



**ECONOMIC ANNALS-XXI**

ISSN 1728-6239 (Online)  
ISSN 1728-6220 (Print)  
<https://doi.org/10.21003/ea>  
<http://www.soskin.info/ea/>

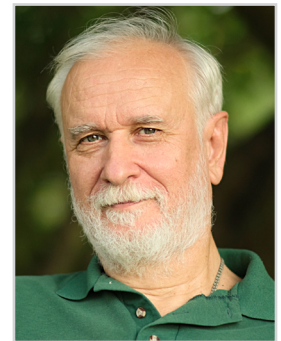
Volume 186 Issue (11-12)'2020

Citation information: Aseeva, I., & Budanov, V. (2020). Digitalization: potential risks for civil society. *Economic Annals-XXI*, 186(11-12), 36-47. doi: <https://doi.org/10.21003/ea.V186-05>



**Irina Aseeva**

D.Sc. (Philosophy), Professor,  
Department of Philosophy and Sociology,  
Southwest State University  
94, 50 Let Oktyabrya Str., Kursk, 305040, Russia  
[irinaaseeva2011@yandex.ru](mailto:irinaaseeva2011@yandex.ru)  
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4172-7762>



**Vladimir Budanov**

D.Sc. (Philosophy), Professor,  
Department of Philosophy and Sociology,  
Southwest State University  
94, 50 Let Oktyabrya Str., Kursk, 305040, Russia  
[budsyn@yandex.ru](mailto:budsyn@yandex.ru)  
ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2371-8659>

## Digitalization: potential risks for civil society

**Abstract.** Transition to the digital economy involves the restructuring of industries, transport and agriculture and gives new opportunities for work with Big Data and optimization the processes in the economy via smart environments, cryptocurrencies and hybrid forms of interaction between human beings and artificial intelligence. Such global transformations could not but cause a massive change in both consciousness at the socio-anthropological level and traditional forms of management at the civilizational level.

Speaking about the civil society in the era of digitalization, it should be understood that this is, first of all, a network society, and without understanding this type of society it is pointless to talk about new forms of civil society. The network society was considered a well-studied object of research by the early 2000s, however today the radical acceleration of ICT and other processes are connected with digital information-network revolution involving artificial intelligence, the possibility of which was not even thought about 20 years ago. Therefore, the main purpose of our paper is an attempt to conceptualize potential risks for civil society connected with the development, testing and implementation of digital services and technologies in the global economy. To achieve this, we used system and synergistic philosophical and methodological approaches developed by the modern post-non-classical science and applied for self-developing systems. To reveal the global trends in the economy and related social problems, we undertook comparative and interdisciplinary analyses based on sources available.

Sociological, philosophical and methodological reflections about radical changes in the anthropotechnosphere during the COVID-19 pandemic have revealed a number of serious problems that threaten the well-being of civil society, such as the aggravation of economic inequality, the collapse of many small businesses due to the quarantine and the introduction of remote forms of work, mass layoffs of qualified specialists, job cuts including the area of intellectual work, transport and service, as well as a significant decrease in the income of the population, decline in the quality of education, a sharp reduction in tourist flows, the ban on mass demonstrations and gatherings, which is an integral basis of the life of civil society. Thus, during the period of pandemic lockdowns, there is a significant change in the economic and socio-cultural environment of modern civilization.

At the same time, the crisis situation provides means not only for the development of civil society, but also for the maintenance of enforcing and regulating functions of the state, which can upset the harmonious balance of interaction between society and any state (capitalist, socialist) or the global state of TNCs.

An analysis of the world economic development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has revealed some signs of a systemic crisis of civilization, along with the processes of digitalization as a catalyst for the shift of the paradigm of civilizational development and a catalyst for civil movements. The most striking Umwelts («perceptual environment») of civil society emerging in the digital realm are described in the paper.

**Keywords:** Digitalization; Civil Society; Civilizational Crisis; Pandemic; Risks

**JEL Classification:** Z13

**Acknowledgements and Funding:** The research is financed by the Russian Science Foundation, Project No. 19-18-00504 «Sociotechnical environment of digital reality: ontological matrices, ethical and axiological regulative structures, roadmaps, and information support for management decision-making».

**Contribution:** The authors contributed equally to this work.

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.21003/ea.V186-05>

**Асеева І. О.**

доктор філософських наук, професор, кафедра філософії та соціології,  
Південно-Західний державний університет, Курськ, Російська Федерація

**Буданов В. Г.**

доктор філософських наук, професор, кафедра філософії та соціології,  
Південно-Західний державний університет, Курськ, Російська Федерація

**Цифровізація: можливі ризики для громадянського суспільства**

**Анотація.** Процес переходу до цифрової економіки триває останні десять років на тлі фінансово-економічної кризи світової цивілізації, що має відношення до змін, які мають місце у промисловості, на транспорті та в сільському господарстві. У свою чергу це дає нові можливості роботи з великими даними в інформаційних технологіях, веде до оптимізації процесів управління економікою та прийняття рішень, створює розумні середовища та уможливорює появу криптовалют й гібридних форм взаємодії людини та штучного інтелекту. Наслідком таких глобальних трансформацій стала як масова зміна свідомості на соціально-антропологічному рівні, так і заміна традиційних форм господарювання на загальноцивілізаційному рівні.

Говорячи про громадянське суспільство епохи цифровізації слід розуміти, що це, передусім, мережеве суспільство, без розуміння якого немає сенсу розмірковувати про нові форми громадянського суспільства. Концепція мережевого суспільства як об'єкт дослідження вважалася достатньо вивченою ще до початку 2000-х років, однак сьогодні радикальне прискорення інформаційно-комунікативних та інших процесів пов'язані з цифровою інформаційно-мережевою революцією за участі штучного інтелекту, про можливість виникнення якого навіть не підозрювали ще 20 років тому і яка кардинально трансформує традиційний уклад нашого життя.

Головною метою даної статті є спроба концептуалізації можливих ризиків для громадянського суспільства, пов'язаних з розробкою, апробацією та впровадженням у світову економіку цифрових сервісів і технологій, що підвищують соціальну ризикогенність в умовах кризового мінливого світу.

Для досягнення поставленої мети в роботі використано системно-синергетичний філософсько-методологічний підхід, розроблений у сучасній постнекласичній науці й застосований для систем, яким властивий саморозвиток.

Для висвітлення загальносвітових тенденцій в економіці та пов'язаних з нею соціальних проблем було проведено порівняльний та міждисциплінарний аналіз російських та іноземних джерел, викладених у відкритому доступі в мережі Інтернет.

У результаті аналізу світового економічного розвитку на початку XXI століття були показано ознаки системної цивілізаційної кризи, розглянуто процеси цифровізації як каталізатора, що змінює парадигми цивілізаційного розвитку та активатора громадянських рухів, а також описано найбільш яскраві умовельти громадянського суспільства, що формуються в цифровій реальності.

**Ключові слова:** цифровізація; громадянське суспільство; цивілізаційна криза; пандемія; ризики.

**Асеева И. А.**

доктор философских наук, профессор, кафедра философии и социологии,  
Юго-Западный государственный университет, Курск, Российская Федерация

**Буданов В. Г.**

доктор философских наук, профессор, кафедра философии и социологии,  
Юго-Западный государственный университет, Курск, Российская Федерация

**Цифровизация: возможные риски для гражданского общества**

**Аннотация.** Процесс перехода к цифровой экономике происходит последние десять лет на фоне финансово-экономического кризиса мировой цивилизации, касающегося реформирования промышленности, транспорта и сельского хозяйства. В свою очередь это открывает новые возможности для работы с большими данными в информационных технологиях, оптимизирует процессы управления экономикой и принятия решений, создает умные среды и способствует появлению криптовалют и гибридных форм взаимодействия человека и искусственного интеллекта. Следствием таких глобальных трансформаций стало как массовое изменение сознания на социально-антропологическом уровне, так и замена традиционных форм хозяйствования на уровне общецивилизационном.

Говоря о гражданском обществе эпохи цифровизации, следует понимать, что это, прежде всего, сетевое общество, без понимания которого бессмысленно рассуждать о новых формах гражданского общества. Сетевое общество считалось достаточно изученным объектом исследования к началу 2000-х годов, однако сегодня радикальное ускорение информационно-коммуникативных и иных процессов связано с цифровой информационно-сетевой революцией с участием искусственного интеллекта, о возможности которой не подозревали ещё 20 лет назад, и которая кардинально трансформирует традиционный уклад нашей жизни.

Соответственно главной целью нашей статьи является попытка концептуализации возможных рисков для гражданского общества, связанных с разработкой, апробацией и внедрением в мировую экономику цифровых сервисов и технологий, повышающих социальную рискогенность в условиях кризисного изменяющегося мира.

Для достижения поставленной цели в работе использован системно-синергетический философско-методологический подход, разработанный в современной постнеклассической науке и применяемый в отношении саморазвивающихся систем.

Для раскрытия общемировых тенденций в экономике и связанных с ними социальных проблем предпринят сравнительный и междисциплинарный анализ российских и иностранных источников, выложенных в открытом доступе в сети Интернет.

В результате анализа мирового экономического развития в начале XXI века были показаны признаки системного цивилизационного кризиса, рассмотрены процессы цифровизации как катализатора смены парадигмы цивилизационного развития и активатора гражданских движений, а также описаны наиболее яркие увелеты (жизненные миры) гражданского общества, формирующиеся в цифровой реальности.

**Ключевые слова:** цифровизация; гражданское общество; цивилизационный кризис; пандемия; риски.

## 1. Introduction

The process of transition to the digital economy has been ongoing for the past ten years amid the financial and economic crisis of the world civilization involving restructuring of industries, transport and agriculture, and giving new opportunities for work with Big Data and optimization of processes in the economy due to decision-making, developing smart environments, cryptocurrencies and hybrid forms of interaction between human beings and artificial intelligence. Such global transformations could not but cause a massive change in both consciousness at the socio-anthropological level, affecting all social strata, and traditional forms of management at the civilizational level. In this article, we pay attention to the changes that have occurred in civil society, defining this concept in a broad sense, under the influence of new information and communication technologies (Bakutina, 2015).

Speaking about the civil society in the era of digitalization, it should be understood that it is, first of all, a network society, and without understanding this fact it is pointless to talk about new forms of civil society. The network society was considered a well-studied object of research by the early 2000s, which is reflected in the works by Manuel Castells (Castells, 2000; Castells, 1999) and Michael Mann (Mann, 1996). There are also modern studies devoted to the classification of networks and possibilities to build a network future. For example, works by A. V. Oleskin (Oleskin, 2016). Today, the radical acceleration of information and communication technologies and other processes are connected with the digital information and network revolution involving artificial intelligence, the possibility of which was not even thought 20 years ago, and which is transforming not only technological, but also the socio-cultural, political and anthropological modes of life (Arshinov & Budanov, 2020).

## 2. Brief Literature Review

The modern digital stage of the civilizational development draws attention of Russian and Western philosophers, sociologists, economists and political scientists, because it radically changes the entire system of relations in society. This paper is devoted to an extremely topical scientific issue - the impact of digital technologies, in particular the Internet, on civil society, which is of great interest for us. The analysis of numerous sources reveals a permanent process of transformation of civil society, its main forms and institutions, described by Plato and Aristotle in antiquity and interesting for Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel and Marx in modern times. The analysis of the features of organization and functioning of civil society in the modern era of new information technologies is provided in the works by M. Reznik (1998), W. Whitlock (2008), G. Yadov (2004), V. Horos (1997), L. Romanenko (1994), I. Fine (1997), G. Cheema (2013), M. Simiti (2017) and others.

Among the works devoted to the diverging influence of the Internet and other ICT on civil society, we can emphasize studies by M. Castells (2008; 2004) and M. Mann (1996) which have already become classic, as well as works by modern authors such as E. Vartanova, (1999), V. Buryak (2011), D. Ivanov (2000), Anheier (2014), Salamon and Anheier (1997), Jensen (2006), Caiani and Kröll (2015) and others.

The relation between civil society and the state, the experience of interaction, manipulating attempts, motives and methods of social activity of citizens are reflected in the works by L. Vasilenko and V. Zotov (2020), A. Gerasimov and K. Zhigaeva (2014), L. Kilimova (2018), A. Chugunov (2002), G. Delanty (2003), D. Lathrop and L. Ruma (2010) and others.

Up-to-date and reliable statistics of the global and Russian economies, the availability of information and communication technologies, as well as the state of the global and Russian civil society, can be found on public websites of Rosstat, the World Bank, McKinsey Global Institute, the OECD, Data Insight, Statist, the Center for strategic social and socio-political research of ISPR of the RAS, the Russian Federal State Statistics Service, HSE Statistical studies and others.

At the same time, despite the active research interest in this problem, the study of the transformations and risks of civil society in the digital reality demands constant sociological, statistical monitoring and socio-philosophical interpretation. This work is only a milestone of a large research project.

### 3. Purpose

The purpose of the paper is to conceptualize potential risks for civil society connected with the development, testing and introduction of digital services and technologies increasing social riskogenics into the global economy amidst the changing crisis world.

### 4. Research Methodology

A philosophical and methodological approach in the post-non-classical science and system-synergetic concepts for self-developing systems are used in the paper.

In order to reveal global trends in the economy and related social problems, a comparative and interdisciplinary analysis of Russian and foreign sources published on the open Internet is conducted.

### 5. Results

#### 5.1. Analysis of the world economic development at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Signs of a systemic civilizational crisis

Today, it is beyond argument that humanity has entered a series of permanent global crises, ranging from environmental and economic to socio-cultural and anthropological, which became clear during the Great Recession of 2008-2009. Considering even deeper reasons for what is happening, we can argue, as is shown below, that the basis of the global metacrisis is not so much of the economic aspect, but rather the disregard of universal ethical norms in favour of pragmatic material interests and needs, and the uncontrolled development and use of the scientific and technological potential of civilization and the resources of the planet (Soskin, 2019). In 2020, there was an explosive growth in the use of digital technologies, primarily due to quarantine measures, the remote work of the majority and remote education. The pandemic has necessitated digitalization and almost destroyed many sectors of the economy and culture, such as air transportation, tourism, sports and entertainment business, catering, etc.

More specifically, the form of civilizational transition is associated with the general high-tech stage of socio-economic development: the transition to the VI technological paradigm by converging NBICS technologies, global digitalization, the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution and the transition to a global network society. The digitalization of all areas of human life, including the life of civil society, has become not only a catalyst for global crisis processes, but also the basis for completely new principles for overcoming it.

It would seem that due to digitalization, the incomes of countries are to grow, and the economy must strengthen. At least, the expert forecasts for 2015 were more than optimistic. The effect of digitalization on the economy was estimated at 19-34% of total GDP growth by 2025 (Digital McKinsey, 2015).

In reality, these expectations were seriously adjusted in 2020. Russian indices show a tremendous drop in March-May 2020 (see [Figure 1](#) and [Figure 2](#)).

Also, according to Rosstat, the index of the real income of the population in Russia in the Q1 and Q2 of 2020 was 8% (Federal State Statistics Service, 2020. p. 112). There are grounds for believing that we are dealing not with a national but with a systemic civilizational crisis which can't be solved by means of the old methods of burning «bad» money in the fire of war. However, instead of a large-scale war, the 2020 coronavirus pandemic became a factor similar in destructiveness for the global economy. Indeed, in the long run, the crisis can be compared in scale only to the Great Depression of the 1930s of the last century, when over three years the US GDP fell by 24%. In our time, in 2020 alone, the losses of the eurozone are more than 8% of its GDP ([Figure 3](#)).

According to the OECD, GDP of most of the world's countries decreased in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2020 (which is not surprising because of the quarantine, the collapse of the service sector and a decline in production), the total GDP of the G20 countries fell by 3.4%, and the GDP of the EU countries fell by 11.9%. Nevertheless, China not only managed to maintain its GDP, but also to even increase it by 11.5% (Figure 3).

Note that all these data and forecasts were published before 2020. This period can be called the first regular stage of the development of digitalization. In 2020, the second, turbulent stage began.

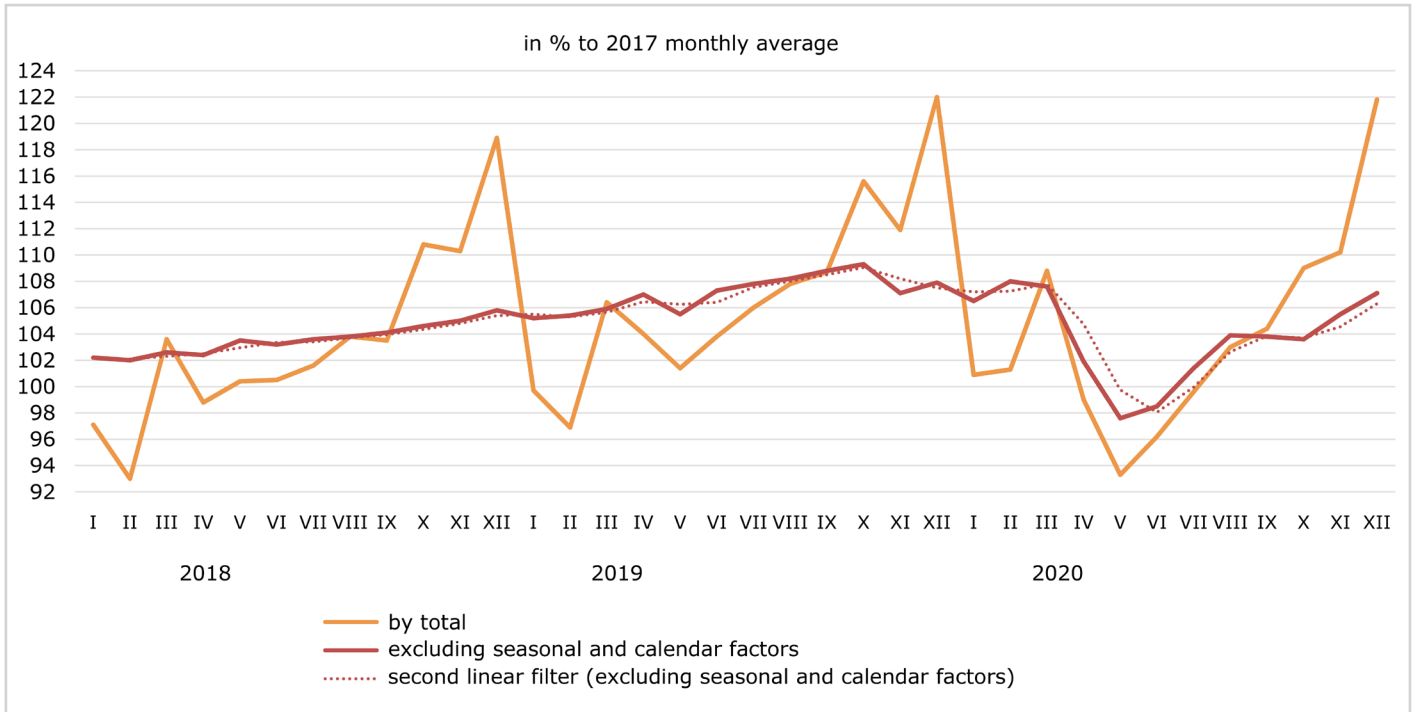


Figure 1:  
**Industrial production index in Russia in % to 2017 monthly average in 2017-2020**  
Source: Center for Strategic Social and Socio-Political Studies, ISPR of RAS

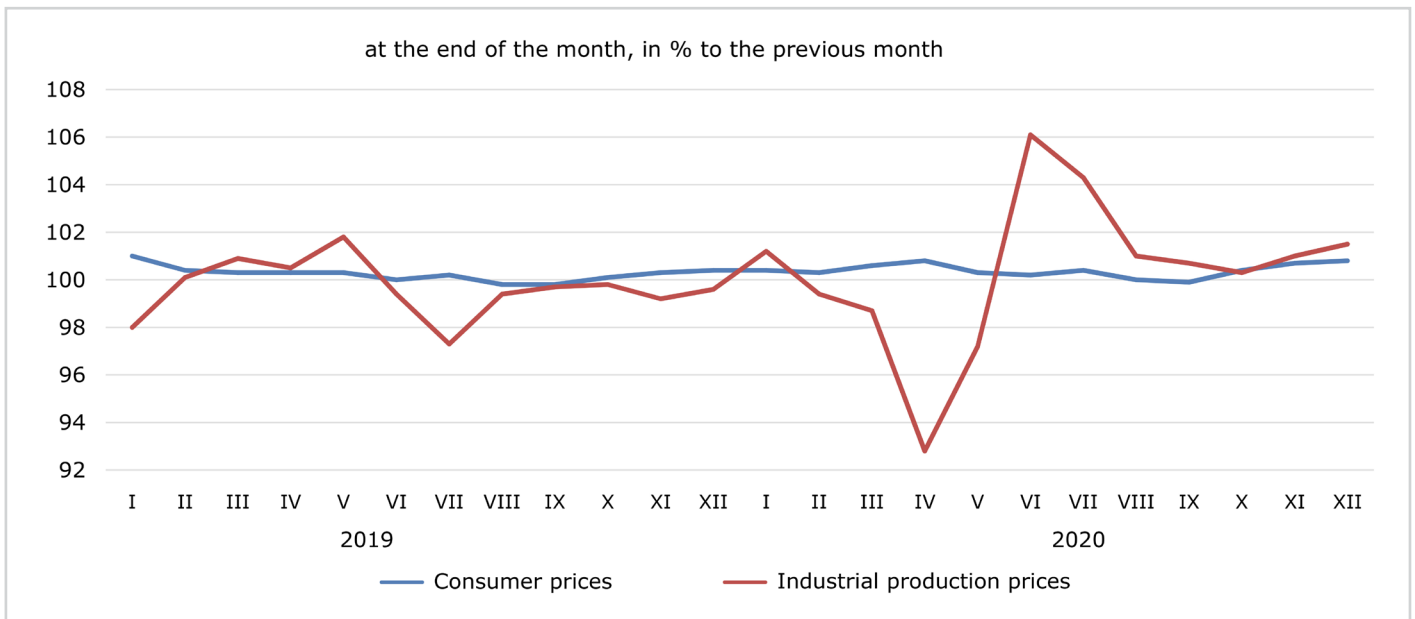


Figure 2:  
**Consumer price index and Industrial production prices of manufactured goods index at the end of the month, in % to the previous month in Russia in 2017-2020**  
Source: Center for Strategic Social and Socio-Political Studies, ISPR of RAS

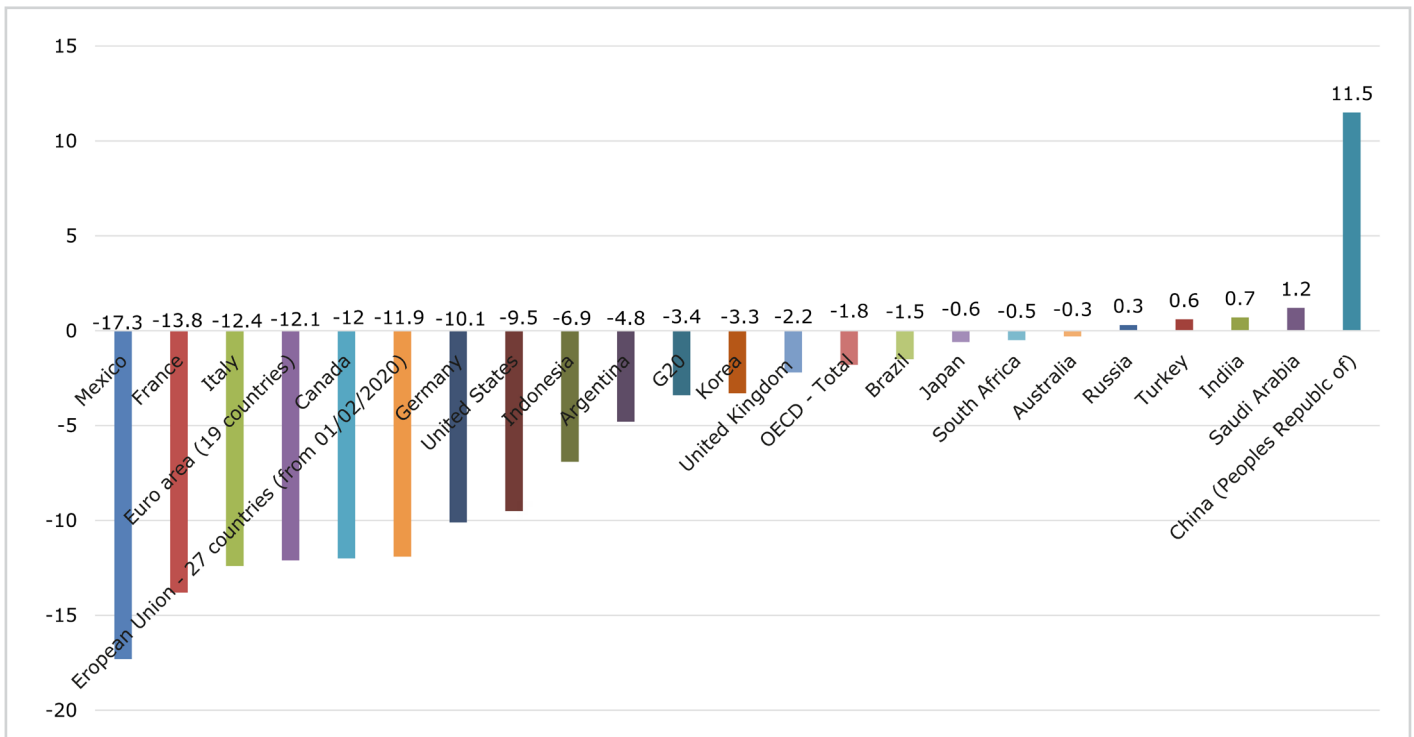


Figure 3:  
Change in GDP of some countries in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of 2020  
Source: OECD (2020)

## 5.2. Digitalization processes as a catalyst for changing the paradigm of civilizational development and a catalyst for civil movements

Digitalization is an immanent feature of the modern world. This fact is eloquently witnessed in the Digital 2020: Global digital overview:

- The number of Internet users in the world increased to 4.54 billion, which is 7% more than during the previous year (+298 million new users as compared to the data for January 2019).
- In January 2020, there were 3.80 billion users of social networks in the world, the number of the social media users increased by 9% as compared to 2019 (this is 321 million new users over the year).
- Today, more than 5.19 billion people use mobile phones - an increase of 124 million (2.4%) over the past year.
- At the same time, the number of social network users in Russia at the beginning of 2020 was 70 million users, which is 48% of the total population of the country. The figure has not changed over the year (Figure 4).

Digitalization was conceived as a new mega-format of civilization, and the benefits of its implementation were painted in rosy colors. The related benefits were mostly seen as positive benefits, both economic and social (Figure 5).

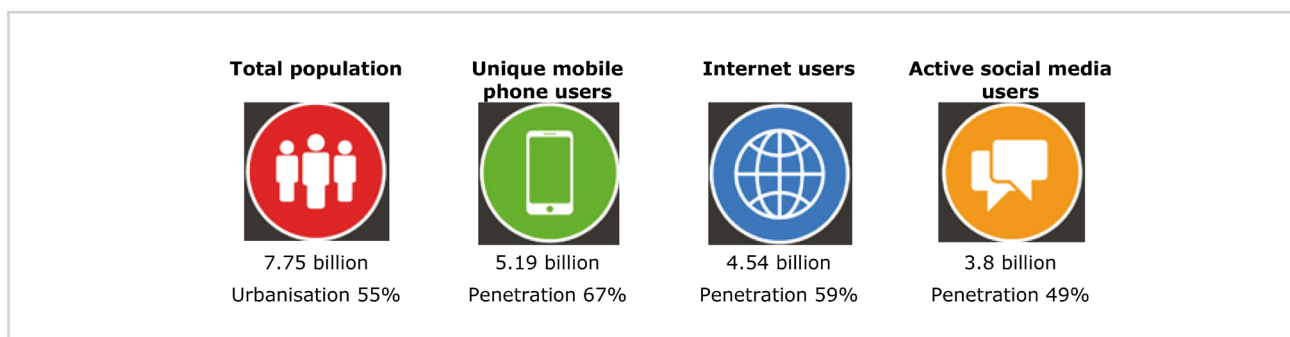


Figure 4:  
The use of digital technologies by the world's population in 2020  
Source: Digital 2020 Global Report

Economic benefits		Digitalization effects	Social benefits	
Significant contribution to the economic growth				Increase of inclusion and poverty reduction
3-5-fold increase in the number of jobs in related industries				Improvement of the availability and quality of health care
Increase in labour productivity				Reduction of the cost and increasing the availability of mass education
Accelerating the growth of small and medium-sized businesses				Reduction of the negative impact on the environment
			Reduction of crime; security of financial services and traffic	

Figure 5:  
Effects of digitalization

Source: World Bank; McKinsey Global Institute (2020)

On the other hand, digitalization has shuffled all the strata of modern society, significantly changing personal, cultural, political, economic relations and established lifestyles, exacerbating old and posing new problems. However, the new challenges to humankind are not so much in the process of digitalization itself, but rather in its current type, based on such management principles as formal rationality, pragmatism and mercantilism, the type that ignores the lifeworlds of people (Kravchenko, 2019, p. 138). A new model of civilization is being formed, in which the familiar physical reality and virtual worlds created by information and communication technologies are intertwined and combined.

The process of transition to the digital economy has been going on permanently for the last ten years against the background of the financial and economic crisis of the world civilization, which affected industry, transport, agriculture and services. Such global modifications could not but cause a massive change in consciousness at the socio-anthropological level and traditional forms of management at the general civilizational level.

Digital technologies open up new opportunities for working with Big Data and can help to optimize processes in the economy and decision-making, facilitate document flow and personal identification. There is a growing social movement around the world that calls for open and free access to public data, and for involving as many citizens as possible in solving management problems (Lathrop & Ruma, 2010). Meanwhile, only in 2019, Roskomnadzor revealed massive non-compliance with the existing legislation (80% of the results of inspections) in the field of personal data storage, which led to adding greater punitive measures for this violation (the fine increased to RUB 18 million).

Analyzing the risks caused by digitalization, it should be noted that they are based on the following curious statistics. As of 2020, 76.9% of Russian households had access to the Internet; Internet connection is technically impossible for 1.7% of Russian households, and 16.3% are not interested in Internet services (Sample federal statistical observation on the use of information technologies and information and telecommunications networks by the population, 2020). According to the digital literacy monitoring data from the NAFI Research Center (National Agency for Financial Studies), the Russian literacy index was 58 percentage points out of 100, which is a low level of proficiency in digital literacy (Digital literacy of Russians: a 2020 study). The sub-indexes include information literacy, communication literacy, digital content creation, digital security and problem-solving skills in the digital environment.

Thus, it is obvious that citizens, business communities and government agencies are not ready for high-quality interaction, even at the level of basic knowledge and skills of digital technologies (Vasilenko & Zotov, 2020). In this case, is it possible to talk about a developed «electronic democracy» or the use of an «active citizen» platform to solve socially significant problems? Will the voice of sociologists on the design of a new social contract between the state and society be heard? Total, forced, but ill-conceived digitalization adds new problems and risks to the already timid and rather small Russian civil society. According to the summary of the report on the state of civil society in the Russian Federation, the share of employment of the economically active population in the nonprofit sector of Russia is 1.1%, compared with 10.2% in Israel, 5.8% in the USA and 3.7% in Germany (Summary of the Report on the state of civil society in the Russian Federation).

Civil society as a cultural and historical and socio-political phenomenon began to develop in antiquity and has been transforming throughout all the centuries of the human history, striving in the ideal case to the global civil society (Buryak, 2011).

Civil society is a self-regulating organization of free, property-owning citizens, social groups and individuals voluntarily united by interests; a mechanism that allows the entire society to coexist with the state and protect human rights. (Aleksanyan, 2006, p. 57).

Boris DeWiel identifies three main components of the modern understanding of civil society: autonomy from the state, interdependence with the state, ensured pluralism of values, ideals and ways of life embodied in its institutions (DeWiel, 1997). Hence, there are several functional problems that inevitably arise in the process of the development and existence of a modern civil society: 1) organization of effective mutual control between state agencies (bureaucracy) and non-state communities of citizens; 2) a possibility to openly and freely declare, form and protect values and rights of citizens; 3) necessity to use a huge resource of new information and communication (network) technologies and practices to consolidate and manage the energy of civil communities. As a result, by solving these tasks, civil society mobilizes the most active individuals to strengthen social harmony, cooperation, justice and mutual assistance.

### **5.3. From the Industry 4.0 project to the idea of pandemic «Great Reset 2020». The pandemic is the instigator of the digital leap and the reason for violation of civil rights and freedoms**

Sociological, philosophical and methodological reflections about radical changes in the anthropotechnosphere during the COVID-19 pandemic have revealed a number of serious problems that threaten the well-being of civil society, such as the aggravation of economic inequality, the collapse of many small businesses due to the quarantine and the introduction of remote forms of work, mass layoffs of qualified specialists, job cuts including the area of intellectual work, transport and service, as well as a significant decrease in the income of the population, decline in the quality of education due to the transition to remote education, restricted access to cultural values, sporting and cultural events, a sharp reduction in tourist flows, the ban on mass demonstrations and gatherings, which is an integral basis of the life of civil society. Thus, during the period of pandemic lockdowns, there is a significant change in the economic and socio-cultural environment of modern civilization.

At the same time, the crisis situation provides means not only for the development of civil society, but also for the maintenance of enforcing and regulating functions of the state, which can upset the harmonious balance of interaction between society and any state (capitalist, socialist) or the global state of TNCs. Let us take as an example the West Virginia Disorder Act, which came into force in 2018, according to which the authorities are relieved of responsibility for the death and injury of people during the dispersing of riots and illegal assemblies. The law was adopted during a nationwide strike of West Virginia teachers, thousands of whom protested in February 2018 (US Protest Law Tracker). And this is not just an American trend. According to the authors of the article «Civil Society at Risk? International Perspectives», in 2016 alone, 281 defenders of human rights were killed in 22 countries. Citizens were arrested for peaceful protests in 68 countries and faced threats or attacks in 98 countries. The patterns are consistent: governments adopt new laws that authorize mass surveillance, use of force, or implement stringent registration requirements for CSOs. (Civil Society at Risk? International Perspectives, p. 64).

So, within the framework of a consumer society and a capitalist mode of production, it is impossible to resolve the current crisis, which is understood by the world elites as well. In this regard it is worth having a look at the report of the Club of Rome «Come on, capitalism!» (2018) or the latest book by Klaus Schwab, a head and founder of the International Economic Forum in Davos, and a managing partner of the Economic Barometer, journalist, economist Thierry Malleret, «COVID-19: Great reset» (Schwab & Malleret, 2020), which already offers a roadmap of medical and bureaucratic dictate under the conditions of the declared permanent pandemic and the demolition of many civil rights and freedoms as a «new normal». On the other hand, the Chinese practice of digitalization, which competes with Western practices, adopted a strict social rating system at the beginning of 2021, which assumes total digital control and automatic deprivation of person's civil rights, proportional to the degree of violation of the order of conduct. Thus, the way out of the proposed situation is seemed to be not only through the development of civil self-organization, creativity and social responsibility, but also in further strengthening of the regimentation of citizens' lives and infringement of their freedoms by the authorities.

The optimism is still declared. According to the information published in the UN report (2020) entitled «World Economic Situation and Prospects», the world economy has shrank by 4.3%, which



is over 2.5 times more than during the financial crisis of 2008-2009. However, according to Antonio Guterres, the UN Secretary-General, in 2021, the world has a unique opportunity to move from fragility to sustainability during its recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, provided that governments, international organizations, the private sector and civil society work together. It is, among other things, about preserving the stability of social and cultural systems. Guterres also mentioned his initiatives of the New Social Contract and the New Global Compact - they will create equal opportunities for all while ensuring universal rights and freedoms (UN Secretary-General: The world is in the deepest crisis for nearly a century and may split, 2021). It sounds very attractive, yet it is completely unclear how the excessive wealth and social inequality in the world will be eliminated when 200 richest families own the largest corporations and 70% of the world's wealth. Following these ideas, in 2020 there was organized a new global alliance of the richest family of Rothschild and the Vatican represented by Pope Francis, which declared the goal of creating an economic system which is fair, trustworthy and able to solve the most serious problems facing humanity and our planet, looking for ways to make capitalism a more inclusive tool for integral human well-being (So-called inclusive capitalism is a joint project of the Rothschilds and the Pope, 2020). In the concept of K. Schwab, who actively uses the concept of «inclusive capitalism», an early prospect of eliminating nation states and transferring control to socially responsible TNCs is proposed, however it is doubtful to claim that such companies really exist. Moreover, there arises an issue of maintaining cultural identity which is cared about by nation states and the UN. Also there is much concern about civil society control of new government agencies and expertocracy, the subject of which is mysterious, since nobody elected them and nobody appointed them, etc. The new global projects are more utopian and contradictory than constructive. In any case, civil society should play a crucial role here, although there are no constructive pilot projects of the New Social Contract yet.

According to the actor - network theory of B. Latour (Latour, 2014), the elements or actors of the network can be not only people, but also objects of nature, technologies, significant events, ideas, objects of semantic spaces of culture, and simultaneously a modern human being in four perceptual environments, or *Umwelts* (in the terminology by Jakob von Uexküll (1894-1944)): natural, technical, social, virtual, usual life-worlds. Yet, the difference is that today these worlds are increasingly endowed with reasonable qualities due to the incorporation of artificial intelligence in them. As a result, these perceptual environments are increasingly intellectualized, animated; they become intelligent environments and begin to possess subjectivity, which makes the application of the actor - network model even more appropriate for analyzing semantic spaces of social networks. Thus, the analysis of the semantics of networks allows the state to understand the reality and receive feedback from society without surveying the population. Today, we cannot say that the state does not know what is going on in people's minds: social networks make society transparent.

The development of civil society is impacted not only by social networks, but also by all the perceptual environments of the digital environment. We will describe the main prospects and risks for people in these environments, the understanding of which will allow representatives of civil society to formulate their demands to the State correctly.

### ***Natural net***

Possible risks from a conflict with natural ecological networks have been known to man since ancient times. These are symbiotic bacterial and viral infections, agricultural pests, to many of which we have adapted or which we are able to defend ourselves from. However, in the context of the global environmental crisis, environmental pollution and climate change, new biosphere anomalies and epidemics appear; increased mutations and genome editing can lead to unpredictable catastrophes in the biosphere. Editing the human genome is also a poorly calculated intervention in the processes of co-evolution of us and nature and changes in the population network of *Homo Sapiens*. Thus, civil eco-movements, along with environmental objectives, should be focused on the protection of the authentic qualities of man as a biological species, and not just the environment.

### ***Technology net***

In the context of the new digital Industrial revolution 4.0, when a robotically created product is guided from the stages of exclusive design, manufacturing, operation, monitoring and online

diagnostics to its disposal throughout the entire product life cycle, an intelligent technological network of the Internet of Things and platform organization of production appears, in which a person does not have to participate actively, but which will perform the optimal technological cycle of the new digital economy. The main challenge here is the creation of robotic network industries and the related service sector, which threatens with the prospect of unemployment of the population. For some this is a leisure challenge, and for others this is the horror of unemployment. The problem still has no solution. Besides, the complexity of such complexes is fraught with large-scale disasters of large network clusters and accidents are often unpredictable, realizing the Black Swan effect, according to N. Taleb.

### **Social net**

Social networks in the digital age have a substitute character in relation to direct human communication and the imitation of a person by anthropomorphic AI intermediaries, which leads to the loss of many socialization competencies. At the same time, it is possible to create new collective network subjects of social life. There appear other grounds for social self-organization, platformization and development of collective intelligence, creation of new economic forms of cooperation - the so called gift economy and economy of sharing. Adverse effects that require compensatory strategies and do not exist today include the high rate of communication network, depriving human development and confirmation of logical and emotional competencies, distortion of cognitive maps and empathic communication skills, elimination of processes of access to implicit knowledge in learning, socialization and collective creativity, etc. In addition, there may be elements of personality dissociation and problems of its multiple identity due to the introduction of many functions of long-term memory in network services, such as search engines and Google avatars, manipulation of social networks and our opinions with the help of chatbots, simultaneous communication under many roles in different networks.

### **Virtual net**

Networks of virtual worlds provided with AI are represented by knowledge bases of enormous volume and work with hypertexts of super-search engines such as Google, Yandex, intelligent interfaces and translators, avatars, touch sensors and virtual reality helmets, huge databases of scientific and artistic information, texts and video sequences, chatbots and spyware. It is the virtual space where artificial intelligence is humanized (or dehumanized) brought up by deep learning technologies for neural networks on the arrays of knowledge culture previously extracted from Big Data databases. There are artificial conglomerations of programs that create languages of communication that are inaccessible to us, there are hybrid societies that create fundamentally new legal problems in communication and economic activity, for example, questions about the legal rights of drones-taxi drivers, etc. In the future, some people may move to virtual worlds, which is typical for the interests of Generation Z which will develop rapidly in the virtual world, while life in the physical reality becomes more complex and unattractive. The most interesting prospects and challenges today are manifested in hybrid variants of interaction of these networks with a person on the border of the virtual and the real, the so-called augmented reality which, for example, is widely used in navigation tasks and training.

We see that the boundaries of the four *Umwelts* described above are far from impenetrable. They can be connected not only through humans, but also directly, without humans, who are being increasingly replaced in them by complex AI.

## **6. Conclusions**

Networks are an additional, balancing and necessary form for hierarchies, for example, through the public opinion or other forms of cultural universals legitimizing the hierarchy, although they are more often spoken of as opposing rather than cooperating. Networks can co-evolve with the state hierarchy, for example, in a positive (volunteer, innovative, educational, production and distribution networks, etc.) or a negative mode (criminal, drug dealing, terroristic, revolutionary, conspiracy networks, etc.).

Thus, we identify two poles of utopian scenarios of a possible future, associated with different perspectives for the development of civil society in the digital environment.

A society of total control. Electronic networks in the first scenario are primarily used for total control of the population, and not for social self-organization and collective creativity, which

is already implemented in China in a rather sophisticated form - not only control, but also social ranking, promotion and punishment based on it. We see the same tendencies of total control and strict regulation of civil society life under conditions of a permanent pandemic in the concept of the Big Reset by K. Schwab. The COVID-19 pandemic has activated forms of total control of medical and bureaucratic authorities. In this regard, one of the most important tasks of civil society, in our opinion, is to defend human rights to privacy, protection of personal data and social expertise of digitalization projects in the field of social communication and monitoring.

Digital Network civil society. In this scenario, a new form of creative social self-organization of the population is implemented, the elimination of blatant property stratification, electronic democracy and meritocracy, the digital economy in the mode of exclusive on-line planning, the economy of gift and sharing, the promotion of innovation and creativity of each individual, the system of nature-like waste-free production and technology. The strategy for the development of digital civilizational transformations should be combined with the network socio-humanitarian expertise of scientific, technical and economic projects in order to preserve the values of civil society and the development of socially conscious consumption in the transition to a new techno-economic paradigm.

The socio-philosophical reflection presented in this paper about the opportunities and risks that civil society is exposed to in the modern digital reality does not claim to be full and complete. This problem is multidimensional and debatable, which only fuels scientific activity and requires further research.

## References

- 100-bal. (2020). *Summary of the report on the state of civil society in the Russian Federation*. <https://100-bal.ru/ekonomika/237391/index.html>
2. Aleksanyan, A. S. (2006). On the issue of defining the concept of «civil society». *Voprosy filosofii (Philosophy questions)*, 12, 54-71 (in Russ.).
3. Anheier, H. K. (2014). Civil society research: ten years on. *Journal of Civil Society*, 10(4), 335-339. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17448689.2014.984973>
4. Arshinov, V. I., & Budanov, V. G. (2020). Network information revolutions and the Great Anthropological Transition: an evolutionary aspect. *Complexity, Reason, Post non classic*, 4, 45-56 (in Russ.).
5. Bakutina, N. S. (2015). Civil society and new information and communication technology. *Bulletin of the Nizhny Novgorod University named after N. I. Lobachevsky*, 2, 79-84. [http://www.unn.ru/pages/e-library/vestnik/19931778\\_2015\\_-\\_2\\_unicode/11.pdf](http://www.unn.ru/pages/e-library/vestnik/19931778_2015_-_2_unicode/11.pdf) (in Russ.)
6. Buryak, V. V. (2011). *Global civil society and network revolutions*. DIAPI, Simferopol (in Russ.).
7. Caiani, M., & Kröll, P. (2015). The Transnationalization of the Extreme Right and the Use of the Internet. *International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice*, 39(4), 331-351. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01924036.2014.973050>
8. Castells, M. (1999). Formation of the Society of Network Structures. *New Post-industrial Wave in the West* (pp. 494-505). Academia, Moscow.
9. Castells, M. (2000). *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*. GU HSE, Moscow.
10. Castells, M. (2004). *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business and Society*. U-Faktoriia, Ekaterinburg.
11. Castells, M. (2008). The new public sphere: global civil society, communication networks, and global governance. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 616(1), 78-93. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0002716207311877>
12. Castells, M. (2012). *Networks of Outrage and Hope: Social Movements in the Internet Age*. Polity Press, Cambridge.
13. Cheema, G. S. (2013). Civil society networks in China and Vietnam: Informal pathbreakers in health and the environment. *China Review*, 13(2), 153-156. <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/524760/pdf>
14. Chugunov, A. V. (2002). *Sociology of the Internet: Social and political orientation of Internet users*. Sociological society named after M. M. Kovalevsky.
15. *Civil Society at Risk? International Perspectives*. (2019, April). Conference Report: Panels and Roundtable, (pp. 63-74). Montreal, Canada.
16. DataReportal. (2020, January 30). *Digital 2020: Global Digital Overview*. <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2020-global-digital-overview>
17. Davidiv, D. (2021). *UN Secretary General: The world is in the deepest crisis in 100 years and may split*. <https://teknoblog.ru/2021/01/26/109970> (in Russ.)
18. Delanty, G. (1998). Social Theory and European Transformation: Is There a European Society? *Sociological Research Online*, 3(1). <https://doi.org/10.5153%2Fsro.156>
19. DeWiel, B. (1997). A Conceptual History of Civil Society: From Greek Beginnings to the End of Marx. *Past Imperfect*, 6, 3-42. [http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/pi/article/download/1422/963&ved=2ahUKEwi2lO\\_V3cHvAhWt4UKHWg1Dj8QFjABegQIChAB&usq=AOvVaw25F7vmwiCtgX32MTxtVw](http://ejournals.library.ualberta.ca/index.php/pi/article/download/1422/963&ved=2ahUKEwi2lO_V3cHvAhWt4UKHWg1Dj8QFjABegQIChAB&usq=AOvVaw25F7vmwiCtgX32MTxtVw)
20. Federal State Statistics Service. (2020). *Information about social and economic situation in Russia*. <http://www.gks.ru>
21. Federal State Statistics Service. (2020). *Selective Federal Statistical Observation on the use of information technologies and information and telecommunications networks by the population*. [https://gks.ru/free\\_doc/new\\_site/business/it/fed\\_nabl-croc/index.html](https://gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/business/it/fed_nabl-croc/index.html) (in Russ.)

22. Fine, I. (1997). Civil society theory, enlargement and critique. *Democratization*, 4(1), 7-28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13510349708403499>
23. Gerasimov, A. V., & Zhigayeva, K. V. (2014). Civil society and the state: social aspects of interaction. *Bulletin of the Moscow State Institute of Humanities and Economics*, 20(4), 40-48.
24. HSE University. (2020). *HSE Statistical Investigations*. <https://www.hse.ru/primarydata>
25. ICNL. (2020). *US Protest Law Tracker*. <https://www.icnl.org/usprotestlawtracker>
26. Ivanov, D. V. (2000). *Virtualization of society*. Peterburgskoe Vostokovedenie, Moscow.
27. Jensen, M. N. (2006). Concepts and conceptions of civil society. *Journal of Civil Society*, 2(1), 39-56. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17448680600730934>
28. Khoros, V. (1997). Civil society: the way it is formed, and whether it is being formed. *MeiMO*, 5, 8-23.
29. Kilimova, L. V. (2018). Socio-cultural bases of manifestation of social activity in civil practices. *Proceedings of the SWSU: Economics, Sociology, Management*, 8(4), 244-252.
30. Kochetov, A. N. (1999). Influence of the Internet on society development. *Information Society*, 5, 43-48. <https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=9117972> (in Russ.)
31. Kravchenko, S. A. (2019). Sociology on the move: the demand for the humanistic digital turn. *RUDN Journal of Sociology*, 19(3), 397-405. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-2272-2019-19-3-397-405>
32. Lathrop, D., & Rum, L. (2010). *Open government: collaboration, transparency and participation in practice*. O'Reilly Media, Sebastopol.
33. Latour, B. (2014). Higher School of Economics. In S. Gavrilenko (Eds.), *Reassembling the social: an introduction to actor-network theory*. HSE, Moscow.
34. Mann, M. (1996). *Society as organized networks of power. Modern Sociological Theories of Society*. INION, Moscow.
35. NAFI. (2020, December 04). *Digital literacy of Russians*. <https://nafi.ru/analytics/tsifrovaya-gramotnost-rossiyanissledovanie-2020>
36. Oleskin, A. V. (2016). *Network society: Necessity and possible strategies of building. Network (reticular) socio-economic formation: quasi-socialist principles and meritocracy*. URSS, Moscow (in Russ.).
37. Resnik, M. Yu. (1998). *Civil society as a phenomenon of civilization*. MGSU Soiuz, Moscow (in Russ.).
38. Romanenko, L. M. (1994). Civil society not only exists, but has never ceased to exist. *Sotcls*, 1, 6-12 (in Russ.).
39. Rumford, C. (2003). European Civil Society or Transnational Social Space?: Conceptions of Society in Discourses of EU Citizenship, Governance and the Democratic Deficit: an Emerging Agenda. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 6(1), 25-43. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1368431003006001555>
40. Salamon, L. M., & Anheier, H. K. (1997). The civil society sector. *Society* 34, 60-65.
41. Schwab, K., & Malleret, T. (2020). *COVID-19: The Great Reset*. <http://reparti.free.fr/schwab2020.pdf>
42. Simiti, M. (2017). Civil society and economy: Greek civil society during the economic crisis. *Journal of Civil Society*, 13(4), 353-373. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17448689.2017.1355033>
43. Soskin, O. (2019). Biblic aspect of time and space in modern global economy. *Legal Bible Almanach*, 1, 65-87. [http://www.okp-elpis.pl/book,open,6756,0,PRAWOS%C5%81AWNY\\_BIBLIJNY\\_ALMANACH\\_I\\_2019.html](http://www.okp-elpis.pl/book,open,6756,0,PRAWOS%C5%81AWNY_BIBLIJNY_ALMANACH_I_2019.html) (in Russ.)
44. Strategic Culture Foundation. (2020). *The so-called inclusive capitalism - a joint project of Rothschild and the Pope*. <https://www.fondsk.ru/news/2020/12/24/tak-nazyvaemyj-inkluzivnyj-kapitalizm-sovmestnyj-proekt-rotshildov-i-papy-rimskogo-52541.html> (in Russ.)
45. The World Bank. (2020). *The World Bank database*. <http://www.worldbank.org>
46. Vartanova, E. (1999). *Information Society and Mass Media of Finland in the European perspective*. Moscow University, Moscow (in Russ.).
47. Vasilenko, L. A., & Zotov, V. V. (2020). Digitalization of public administration in Russia: risks, casuses, problems. *Digital Sociology*, 3(2), 4-16. <https://doi.org/10.26425/2658-347X-2020-2-4-16>
48. Vasilenko, L. A., Zotov, V. V., & Zakharova, S. A. (2020). Social media potential for developing participatory governance. *RUDN Journal of sociology*, 20(4), 864-876. <https://doi.org/10.22363/2313-2272-2020-20-4-864-876>
49. WebCanape. (2020). *All Internet statistics for 2020 - figures and trends in the world and in Russia*. <https://www.web-canape.ru/business/internet-2020-globalnaya-statistika-i-trendy> (in Russ.)
50. Whitlock, W. (2008). *Twitter Revolutions: How social media and mobile marketing is changing the way we do business and market online*. Xeno Press., Moscow.
51. World Economic Forum. (2013). *The future role of civil society. World scenario series*. World Economic Forum, Cologne, Geneva.
52. Yadov, G. B. (2004). *Information and society*. Moscow.

Received 2.09.2020

Received in revised form 12.10.2020

Accepted 28.10.2020

Available online 28.12.2020

Updated version of the paper as of 21.01.2021