



## **INTELLECTUALS IN ONLINE COMMUNITIES: A SOCIO-PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS**

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### **ANNOTATION**

*The article presents an assessment of the reasons and forms of participation of intellectuals in modern online communities, as well as an analysis of the potential involvement of professional producers of ideas in the communicative practices of users of social networks.*

**KEYWORDS:** *intellectuals, network communities, social networks, cultural capital, interactive rituals, civic activity.*

### **DISCUSSION**

The concept of a network society offers an interpretation of the morphology of a modern social organization, the key institutions and activities of the members of which are structured around electronic communications. However, the leading role in the network society is played not by computers or gadgets as products of scientific and technological progress, and not by information itself, but by the ways of its dissemination and the principles of self-organization of participants in virtual interaction. Such a society promotes the development of horizontal relations, in which there is no centralization and rigid hierarchy. Nevertheless, one of the authors of the concept of a network society, M. Castells notes in it the tendency to construct social action and even politics around primary identities, "either ascribed, rooted in history and geography, or constructed anew in an anxious search for meaning and spirituality". By identity, Castells understands the process "through which a social actor recognizes himself and constructs meanings, mainly on the basis of a cultural property or a set of properties". In his opinion, self-identification and self-presentation are the most important aspects of interaction in social networks.

In a networked society, the individual does not remain closed in the virtual space, on the contrary, he receives additional opportunities for the selective expansion of his social environment. Social networks today are virtual forums where the discussion of socially significant issues, the positioning of parties, the accumulation, articulation and aggregation of public interests, and sometimes the mobilization of supporters of civil movements take place. In the aspect of the identity of users of social networks, the rule applies: tell me which communities you are a member of, or whose personal pages you subscribe to, and I'll tell you who you are. The need to represent the virtual self forms the demand of users of social networks for samples of cultural capital-ideas, knowledge, works or texts, participation in which is achieved through involvement in the practice of commenting, reposting and placing "likes". Producers of cultural capital, in turn, also become participants in online communities.

Many popular politicians, journalists, public figures and, of course, intellectuals have their own pages on Facebook or LiveJournal. It was the intellectuals that the French sociologist P. Bourdieu defined as the carriers of this unique resource - cultural capital - imposing on them the obligation to act as the "collective consciousness" of the nation. A network scheme of cultural production, the key



participants of which are intellectuals, is also proposed by the modern American sociologist R. V. Shumakov. Collins, for whom the intellectual world is a grandiose conversation, a cultural capital that circulates both in periodic face-to-face rituals and in writing texts.

The Global theory of Intellectual Change "Collins introduces the concept of an intellectual network, meaning a community of intellectuals who are personally familiar with each other and are involved in the interpretation of the same texts. An intelligent network is strikingly different from other types of social network. First, it is characterized by a special type of self-identification of participants-through participation in the creation of a universal, sacred "truth". Secondly, it is supported by special interactive rituals - joint discussions, reports and lectures that are not aimed at socialization and do not have a practical nature. Various variants of such intellectual networks (intellectual groups, teacher - student chains, and lines of rivalry between contemporaries) create the field of forces in which intellectual activity takes place.

In the interpretation of Collins an intellectual person is his desire for this conversation: the desire to participate in a conversation about the most "hot", central problem, in which ideas have the greatest sacredness, and the desire to give them, if possible, the imprint of his own personality so that his ideas have a wide appeal in the conversation, and with them the personal reputation of the author. Thus, the intellectual network is a highly competitive environment, since the dialogue of intellectuals is always competitive, explicitly or implicitly includes the element of "elbowing", as well as clinging to each other in order to get into the area of focus, and as close as possible to its center. Success in the struggle for leadership is determined by the ability of a professional idea producer to prove that it is his ideas that meet the criteria of novelty and importance.

The logic of the development of the network society since the end of the XX century forms a new type of intellectual - a public intellectual, who is distinguished by a focus on practice, involvement in public discussion of topical issues. The concept of "public intellectual" in its meaning goes back to the definition of "engaged intellectual" used in the 19th century in France, which described intellectuals who criticized state policies and justified the reaction of civil society to the actions of the authorities. The genre specificity of public-intellectual work is determined by such areas as:

- self-popularization;
- development of new ideas in the field of their scientific interests;
- commenting on the current socio-political agenda;
- formulating forecasts;

- participation in the preparation of public reforms;

- literary criticism and political satire;
- expert activity. Due to the development of mass media and the spread of electronic communications, celebrity intellectuals (such as Marshal McLuhan, Stephen Hawking, or Slava Zizek) appear among the public intellectuals.

American sociologist L.Kozer believes that the audience of such intellectuals is not a circle of colleagues or experts, but an educated or semi-educated public as a whole. However, when leading popular blogs, celebrity intellectuals are forced to act according to the laws of the intellectual production market - that is, to offer ideas that matter not in themselves, outside of any time or locality, but that are interesting to their subscribers or members of virtual communities. And as a result, they become more celebrities than intellectuals. In social networks, cultural capital is distributed over the attention space, and the most valuable is the one that can be successfully used in the next round of competition for attention.

Nevertheless, the "network" authority of professional producers of ideas is undoubtedly one of the forms of social capital, the demand for which increases during periods of decline in public confidence in the political elite and institutions of power. In the conditions of socio-political instability, the author's blog or the user profile of an intellectual becomes a platform for direct interaction between professional producers of ideas and subjects of civic activity.

The situation of interaction in social networks is sometimes an interactive ritual of here-and-now communication of intellectuals, opinion leaders and civil society activists. As Collins notes, the micro-situation of interaction is not something individual, but "penetrates through the individual, and its consequences spread outward through social networks to a macro-arbitrarily large scale". The researcher also defines the elements of an interactive ritual, which includes: a group of at least two interacting participants; the focus of the participants' attention on the same object or action, while each is aware that the other is holding this focus of attention; the general mood or emotion of the participants.

The mechanism of interaction consists in the fact that circumstances that combine a high degree of concentration of attention on each other generate a sense of membership associated with cognitive symbols, and give emotional energy to individual participants, making them feel confident, enthusiastic, and willing to act as they consider morally correct. As a result, the emotional energy flows from the situation when users of social networks participate in interactive rituals, to the situation when they are in seclusion, and is stored



here. After some time, the emotional energy fades, and users can again turn to ritual participation to recharge themselves. Of course, the realization of the potential of involvement of intellectuals in the communicative practices of users of social networks depends on objective conditions - the degree of openness of society or the democratic nature of the political system, the availability of electronic communication channels, etc.

However, the integration of professional producers of ideas into civic practices through participation in virtual communication with activists and supporters of social movements today increasingly influences the formation of the repertoire of collective actions, the intensification of communication and the development of the activist environment, and in the future can determine such aspects of the activities of movements as the formation of the identity of movement participants and their supporters; the dynamics of attitudes of civil activists; aggregation and articulation of the requirements of participants of self-organizing groups and movements; methods of action, forms and ways of achieving goals.

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