

THE DIGITALIZATION OF SOCIUM: ITS SIDE EFFECTS ON THE SOCIALIZATION OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE

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Abstract. The digitalization of socium has traumatic consequences – affects the consciousness and behavior of the young people which is specifically manifested in their disembedding from the context of social bonds. This presupposes the departure from the historically prescribed social forms and attachments which are parts of the process of the youth's socialization and education. On the one hand, the youth as a social group is being subjected to the process of fragmentation of society caused by the fact that the educational institutions designed to act as mediators for the interests of the young people lose touch with them leading to an increase in uncertainty in the understanding of basic values. On the other hand – this fragmentation of the society is also promoted by the "digital risk" and "digital metamorphosis of society" which, according to U. Beck, causes a "radical type of individualization": the young people tend to get rid of institutional relations, attachments to the local cultural context and begin to depend on the consequences of their own risks. The concrete factors of these processes are as follows. The digitalization of society radically changes the socialization of the young people. They have become addicted to "googling". They rely more not on parents and teachers but on the opinions available from their mobile computers. As a result, the young people, being exposed to the codes of signification of Good and Evil taken from "googling", become dependent on digital realities that determine the nature of their behavior in which the values of novelty begin to prevail. At the same time, their way of thinking is especially deformed, likened to the functioning of computers. Historically, the younger generation was socially and financially dependent on the older generation which actually caused a conflict between fathers and children. However, the circumstances of life in one socio-cultural space and time settled these contradictions quite successfully. Today the socialization takes on a digital character that is not directly related to the specific socio-cultural worlds of people, their previous status and roles. If socialization usually means the transfer of the values and norms from the older generation to the younger generation that are necessary for entering the existing social and political order, making young people actually social beings, now, according to U. Beck, with socialization there is a metamorphosis: "the young

generations, on the contrary, were already born as ‘digital being’. What has been packed into the magic word ‘digital’ has become part of their ‘genetic outfit’” (Beck, 2016: 189).

The digitalization of socium that has come into our lives brought social and cultural changes, radically transformed the nature of society and the young people. In my view, the adoption by scientists and then politicians of the integralism of digital and humanistic turns can ensure the transition of civilizations and societies to a fundamentally different trend of development. Our optimistic forecast regarding these opportunities is based on the following assumption: the existing very deep intergenerational conflict is not eternal – it may be forecasted that in a generation it will exhaust itself in the current forms because practically the socialization of all people will assume the mastery of values and norms necessary for the management of becoming socio-techno-natural realities in the humane interests of the mankind.

Keywords: digital metamorphosis, digital socialization, digital youth, digital turn, humanistic turn

Introduction

Today there is an active process of becoming a more complex society with new risks and vulnerabilities (Kravchenko, 2013: 3-12), a characteristic feature of which is the emergence and widespread of the digitalization of socium. Its consequences are ambivalent: on the one hand, “‘the digital’ entails changes in the relations between technologies and social life; between knowledge, society and technology (Marres, 2017: 11). The benefits of the digital socialization and education are multiple: digital technologies are seen as “enabling and generating a new response-ability to both students and educators” (Bustillos, 2017: 159); but on the other hand, the digitalization of socium develops side effects in the form of centrifugal tendencies, releases young people from the context of social and cultural bonds, produces “digital humans, whose metamorphosed existence questions traditional categories, such as status, social identity, collectivity and individualization (Beck, 2016: 146). As a result, “each new generation must gradually be socialized into a technical order, even through doing so begins with entering what little remains of the culture-based connectedness... children and teenagers become more dependent on ‘googling’ everything, causing them to leave behind what little they have acquired of a symbolic universe of sense” (Vanderburg, 2016: 261, 263). All this is a challenge to Sociology.

Objectives / Purpose of the study

This paper analyses the impact of the digitalization of socium on the production of side effects on the socialization of the young people. It covers how the opportunities available with digital socialization relate to new risks and vulnerabilities. The aim is to highlight the nature of side effects of the modern trends of socialization. The author proposes the ways to overcome or minimize the side effects on the digital socialization, arguing for the need to use integrally the instruments of the digital and humanistic turns.

Methodology

The presented article studies the dynamics of socium in a non-linear way, relying on the theory of ‘arrow of time’ that was worked out by the Nobel prize-winner I. Prigogine. According to it all the material, bio and social matter is being developed increasingly quicker and in a more complex way (Prigogine, 1997). In my opinion, the effect of the ‘arrow of time’ should be extended to the dynamics of socialization that develops from linear embedded tendencies to non-linear centrifugal ones, so there appeared “radical type of individualization” (Beck, 2002). The newest emerging factors in the fragmentation of society and change in socialization include increasing uncertainty, digital risks and metamorphoses – they produce what is called the “generations of side effects...the common concept of ‘socialization’ doesn’t capture this any more” (Beck, 2016: 188). The methodology is based on the synthesis of the digital and humanistic turns that is of particular importance forming an interdisciplinary concept.

Results / Findings

I put forward the contours of the concept of the digital turn arguing that, however, it is not enough to overcome the side effects on socialization of the modern youth. The sociologists need the integralism of the achievements from all sciences. Such an interdisciplinary diagnosis would allow, on the one hand, to take into account all possible paradoxes, dispersions, metamorphoses, turbulence of society, and on the other hand, – to search for and approve new forms of humanism adequate to complex realities, including the humanistic orientation of any scientific researches and innovations. That becomes an ethical cosmopolitan imperative, which is aimed at revealing the dynamic nature of modern socium, including the process of digitalization, the production of new risks and metamorphoses that concern the side effects of modern trends of digital socialization.

Discussion

A significant contribution to the production of centrifugal forms of life is made by the current fourth industrial revolution, based on the digitalization of socium and man, leading to even greater fragmentations. The traditional institutions designed to act as mediators for the interests of various social

groups, especially young people, lose touch with society. This produces an increase of uncertainty in the understanding of basic values, pluralism and diffusion of social spaces and identities. The dispersion of values, in essence, becomes a norm – we named this process as a “normal anomie” (Kravchenko, 2014: 3-10).

The side effects of the digitalization of socium, their influences on the socialization of the young people are expressed in tendencies of individualized forms of existence, passive in their essence, which contribute to the development of loneliness (Riesman, 2001). These forms of existence prevent the development of socially significant transformations. The young people also unwillingly come in touch with risks from other countries. However, for their valid diagnostics they do not have embedded cultural content. The situation is aggravated by the fact that the state, public institutions do not sufficiently confront these challenges, because the functions of a special protection of the young people from culturally alien to them artifacts are weakened. The young people are predisposed to centrifugal mobilities, based on digital content: study, work and even love. The digital technologies produce “miniaturized mobilities” that are “fundamental to the current phase of the development of contemporary societies and facilitate an intensification of ‘life on the move’ through advances in new portable software and hardware products” (Elliott, Urry, 2010: 28). The earlier mobilities had the largely structured essence that was expressed in relatively long-term trends. Nowadays these mobilities are replaced by short-lived unstructured centrifugal mobilities in the form of flows of people, knowledge, information, money, dangers and challenges that are practically not controlled by states, not depend on socio-cultural practices and human ties. The labour activity is changing, becoming more and more centrifugal. A process of precarization of employment in the youth labor market takes place. There arose “a paradoxical metamorphosis”: “in many countries of the world we have the best ever educated generation, which, however, is threatened by a hitherto unknown degree of unemployment” (Beck, 2016: 196). The side effects of the digitalization of socium penetrate into the family, which is influenced by the conflict of interest between love, family and personal freedom – the traditional long-lived family is metamorphosed into a “family for now” (Beck, 2016: 140); one can see “love at a distance” and the rise of “world families” (Beck, Beck-Gernsheim, 2014). As a result, traditional gender roles are being degraded, reproducing risks for both men and women: the risks of the late birth of the first child and the divorce are increasing. A specific kind of a digital risk arose in the form of a “digital freedom risk”, which “was not triggered by a catastrophe in a traditional sense. Rather, it was triggered by

the mismatch between the perceived and the actual reality of freedom in contemporary (Western) societies... The real catastrophe would actually be an unseen hegemonic control on a global scale” (Beck, 2016: 141-142). The young people who value individual freedoms will be particularly affected by this ‘liquid’ new catastrophe, which, while being invisible, undermines the protection of privacy as a fundamental human right.

Only some side effects on socialization of youth produced by the digitalization of socium have been mentioned here. But they manifest the demand for innovative theoretical approaches to the analysis and management of the becoming complex realities. One of them is the digital turn, essence of which is as follows. It is fundamentally different from other turns in sociology namely: the linguistic turn (L. Wittgenstein, M. Heidegger, M. Foucault); the risk turn (U. Beck, A. Giddens, N. Luhmann); the cultural turn (J. Alexander). J. Urry put forward complexity, mobility and resource turns. Despite the integral nature of all these turns, their theoretical and methodological instruments suggest one or another dominant determinism. The digital turn, on the contrary, does not have any dominant determinism, because, in fact, it deals with super complex reality that cannot be diagnosed through the lens of a particularly important role of a single factor or the achievements of one scientific field. If previously mentioned turns reflected on the results of the revolutionary transformations in rather concrete spheres of the society, the digital turn scientifically analyzes the “digital metamorphosis” that is “essentially different from digital revolution. Digital revolution describes a mainly technologically determined social change... the notion of revolution suggests that change is intentional, linear and progressive... Digital metamorphosis, on the contrary, is about non-intentional, often unseen side effects, which create metamorphosed subjects, – i.e. digital humans” (Beck, 2016: 145-146). I emphasize that the digital metamorphosis is about radical changes in the nature of the society and the youth.

Conclusion

In my interpretation the digital turn focuses on the study of centrifugal trends and the development of principles of management of the short-lived socium. In order to validly diagnose and analyze the side effects of the digitalization of socium, their influences on the socialization of the young people, the sociologists should rediscover ‘socialization’ through innovative approaches (Kravchenko, 2010: 14-25), putting an accent on the side effects and taking into account the integral instruments of the digital and humanistic turns.

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