

SOCIAL COMPUTER NETWORKS - IT AND SOCIOLOGICAL PHENOMENON

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Abstract: *When computers first appeared, which were stored in large rooms and weighted several tons, few could have guessed that they would one day become a part of everyday life in modern societies. With the advent of the World Wide Web and e-mail, Internet made a revolution in all spheres of life. This inexhaustible source of information is spread at tremendous speed. The world is just "a click" away from us. Despite the fact that computer networks are the social phenomenon of IT, we must bear in mind their important sociological, and therefore ethical and moral dimension, i.e. monitoring and examining their positive/negative effect. At the end of the last decade of the twenty-first century, people realized that privacy, freedom of research and copyrights - are basic, angular contents, but the social problems, conflicts, rules of behavior and technology, also.*

Keywords: *social computer network, IT and sociological phenomenon, privacy, freedom of research, copyright*

1. INTRODUCTION

Social computer networks, in addition of gathering a large number of people and occupy their attention, they have great power to create strong views and public opinion, creating big (global) plans and organizing mass actions on a global level. Any ideas or suggestions, if there are enough interested to support them, comes to the fore, becomes the topic of the story for days, and very often provide a much greater importance and greater challenges. Therefore, it is often said that the world is only one "click" away from us, and the best evidence for that is the existence of the social computer networks.

Practice has proved that the fundamental questions and problems run by information technology related to intellectual property rights (copyright, patents, trademarks, trade secrets, books, music, movies, etc.), personal privacy and the privacy of data (personal right of any individual or community group to decide whether, when and how information or data will be transmitted to others), ownership of information. These problems inevitably trigger the issue of liability, a number of social, moral and ethical dilemmas, and monitoring and studying the behavior of people in them. Therefore, in addition to laws that regulate the area related to information technology, special significance has taken so-called information ethics as a set of ethical principles of responsible use of information systems.

In this sense, in the science and practice following principles crystallized: (1) "the golden rule" - refers to an approach that involves the same behavior toward self and others, (2) "the categorical imperative" - behavior that involves behavior accepted by everyone, (3) "the slippery slope rule" - refers to the fact that it is necessary to stop those repetitive activities that lead to negative consequences, (4) "the utilitarian rule" - suggests that we should do those activities that bring only good to most people or suggests that we should do those actions that will do the least damage and will be the cheapest, (5) so-called, rule of "there is no such thing as a free lunch" rule - establishes the principle of indemnity to the owner.

2. SOCIAL NETWORKS

Social computer network (social networking, also, remark by M.S. and V.V.) is a social structure made of individuals (or organizations) called "nodes", which are associated with one or more specific types of interdependency, such as values, visions, ideas, financial interests, friendship, kinship, common interest, dislike, sexual relationships, or relationships of trust, knowledge or prestige.

In fact, it is connecting people and organizations with cultural and other similarities and common interests in a specific group. Research has shown that social networks operate on many levels, from families up to the level of nations, and play a critical role in determining the way in which some of the problems will be resolved, how organizations will function, and the degree to which an individual will succeed in achieving individual goals.

Social networks have emerged in the early 21st century and dramatically changed the way people communicate. Just what is the RSK social network account? Social network occurs by gathering people in certain groups. It is easy to make a social network in schools, urban communities, companies, etc. Yet, today, the most popular are ones that are formed on the Internet. This happens probably because for millions of Internet users in the fastest and simplest way this social network provide to seek for a friendship, share first-hand information from a number of areas, looking for a job, advertise, make financial transactions, etc.¹

Special dimension is the speed of information flow. Thus, according to Gerd Leonhard PR futurist, the latest news via Twitter comes to the public for 23 seconds, on television for 45 minutes, and by printed newspaper for up to 24 hours. Hence, it can be concluded that the traditional media reach its end. However, we believe that they will "move" in the realm of analytical, while the social networks will take precedence in the race for the throne of cognitive information.

According to the data published by the Statistical Office of Serbia, every day Internet is more and more important. Almost every household in Serbia has a computer; more than 50% of households have access to a global network, and every day 2.7 million citizens of Serbia connect to the Internet. However, the exact number of those who use the Internet on an everyday basis cannot be determined with certainty because there are plenty of them who are "online" even when not at home. WiFi exists in almost all public places, such as parks, restaurants, bars, etc. Among the regular visitors to social networks are both young and old users, and more and more children aged 13-16 years. According to recent researches from the EU, up to 80 percent of children in Europe have a profile on a social network.²

3. MODERN SOCIAL PROCESSES AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

Social networks carried out a strong influence on the development of humankind globalization. The modern society is characterized by a process of rapid changes in all spheres of social life and the human environment.³ Processes that characterize modern society are:

¹ Stanković, M., Veljković, V., *Virtual social networks as information and sociological phenomenon*, 12th International Conference „Research and Development in Mechanical Industry“ RaDMI 2012, Vrnjačka Banja, Serbia, 13-17. September 2012, pp. 870-877

² Karijera, broj 17, Beograd, april 2011, str. 7.

³ Veljković, V., *Sociološki osnovi bezbednosti*. Niš: Visoka škola strukovnih studija za kriminalistiku i bezbednost, 2009, pp. 162-166.

1. *Scientific and technological revolution.* The development of science and, accordingly, the development of techniques in practical human activities - production, has led to global changes in the world. Especially the third scientific-technological revolution produced universal and fundamental changes in society and all kinds of social status of the man. However, this progress has its dark side, as the application of various sophisticated destructive means, including the use of social networks, adversely affect the person's narrower, wider and global community in all its spheres of life.

2. *The political structure of modern society.* Only for a one century, a human life has seen strong dynamic changes in the political structure of society. Because of these changes, there were great earthquakes in overall society, a great social stratification, the overall conflicts around the world - war, terrorism, organized crime, drug abuse and other forms of destruction. In the process, with the rapid development of information system, the social networks play an important role.

3. *Culture of modern society.* Cultural processes, in addition to great progress, have many elements that threaten man's humanity, integrity and activity, reducing it to a superficial, passive, impersonal being, who does not live own, true life, a life that has been standardized, defined and imposed externally.

Such a society, called the "new world order", with "mondialist ideology", produced a mass culture of a lower order, which within humans "meets the requirements of the lowest level and prevents the right to learn about the world and the rights of human activity in it."⁴ These changes, in which a strong, positive/negative impact have computer and social networks are reflected in (1) *acculturation of various multicultural groups*, (2) *changes in the value system - "anything goes" and "everything is allowed"*; (3) *applying means of mass communication - press, radio, television, film, video, the Internet, mobile telephony*; and (4) *increase in leisure time* that people passivate and almost exclusively associate with social networks that with its contents annihilate other forms of culture; (5) *looking for new lifestyles - spending, snobbery, babbity, narcissism, boredom and violence.*

Before further analyzing each of these areas, we will suggest the current coverage of the various social networks in the world⁵ using following picture:

⁴ Lukić, R., Sociologija morala. Beograd: Naučna knjiga, 1976. p. 586

⁵ <http://tehnologija.me/svjetska-kartu-drustvenih-mreza-infografika/> datum pristupa 23.06.2012. – 15:40h

WORLD MAP OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

June 2012

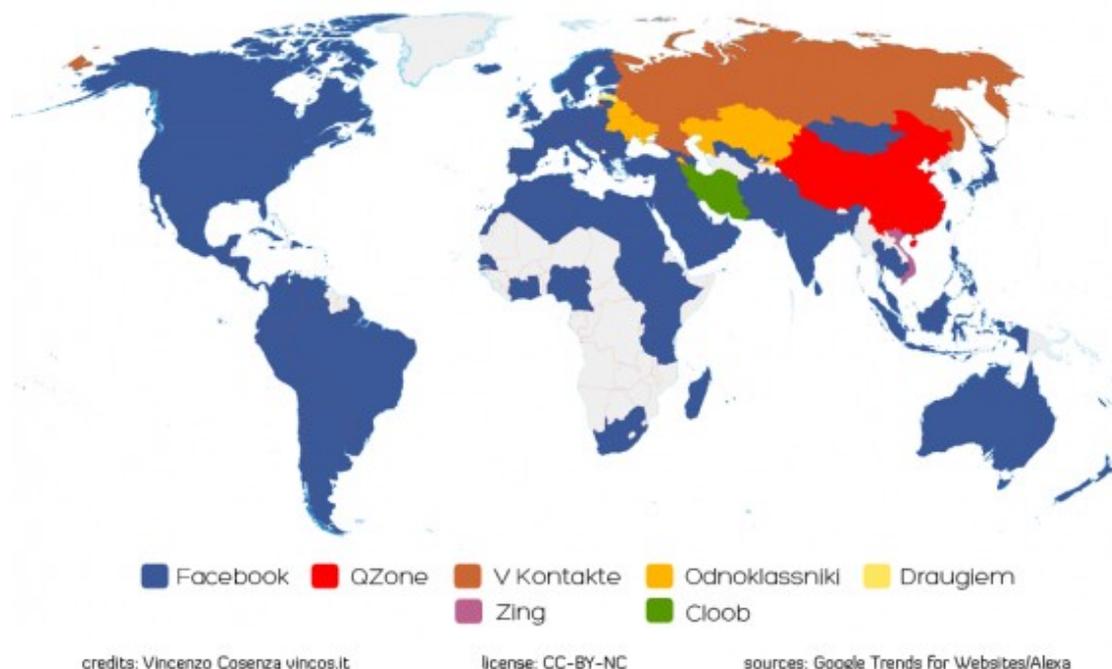


Figure 1: Coverage and distribution of specific social networks in the world

4. AREAS OF POTENTIAL CONFRONTATION BETWEEN IT AND SOCIAL PHENOMENON

According to the contemporary scientific literature⁶ relating to potential problems and conflicts between information and social spheres, positions of importance stand out and one of them is the fact that this problem is focused on at least three areas: privacy, freedom of research, copyrights.

4.1. Privacy, as an element and the area of potential conflict between social issues, rules of behavior and public technology is particularly interesting framework for this phenomenon. Today it is difficult to give a satisfactory answer to the question, “Whether people have a right to privacy “? Even more when you consider there is also a certain dilemma in the U.S., whose legal system is known as a perfect model for the rest of the democratic, mondialist world. Thus, the Fourth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution prohibits the government to search the apartments, securities, bank accounts without a good cause and limit the situations in which it may issue a search warrant. It follows that this phenomenon is present for more than 200 years and can be directly transferred to social networks.

⁶ Tanenbaum, S. A. Računarske mreže, Mikro knjiga, Beograd, 2004, p. 780.

What size can take in modern times is best illustrated by the Google's case in August 2012, due to violating users' privacy by secret surveillance of their activities on the Internet. Due to Google's monitoring of online activities of millions of users who use the Apple Safari program to surf, Federal Trade Commission has set maximum sentence ever imposed on a company for a violation of the agreement - 22.5 million dollars. In the bargain in an earlier case, Google has entered the 20-year agreement with the Commission, according to which among other things, committed not to mislead users regarding their privacy on the Internet.

The rule of good online marketing business in the U.S.⁷, and increasingly in the rest of the world, is to respect the concept of asking permission from potential and existing customers before you attempt to communicate with them. Until a few years ago, marketing organizations were seeking potential customers by sending them junk mail or contacting them by telephone. Today, no companies with a good reputation want to be labeled as such. Although still there are no state regulations governing how companies are allowed to use user's data, labeled spammers can seriously harm the company's image. Thus, for example, Amazon.com has sent unsolicited e-mail to thousands of its customers. For days, people were forwarding copies of this e-mail to the media.

Published articles carried the headline "Spamazon.com". It was the beginning of spam - any content that Internet users receive without their prior approval. Usually, these are messages that advertise some products and services that people do not care for. The authors of such messages collected tens and hundreds of thousands of e-mails following the news conference and other places where people can represent their name. Personal addresses collected like that are used in a variety of ways, usually people selling them to interested clients who want to use them for direct marketing. The most serious problem regarding to spam terror is related to the possibility that a particular individual or group constantly sends messages to the user in order to completely block its access to the network. However, the more common form of "spamming" is deceptive spam - messages that contain information about how the user can unsubscribe receiving these messages. In fact, receiving the answer, the spammer is informed that the user is located at that particular address. In addition to these, there are spam messages in the form of messages relating to quick money and as HOAX messages.⁸

4.2. Freedom of research - is the process of policy in the changed circumstances. These changed conditions assume conditions in which individuals do not want to show their identity to everyone. It is related to social issue that is characterized as a freedom of expression and its opposite - censorship. Overall, this can serve as an instrument of ruling-management structures of the countries want to limit what their citizens read and/or publish.

Usually refers to the following: (1) materials unsuitable for children or adolescents, (2) hate speech aimed at various ethnic, religious, sexual or other groups, (3) information about democracy and democratic values, (4) historical materials contradict the official version of the governing structure of the state, (5) different reference books (e.g., picking locks, making weapons, encrypt messages, etc.).

There is no much information on cases in which we should give up of the freedom of research, although there are plenty of scientists, in particular philosophers who have dealt with this issue. Although their findings generally supported the freedom of research, just opposite was conducted in practice, much of the researches were rejected or even banned, sometimes with the

⁷ Damjanović, P.: Poslovna etika. Beograd: Visoka škola za poslovnu ekonomiju i preduzetništvo, 2009. pp. 133-135.

⁸ <http://www.synergy.co.yu/casopis/marketingrevolution2.asp?text=36>

excuse that the evidence did not adequately prove what is researched, and often with a simple explanation of how the research data is "harmful or unfit for society or a social group."

Following question raise, "What is it, and how it should look, feel free to explore"? In addition, is it at all possible to have free "basic science" research, quite apart from the society and capabilities of its own application? Many scholars argue that there is no free research. However, we should not perceive free research as the one that is completely free from the influence of the surrounding community, but as the one, that will not be intentionally obstructed and its results rejected. Therefore, in order to say that the research is free, it may not be supported by the state, but it must not be prohibited or should deny its results. This raises the question – "Why should the state ban or challenge the value of some research? There are two most common answers: because of the methods used in the study or the impact that the results of this research could have.

A person's perception of the world depends on the way and experiencing the world. That's why humans, as a curious beings, trying to come up to explanations, to share information with other people, inevitably assessing their value. In order answer to those questions to be the most reliable one, a free research effort is necessary. However, the man is often manipulated, which is further complicated by computational social networks. Internet, now is more or less under-organized (may be that is the intent of its founders, given the fact that its sources are in one of the undisputed symbol of world power), almost randomly spreading, like a torrent overflowing countries and continents, nations, and race, connecting the whole planet in a one vast network whose strands, although invisible, are stronger than steel cables.⁹ This is the reason why man's freedom of research hampers via social networks with frequent "treatments", "filtering" and arranging information before publication, so that they and thus public perception of someone or something is deformed.

4.3. Copyright. This ensures that the authors of those works that include intellectual property give exclusive rights to use their work for a certain period of time. There are many examples of small "wars" in the case of copyright infringement caused by new technologies (e.g., between Hollywood and the computer industry). That is why Digital Millennium Copyright Act - DMCA was passed, which declared a crime even to bypass the protective mechanism of authorship or to show someone how to do that.

Intellectual property does not protect ideas as such, but only the original expression of ideas (via copyright) or practical application of the ideas (knowledge, information, and useful products). Among other things, copyright laws give the author the exclusive authority to reproduce, to market, lease copies of the work, and to announce its work publicly (e.g., perform, represent, broadcast). The author, as well as any other participant in the commercial trade, is in a position to get the economic benefit from the results of its work.

Some forms of economic exploitation of the copyright work, in fact are specialized economic activities that involve organizational and personnel requirements, and the author, as a rule, is not able to deal with them. Therefore, the author authorizes so-called users of its copyright materials (producers, publishers, broadcasters, theaters, etc.) to do so. Legal instrument through which the user of the author's work acquires the right to use certain copyrighted work in a way, is the copyright contract. Concluding this contract, the author made the trade of certain powers of authors' property, at the same time demanding of users a fee equivalent to the transferred authorities. In practice, the author does not realize income from the direct economic use of his work, but is derived from the fees it receives from users of copyright works under the contract.

⁹ Randelović, S.: Beograd: Efektivno komuniciranje, VIZ, 2009, pp. 80-81.

This is a legal mechanism to achieve social function of copyright: to reward authors for their work, to encourage creativity and thus copyright and cultural development of the community.

5. RESUME

Social networks, particularly the Internet and mobile phones have enabled people all over the world to receive messages and equally interact with the senders of the messages. However, social networks such as Internet and Facebook, have their *negative cultural impact* - social, ethical, moral, philosophical, cultural, aesthetic, since, due to the massive and effective controls in some of its segments, allow people (users) to access more information, while united them in a sociological way, creating the same type of man, impersonal and uniform, which often tends to provoke and strengthen the basest of human instincts and passions, where emotions prevails over common sense.

Despite the fact that computer networks are the social phenomenon of IT, we cannot omit their important sociological, and therefore ethical and moral dimension, i.e., monitoring and examining their positive/negative effect. At the end of the last decade of the twenty-first century, people realized that privacy, freedom of research and copyrights - are basic, angular contents, but the social problems, conflicts, rules of behavior and technology, also.

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