and social network groups where there exists private sections available only to the privileged. Access availability is determined by technical means and the actions of moderators often provoke conflicts in the Internet space.

Size of the Internet social groups

Size should be considered separately. Georg Simmel mentioned the number of 20 to characterize the size of a social group, beyond that direct acquaintance and intimacy are lost, and officialism and anonymity appear [10]. Does this rule also work for the Internet social groups? Whether it is so or not, the web witnesses smaller groups with anonymous participants and, on the contrary, larger groups in which partners are acquainted to each other. The Internet enables to 'split up' group interaction to the interpersonal level...

The Phenomenon of 'personal information'

While communicating on the Internet individuals use technical means which often require the indication of personal information – gender, age, likes and dislikes, photos, etc. Researchers pay more attention to the deviations from real life which form the virtual identity of a user – he/she appears pretends a person of different gender or age, alters his/her real data in some way. This phenomenon is well-studied and, to my mind, has lost its urgency to some extent. The mass user has come to the web, so imagination and a creative approach to constructing one's web image is receding. Presently it is more interesting that we can learn a lot about the partner beyond 'intimate' communication – that we could learn only through a long-term confidential interaction in the real life. That is all the kinds of information starting from favourite books to vacation photos. Indeed, with due observance one can make a lot of conclusions about a person basing on these scarce facts. For one part, this dismisses some unnecessary questions; for the other part, this also deprives people of the possibility to 'adjust' to each other, since general questions (which are usually answered on one's personal page) provide some time to set proper interaction with each other in the real life. Another aspect of the 'personal information' phenomenon is forming stereotypes about people. It is obvious that a few paragraphs in the web cannot present the scale of a human personality. Moreover, not everyone is ready to publish the most intimate data about



themselves due to some peculiar traits of character (as well it is required by the above-mentioned security standards) – not even for the sake of constructing a distinct image. Thus, the recipient supposes he/she knows the partner, while the actual situation is far from that. It is of great significance at the level of the group. The very principle of forming ‘personal information’ is interesting – such information very often contains labels referring to some social group. There emerges various sets of frequently mentioned likes and dislikes, quotations, etc., characteristic of certain groups. In a sense this represents a more ‘pure’ version of symbolic interaction [24].

Cybersocialization

Subjective criteria are also quite urgent, in this respect I pose the question of socializing in the Internet. This question has been under the close inspection of researchers for a long time, however, one should mention that the latter are mostly psychologists who approach ‘cybersocialization’ from the point of view of personality rather than social community.

Primary and secondary social groups of the Runet

Furthermore, we are interested in distinguishing between primary and secondary groups (described by Charles Cooley [22]) in the Runet, which is rather close to the problem of socialization. Several researchers distinguish primary and secondary socialization on the Internet, and their order of sequence may not correspond to the order presented in real life. An example of the lack of correspondence according to the intimacy criteria is a forum where a newcomer obtains access to open site sections only, and acquires the possibility to access more private site sections with the advancement of his/her status in the group. This example may seem outdated (though some researchers speak of rediscovery of this means of communication after the social network boom). Correspondence is observed in social networks – first a user enters the ‘friends’ space, then the less intimate groups according to his/her interests. However, various patterns are possible in the web on the whole. For example, experienced users who became familiar with the web before the emergence of social networks had gone through primary socialization at the topical forums and the like. Afterwards they found themselves in the space of non-topical communication for the sake of the very contact. Such communication was commonly restricted to in ‘flood’ sections and punished with negative sanctions while in non-relevant sections. Thus, the virtual space do not suppose a strict sequence of the types of socialization priority, and the relevant patterns are numerous. The way of web socializing of an individual influences presumably the following aspects: with what groups he/she identifies, what is his/her attitude towards various groups, and, lastly, what is his/her role and status in a group. On



the whole, to define what does the pattern of web socializing determine is a very challenging question.

Socialization and identity in the Runet

Individuals entering into a virtual population undergo socialization in a way usual for a common population. The Internet is peculiar in the fact that people can use it without being involved into interaction with other people, that is, without socializing at all. However, in the last few years the communicative function, which is intrinsically not the least for the web, has become hyper-urgent. For one part, socialization on the Internet may be considered as secondary, by media means, for the other part, it may be considered as a separate kind of socialization.

Researches distinguish between two levels of socialization, primary and secondary. It is obvious that we can also distinguish two levels of cyber-socialization as well, as has already been mentioned earlier.

The problem of socialization was stated as early as by Émile Durkheim in his work 'Suicide' describing the phenomenon of anomie, a breakup of ties with the society [8]. However, Durkheim thought the society to be primary as compared to the person, which is a dubious statement from the viewpoint of contemporary social science: 'as a matter of fact, socialization allows a person to influence cultural environment actively instead of turning him into a programmed machine' [5]. Yet, when considering the virtual society it is important to take into account that its technical mediacy specifies certain rigid (or perhaps rather lax) frames of interaction, that can be treated as 'primary' as related to a person.

Nevertheless, the theory of social interactionism and phenomenological sociology which emerged largely under the influence of the former are more relevant to the present problem. 'An organized community (a social group) providing an individual with unity of his/her self can be named generalized alter. The alignment of generalized alter is the society alignment' [24]. In particular, present-day researchers note that 'it is best to consider the virtual community from the viewpoint of phenomenology'. However, it is worth mentioning that viewing of exact questions of the virtual personality formation is well-developed in the sphere of psychology, many authors write about the personality in the virtual space. Yet, I am mostly concerned not with the personality, but with the social group, its functioning within the virtual space, the formation of group identity, and how a person socializes inside the group.

Roles and status in the Runet social groups

When considering the Runet social groups as socialization agents one should realize what social roles these groups suggest. There is an interesting



phenomenon which has already been viewed many times by psychologists. That is the failure to realize one's potential in the real life as a factor of active addressing to the web interaction. From the point of view of sociology it is possible to speak of the fact that a person who has no social role in the real life, e.g. the leader's role, obtains it through socializing in the Internet. In fact, herein we do not observe any peculiar property of the Internet – the same may be said about the motives of those who self-actualize in sects, political parties and other alternative organizations, where they can become heads of imaginary orders and the like while failing to make a career.

The Runet social groups represent all of the standard roles, leader to outsider, as any non-virtual group does. It is interesting to consider whether it is possible to find out about relationships between the roles in the real life and in the virtual space. Whether a supreme role in the web points to a minor or marginal role in the real life? On the contrary, do the leaders of the real life never pay attention to the web interaction as they obtain minor roles there; or do they seek to achieve the first place everywhere? These questions are of an ambiguous character, they require comprehensive analysis of motives of addressing to the web.

In criticizing the structural/functional approach, Anthony Giddens indicates that social role is not a function enforced upon an individual, and states that a person constructs his/her roles him/herself [5]. However, it is necessary to take into consideration the following fact: a motive as an element of constructing the role does not inevitably lead to achieving the target. One should also mind that when considering interactions between an individual and a group – it is impossible that each challenger for the leader's role in an Internet social group would acquire it. Indeed, this is one of the reasons for the abundance of negative content in virtual interactions – quarrels between partners, mutual insults are manifestations of the contest for the leadership in a group.

Thirdly, the Internet space allows a high level of anonymity, as well as the possibility to avoid interaction; no one prevents individuals from changing the groups in which they communicate. Then, it is interesting to ponder why do minor roles, outsider roles and other negative roles appear in these groups all the same? Why do some users put up with their inferior position when they can easily escape from it?

Fourthly, so far I have been speaking of the hierarchy inside the group, while the Internet allows to form groups built up with no regard to the principle of hierarchy. One of the brightest examples is 2ch.ru, a chat where all the users are 'anonymous'. It was designed initially for the purpose that no user could have a more weighty opinion than another one on account of his/her 'elitism', or an image of authority created during previous discussions. Nobody know who is writing, in fact, everybody are equal. Those users who try to identify themselves



(e.g. by giving links to their personal pages or other resources which can lead identifying them indirectly) are punished with negative sanctions. Yet it cuts both ways – complete anonymity grants the feeling of impunity, so 2ch.ru website abounds in mutual insults with no responsibility for them. Certainly, 2ch.ru is rather a phenomenon of the previous period of the Internet development; presently anonymity has all but disappeared from the web.

Peculiarities of the Internet. Hypertextuality and multimedia

The Internet space creates culture of multimedia communication. Its peculiarity is that hypertext replaces linear message here. ‘According to Marshall McLuhan’s book named ‘The Gutenberg’s Galaxy’ (1962), after the invention of printing the linear way of thinking prevailed, but since the late 1960s it has been replaced by hyperception, a more global way of perception, through television images and other electronic means’ [23]. Thus, the Internet social communities take form in the context of mediacommunication. ‘A person changes from a reader into a user of multimedia OCS handling written and oral speech, pictures of all kinds, movie and video trailers, tables and schemes created by the computer at his request’ [21].

My earlier research in this field showed that a social group often forms around topical sites with multimedia content, and the type of content is irrelevant here – what is relevant is the site’s connection to the topic, the idea, the ideology. The poll conducted among the owners of several subculture sites, or their active assistants, shows, for instance, that some use the content not as a target but as an ‘illustration to the idea’. ‘Media do not simply broadcast information, they ‘design reality’ creating signs and images which refer a person not to a sensory image, but to the experience of consuming media (cf. J.Baudrillard’s simulacra),’ writes E.Lapin in his article ‘In search of reality: analysis of representation’ [13].

Visualization

Anthony Giddens states that the emergence of the Internet reorganized spatiotemporal continuum of the social interaction and poses the following question: what new was brought by technologies? [5] It is worth mentioning that he represented his ideas when the Internet presented a hypertext and included little visual information, especially video files. Therefore, Giddens refers to Baudon and Moloch who mark the lack of visual contact between partners during interaction [5]. Yet, nowadays we face a different situation. According to the forecast of Cisco Systems company that was represented in the Cisco Visual Index, published in 2009 and contained prospects of the videotraffic growth before 2014, its rate will be constantly on the increase and by 2014 it will make up 91% of the world traffic [29]. The fact is that video files are not only of



‘bigger size’, but their popularity is growing as well. Those means of communication which allow to see your partner also belong to the videotraffic. It is certainly impossible to speak of the regular ‘eye to eye’ contact here, however, the situation is different from that observed by Giddens 10 years ago.

Interactivity

Interactivity allows users to initiate discussions as well as to group the audience according to the principle of operation, discusses Elena Zayats in her research ‘Reality shows and the Internet: ways of representation and ways of presence’. Elena Zayats writes about the emergence of a new category – ‘action of desire’ [9]. The essential feature of this category is that the recipient identification occurring in the process of communication between the media and the recipient is entirely different from the usually observed. The recipient is embedded into a certain community, formed among the audience and strives to perform an action relevant to this community. Such actions include leaving a comment, taking part in a vote, etc. Therefore, the internet’s interactive nature plays a special role for the Internet communities. According to the data of my earlier research, topical sites around which social groups are formed are a kind of ‘content filters’ and agents aggregating information. These sites choose the information that they need or that poses interest for the given community from the general flow of circulating information.

Functions of the Runet

In my earlier research I studied functions of the Internet from the point of view of consuming media on the material of movie consumption. In the course of the above-mentioned large-scale poll I used the projective psychological method: respondents were asked an open question of what are their associations with the Internet as a movie source. As a result I acquired an array of 1,900 words. 500 distinct word forms were altogether distinguished excluding prepositions, conjunctions and particles. Then these word forms were arranged into several categories. Arranging proceeded in several steps. At the first step I got approximately 50 categories, at the second – 25 of them. And lastly I distinguished 4 key directions mentioned by more than 10% of respondents.

Association analysis shows that the first place is occupied by the function of information storage. ‘Library’ (ibid. ‘video archive’, ‘film archive’, ‘fund’, ‘collection’, ‘storage’, ‘repository’, ‘storeroom’, ‘storage room’, etc.) suggests that the Internet stores a great amount of information in a rather orderly manner. The same cannot be said about any other media.

The second association also points to the information abundance, however I distinguished it into a separate direction. Here what is important is the information’s disorder and that not all of it is useful. ‘Dump’, ibid. ‘junk’,



‘garbage’, ‘waste’, ‘snarl’, ‘a desk covered with unsorted papers’, ‘a dark room where you are looking for your second sock’, ‘salad’, ‘a purse with all things needed where you cannot find a thing’, ‘creative chaos’, ‘sea’, ‘sand pit’, ‘a single rose in horse manure’, ‘a sack of peas with a couple of pearls’, ‘illusionist’s top hat’, ‘Pandora’s box’, etc. It is not an easy task to search for something in the Internet, and it takes a lot of effort to find what you need. The Internet is a pile of mass products, and in order to find something exclusive one should dig and sift heaps of information. Yet, this exclusive is actually present there, while in the other media there is nothing like that.

The third group of associations is united under the heading of ‘noosphere’ – ibid. ‘encyclopedia’, ‘civilization’, ‘illuminer’, ‘free’, ‘gratis’, ‘access’, ‘universal’, etc. It means the Internet provides access to achievements of the entire world, comprises everything and is free and available to anyone.

The fourth place is ‘sample’ – ibid. ‘signboard’, ‘preview’, ‘catalogue’, ‘file archive’, ‘data base’, etc. It means the Internet is not only a storage but rather a marker of what is stored and where. In the Internet one can learn what movies are on and where, watch a trailer or a movie itself, and decide whether it is worthwhile watching the movie in a cinema.

Conclusion

In the present article I have listed the principal directions of research within the scope of study of the Runet social communities development dynamics. I have described the group paradigm used for their description. The Internet is the very embodiment of the new epoch of information, as stated by Manuel Castells. Without taking notice of this new medium the process of transfer to building a new society in Russia would be impossible, he wrote in the foreword to the Russian edition of his book ‘The Galaxy of Internet’ as early as 2004 [12].

I consider promising further research of the Runet social communities development dynamics, of their crystallization and deconstruction. In my opinion, most attention should be paid to the social groups formed within the web. Besides, there is a number of questions that may present a basis for further research hypotheses – for example, the hypothesis that the community of the Internet users is in fact a population (not a subculture, as it was considered earlier). Another research direction of no less importance is distinguishing the role of media concerning the formation of social groups in the Internet.

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PIOTR IVANOV

**STRUCTURING OF
DISTANCE EDUCATION
VIRTUAL FIELDS IN
RUSSIA AND ABROAD**

At the present stage of development, popularity and perception of virtual communication technologies it is difficult to speak of a concise typology of virtual science communities and educational programmes. It is connected mostly with the subjects of communication since scientific and university environments show a great deal of inertness despite being aimed at innovation and development. Adopting new ambience and means of communication proceeds slowly and erratically. Tutors and students can hardly get used to the fact of being at a distance from each other at the moment, scientists do not get accustomed to the conditions of teleconference at once, prospective students and postgraduates are still surprised with the Skype interviews with professors and managers. However, the process of virtualization and the transfer to online forms of interaction gains momentum. By no means it is to replace the traditional forms of work in the usual ambience of intramural interaction, it simply increases their efficiency and the ability to adapt to the new conditions.

It is possible to mark several directions of the development of science and educational communications virtualization.

The first trend concerns organizing educational and scientific process as such. It consists in making some bureaucratic and coordination elements virtual, for instance, the creation of a united base of courses, training materials, scientific articles for a university or a group of universities, for example, the Evolve (<http://evolveebookstore.elsevier.com/>) Select digital book, developed specifically for students, is a storage of the databases including books, articles, studies, dictionaries necessary for studying in an educational institution. It is equipped with a convenient search system and is not dependent on the Internet access. In other words, this book is a kind of virtual analogue of a library. On



the other hand, students of Tamagawa University, Japan (<http://www.tamagawa.jp/en/>) are provided with blocks of audio- and videomaterial thanks to which they can, say, attend a lecture once more, watch a record of a seminar they have missed or, on the opposite, study several lectures ahead of the regular course curriculum for the sake of better time management. Many institutes support international programmes for students and interested in prospective students from abroad (the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, Moscow; Artes Liberalis, Poland) undertake entrance interviews through Skype. It is quite reasonable, as long as it enables to reveal the actual competence level of an entrant as it eliminates almost fully the possibility of cheating from his/her part, on one hand; and in case an entrant fails the interview, financial waste is minimized on the other hand. Due to these lower risks there are increases to inflow of people willing to enter the university and enlarges opportunities to select among prospective students.

The scientific community can also put to good use free access university databases containing CVs of scientific workers and tutors, for example, as it can be observed at the NRU HSE web site. It contributes to the efficiency of search for colleagues, tutors, authors, articles, reference information, etc. Some educational organizations, e.g. Kama regional university (<http://kama.openet.ru>), promote the direction of the intellectual property protection concerning virtual books and authentic courses. It is the reverse side of the virtualization process, so to speak, as long as the more science and university communities integrate into the Internet, the more urgent is the problem of the intellectual property and security, in particular, the problem of the illegal use of authentic material (e.g. authentic courses) for business purpose.

In spite of their advantages and innovation, all aspect of the present trend have a quantitative character in the process of science and educational communication development. They make existing elements easier, cheaper and more rapid, but they do not alter the pattern of the teaching process and scientific search implementation in a *cardinal* way.

Those events in the sphere of science and educational communication that are new in a qualitative way should be subject to a separate consideration.

First, one should mention electronic courses. In substance they are software packages containing materials of the course and test assignments. A student mastering such a course may potentially address the tutor for help through e-mail or some site facilities; however, such interaction is optional. Many educational organizations abroad experience similar academic programmes. In Russia the first steps in this direction are just being made; thus, for example, Cherepovets state university transferred a number of subjects studied at the Faculty of Metallurgy into electronic course.



The ‘Wikiversity’ project based on the platform of ‘Wikipedia’ (<http://www.wikiversity.org/>) resembles electronic courses in its conception to some extent. The idea is to create databases including courses in various fields of knowledge using wiki-engine. This idea originated from the obvious fact – in order to understand what is, say, sociology, it is not enough to simply read the ‘Sociology’ entry, be it a most detailed one. It is necessary to develop a form of the information presentation structured in a certain way. ‘Wikicourse’ stands for this very form. It has a number of qualitative difference from textbooks, for example: a possibility of communication with the ‘tutor’ using forum interface, as well as its integrity with ‘Wikipedia’. These facts provide a ‘student’ with the possibility of interactive reference concerning almost any question connected to the course.

As to the main innovation concerning electronic technology in education, it is the concept of ‘trans-border distributed university’. The kernel of this concept is as follows: contemporary telecommunication technology enables not only to deliver educational products to any spot of the world, but also to execute a regular real time feedback, to conduct remote borderline monitoring of comprehension. So, consequently, the university transforms from a building frequented by students with the purpose of acquiring educational products, into a teleport transmitting educational products directly to the students, no matter where they are. In Russia the given concept is being promoted by Modern University for the Humanities (muh.ru) operating in 57 cities of 12 countries and expanding its educational network. In the USA its analogue is American Intercontinental University (aiuniv.edu).

The creation of such powerful virtual universities is possible thanks to the videotelecommunication system development. The particularity of the teaching technology consists in the fact that videotelecommunication systems intended for the university education should meet a number of requirements – they should be available for the users with low income, i.e. to pose low system requirements for the hardware, they should support cross-connection between a large amount of users (creating a ‘virtual class’), they should support modes of demonstration of supplementary training material (video, image, presentation). At the present moment ‘ВидеоМост’ (‘VideoBridge’) can be named as the most adequate videotelecommunication system for educational organizations. In particular, it is applied at the Center for education and distance learning for handicapped children in Krasnoyarsk, Russia (http://www.krao.ru/rb-topic_t_65.htm).

Whereas quantitative elements of virtualization are accepted almost without any resistance, elements which are new in a qualitative sense cause alertness if not rejection, since they question the century old traditions of university education. E-learning largely requires crucially different approaches and methods as well as organizational and management conditions as compared to



the traditional teaching process. The problems of the education virtualization may be discussed by means of 'E-learning' online journal (<http://www.elw.ru/>), since 2010 'E-learning Russia' is published (www.elearning-russia.ru/). For the last few years universities abroad carry out polls and surveys regularly to study the efficiency of virtual educational programmes as well as the attitude of students and tutors towards them.

According to the results of 2008 survey, the renowned Open University <http://www.open.ac.uk/> which is framed entirely on the electronic study basis won the first place of the 'Students' content with education' rating (<http://www3.open.ac.uk/media/fullstory.aspx?id=19508>), and the fifth place of the British academic education quality rating (<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/>). This example allows to look upon the potential of electronic education development optimistically, since from the methodological standpoint, the virtual course content differs crucially from that of classic courses. Due to their integration with the Internet the significance of lecture material is gradually lost, while the value of seminar work increases rapidly. The monitoring and assessment of the quality of e-learning is entrusted to the European association of distant training universities (EADTU) that has elaborated the European quality standards concerning the particularity of electronic education. In Russia the same function is performed by the Accredited agency for assessment of the electronic education quality (AAEEQ) created on the basis of the Open Eurasian University. It offers its service of assessing electronic course quality to Russian educational organizations.

Despite the fact that in Russia virtual education is still underdeveloped, there already exists most of the infrastructure necessary for the escalation of its development. The majority of universities (both in Russia's capital and its regions) possess well-equipped classrooms intended for teleconferencing. Yet those information capacities stay unexploited as a rule and simply 'decorate' the university.

To summarize all the above-mentioned facts, one may note the following points that the e-learning in Russia needs to enable its further development: the availability of quality software authored by a domestic producer, Russian universities' involvement into Bologna process, the presence of a community (formed by the 'E-learning' online journal and its annual conference) interested in the questions of electronic training, a sufficiently high level of computer and Internet application (though on average it is below European level), a growing demand of higher education, government-supported policies of innovation and advanced cooperation with universities abroad which enable the exchange of experiences in the sphere of distance learning. These factors enable the solution of the current problems of the virtual education in Russia, namely, a breach between the quality of educational products and an access to the infrastructure.




Firstly, most Russian universities which offer the best quality of education are unwilling to develop e-learning programmes for some obscure reason. Meanwhile some minor educational organizations show a large upsurge of such programmes. Secondly, e-learning should be recognized as a regular education method. The Russian academic community treats e-learning as nothing but an amusing bauble at worst, and as a secondary supplement to the main course of education at best – a view intrinsically wrong as shown by the Open University practice. Thirdly, swindlers, operating in the e-learning sphere, who offer distance courses for a certain fee and issue diplomas of mere decorative value should be denounced. Such programmes discredit e-learning and impede its full-scale development and require standartization and accreditation by the state .

Distance education universities external links

1. aiuniv.edu- American Intercontinental University
2. capella.edu – Capella University
3. devry.edu – DeVry University
4. kaplan.com – Kaplan University
5. aptm.phoenix.edu – Phoenix University
6. regis.edu – Regis University
7. strayer.edu – Strayer University
8. waldenu.edu – Walden University
9. muh.ru – Modern Humanitarian Academy
10. dipoli.tkkfi - TKK Dipoli
11. elene.tlc.net - METID Centre
12. mesi.ru/e-learning/– Moscow State University of Economics, Statistics and Informatics
13. susu.ac.ru – South Urals State University
14. vologda.mubint.ru – a branch of the International Academy for Business and New Technology (Vologda, Russia)
15. open.ac.uk - Open University

Other links:

1. eoi.ru/quality – Accredited agency for assessment of the electronic education quality
2. eatdu.nl – European Association of distance training universities
3. videomost.com – ‘ВидеоМост’ company
4. elearning.ru – ‘E-learning Russia’ online journal
5. e-learningcenter.ru – ‘eLearning center’ company



PART 2
THE EXPERIENCE OF
ONLINE / REAL TIME
EDUCATION



ALEXEI BOKLIN

**ORGANIZING TELEBRIDGES
IN THE SPHERE OF THE
UNIVERSITY EDUCATION:
THE OPTIMUM CONDITIONS
IN THE CONTEXT OF
HUMANIST CRITIQUE OF
TECHNOLOGY**

As M.Castells once stated, in spite of the potential that information technologies bear for education, as well as for healthcare and culture development the promotion of ‘a giant electronic entertainment system’ is the prevailing and most secure investment, from the business point of view [Castells 2000, p. 397-398]. This is quite reasonable, viewing that we live in the age of the entertainment industry, however, ‘serious’ spheres including education make headway as well: telebridges, i.e. online videocalls with the picture rendering to a telescreen or to a projection device, present one of the ways of applying technologies in the given sphere.

Teleconnections have a number of obvious financial and temporal advantages, however, there is more in them than the purely pragmatic prospect – it is a sociological, or possibly humanist, prospect. This is confirmed with the words of S.Turkle: ‘At every our step, being teachers and citizens, we must ask ourselves whether the current technology leads in the way that serves our human concerns. Such questions are of no technical character, those are social, moral and political questions... Technology does not determine the change, but it urges us to follow certain directions. If we reveal these directions, it will be easier for us to make a human decision.’ [Turkle 2004]

* * *

The experience of the telebridge using may be placed into a broader context of the critical comprehension of negative technology development consequences for the human living on the whole and for social interaction in particular.

Technologies, or ‘extensions of man’ according to M. McLuhan, produce an unfavorable paradox: ‘incessant recipiency of our own technology into ourselves



in the process of its everyday use puts us into the role of Narcissus consisting in subconscious perception of these images of ourselves and stupefaction. Incessantly embracing technology we bind ourselves to them as servo-mechanisms. That is why – simply to use them– we must serve them, these extension of ourselves, as gods or relics of some kind.’ [McLuhan 2007, p. 56] Although McClewen himself viewed technology with an utmost latitude, from the spoken word or numbers to money, television or clothes, while we herein mean technology in its narrow sense (‘computer technology’), but still McLuhan’s image is more than relevant. Moreover, technology transforms both idea and mentality spheres in a crucial and, mind it, not necessarily favorable way. ‘Technology is based on fantasies connected with the ideas of salvation and apocalypse and on the perception of the fact that the danger threatening the society is real.’ [Alexander 2001, c. 98] Herein we speak of the problem of reification defined by P.Berger and T.Luckmann: ‘... reification is the perception of human phenomena as things, i.e. in unhuman and possibly superhuman terms. [...] Reification means that the human can forget his authorship in the matter of the human world creation as well as the fact that he does not possess the understanding of the dialectic connection between the human creator and his creations. Reificated world is, by definition, a dehumanized world. It is perceived by the human as an alien facticity, as an uncontrollable opus alienum, not as an opus proprium of his own producing activity.’ [Berger, Luckmann 1995, c. 146]

In my opinion, the problem mentioned is connected with the process characterized by L.Ionin as ‘decrease of vitality’, i.e. the decrease of activity and legitimating meditateness as a life standard in the postmodern conditions [Ionin 2004]. In other words, the phenomenon defined by A.Schütz as ‘keen attitude to life’ is receding, states Ionin; it is worth emphasizing that for the former this attitude is one of the integral characteristics of everyday life differing as such from other ‘final fields of meaning’ in terms of its objective character, and due to that it is ‘supreme reality’ [Schütz, 2004].

In its turn, the ‘decrease of vitality’ manifests directly in the sphere of face-to-face interaction. Thus, some researchers suppose that the frequency of face-to-face contacts decreases drastically along with the increase of the distance between those who enter into communication. Although it would seem that the Internet provides just fine possibilities for the contact at a distance [Mok, Wellman, Carrasco 2010]. Herein we face another problem: ‘... if the significant part of the communication is conducted online – be it at home, at school or anywhere else – kids and cyberkids will most probably develop the skills necessary for online interaction, but they will also most probably lack some skills involved into face-to-face interaction.’ [Brignall, Van Valey 2005, 342-343] The result is as follows: ‘If the power of the Internet future consists in the



fact that individuals will be able to choose with whom they would interact, then speaking of the development of social interaction skills it could also be one of the weak points of the Internet.’ [Ibid, p. 345]

* * *

It occurs that the experience of organizing telebridges is one of the inevitable consequences of communication technology development – at least in the shape they have taken in the contemporary world. Incidentally, inevitability has no negative connotation.

If we consider face-to-face interaction, i.e. the type of interaction framed with physical presence of both participants (in the given case a student and a tutor), as the most regular kind of interaction, then it is possible to construct a peculiar continuum of interactions. On one end of the continuum we place ‘student-tutor interaction’ by means of reading books. Thus, for example, aspiring sociologists or those who dedicated many years to the social science may ‘interact’ with Weber and Durkheim (herein the expression ‘the author speaks to the reader’ takes on the imaginative character since there is no actual face-to-face interaction). On the other end of the continuum we put the interaction between a student and a tutor being introduced to each other in the form of so-called avatars (i.e. online representations – artificial characters under the control of real people). For instance, such kind of communication is typical of the Second Life virtual world, used in educational purposes among all the others [Second Life – Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia].

In this case technology-mediated interaction between participants coexisting, but separated from each other geographically, will be maximum close to the true interaction. A telebridge is more real than reading because its creators are more real – because of them being seen, as well as because it is an actual *interaction* between the author and the reader now. Feedback is possible here (despite those luminaries whom we invited for the virtual meetings hardly said a word they had not published yet). Therefore, we obtain the social interaction between a tutor and a student insofar it is possible, considering the distance which separate the former from the latter and the current state of information technology development.

However, one more problem comes into being now. It is quite possible that one day technologies will develop to such extent that neither tutor, nor student will need to leave home in order to ‘attend’ classes (or to ‘depart’ for a conference). In other words, people will become so ‘rapid’ that they will cease to move physically and encounter each other ‘real face’-to-‘real face’ so that teleconferencing will completely oust real interaction. Still, it is too early now to make forecast in this sphere. Nonetheless, it occurs that the university will evolve by all means in the direction of the virtual component augmentation in



the educational processes and, in part, management processes. In my opinion, the telebridge experience combined with real world activities and classes presents the optimum conditions from the prospect of the information technology development and the humanist critique of this phenomenon.

As a conclusion, one should note that the basic level of interaction is the very 'supreme reality', one way or another, with no regard to the level of the technology development (as shown by the experience, my own experience as well). It is due to the single fact that 'serious' relations are difficult to establish and support solely in the virtual space. During one of the telebridges John Urry made a perfectly true observation: 'the fact that we are communicating now originates from the fact that we have met and got acquainted in the real life.' No technology can substitute for the live communication.

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ANDREI ANDREYEV

**PROBLEMS OF
THE PERCEPTION OF
VIRTUALIZATION
BY TELEBRIDGE
PARTICIPANTS
(FIELD NOTES)**

The aim of our research consists of specifying the similarities and differences between the processes of conducting seminars in their traditional form and in the form of telebridging (online connections).

The present text are some field notes of the person who partakes in organizing telebridges first-hand. Beside observation, I held partially structured interviews with the telebridge participants – MA students of the Sociology faculty of the State University Higher School of Economics. These interviews were held after the students had attended telebridges *three times*. All the interviewees had not taken part in such technologically-mediated seminars before. The interview results compile the main body of the given text.

I use the term ‘virtualization’ to stand for telebridge conducting and its perception by the participants. General theoretic comprehension of the virtualization process is executed within the scope of the theory of information and M. McLuhan’s theory of ‘hot’ and ‘cold’ means of communication.

The theory of communication suggests the very possibility of communication including the following elements: message sender, channel of distribution, recipient, and communication effect. Herewith it is important that the concept of information is not identical to the linguistic notion of ‘sentence’ or ‘phrase’. Information is just something that reproduces communication in a practical sense, that is, provides a feedback. ‘The quantity of information in a message should be measured with a value gauging the change of event probability under the impact of the message.’ [1]

My survey is also based on Marshall McLuhan’s understanding of the mass communication means as ‘hot’ and ‘cold’. Is the telebridge a ‘cold’ means of



communication? That is, a means making human consciousness to *finish the image* [2]. Or is it rather ‘hot’?

The first question concerns the way in which communication in the form of the telebridge differs from communication on the Internet. The telebridge participant begins to expatiate:

Participant: *while on the Internet I am an abstract user and I search for the needed information, here I am grasping it in the course of the very seminar, and I build up kind of a search pattern, that is, neither am I taking any principal part, nor am I playing the leading role, I cannot select what I would like to learn, and we are talking bearing in mind the current topic only. It’s rather a forum of a kind. I mean, if we make comparison with the Internet – it’s a forum with some people taking part in it, and the Internet is something different for me all the same... using the Internet and this seminar... there is something in common between them on principle, but I won’t say they are identical.*

Interviewer: *what is this difference, could you express it somehow?*

P: *The simplest difference is that I am communicating with people. I mean I’m not in a sort of library browsing it through remote access. So I’m talking to the people and get some knowledge from them. I mean they... it’s like you can ask, you can learn, and the people will lead you to the right answer, and on the Internet I have to, like, pick up information myself and make my own decisions. That’s why, I think, this is the main difference. When I’m online, I am the only and first-hand maker, while here I am a listener, and I’m rather gathering knowledge from the people.*

Another participant’s report:

The new thing in it [the teleconference¹] is that it’s live, I mean, it’s not, suppose, a lecture that may have been recorded and delivered to us, it is exactly such a live form, we can ask questions during some narration, for example, and we can share impressions, new impressions, that is, it’s not like you’re watching... and then you recall, and what can turn out in a way... it comes as a live talk, and we can see the response of a person on the screen, he can ask something back... I mean, it’s nearly absolute feeling of reality, that you’re in one room with these people... and the very distance – it’s not perceived at all.

Other participants marked the aspect of ‘presence’, ‘liveness’ of the telebridge as well, emphasized the importance of the ambient space including lecturers on the screen. They attributed the cultural component to this space: it was important for the participants how the walls were decorated, what symbolic figures like posters and trinkets were seen.

The language of communication is one of the most significant cultural characteristics of the telebridge. Hererin we speak of the English language:

¹ The author of the article and the interviewees used the words ‘teleconference’, ‘telebridge’ as synonyms during interviews.



... I reckon that it would be good for me to take the next course, as it was in English too...

... well, firstly, the subject is in English. That is, we don't have an English course right now, that's why... I need some language practice, any at all. In fact, I haven't been speaking English for a year. So it is quite difficult now, but maybe it would be easier a bit later.

The language skill itself acquired during telebridges is perceived by the participants in the following manner:

... on the whole, I've got a rather normal level <of English> ... but there are people that would possibly be afraid simply to take this course, or they would participate, but still feel insecure concerning their English since we <don't> have any practice of free communication... well, at least spoken... well, we may have skills in written English, but to speak English freely is uncommon, because you need practice and classes, and here it's good as you listen to a person, his narration, his comments, explanations... <this very> stream of thought... then you understand it better indeed... When they say a phrase with some strange words, it's very difficult to perceive, like in class, for example: assignments... the tutor of English says something, you fail to understand a single word, and that's all, the meaning is lost. When this conversation is held here, I think, anyone repeats it maybe in other words in the process of expressing his thought, and even those who have not understood, a single word in a question, as it happens... from the part of the professor, then he comments on this question and he does that in other words, and then you understand it.

This aspect is worth emphasizing as expressed by the participants – they understand not the language but the speech. It is the general context of expressing the thought by *Native speakers* that makes communication possible and transforms lecturer's message into information for the participant (the given aspect was also marked by some of them).

English is not the only reason to choose the course. Nevertheless, it is present in a peculiar classification.

I: What made you choose this course?

P: First of all, I made initial judgement according to the title, I mean, it is something crucially new, interesting. At the same time it's connected with my professional or academic activity. That is, I was interested with the topic, that I could learn something crucially new and interesting. Probably, that's the first thing. Second, that's the fact that the course is in English. I mean, this is... a possibility to read some material, but the source material... I mean, not the translations, but the source texts, and to talk to the authors of these texts as well. Well, I mean, to approach the experts of my field, that's social science.



Among other characteristic features of the telebridge one should name greater *discipline*. Problems of a telebridge participant arise around ‘the eye of the web cam’ which the participants are not used to yet:

... perhaps, the difficulty is that there is visual contact, i.e. it's perhaps difficult to look at one spot, plainly speaking, at a person... well... or at the camera, on purpose... I mean, there is some kind of strain in it, as to perception, something is also like... I don't know... for instance, sometimes the other part presents a great flow of information.

Another participant's report:

P: Now I really don't know. Well, probably it's better to listen to it live. To see a person like so, in front of you... listening is better than the telebridge.

I: What are the criteria of 'liveness'?

P: I don't know how to explain it to you... it's on the level of feelings, I mean, it's like when a person is declaiming by the blackboard, right in front of you, he is energizing you all the same... well, and that's somehow better for comprehension. At least, it seems it would be easier and more comprehensible...

The participants associate the ‘liveness’ of the telebridge (see above) with the *cultural* repletion of this form of communication and the constant need of paying attention. At the same time, when speaking of the traditional seminar form they mention greater opportunities to relax, ability to ‘lose attention’. In this context it could be said that we may label the telebridge rather as a ‘cold’ means of communication, and offline seminars as a ‘hot’ one.

However, as in the case of other research on the comparison of traditional kinds of communication with the virtual communication, *time* and *space* remain the inevitable characteristics of the latter's ‘attraction’. Let one of the participants explain it:

I thought that... I'd probably like to see what the overseas sociology is like, if it is somehow different from ours. It is that striking. Like the American course: new explorations or the very approach to studying problems, if they differ from ours or not. That's why for me the teleconference on the whole is an act of getting acquainted with new information on account of the fact that it enables to overcome enormous distance, you can talk to other people from another part of the world without leaving the room, exchange information with them in time, not to meet them once a year at the conference... I mean, if it's a kind of cooperation from one part of the world and another one, then it's very good in this regard. The telebridge is to aid such cooperation greatly.

The participants spoke of the possibility to ‘project’ to another continent, to visit another time, the time of the *Others* from the other side of the screen.

To conclude all that was said above it is worth mentioning ***the problem of the virtual form using skill in the training process, online seminars***. This is how another participant expresses it:

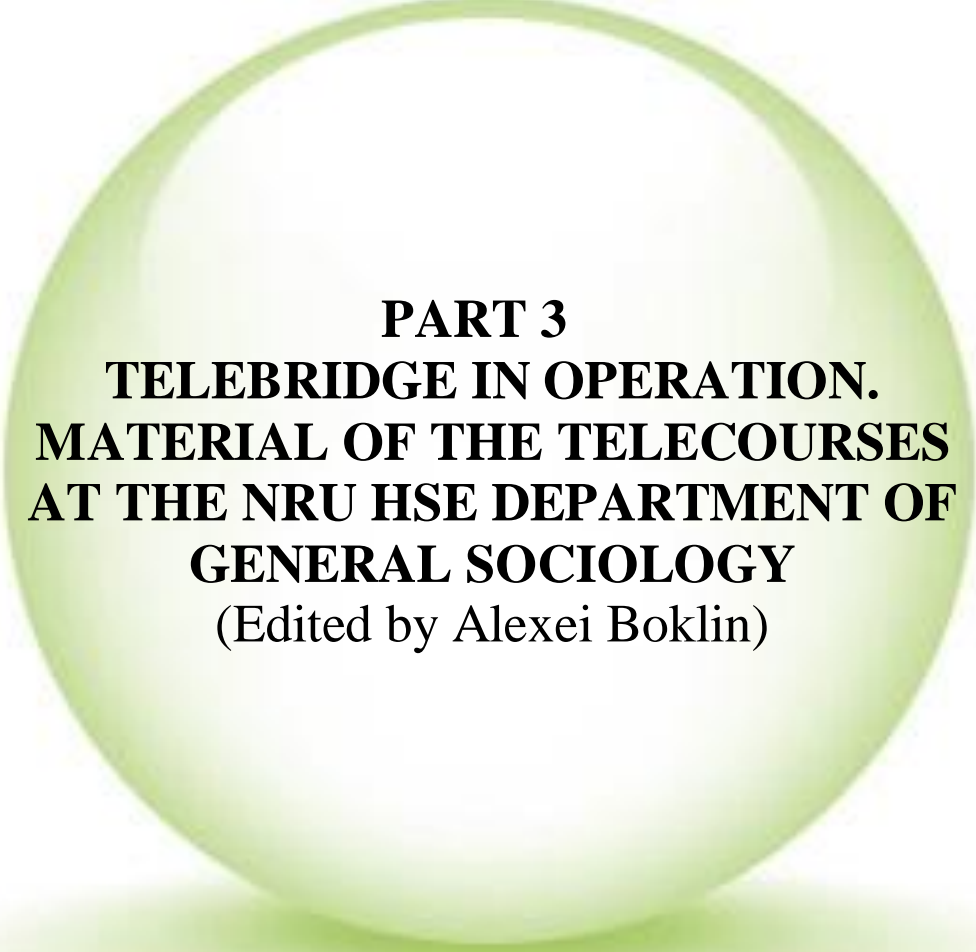


I consider it promising from the point of view of education as it is, because it's necessary to get used to this form; if we are to handle more or less serious matters, then teleconferencing is a usual practice with a web cam and so on, and so forth. That's why we should get used to it and learn it...

The telebridge is one of the models of conducting classes. Considering the given model, the problem posed is the lack of the skill of partaking in such forms of telecommunication. At that, the telebridge participants mention that virtual lectures and seminars do not replace the traditional function, but they possess some particular functions satisfying the demands that the traditional form cannot satisfy.

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PART 3
TELEBRIDGE IN OPERATION.
MATERIAL OF THE TELECOURSES
AT THE NRU HSE DEPARTMENT OF
GENERAL SOCIOLOGY
(Edited by Alexei Boklin)



Telebridge with John Urry

WORLD ON THE MOVE

September 10, 2009
Higher School of Economics (Moscow, Russia) –
Lancaster University (UK)

John Urry (b. 1946)

A prominent contemporary British sociologist, Professor of Lancaster University, head of Center for Mobilities Research. He has written several works on the problems of environmental sociology, sociology of tourism, sociology of mobility, and on social theory in general. He has developed the theory of the present-day society recession from the age of 'organized capitalism'.

At Lancaster University the focus of his earlier works was placed on the social theory and the philosophy of the social science. As a result a collective work 'Social Theory as Science' (1975, 1982) was presented exposing basic features of the realist philosophy of science. 'The Anatomy of Capitalist Societies' (1981) contains several critical essays concerning a number of Marxist tendencies, L. Althusser's structuralism, German theory of state and the Gramscians. Lately John Urry has focused his attention on studying the altering character of the contemporary society mobility. 'Sociology beyond Societies' (2000) and 'Mobile Technologies of the City' (2006, co-editor M. Scheller) are among his latest works.



Participants

JU – John Urry, Lancaster University

NP – Nikita Pokrovsky, HSE

SB – Svetlana Bankovskaya, HSE

AB – Alex Boklin, HSE

Q – Questions from HSE MA students

JU: It sometimes seems as if all the world is on the move. The early retired, international students, terrorists, members of diasporas, holidaymakers, business people, slaves, sports stars, asylum seekers, refugees, backpackers, commuters, young mobile professionals, prostitutes – these and many others – seem to find the contemporary world is their oyster or at least their destiny. Criss-crossing the globe are the routeways of these many groups intermittently encountering one another in transportation and communication hubs, searching out in real and electronic databases the next coach, message, plane, back of lorry, text, bus, lift, ferry, train, car, web site, wifi hot spot and so on. So we have sort of pattern of movement and various hubs where different groups in different sorts of ways – virtually or really – encounter each other.

The scale of this travelling is immense. It is predicted that by 2010 there will be at least one billion legal international arrivals each year (compared with 25 million in 1950); there are four million air passengers each day; at any one time 360,000 passengers are at any time in flight *above* the United States, equivalent to a substantial city; 31 million refugees roam the globe; and there were 552 m cars in 1998 with a projected 730 m in 2020, equivalent to one for every 8.6 people. In 1800 people in the United States travelled on average 50 metres a day – they now travel 50 kilometres a day. Today world citizens move 23 billion kilometres; by 2050 it is predicted that that figure will have increased fourfold to 106 billion.

Today world citizens move 23 billion kilometres; by 2050 it is predicted that that figure will have increased fourfold to 106 billion. But interestingly, people actually don't spend more time travelling, since this seems to have remained more or less constant at about one hour or so a day. Also, people do not necessarily make more journeys, they don't travel more time – but they travel faster and further, so what is crucial is the speed of travel. And of course what has happened has been the shift from walking, cycling or being on



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the back of a horse to sitting in the car, being on the train or in an airplane, the shift from slow modes to fast modes of travel.

The amount of travel industry accounts for about 10% of the world economy, about 10 % of the world employment and about 10% of world income, and almost everywhere is to some degree affected by it. The World Tourism Organization, for example, publishes statistics for over 200 countries: most countries send and most countries receive some visitors. Perhaps North Korea has very few of them, but almost every other country of the world is a recipient of some visitors.

We have a pattern of voluntary or mostly voluntary travelling. It is the largest ever peaceful movement of people across borders. To some degree for people who are relatively affluent, maybe the rich – quarter or the third of the world population – the world has become a ‘department store of countrysides and cities’ that can be at least from time to time sampled. And it is also interesting: even with various global catastrophes like September 11 or the bombings in Madrid, Bali, Moscow and London, various global pandemics and so on this pattern of general increase in physical movement and in communications has not significantly gone down. If you look at the statistics after September 2001 or after these various bombings you got a little deep and then it reasserts itself. The only exception to that has been after the financial collapse in various countries – it has been a significant worldwide deep after October 2008. Interesting question as well is whether that upward line will reassert itself or whether this is a significant shift eating mobility patterns around the world.

I should also point out that not only people are physically mobile but also materials are on the move, often carried by moving bodies and of course many products are made up of many different components that have been moved in and assembled in different sorts of ways. Physical movement takes place at the same with an astonishing growth of the Internet from 1993 and 1994 when the first Internet practices were brought in, and since the growth of mobile telephony as well. Internet, mobile telephony have reorganized communications between people and yet you have also had a large and significant increase in physical movements simultaneously.

It is now thought like 2 to 3 billion mobile phones in the world, with the population of 6.5 billion people and a billion to 2 billion internet users. So you have a worldwide mobilizing of mobile phones, Internet and also physical movements. Mobile technologies appear to be transforming many aspects of economic and social life that are in some sense on the ‘move’ or away from ‘home’. What we have are extensive, intricate connections between physical travel and modes of communication. Some people say that physical changes appear to be ‘de-materializing’ connections, as people, machines, images, information, money and finance, ideas and dangers are ‘on the move’,



making and remaking connections at rapid speeds around the world. I think that issues of too much movement for some and too little for others, the wrong sort of movement or the wrong time are central to people's lives and central to the operations of many organizations, public institutions, private companies, NGOs and so on, they are centre-stage on many policy and academic agendas.

Q: What do you think about the recent development of mobile technology? Does it change the experience of movement? Does it actually destroy the experience of movement? Because irrelevant of where you are, you are constantly linked to your personal networks, you can even receive a call from your mother asking what you had for breakfast.

JU: Yes, sure. One of the things I would suggest is the way in which people are not quite away, intimately connected, and some people describe this as 'imagined presence'. As you move you are in your little mobile machine carrying around your connections and your relationships.

And of course address books. In a way, everybody's address book is different from others. So rather than in former times most people would have known roughly the same other people, what mobile life is a situation in which people know a lot of different people and each person's network is distinct, we have personalized networks. It is also interesting because although we don't know each other, but probably there are connections between our networks: there are people in my address book who know some other people, who would then know Nikita, so there are interesting interconnections around the world through these networks.

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JU: There are four main senses of the term 'mobile' or 'mobility'. I use it a lot and write about the idea of mobile sociology. I think 'mobile' has at least 4 meanings.

First, there is the use of mobile to mean something that moves or is capable of movement, as with the iconic mobile (portable) phone but also with the mobile person, home, hospital, kitchen, and so on. Mobile is a property of things and of people (as with the class designated the 'new mobility'). Many technologies in the contemporary era appear to have set in motion new ways of people being temporarily mobile, including various physical prostheses that enable the 'disabled immobile' to acquire some means of movement. Mostly the term mobile here is a positive category, except in the various critiques of what has been termed 'hypermobility'.

Second, there is the sense of mobile as a mob, a rabble or an unruly crowd. The mob is seen as disorderly precisely because it is mobile, not fully fixed within boundaries and therefore needs to be tracked and



socially regulated. The contemporary world appears to be generating many new dangerous mobs or multitudes, including so-called smart mobs, which are less easily regulated and require for their governance, new and extensive physical and/or electronic systems of counting, regulation and fixing within known places or specified borders.

Third, there is the sense of mobility deployed in mainstream sociology/ social science. This is upward or downward social mobility. Mobility is here vertical. It is presumed that there is relatively clear cut vertical hierarchy of positions and that individuals can be located by comparison with their parent's position or with their own starting position within such hierarchies. There is debate as to whether or not contemporary societies have increased the circulation of people up and down such hierarchies, making the modern world more or less mobile. Some argue that extra circulation only results from changes in the number of top positions and not in increased movement between them. There are complex relations between elements of physical movement and social mobility.

And finally, there is mobility in the longer term sense of migration or other kinds of semi-permanent geographical movement. This is a horizontal sense of being 'on the move', and refers especially to moving country or continent often in search of a 'better life' or to escape from drought, persecution, war, starvation and so on. Although it is thought that contemporary societies entail much mobility in this sense, previous cultures often presupposed considerable movement such as from Europe to the dominated countries of their various Empires or later to North America.

I am going to use 'mobility' to cover all of these senses but we have to be careful to be precise about which we are using.

One of the things that happened in the last 20-30 years has been the growth of an enormous number of different kinds of social patterns that presume physical movement and communications at a distance.

First of all, there has been the growth of forced migration, asylum seeking, refugees, the homeless, travelling and migrating. And of course some of these are now said to be the product of the effects of the climate change (droughts, floods etc.), of huge problems in securing sufficient food in various countries and continents. And indeed some are related to the growth of slavery: some people now say there are more slaves in the contemporary world than there were at the heights of the European slave trade in the late 18th century – the period of the European history that Europeans are often keen to forget. But there is a large amount of forced or more or less forced movement and often obviously in circumstances which are unbelievably exploitative and oppressive.



Second kind of travel is the huge amount of business and professional travel and the proliferation of all sorts of places – hotels, conference centers – which have sprung up to provide temporary homes for business and academic folks, architects and artists and so on to meet up, often explicitly in neutral territories. The scale of that is very extensive.

Thirdly, there has been the growth of international students and the travel by young people often developing what in New Zealand is called ‘overseas experience’. I guess a lot of people at least in Europe would also have patterns of overseas experience, they believe that in order to discover yourself you have to have travelled – away from the place that you were brought up in. That is quite significant.

Fourth category has been the growth of a large amount of medical travel. In fact medical travel was very important in the early development of leisurely travel because of the importance of spa-towns – places to take water. These days, in the contemporary world there are many different kinds of what people call ‘medical tourism’. I think one of the interesting countries for medical tourism is Cuba. It has a good health service and now tries to attract large numbers of west-European visitors and Canadians.

Fifthly, there is a significance of what we might call military mobility of armies, tanks, helicopters, aircrafts, satellites and so on, some of which have important spin-offs into civilian usages: for example, airports often change from being military to then being civilian.

There is a quite significant pattern of what I call ‘post-employment travel’, that is people retiring to the same country or to sunnier places – a lot of people from Scandinavia often retire to Spain and other parts of the Mediterranean, so persons of retirement are forming transnational post-employment lifestyles.

Then also what I call ‘trailing travel’, the trailing travel of children, partners, other relatives and domestic servants who have to follow around the primary breadwinner, that is a trailing pattern of dependence.

Then there is travelling migration within diasporas; the most interesting diaspora, I think, is the Chinese diaspora which some people think has at least 45 million people, pretty big society. The Chinese diaspora spread around the world and obviously all sorts of patterns of movement are increasing between that it and China itself.

There are many travelling service workers in somewhere like Dubai for example, so Dubai is both a place of huge numbers of temporary visitors and then huge numbers of temporary visitors who are workers including sex workers ‘servicing’ the visitors.

There is tourist travel and within it a particularly important and the fastest growing category is visiting friends and relatives. That is partly because of the all of the things I said earlier about young people’s travel or business and



professional travel that sets up connections, networks and as a consequence of these networks from time to time friends and relatives get travelled too. Then finally, there are all sorts of work-related travel and especially commuting travelling to other places daily or weekly.

A consequence of all these different patterns of social life is what I call ‘the mobility turn’. Thinking about how mobilities should be built into social science, trying to mobilize analysis that have tended to be static, fixed and relatively non-spatial, non-mobile. This mobility turn is thus concerned with multiple ways in which economic and social life is performed and organized through time and across various kinds of space and especially the ways in which social relations get ‘stretched’ across the globe. I try to think about the methods that follow and the phrase I have for this is ‘the developing mobile methods’ so if people, ideas, information, money and objects are moving about how is it that social scientists try to capture and understand and analyze those movements? By definition, they are hard to capture, they are on the move, often they are not very visible and not very clear and some of the methods that social science has used are not very effective at capturing the slippery and changeable character of these patterns of movement.

In general, mobilities have been a black box, something people do not know about and do not investigate. Normally movement is seen as a neutral set of processes that permit the forms of economic, social and political life that need to be explained by other processes such as by economics or by politics. And to the extent which travel and communication have been studied, they have normally been placed in very separated categories so you have the study of transport, geography, the sociology of tourism or the study of communications. Of course holiday making, driving, walking, phoning, flying and so on are manifestly significant within people’s lives and yet they tend to be under-examined.

One of the things that I think is necessary to develop in relation to thinking about mobility is to take account of what I call ‘the mobility system’. These systems make possible movement, they mean that there are spaces for what I have been called ‘spaces of anticipation’ that the journey can be made, that the message will get through, that the parcel will arrive, that the family group can meet up. These systems permit relatively predictable and relatively risk-free replication of the movement in question. And in the contemporary world there are an extraordinary number of these systems such as systems of tickets, addresses, safety, hubs, web-sites, money transfer, tours, storage of luggage, air traffic control, bar codes, timetables and there are many others of course. These systems are very interesting and are parts of the way in which the physical world has been overcome and made relatively secure, regulated and relatively risk-free.



SB: Movement is always being and not-being in the present point; a question on movement ambiguity and movement unpredictability: does your notion of systems solve this problem?

JU: My view of systems is that they never finalize, never complete, and they are never a matter of equilibrium. Physicist have a term which I like – ‘metastable’: not stable and not anarchic, contingently stable. Systems are held in a state in which quite minor things – bearing in mind the idea of complexity – can in certain circumstances disrupt what appears to be a highly stabilized system or a set of systems. Also, of course, systems are very interdependent with each other, so again – a small change somewhere in one system can then have a knock-on effect, reverberations which then impact on other systems.

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JU: I see the capacity to network as a form of capital like economic capital or cultural capital. Network capital, I want to argue, is increasingly important in the contemporary world and it is probably more unequally distributed as other forms of capital.

Movement of some creates new industries, new things like airports, service stations, hotels, leisure centers because for others they are employees. But for me, an utterly central part of the mobilities’ program of research is to think about the new ways in which movement for some is non-movement for others.

A very interesting example is the big cities that now are come to develop around airports. Airports are epitome of movement aspects – people are moving in and out all the time. But of course there are large numbers of people who are relatively immobilized living and working in cities which often employ 50 or 100 thousand people. Sometimes they are mobile, but mobile to work for others – like my example with Dubai where the 80% of workforce are made up from migrant workers from Pakistan and India – incredible flows coming in to service. And when the workers arrive in Dubai their passports are taken away from them and they only get them back when leaving.

Yes, I completely agree and my method of looking at that is the concept of network capital. Also, I think there is an ideology of movement, the notion that to be a successful professional person you should have travelled about and you should have accumulated network capital from movement – I guess that is something that all of us are complicit in to some degree.

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The significance of ideas of movement and circulation in the early scientific thinking, especially followed Harvey's discovery of how blood circulates within the human body and Galileo's notion that a natural state is to be in motion and not at rest, was the very idea that motion is ‘natural’ and is something that ought to be identified, registered, promoted and so on. Some of the ideas that circulation is good you can see in a lot of early discussions on what should be



done about cities in the early 20th century with the development of the motorcar with the car being something that would promote good healthy circulation in the body of society or the body of the city. So I think in Western thought the virtues of movement are very significant. There is in the modern world an accumulation of movement that is analogous to the accumulation of capital – repetitive movement or circulation made possible by diverse, interdependent mobility-systems.

Some pre-industrial mobility systems included walking, horse-riding, sedan chairs, coach travel, inland waterways, sea shipping and so on. But many of the mobility systems which are now significant date from England and France in the 1840s and 1850s. Their interdependent development defines the contours of the modern mobilized world that brings about an awesome 'mastery' of the physical world (generally known as the 'industrial revolution'). Nature gets dramatically and systematically 'mobilized' in mid-nineteenth-century Europe. Systems dating from that exceptional moment include a national post system in 1840 (Rowland Hill's Penny Post in Britain based upon the simple invention of the prepaid stamp), the first commercial electrical telegram in 1839 (constructed by Sir Charles Wheatstone and Sir William Fothergill Cooke for use on the Great Western Railway), the invention of photography and its use within guide books and advertising more generally (Daguerre in France in 1839, Fox Talbot in England in 1840), the first Baedeker guide (about the Rhine), the first railway age and the first ever national railway timetable in 1839 (Bradshaws), the first city built for the tourist gaze (Paris), the first inclusive or 'package' tour in 1841 (organized by Thomas Cook between Leicester and Loughborough in Britain), the first scheduled ocean steamship service (Cunard), the first railway hotel (York), the early department stores (first in Paris in 1843), the first system for the separate circulation of water and sewage (Chadwick in Britain) and so on. In 1854 Thomas Cook declared as the slogan for such a period: 'To remain stationary in these times of change, when all the world is on the move, would be a crime. Hurrah for the Trip – the cheap, cheap Trip'.

But of course it turned out to be very limited changes – the twentieth century then saw a huge array of other 'mobility systems' develop, including the car system, national telephone system, air power, high speed trains, modern urban systems, budget air travel, mobile phones, networked computers. As we move into the twenty first century these 'mobility systems' are developing further novel characteristics.

First, systems are getting even more complicated, made up of many elements and based upon an array of specialized and arcane forms of expertise. Mobilities have always involved expert systems but these are now highly specific, many are based upon entire university degree programmes and there is the development of highly specialized companies. Second, such systems are much



more interdependent with each other so that individual journeys or pieces of communication depend upon multiple systems, all needing to function and interface effectively with each other. Third, since the 1970s onwards, systems are much more dependent upon computers and software. There has been a large-scale generation of specific software systems that need to speak to each other in order that particular mobilities take place. Fourth, these systems have become especially vulnerable to what Charles Perrow ‘normal accidents’, accidents that are almost certain to occur from time to time, given the tightly locked-in and mobile nature of many such interdependent systems: if one bit goes wrong, the whole system goes wrong.

What has been generated is what I like to call ‘mobility complex’ which is a new system of economy, society and resources. That have spread around the world and this mobility complex is remaking consumption, pleasure, work, friendship and family life.

One of the most interesting writers about that is Zygmunt Bauman. He says, as a consequence of this complex ‘mobility climbs to the rank of the uppermost among the coveted values – and the freedom to move, perpetually a scarce and unequally distributed commodity, fast becomes the main stratifying factor of our late-modern or postmodern times’. Mobility inequalities become central to understanding contemporary societies. And of course as people move about gaining new addresses in their address books so that network extends, they then become more networked and networking thus is a form of inequality.

As I said earlier, movement and especially the capacity to move through what I call network capital have become particularly significant. Network capital may consist of the number of features: the ability to access forms of movement (the capacity to repair a journey when something goes wrong with it and then other alternative could replace it), to know about these forms of movement through, for example, timetables, access to information and communication systems.

My argument is that the contemporary social science ought to take very much into the hand these inequalities of network capital and network capital is obviously connected to income and wealth, it is, as Bauman says, a main stratifying factor in contemporary times and we should study network capital alongside economic capital and cultural capital.

Q: Is network capital measurable or is it just a metaphor?

JU: Yes, it is certainly not as easily measurable as you could measure the economic capital or the distribution of income or wealth but of course normally we would think that, for example, relationships of social class involves more than just a distribution of income and wealth but these are sets of relations, so network capital would also be a set of relations and it would involve therefore indicators – say, the number of different forms of transport that any individual



has access to, forms of communications, the reliability and consistency of those, the degree to which in a given society those were consistent and integrated with each other, the degree to which it was possible for particular groups to repair situations where there might be a some kind of a breakdown. So I think what we could do is to study it at a specific level – particular social groups, to establish how and why these groups have high or low network capital. It would be difficult to produce a national distribution but then that would be true for other forms of basis of stratification as well.

I am writing a book with Anthony Elliott called ‘Mobile Lives’ and he has been doing a research on what we call ‘the globals’ – those who are hugely rich and with high levels of network capital and we have to some degree being exploring through his research how to study the network capital of what we might loosely call ‘the super rich’ whose lives are formed through movement. There is no problem in moving from one country to another because ‘the super rich’ would have homes in those countries as opposed to merely having to book a hotel room or sleeping on somebody’s couch. And of course also there are some groups who compensate for relatively low network capital such as youngish people who in a way often travel in ways more than they ‘ought to’, given their income – for example couchsurfing networks is an interesting way of getting around or compensating for limitations on network capital. So there lots of ways in which one can begin to study at least for specific groups the huge inequalities. I’m not sure whether these inequalities are more pronounced than distribution of income and wealth but they are certainly very pronounced and also they are obviously very significant by ethnicity, by gender, in complicated ways by age and so on.

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AB: I would like to know your opinion of what might be called ‘dematerialization of human experience’ or ‘decrease of vitality’. For example, instead of making a real journey I can sit in front of a TV or a computer and watch pictures, videos or take a virtual tour on the Internet. What do you think about the perspectives of this phenomenon?

JU: The contemporary world is extremely difficult to research because the conditions of physical travel and communications are so rapidly changing, and figuring out how that is going to develop in the future is a huge question.

I think there is still a very strong notion of material connections, at least from time to time. This event wouldn’t have been possible if I hadn’t met couple of colleagues and organized this previously somehow. There has been an establishment and a certain sort of trust between us because we physically met – it is a material basis. And then, on this basis, we have other kinds of communications, such as we are having now, or through mobile telephony, e-



mails or Skype. So at the moment it seems to me that the virtual is adding into material.

What is really interesting is whether people would substitute for the physical or body relationships or encounters with purely virtual. I don't think there is much evidence that this happens so far, but we don't know in what ways technologies will change – this might be a much more dematerialized possibility. What would the Internet be like in a, say, 20 years time? How would we be doing this encounter 20 years from now? I guess it would be pretty different and maybe each of you and I would be 3D-figures, many of the features of the faces would be experienced by the virtual communication systems and we might well say: 'Ok, that's the more real experience we said of the physical travel'.

NP: I believe that in the prospective of a few years from now or few decades perhaps, we will have less need for physical travel and there is a lot of evidence how physical travel in the world is replaced with virtual (not to mention what we are having now). Take virtual tourism for example: now we are installing webcams in different geographical spots of the world in order to give people the illusion of being present somewhere where they can go physically! But they don't have time or desire enough – just to see the picture of what is happening there online.

In my view, non-material, dematerialized factors will take the leading and prevailing role – in one way or another, and the segment of dematerialized world would increase substantially. Virtual mobilities will replace the lack of physical motion; it will even bring some changes in human bodies – we will look differently from what we are now.

SB: What will happen if the virtual communication replaces physical movement on which all the tourist industry stands upon? Or why people are willing to be there physically, by their own bodies?

NP: This is debatable – some people do, some people don't. I don't think that everybody is just dying to travel – this is sometimes forced by the circumstances, by mass media, by public opinion, but sometimes to stay where you are is a bit more rewarding than to go somewhere.

JU: The physical movement that we have known, at least in a part of the world, over the last century or so, have all been premised upon cheap oil. The politics of oil and the fact that at the moment there is no real substitute for oil for moving water, people and objects around the world – this is all a big issue. And, of course carbon emissions from that oil and the effects on climate change are incredibly significant and that would add to the complexities of your point that life would be increasingly 'living a life on the screen' as opposed to 'living a life on the road'.



Telebridge with George Ritzer

PROSUMPTION. A NEW SOCIAL CREATURE

December 11, 2009
Higher School of Economics (Moscow,
Russia) – University of Maryland (USA)

George Ritzer (b. 1940)

An American sociologist, one of the leaders of contemporary sociology, distinguished Professor at the University of Maryland (USA). G. Ritzer is mostly known by his conception of 'McDonaldization' which extends Max Weber's classic theory of rationalization. G. Ritzer claims that McDonalds restaurants proved to be the best manifestations of the growing instrumental rationalization and unanticipated consequences of the human existence. George Ritzer is also one of leading theorists of the theories of globalization and consumer society. The latest works of G. Ritzer are 'The McDonaldization of Society' (2008, 5th edition) and 'The Globalization of Nothing' (2004).



Participants

GR – George Ritzer, University of Maryland

NP – Nikita Pokrovsky, HSE

NJ – Nathan Jurgenson, University of Maryland

PJ – P.J. Rey, University of Maryland

AB – Alex Boklin, HSE

TR – Tatiana Razumovskaya, HSE

Q – Questions from HSE MA students

GR: I have long been working on the topic of prosumption although I did not have the term ‘prosumption’. The term first appears in Alvin Toffler’s work in 1980 and was very popular, but I don’t think that his use of the concept of prosumption had very strong effect on me nor on very many people. There are many other things about Toffler’s work that caught people’s attention – not that one in particular.

When I was writing the book on McDonaldization and writing about the issues of efficiency I started talking about the idea that one of the ways in which McDonalds made operations efficient was to put customers to work. So there has long been a section in the book headed ‘Putting customers to work’ and obviously that’s the forerunner in many ways at least to my thinking on prosumption. Some years later I started to think about this phenomenon in terms of a continuum: on the one hand we have a pure consumer – someone who does nothing but consume; and on the other hand we have a pure producer, if such thing is possible, where there is no consumption going on.

At one point I played with terminology of using the term ‘prosumer’ in a more limited sense to be the kind of person who is more producer than consumer: a prosumer would be toward the production end of the continuum. Then I played on the other end of the continuum with the idea of what I call ‘conducer’, which is obviously just reversing the priorities. The conducer is somebody who is more of a consumer than a producer. I found it so unpleasant that I actually never did anything more with that idea. But still – at least in general – we need to think in terms of a continuum – from a pure producer to a pure consumer and then think of mixed types in the middle.

NP: On my part, if you allow me, I would suggest one more entry to the list of those new functions of consumers who are becoming producers. This is the entry of those consumers who buy electronic equipment and, in order to start all the functions, are forced to study very thick manuals which is quite a labor to do in fact and takes a lot of time and practicing. So, you really need to have a



special training before you can become a well-operating person. There is no way to do anything without producing this knowledge for yourself.

NJ: Can you give an example? A lot of new technologies are increasingly easier to use user-friendly that don't require the sort of production of knowledge on the part of the consumer?

NP: I think this format of 'easy-using' or 'friendly-using' equipment is a fake thing, because if you go deeper in studying those functions, physically speaking, you get lost. You need to have a very special knowledge of how to use them and when a technician comes to help you to install the equipment he operates very easily with those things but as soon as s(he) leaves, you're absolutely lost and you have to learn a lot. It refers to some software, hardware, notebooks, HD television sets, HD satellite receivers, washing machines, dishwashers, everything. It is my general attitude.

AB: I would refer to Linux which you largely discuss in your mutual paper. Even most friendly-made editions of Linux operating systems are hard to use because if we compare them with Windows which is very friendly and which does almost all the things for you, in Linux you really have to learn in order to operate it well and not to face any critical errors.

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GR: On the one hand there is interesting prosumer and on the other hand there is the interesting Web 2.0. Of course they come together since the most important contemporary examples of the prosumer exist on Web 2.0.

One of the arguments that I make in one of my papers is first of all that in thinking about prosumption and production and consumption we need to correct two historical errors. I think it comes from the tendency in economics to differentiate between supply and demand, basically supply being production and demand being consumption. Then in other fields, and in sociology – a separation of production and consumption. I think there is a problem here historically of making this conceptual distinctions but also seeing them as in some way opposed to one another while privileging supply in economics and production in sociology. So two related errors are that we are separating these ideas and then privileging supply and production over demand and consumption.

Over the last century and a half or more, there is a tendency among social theorists to emphasize either production or consumption. Most of the early theorists – and Marx being the most important example – emphasized issues of production. Consumption was of secondary importance to Marx and consumption he dealt with really had to do with something taking place in the process of production, not the kind of consumption that we generally think of today.

Conversely, beginning in the post-war era, in the United States especially, the focus began to shift from production to consumption as production in the



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United States started to decline – early with the decline of the steel industry and then more recently with the decline of the automobile industry. I think you know I'm interested in what I call the cathedrals of consumption – Disney world, shopping malls, Las Vegas and things like that. All of those were products that began in the United States in the 1950s and boomed in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s and reflected, in the United States, the shift from society dominated by production to one in which consumption was more and more important, and the statistics that we use a lot in the US these days, is to say that 70% of the American economy relates to consumption. There is some controversy about how accurate that figure is but in any case it's an indication of the degree to which consumption has become predominant in the United States.

Of course the scholarship began to shift as well. We have the beginning of the field of the sociology of consumption as a result of this although interestingly the sociology of consumption has never been strong in the United States. It's great paradox – the fact that here we have the world leader in consumption and the world leader of exportation of consumer goods and modes of consumption but at the same time we have a rather undeveloped sociology of consumption. Probably the richest work in the sociology of consumption has been done for years in Great Britain. The key document was done by Jean Baudrillard in his 'Consumer Society' which was published in 1970. Baudrillard announced there the arrival of consumer society and it was very important that someone within Marxist tradition made this point. Of course later on he published books on his break with Marxism and then his more radical ideas; anyway, I think that volume was important in the history of thinking about this. But the essential point is if you think of Marx as being overwhelmingly a theorist of production and Baudrillard at least in 1970 as being overwhelmingly a theorist of consumption what you have here is that disfunctional separation between production and consumption, which has adversely affected our ability to think about many things by feeling that we necessarily had to categorize them as either production and consumption.

From my point of view, I would say: we have always been prosumers. To me, the primordial state is the prosumption state. If we go back to the earliest history, back to Middle Ages where people are raising their food, hunting for their food or however get what they need to eat – they are more or less or simultaneously are producers and consumers of what they need in order to live. I think that historically that is the primary state. What happened in the Industrial Revolution, is that we came – as Marx did – to separation of home and a workplace (a factory). We came to think of those people who went to the factory as producers without taking into consideration the fact that – as Marx recognized but did not emphasized enough – even in their active producing within the factory they were prosuming because they had to at the minimum consume –



they had to consume Marx's means of production in order to produce. So what we thought of as a production worker was a prosumer.

As we move into the era of the last half-century or so in the United States, we think in terms of a consumer society. The fact is of course that increasingly – as you, Nikita, pointed out with your examples – consumers are producers. And it's back to my idea 'putting consumers to work' but it seems to me that we see an explosion of prosumption – for a variety of different reasons. Enormous basis of costs saving, for example. It's much cheaper to have you buy that expensive book and look things up and do it all yourself then to send somebody out to your house to do that. Obviously, it's very difficult these days to get corporations to provide those kinds of services, they want you to do your work for yourself. Of course the real force at the moment in the explosion of prosumption is on the Internet, it's on Web 2.0: Wikipedia, Facebook and sites like that are fundamentally prosumption sites: one is consuming what is on those sites but is also producing what is there. Everyone expects the Internet to explode, Web 2.0 to explode and evolve perhaps in Web 3.0. whatever that might be. The future is much greater explosion of prosumption and of the utility of that concept.

NJ: Facebook, for instance, is essentially an entire system where the users create almost all of the content. Obviously the structure of this site is created by the corporation but all the content, every reading is created and also consumed by users so that's a really good example of the importance of prosumption.

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GR: Let's discuss the issue of exploitation. To some degree it depends on your theoretical perspective as to whether you see this as a system of exploitation. I remember going back to very primitive forms of this when they first arose in the US – self-service gasoline stations. The idea was that: do it yourself and the price of gasoline will be cheaper. But very quickly, however, after that initial lowering of the price the price pretty quickly went back to where it was before so you were paying the same price and now you were doing the work. I guess that begins to communicate my perspective on this: in my opinion, that this is genuinely a new form of exploitation.

If you take a Marxian view on this, obviously capitalism is a system which was based on the exploitation of the worker so the idea was to reduce the worker's pay to as little as possible – just pay the worker enough so the worker can survive and come back the next day. And obviously that has worked very well for capitalism. However I think the prosumer is an amazing gift to the capitalist. All of a sudden you have a whole mass of people who are willing to do all sorts of work for nothing, for no pay at all. I'm not sure and I guess if you take business literature on this topic which comes under topics like 'co-creation', the business orientation toward this is not to look at this from the point of view of exploitation. But I do think of it as a kind of exploitation because the



level of exploitation of a prosumer is in many ways much greater than the level of exploitation of a worker. You have to pay workers something, you have to provide them with various sorts of things and in the case of prosumers you don't pay them anything and they provide everything – their own computers, their own electricity, their labor power – they do it all for nothing. This is a controversial issue and other people argue: 'How can you call it exploitation? People love to do this, they have fun doing this, they are fulfilling themselves and therefore it's not exploitation.'

NP: Well, personally I can interpret this as a personal love for being exploited which is a neo-Freudian way of approaching it. Another example of what you are saying, George, is IKEA type of furniture.

GR: Absolutely.

NP: The whole business of IKEA is based on that you build your own furniture using your own labor and your tools and this is why – they say – it's cheaper than in other stores although it is not cheaper, I guess, at least in our country. This is what we can call 'the hidden exploitation'.

GR: IKEA is a good example and you could think of it as a new form of false consciousness, I suppose: we all think we are having all sorts of fun putting together IKEA furniture or doing any number of these prosumption tasks but you are still doing lots of work for them that they used to have to pay people to do. Now you are doing it for them and you are doing it for nothing. And you are smiling as you do it – it's ideal from the capitalist point of view.

* * *

NP: The another issue, a very sharp one. Can you, at least at some point, give an example of prosumer strategies at the universities, in high education, since you are an expert on McDonalds university? Do you think that we have prosumer phenomena in this shere?

GR: Well, I think online universities would be more ideal prosumer kind of universities where professors are doing little or no work and the students are at home on their computers basically educating themselves, using the variety of things that have been provided by the universities. That would be the major example.

NP: Usually it is considered – at least in our country and I'm sure in the US as well – to be very progressive, to be very up-to-date to enable students to work themselves on searching the information or just educating themselves instead of teaching them certain things in class.

GR: I'm sure that ideology exists; it is also a lot cheaper, right? They don't have to pay me or they don't have to pay you. I don't have to be here – go off on the Internet, look up my papers and read them – and I will give you a multiple choice exam that you can take at home. That would be ideal from the university's point of view but I'm not sure it is ideal from the educational point



of view. It is probably a good idea that we have combine traditional kinds of education with using that to have students go off and create a knowledge themselves or find knowledge for themselves. But I'm not sure that we want to go to the university where students are prosuming their entire education. I would be troubled by that – I guess because I would be out of the job.

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PJ: Returning to the issue of exploitation. While I largely agree with characterization of prosumption on the Internet as exploitation, the counter-argument exists. A lot of people who are doing prosumption – most prominent example maybe is bloggers – are doing activities, for much of which they are not getting paid, but they are earning a degree of social capital that they can ultimately leverage and monetize and make real money often. You have a number of examples of Internet millionaires – people who would be able to use their prosumption on the Internet to become famous or to be recognized as having a level of expertise because of the free labor that they contribute and ultimately gained a great deal of indirect benefits from that activities. So while of course no direct wages are being paid through that system bloggers are receiving money from the web-sites, they ultimately are able to monetize their activity and many make a living from the free content that they had originally produced.

NJ: The general point is that even if we are not being paid to use Facebook for instance there is also non-monetary value – social capital, social networks that we make. We can find jobs in the future or just get personal enjoyment. It maybe doesn't have to do with direct wages but value can be calculated in different ways because if you only calculate value by direct wages then exploitation on Facebook is infinite.

GR: Right.

NJ: If the producers are not being paid, then the exploitation is infinite because in Marx's sense you are only calculating value on direct monetary wages. So if we want to talk about exploitation we also need to see the other sorts of non-monetary value that are created.

PJ: I think some people have drawn the analogy that is more useful to look at – gift economies which operate on indirect reciprocity, reputation economies. The issue is that certainly exploitation is occurring with prosumption online but there's also a lot more going on, it's a much more complex story and to really fully understand this process you have to step outside the conventional Marxist framework.

GR: This gets into an issue getting a lot of attention here these days – an argument by Anderson about the free economy. Are you familiar with that argument there?

NP: Can you be more specific?



GR: I'll let Nathan do it, but the basic argument is that mainly because of the Internet we have become more and more accustomed to getting things free. Lots of the services that we get on the Internet we get for nothing. I would say it costs Facebook (and many other companies) huge amount of money to provide the infrastructure. They are providing us with the service and we are not paying for it. The other side: you have lots of things that are available to you on the Internet that are free.

That creates an ethic where what you do on the Internet is free. The argument is that we have emerging here a free economy which raises all sorts of interesting issues to think about in the future and how it is that all of these people who are often doing GPS mapping in order to map the world or writing book reviews for Amazon.com and they're doing it because they like to do it. How are they going to survive?

NJ: I think it's a good summary. We are working on the Internet for free and we're buying our products for free – that's the free economy.

PJ: The other issue is this: a company will provide, say, 90% of their services for free but once you are hooked, once you like what they have to offer, in order to access the full value of their products you need to start paying, buy a premium – and then additional services are made available to you. I think that a lot of online companies have moved to that model.

GR: An interesting example of this is iPod with its apps. People send in apps and iPod decides which they are going to include and which not. Many of them are free some they charge for. It's a hugely growing number of these applications which greatly expand the capability of an iPod. Now the point here is that many people are creating these apps this for free but by having more applications iPod is enriched, it becomes more attractive and acquires more power in the market place. I think Google now has a version of this and has gone to a model of the 'accept them all'. In any case, prosumers are doing all sorts of work that is greatly benefiting. Maybe it's a beginning of a career, maybe they can start charging for it but in many cases they end up getting nothing but pleasure that iPod is using their application.

NP: So, the question is, why do people do that? What's in your opinion the main motivation for people to share their free products and put them online or send them to Wikipedia or any other Internet source and giving them for free for the common use?

NJ: You use the word 'common' – we hear it behind the ethic of Linux and other open source software. In a 'creative commons' community like Wikipedia the idea is collaborating in creating some sort of a social good. It is a very socially rich environment that people get a lot out of.

NP: This is what we call 'free economy', then.



GR: Yes. There is an ideological conflict on the Internet between a capitalistic mentality and what's called the cyber libertarian notion. Linux, for example, would be a part of this. There are people who adopt the cyber libertarian notion – that Internet should be free and controlled by the mass of prosumers – they derive pleasure from being involved in this movement. Linux succeeds as opposed to the other available systems that charge large sums of money to provide essentially the same kinds of services. So there's kind of an ideological satisfaction for many people that is derived from this as well.

AB: I have a question that would refer to the issues that we have just mentioned exploitation and free economy ethics. How would you treat the phenomenon of Internet piracy? Is it just a way of breaking the law or that's a way of protesting or even bringing that free economy ethics to greater extent? For example, if I contribute to Wikipedia or Linux or to other things it wouldn't that be quite logical for me if I expected to get music, video files, or watch online television for free as well? Just because I would like to see some feedback from corporations.

NP: Indirectly it also refers to plagiarism on the Internet – not the same subject but they intersect one another very closely – which is widely spread among students in all the countries. At the university where now I work there is a special division and a software program for tracing plagiarism and not a single student's paper can get any satisfactory degree without getting through this program.

GR: So are you both saying that because you are doing those things free on the Internet it is ok to steal music or to steal ideas?

NP: No, this is a question, this is not an affirmation or anything like this. If Internet is a free zone, then everything is free on the Internet.

AB: And this is about the question of a new form of capitalism, I suppose, in general. A total free market which will replace the old-fashioned capitalism aimed at selling goods and at the same time exploiting people for free. That is just a question, not a thesis.

GR: Yes, I think it's a big new issue. There are a lot of questions associated with it, of developing a total economic model where people do things for free and get things for free. That is such a revolutionary idea.

I was just in Italy. We spent a week there and we had a guy who was our driver for the week. I thought he was the employee of my host. Two or three days into the trip I asked, 'How long have you been driving for so and so?' and he answered, 'I don't drive for him, I'm his friend.' A couple of days later I said to my host, 'It is quite unusual that this guy is willing to take a week out of his life and out of his work to drive us around all over Italy.' And he replied, 'That's the Mediterranean way'. It's a version of a free economy. Maybe there are more places in the world where we have these pockets of free economy.



NP: I think it is primordial, prehistoric ethic. Italy, Greece, sometimes the south of Russia (it used to be in Russia at least) – same things. You can get a lot of services for free.

GR: Well, perhaps what we have here is a coming together of primordial performance of services for free and the Internet performance of services for free. Obviously, however, we have daunting problems in creating the free economy, the actual implementation of that. It bubbles the mind to try to think about how you would run an entire economy in that way.

NJ: I think the issue of piracy is really good to give another sort of not-so-capitalist slant to what is going on with presumption, even though I'm sure it will leverage for profit in the long run. I don't think that presumption is an invention of capitalist to just trick us all into working for free; with piracy or related developments we see collapsing of giant capitalist institutions in the economy such as the publishing industry or music industry.

* * *

GR: With Nathan, we have also been thinking and writing about efficiency versus effectiveness. Efficiency is, of course, one of the basic characteristics of Weber's theory of rationalization and my theory of McDonaldization and certainly a basic component of capitalism as well. All of these refer to what we do or what is ought to be done if efficient kind of way.

Sometimes efficiency is effective too, but other times efficiency ends up being ineffective. We have the examples of recent failure of the American automobile companies which were operating very efficiently but not very effectively in the sense that they were not producing competitive automobiles, automobiles that were well adapted to the environmental problems we have, to gasoline prices etc.

The argument is that what we see on the Internet and Web 2.0 is the issue of effectiveness rather than efficiency. It is not efficient for ten thousand people to be involved in the creation of Wikipedia entry, a very inefficient model, right? But it is quite an effective model. I think increasingly people are accepting Wikipedia as a legitimate source. I edited a few years ago the Encyclopedia of Sociology which is 11 volumes long – a traditional model where I used 17 hundred scholars around the world to write the entries. And one of the review said something like: 'Well, many of the entries are not as good as or no better than Wikipedia entries.' I thought it was a good contrast between the older, relatively efficient model of getting 17 hundred scholars to write in their areas of expertise – efficient but maybe not so effective – and the Wikipedia model which is not very efficient but quite effective.

* * *

GR: Another idea that I have been working on with Nathan has to do with various models of surveillance and control within society. What we start with



there is Michel Foucault's notion (based on the work of Jeremy Bentham) of the Panopticon in his book 'Discipline and Punish'. His model is the prison and the tower in the prison. The prison cells are open to the tower and you can have hundreds or thousands of prisoners who are being surveilled and controlled by a very small number of prison guards. And in fact in the end you don't necessarily even need to have anybody in the tower because the prisoners cannot see into the tower and so they conform simply out of the idea that there might be somebody in there. That is the 'few-many issue' – the few controlling the many. Other models have recently been suggested. The second one is 'synopticon' which is 'the many surveilling the few'. Television would be the example of that where there are many viewers who are watching popular shows. You can have millions of people watching Oprah Winfrey's guests and they will reveal things about themselves.

A third possibility is what we are calling the 'miniopticon' – that is 'the few surveilling the few'. We are using here Norbert Elias' work and his idea of lengthening dependency chains. But the point is that earlier in that process you have only a few people surveilling a few people. It's not important for our purposes.

The key point here is the forth type – what we call the 'omniopticon'. And the 'omniopticon' is 'the many watching the many'. What we want to argue is that in the contemporary world – especially on the Internet – what you have and what has become a much more important model than the classic 'the few watching the many' is 'the many watching the many' so we see this is emerging new model of surveillance and control. Facebook would be an example here. These is an important corrective on Foucault's perspective.

AB: If we talk about the last example, Facebook, even despite the fact that still the many are watching the many another premise is implicated – the Foucauldian premise – which is that the few are watching the many. So it is argued sometimes that Facebook reveals too much personal information from the users which they upload to their profiles to secret services.

GR: That is a good point because what you are really saying is that we basically create here four types but of course in the real world you have a combination of types. So I think it is entirely possible that we have 'many-many' model going on and the few out there who are watching the many-many kind of model. I think that would be a useful addition to the paper we are working on.

AB: That also might be about the Frankfurt School problem between what is pronounced and what is true, what is behind. As a pronounced model you can have this 'omniopticon' translated to lay people while in fact you have classical panopticon.

NJ: But I think it is important not to fall back into this. We all should be wary of very important critiques about how panopticon surveillance exists on Facebook.



All those critiques are very important and a lot of people are focused on them with respect to the Internet. But what has not really been written and what has not been focused on is finding issue with the ‘omnioptron’. Again – not to say we should not talk about government or corporate surveillance on Facebook, but I think there is a new problematic, a new potential for new theorizing on ‘the many are watching the many’.

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AB: Just a short note about ‘effectiveness versus efficiency’. If we discuss effectiveness it is important to bear in mind which sphere we take – for example the Italian man Professor Ritzer was talking about was effective in gaining social capital but he was not effective in gaining money. And the same can be said about Wikipedia: you can be effective in providing useful knowledge for all the people around the world but it is not effective to give money to those who contribute to this project.

GR: Yes, fair point.

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GR: One of the things we are interested in is the transition from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 and the implications of that. It relates to the ideas that I develop in ‘The Globalization of Nothing’. The general argument that we make is that Web 1.0 was dominated more by what I call ‘nothing’. ‘Nothing’ is any social form which is centrally conceived, centrally controlled and lacking in distinctive content. The classic Yahoo page that is closer to the ‘nothing’ end of the continuum is centrally controlled by Yahoo, centrally conceived by Yahoo and lacking in distinctive content – and historically, at least in the early years of Web 1.0, everybody got basically the same page. On Web 2.0, it seems to me, there is much greater possibility for the existence of ‘something’ – on Web 2.0 we can see the development of many more social forms that are more indigenously conceived by the people who happen to be involved in, controlled by those people and producing as a result distinctive content rather than the homogenous content that gets produced on Web 1.0. In that sense that is a rather optimistic view of social change and optimistic view of Web 2.0 as opposed to Web 1.0: Web 2.0 is more a domain of ‘somethingness’ and on Web 2.0 there are much greater possibilities for the creation of it than on Web 1.0.

AB: If we treat Web 2.0 as a positive transmission from its previous variant, do we face the problems we have just mentioned – social control and the problem of manipulation? I guess we should take both sides of the coin in our analysis.

GR: What I always like to do is to look at a social phenomenon from a variety of different theoretical lenses and I think we need to be wary of adopting one overarching lens and always seeing things from the point of view of that lens. In terms of what we talk about today we get rather contradictory conclusions: on the one hand, Web 2.0 is an exploitative domain and on the other hand it is also



a domain in which we see more ‘somethingness’ than ‘nothingness’. So you have simultaneously a critical orientation and a laudatory orientation. For me, social theory is like a huge toolkit and I think from a student’s point of view what is desirable is to know as much about the tools that exist in that kit as possible. I suppose I should do a TV show, ‘Theorizing anything’.

NP: But behind this joke, I suppose, there is a very serious content because being a theorist today in sociology means that, basically speaking, in my opinion one has to have an interpretation for almost everything in the world. This is in what sociological theory is today how I think. I am not sure you have the same attitude, perhaps you do.

GR: Yes, I always try to make sense out of whatever I am encountering and usually I fall back on my own theoretical ideas or other theoretical ideas, or develop new ones. There are always new developments, vast warehouse stores of ideas that you can use to think about various things or to come up with new ideas. The other thing about being a theorist is that you can theorize as long as you have two or three brain cells left – and maybe beyond that. I may have gone beyond that.

* * *

TR: Have I understood correctly that consuming process in IKEA or Facebook examples is a free kind of labor that actually brings pleasure just because people do it for themselves so they are, in Marx’s terminology, not really separated from the result of their work and the labor process?

PJ: I would say that what you bring up is that presumption to some degree may overcome alienation. I think the another important thing that we have not brought up in the conversation about presumption is the fact that visual content is infinitely reproducible. I think what is interesting about the way that economy works on the Internet is that you can actually produce something for your own enjoyment not being separated from the product of your own labor. But then everyone else can come along and simply copy that million times, infinitely. For example, with the iPod and iPhone apps, you can make a program that is useful to you and then Apple can come along and reproduce it and leverage value from that product. And I think that understanding the aspect of infinite reproducibility in conjunction with the idea that labor is less alienated has a lot of potential for explaining why presumption has exploded in the context of Web 2.0.

NJ: As a possibility, we can have exploitation and not alienation – maybe what we have is that people are not alienated and not moved from their work but they can still be exploited.

GR: I would answer that you need to distinguish between structural realities and attitudes and feelings. You may feel not alienated, you may feel not exploited, you may feel really good about what you are doing, but from a structural point of view – Marx’s definition of alienation was really a structural definition – you



lose control over, you get separated from that. The same thing with exploitation – these are to me concepts which relate to the fundamental structure of capitalism. And I think those fundamental realities continue to be in place while more and more people are putting their IKEA furniture together or writing on their Facebook wall and things like that. They are feeling good about it but at the same time Facebook's market value goes up a billion dollars a year and IKEA is more and more profitable. So you feel good and they are growing richer. One of the ways they are growing richer is what you are doing for them. It is a great system from a capitalistic point of view because we are all joyfully enriching Facebook, Apple Computer, IKEA. If I could only get you all to write my books for me and apply this that way I could become wealthy myself.

AB: That is once again about compensatory mechanisms which can help to overcome exploitation. Even if the system is really exploitative you may still have a lot of joy and if you are copied millions of times – doesn't it mean that you are popular, that you have gained social capital?

NP: I would say that what we are discussing today is the post-consumer society type of free economy where people would be contributing to the common market or different kinds of markets without having such a self-consciousness of being exploited. It is the free donations of products and free consumption – but only under the condition that the economic and social security of people is guaranteed by the society. Otherwise I cannot imagine it to be something real. The question is whether we have enough evidence of those new-coming phenomena and the key issue is what is going to be after the economic crisis – is it going to be a new stage of development of the consumer ideology and consumption, a post-consumerism type of thing which I think you, George, is describing as the totality of prosumer culture where everyone will be contributing to consuming from the same reservoir.

GR: Yes, that is right. I think there is a lot of evidence that there is a new world emerging here. Your point is a good one, that is if we are all doing this stuff for free that might work if we lived in a society where everyone was being cared for at some at least minimum level by the society but that is certainly not the case in the United States – we don't have that kind of ethic. We have a real contradiction here in the sense that lots of people often do things for free not really knowing how they are going to profit from it but doing it nonetheless because they like doing it. But it is in the context of the society which is not going to be there to protect them. This is another dilemma that we need to address in the future. This is all exploding around us – we are all part of it, we can all see it very clearly, and so we all can analyze this as we go on a day-to-day basis.



Telebridge with
Michael Burawoy

PUBLIC SOCIOLOGY IN REVIEW

December 18, 2009
Higher School of Economics (Moscow, Russia) –
University of California, Berkeley (USA)

Michael Burawoy (b. 1945)

A prominent American sociologist, at present Professor at the University of California, Berkeley. At the XVII ISA World Congress of Sociology he was elected president for the 2010-2014 term. Michael Burawoy is mostly known as the author of 'Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process Under Monopoly Capitalism' (1979); he is a known proponent of 'public sociology'. M. Burawoy's early works were made within the scope of the participant observation method of the process of production at industrial companies around the world: in Zambia, Chicago, Hungary, Russia. Presently M. Burawoy emphasizes the importance of how social science as a certain type of knowledge is implanting into the public sphere and becoming common asset. To consider this question he employs the spheres of academic/professional sociology, social engineering, critical sociology and, namely, public sociology as analytic ideal-typical modes. His most recent publications are 'What Happened to the Working Class?' (2002), 'Private Troubles and Public Issues' (2007), 'A Public Sociology for California' (2008).



Participants

MB – Michael Burawoy, University of California

NP – Nikita Pokrovsky, HSE

Q – questions from HSE MA students.

MB: What I want to do is to give an introduction to public sociology based on my own experience and then more abstractly so you have a sense of its genesis and then we can have a discussion about its relevance for Russia.

I am going to start in 1990. I was invited to join a boat full of Russian sociologists going down the Volga river for 10 days – it was a wonderful trip and introduced me to Russian sociology – many of these sociologists, of course, were working in large enterprises and so were very applied sociologists. 1990 was a very exciting year in the history of the Soviet Union, it was just about the end although at that time we did not know it. I had been to the Soviet Union before but this was the first time I had a chance to speak to sociologists on an informal basis.

After Moscow I went to South Africa. This was the first time I had been there since 1968. I had never returned because of the academic boycott against the South African apartheid regime organized by the African National Congress. But I was invited in 1990 after the boycott had been lifted to go and address sociologists in South Africa. This was a very strange and extraordinary experience for me particularly after going down the Volga with all those Russian sociologists.

What I discovered in South Africa was a sociology I had never seen before, just as Russian sociology was also quite unique at that time. I found sociologists – as well as people whom I had known for many years in exile – people who were deeply engaged in the social movements of the time whether in communities or factories. These sociologists, deeply embedded in such movements and doing a very activist sociology, were generating all sorts of new ideas and challenges to the conventional sociology I was accustomed to. This was my first intimation that sociology could be really different than the sociology I practiced and that was generally practiced in the United States. It was a very professional – by ‘professional’ I mean sociologists in the United States spend a lot of their time talking to one another, exchanging papers with one another and evaluating one another’s work, teaching students in the university but for the most part they are insulated from the wider society.

I was intrigued by this new alternative sociology and I came back to the United States with an imagination of how sociology could be different – the combination of going down the Volga with Russian sociologists at the time of



the disintegration of the Soviet Union and being in South Africa with South African sociologists challenging the apartheid regime.

Out of this emerged, over time, reflections that became the basis of my vision of sociology as composed of 4 elements: professional, public, policy and critical. The idea of public sociology emerged very much from my experience in South Africa in 1990 and indeed in subsequent trips to South Africa during the 1990s and I still continue to go back there. That is the context within which my understanding of public sociology developed – that and the contrast with US sociology, which was so involuted and so professionalized.

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DIVISION OF SOCIOLOGICAL LABOR

Audience Knowledge	Academic Audience	Extra-Academic Audience
Instrumental Knowledge	PROFESSIONAL	POLICY
Reflexive Knowledge	CRITICAL	PUBLIC

The prototype of professional sociology can be found in the United States. It is the extreme form of professional sociology and I am going to contrast it with what I call ‘public sociology’. In professional sociology sociologists engage with one another, work within their own research programs, develop research agendas. A variety of research programs exist and are developed usually in a university or academic context, sometimes in institutes outside the university. Professional sociology is a sociology for sociologists or largely for sociologists as opposed to public sociology, which engages broader publics, lay audiences – it is a dialogical relationship in which each side is accountable to the other in which sociologists respond to the problems and interests of publics and publics respond to sociological insights. So here the idea is not to produce a sociology only accessible to professionals but to produce a sociology that can provide the foundations of public debate and public discussion.



I want to contrast public sociology with what I call policy sociology. Policy sociology is less a dialogic relationship, it is the application of professional sociology in the service of some client. The client may be a government agency, an NGO, a labor organization. In policy sociology it is the client that determines or defines the terms of sociology, defines a problem to be solved by a sociologist.

And finally, there is a fourth type of sociology, which I call critical sociology. Critical sociology is often in opposition to policy sociology but aims first and foremost at professional sociology. Critical sociology is sociology that investigates interrogates the assumptions of professional sociology and subjects them to critical discourse, critical discussion.

Where do we find a lot of policy sociology? I talked about professional sociology in the US, public sociology in South Africa. I found a lot of policy sociology in what was the Soviet Union. In fact sociology in the Soviet Union was largely a sociology that was orchestrated and organized on behalf of the Party. It was a sociology that provided the ideology of the Party state. So the prototype of policy sociology could be found in the Soviet Union.

Critical sociology you might say emerged in response to policy sociology – in places like Hungary or Poland where socialist regimes called forth critical sociology, critical of the policy sociology – although that could be very risky. In the West, on the other hand, critical sociology was more oriented to professional world. In the United States we think of people like C.Wright Mills or Robert Lynd, one could even include Pitirim Sorokin who, in his later years, played the role of the critical sociologist in the United States.

NP: How about Robert Merton, where would you put him?

MB: That is interesting. He was a key architect of professional sociology in the United States although one of the ways he built professional sociology was by giving it a public image – so he was also a public sociologist but only in the service of professional sociology. His student, Alvin Gouldner was very much a critical sociologist, critical of the professional sociology that was current in the 1950s and 1960s.

Anyway there we have our two-by-two table, and the question is: how do we justify it? I have constructed it inductively and, thus, justified it empirically, but I think that we can also generate these four types of sociology by asking two fundamental questions:

1) Knowledge for whom?

This is a question that sociologists and social scientists ask too infrequently. Who are we writing for? Are we writing for ourselves, an academic audience, or are we writing for an extra-academic audience? That is one dimension of our two-by-two table.

2) Knowledge for what?



For what ends, purposes do we want to produce sociology? When we are policy sociologists we have an extra-academic audience, a client who defines the problem, and we, sociologists, try to solve the problem, that is one form of instrumental knowledge. On the other hand, as professional sociologists we have an academic audience and we are in the business of solving puzzles. I think that is what we do as social scientists, we have our research programs or paradigms, and they generate puzzles and as sociologists we try to solve those puzzles, that is how Thomas Kuhn defines science and I think that is what we do as scientists. Those are the two types of instrumental knowledge – solving puzzles which is professional sociology or solving problems, which is policy sociology.

Now we turn to the second dimension – reflexive knowledge, which is not so much concerned with means for given ends but concerned with discussion of those ends, ultimate goals, values of society. This reflexive knowledge is what Max Weber would call ‘value discussion’ and this distinction between instrumental and reflexive knowledge is at the heart of the Frankfurt School of critical theory.

In the extra-academic context reflexive sociology is public sociology – that is a dialogue among sociologists, social scientists and broader publics about the directions or the values of the society in which they live. Critical sociology, on the other hand, is a discussion within the sociological community itself, a discussion about the methodological and philosophical assumptions of professional sociology, about the foundations of our discipline. It is important to interrogate the values that inform professional sociology, but that interrogation – that critical sociology – should also infuse public and policy interventions. The values that form the foundations of sociology – notions of justice, of rationality or equality – should also inform public and policy sociologies. So if professional sociology is the ‘brain’ then critical sociology is the ‘heart’ of sociology – it is where we find our reason for existence and the motivation for our work.

This is my division of sociological labor. Now let me make a few qualifying remarks. First, individual sociologists can be professional and public sociologists at the same time or they can be policy and professional sociologists, or they could be simply public sociologists alone. The link between sociologist and type of sociology is not given, it is a complex relationship and indeed sociologists often have careers that take them sequential through these various boxes.

What about the relationships among the 4 sociologies? The underlying assumption of this division of labor is that they these four types are in a relationship of interdependence. That is to say, each one of these sociologies depends upon the other three. The flourishing of each depends upon the flourishing of all.



To the extent that these four types of sociology are in intimate connection with one another we have a vibrant discipline. To the extent – this is the danger – that the public sociologist becomes populist sociologist and is only concerned with being accountable to publics and loses touch with policy and critical and professional sociologies, that is a problem for public sociology and a problem for the discipline as a whole. To the extent that professional sociology insulates itself from policy, critical and public sociologies, as to some extent it does in the United States, that is a problem not for professional sociology but for the discipline as a whole. Insofar as critical sociology becomes simply dogmatic sociology and becomes unresponsive to professional, public and policy sociologies, it too becomes problematic.

So my claim is that flourishing discipline depends upon the interrelationship, upon a synergy of these interdependent sociologies, forming what we might call an organic solidarity. That is my dream. But reality, of course, is very different. The reality is that these four sociologies – in whatever context we look at them whether it be local, national, regional, global – are turn out to be part of a hierarchy, they are in relationship of domination whose configuration looks very different in different countries.

* * *

Let's have a little fun. All the following people are sociologists in one way or another. By talking about them the idea is to show the ways in which they do not fit perfectly into these boxes. All I want to suggest by these short biographies how different people are located at different places in this matrix, often people combine different types of sociology together and we can see in the Russian context that different generations of sociologists are engaged with the wider world and with sociology in different ways.

Leon Trotsky. Trotsky was of course a very public figure and a wonderful orator, he spent a lot of time haranguing people about the revolution, especially in 1917 with those in Saint Petersburg. But he was also an architect of the early Soviet state – his policies under war communism during the civil war and the militarization of labor afterwards turned out to be very authoritarian. But he was a major figure in charting out economic policy and he was, of course, the brilliant commander of the Red Army during the The Civil War. An extraordinary character. On the one hand he was a public sociologist – his *History of the Russian Revolution* is still one of the greatest books ever written about the Russian revolution, and one written by a participant observer. You might say he was a professional sociologist but there was no professional sociology. He was also a critical sociologist. *The History of the Russian Revolution* was written in exile as a critique of what became of the revolution. We see how he is located in at least three of these boxes.



Alexander Chayanov was a great rural sociologist who defended the idea of the peasant economy against collectivization. And his theories of the peasant economy are widely read, at least, in the West to this day. Theodor Shanin, a well-known sociologist and big figure in peasant studies, and who has now returned to Russia, became Chayanov's champion and popularizer in the West. Chayanov was also a policy sociologist and a critical sociologist like Trotsky.

Nikolai Bukharin. He wrote a book called *Historical Materialism* and a very famous book on imperialism as well. So you might say he too was a policy sociologist but also contributing to the emerging paradigm of Marxist sociology, but from outside the professional world.

But what do all these three people have in common? All are public sociologists in one way or another but they have something else in common. They were members of a single party but what happened to all of them? They were killed by the Stalinist regime (Bukharin 1938 as far as we know, Chayanov was 1937, and Trotsky was assassinated in 1940). My point is this: public sociology is not for sissies, it can be very dangerous. For example, public sociologists in South Africa were assassinated, others found themselves in prison and harassed. If we think about the Iran today, sociology is under assault precisely because it has public moments and critical moments. Here in the United States, there is no threat to your life, there is nothing at stake – it is just a matter of what you might lose in terms of your career.

Pitirim Sorokin. In his early years in the United States in the 1920s and 1930s Sorokin was a major figure in professional sociology. He introduced the idea of social mobility into US sociology – something we now take completely for granted. He was also a major figure in bringing history to sociology. Yes he brought it to sociology in a relatively crude manner but his vision, his panorama was extraordinary. That is on the one side. But on the other side he tried to promote a public sociology with his ideas of love or altruism, which he thought of in religious terms and sought to disseminate them among publics beyond sociology. In fact he lost his sociological audience because he was so critical of sociology. In his Russian phase Sorokin was also a policy sociologist – he was a secretary to Kerensky in the Provisional Government during the Revolution and after the Revolution he conducted sociological surveys investigating rural policies. His work became a real challenge to the regime and he was imprisoned. He secured a reprieve from Lenin but was expelled from the country. That is how he survived as a critical-public sociologist and escaped the tragic fate of so many others. He is a fascinating figure because he moved between all four types of sociology at different periods in his life.

Tatiana Zaslavskaya. In Novosibirsk, she worked on inequality within Soviet society. But she was more than just a professional sociologist.



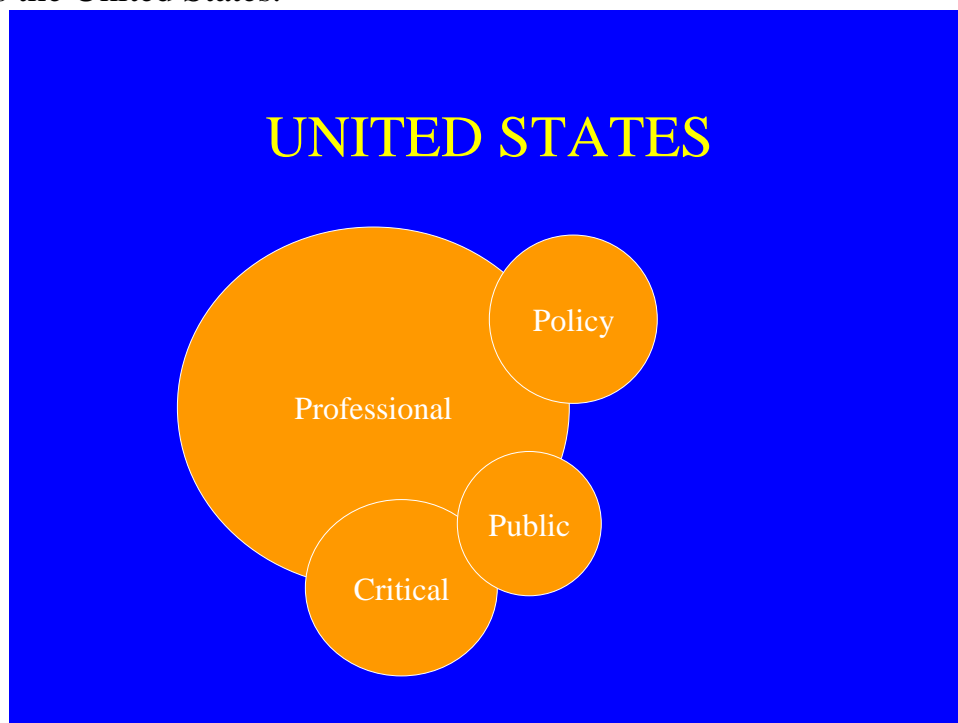
NP: She issued a very important report in 1980 about the social conditions of Soviet society which was very critical, challenging its foundations. It was a very important professional deed and very risky in a certain way. She was highly criticized by the communist party bosses and was almost on the edge of being expelled from the university in 1980. It was the late Brezhnev period, we call it the time of ‘The dream of reason’. Zaslavskaya was a rebel, she started a very important movement and I think she is the founder of contemporary Russian sociology – public sociology as well as professional. But she is also a policy sociologist. She worked with clients, with contracts and she conducted her research not just for the sake of academia but for practical applied purposes, especially in rural sociology.

MB: I think she used to say that being in Novosibirsk there was no way to punish her as there was no place further from Moscow where they could send her. So she could be critical and safe in Novosibirsk.

Vladimir Yadov. He is of course another figure very similar to Zaslavskaya – similar generation, similar public role and similar professional role in sociology.

* * *

MB: Let me summarize where we are by presenting this in a different way – not talking about individual sociologists but the sociologies of different countries. Here is the United States.



This is my impression of the United States, a gross generalization of a complex field. Still, we can say it is heavy on professional sociology with



relatively weak public, policy and critical sociologies. The professional dominates the discipline.

NP: Why do you have such a big professional sociology – because there is no public demand for sociology? What is the social reason for having such an enormously huge bulk of professional sociologists in your country?

MB: We can say historically that all the disciplines not just sociology are hyper-professionalized in the United States, and they developed in the mid- and post-war period with what we call ‘The Academic Revolution’, with the rapid expansion of the universities that combined both teaching and research, universities became societies into themselves.

This is interesting: we always asked the great French philosopher, Michel Foucault, when he used to come to the University of California, ‘Why do you come to Berkeley? Why would a French intellectual want to come to the United States?’ He said, ‘Because in the United States the university is like a huge public sphere unto itself.’ And he was able here to debate with people as though it were a public sphere. Such a university does not exist in France.

Specifically about sociology, we have a real problem – why is the public, the critical and the policy so small? Because sociology has always had a problem in the United States in conveying its wisdom to a broader community. Why? Because in the United States the idea of the social, the very assumptions of sociology are antithetical to the common sense of its people. In the United States people think as individuals, they think psychologically, the world and so the sociological perspective has great difficulty in conveying the social structural limitations of human action. In the US individuals believe they can accomplish anything, they just have to want to do it badly enough! Why is policy sociology so weak? Policy science was stronger in the period when there was a more elaborated welfare state in the 1960s, when there were publicly recognized ‘social problems’, such as poverty, or civil rights, but today these problems may be worse but they are not defined as social problems – the welfare state has shrunk and problems are defined as an individual affair. The concept of society is alien not just to the citizens but also to the state. We sociologists are on a very defensive position: we exist because we have so many students to teach, it is our major function. In my view, teaching is a very important aspect of public sociology and we should think of students as our publics with whom we have conversations, two-way conversations, about the world.

NP: But why would your students take sociology courses if they are not applicable to what is happening in the country?

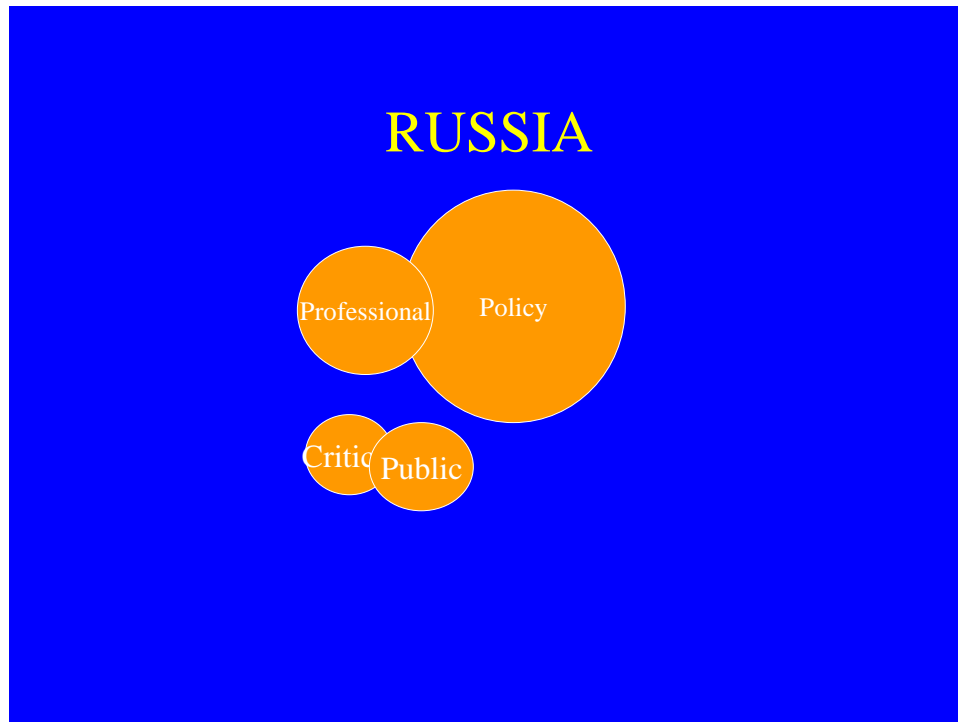
MB: Sociology is very applicable to what is happening in the country! While the world at large may not see it that way, many students do. For example, many of our sociology students are immigrants: when they come to the United States they find themselves in a very difficult situation to grasp. Sociology gives them



a vision of how this society is constructed, they recognize hierarchy, domination, inequalities but also diversity, plurality, different ethnic and racial groups. But the wider public does not see the world through a sociological lens. Not to say the sociology does not explain the world – far from it, it is just that its explanations, the emphasis on social structure is not in the common sense, not readily accessible to people. It's very different in France, Scandinavia, England, for example. There they do understand social structure, but the United States is a mass society which worships the individual, has created what Durkheim called 'the cult of the individual'. Therefore it is difficult to get the ideas of sociology across.



In South Africa there was a strong public sociology because it was so linked to the apartheid struggles of the 1970s, 1980s and the early 1990s. What is interesting, today in a new post-apartheid South Africa sociology is in retreat, it is becoming less public. Civil society is now much more contained, leaders of the civil society have moved into the state, the state itself has insisted that sociologists spend more time teaching and has made the conditions of sociology more and more difficult. So what you have is a movement back out of the society, away from public sociology into the professional and policy sphere. Many sociologists in South Africa cannot exist on their university income alone, but have to supplement it with policy work for NGOs or often state organizations. A similar story we could tell for India or Brazil.



In 1990 Russian sociology was in a very vibrant mood. This was the Perestroika period in which civil society and sociology took on a new lease of life particularly around small cooperatives which energized civil society. I think in the post-Soviet era, the public face of sociology has been in retreat. Elena Zdravomyslova has said that public sociology in Russia has to be the public defense of professional sociology. Only now is professional sociology being built up, like here at the HSE. But it is still fragmented without a coherent framework. This the legacy of the Soviet period when sociology – inasmuch as it existed – was the ideological arm of the party state. That is to say, with a few exceptions such as those I have already mentioned, sociology was an extremely limited policy science. You live with that legacy today, as we can see in the abundance of survey research for NGOs, for corporations, for government agencies, for politicians. An autonomous professional sociology is still very weak.

NP: I have pretty much the same type of understanding of what is happening. The only point is that we probably need to put those circles closer to one another because critical and public sociology are not isolated from policy and professional – many figures among my colleagues work in all four domains simultaneously. They come closer with an exception that probably policy sociology is a little more distant from the others. Policy sociologists feel like being more self-contained, they are more or less well paid, they probably do not



need us, they have their own world – their own contracts, their own clients – probably not in the time of crisis today but a few years ago.

What is your anticipation of the future development of public sociology in your country and in our country? Do you think it could be on the rise and under what conditions? What can our students do with the knowledge of public sociology in the future?

MB: The future of public sociology varies from country to county. When I was talking about public sociology in the US this time last year I was optimistic that the new Obama regime, facing an economic crisis would subscribe to a more sociological vision of the world. And I was not the only one hoping this might be the case. This hasn't come to pass even though the economic crisis continues. Particularly hard hits are the universities which are moving ever more in the direction of privatization, corporatization and there is now the question of what will happen to disciplines like sociology, or history or English that cannot deliver commercially redeemable goods. The public universities in the United States at this moment in history – and we feel it very strongly here in Berkeley – are very much in retreat, in a defensive position. Of course the university is organized so that the first to suffer are the non-academic staff who get laid off and the students who have to pay higher fees, but, slowly but surely, it is going to affect everybody and, indeed, it is already affecting everybody. Under these circumstances sociology has both greater obstacles to overcome but it will also be presented with new opportunities. We have to think of new ways of giving sociology a public face in these new circumstances. Today public sociology is ever more necessary because there are no clear economic solutions to our economic problems, there are only sociological solutions. Still, as I have said, it is not clear who believes this – even many sociologists don't – and, therefore, what constituencies public sociology will have. That is the story here in the United States.

NP: How about China? I am asking because you are a great admirer of inviting Chinese colleagues into the ISA so I am asking you about your evaluation of the perspectives of the Chinese sociology. They have very special social and political conditions.

MB: It is a very fascinating story and very different to the Russian one. Chinese sociology did not exist until the 1980s. It had been squashed by the state. How was it resurrected? In the 1980s they brought in experts of Chinese descent from the United States – Nan Lin was the most famous of these – to bring US sociology to China and they did that very successfully. At the same time the government sent lots of Chinese students mainly to the United States, but Europe too, where they were trained. Many of them returned with their PhDs and now populate the major departments of sociology. Sociology is also very strong in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences where more policy driven



work is done. All this indicates that the Chinese state considers sociology as having great potential in tackling social problems and also creating an ideology that will cement a society that is dangerously falling apart. The state has much more faith in sociology than most other states!

Now, alongside this professional and policy driven sociology, there also inevitably develops a critical sociology and even a public sociology. Today in China it is possible to actually have a public sociology because there exists a thin and precarious but nevertheless real public sphere. There is the possibility through the Internet, through NGOs, through social movements of a very limited kind to convey sociology to a wider society. And there have been some very interesting projects conducted by sociologists working with communities and labor organizations in different parts of China. You never know if and when the state will stamp them out of existence, but nevertheless this is a very promising development of sociology. At this point Chinese sociology is one of the most vibrant sociologies in the world.

Another interesting part of the world is Latin America with a long tradition of engaged sociology, public and policy sociology. There we find politicians who are sociologists or were sociologists and public intellectuals orchestrating debates about the direction of society. Brazil is the best example, but also Mexico, Bolivia and Argentina.

NP: Cardoso, a very famous sociologist who was once the president of the ISA, became the president of Brazil. And I heard that there are more sociologists in Brazil than in the United States.

MB: If you are a sociologist in a university in Brazil, you can live on your salary – that is not true in any other country in Latin America where a sociologist employed in the university has 2-3-4-5 other jobs. This really limits the effectiveness of teaching, conducting research, becoming a public figure. Brazil has always funded its public universities in a way that was quite unusual for the third world. But you find a lot of organic public sociology, that is sociologists working closely with communities in many parts of Latin America. They have developed what is called ‘participatory action research’ – that is collaborative research between sociologists as well as other social scientists and communities. It is quite a fascinating region of the world with respect to public sociology!

* * *

Q: Can sociologists exist in countries which don’t have civil society? What do you think about civil society in Russia?

MB: As I see it sociology is a view of the world taken from the standpoint of civil society, so if there is no civil society there is no sociology. And I think there is a lot of evidence for that – in Stalinist Russia there was no sociology, in Mao’s China there was no sociology, and there was no civil society in either of



those countries. The same happened in Pinochet's Chile, or in Nazi Germany. Without civil society sociology cannot survive, they are connected by an umbilical cord. They are Siamese twins, firmly attached to one another, growing up together.

I think what we sociologists have failed to do is to develop a convincing scheme of mapping civil societies in different parts of the world. Any such map must also show the relationship between civil society and the state, civil society and the economy at the same time as being sensitive to the internal structure of civil society. What is civil society? Its elements are institutions, organizations, social movements and publics that are neither part of the state nor part of the economy. What does it look like in Russia? It looks very different in Moscow than it does in Syktyvkar; Novosibirsk is different from Saint Petersburg. Russia is an enormous country and I think the first thing to say is that Russian civil society is not a single integrated one, it is a fractured civil society and therefore you get a fractured sociology. It is no accident, therefore, that sociology tends to develop in one or two centers in Russia. I have not been studying Russia since 2002 so I don't have a good sense of what has happened since then in terms of the development for example of social movements or organizations that transcend regional boundaries.

NP: I agree with you again. Sociology is fragmented and, in my opinion, civil society today in this part of the world is not living through its happiest times. The public demand for sociology is falling as compared to what it used to be, let's say 5-8 years ago. We probably need to agitate publics, this is why we have invited our students to study public sociology, because we cannot wait to be asked to do something in society, we need to look for work in society, to recruit more publics to study sociology, to take the initiative in meeting people, in going on television and radio, the press so as to convey analysis, our critical evaluation of what is happening in society. This is what we can and should do – there is some room for that, there is a freedom today to do that. In other words we need to be a little bit more militant.

MB: Absolutely. On the one hand, there is the idea of a traditional public sociology in which you communicate sociological visions and their relevance through the mass media. On the other hand, there is the organic public sociology in which you have direct face-to-face unmediated relationships between sociologists and communities, building up projects and researches through collaboration.

Sociology has its own projects but it cannot be isolated from other disciplines. Particularly in public sociology, we have to collaborate across disciplinary boundaries. That is not to say that we dissolve sociology, it means that we strengthen the discipline by having relationships with other disciplines. I think public sociology must become a part, a distinct part of a public social science.



Some people think that there should be only one social science, that there should not be sociology, political science, geography, anthropology or economics but instead just one social science. This one social science at this time in history would turn out to be economics and that would be problematic, at least from my point of view. Social sciences have different interests: although each social science is a complex and contested field, nevertheless each has a dominant perspective: in political science it is to support the stability of political orders, in economics it is to expand markets. As I've said I think sociology's interest is to defend civil society and I think these are antagonistic projects. Particularly in an era of run-away marketization, sociology has a very important role to play – to keep markets and the state at bay, to prevent them from destroying civil society. In this regard sociology is at odds with their dominant perspectives in economics and political science, but it is allied to anthropology and to geography. I suppose I am a 'sociological chauvinism' – I still believe in the importance of a sociological vision. And as I say this is very much tied to civil society.

Q: Can one be a sociologist without having a credentialed official training as a sociologist?

MB: I don't think there is any doubt that one can be a public sociologist without a diploma in sociology. In this country, there are thousands of journalists, many of whom are spontaneous, intuitive sociologists or even sociologists that have read a lot of sociology. There are quite a few outstanding journalists who write brilliant analyses of important issues of a sociological character. The *New Yorker* is particularly strong in this regard, and the *New York Times* is like a daily journal of sociology!

So, yes, there are public sociologists doing good work, who are not part of a university, who may not even be trained in sociology and it is our role, sociologists in the university, to enter into a dialogue, a discussion with them. When I was a president of the American Sociological Association, I introduced a new award for excellence in the reporting of social issues. The idea was to reward and recognize people outside the discipline who are doing good sociology, and that is what we do every year. We should not see them as competitors but as collaborators and we should learn from them.

Q: What type of knowledge and practical skills are important in training a public sociologist?

MB: There are two types of public sociology, traditional and organic, and they require very different skills. The traditional public sociologist has to be very skilled at translating – they both have to be of course – sociological ideas into an accessible language so that they resonate with the experience of those with whom we are communicating. Training to be an ethnographer who joins communities in their time and space would be good training for all forms of public sociology. Before we can communicate sociology, we have to understand



the common sense of the people with whom we are communicating. That is a necessary foundation for both the organic and the traditional type of public sociology.

In training public sociologists, we should also spend much more time listening to journalists talk about how they communicate and write for public audiences – they do it every day of their lives. We should bring in photographers and see how they think and how they imagine their subjects. We should bring in practitioners of communication and become apprentices to such experts.

Sociology has not done enough to explore different media; anthropologists are way ahead of us. If we are a part of sociology, we should very deeply engage with, for example, film as a way of presenting our ideas. There are all sorts of ways of presenting our ideas through the Internet, just like the very conversation we are having today. We should be doing more of this. A friend of mine, Erik Wright, who teaches in Wisconsin holds conversations between himself and political activists in Bogota, Columbia about his ideas on participatory government and democratic budgeting. This trans-continental dialogue is now facilitated by the communications technology that we have. That is the optimistic side of public sociology – we have at our disposal new technologies that would facilitate getting our ideas across.

Q: On the one hand, sociologists should work with concrete publics that exist in reality. On the other hand, public sociologists should create and organize their own public. What do you think about sociologists themselves constituting a public?

MB: One of my projects in the International Sociological Association has been to create a global community of sociologists. We have to learn to talk to ourselves and among ourselves, to constitute ourselves as a public before we can be effective in communicating with others. Or at least these two should go hand in hand. We are simultaneously observers of society but also participants in society. As observers we constitute ourselves as scientists, professional sociologists, but as participants we constitute ourselves as public sociologists. I feel strongly that we have to think of ourselves as a collective actor and we have to turn sociology on ourselves and think imaginatively how we can work together across national boundaries, overcoming all the inequalities and differences that divide us. It is a difficult project particularly especially if we are thinking globally, but I am encouraged that this is really possible – to develop a distinctive vision of sociology that we can indeed all share.



Telebridge with
Jeffrey Alexander

CIVIL SPHERE vs. PUBLIC SPHERE

February 10, 2010
Higher School of Economics (Moscow, Russia) –
Yale University (USA)

Jeffrey Alexander (b. 1947)

One of the leaders of contemporary sociology, Professor at Yale University, honorary Professor at the University of California (Los Angeles), Jeffrey Alexander heads Center for Cultural Sociology (Yale University) together with R. Eyerman. He adheres to 'neofunctionalism' (it was Prof. Alexander who put the term into academic practice in 1985). J. Alexander considered the critique of functionalism which had occurred in 1960s-1970s, and complemented T. Parsons' conception with achievements of other schools of social science, primarily with the ideas related to the conflict theory and phenomenology. His latest works are 'The Meanings of Social Life: A Cultural Sociology' (2003), 'The Civil Sphere' (2006).



Participants

JA – Jeffrey Alexander, Yale University

NP – Nikita Pokrovsky, HSE

AB – Alex Boklin, HSE

DP – Dmitry Popov, HSE

SL – Sergei Lebedev, Moscow State University

JA: I would start with some background introduction to my work on the civil sphere. ‘The Civil Sphere’ draws out of different trends of my work but what is most distinctive about it is its cultural sociological dimension.

Cultural sociology is something that I began to define in my own particular manner in the middle and late 1980s. This is an effort to put meaning, patterns of meaning and meaning-making at the center of social science, to make meaning into an independent variable to give culture relative autonomy.

The background of this goes back to Durkheim. In the early 80s I said that we needed to make a distinction between the middle theory of Durkheim and late Durkheim. Late Durkheim is especially in ‘The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life’, which is a study of the symbolic classification system of the Australian aborigines, the rituals, the division of symbols into the sacred and profane, the energy that circulates among the aborigines, and the importance of culture. That book by Durkheim, published in 1912, was taken as a foundational text for anthropology but not sociology. Sociology focused on ‘The Division of Labour in Society’ (1893), ‘Suicide’ (1897) and ‘The Rules of the Sociological Method’ (1895). My interpretation of Durkheim was that those middle period works of the 1890s were too functionalist and too mechanical; it was really Durkheim toward the end of his life who emphasized symbolic and emotional energy which we should focus on.

In doing so, I wanted to argue against the idea that traditional and modern lives are radically different in terms of the role of emotions, tradition, and meanings. This is one of the most pernicious divides that marks modern social science. Of course, there is a big difference between a traditional and a modern society, there is no doubt about ~~that~~ the role science, urbanism, education, rationality etc., but does that mean that modern people have given up irrational feelings and commitments to belief systems that can’t be proven by science? The assumption of Marx, Weber, early Durkheim, also Simmel in many respects, and many others since is that there is this radical break between tradition and modernity: for example, when anthropologists study traditional societies, they might use the tools of symbolic analysis, but when they study modern societies, they have to focus entirely on the economic organization, on the role of demographic variables on society and the as purely bureaucratic.



In the 1980s, I tried to develop conceptual tools for studying culture, meaning, codes and narratives inside the modern societies. For instance, I wrote an article on the computer, ‘The Sacred and Profane Information Machine’ which is in a book called ‘The Meanings of Social Life: A Cultural Sociology’. I said that the computer is, of course, a piece of immensely efficient and rational technology, but it is also a gigantic symbol that people have very irrational feelings about; they look to the computer as a vehicle of salvation and a machine that threatens damnation, that threatens to bring an apocalyptic end of the world.

In the late 1980s I was studying politics, in which I have always been interested, and wrote an essay on the Watergate crisis in the US, which was created by president Nixon. One of the things I realized, as I was beginning to learn about symbolic structures, is that the late Durkheim has to be updated and connected to semiotic theories – for example, Barthes, Lévi-Strauss, later on Foucault and also to the hermeneutical theories of Dilthey and others, and – in the contemporary context – to the great symbolic anthropology of the late 20th century – for example, Mary Douglas, Clifford Geertz, and Victor Turner. So basically my concern as a cultural sociologist was to synthesize these different elements in a way that would produce models of analysis that could be subjected to rational empirical methods and come up with strong and robust findings.

In the late 1980s and 1990s, I studied the history and contemporary contours of political, social, economic, governmental, racial, gender, religious conflicts that occur in the public sphere of the United States particularly, but other countries as well. And instead of thinking of those conflicts as conflicts primarily over the material resources or social capital (such that the actors had nothing in common with each other – in other words, a game theoretical model), it seemed more true to me that the actors often actually spoke a common language. Even while they were in a very serious conflict with each other, they articulated their different interests in terms of a shared public language of which they were not really aware. I decipher this language as a binary code which I call ‘the discourse of civil society’. I decided that was the language about motives, relations and institutions that had highly polarized quality of the sacred and profane, good and bad, and that what people were fighting over was not only material interest but the symbolic construction of themselves and others and that if they could construct their opponents in a polluted manner then those would look to the public audience as if they were undeserving of opposition in the civil sphere and were not worthy people in civil terms.

Once I had that insight, I built a new theory of the civil sphere and in doing that I could take on board not only cultural theories, but also institutional theories which were a bit of Durkheim, partly Weber, a lot of Parsons. Weber and Parsons developed a theory of different value spheres and different institutional worlds, and they develop a basic notion of systems – so you could



talk about the relative autonomy of different spheres (civil, political, sphere, family, religious, ethnic or racial) from each other. It seemed to me that I could develop a more sociological understanding of democracy – that democracy exists to the degree that civil sphere assumes relative independence from other spheres. And I define the civil sphere as a sphere organized around an ideal of solidarity where each person has strong feelings of identification with every other member of the society, but the identification with people defined as autonomous individuals. So it is an attempt to combine individual with the communal and this is quite close to Durkheim's understanding of 'the cult of the individual' or to what Parsons called 'institutionalized individualism'.

I don't believe that civil solidarity has been given nearly enough attention in social theory or in social sciences. Social sciences have mainly talked about the nation, the state, a bit about the legal order, of course, economic inequality a lot, ethnicity etc., but the sphere of civil solidarity is rarely the object of social analysis, so my aim was to develop a new object of study. What I wanted to lay out was, in a kind of Mertonian way, a middle range theory of the civil sphere, not simply a meta-theory in a philosophical or normative sense of which Habermas' work 'The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere' is an example. But my aim was very sociological – I wanted to elaborate a set of concepts which would enable people to do research and to develop explanations. I have two main levels: the level of the discourse of civil society which I have described in a set of complex languages and then the institutional level which I divide into the communicative and the regulative. The communicative gives a central role for mass communication, for public opinion polling, and for civil associations, and the regulative has more to do with using the discourse of civil society to develop coercive instructions to the state and to the individuals in the society. Of course, the key to a democracy is if the people on their own can regulate state power. That is the critical issue, because if they can do that to a significant degree, then they can also regulate economic, religious or patriarchal power. For example, if you have a relatively autonomous mass media, that is tremendously significant in affecting public opinion and social consciousness, and people who are in power have to answer to this public opinion. That is why when a society moves away from democracy, it is extremely important for authoritarian powers to gradually gain control of newspapers and television stations and why professional journalism is one of the least studied but most significant institutions in a civil society.

It is a shame – I don't know what it is like in Russia but in the United States – the study of mass media is in specialized schools that are called 'media schools' or 'journalism schools' and it is rarely a part of the social science – sociologists rarely study newspapers or televisions. Anyway, the communicative institutions are critical – another example is polls. The more a society becomes



authoritarian the less is public polling important. Polls seem as if they are purely scientific – they take random sampling to develop public opinion, but polling provides a public force that can shock people in a moral manner – for instance, it can say that the public doesn't like what the president of the United States is doing. If Obama is doing something and people think it is popular, and then public opinion polls reveal that actually there is skepticism among the majority of citizen about President Obama's healthcare plan – well that kind of stops him! There is no institutional regulation, but then the journalists say: 'How do you respond to the fact that the public doesn't like what you are doing?' and he feels compelled to answer in a way because he is under obligation of solidarity. Of course he is also worried for his own material interest and that gets to the regulatory institutions, because every one, two, three or four years there are elections. The electoral system (free and fair voting) is a critical regulation: every once in a while public opinion translates into a vote which means that people can be kicked out of the office.

* * *

One of the things that I struggle with in developing this theory is the relationship between civil sphere and public sphere – there is a mess with the terms and I address this when I talk about the civil society. In the literature you must have met mostly civil society; I wanted to try to develop a distinctive way of speaking of civil society as a sphere that is vis-à-vis other social spheres whereas the traditional political theory and social theory way of thinking about civil society is all spheres outside of the state or all social issues outside of the state. For me, the civil sphere is different than the public sphere; many of the performances in the public sphere are oriented towards the extensions or contractions of civil society and civil obligations, but many are not. This is the argument that I have made.

The Habermasian perspective, which is very powerful today, traces its roots back to Plato and Aristotle and the ideas of Socrates – back to the Greek polis in republican Greece. 'Publicness is identical with democracy' – that is Habermas' argument. I don't agree with that because what I see is that publicness is a performative space in which people – political actors, social actors – can make arguments against democracy that can be projected to everybody. In the 1920s and early 1930s in Germany, the Hitler movement and the Nazi movement performed on the public stage as very effective actors and increased anti-Semitism, nationalism and eventually succeeded in gaining the most votes in 1933! And in the United States I see many very conservative actors making effective performances on the public stage.

Hannah Arendt is very interested in the public as well and she also, as Habermas does, takes her interest back to the Greek polis and to the classical writings of the ancient philosophers. But Arendt has a much more cultural and symbolic



understanding of the public sphere. Habermas' understanding of the public sphere is very rationalistic: he believes that people are compelled to present good reasons, that there is an urge to reach consensus, that you are bound by certain norms of transparency etc., whereas Arendt realizes that the public sphere is a sphere of what she calls 'agonism' and she uses the notion of performativity – the sphere of speaking and acting individuals. I feel that my understanding of the public sphere is closer to Arendt's.

In the last decade, I have tried to develop a theory of social performances. Social performances are ways that actors try to get results in interaction, but they do so culturally and symbolically, not through rational action. The idea of social performance tries to embrace a more pragmatic dimension and connect it to a cultural dimension – that is why I call it a theory of cultural pragmatics. If you look at the history of post-World War II sociology you see the work of Erving Goffman and his first and most important book 'The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life' published in 1956. It is all about presentation, performativity, and there are a lot of other developments like the work of John Austin with the notions of ordinary language and performance. So I try to bring theater studies, performance studies into cultural theory.

* * *

AB: My question will generally refer to the relation between the civil sphere and Internet technologies. We may point out quite a number of negative intrusions that can be made into civil sphere – by capitalism, by state, by religion etc. But as far as I understand there is at least one danger that comes from within – this is the problem of commercialization or bureaucratization of civil sphere. If we take what is called 'independent mass media' or trade unions fighting for workers' rights, they all imply inequality within their organization (including unequal distribution of power), they all need some funds in order to keep on existing. And this may turn to non-civil institutions which demonstrate these features. So the question is: how would you evaluate the potential and the role of Internet technologies – in particular Wikipedia which helps to share information for free and can be contributed to freely, or Youtube which was the only channel for information from Iran when all other media were blocked by authorities after the election, or social networks like Facebook? I suppose, these could be really useful instruments for constructing and sustaining civil sphere.

JA: Concerning the first point about commercialism, I would say that spheres outside of the civil sphere including economic and private capitalism are not necessarily anti-civil, but they are non-civil. I identify three ideal-typical modes of relation between civil and non-civil: facilitating input, destructive intrusion and civil repair. I argue there it is up to the society at particular time to decide if something is a destructive intrusion or not – in other words, whether it is anti-civil. It is not objectively anti-civil: for example, the patriarchal arrangements of



a traditional family where a male was in power over the female was not regarded as an anti-civil institution for most of modern societies. If you look at Habermas' book, he actually argues that patriarchal family was essential to the vigorous public sphere and ethics, but in our days – at least insofar as we accept feminism as a strong moral argument – we often feel that that family was anti-civil, that it does not give facilitating inputs to the civil sphere, but is something that the civil sphere needs to reconstruct to give more rights to women so to protect them.

I would say, the same is with business. The history of the relations of private capitalism and the civil sphere is always changing and always dynamic. For example, the safety and the conditions of workers in factory, which are fairly regulated now, used to be unregulated. Is there unemployment insurance for people when they are fired? Is there right for workers to organize their own trade unions? These are continually negotiated.

The issue of independent media is also very important. On the one hand, the media is made for the purpose of making profit and one would say this is anti-civil. But I would argue that that it really depends more on the professional of journalism – to what degree does it form a self-regulating professional organization – and the freedom of the people who write the scripts and the news. How much do they control? How much do the people who own the media control? These are big issues to study.

The second part of your question that was about all the new, let's say, 'social relations media'. Definitely in a society which is very state-controlled, where there is a suppression of the autonomy of media, you find that these social networking tools are absolutely essential because they are the only way people can communicate directly with one another and public opinion can form, and broader solidarity constructed. In a society like the United States, however, networking media do are not as crucial, for there are other, more professional, and more deeply institutionalized communicative institutions in the civil sphere. It is quite a challenging problem, for example, to figure out what the relationship is of blogging to the communicative media of the civil sphere. If you look at the blogging you see blogs are very partisan and very "prejudiced." Blogs are organized nationally around right wing and left wing opinions; they don't correspond to the utopian ideology or the utopian discourse of the Internet. As a cultural sociologist I would look at the Internet not as an objective thing (although it does have objective possibilities), but there has also been a utopian discourse in a company of the introduction of the Internet – a utopian discourse of freedom, solidarity, democracy.

For example, people say: 'The Chinese government will not be able to maintain its authoritarian control once that Internet comes to China' as if a purely technological development has a gigantic cultural meaning attached to it, and



thus its effects are inevitable. But as we see in China, the Internet will be controlled to a high degree by the state and we experienced a tremendous conflict between Google and the Chinese Communist Party. As I understand, in Russia it is not like that and there is still complete freedom of the Internet use. All of these social networking technologies are a new kind of communicative institution and they should be written about, but in a manner that is careful not to endorse them as an inherently democratic institution.

SL: I would like to bring up again the topic of mass media and communication. Could you please expand on how they produce ideology, myths and in this way influence society and act as a means of power?

JA: In the United States and Europe there has been a very long standing debate about the relationship between mass media and mass public opinion. Basically, there are two very well established standpoints – one is that the mass media is a manipulator of opinion, independently of society, but the other side of research says that is not true, that ideologies or narratives of the mass media are filtered through the primary and secondary groups of the civil society. Projection and reception may be not synchronized, and you can have a state mass media projecting things which people just do not believe. Of course, when the mass media are controlled not by the civil society but by the state or by a rapacious capitalist and are not affected by independent journalism, they are an anti-civil force – but it does not mean that they have complete control of what people think; there are other ways for people to form opinion. Even in the darkest days of the Soviet Union, from my observation, it was not clear that the mass of the people believed the propaganda machine of the state, and there were independent circulations of opinions, there were artists, there were intellectuals. Here is the way that I think of this: let's say a giant company hires an expensive advertising firm and they design a huge advertising campaign to convince people of X, Y or Z – they do not necessarily succeed and convince. There are many studies of such failures. So we can't assume that all the messages that come in are accepted. It depends on what other opportunities people do have to form opinions and on what is the role of informal communication. What about religion? Is religion a form of public opinion formation that has autonomy vis-à-vis the mass media? What is the media's relation of family structure or ethnicity? What region are you from? Does this affect your opinion of things apart from the media? There are many ways to sustain counter opinion that can be quite separated from mass media.

DP: You are talking about mass media as a means of creating civil definitions, but it can also become a tool of creating simulacra, in terms of Baudrillard, so this might be just another type of controlling the society, another way of making people believe something what those who control the mass media want them to



believe. The question is, in other words, if civil sphere can be simulated? Is it a real threat, from your point of view?

JA: I like the way this question puts Baudrillard's, post-modern, and Neo-Marxist critique of contemporary society in contact with my theory of the civil sphere.

Once you have a society where mass media is present, then performativity has a central place. None of us will ever meet personally and have a chance to evaluate in a face-to-face way those who are in power over us. 99.9% percent of us will never meet these people really – that is the fundamental condition of a large-scale modern and post-modern society. But that means that our understanding of who they are and their moral stature is a matter of projecting performance. When we evaluate performances we are always answering if they are fake or authentic, so a simulacrum is a judgment that the performance is fake. Baudrillard worked with the idea that there is an authentic reality which he knows as an analyst and a fake reality which he also knows, and that puts him close to Frankfurt critical theory. He sees mass media as culture industry and argues that in a post-modern society most of performances in the public are fake. All public lives, all representations of power are matters of performativity and it is up to the public or what I call 'citizen audience' to attribute authenticity and sincerity or to make a critical judgment that the performances are fake or not. In fact, the currency that circulates through a civil society, through its public spaces, is judgments as to 'that is fake', 'that is authentic', 'he is moral', 'he is pretending'. Yes, other social conditions would make it more easy to pretend to be somebody whom you are not, and the answer would be if the mass media are controlled by a government or a corrupt capitalist class or businessmen people who are in league with the government, and if there is no competition between media and between political parties – that makes it harder for the public to reach an opinion about authenticity.

I wrote about this problem in a book that I have recently completed: *The Performance of Politics: Obama's Victory and the Democratic Struggle for Power* (Oxford University Press, 2010). I said it would be technologically possible, for example, for the Obama or the McCain campaign to fake every single image, that they could pretend there were giant crowds when there were just a few people, they could pretend that people were applauding when they were not. There are immense technological possibilities. So the question is: why does not that happen in more or less competitive democracy? There is a chance to manipulate, so why don't political candidates go all the way towards a real simulacra? I think it is because if you did that, you would be exposed in a day, or a week, or a month by the other side, by other media, and you would be exposed as violating the normative constraints of the discourse of civil society



which demands honesty, responsibility, sincerity. You could be impeached, arrested or put in jail.

NP: How would you see the role of a sociologist in such conditions – whether a sociologist should demonstrate the authenticity of the process? Do you think the sociologist should be involved in analyzing the situation or a sociologist should be outside of those things? What would be a specific role of a sociologist in civil sphere?

JA: There are two different roles: there is a role of an intellectual and the role of a professional sociologist. Certainly, sometimes a person is both a public intellectual and an academic sociologist, but often sometimes not. Intellectuals can play different roles. One is very partisan – right-wing intellectuals, left-wing intellectuals. The role of such an intellectual is to speak not on behalf of the civil sphere but on behalf of particular interests. Yes, they are on the public stage, but they are people who formulate ideologies.

On the other hand, there is an intellectualist ideal, that goes back to Socrates, of people who speak on behalf of critical discourse of the civil sphere: Sakharov or Solzhenitsyn in the history of Russia, Habermas in Germany, Sartre and sometimes even Foucault in France. The key to this role is the word ‘disinterest’: ‘disinterested’ means somebody who does not have a particular side and can step back therefore from a contest. I think that is the role of the academic intellectual as well. In a civil society an academic could enter a debate and say: ‘This is a fixed election, this is a simulacrum, this is not democracy’, because the authority of a sociologist or an academic can be that we are speaking from a more universalistic point: ‘I am making a general remark about this entire situation, I am not for the left, I am not for the right, I represent myself from the point of view of the public’.

NP: If I speak as an intellectual like Sakharov or Solzhenitsyn, but being a sociologist myself, I should first of all announce my role and status as an interested moral speaker, although I am a sociologist, but I am speaking on behalf of the society as a citizen. But in other case I should represent myself as a professional, disinterested, neutral value-free sociologist and say ‘I am speaking as a medical doctor to you, I am telling you your diagnosis.’ Is it true that you or myself or any other colleagues of ours should definitely represent themselves either as citizens or sociologists and not mix up those two roles?

JA: Those are ideal types, and in concrete reality we all mix those roles. An economist, a constitutional lawyer, a medical expert or an expert in public health might say: ‘I am an expert in this and I am telling you that the Russian economy has so much corruption’ (I am purely hypothetical here!) ‘The level of corruption is 55%, and if we don’t lower it to 20%, we will not have a productive economy’ – that is a person speaking as an expert but obviously also as a citizen, because why would he care about corruption? Because he cares



about solidarity, about obligations to others, about honesty – so we do mix these two roles together. But it is possibly different from saying ‘I am a member of a liberal party and therefore I want you to do this or that.’

NP: Then definitely you are not an expert, but a representative of the political party.

JA: And a lot of intellectuals like to do that.

AB: To what extent does iconic experience affect modern society, what is the influence of it and whether it is a universal process which we may find in all the cultures and societies all over the world?

JA: For me, the critical issue is this: is iconic experience and iconic representation also present in a mechanical society, a modern society or it is only part of a religious society or a traditional society? For example, Russian orthodox churches are famous for icons, but undoubtedly the Soviet Union was filled with icons too?

As I said at the beginning of this seminar, I am very critical of the idea that there is a major break or epistemological difference between traditional and modern societies. Roland Barthes, in his collection of essays called ‘Mythologies’, wrote a short and brilliant essay called “Einstein’s Brain.” To speak of the image of Einstein is to see the significance of iconic representation, because that image is a way of communicating a whole set of descriptive meanings about the modern world – the role of physics, the role of mathematics, the mystery of science, positive and negative possibilities. So for me, the iconic means that we represent cultural meanings not only through our discourse, in written and spoken languages, but also through the material culture meaning through the aesthetic constructions of the surfaces of things.

I don’t know any of you except Nikita (I had a pleasure of him coming into my house in New Haven). But I am looking at you and I see your faces, your hairstyles, how you are holding your hands, how you dress, and I am making – unconsciously largely – inductions about how you are thinking, feeling, who you are. I may probably be mistaken about 95% of the things I am thinking. But that is the role of surface, of representation, so my answer is that iconic experience is very important everywhere – that is why we have pictures of our beloved leaders on billboard.

NP: Jeffrey, why do you say you are 95% mistaken? Because you are from a different culture. When I look at my students, I am not 95% mistaken, because I belong to this culture and I have the power of interpretation and reading the iconic, right?

JA: Exactly. Of course, to the degree that your students and I are a part of the global culture where there is an international sense of style, then I have more security and can make more judgments better than 95%.



AB: You have already said that from your standpoint, iconic experience is truly important for different cultures in all historical periods. What is the role of emotions in iconic experience and, in general, in social and cultural systems?

JA: It is difficult for me to understand emotions without thinking of their symbolic representation. Say, ideas of pollution, fear of things stigmatized, feelings of shame or an embarrassment – emotions are attached to cultural codes, these social codes are patterned, they are institutionalized, and they are not something that we possess as individuals. Why do we wear cloths instead of walking naked? It is a pretty significant thing and it is obviously about the coding of the emotions. Anger, joy, sadness – these are connected to narratives and brought forth by text – by progressive, tragic or melodramatic narratives. We should not study emotions in isolation from cultural sociology.

AB: You write that contact with iconic goes through our senses and transmits meaning, but at the same time that is a transmission without communicating. You also point out that iconical is about experience and to be iconically conscious is to be able to understand without knowing. How do you think, is reflection about why we worship icons or why somebody wants to be an icon, somehow kills or stops ‘iconic consciousness’? Schütz wrote that at the very moment we start reflecting on dreams or fantasies, we are no longer dreaming or engaged in the sphere of fantasies.

JA: Reflection is not the same as iconic experience – it is an attempt to step outside of the flow of iconic experience, but being able to engage in reflection is itself partly stimulated by iconic attachments. For example, if you become attached to your sociology professor as an iconic figure and you learn to imitate him or her and you internalize his critical thinking in education – that iconic experience can allow you to be reflective and non-iconic vis-à-vis society. For example in a radical social movement it is quite common to admire, even to worship a popular mass leader. This means there is iconic experience, so membership in the group is often a very unreflective set of emotions. But the members of that movement have critical reflection towards, let’s say, business or capitalist media.

I don’t think that there is a danger that reflection ends iconic experience forever: you can have reflections on dreams but you are still going to dream every night. You don’t stop yourself from dreaming, you wake up and you try like Freud did in the interpretation of dreams to gain some independence from the act of dreaming, but it does not mean you are not going to dream. You can think and write a book about love, but it does not mean you are not going to fall in love. And when you fall in love, you have lost your ability for reflection.



APPENDIX



SELECTED PROGRAMMES³ AND ABSTRACTS OF ONLINE SOCIOLOGY COURSES

Department of General Sociology of NRU HSE

Social Analysis of Urban Everyday Life

(English) for the course 040200.68 – Sociology, Master of Arts program

**Nikita Pokrovsky, Prof., Doctor of Sociology,
Department of General Sociology (NRU HSE)**

Jaan Valsiner – prof., Clark University

Nikita Kharlamov – tutor, NRU HSE; postgraduate, Clark University

Requirements for students: a student is required to possess an upper-intermediate language level and basic sociological education to participate in the course.

Abstract:

The course provides students with classical and contemporary sociological perspectives on the city everyday life and to

Besides this, this course is, as planned, to give tools and insights to study this field on their own.

The course covers the 1st and the 2nd modules.

Educational tasks of the subject:

As a result, the student is expected to:

³ Courses represented in this section are supported by the Foundation for Education Initiative (NRU HSE) programme



- understand the key sociological issues in the sphere of urban everyday life research (both empirical and theoretical) and the ways in which they are solved;
- conduct a relevant research and to present its data in an essay.

Forms of monitoring:

The course implies conducting a research by students (they may do it in groups) presented at the final meeting and converted into essay afterwards.

The final grade is calculated as follows:

W (activity during lectures and seminars) = 0,2; W (essay) = 0,4; W (project research presentation) = 0,4.

III. Course Curriculum

Topic 1. Course Introduction

The first meeting sets out the landscape of the course. The key questions for the meeting are: What is the city as a scientific phenomenon? What disciplines study the city? What are sociological, psychological, geographical research outlooks on the city? What does it mean to 'study the urban everyday life' and how could one grasp it? What are the advantages and disadvantages of focusing on everydayness?

Readings:

Required:

Lefebvre, Henri. 1987. 'The Everyday and Everydayness' [Translated by Christine Levich]. Yale French Studies, Vol.73, pp.7-11.

Simmel, Georg. 1971 [1903]. 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' [translated by Edward A. Shils]. Pp. 324-339 in: Simmel, Georg. 1971. On Individuality and Social Forms; Selected Writings. Edited and with an Introduction by Donald N. Levine. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press.

Suggested:

Venkatesh, Sudhir. 2008. Gang Leader for a Day: A Rogue Sociologist Crosses the Line. London: Penguin. Ch.1: 'How Does It Feel to Be Black and Poor?', pp. 1-25.

Jazbinsek, Dietmar. 2003. 'The Metropolis and the Mental Life of Georg Simmel: On the History of an Antipathy'. Journal of Urban History, Vol. 30 No.1, pp. 102-125.

Topic 2. How Does Cultural Psychology Analyze the Complex Phenomenon Called 'The City'?

In cultural psychology there are three general directions through which the city is investigated. Traditionally, in conjunction with environmental psychology, cultural psychology would analyze the personal feelings and thoughts of one or another culturally structured place (square, street) and look at the kinds of activities performed in the urban contexts (children playing, elderly sitting or walking, etc.). In conjunction with social psychology, cultural psychology



considers phenomena of ‘bystander intervention’ and the impact of crowding in cities upon the establishment of social conduct norms. Thirdly, cultural psychology of the 21st century is establishing its ties with semiotics – the science of signs. From that viewpoint, both the places in the urban environments and the actions of the persons in public environments are viewed from the perspective of what kinds of signs mediate their actions.

Readings:

Required:

Valsiner, Jaan. 1998. *The Guided Mind*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press [chapter Semiotic regulation of psychological processes, pp. 234-282].

Rosa, Alberto. 2007. ‘Acts of psyche: Actuations as synthesis of semiosis and action’. In: J. Valsiner and A. Rosa (Eds), *Handbook of Socio-Cultural Psychology* (pp. 205-237). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Suggested:

Ohnuki-Tierney, Emiko. 1994. ‘The Power of Absence: Zero Signifiers and their Transgressions’. *L'Homme*, Vol. 34 No.2, pp. 59-76.

Valsiner, Jaan. 2006. ‘The Street’. Unpublished manuscript, based on invited lecture at *Arquitectura 3000*, Universitat Politecnica de Catalunya, Barcelona in 2004.

Valsiner, Jaan. 2007. *Culture in Minds and Societies: Foundations of Cultural Psychology*. New Delhi: Sage. Ch. 8: ‘Methodology for Cultural Psychology: Systemic, Qualitative, and Idiographic’, pp. 358-389.

Topic 3. Basic Distinctions in the Study of Urban Everyday Life

The study of urban everyday life is grounded in setting up a range of distinctions (often these are dichotomies) that define the phenomenon and help grasp its various aspects. The first of these distinctions is the dichotomy ‘rural/urban’ which today is increasingly compromised and made complex by processes of globalization and widespread urbanization. Another key distinction is ‘public/private’, which defines the kinds of activities and modes of social ordering in urban space. The distinction ‘center-periphery’ is central to imagining the space of many (but not all!) cities, including Moscow. A set of distinctions such as ‘light/dark’, ‘safe/dangerous’, ‘visible/invisible’, ‘passable/impassable’, ‘ordered/disordered’ help describe human experience of the city.

Readings:

Required:

Simmel, Georg. 1997a [1903]. ‘Sociology of Space’ [translated by Mark Ritter and David Frisby]. Pp. 137-170 in: Frisby, David and Mike Featherstone (eds.) 1997. *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*. London et al.: Sage.

Amin, Ash. 2007. ‘Re-Thinking the Urban Social’. *City*, Vol. 11 No.1, pp. 100-114.



Suggested:

- Edensor, Tim. 2005. *Industrial Ruins: Spaces, Aesthetics and Materiality*. Oxford: Berg. Ch. 3: 'Ruins and the Dis-Ordering of Space', pp. 53-95.
- Featnerstone, Mike. 1997. 'The Flaneur, the City, and Virtual Public Life'. *Urban Studies*, Vol. 35 No.5-6, pp. 909-925.
- Schonle, Andreas. 2006. 'Ruins and History: Observations on Russian Approaches to Destruction and Decay'. *Slavic Review*, Vol. 65 No.4, pp. 649-669.

Topic 4. The Chicago School of Sociology

The Chicago School (sometimes described as the Ecological School) was the first major body of works emerging during the 1920s and 1930s specialising in urban sociology, and the research into the urban environment by combining theory and ethnographic fieldwork in Chicago, now applied elsewhere. While involving scholars at several Chicago area universities, the term is often used interchangeably to refer to the University of Chicago's sociology department. Following World War II, a "Second Chicago School" arose whose members used symbolic interactionism combined with methods of field research, to create a new body of works. This was one of the first institutions to use quantitative methods in criminology.

The Chicago School is best known for its urban sociology and for the development of the symbolic interactionist approach. It has focused on human behavior as determined by social structures and physical environmental factors, rather than genetic and personal characteristics. Biologists and anthropologists have accepted the theory of evolution as demonstrating that animals adapt to their environments. As applied to humans who are considered responsible for their own destinies, the School believed that the natural environment which the community inhabits is a major factor in shaping human behavior, and that the city functions as a microcosm.

Readings:

Required:

- Park, Robert E. 1915. 'The City: Suggestions for the Investigation of Human Behavior in the City Environment'. *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 20 No.5, pp. 577-612.

Topic 5. Contemporary Perspectives on the City

Contemporary social science has added a range of new perspectives on the city that attempt to describe the rapidly changing urban landscape on the verge of the new Millennium. Principal approaches relevant to contextualizing the study of everyday life include the regionalist perspective envisaging the changing landscape of the city ('patchwork urbanism') and the dissolution of bordered urban settlement; and the postmodernist perspective that attempts to reconfigure



the conceptual structure used to imagine the city. A particularly important problem is the possibility of universal applicability of these approaches for the study of such environments as Moscow.

Readings:

Required:

MacLeod, Gordon and Kevin Ward. 2002. 'Spaces of Utopia and Dystopia: Landscaping the Contemporary City'. *Geografiska Annaler: Series B – Human Geography*, Vol. 84 No. 3-4, pp. 153-170.

Suggested:

Davis, Mike. 2006 [1991]. *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*. 3rd Ed. With a New Preface. London, UK and New York, NY: Verso. Ch. 4.

Flusty, Steven and Michael J. Dear. 1998 . 'Postmodern Urbanism'. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 88 No. 1, pp. 50-72.

Keizer, K., S. Lindenberg and L. Steg. 2008. 'The Spreading of Disorder'. *Science*, Vol. 322, pp. 1681-1685.

Topic 6. Environmental Psychology of Living in the Cities

The classic work of Stanley Milgram in social/environmental psychology remains the basis for a look at the city phenomena. Based on the hyper-large and crowded context of New York, Milgram demonstrated phenomena of feelings of the city, and social norms that are constructed for the psychological living in the city. City is also socially structured ("ghetto" phenomena) and an inevitable meeting place for persons of different ages, races, and interests.

Readings:

Required:

Milgram, Stanley. 1970. 'The Experience of Living in Cities'. *Science*, Vol. 167, pp. 1461-1468.

Suggested:

Hannerz, Ulf. 2004. 'Mainstream and Ghetto in Culture'. Pp. 177-200 in Hannerz, Ulf. 2004. *Soulside: Inquiries into Ghetto Culture and Community*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Topic 7. Methodologies for Researching Urban Everyday Life

This meeting attempts to chart the range of methodologies available for studying the urban everyday life. The traditional participant and non-participant observation today is widely augmented with a variety of participatory techniques such as experiments and various performative techniques that involve complex activities that involve researcher and participants in a concerted enterprise within urban space. Particular attention will be devoted to the relation of the researcher to the actual empirical environment of the city.

Readings:



Required:

Bulmer, Martin. 1982. 'When is Disguise Justified? Alternatives to Covert Participant Observation'. *Qualitative Sociology*, Vol. 5, pp. 251-264.

Suggested:

Buscher, Monika and John Urry. 2009. 'Mobile Methods and the Empirical'. *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 12 No. 1, pp. 99-116.

Galasinska, Aleksandra. 2003. 'Temporal Shifts on Photo-Elicited Narratives in a Polish Border Town'. *Narrative Inquiry*, Vol. 13 No. 2, pp. 393-411.

Ingold, Tim. 2004. 'Culture on the Ground: The World Perceived Through the Feet'. *Journal of Material Culture*, Vol. 9 No. 3, pp. 315-340.

Topic 8. Project Development Meeting

The meeting is devoted to developing the course projects. For this meeting each student is required to present a short outline (5-7 minutes, with or without visual aids) of the proposed course project for in-class discussion.

Topic 9. Boundaries and Rhythms of Urban Everyday Experience

Dichotomies discussed earlier imply the existence of boundaries or borders as well as processes of fusion and transgression thereof. This lecture focuses on the issue of boundary-making and boundary-breaching. This issue is best approached from a dynamic standpoint that sees experience as process. We will discuss flexible and rigid boundaries and the rhythmical nature of many border orderings in the city.

Readings:

Required:

Lefebvre, Henri. 1996. 'Rhythmanalysis of Mediterranean Cities'. Pp. 228-240 in Lefebvre, Henri. 1996. *Writings on Cities*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Simmel, Georg. 2007 [1908]. 'The Social Boundary' [Translated by Ulrich Teucher and Thomas M. Kemple]. *Theory, Culture and Society*, Vol. 24 No. 7-8, pp. 53-56.

Suggested:

Lindemann, Gesa. 2005. 'The Analysis of the Borders of the Social World: A Challenge for Sociological Theory'. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, Vol. 35 No. 1, pp. 69-98.

Shapira, Rina and David Navon. 1991. 'Alone Together: Public and Private Dimensions of a Tel-Aviv Café'. *Qualitative Sociology*, Vol. 14 No.2, pp. 107-125.

Topic 10. Discussion of Projects – Progress Reports

The meeting is devoted to developing the course projects. For this meeting each student is required to present a short outline (5-7 minutes, with or without visual aids) of the proposed course project for in-class discussion.



Topic 11. Magic, Rituals and Theatricality in the City

A century ago, Max Weber wrote that “disenchantment of the world” was relentlessly happening. But as our science and technologies develop, it seems that on the contrary, our world becomes more and more magical. Leonid Ionin proposes to call it a `new magical epoch`.

Many modern social theorists (among them Ulrich Beck, Zygmunt Bauman, Anthony Giddens) emphasize that the world is `getting out of control`, becomes more uncertain and risky and that these risks and uncertainty are `hand-made`, manufactured.

It was Bronislaw Malinowski who first linked magic and uncertainty (plus danger and anxiety). This `uncertainty hypothesis` is applicable not only to aborigines, but also to modern people – those who live in cities.

Thus, the main objective of the lecture is to analyze the place of magic and its features in relation to other key concepts (danger, anxiety and belief). Lecture material combines both theoretical and empirical material.

Readings:

Required:

Malinowski, Bronislaw (1955), *Magic, Science and Religion*, in: Needham, Joseph (ed.). *Science, Religion and Reality*. New York: George Braziller, Inc.
Ionin, Leonid (2005), *Novaya magicheskaya epoha (The new magical epoch)*, *Logos*, Vol. 2, No. 47, p. 156-173.

Suggested:

Felson, Richard B. and Gmelch, George (1979), *Uncertainty and the Use of Magic*, *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (September), pp. 587-589.
Albas, Daniel and Albas, Cheryl (1989), *Modern Magic: The Case of Examinations*. *The Sociological Quarterly*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (Winter), pp. 603-613.
Vyse, Stuart A. (1997), *Believing in Magic: The Psychology of Superstition*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Campbell, Colin (1996), *Half-Belief and the Paradox of Ritual Instrumental Activism: A Theory of Modern Superstition*, *The British Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 47, No. 1 (March), pp. 151-166.

Topic 12. Discussion of Projects – Progress Reports

The meeting is devoted to developing the course projects. For this meeting each student is required to present a short outline (5-7 minutes, with or without visual aids) of the proposed course project for in-class discussion.



Topic 13. Final Meeting

During the final meeting, research groups (or single students) present their current achievements and share faced difficulties with colleagues in order to bring them into their essays and presentations.

Topic 14. First Course Paper Draft Deadline

Discussion of essays submitted online, preparation for the forthcoming research projects presentation.

Topic 15. Final Course Paper Draft Deadline

Presentation of research projects and their discussion.

**The Globalization of Social Time:
Theory and Applications**
Teleconference course

Nikita Pokrovsky, Higher School of Economics

Rosa, Hartmut – Friedrich-Schiller-University, Jena, Germany

Aim of the Course

The aim of the proposed online course is to acquire a critical understanding of those worldwide social and cultural processes that are frequently brought together under the banner of ‘Globalization’. The course seeks to explore, analyze and understand these transformative processes from a temporal perspective, i.e. through the theoretical and empirical study of social time. Thus, it seeks to establish an understanding of ‘globalized time’ as a time that is at once condensed (or accelerated), fragmented, commodified, unified, gendered and multi-temporal. The course is based on the observation that the acceleration and globalization of time is experienced similarly in all areas and contexts of the world: in South America as well as in the US, Western Europe or Russia, India or China, South Africa or Australia. The overall goal of the program is to enable students to understand and apply a variety of fundamental theories of globalization to a broad range of social phenomena in their every-day life-worlds and in their life-course.



The Content

Advocating a broad transdisciplinary orientation, the course aims to integrate state-of-the-art resources of the sociology of time and of theories and empirical studies of globalization processes in order to facilitate a deep understanding of the multifaceted transformation processes modern societies are going through.

The online course is meant to be a kernel for the development of a new research and educational model for investigation into social lives of human beings in any country of the World – thus it includes topics and readings that are relevant in Europe, the Americas, Africa, and Asia. It also includes small-scale observational research tasks that should guide students towards developing their skills of analytic and critical observation in culturally structured and diverse open spaces. In addition it involves the skills of so-called sociological imagination which helps the students to relate the chain of simple everyday life facts to the main social tendencies of our time.

Applications

The focus on social time and everyday social practice allows to find common ground in various research spheres and disciplines and to promote the development of a research standpoint from which all kinds of inquiries may be launched, from fundamental research on basic questions of temporal life to applied projects in public (municipal) administration, business design, and creative arts.

Process of Teaching

The online course explores an advanced level of social and temporal studies starting from the conceptual foundations of Globalization and Social Time. It covers a range of specific topics that are currently on top of the agenda of sociological research, using a variety of case studies from around the world and working with varieties of data types (e.g. narratives, maps, photographs, statistical data) and research methodologies (e.g. observation, experimentation, mapping). The suggested course potentially can be implemented in any university around the World – and in any collaborative arrangement between universities around the World, especially in a format of videoconferencing. It is based on the collaboration between Higher School of Economics in Moscow, Russia, and Friedrich-Schiller-University in Jena, Germany. It is intended as a standard program for any course on the topic of globalization or the sociology of time in any country around the globe. The use of contemporary technology affords the running of such a course in parallel in various countries – which is the aim of the present course program.



Teaching Format. The proposed course is designed to meet the requirements of contemporary multimedia, i.e. using audio/visual means of teaching and learning (PowerPoint, video/audio recording, etc.). There will be six consecutive two-hour sessions (in English) that are telebridged between HSE and Friedrich-Schiller-University. This will be followed up by a final five-hour online conference where students mutually present and discuss the work. To get full credits, students subsequently are asked to write a 15-page essay.

All lectures and class discussions would involve from the students the skills of using digital photography and video. The course plan is established as a perspective of online, real time, teleconferencing between State University – Higher School of Economics in Moscow and Friedrich-Schiller-University in Jena. It is more than a new means of communication between distant locations on the globe. Teleconferencing brings into being an entirely new effect of virtual presence and co-presence of two quite distant groups of professors and students representing two different cultures. Such communication through space and cultural differences makes almost a magical impact on human consciousness.

Co-teacher

Dr. Hartmut Rosa, Professor of General and Theoretical Sociology in Jena and Director of the Research-Institute ‘Laboratory of the Enlightenment’ at Friedrich-Schiller-University in Jena, is working on the sociology of time, on the theory of modernity and in the field of globalization-studies. He is editor of the journal ‘Time & Society’ (Sage) and an affiliated professor at the New School for Social Research in New York, too. His book ‘Beschleunigung. Die Veränderung der Zeitstrukturen in der Moderne’ will be published in English and French, soon. He has published numerous books and articles in German as well as international journals. In September 2008, he visited HSE and presented two lectures on Social Acceleration.

Further ‘Marketing’ of the Course

The suggested course potentially can be implemented in any university around the World – and in any collaborative arrangement between universities around the World, especially in a format of videoconferencing. It is based on the collaboration between Higher School of Economics in Moscow, Russia, and Friedrich-Schiller-University in Jena, Germany. It is intended as a standard program for any course on the topic of globalization or the sociology of time in any country around the globe. The use of contemporary technology affords the running of such a course in parallel in various countries – which is the aim of the present course program. The participating MA students on both sides will be introduced to the field of modern communication and will develop a taste for contemporary social theory in its both abstract and applied variations.



Contemporary Tourism and Construction of Reality

Teleconference course

Nikita Pokrovsky, prof., Department of General Sociology, NRU HSE
Tatyana Chernyaeva, prof., Department of Tourism Business Management,
Saratov State Technical University

The course is supposed to achieve the aims pertaining to two distinct groups: organization/communicative and educational.

Organization/communicative aims are connected with transmitting knowledge and creating a communication space between universities in order to promote the formation of a common research tradition, sociological views and professional interaction.

Educational aims are imply sociological reflexion on the contemporary tourism experience as a specific model of constructing reality. While achieving these aims following **educational tasks** are fulfilled:

- to examine mobility depending on the type of social structure;
- to identify the specific character of tourism as a phenomenon of global consumer culture;
- to conduct comparative analysis of principal sociological concepts concerning research of tourism; to comprehend their methodological bases;
- to analyze new *meanings* of tourism lurking behind the enormous scale of tourist activity.

The course is intended for MA students of the 2nd year of education: MA programmes ‘Sociology of the public sphere and social communications’ (State University Higher School of Economics), ‘Tourism management’ (Saratov State Technical University). Students should possess basic knowledge of fundamental sociological paradigms, comprehend the particular character of constructivist approaches to the social reality interpretation, be familiar with methods and technologies of quality research.

The size of the course groups is up to 20 students on each part.



The course is read online in the form of teleconferences for the two groups of MA students (groups no larger than 20 students on each part).

Form, structure and organization of the course: MA student groups of the two universities discussing topics and questions from the same list simultaneously in the system of *weekly* online telebridges. Forms of discussion: (a) online lectures, (b) analytic discussions based on the subject of the texts read beforehand, (c) presentations and discussion of the course participants' mini-projects. Final essay on the issues of consumption in everyday life (firstly, the groups exchange their essays and discuss them on the web forum). The course offers theory classes (16 hours), seminars (8 hours), tutorials (8 hours).

Monitoring forms: 1) presentation of personal and team projects during online classes, 2) handing over reports on research and essays to the both tutors.

Plan of a typical class: 1st part is for the tutor to expose or comment theoretical material (a lecture or a seminar), 2nd part is for MA students to discuss their presentations. Each participant is to open his/her blog at the Internet-portal 'General sociology. History of sociology' of the Department of General Sociology (NRU HSE) to display the processes of gathering and analyzing the material, preliminary and final results. Current material is subject to free discussion. This enables the tutors and participants to extend the scope of the course, to observe the working process not only in class, and to refer to the things read in the blog entries as well as those stated during online discussion.

Workholding and distribution: Online teleconferences are recorded and uploaded as flash video at the Internet-portal 'General sociology. History of sociology' of the Department of General Sociology (HSE) in free access.

Theory classes are held as dialogue lectures, problem discussion; team reflexion with the use of multimedia material and involving experts from tourism and advertising agencies, photographers.

Within the scope of seminars and tutorials much attention is paid to the training and grasping of analytic activity skills: comparative analysis, synthesis of theoretical approaches; improvement of students' background theoretical knowledge, knowing the principal paradigms, conceptual models, explication of meanings of basic concepts and connections between them – all that constitute the sociological background knowledge. Another task of no less importance is to form an intellectual facility, the ability to match various fields of knowledge and transpose theoretical schemes and sociological approach to a broad class of situations connected with tourism. These tasks can be fulfilled by means of the small group work technology, group discussion and presentation of material of the team research as well as collage and projection technologies.

We proceed from the understanding of the discipline praxic character. It is possible only with the specific structuring of the teaching process, its extension beyond the linear 'professor-MA student' communication when the former acts as a holder of absolute truths and general assessment, and the latter – as a



passive receiver of information. Within the scope of the present course the subject and the subjective communication guarantee its efficiency – while working co-creatively both the tutor and an MA student implement co-operative intellectual search and form research discursive practices. The given approach was developed and successfully applied in the framework of the Saratov school of theory of organizations, focusing on the methodology and technology of organizational engineering.

Consumption as Sociological Discourse

Teleconference course

Nikita Pokrovsky, Prof., Department of General Sociology, HSE
Vladimir Ilyin, Prof., Department of Sociology of Culture and
Communication, Faculty of Sociology, Saint Petersburg State University

Subject of the telecourse: *the discourse of consumption* which manifests itself in the form of individual experience of groups of people constructing their identity and reproducing their social self while consuming goods and services.

Methodology (theory): In its content the given telecourse is based upon the dualistic methodology taking into account both structural and agency components. The most brilliant representatives of this methodology are P.Bourdieu and A.Giddens. Its realization in the sphere of consumption implies involving a large number of other approaches (e.g. E.Goffman's dramaturgical perspective) which do not contradict the given methodology. Its kernel relating to consumption could be summarized in the following theses. 'To be' is not only to be named, but to live relevantly, in the sphere of consumption as well. Social constructing is a process of the word definition transformation into more or less stable forms of behaviour, social interaction. An individual constructs his/her identity by a numerous means, and the choice of goods and services occupies a place of no little regard among them. Individuals create themselves, but they draw resources from the environment; follow the culture programme formed under the influence of their society culture, their group subculture; apply the principle of 'mirror self'. Consumption is at the same time an act of text production and a *discourse* with deep social consequences. A person tells his/her



fellows: 'I am X' in a language of consumption (meals, outfits, apartment, vehicle, etc.). Using special moves of self-presentation an individual imposes his/her definition upon his/her fellows and manipulates their impressions. Outer identification acts as an attribution to a certain group or category and the fellows build up their behaviour with the given individual.

As a person obeys existing norms, values, and conforms to the conventional language, he/she reproduces not only him/herself, but also his outer environment. Morality, customs, fashion exist as far as people reproduce them in the everyday life. An individual's active role in creating environment is most evident within small groups (family, friends, colleagues, etc.). There the tastes of a single person may affect others' ways of consumption. Meanwhile, the same process occurs in bigger communities, but the role of an individual is much less significant. However, the result is unchanged: social and cultural environment exists in the only form in which we reproduce it.

Aim of the course: to create a united educational and scientific 'telespace' (virtual space) which would include and integrate two scientific schools of studying social theory of consumption at the Department of Sociology of Culture and Communication of SPbSU (V.Ilyin) and at the Department of General Sociology of NRU HSE (N.Pokrovsky). The interaction of these two scientific groups has been taking place for many years within the scope of Russian and international conferences and summer schools as well as using the grant of 'Consumption and consumerism in the context of globalization in Russia' provided by Russian Foundation for Basic Research. BA students from Sociology faculties of the both universities would enter easily into this educational and scientific space.

Task of the course: to inspire students' scientific interest towards fundamental sociological research. To teach students how to 'read' texts and discourses of the common life and to interpret them using 'sociological imagination'. To institutionalize the Russian school of social theory of consumption (NRU HSE – SPbSU) within the scope of the online teaching process.

Form, structure and organization of the course: BA student groups of the two universities discussing topics and questions from the same list simultaneously in the system of *weekly* online telebridges. Forms of discussion: (a) online lectures, (b) analytic discussions based on the subject of the texts read beforehand, (c) presentations and discussion of the course participants' mini-projects. Final essay on the issues of consumption in everyday life (firstly, the groups exchange their essays and discuss them on the web forum).

We are to conduct parallel co-operative *express research* with the active use of visual aids and their current discussion via telebridge. Possible subjects: 'Street fashion styles in Moscow and St.Petersburg', 'Outfit as an instrument of constructing the gender boundary', 'Feminine/masculine styles', 'The car as a



**THE VIRTUALIZATION OF
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METHODS, STRUCTURE, COMMUNITIES

factor of the lifestyle formation’, ‘Phenomenology of light and darkness in the urban environment in consumption zones’, etc. General direction of students’ research is ‘People and objects’ – the analysis of the social interaction formation, relationship configuration, stable and transient social communities in the process of consuming goods and services (e.g. similar tastes in the sphere of leisure generate communities with certain style, consuming food and alcohol executes ritual functions in the process of group forming and rallying, etc.). Team interpretation of audiovisual material reflecting the culture of consumption and conforming to the methodology of the visual sociology.

Course duration: 36 hours (4 hours per week as one unit: 32 of them online, and 4 hours offline separately). N.Pokrovsky and V.Ilyin share the course tutorship 50/50.

Monitoring forms: 1) presentation of personal and team projects during online classes, 2) handing over reports on research and essays to the both tutors.

Plan of a typical class: 1st part is for the tutor to expose or comment theoretical material (a lecture or a seminar), 2nd part is for BA students to discuss their presentations. Each participant is to open his/her blog at the Internet-portal ‘General sociology. History of sociology’ of the Department of General Sociology (NRU HSE) to display the processes of gathering and analyzing the material, preliminary and final results. Current material is subject to free discussion. This enables the tutors and participants to extend the scope of the course, to observe the working process not only in class, and to refer to the things read in the blog entries as well as those stated during online discussion.

Workholding and distribution: Online teleconferences are recorded and uploaded as flash video at the Internet-portal ‘General sociology. History of sociology’ of the Department of General Sociology (NRU HSE) in free access.



Globalization – Virtualization – ‘Glam-capitalism’

Teleconference course

Nikita Pokrovsky, prof., Department of General Sociology, NRU HSE
Dmitry Ivanov, prof., Department of Sociology of Culture and
Communication, Faculty of Sociology, Saint Petersburg State University

Aim of the course: promotion of an integrated sociological educational space formation in Russia by means of up-to-date information and communication technologies; improvement of professors’ and students’ competence in the media sphere.

Tasks of the course:

1. Elaborating multimedia teaching complex on the platform of the virtual class (teleconference education) and the social network (education with the use of Web 2.0 services).
2. Practicing teaching process in the multimedia information and educational environment.
3. Developing the skills of applying various information and communication technologies as means of professional communication, creation of multimedia scientific and educational products basing on these technologies.

Inspiring MA students’ scientific interest towards fundamental sociological research. Teaching MA students to conduct social/theoretical analysis of the everyday life facts and to interpret them by means of ‘sociological imagination’. Institutionalizing the Russian school of social theory and sociology of globalization processes (NRU HSE – SPbSU) within the scope of online teaching process.

Subjects of the course: Tendencies towards modernization in the 1st half of the 20th century. Crisis of the social/cultural project of modernism. Postmodernism and its depletion by the end of the 20th century. Globalization and its effects. The prime and the decline of the Soviet society as a manifestation of general civilization tendencies. Fragmentation of the social life in Russia and its inclination towards aestheticism. ‘Postindustrial’ economy and consumerism, mediatization of politics, pop culture expansion, status differentiating according to the lifestyle. ‘Focal’ globalization in Russia. Development of transnational



markets and corporations. Struggle between the state bureaucracy and international organizations. Displays of multiculturalism. Migration influence on stratification. Replacement of the reality with images and virtualization of the social institutes. The role of image communications and digital technologies. Virtualization passing to the state of glamour. Cyber-culture development lagging behind the upsurge of glam capitalism. Economic growth in Russia and its structure. Peculiar flows and hyper-consumption concentrating in the crude production and government centres/structures. National brands lagging behind the global trends. Recolonization of depressive industrial and rural regions/structures by the state and transnational corporations. The economy of 'national projects'. The image of empire integrating into Russian mass media. Patriotic 'Empire style' of the mass culture. Bohemian 'Empire style' of the world of glamour. Virtual countercultural communities and their colonizing as sources of new 'symbolic' raw material for the mass culture. The state bureaucracy efforts to create telecommunicative infrastructure and to promote of the positive image of Russia. The breach of regular functioning of the economy of brands and trends and the policy of images and presentations by the outsiders of glam capitalism. Partisans of business (hackers and pirates), politics (extremists), culture (bloggers and flashmobbers). Tendencies towards absorption of alternative social movements and transformation of glam capitalism.

Form, structure and organization of the course: MA student groups of the two universities discussing topics and questions from the same list simultaneously in the system of *weekly* online telebridges. Forms of discussion: (a) online lectures, (b) analytic discussions based on the subject of the texts read beforehand, (c) presentations and discussion of the course participants' mini-projects. Final theoretical essay on the topics of study within the framework of the present course (firstly, the groups exchange their essays and discuss them on the web forum).

The course of lectures by D.Ivanov and N.Pokrovsky is in the PowerPoint programme. MA students' answering for the questions of assignments and team discussion are to take place in the social network. MA students' search and uploading of visual material to the given subject are to take place in the Internet.

Course duration: 36 hours (4 hours per week as one unit: 32 of them online, and 4 hours offline separately). N.Pokrovsky and D.Ivanov share the course tutorship 50/50.

Monitoring forms: 1) presentation of personal and team projects during online classes, 2) handing over reports on research and essays to the both tutors.

Plan of a typical class: 1st part is for the tutor to expose or comment theoretical material (a lecture or a seminar), 2nd part is for BA students to discuss their presentations. Each participant is to open his/her blog at the web portal 'General sociology. History of sociology' of the Department of General



Sociology (NRU HSE) to display the processes of gathering and analyzing the material, preliminary and final results. Current material is subject to free discussion. This enables the tutors and participants to extend the scope of the course and to observe the working process not only in class.

Online teleconferences are recorded and uploaded as flash video at the web portal 'General sociology. History of sociology' of the Department of General Sociology (NRU HSE) in free access.

Sociology of environment and social change

Teleconference course

Nikita Pokrovsky, Prof., HSE, Department of General Sociology
Boris Tokarsky, Prof., Department of Sociology and Social Work, Faculty of Human Resources Management, Baikal State University of Economics and Law

Aim of the course: to create a united educational and scientific 'telespace' (virtual space) which would include and integrate three scientific schools of the social theory research.

Task of the course: to inspire MA students' scientific interest towards fundamental sociological research in the sphere of the social change at micro- and macrolevels considering the natural environment dynamics in many regions of the world: the Baikal, the Pacific coastal zone, the Canadian arctic region. To examine the models of social interaction between the nature and the human resource. Ethnic groups of the Native population under the impact of the changed environment. To create a united educational and scientific 'telespace' (virtual space) which would include and integrate three scientific schools of the social ecology research – at the Department of Sociology and Social Work of BSUEL (B.Tokarsky) and at the Department of General Sociology of NRU HSE (N.Pokrovsky) cooperating with the University of British Columbia. To inspire MA students' scientific interest towards fundamental sociological research. To teach students how to 'read' texts and discourses of everyday life and to



interpret them using ‘sociological imagination’. To put the course on the regular basis engaging aspiring tutors and to pass the course on to them afterwards.

The course is read online in the form of teleconference for the two groups of MA students of the Faculty of Sociology (NRU HSE) and the faculty of Human Resources Management (BSUEL). 4 master classes, 2 hours each – Ralph Matthews (University of British Columbia, Canada). The groups are no larger than 20 students on each part. The 2nd year of the MA programme. Professor Matthews enters the course with four master classes from Vancouver (in English, no interpreting).

Course duration: 36 hours (4 hours per week as one unit: 32 of them online, and 4 hours offline separately). N.Pokrovsky and B.Tokarsky share the course tutorship 40%/40%, Ralph Matthews – 20%.

Monitoring forms: 1) presentation of personal and team projects during online classes, 2) handing over reports on research and essays to the both tutors.

Plan of a typical lesson: 1st part is for the tutor to expose or comment theoretical material (a lecture or a seminar), 2nd part is for BA students to discuss their presentations. Each participant is to open his/her blog at the web portal ‘General sociology. History of sociology’ of the Department of General Sociology (NRU HSE) to display the processes of gathering and analyzing the material, preliminary and final results. Current material is subject to free discussion. This enables the tutors and participants to extend the scope of the course, to observe the working process not only in class, and to refer to the things read in the blog entries as well as those stated during online discussion.

Form, structure and organization of the course: MA student groups of the two universities discussing topics and questions from the same list simultaneously in the system of *weekly* online telebridges. Forms of discussion: (a) online lectures, (b) analytic discussions based on the subject of the texts read beforehand, (c) presentations and discussion of the course participants’ mini-projects. Final essay on the issues of consumption in everyday life (firstly, the groups exchange their essays and discuss them on the web forum).

Workholding and distribution: Online teleconferences are recorded and uploaded as flash video at the web portal ‘General sociology. History of sociology’ of the Department of General Sociology (NRU HSE) in free access.



KSENIA LAZEBNAYA

**A DRAFT OF AN
INTERNATIONAL ONLINE
UNIVERSITY**

The Virtual University is an educational organization with a unified system of access to the educational resources of online educational courses. Engineering of the virtual ambience in order to organize the teaching process requires firstly the development of a control system over databases and participants' communication.

It is possible to meet this challenge thanks to the use of the social network structural and functional facilities of the. A virtual organization including some of the elements of the social environment shows a high level of interpersonal connections and live refreshable content. It allows to execute monitoring of the user activity, their contacts and interests, being an integral condition of the control optimizing and improving the quality of educational services provided.

The arrangement of the adjusted 'social network' enables to create a single channel uniting:

three information flows:

- official connections and documentation;
- educational communications (educational audiovisual aids);
- personal contacts.

between three parts of communication:

- students;
- tutors;
- managers.

To this end it is necessary to design at least two kinds of network interfaces:

- an account of a student, tutor, manager;
- site of the course.



THE VIRTUALIZATION OF INTER-UNIVERSITY AND ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION METHODS, STRUCTURE, COMMUNITIES

Formal field of the account

Monitoring of the education process takes place thanks to creating necessary formal information field of the account for each partaker according to his/her status in the system, for example, year of study and programme. Formal field reflects refreshable information on the courses a student is currently taking (news stream, monitoring diagram, teaching material, etc.) as well as information on the state of official documentation and messages from the management.

Personal field of the account

Within the scope of his/her account each participant is able to create a personal virtual space and thereat to be engaged actively in various events of the community. Personal field implies exchange of private messages with any participant of the teaching process, access to other users' pages, handling archives of teaching material, keeping public records (blogging), and, finally, taking advantage of the united calendar organizer containing both course events and personal records.

Site of the course

The site of the course contains all the necessary texts, audio and video materials, news stream, information on the heads, participants and managers of the course, its structure, the calendar of events, as well as the possibility of supporting online communication between the users (mini chat).

The screenshot displays a user interface for a virtual university. At the top, there is a header with the university's name in Russian: "ВИРТУАЛЬНЫЙ СОЦИОЛОГИЧЕСКИЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ". Below the header, there is a "лента новостей" (news feed) section with a post titled "«Мы являемся частью глобального академического рынка»". To the right of the news feed, there is a sidebar with navigation options: "ОФИЦИАЛЬНЫЕ ДОКУМЕНТЫ", "ЛИЧНЫЕ ДОКУМЕНТЫ", "СООБЩЕНИЯ +2", "КОНТАКТЫ", "ВИДЕО", and "ФОТО". Below the news feed, there is a section for "Общественная роль социологии: исторический анализ" with a date of "01.09" and a link to "Доступна объявленная программа курса". To the left of the news feed, there is a "СТАТУС" section for a student in the 1st year of study, with a date of "2010 СЕНТЯБРЬ 09" and a "БЛОКНОТ" (calendar) section. The calendar shows the date "16-09" highlighted. Below the calendar, there is a "ТЕКУЩИЕ КУРСЫ" (current courses) section with a list of courses: "Общественная роль социологии: исторический анализ", "Социология моды и модного поведения", and "Globalization of Social Time: Theory and Applications". To the right of the current courses, there is an "АРХИВ КУРСОВ" (course archive) section with a list of courses: "Социальные паттерны потребления", "Социальные проблемы и социальная политика", "Социальный анализ в журналистике", and "Туризм и процесс конструирования реальности".



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РАСПИСАНИЕ

07.09. - телемост с Майклом Буравым

08.09. - лекция "Фотография, видео и социология" (Ярская-Смирнова Е.Р.)

15.09. - семинар по итогам прохождения 3 темы

20.09. - семинар по итогам проверки эссе

22.09. - лекция-консультация "Создание мини-проекта"

2010 СЕНТЯБРЬ 09

01	02	03	04
05	06	07	08
09	10	11	12
13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28
29	30		

структура курса

ТЕМА 1
Классические направления и школы: общественная позиция социолога

ТЕМА 2
Публичная социология

ТЕМА 3
От исследования к действию: методы и дилеммы публичной социологии

ТЕМА 4
Визуальные средства публичной

Виртуальный социологический университет

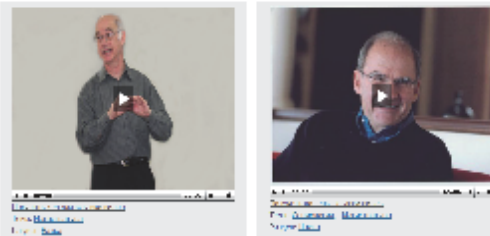
КУРС Общественная роль социологии НАПРАВЛЕНИЕ Социология публичной сферы и социальных коммуникаций СРОКИ ПРОВЕДЕНИЯ 01.02.10 - 01.10.10

лента новостей

01.09 Доступна обновленная программа курса

с 01.09 начинается работа над **ТЕМОЙ 4: Визуальные средства публичной социологии**
Фотография, видео и социология. Визуальная социология. Концепция социологической фотографии. Концепция verbatim. Кинотеатрос. Театрос. Презентация мини-проектов.

материалы курса



07.09.10 В рамках направления "Социология публичной сферы и социальных коммуникаций" состоится телемост с Майклом Буравым

31.08.10 В рамках направления "Социология публичной сферы и социальных коммуникаций" состоится телемост с Джорджем Ритцером



Общественная роль социологии / Под ред. П. Романова, Е. Ярской-Смирновой. М.: Вярванг, ЦСПТИ, 2008



Штомпка, П. Визуальная социология. Фотография как метод исследования. — М.: Логос, 2007



Визуальная антропология: настройка оптики / Под редакцией Е. Ярской-Смирновой, П. Романова. М.: Вярванг, ЦСПТИ, 2009.

Далее...

Срок сдачи эссе по теме телемоста с Джорджем Ритцером: сентябрь 2009. 10 (тема письма "Ритцер")

МОЯ СТРАНИЦА

ОФИЦИАЛЬНЫЕ ДОКУМЕНТЫ КУРСА

СООБЩЕНИЯ +2

КОНТАКТЫ КУРСА

ВИДЕО АРХИВ КУРСА

ФОТО АРХИВ КУРСА

РУКОВОДИТЕЛИ КУРСА

Покровский Никита Евгеньевич

Ярская-Смирнова Елена Ростиславовна

УЧАСТНИКИ КУРСА

Аббасов Р.В.

Вельская А.Д.

Еремин С.К.

Weller S.

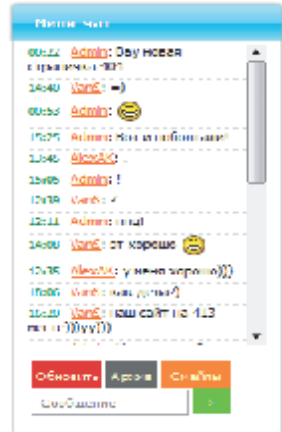
Morrison F.

Maledy D.L.

АДМИНИСТРАЦИЯ

Иванова И.И. сопровождение учебного процесса

Иванов В.В. техническая поддержка





**THE VIRTUALIZATION OF
INTER-UNIVERSITY AND
ACADEMIC COMMUNICATION
METHODS, STRUCTURE, COMMUNITIES**



<http://www.wix.com/door127/virtualization>

START	<p>Department of General Sociology NRU HSE Research Project 2009 - 2011</p> <p>VIRTUALIZATION OF INTER-UNIVERSITY & SCIENCE COMMUNICATION METHODS, STRUCTURE, COMMUNITIES</p> <p>NIKITA POKROVSKY</p> <p>THE UNIVERSITY TRANSFERRING TO THE VIRTUAL REALITY</p> <p>One may say with a great deal of certainty that he who possesses contemporary infocommunication technology possesses the world, to paraphrase the famous statement. Two notions merge apparently in the term infocommunication, that of information and communication. Thus, now it is not enough to simply possess information or to generate it. It is necessary to execute its transfer and circulation in the given environment and to due to objective checkpoints. Meanwhile, these rather abstract truths relate directly to the university education practice and scientific projects realization. Once there was a conceptual motto No sociologic research exists until it is reflected in the mass media. (M.Gorshkov, head of Institute of Sociology at the Russian Academy of Sciences); presently we have to speak of complex programmes of the scientific knowledge circulation and advanced examination in a complicated informational and communicative space with the use of various forms (formats). By doing so present-day authors of scientific and educational products at the same time become their distributors possessing all the means of communication. On these conditions the teaching process in universities transforms into an infocommunicative one and demands complicated adjustments which were not present among the university seats earlier.</p>
TEAM	
THEORY	
PRACTICE	
FUTURE	
CONTACTS	

START	<p>125319 Россия, Москва, Кочновский проезд, дом 3, кб. 436</p> <p>125319 Russia, Moscow, Kochnovskiy proezd 3</p>
TEAM	
THEORY	
PRACTICE	
FUTURE	
CONTACTS	<p>telephone + 7 (499) 152 02 31 e-mail officesociolog@ya.com</p>

**Virtualization of inter-university and
academic communication:
Methods, structure, communities**

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