Future of Platform Economy: Digital Platform as New Economic Actor and Instance of Social Control

**Anna Valer'yevna MARKEEVA¹,
Olga Vladimirovna
GAVRILENKO²**

¹ PhD in sociology, associate professor,
Associate professor of Economic
Sociology and Management
Subdepartment, Department of
sociology, Lomonosov Moscow State
University, Moscow, Russian
Federation, e-mail:
anna_markeeva@mail.ru

² PhD in sociology, associate professor,
Head of the Social technologies
subdepartment, Department of
sociology, Lomonosov Moscow State
University, Moscow, Russian
Federation, e-mail:
ol.gavrilenko2014@yandex.ru

Abstract: The digital technologies have irreversible impact on social structures, institutions and mundane practices. This forces to raise again the classical social-philosophical question about social control, its forms, modes of realization, points of application and stakes, and about emerging economic regimes, claiming to be basic and defining. This article presents the attempt to describe and analyze digital platforms as new economic actor and instance of social control.

Keywords: *digital platform; sharing economy; economic actor; social control; digital technologies; social resistance.*

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Introduction

The profound and irreversible influence of digital technologies and communication on social structures and institutions, as well as their pervasive impact on everyday practices and modes of existence, have long been a trivial statement (this trivialization has not least been facilitated by the transformation of "digitalization" into the category of state thinking and governance).

Now technological progress is often presented as an imperative of social and cultural society development. Without touching upon the discussions going on in professional communities and everyday communication on whether technologization will contribute to the development of society and the individual or will lead to their total degradation, we would like to draw attention to the following aspect associated with technologization. Radical technological changes (and their consequences) break down existing markets, set in motion the mechanism of generic competition¹, described by experts in social management as an abstract construct, and ultimately transforming the existing social and economic institutions, lead to the disappearance of many everyday modes of existence. In this regard, radical changes, despite the possible positive (progressive) consequences of their implementation, encounter various forms of resistance.

This article presents an attempt of the authors to look at the social consequences of the development of one of the key actors of the new technologization – digital platforms. The authors try to demonstrate that the positive aspects and characteristics set out in digital platforms (for example, reduction of the cost of production by building a cheaper, effective communication between the manufacturer and the consumer, development of collaborative forms of activity, transparency, freedom of participants' entry and exit, etc). – may not be realized due to management measures formed in accordance with the logic of the industrial era, first of all, control measures. The result of the lack of an effective state regulation system and public control over digital platforms can be their transformation into an independent instance of social control with virtually unlimited power over

¹ In late 70-ies of the XX century M. Porter, P. Drucker, F. Kotler and others postulated transition to a qualitatively new stage of competition development – generic (universal) one when the struggle of economic actors comes not from the logic of industry competition, but it becomes a struggle of "all against all" for a type of consumer resource (money, time, attention, etc.). The economic regime of digital platforms is a regime of generic competition.

the modern mediatized world. The breakdown of the existing balance in the systems of mutual control between public authorities, market players, civil institutions and usual customers will inevitably lead to the deepening of existing socio-economic and cultural problems: growth of social inequality, consolidation of a significant part of the low and medium-skilled labor force in the precaring labor zone, formation of a gap between traditional and platform-type organizations, loss of critical thinking skills by young people as a result of cyber-socialization, transformation of the real opportunities for mobilizing supporters and for expression of civil stand made possible through digital platforms, in slacktivism.

Digital platforms as a new economic actor

The concept and characteristics of new economic and social actors – digital platforms - are considered in the context of development of various types of collaborative production networks by sociologists and economists. In this regard, digital platforms and platform economy are conceptually related to the sharing economy. According to the survey prepared for the World economic forum in 2016 (WEF, 2016), the development of sharing economy services is one of the leading technological drivers of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, the active spread of which is associated with global changes in the economic, social and cultural landscape of modern society.

The contribution of the sharing economy companies to the economic indicators is as yet not so significant as traditional sectors: the total volume (according to the study in 40 countries) is about 2.2 trillion\$. In eight countries, including the USA, Canada, Japan and France, about 5% of GDP is generated by companies of this type (Rifkin, 2014). But those numbers should not obscure the significance of the sharing economy companies for the new emerging economy model. According to the Price Waterhouse Coopers (PwC, 2015: 14) forecast, by 2025 the income of the sharing economy companies will grow 22 times, in five analyzed markets the distribution of shares between traditional (non-digital) enterprises and digital platforms will change from 5% (\$15 billion) generated by digital platforms against 95% (\$240 billion) of traditional (non-digital) type companies in 2013, to a ratio of 50% to 50% with equivalent volumes of \$ 335 billion. The ambitious plans of the governments to develop sharing projects are even more impressive: according to the plans of the Chinese government, up to 10% of the country's GDP will be created by the sharing economy companies by 2020 (Rinne, 2019).

Data on the number of digital platforms is differ. According to surveys by the European Commission, there were 323 platforms in Europe in 2017. The data of Timbo, the first global Index of sharing economy, show that out of 4,615 companies in 213 countries only 286 can be attributed to the platforms of the sharing economy (Bergh, Funcke, & Wernberg, 2018). However, a small number of companies is rather a consequence of the model of their development, when in order to increase profitability, they are forced to follow the path of mergers and acquisitions. The strength and nature of their impact can be judged by the companies' involvement in the platform ecosystems, as well as by the dynamically expanding user audience. Currently, 19% of the US adult population, 36 % of the UK residents are already involved in the sharing economy as users or service providers (PwC, 2015: 15).

The heterogeneity of the existing sharing economy projects generates polarization of the existing views on its future. Some experts (Dyal-Chand, 2015; Rifkin, 2014) by analyzing various platforms of exchange and donation focus on the revival of (in contrast to the ideology of individualism, competition and upshifting aspirations of the industrial era) various forms of cooperation, mutual assistance, popularization of "communality"(in the new digital format) in the modern world². They talk about a model of social economy based on a system of universal cooperation and oriented towards solving socially significant problems. The other researchers – focusing on the development of digital companies that generate profits through the brokering between suppliers of goods and services and consumers (Uber, Airbnb, etc.), emphasize the destructive consequences of such projects for the countries' economies: creation of barriers to the countries and companies' innovative development, total reduction of labor costs and workers' social guarantees in all professional groups. From their point of view, development of sharing economy projects leads to "growth of parasitic rental capitalism". "The clever trick of the 'sharing' economy is to change the names of things without changing the things themselves. Rent and hired labor — which have existed since the birth of capitalism — are simply presented as "sharing".... "Sharing" economy is usual commodity exchange getting a new glossy, eye-catching trendy and modern PR in the Internet era " (Booth, 2017).

² This is related to the development of crowdsourcing (a new format of collaboration), co-working (new forms of organization of working places), co-living (revival of community housekeeping)

The modern digital infrastructure opens wide opportunities (in time and spatial dimension) for the organization of collaborative work, mutual assistance, inclusion of untapped or "underutilized" resources (intellectual, material, time, etc.) in the economic turnover. The sharing economy as an "umbrella" concept includes a whole range of projects and services built on various forms of market and non-market exchanges (donation, barter) and allowing actors to be incorporated in economic activities, implementing both altruistic and purely pragmatic goals. However, within this process of the economic model transformation, a new actor - digital platforms - appears and begins to claim a key role/position.

There are various approaches to the definition of digital platforms due to the dynamic development of information and communication technologies. There was an inevitable expansion of the concept of digital platforms because of improvement of their architecture and extension of their scope of application: "an increasing number of complex and special objects started to be called platforms. Now the platform is both a virtual trading platform, and the whole set of its users, and software, hardware and network systems, business model and the company that implements it" (Kuprevich, 2018:312).

Recognizing the need for different approaches to the definition (through the listing of its key components³ (Mootee, 2008; Morvan, Hintermann, & Vazirani, 2016), through the differentiation of their functional purpose⁴) two complementary approaches were used for this research: the digital platform as a business model and as a digital infrastructure. These two approaches to defining digital platforms correspond to two stages of their development.

Digital platforms are associated with the formation of a new business model based on gaining access to a certain resource (the accessed-based consumption) and signifying the transition from the model of selling a certain product or service to the model of selling functions for their use. In this case, we are talking only about digital platforms that promote a *new*

³ Data entry mechanism, machine learning transaction mechanism to perform tasks or rule-based actions, analytical mechanism, etc..

⁴ There are various classifications of digital platforms in terms of functionality: platforms are divided into an innovative, transactional, investment, integration (Evans & Gawer, 2016); into advertising, cloud, industrial, grocery, and lean (Šrnicek, 2019), into instrumentals, infrastructure and application (Glazkov, 2018). Such classifications are productive in identifying the features of the platform data operation, determining the growth model and the main beneficiaries, but the accelerating process of convergence, absorption of some digital platforms by others and expanding of their functions do not allow these classifications to preserve the description completeness for a long time and require constant revision.

*business model based not on the sale of a certain product or service, but on providing access to goods or services that the platforms themselves do not usually own*⁵.

This approach describes the features of the only application platforms development⁶ quite well. This approach makes it possible to clearly identify projects promoting this business model in the general system of the sharing economy, to analyze the positive and negative effects of their development on some sectors, as well as for individual group participants (suppliers of services and goods, consumers, the platform itself).

However, some simplification, reduction of all types of platforms to one type (*applied digital platform*), does not make it possible to cover those major implications for the social world transformation that are behind the platforms development. It should be recognized that there are platforms of different level: they range from high-level platforms that enable a basis of platform economy to low-level platforms that provide a collection of business and/or technology capabilities that other products or services consume to deliver their own business capabilities. The development models formed by the platforms of different levels differ. Without denying the impact of applied digital platforms, some destructive consequences of their distribution (employment, disappearance of a whole complex of agents in the commodity-producing chain), can be partially compensated. For example, equalization of competitive position between traditional rental agents and Airbnb was solved in some countries by imposition of an additional tax on short-term renting. Similarly, a number of states in the US are forcing Uber to provide enhanced worker protection, including health damage compensation and unemployment protection. At the same time, development of high-level digital platforms (digital ecosystems) requires development of new approaches and methods of regulation. Probably, the consequences of their development cannot be quickly leveled.

⁵ This business model has three variants (Wallenstein & Shelat, 2017): 1) decentralized platforms (the asset owner sets a timeline and offers the asset directly to the user, and the platform provides the asset owner and the user interaction, facilitating the transaction in exchange for a small share of the fee (Airbnb); 2) centralized platforms (the platform owns the asset and sets the price, allowing to have more control over quality, availability and standardization, as well as to get more profit) (Zipcar).3) hybrid platforms (asset owners offer a service with price and norms set by the platform. Ownership and risk are decentralized, while standardization and service level are centralized (Uber and Lift).

⁶ An *applied digital platform* is a business model for enabling algorithmic exchange of values between a significant number of independent market participants through transactions in a single information environment, leading to a reduction in transaction costs due to the use of digital technologies and changes in the division of labor)

Digital ecosystems is not only a business model, it is a digital basis, the infrastructure of the modern world. Therefore, the second (broad) research approach, which defines *a digital platform as a digital infrastructure that creates value by allowing two or more groups to interact*, more precisely describes the current stage of their development and the social effects they generate. In this regard, the platform not only provides a forum for interaction, making a profit from the connection of supply and demand (business model), but ultimately starts to generate profit from the maintenance of site, from the ability to extract new data from the analysis of the agents connected to the platform, from the "network" effects that the platform receives when the number of users increases.

Another aspect that enables the need for a wider approach to digital platforms relates to the fact that not only the business organizations, users, public entities but also physical objects able to generate data are among the groups that are included by the platforms to simplify interaction. The future environment of digital platforms will include an increasing number of users-physical objects (things), which will lead to the need to improve the interaction between people and physical objects, between groups of physical objects (things). Such platforms are already being created, for example, there is a search engine for the Internet of things called Thingful, which allows physical objects to find each other without people's involvement to analyze the actions of each other and to build joint solutions.

Seeing digital platforms as a digital infrastructure, as a new stage in the evolution of these economic actors, allows us to move away from a narrow understanding of the social and economic effects that applied digital platforms (first stage in the evolution of these economic actors) bring to our lives. High-level digital platforms create the conditions for "recombination of resources", sometimes destroying even recently created technological solutions. They find new business opportunities by becoming Schumpeter entrepreneurs, driving the business logic of digital transformation, and thereby isolating themselves from both traditional (non-digital) and digital companies that use separate technological solutions. High-level digital platforms expand the intellectual capabilities of the entire digital business, providing the next stage of digital transformation. They form the image and model of a new economy, often referred to as a platform economy, where platform owners (like factory owners in the First Industrial Revolution) become key agents, concentrating not only economic power, but social and political influence.

Digital platform as a new social control instance

The relationship between the "social" and the "technological" has always been at the center of sociological and philosophical discussions. At the moment, the "social's" rootedness in technological systems, infrastructure, especially digital communication is postulated more and more often. Thus, the works by Couldry and Hepp (2016) see the modern world not only as "deeply mediated", but it is proved that the technological infrastructure becomes the foundation of this world and determines the practices and socio-cultural contexts where they find their expression. However, this evidence (both every day and research one) does not eliminate the need to raise classical sociological questions: what forms does social control take in the digital social world, what are the technical modalities of its implementation? What are its "points" of application and expected effects (including fundamentally new ones)?

According to some experts, the existing digital environment is the space of true freedom, the space of "hope", where everyone finds the opportunity to express themselves, acquires a sense of unity and support. This is the space where a civil initiative that can change the world and the existing social institutions is formed (Castells, 2016). However, a careful topological study of the digital space and its technological component suggests the opposite: it is a constructed and managed space of "megacorporations hegemony" (Manovich, 2018: 35). The leading role of large IT corporations, gradually turning into platform economy giants remains invisible to most users. Due to the many technological solutions that underlie the construction of digital environment, the illusion of "freedom" and competition is created. In fact, it is a controlled, hard-wired space where even competing or opposing opinions are the product of a single creator (TNC), "dissent becomes a tool of exploitation and control" (Dean, 2005). Platform owners become the true creators of this mediatized world.

As noted above, the debates about the role of digital platforms in the new economic model and their impact on the transformation of our everyday life unfold around the following question: will the spread of new types of organizations that combine market mechanisms and reciprocity as a form of coordination lead to the creation of a new social economy (alternative to capitalism), or to the creation of "monopolistic" and/or "rental" capitalism with the worst social effects for the majority of the population?

The supporters of the shift from capitalism to a social digital economy believe that the new model of economy, independent of either the market (market mechanisms) or the state (organizational mechanism), revives a more ancient form of institution – self-governing and self-organized activity (Rifkin, 2014). The undoubted advantages of the new hybrid organizations (flexibility, adaptability, etc.) are presented with the "romanticism", with an emphasis on the expansion of intangible motivations and values of postmodern society. Based on the results of studies demonstrating the revolution in the minds of modern people (we are talking mainly about developed societies, certain generations (Y,Z)), associated with the reluctance to own property, the desire for self-realization etc., consciously or not, revealing the features of people cooperation projects, the experts overlook that these projects cannot be the basis of a new economic model. In fact, the colonization of the whole economic space by global digital platforms provide a movement to the form opposite from the social economy. In a global context this is the movement towards "monopolistic capitalism of platforms", in which the owners of technology platforms become "society infrastructures owners" (Srnicek, 2019: 83).

At the same time, platforms, becoming key economic agents, due to the dominance of the trend towards monopolization in them, create prerequisites for the transition from competition of different types of capitalism (Albert, 1998) to the formation of one type of capitalism (monopolistic). This transition will be accompanied by a reduction in social and labor guarantees and a catastrophic drop in the cost of labor in all professional groups all over the world, as well as the consistent destruction of any competition between different types of organizations (platform and classic ones), the creation of global ecosystems of several platforms competing with each other. From the diversity of economic models, there is a movement towards "flattening " of economic life, transformation of all national economies into one global monopolistic economy, which will be based on the technological imperative.

Previous attempts to build and/or bring economic systems to a single model show that by launching centrifugal forces, they inevitably led to the opposite effect - the expansion of the diversity of economic models. Thus, the application of the Washington consensus as a universal technology for the transfer of countries with a planned model to the US capitalist model faced a variety of institutional features of national economies. In the end, this process led to the competition of different types of capitalism (American, Rhine, etc.), to the formation of a "postmodern exhibition" of economic models and courses that compete not only on key economic

indicators, but represent other (and not in the "best"- "worst" logic) national models of social structure (Barkov, 2012). The attempt to bring all economies to a single model (platform economy) will not lead to diversity and competition of different types. The model of economic growth inherent in the platform principle of organization may be carried out only in conditions of total expansion (platforms expansion) in the world economy, subject to the leveling of national characteristics and existing "infrastructures of society".

Thus, the expansion of digital platforms is likely to be accompanied by increased control over the social world. Srnicek (2019) notes that the current situation with the development of digital platforms is extremely unstable from the standpoint of their profitability, which forces digital platforms to use increasingly aggressive methods of capturing both economic and social space. This leads to the expansion of the field of new resource (data) extraction, to strengthening its role as interaction "gatekeepers", promotes the market convergence⁷ and the improvement of technical and management solutions that lead to the closure of ecosystems.

The greatest debate is generated by the surfacing results of the expansion of platforms in the user data collection today. There is a total, unlimited fixation of daily routine, uncontrolled intervention in daily user practices and actions. Physical objects ("things") working to extract a variety of data play an increasingly active role in this process, not users. The industrial and consumer Internet of things (IoT) sector is experiencing explosive growth: the global market will grow from \$170, 57 billion (2017) to \$561.04 billion by 2022; Russia is one of the largest players in the IoT market in Central and Eastern Europe with an annual growth rate of 15% (International Data Corporation, 2017). This will increase the blurring of boundaries between the private and the public, promote the commercialization of user data. In addition, the race of digital platforms for the creation of various wearable devices with the fixation of daily activities (for example, Yandex.Station) or any infrastructure solutions (development of smart cities), presented by technooptimists as ways to improve the quality of life, will constantly work on the formation of the platform economic profit.

The penetration into the people's private life will be associated with an increase in commodification not only of space and time, but also of the

⁷ An example of convergence is the digital platforms movement into the physical space: creation of Amazon's AmazonGo product retail network, development of Yandex services. Yandex,Food, Yandex.Auto and others.

human qualities of care, love and friendship, allowing a new type of capitalism to become total in the coming years. At the same time, an important aspect of the possibility or impossibility of control over the global project of digitalization of the world is that attempts to call a new class of capitalists (platform owners) to ethically sound management decisions regarding the aggregation of data of users' private life are actually doomed to failure. The problem is not that the platforms' owners are cynical, socially irresponsible people, but that the feature of profit-making by new platform giants, the specifics of the field of competition formed by them and possible strategies for action in this field are in direct contradiction with the need to protect privacy. According to the apt words by Zuboff (2016:8), "demanding privacy from surveillance capitalists or lobbying for an end to commercial surveillance on the Internet is like asking Henry Ford to make each Model T by hand. ...Such demands are existential threats that violate the basic mechanisms of the entity's survival. How can we expect companies whose economic existence depends upon behavioral surplus to cease capturing behavioral data voluntarily? It's like asking for suicide".

Resistance to the digital platforms expansion: is it possible?

Few are aware of the increased degree of controllability due to the digital platforms development, but even fewer are trying to fight it. Basically, it is user-activists and/or their new online social movement (e-movement) and the national states. These are main actors who are involved in the "invisible" struggle for freedom of the media world. However, the objectives of the struggle and the strategies they choose are different. The strategies of the first, with all the variety of manifestations, can be divided into 2 types: 1) activities for the creation of a fundamentally different technological environment (movement for open-source programs, for the new Internet, against the displacement of organic search from the Internet, etc.); 2) conscious restriction of media consumption, spread of restrictive media practices (mediasketism, "digital diet", etc.).

National States join the struggle not to provide greater freedom to simple users, but not to lose control of not only digital space, but also of citizens. A number of experts believe that this struggle has already been lost by states. According to Zuboff (2015, 2019), the new type of capitalism generates "a new kind of sovereign power. The automated ubiquitous architecture of Big Other", which instead of weapons and armies uses its own way of imposing its will - automated environment. This power is concentrated in the hands of digital platforms, giving them unlimited

opportunities in total surveillance of people and management of their behavior, which no government has.

However, national states continue to struggle for control of the mediated worlds, using a combination of the two strategies. The first is a strategy of total restriction, countless attempts to put the digital environment under control using classical regulation methods that do not work well for modern information technologies (For example, in Russia Yarovaya laws, Telegram ban, etc.). The second strategy is carried out under a single slogan: "If a process cannot be stopped, it must be led." The National states is actively investing in the creation of information infrastructure, in the joined business projects with national IT companies, providing them with opportunities to monopolize some markets in exchange for cooperation and loyalty in the provision of data to control various aspects of social and economic activities of the population, as well as their private sphere (AliExpress and the social credit system in China, Yandex, Sberbank and Russian Government collaboration in the formation of the digital economy infrastructure). This strategy is more effective: in its implementation (as opposed to prohibitive measures), the state does not have to deal with the negative reaction of citizens. Digital platforms have formally removed barriers for most modern users in obtaining information, expanded the possibility of choosing everything (ideas, friends, goods, etc.). Therefore, any restrictive measures on the part of the state for government the network space will face the users' resistance. Even if most of them do not need the existing freedom of choice, the restrictive measures will require an explanation of why "public administration systems slow down the possibility of obtaining comprehensive data... from the networks around us, why they stand in the way of achievable human speed" (Ramo, 2017:223). And the companies themselves will use this desire of people, creating information reasons, often fake, seeking to protect commercial interests, and sometimes on the wave of prohibition, increasing economic results, by expanding the audience and increasing profits (a good example –Telegram ban). It should be understood that this is a policy of "freedom commercialization", but not the desire to actually provide it.

A significant problem in the struggle for the media space government, for limiting the expansion of digital platforms is that to convey their position to the public, to find and mobilize the supporters of their ideas, both Internet activists and government agencies are forced to resort to the existing media technological infrastructure and play by its rules.

But the huge amount of data generated on a daily basis is already a global problem for all actors (whether it is a simple user, a company or a

government agency) trying to communicate their information to the target consumers. It becomes more and more difficult without accepting the conditions of existing IT and media holdings, without referring to the technical solutions developed by them for navigation and orientation in space. And given the fact that this is accompanied by a rapid decline in the interest of the user to the information processing ("free access to data, completeness of options and freedom of design not so much seduce and attract the user, as strain and disorient him" (Bolz, 2011:97), all this makes the fight against TNCs in the "fight against windmills."

Some experts hope for the development of expert communities that develop open-source software products. It is believed that they are the only ones who can really compete with the digital giants. However, a number of factors indicate that these hopes will not be justified. First, the number of these enthusiasts around the world is small. In order to at least partially limit the power of global corporations, it is necessary for each user to form a more responsible network behavior. Data of sociological researches (Russian Public Opinion Center, 2018) show that the trend towards responsible network behavior is not massive: for example, 55% of Russian users believe that information about users in social media is used by third parties (government, private companies, etc.), but only a little more than half of them (55%) are negative about such use, and 36% are indifferent. In addition, 52% of respondents do not see a threat in such use of their personal data by third parties. The passivity of the majority of users (changing freedom for convenience, speed and comfort) will not allow to advance alternative "free" technological startups and thus will not provide the possibility of independent user (network) control, which the supporters of an optimistic view on the technologies development write about (Castells M., Habermas J. etc.)

The second factor that limits the ability of network enthusiasts to control the technological world lies in the economic plane, in changing the form of competition in the transition to a platform economy. Competition is about data collection, analysis and control. To increase competitiveness, the new giants of the platform economy will consciously contribute to the opening of the software code. The code opening becomes part of a global game aimed at monopolization and total control, and not vice versa, as the code opening allows to "build and expand the data extraction infrastructure" (Srnicek, 2019:89).

Some experts believe that national states still have legislative levers, state structures of regulation and control in their hands, which are able to limit the monopoly of digital platforms, protect the privacy of citizens from

their interference. They suppose that the states' investment in the creation of "public platforms created, owned and controlled by ordinary people" (Srnicsek, 2019:113), independent of either business or the state will contribute to the maintenance of democracy and a more humanistic form of technological development. However, in practice, most governments with businesses implement a policy of joint subsidies of commercial, not public, platforms. The logic of platform development suggests that even if public platforms are created, they will be forced to integrate with business platforms, and thus work to expand business opportunities and tasks of state bodies. An important role in the formation and functioning of public platforms should be the ordinary users' desire not only to produce daily communication acts, but also to analyze and control data. The current practice of developing digital platforms often works to reduce user initiative, leading to a loss of user autonomy in the digital environment. Thus, one of the practices of user communication with the digital platform is mobile applications. Using an increasing set of mobile applications to solve various life problems, the user begins to perceive the smartphone, its operating system and applications built on them as a component of the body, without which he experiences psychological and physical discomfort. According to international research by Kaspersky Lab & Opeepl Company (2018), 45% of respondents can't part with the smartphone during meals; 32% have no idea how they could order a taxi, arrange the goods delivery, etc., without using the mobile app. The question arises whether a person, so dependent on different types of digital platforms that improve his interaction with himself and the outside world, can become independent at some point?

The digital identity profile is becoming an element of the digital economy and the emerging digital infrastructure (a draft law on amendments to the Law on personal data is currently being considered in Russia). The individual, as an object of control in the digital world, has a new digital name. This inevitably leads to a change in the model of relations between citizens, government and business, there is a transition to "transparent" online forms of data transmission. As a result, the personal data of the digitized person may well be in open access not only for government agencies, but also for commercial organizations. The owners of digital platforms themselves are the most interested party in this process. Data is a resource and basis for increasing capitalization of the organization in the

digital world, which is particularly important for those who own this data. Digital profile is becoming a commodity⁸.

The question arises: why do we believe so much that all these smart platforms, aggregators collect "true" information, that they really "understand" what our actions, our daily life are and what we really are? Is it possible to encode complex life in technical systems and ultimately reduce it to a code or identify it with the code (the assumption that seems to be imperatively inscribed in most digitization projects), to what extent do social worlds lend themselves to algorithmization at all? Are all relevant properties measurable, that is, representable in digital formats? For example, the concept of "smart city" is based on the recognition of the fact of world fundamental cognizability: we can get information about the opinions, habits, behavior of citizens on the basis of their "digital traces" in the mode of largely simulative objective neutrality. But all these sensors, reading information, cannot give complete and error-free information. In particular, due to the ability of individuals to distort reality, "twist statistics", to provide information in a favorable light, for example, to notice or not to notice the offense⁹. The same information from multiple cameras can be used, for

⁸ Similar processes (even ahead) are in the field of biotechnology, in particular modern biobanking, more and more determined by digital infrastructures and the current market order in the logic of its functioning. Comp.: "As an expression of the new industrial order (both in terms of the scale of activity, the volume of investment, and the nature of the technologies involved), Biobank becomes a techno-scientific machine that transforms human biomaterial and the information extracted from it into economic value, i.e. contributing to the commodification of human vitality elements. Indicators of participation in the organization and maintenance of many venture capital biobanks functioning companies make us take this interpretation seriously. It is the investment guarantees of American venture funds that contributed not least to the support of the Icelandic Parliament for the national Biobank project promoted by the private biotechnology Corporation, de Code Genetics Inc. The history of this project and complex scientific, economic and political strategies for its promotion and legitimation (including based on an appeal to the natural and social history of Iceland and its population-biological exclusivity) are reconstructed in a brilliant article (Winickoff, 2015). Here is just one of the episodes of this story: "–in one unprecedented stroke, a national parliament had authorized the transfer of citizen medical information to a private corporation for commercial exploitation and development, and without the a priori permission of individual citizens" (Bryzgalina et al., 2018:166-167).

⁹ Despite the steady trend towards automation (i.e. elimination of human), supported by a variety of digitalization projects and exciting all new social segments, technologies should be thought of as complex assemblages, articulating political imperatives as well. Comp. in Rose (2007:16-17): " Technology, here, refers to any assembly structured by a practical rationality governed by a more or less conscious goal . . . hybrid assemblages of knowledges, instruments, persons, systems of judgment, buildings and spaces, underpinned at the programmatic level by certain presuppositions and assumptions about human beings ".

example, for voyeurism, to satisfy hidden desires. The technologies themselves, in their radical ambivalence and polyvalence, are far from political neutrality.

The questions of social control in the digital space do not have unambiguous answers due to the fundamental ambivalence of this space and its supporting technological infrastructure, as well as the radical plurality of social agents interested in its existence. Most likely, the existing concerns about the total control of digital platforms will break about the fundamentally impossible digitization of social and/or the existing "limit" of artificial intelligence to interpret and construe data on human behavior. The social world is too complex to claim that it's possible to be fully informed about it, however advanced the information systems that aggregate this data may be.

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