



DOI: 10.22363/2313-2272-2025-25-3-762-779

EDN: AIVUDW

Transformation of social structure in the neo-information society*

A.A. Yefanov^{1,2}, V.L. Muzykant³

¹Russian State University for the Humanities,
Miuskaya Sq., 6, Moscow, 125047, Russia

²HSE University,
Myasnitskaya St., 20, Moscow, 101000, Russia

³RUDN University,
Miklukho-Maklaya St., 6, Moscow, 117198, Russia

(e-mail: yefanoff_91@mail.ru; muzykant-vl@rudn.ru)

Abstract. The article presents a sociological interpretation of the neo-information society as a special stage of social-cultural development based on a combination of methods: conceptualization, comparative analysis, secondary analysis of sociological and statistical (mediametric) data. The authors use a polyparadigmatic approach to critically rethink such interrelated categories as information society, network society, digital society, smart society, mobile society, electronic society and platform society, thus explaining the need for introducing the category of neo-information society into the social-humanitarian discourse. Since there are numerous attempts to make researchers accept the category of neo-information society (global information society, post-information society, information-communication society of knowledge, hybrid society), the authors explain vulnerabilities of such scientific studies and propose a definition for the concept of neo-information society. The article describes the main features of the neo-information society and social-communication relations in this type of society as predetermined by the collaborative interaction of three main groups of agents — traditional media producers, traditional media consumers and interested actors. Based on the results of the conducted research, the authors argue that the polyparadigmatic study of the neo-information society allows, on the one hand, to identify the features of modernization of the media space in contemporary social-political, social-economic, social-technical and social-cultural realities, and, on the other hand, to explicate the uniqueness of social-communication relations that influence the redefinition of social structure.

Key words: neo-information society; social-cultural development; social structure; Internet; media production; media consumption

For citation: Yefanov A.A., Muzykant V.L. Transformation of social structure in the neo-information society. *RUDN Journal of Sociology*. 2025; 25 (3): 762–779. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-2272-2025-25-3-762-779>

*© A.A. Yefanov, V.L. Muzykant, 2025

The article was submitted on 27.02.2025. The article was accepted on 17.06.2025.

Contemporary society functions under the primacy of social-communication relations based on the media. The current stage of social-cultural development is “a revolutionary era of communication abundance, symbolized by the Internet, which is structured by a new world system of overlapping and interconnected media devices. For the first time in history, these devices, created on the basis of cheap microprocessors, combine texts, sounds and images in a digital, compact, easily stored, reproduced and transportable form” [25. P. 8–9]. All these interfaces are united into global networks accessible to people both financially and physically: communication abundance extends not only to developed countries (almost all social practices are mediatized) but also to developing ones (for instance, in South Africa mobile communications are more accessible than clean drinking water).

As for Russia, from 2011 to 2021 the real Internet audience increased three times — from 28% to 74% [23. P. 12], and in 2020, during the first “wave” of the coronavirus pandemic, 79% regularly contacted with Internet products (1). Self-isolation under the covid-19 pandemic intensified incorporation of Internet products into everyday life: Russians use them to meet informational (news), communicative (social networks and messengers), recreational (films, videos, music, books), educational (including self-education), professional (work), civil (defending rights and freedoms) and everyday (services such as Electronic Government, Government Services Portal, Mobile Bank, marketplaces) needs. In general, the coronavirus pandemic determined an increase in the importance of Internet products (2).

The Internet constructs a culture of real virtuality, being perceived by individuals as a certain ordered and hierarchical system. The strengthening role of the Internet in everyday life, which determined the redefinition of key fields of the media space, allows us to talk about the formation of a special, qualitatively different stage of social-cultural development — neo-information society, which can be explained in the perspective of social progress as based on such irreversible changes that lead to the transition to a higher level of material production and human well-being [37. P. 165], i.e., on the evolutionary interconnected transformation of material and social-cultural spheres, caused by the increasing influence of the Internet. Social progress should be considered in three dimensions: basic needs; foundations of well-being; individual capabilities focused on rights and freedoms [55. P. 7]. The neo-information society as a special stage of social-cultural development is reflected in all three components, inspiring changes at both material and social-cultural levels. However, for understanding the essence of the neo-information society, it is necessary to consistently consider the interrelated concepts — information society, network society, digital society, smart society, mobile society and platform society — as revealing the features of the new stage of social-cultural development.

Information society

The concept of information society is based on the idea of post-industrial society. D. Bell [4] identifies three stages of social development: agrarian (pre-industrial), characterized by the dominance of agricultural sector, church and the army; industrial, caused by the industrial revolution (an emphasis on production structures); post-industrial, in which knowledge as such prevails, and the university is a platform for its formation and accumulation. Thus, the industrial period determined conveyor production and consumer society, the post-industrial era — mass production and knowledge society, characterized by a kind of “intellectual” consumption. A. Toffler identifies three waves in social development [46] (wave means a quantitative-qualitative “revolutionary” changes in science and technology that transform social structure): agrarian — transition to agriculture; industrial — rapid growth of industry, which launched the scientific-technological revolution; informational — dissemination of knowledge through communication networks. Toffler insisted on four interconnected spheres of social development: technosphere, sociosphere, infosphere, and psychosphere, with technosphere determining transformations in all other spheres as the driving force of civilization. Unlike Bell, Toffler pays special attention to the media and development of the infosphere in the post-industrial society, arguing that the demassified media demassify consciousness: “Opinions on any issue — from pop music to politics — become less unified. On a personal level, we are besieged and blinded by contradictory and irrelevant fragments of imagery that knock the ground out from under our old ideas and bombard us with fragmented and meaningless ‘clips’, instantaneous shots. In fact, we live in a ‘clip culture’” [46. P. 119]. Certainly, the media impose clip (disjointed, fragmented) thinking and the corresponding culture, but such thinking does not generate polarization of views, on the contrary, it aggravates manipulation of mass consciousness to achieve programmed reactions from consumers. Perhaps, Toffler’s position on the demassification of consciousness reflects his ideal of the infosphere.

Some Western scholars call the society with economic processes based on information technologies differently: “technotronic” [8], “mature” [33], “postmodern” [29], “new industrial” [17], lacking the very idea of the information society as a developed form of post-industrial society [31]. Thus, Masuda considers information as an economic resource and its general availability as a result of low prices for information services, which is why the information society would become a society of consent, devoid of class and conflict. At the current stage of social-cultural development (neo-information society) this thesis looks utopian under information wars, cyberterrorism and other destructive phenomena. Rather, “there is a certain general model of changes — a three-stage progressive movement: formation of main economic sectors for the production and distribution of information; expansion of the range of information services for

other industries and for the government; creation of a wide network of information tools at the consumer level” [15. P. 117]. Moreover, the market approach to the information society defines information as both a commodity (having a certain value and a subject to purchase/sale/exchange) and an important factor in historical development, “a reflection of the imperatives of capital, since corporate and class interests and market priorities have a decisive influence on the development of new computer technologies, and, on the other hand, development of information allows us to preserve and strengthen the system of capitalist relations” [42. P. 58].

The general economic approach to the information society is based on the idea that information is capital that can be stored, exchanged or sold, i.e., “national information resources are the greatest potential source of wealth... the production of information is expressed in the creation of new knowledge, scientific discoveries” [43. P. 394]. Thus, in the neo-information society, with the development of digital economy, the service sector associated with producing, processing and disseminating information begins to dominate, depending not only on the largest corporations (as in the 20th century) but also on individual actors (primarily bloggers who became influencers due to acquiring symbolic capital).

Thus, the main criteria of the information society are as follows: technological — introduction of information technologies in various spheres of life; social — information as the main stimulator of social dynamics and mass consciousness; economic — information as the main resource, product, service, sphere of employment; political — freedom of information as a driver of democratic political process (increasing civil awareness and political participation); cultural — information values as a fundamental component of general cultural values. Information society is defines as “a society in which the quality of life, as well as prospects for social change and economic development, increasingly depend on information and its use... living standards, forms of work and leisure, education system and the market are significantly influenced by achievements in the field of information and knowledge” [30. P. 119]. In turn, the neo-information society declares communication a key element of social relations, and “big data” in various spheres transforms social structure.

However, there is some skepticism in the perception of the theory of information society: “For theorists of the information society, it is absolutely unimportant whether we transmit a fact, a judgment, a flat ‘common place’, a profound teaching, a high truth or dirty obscenity... Information has a flavor of safe neutrality; and it is very simple and useful to pile up mountains of indisputable facts. Such an innocent cover is an excellent launching pad for the political plans of technocrats who do not want to reveal, as much as possible, their true goals. In the end, what can you object to information?” [40. P. 19]. In other words, we need not only quantitative but also qualitative measurements of information, since it “constitutes the essence of modern social relations... After we firmly established the role of information in the development of capitalist society and recognized the place of reflexive

modernization and theoretical knowledge, the accumulation of which accompanies the development of capitalism, we created exceptional conditions for managing our own future” [56. P. 371]. In the neo-information society, this approach is productive: to assess the role of information, it is necessary to follow the principle of historical continuity to identify factors and context of informatization, type of information, its motives and actors involved.

The implementation of the concept of the information society began in Japan, USA and West Europe at the turn of the 21st century. In 2000, the European Union developed a project of “Electronic Europe” (eEurope) to create a global information space in ten years (by reducing the cost of Internet access, ensuring high-speed communication, providing various types of services in education, medicine, trade, taxation, etc. online); and the leaders of the Big Eight adopted the Okinawa Charter of the Global Information Society to develop the information society for both improving social well-being and developing the economic system. The introduced concept of knowledge society (UNESCO) based on humanistic principles and ideals is another step towards the information society, since information is declared the core of social organization. In 2006, the UN General Assembly declared May 17 the International Day of the Information Society. In 2010, Barcelona Declaration of Research Principles was adopted by the International Association for Media Measurement and Evaluation of Communications (AMEC) and the Institute of Public Relations (IPR) to emphasize the importance of systematic media measurements and institutional measurement of social media, combining quantitative and qualitative methods, machine and manual analysis systems.

As for Russia, in the Soviet period post-industrial, information society was considered an antagonist of socialist society and rejected for ideological reasons. After the collapse of the USSR, “information resources in unity with the means, methods and conditions to be activated were effectively used as the information potential of society” [13. P. 94]. In the 2010s, the formation of neo-information society was considered a new information revolution (based on the principle of co-evolution) affecting all spheres of life due to “radical changes in social structures... which expanded information activities and services” [38. P. 73]. At this stage special attention should be paid to “information security of the individual, society and state... the creation of an effective system for ensuring the rights of citizens and social institutions to freely receive, distribute and use information” [11. P. 15]. Freedom of information is the main factor in the development of information society, since “the collective mind becomes not only the support for the development of Homo Sapiens but also the object of targeted efforts to improve it” [34. P. 82].

There are four stages of the state policy in the development of information society: 1991–1994 — measures to informatize the country (technologization); 1994–1998 — formation of Russia’s information policy (institutionalization); 1998–2010 — developing information policies in constituent entities of the Russian Federation (implementation of the Federal Target Program “Electronic

Russia”) (localization); 2011–2020 — intensified development of the information society (stage-by-stage implementation of the “Strategy for the Development of the Information Society” and the state program “Information Society”) (info-socialization). The fourth stage marks the transition to the neo-information society with a number of interconnected activities: creation of information-telecommunications infrastructure, provision of high-quality services on its basis (In education, medicine, social protection, business), ensuring a high level of information availability, strengthening the efficiency of public administration and local government in the field of information-communication services. According to the results of the authors’ study in 2019 (3), despite the ongoing transition to the information society in Russia (access to the Internet in all populated areas, free courses to improve the computer literacy, etc.), the humanistic-ethical side of the transition remains rather ignored — how to correctly use the online content, what mechanisms can be used to verify the truth (fact-checking) [58] and so on. This methodological gap can be filled by a media education strategy in higher and secondary schools, provided a comprehensive institutional approach.

Network society

With the development of media technologies, the concept of information society was significantly expanded with the concept of network society [7]. Already in the 1970s P. Bourdieu defined “the field as a network of objective relations (domination or subordination, complementarity or antagonism, etc.) between positions... The network of objective relations between positions determines and orients the strategies that agents use in the struggle to maintain or improve their positions: the effectiveness and specific content of these strategies depend on the place of each agent in the structure of power relations” [6. P. 155–156]. Today’s society is considered a branched network of interconnected networks [14] due to the innovative implementation of the electronic communication exchange systems [21]. J. van Dijk defines the network society as a social form that “organizes its relationships in media networks, gradually replacing or supplementing social networks with face-to-face communications. Personal communication is being replaced by digital technologies. As a result, social networks and media networks form the main mode of organization and the most important structures of modern society” [53. P. 112]. Thus, the concept of information society focuses mainly on the technological factor, while the concept of network society also includes economic, political, social and cultural processes. The Internet is presented as a key field, and all types of communication — interpersonal, group and mass — become a single whole, turning into network communication. However, the network society has negative aspects such as susceptibility of networks to technical errors and hacking, but the need to manage social networks opposes the idea of freedom of the network society.

M. Castells examines the genesis of the network society, emphasizing its main historical determinants in the early 1970s: the information technology revolution; cultural and social movements; the crisis that restructured two social-economic systems of that time (capitalism and etatism. These processes not only formed the global information economy and the culture of real virtuality but also generated a new globalized social structure — the network society as a form of social structure in the era of information capitalism, in which “key social structures and activities of its members are organized around electronic communication networks” [9. P. 283]. In turn, networks with three main characteristics — flexibility (ability to reconfigure in changing conditions), scalability (susceptibility to a decrease or increase in size with the least cost) and stability (ability to withstand attacks) — form a new “social morphology”, i.e., networks are “basic cells” of society and individuals — nodes on the path of distribution of these networks.

As for the place of the media in these flows, Castells argues that “while the media has indeed become globally interconnected, and programs and messages circulate on a global network, we do not live in a ‘global village’ but in custom-built cottages, produced globally and distributed locally” [9. P. 327]. Thus, the increasing demassification of the media determines individualization and relevance to the interests of the consumer. Castells also introduces the concept of space of flows to explain dissemination of information: global cities act as nodal points of communities’ dispersal and of information expansion. However, Castells’s theory was criticized, since “the nation as an instance generating identities is increasingly losing its significance in favor of globalizing but also ‘tribal’ forces” [5. P. 104], i.e., individuals “turn into” profiles in social networks and are available in the online mode. Another Castells’s idea is “timeless time” and “eternal universe”: “The shift of times in the media, occurring within the same communication channel and at the choice of the viewer/participant in the interaction, creates a time collage in which not only genres are mixed, but their time scan turns into a flat synchronous horizon without a beginning, without an end and without any sequence” [9. P. 123]. However, prototypes of the network society can be found at all stages of civilization, since social-cultural development would be impossible without information exchange, but, unlike previous eras, today “collection, analysis and transmission of necessary information have become fundamental sources of productivity and power” [9. P. 126], a means of globalization and its result. In the network society, power is not concentrated in the hands of symbolic leaders, relevant institutions or organizations but is dispersed in global information networks. The logic of the network society radically changes institutions of politics, business, culture, production and the life structure of individuals. In the network society, vertical management links (regulation by governments, business structures and media industry) are significantly weakened, while horizontal social links become stronger (due to mass communication flows on the Internet) (see, e.g.: 4; 5; 6).

Over time, Castells's views changed, and he updated the definition of network society: "A society whose social structure is built around networks activated by digitally translated information and based on microelectronics and communication technologies; social structures are organizational arrangements of people in the spheres of production, consumption, reproduction, experience and power, expressed in meaningful, culturally encoded communication" [10. P. 41]. Castells began to use mainly the term "global information society", considering networks as exclusively digital and global (in terms of their scale, speed and structural complexity). Thus, the network is an essential basis (directly associated with the architectonics of the media space) for the social structure of the neo-information society.

Digital society

The concept of digital society has been used in the academic community since the 1990s. D. Tapscott identifies the following features of the new digital society: focus on knowledge; digital representation of objects; virtualization of production; high labor productivity; innovations; integration; convergence; elimination of intermediaries; transformation of the "manufacturer–consumer" relationship; dynamism; business activity in the internetwork environment; multimediatization of social practices; globalization [45]. Despite the presence of many specified features in the concepts of information society and network society, digitalization was prioritized for the first time. Some researchers see methodological gaps in the concept of digital society, since in it a technogenic civilization is deprived of physical space, loses geographical coordinates and acquires an "increasingly obvious extraterrestrial character". However, "the digital society develops in an artificial technogenic world, in which nature acts at best as a decoration, and human life is connected with microelectronics" [24. P. 165].

A specific manifestation of the digital society is digital culture, in which the only value is the number as the "elementary unit" (of bank accounts, exchange rates, stock quotes, prices, speed and time, deadlines, ranking, "likes", etc.). The digital society dematerializes social life, since the economy, social sphere, education, culture and even politics acquire a symbolic expression of images and numbers (even of preserving traditional physical form). Under the transition to the digital society, since 2010 Russia has implemented the strategy for digitalization of television and radio broadcasting and in 2018 started the Federal Target Program "Digital Economy" which is to create a unified digital infrastructure for using big data by state institutions (to optimize their functioning) and ensuring information security. Thus, under digitalization, society undergoes a significant transformation at the level of means for obtaining information, speed and content. As a result, today digital sociology (established in the mid-2010s) studies the main aspects of digital society, focusing on digital data at the micro- (individuals) and macro-level (various institutions and society as a whole) and applying digital tools [28].

Thus, the neo-information society has some features of the digital society due to the obvious influence of digitalization on various social practices. At the same time, the neo-information society is based primarily on media-communication relations, their philosophy and culture and digital indicators of all social activities (symbolic capital of subjects).

Electronic society and smart society

Tapscott identifies digital society as electronic society [45], emphasizing the primacy of technetronism — subordination to the influence of electronic infrastructure. On the one hand, the significance of the technetronic factor in contemporary social-technical and social-cultural realities is unconditional; on the other hand, its conceptualization requires additional explanation due to limitations determined by analogies with digital society. Despite obvious methodological omissions, the category of electronic society became quite popular, given the widespread information and communication technologies. Electronic resources and services have entered everyday life, largely redefining social practices, although they have not completely replaced offline communication patterns. Thus, we can draw analogies between electronic society, digital society and information society, interpreting the significant strengthening of the electronic infrastructure at the turn of the 2010s–2020s as one of the basic features of the neo-information society.

At the intersection of the categories of information society, digital society and electronic society, there is the concept of smart society, which assumes a transition to a new stage of social-cultural development (and social order) due to the active use of technologies based on artificial intelligence in everyday life (smart watches, smart speakers, smart TV, etc.). On the one hand, new functions expand capabilities of basic devices; on the other, they make devices adapt to the needs of their users (by collecting, processing and analyzing their unique data). In smart society, the so-called smart characteristic is decisive, referring to the concept of information society, in which knowledge acts as a basic category with a symbolic meaning (even within commodification). However, in the context of smart society, a partial substitution of concepts is observed: knowledge is simulated as a result of robotization, without providing prerequisites for new understanding of reality due to the technical objects' inability to deeply reflect (like human beings). Therefore, knowledge increasingly moves away from understanding, being realized exclusively at the level of skill and possession which is one of the main anthropological problems of our time full of ethical and existential collisions.

An interdisciplinary scientific-practical direction has emerged — the Internet of Things [44]: it assumes interaction not only between social subjects and technical objects but also between technical objects, which implies a single network of social-communication relations at various levels. The Internet

of Things has begun to actively manifest itself at both everyday and production levels (industry, agriculture, transporting, medicine, education, art, etc.). In turn, the smart society is directly related to the new concept of Society 5.0, which assumes the use of technologies based on artificial intelligence in all spheres of social life [18]. Certainly, at the turn of the 2010s–2020s, such technologies were introduced in various industries, which in the long term would require to rethink the role and place of human labor. However, it seems premature to talk about a complete transition to the smart society, since today technologies based on artificial intelligence are not systematically used, being largely considered as some technical discoveries and breakthroughs still overcoming many barriers — material and cognitive (competencies and skills to use such complex systems). Thereby, the smart society is not “a new stage of social development or social progress but rather a time of active application of smart technologies for the needs of the man and society. Smart technologies contribute to technological progress, have the potential to influence social progress in the future, but today it is premature to claim that they contribute to the formation of smart society” [2. P. 44]. Moreover, it is necessary to take into account the risks associated with possible technical failures of smart systems, data leakage, and interference of “third parties” (hacking, pranking, etc.). Thus, smart technologies should be used in combination with human resources when introduced into social practices (one of the characteristics of the neo-information society).

Mobile society

Another fundamental transition of our time is defined as mobile society [60]. This term is based on of J. Urry’s “new paradigm of mobilities”: “As for the spatial, sociology (not counting urban studies) has generally paid insufficient attention to the fact that social practices are formed by spatial patterns, which have a serious substantive impact on these practices” [50. P. 125]. Urry insists on the coexistence of various types of interconnected mobilities in social space: physical movement of individuals in spatial-temporal segments; physical movement in production and commercial relations; imaginary travel under virtualization of social practices (cinema, television, Internet, etc.); communicative travel through the exchange of messages by e-mail, SMS, etc. [51]. All objects surrounding individuals can be classified in terms of their real and potential mobility: permanently stationary (railway); temporarily fixed (transport at the parking lot); portable (books); attached to the body (watches); social “prostheses” (mobile phone, tablet, pacemaker); based on complex technical codes (computer, household appliances such as a washing machine or microwave oven). Urry considers mobility as an interaction of phenomena, images and individuals, focusing on its social consequences. The totality of these interactions (“flows”) constitutes the so-called “channel” — wide networks (of information and communication) that intersect and create

interconnected nodes. Such flows overcome not only geographical boundaries but also virtual ones.

The “new paradigm of mobilities” is particularly relevant for the theory of neo-information society, since its fundamental thesis is the formation of the space of flows as a set of symbols (signs), i.e., there is a transition from social order to information-communication order. In the neo-information society, the erasure of boundaries between global and local communication determines the formation of a new social structure characterized by transboundary social-communication relations of subjects. Mobile phone seems to be the main factor in the development of mobile society: “First, it is the most widespread means of communication; second, it ensures individualization of information exchange, opening up new opportunities for interpersonal communication.; third, it is devoid of that element of alienation that is still felt and manifested when using the Internet and websites. Thus, mobile communications are the most direct connection between people, devoid of the impersonality of mass communication — newspapers, radio, television. And this advantage contributes to the further development of the mobile phone not only for interpersonal communication but also for exchange of information” [61. P. 6].

Today, there are new audiovisual telecommunication technologies in the Internet (In the first half of the 2010s, Skype was the most widespread, later many others — Yandex.Telemost, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, including the corresponding options of WhatsApp, Viber, Telegram messengers) actively used not only in everyday life but also in professional activities (educational practices and interaction with colleagues), since they provide a greater social-communication effect than telephone due to visualization of the interlocutor [59]. However, mobile phones with access to the Internet make communication individualized, interpersonal, group and mass at the same time, which is proved by the growing popularity of IIP (Individual Information and Personal Access Media) — robotic technologies offering content relevant to the consumer — and messengers with a wide range of channels. In the consumer perspective, mobile communication has become a priority in the network system: thus, already in 2020, 72% of Russians were mobile Internet users and 52% — desktop users (1); in 2022, 90% of users consumed the media content on the Internet with mobile devices, 35% combined mobile and desktop, but the largest exclusive desktop audience is older groups (55%) (7). The elderly still prefer television content, being conservative in their routine practices.

It should be noted that mobility as the main (and the only) characteristic of the mobile society has become not just an integral attribute of social life but a kind of personal “extension” due to satisfying the entire set of one’s needs (information, communication, recreation, education, professional, civil), which makes mobility one of the basic characteristics of the neo-information society (especially in terms of patterns of media consumption and media production). At the same time, it is not correct to reduce the essence of social-communication

relations to the technocratic factor and partly to the ontological level, ignoring their symbolic meaning: this can be prevented by the use of the dialectically connoted term “neo-information society”.

Platform society

At the turn of the 2020s, the category of platform society became quite widespread in academic discourse due to the significance of digital platforms in the social structure of everyday life [1; 52] (reproduction of basic social processes and social practices due to satisfying a wide range of needs). The main communication channels (platforms) are social media which can be divided into the following types: blogs; data exchange services; all forms of Wiki; online games with interactive elements; instant messengers; bulletin boards (like Avito); virtual dating services; e-mail; ; social networks [27. P. 15]. Media consumption studies confirm the priority role of these platforms in our everyday life: thus, in 2020, an average Russian spent 187 minutes a day on the Internet; the most popular resources were instant messengers, social networks, multifunctional systems (Yandex, Google, Mail), video hosting web-sited and interactive portals for online services (AliExpress, Avito) (1), i.e., the Internet landscape is primarily associated with the social media, reproducing the mediatized social structure [36]. In the platform society, “digital platforms of social networks represent not only complex social-technical complexes but also powerful social institutions, acting as regulators that organize social life both online and offline, change the nature of private and public communication, and qualitatively influence social behavior and everyday practices” [63. P. 170].

However, multiplatformity as a basic characteristic of the platform society cannot be reduced to social network resources or to social media in general (despite their obvious significance in the neo-information society), since it is also ensured by the “new media” (analogues and extensions of traditional media — newspapers, magazines, TV and stations; online publications and podcasting), online cinemas and interactive resources offering a wide range of online consumer services. Moreover, the thesis about social networks acquiring the status of powerful social institutions does not seem convincing: certainly, in the new media paradigm one can notice a redefinition of key communication channels and media institutions, but the institutional role of blogging is questionable. The very term “platform society” presupposes the full transition of social-communication relations in the Internet space (corresponding platforms), in many ways replacing offline communication.

Thus, the context-dependent combination of online and offline modes of communication should be considered one of the characteristics of the neo-information society, which makes the main limitation of the platform society concept its methodological underdevelopment, primarily in its operationalization and implied provisions. However, the very fact of paying attention to the special significance of platforms on the Internet as ensuring social-communication relations can be considered as a promising direction for further research in this subject area.

Neo-information society

Contemporary society, which combines the features of the information society, network society, digital society, smart society, mobile society, electronic society and platform society, produces individualized, interpersonal, group and mass communication, thus, being the most highly organized structure defined as the neo-information society. However, academic discourse still lacks its conceptualization as a specific stage of social-cultural development. Thus, the term “global information society” does not fully reflect all relevant aspects and characteristics and implies some utopian ideas. At the turn of the 21st century, “the intensive development of new information-telecommunication technologies gave a fundamentally new quality to cross-border information exchange and became a driving force of economic and social changes, which has a significant impact on relations between individuals and countries at the global level” [12. P. 23]. The main obstacle to the development of the global information society is the growing technological gap between developed and developing countries. Another definition of the neo-information society emphasizes that it is to a greater extent determined not by knowledge but by network communication: “People act using new information, and communication flows are not only not absorbed as a resource of activity, like raw materials or energy, but, on the contrary, multiply and accelerate, since information is not so much a resource as an incentive (motive) for action” [22. P. 361].

Thus, the Internet is a field for expanding not knowledge but communication links, which creates the information-communication society of knowledge” [47. P. 68]; dialogic and discursive attributes of media technologies should ensure social consensus to solve important social problems related to social interactions of subjects of the neo-information society. The Internet does not destroy the space of the city (the term “death of the city” means that all life activities do not need leaving home due to communication flows [26]) but gives it new dimensions, becoming itself a global city” [22. P. 480]. Indirect indicators of the neo-information society can also be found in the works about “post-information society” [16; 19; 39; 41; 53; 62], most completely conceptualized with the social-cultural approach: “The post-information period in social development comes when purely technological changes, inherent in their original forms to the information society, reach a truly global level, stimulating the formation of a new cultural identity, new types of communicative relations and a new system of cultural values” [35. P. 7]. The post-information society is characterized by a creative and constructive identity with an adaptive and protective intention, allegedly devoid of destructive meanings. However, such an understanding contains some methodological omissions: first, the formation of information and then neo-information society are inseparable from cultural transformations directly related to the formation of media space within social space (i.e., spatial and cultural differentiation at different stages of social-cultural development is questionable); second, the thesis about a creative and constructive form of individual identity with an adaptive and protective intention

as typical for the post-information society needs explanation, since media effects with inherent ambivalence are part of the neo-information society too; third, the very term “post-information society” seems dubious, since at the new stage of social-cultural development information (and communication) still prevails, but its role and significance for social relations and social institutions change, which determines the transformation of social structure.

Today, “any attempt to construct a concept of post-information society is only a temporary transition from the concept of information society to its alternatives under the criticism of the content of the concepts of post-industrial and information society with the forced acceptance of their theoretical-methodological basis; therefore, the concept of post-information society is not effective in either descriptive or operational sense” [32. P. 112]. The concept of neo-information society seems to be an alternative for explaining contemporary social-cultural realities: on the one hand, it develops previous concepts; on the other hand, overcomes their limitations.

Another relevant term is “hybrid society”, emphasizing external and internal dynamic integration and interdependence of social processes and elements, i.e., “inversion of space” [57]. Despite unconditional advantages, this type of society has some destructive consequences: increasing social gap between rich and poor countries; pressure from developed countries on developing ones; ethnic wars and religious conflicts; failure of the ideas of sustainable development, multiculturalism and tolerance; new forms of addiction (computer gaming); clip and collage consciousness; uncritical perception of reality; “flat” world of social network users; deformed socialization in the virtual space.

Based on all the above, we need to justify the category of neo-information society and its interdisciplinarity in the social-humanitarian discourse. The prefix “neo” means a new reading, a rethinking of the existing social order: the concept of neo-information society does not deny or exclude previously developed concepts but focuses on the role of communication and media in social processes and structures. Thus, neo-information society is a special, qualitatively different stage of social-cultural development, determined by simultaneous globalization and glocalization and the primacy of social-communication relations mediated by network and digital technologies and associated with individualization of needs and interests of society. Today’s technocentrism demassifies the media by both modernizing channels of traditional media (periodicals, radio, television) and creating new customized resources and platforms (blogs, social networks, messengers, portals for online services, mobile applications). The structure of social-communicative relations serves collaborative interactions of three main groups of agents — media producers, media consumers, and interested actors. Traditional media producers are structures with institutional channels for distributing media content, acting as communicators; traditional media consumers are target audiences that previously were just recipients but today acquired the functionality of the media content generator; the group of interested actors consists

of government structures and business elites, which, on the one hand, exert a systemic influence on the editorial policy of the media and, on the other hand, interact with media consumers both directly and indirectly (mediated).

According to the structuralist constructivism of Bourdieu, the structure of social-communication relations in the neo-information society is directly related to the possession of symbolic capital, which opens up opportunities for agents' symbolic and economic dominance: "symbolic capital is symbiotic with economic capital, since it represents a 'credit of trust' — the endowment of symbolic resources that not only determine a certain authority in the social system, but also, in turn, provide an opportunity for the abuse of the developed brand loyalty" [6. P. 55]. For media producers, symbolic capital represents an increase in rankings of their media products, for interested actors — an increase in electoral and consumer loyalty, for media consumers — satisfaction of media needs and an opportunity to influence the media agenda (acquire the status of the public opinion leader). This interpretation of social-communication relations allows us to identify the following main, interconnected and mutually determining features of the neo-information society: technologism, infocentrism, media orientation, digitalization, network nature of interactions, simultaneity of globalism and glocalism, mobility of social practices, cross-border communications, social integration, and transformation of social structure.

Notes

- (1) Mediascope, UI WEB-Index, Russia 0+, population 12+, September-November 2020.
- (2) Internet and Online Services. 2020. URL: <https://fom.ru/SMI-i-internet/14402>.
- (3) N = schoolchildren in 7–11 grades and teachers from 10 cities of the Volga Federal District — regional and republican centers (Kazan, Nizhny Novgorod, Orenburg, Penza, Perm, Samara, Saransk, Saratov, Ulyanovsk and Ufa); combination of probability and quota sampling, representing the main social-demographic characteristics.
- (4) URL: http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_162586.
- (5) URL: http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_320401.
- (6) URL: <https://www.garant.ru/products/ipo/prime/doc/72135254>.
- (7) Internet Audience. 2023. URL: https://mediascope.net/upload/iblock/3d8/qrldud7t7dxy-zw1rhtzxc3rwx8deg7uk/2022_%D0%98%D0%9D%D0%A2%D0%95%D0%A0%D0%9D%D0%95%D0%A2.pdf.

References

1. Andersson Schwarz J., Larsson S. (Eds.) *Developing Platform Economies: A European Policy Landscape*. Brussels; Stockholm, 2018.
2. Ardashkin I.B. Smart society as a stage of development of new technologies or a new stage of social development (progress). *Bulletin of the Tomsk State University. Philosophy. Sociology. Political Science*. 2017; 38. (In Russ.).
3. Batagan L. Methodologies for local development in smart society. *Economics of Knowledge*. 2012; 4 (3).
4. Bell D. *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society. A Venture in Social Forecasting*. Moscow; 2004. (In Russ.).
5. Boltz N. *The ABCs of Media*. Moscow; 2011. (In Russ.).
6. Bourdieu P. *Social Space: Fields and Practices*. Moscow; Saint Petersburg; 2005. (In Russ.).

7. Breten S. *Models of Man and Society: A Bridge Between Theory and Experience — From Sociology to Social Psychology*. Moscow; 2009. (In Russ.).
8. Brzezinski Z. *Between Two Ages. America's Role in the Technetronic Era*. New York; 1970.
9. Castells M. *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*. Moscow; 2000. (In Russ.).
10. Castells M. *Communication Power*. Moscow; 2016. (In Russ.).
11. Chereshekin D.S., Smolyan G.L. Network information revolution. *Information Resources of Russia*. 1997; 4. (In Russ.).
12. Chernov A.A. *Formation of the Global Information Society: Problems and Prospects*. Moscow; 2003. (In Russ.).
13. Colin K.K. Social informatics — the scientific basis of post-industrial society. *Social Informatics*. 1994; 4. (In Russ.).
14. Craven P., Wellman B. The network city. *Sociological Inquiry*. 1973; 83.
15. Dyzard W. The coming of the information age. *New Technocratic Wave in the West*. Moscow; 1986. (In Russ.).
16. Evdokimov V.A. Systemic distortion of messages in the post-information society. *Science of Man: Humanitarian Studies*. 2015; 19 (1). (In Russ.).
17. Galbraith J.K. *The New Industrial State*. Moscow; Saint Petersburg; 2004. (In Russ.).
18. Gladden M.E. Who will be the members of Society 5.0? Towards an anthropology of technologically posthumanized future societies. *Social Sciences*. 2019; 8.
19. Gorokhov V.G. Scientific-technical policy in the society of ignorance. *Issues of Philosophy*. 2007; 12. (In Russ.).
20. Hartswood M., Grimpe B., Jirotko M., Anderson S. Towards the ethical governance of smart society. *Social Collective Intelligence Combining the Powers of Humans and Machines to Build a Smarter Society*. Bern; 2014.
21. Hiltz S.R., Turoff M. *The Network Nation: Human Communication via Computer*. New York; 1978.
22. *Information Society*. Moscow; 2004. (In Russ.).
23. Kachkaeva A.G., Shomova S.A. Media literacy and critical autonomy in the era of “communicative capitalism”, “empathetic media” and “sensitive data”. *Sociodigger*. 2021; 2 (6). (In Russ.).
24. Kazarova T.V. Digital society as a unique cultural-historical phenomenon. *Digital Society as a Cultural-Historical Context of Human Development*. Kolomna; 2016. (In Russ.).
25. Keane J. *Democracy and Media Decadence*. Moscow; 2015. (In Russ.).
26. Leibniz G. *Monadology*. Moscow; 2020. (In Russ.).
27. Lobodenko L.K. Social media as a new space for the development of communications. *Social Media as a Resource for Integrated Communication Practices*. Chelyabinsk; 2017. (In Russ.).
28. Lupton D. *Digital Sociology*. New York; 2015.
29. Lyotard J.F. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Saint Petersburg; 1998. (In Russ.).
30. Martin J. Information society. *Theory and Practice of the Social-Scientific Information*. Moscow; 1990. (In Russ.).
31. Masuda Y. *The Information Society as Post-Industrial Society*. Washington; 1981.
32. Matsevich I.Ya. Phenomenon of “post-information society” as an object of conceptualization. *Media Philosophy*. 2009; 2 (2). (In Russ.).
33. *Mature Society*. Moscow; 2010. (In Russ.).
34. Moiseev N.N. Information society as a stage of contemporary history. *Free Thought*. 1996; 1. (In Russ.).
35. Morgunov A.A. *Information Society and Prospects of its Transformation: A Philosophical-Cultural Analysis*. Samara; 2016. (In Russ.).
36. Muzykant V.L. Social mechanisms of functioning of media institutions: Genesis of addressee preferences. *RUDN Journal of Sociology*. 2017; 17 (1). (In Russ.).
37. Parsons T. *System of Modern Societies*. Moscow; 1997. (In Russ.).

38. Rakitov A.I. *Information, Science, Technology in Global Historical Changes*. Moscow; 1998. (In Russ.).
39. Rakitov A.I. Post-information society. *Philosophical Sciences*. 2016; 12. (In Russ.).
40. Roszak T. *The Cult of Information: A Neo-Luddite Treatise on High-Tech, Artificial Intelligence, and the True Art of Thinking*. Auckland; 1986.
41. Savchuk V.V. Man of the post-information society. *Bulletin of the Saint Petersburg University*. 1998; 6 (3). (In Russ.).
42. Schiller G. *Manipulators of Consciousness*. Moscow; 1980. (In Russ.).
43. Stoner T. The wealth of information: A profile of the post-industrial economy. *New Technocratic Wave in the West*. Moscow; 1986. (In Russ.).
44. Swan M. Sensor mania! The Internet of Things, wearable computing, objective metrics, and the quantified self 2.0. *Sensor and Actuator Networks*. 2012; 1 (3).
45. Tapscott D. *The Digital Economy: Promise and Peril in the Age of Networked Intelligence*. Kiev; Moscow; 1999. (In Russ.).
46. Toffler A. *The Third Wave*. Moscow; 2004. (In Russ.).
47. *Towards the Mobile Society: Utopias and Reality*. Moscow; 2009. (In Russ.).
48. Trotsuk I.V. All power to the experts? Contradictions of the information society as both depending on and devaluating expertise. *Russian Sociological Review*. 2021; 20 (1).
49. Trotsuk I.V. Possibilities and limitations of distance learning under the covid-19 pandemic and digitalization of higher education in Russia. *Education through the Covid-19 Pandemic: Socio-Humanistic Aspects*. University of Belgrade; 2024. Vol. 2.
50. Urry J. *Consuming Places*. London; 1995.
51. Urry J. *Sociology beyond Societies. Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century*. London; New York; 2000.
52. Van Dijk J., Poell T., de Waal M. *The Platform Society: Public Values in a Connective World*. New York; 2018.
53. van Dick J. *The Network Society: Social Aspects of New Media*. London; 2006.
54. Volodenkov S.V. Evolution of traditional institutions of representative democracy in the post-information society: Problems and prospects. *Electoral Legislation and Practice*. 2016; 3. (In Russ.).
55. Weber A.B. Social progress: Problems of measurement, comparative analysis and challenges for policy. *Social Sciences and the Present State*. 2015; 11 (3). (In Russ.).
56. Webster F. *Theories of the Information Society*. Moscow; 2004. (In Russ.).
57. Yanitsky O.N. Information society: Challenges for Russia. *Sociology and Society: Social Inequality and Social Justice*. Moscow; 2016. (In Russ.).
58. Yefanov A.A., Budanova M.A., Yudina E.N. The level of digital literacy of schoolchildren and teachers: A comparative analysis. *RUDN Journal of Sociology*. 2020; 20 (2). (In Russ.).
59. Yefanov A.A. The first “wave” of the coronavirus pandemic as evidence of the “strange” attractor in the Russian segment of the media space. *Bulletin of the Moscow University. Series 10: Journalism*. 2022; 6. (In Russ.).
60. Zasursky Ya.N. From electronic society to mobile society. *Information Society*. 2008; 5–6. (In Russ.).
61. Zasursky Ya.N. Mobile phone as a factor in the development of the information society. *Bulletin of the Moscow University. Series 10: Journalism*. 2009; 2. (In Russ.).
62. Zorina E.G. Conceptualization of the post-information society and the Influence of its characteristics on the political sphere. *Information Wars*. 2017; 2. (In Russ.).
63. Zvereva G.I. Concept of “platform society” in contemporary social-cultural studies. *Bulletin of the Russian State University for the Humanities. Series: Literary Studies. Linguistics. Culturology*. 2019; 8–1. (In Russ.).

Трансформация социальной структуры в неoinформационном обществе*

А.А. Ефанов^{1,2}, В.Л. Музыкант³

¹Российский государственный гуманитарный университет,
Миусская пл., 6, Москва, 125047, Россия

²Национальный исследовательский университет «Высшая школа экономики»,
ул. Мясницкая, 20, Москва, 101000, Россия

³Российский университет дружбы народов,
ул. Миклухо-Маклая, 6, Москва, 117198, Россия

(e-mail: yefanoff_91@mail.ru; muzykant-vl@rudn.ru)

Аннотация. В статье предложена социологическая интерпретация неoinформационного общества как особой стадии социокультурного развития на основе использования ряда подходов: концептуализации, компаративистского анализа и вторичного анализа социологических и статистических (медиаметрических) данных. Применяя полипарадигмальный подход и критически переосмысливая такие взаимосвязанные категории, как информационное общество, сетевое общество, цифровое общество, smart-общество, мобильное общество и платформенное общество, авторы обосновывают правомочность введения в социогуманитарный дискурс категории «неoinформационное общество». В частности, во временном модуле обозначены исследовательские попытки приблизиться к концепции неoinформационного общества (глобальное информационное общество, пост-информационное общество, информационно-коммуникационное общество знания, гибридное общество) и их ограничения. Авторы предлагают определять неoinформационное общество как такую социальную систему, где структура социокоммуникационных отношений предопределена коллаборативным взаимодействием трех главных групп агентов — традиционных медиапроизводителей, традиционных медиапотребителей и заинтересованных акторов. В статье охарактеризованы основные свойства неoinформационного общества и сделан вывод, что его полипарадигмальное изучение позволяет, с одной стороны, определять особенности модернизации медиапространства в современных социально-политических, социально-экономических, социотехнических и социокультурных реалиях, а, с другой стороны, эксплицировать своеобразие социально-коммуникационных отношений на переопределение социальной структуры.

Ключевые слова: неoinформационное общество; социокультурное развитие; социальная структура; Интернет; медиапроизводство; медиапотребление

Для цитирования: Ефанов, А.А., Музыкант В.Л. Трансформация социальной структуры в неoinформационном обществе // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Социология. 2025. Т. 25. № 3. С. 762–779. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-2272-2025-25-3-762-779>