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MEDIAPOLIS: NEW ENVIRONMENT, NEW LIFE, NEW RESEARCH PROSPECTS

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Abstract

The author of the article operates with concepts of the Mediapolis and a media life that characterize a modern environment for the individual and society. The analysis develops the idea of the Mediapolis that was offered by British researcher Roger Silverstone and received support from other known theorists. The author's attention is focused on everyday practices of interaction of the individual with the media. Through this prism the needs for the media are considered as well as the behavior of the citizen; the infrastructure and system of media; manpower of media manufacture; changes in management; speech communication and cultural consciousness of community. The Mediapolis represents a specific analogue of the real city taken in its media hypostasis. Taken together these features comprise the content of the research project "The Modern Russian Mediapolis" which is carried out at St Petersburg State University.

Key words: *Mediapolis, environment, person, society, media life, everyday practice, communication.*

1. INTRODUCTORY NOTES

The newest realities give a stimulus for searching for nontraditional approaches to the growth of the media component in human communities' living. This especially modern situation has been wholly expressed by the British scientist Roger Silverstone in the title of his monograph: "Media and Morality: on the Rise of the Mediapolis". The bright intellectual metaphor (the Mediapolis) incorporates multidimensionality and real depth of the occurred changes. Silverstone gave the following explanation for his choice of a vector of reasoning on present society and the person within it:

> We have become dependent on the media for the conduct of everyday life. ... it is quite clear that the media are not, cannot be, everything. Life is lived outside the media and for many, if not statistically most, around the world, the media, at least many of them, are absent, unavailable, irrelevant. ... Life is lived, in families, organizations and states without references to the media. We live. We die. My argument presumes all this. But it also insists on the significance of the media for our orientation in the world ... in ways unimaginable before the electronic age. (2007, pp. 5-6)

This substantiation of the author's position attracts attention due to balanced estimations of the occurred changes (without demonization of the media channels that is characteristic for a number of publications), and the intention to search for solutions of fundamental questions in the daily living activity of the individual and society, instead of in external factors, like politics and technology. It is remarkable, that the correlation of the media and morals is included in the name of the book – "Media and Morality".

Other known scientists also reflect on this phenomenon though they use different terminology. “Thinking about the Communicative City” – as the Dutch professor Cees Hamelink titled his report at a large international forum (2011, 31). Media & the City Workshop was organised in 2012 at the Catholic University of Milan. The area of interest at the workshop was defined by some main ideas: media representations of cities and social processes; cities as spaces for media usage and the influence of media in the experience of cities; the presence of the media in the urban contexts; and impacts of media enterprises on urban contexts. (Media & the city 2011) Moscow State University gathered experts to discuss the problem field “Communication Structure of Modern City”.

Some researchers supported the idea of the Mediapolis as an original form of civilization and gave an expanded interpretation to it. They especially emphasize two related phenomena that are to some extent exemplary of the contemporary human condition:

> First, a notion of media work as a set of behaviors, strategies and tactics, norms and values that co-determine with technology the outcome of the production of culture within and across media industries … Second, an appreciation of media work as a range of activities and social arrangements that a growing number of people – and the majority of teenagers – enact in the context of contemporary digital culture … that is: using media as media producers rather than or next to media consumers (Deuze 2009, pp. 23–24).

2. MEDIA LIFE IN THE MEDIAPOLIS

In a context of media researches the main task consists of transferring attention from institutes and professionals of media to the "ordinary" person, which is active in his own media behaviour. This includes when activity is enforced besides his desire and consent. From these positions a sufficient addition to an expressive metaphor of the Mediapolis appears, namely, in our opinion, the concept of *the media life*. Corresponding to Silverstone’s concept, the media life is not opposed with a “usual” life in its traditional syncretised understanding, but becomes its integral and one of the major parts. At the same time it goes according to its own laws and rules similar to humans living in economy, family environment, politics and other spheres that have their own regulations, customs and standards.

The science should have a high ability to meet a qualitatively changed situation. At least, a society may expect noticeable growth of interest to so-called audience’s behaviour in the media sphere (though a canonical understanding of the audience as a set of the information consumers, most likely, will lose a sense in coming years). The statistical analysis of subjects and objects of research gives the possibility to see how zones of attention in scientific publications actually correspond with each other. Such an attempt has been made by the German experts.

For the historical and theoretical introduction they have examined the evolution of journalism research in Western countries.

> For a long time, researchers across the globe concentrated on an individualistic and normative understanding of journalism, particularly using hermeneutic and historic approaches derived from the humanities. ... When researchers in the U.S. began to conduct studies with special attention to journalistic production and the journalists’ labour context, their work was rather sceptically received by practitioners who labelled these efforts “Mickey Mouse studies” ... Even though the “high noon” of normative and individualistic ideas in journalism studies is over, they still can be

> found in both journalistic practice and theoretical approaches to the field. (Löffelholz and Rothenberger 2011, p. 11)

After World War II a great variety of research approaches appeared. But the authors especially stress a necessity of cultural studies in the journalism field. They recall some authoritative European scientists who urged the primarily sociology-driven community of journalism academics to overcome their narrow focus on communicator research and to stop the "exclusion of the audience" (ibid, 13).

The content analysis of scientific journals concerning journalism opened to the authors a modern state of affairs. Seven academic journals that which use the term "journalism" in their title have been selected for studying. These English language journals represent different regions of the world. In result was that the leadership belongs to the research that focused on the communicator (mostly editorial personnel): 64.5% of all published articles. They are followed with the analysis of the content of media (49.6%), and audience studies (14.6%). Research of the channel or, accordingly, media production meets very seldom: only 9.2% of all cases. The picture is supplemented with the characteristic of the empirical research methods that are used by authors of publications. Obvious prevalence of a content analysis (43.3%) and in-depth interview (20.1%) precisely correlates with focusing on the organization of texts making and a self-estimation of employees. To the audience studies the standardized interviews, experiments, and observations are more organic, but nowadays these methods take very small places in the presented grouping (ibid, 16, 19). The preferences have not changed a lot in comparison with a period when pragmatic interest in media functioning and journalist dominated the science.

A qualitative leap in the development of fundamental theoretical research is necessary in order to define needed level of reasoning on a situation of the Mediapolis and a media life. The situation demands fresh ideas, and if possible new paradigmatic suggestions, instead of the empirical observations that prevail today. It would be strange to deny the importance of data gathering, including experiences in a genre of case study. But even less suitably is to agree with the domination of simple descriptive projects when the reality appeals to formulating and checking of hypotheses of a highest theoretical level.

Attempt to arrange such a research was made by members of the Theory of Journalism and Mass Communications Department of the St Petersburg State University. The project titled "*The Modern Russian Mediapolis"* is developed here, and some steps to its practical realization (mainly on materials of St Petersburg) are taken. The intellectual impulses at the beginning of working were found in the complex of those ideas, propositions and data that have been presented above. The general intention is to construct (better to say - to reproduce) as though a media copy of a megalopolis, or to reflect a megalopolis in its media hypostasis. There are no analogues of such research, as far as we know.

We do not have a task to formulate a definition of city (megacity). We use the description which does not cause objections because of its commonly appropriate offered characteristics:

> … the city in general is rather independent, legally formed complex dynamic territorial, economic and social system in which … relations of life-support are generated … Thus, city … unites community into the system consisting of various elements (economy, culture, politics, ecology), penetrated by social relations whose functioning is directed on achievement of the global purpose - growth of the quality of a life of each person. (Shibakov, Kotlyar and Shibakova 2004, p. 71)

Just as the real, "physical" city includes a rich variety of interconnected substructures and elements, the Mediapolis also "consists" of management and manufacture, infrastructure and a private life of citizens,

mass consciousness and speech dialogue. Certainly, it would be naive to proceed from the assumption of full identity in a structure of elements, but parallels can be relevant and fruitful in intellectual dimension. Below we shall describe main directions and problems of the project.

First of all we need to agree what we understand as the Mediapolis. This word is in use in the public sphere (besides the context that has been offered by Silverstone) - publicity agencies, consulting agencies, publishing houses and even the program on the radio channel in France use the name. It is not necessary to argue that such names, as a rule, are the result of a casual choice, instead of aimed theoretical-conceptual search. In our project, the Mediapolis is understood simultaneously in several projections:

1. Qualitative conditions of human life, and a society that is formed by intensive development of media technologies, rising manufacture, and usage of media production;

2. Non-material environment of inhabitancy of the person, and a society created by the media communications and deprived of spatial definiteness;

3. Methodological toolkit explaining events and processes in the modern world in a view of manufacture and usage of media production.

The substance, qualitative characteristics and estimations of the Mediapolis lay outside these formulations. The main task of the research consists in searching for and interpreting these subjects on each thematic direction. In other words, we shall use and prove the selected methodological paradigm that has a generalized name "Mediapolis".

For example, regarding *quality of life* (media life) it is necessary to reveal a correlation of infrastructural and technological factors, on the one hand, and social, economic, social-psychological ones, on the other hand, plus maybe ecological and anthropological factors. Otherwise we shall come to a primitive technological determinism which is not popular any more in a science as an explanatory system. In a context of tendencies which determine the development of a modern science much more important for us should be investigating the world of everyday life (everyday lives, individuals' practices), which excites a heightened interest in sociology, social psychology and others humanities. In particular, experts in political sociology write:

A revival of interest to the world of everyday life within the frame of sociology of daily practices has been connected with "a practical turn" … means separation of the world of routine actions into autonomous area of research … Practical action forming dynamic unity with a structural context becomes the basic form of existence in everyday life (according to A. Giddens). (Plotichkina 2010, pp. 234-235, 237)

In previous years some researches were published that are focused on daily media behavior, and with obvious accent on its socio-cultural understanding. As sociologists of culture emphasize:

Information revolutions are not a rectilinear process in the frame of which new kinds of media simply become current, taking a predicted place in a home and everyday life of the person. It would be more correct to speak about versatile process - acculturations of media, or … about a domestication process relating to media technologies. Within this process the means of communication are being examined and adopted to conditions of the developed life; simultaneously former habits collapse, and the social interactions mediated by technical novelties change. (Sergeeva 2011, p. 3)

3. THE MEDIAPOLIS FROM DIFFERENT PROSPECTS

One can see that such a view of a social reality is wholly organic in our understanding of the Mediapolis as routine, regular practice of its inhabitants who are deeply engaged in interaction with the media. This aspect of research deserves a detailed reflection in the analysis of a *Mediapolis citizens' life,* which constitutes one of the central sections of the research project. The citizen in this case is considered in a direct connection with etymological roots of this word, as a city dweller, the ordinary inhabitant of the Mediapolis, despite obvious conditionality of borders of this quasi territorial phenomenon.

Existence in the world of the media represents a daily practice to which our contemporary has become accustomed, and in which he is easily guided - not only in a technological dimension, but also from the accepted rules of behaviour viewpoint. Regular sociological statistics supports this conclusion. So, according to the data of the 'Zircon' research group, a high level of media literacy (knowledge, understanding and skills of behaviour in the media environment) in September, 2011 was demonstrated by 39% of Russians, in comparison with 31% of a low level (two years ago the situation looked worse: 31 and 23 correspondingly). Thus in 2011 62% of interviewed respondents were sure that every person can understand a stream of the information without assistance, and separate the reliable information from information "dust" (Media consumption 2012). Even if this opinion contains a deal of overestimated self-representation, it all the same testifies a good adaptation of contemporaries to the newest conditions of life in the media.

In order to prevent the widespread narrowing of a theme, let us emphasize that everyday life of the townspeople is not closed in the sphere of household and consumption; at least, it develops not only in it. Researchers of human communities offer much more complexly arranged designs. They became a subject for discussion in the '*60 parallel'* magazine. It is remarkable that the magazine describes itself as a journal "for the people, inclined to think of sense and matter of their own everyday activity". They use a basic scheme of the society offered by Russian philosopher Georgij Schedrovickij. It includes four zones:

1. Zone of formalized systems of activity: a different type of organizations, institutions, and industrial structures where people exist as social individuals;

2. Zone of consumption and household;

3. Zone of club where people arrange different relations concerning events in first two zones and content of the fourth;

4. Zone of culture where matrixes (norms, standards and samples) providing reproduction of the developed forms of activity and a life are found. The man is thought of as a unity of the organism, the individual and the person (Rac 2011).

Accordingly, the citizen of the Mediapolis interests us in all named zones of the social world because all of them include media components, and in each of them he is the main character. However in the formalized systems during consumption and in the club he is a dependent figure, with the lowest degree of independence on external influences. As the individual subject of thinking and behavior he appears in a field of everyday culture, where he has an opportunity to accept (or reject) offered norms and patterns of a media life. Certainly, such freedom of choice needs a high level of media literacy and a mature self-identification.

The aspect of everyday human activity has not less importance while analyzing a theme of *labor resources* of the Mediapolis. Certainly, daily practices of the people who are professionally involved in media production, first of all interest us in traditional dimensions - from the viewpoint of the organization of working process in media organizations and the personnel structure. It will be useful to track tendencies of changes in the media employees (the professional priorities, new official and

qualifying positions, age, educational background). Some statistical estimation gives serious stimulus for reflection. So, according to UNESCO, in the first decade of 2000s in Russia there were 102 thousand newspaper journalists, by this parameter the country won first place in the world. For a comparison: in China (second place) 84 thousand, and in the USA – 54 thousand. The population of China is 10 times more than of Russia, and the income of the American print media from advertising exceeds the Russian results by approximately 20 times. From a demographic or economic points of view an advantage for Russia does not find substantiation (Ivanov 2011). It is possible to assume, that we meet a situation of personnel chaos and its inevitable consequence – a decline of a skill level of employees.

Some tendencies in dynamics of professional characteristics of employees come to light due to the supervision of recruiting agencies. For the conclusions they use index HeadHunter (hh.index) which shows how many resumes come per vacancy in certain professional areas. For a normal market situation the index size used to be from 2 to 3 points. However at the end of 2011 in St Petersburg per one vacancy of the social networks employee or of blogger there were only 0.5 resumes, and employers had nobody to choose. At the same time the situation in the labor market of traditional media was controversial: an overabundance of employees and irrelevance of offers to employers' requirements generated a sharp misbalance. The sharpest supply and demand misbalance relates to reporters, observers and correspondents (hh.index 37.7), TV and radio directors (32.6), photographers (28.1) (Shmatko 2012, pp. 94–95).

In other words, manpower of the Mediapolis undergoes deep structural changes which occur spontaneously and remain, mainly, outside the researchers' field of vision. In these circumstances it is especially important to focus attention on self-identification of employees in the Mediapolis, as well as on their reflection on a change of working conditions, attitudes in editorial staffs and other collectives, and on portrait characteristics of typical "new" professionals.

Separation of life from an inhabitancy may be done only in an abstract-schematic context. Nevertheless the accents in these two cases will be various. The research approach through inhabitancy assumes prime attention to *the need for media* – both from the individual side (who is the main personage), and also from the side of structured and not structured communities. Most likely, they are not limited by fundamental "deficiency needs" (by A. Maslow) - physiological and safety ones, but include so-called secondary needs which in known contexts even prevail. We mean the highest level of the Maslow "pyramid" – the self-actualization. It is necessary to consider, that in XXI century the self-actualization is tightly linked with the opportunity of self-expression, which, in turn, became a subject of the sharpest anxiety. The authors of the world survey devoted to excess to the Internet stressed in their report for UNESCO: "Representatives of global institutions and national governments around the world have endorsed freedom of expression as a basic human right" (Dutton et al. 2010, p. 7).

Correspondingly, it is impossible to imagine *governance* in the Mediapolis as a set of algorithms of actions from the outside, administratively; in this case elements of spontaneity, self-regulation, horizontal coordination, and informal communications will be strong. In the media sphere, as well as in a public life as a whole, the role of the state and other official bodies is highly important and necessary, but it is only a providing role if to speak about the rights and freedoms of the person and furthermore about mass communication. In a certain sense institutional resources are now in general close to the end, and to no small degree it occurs due to availability of media technologies to the ordinary inhabitant of the Mediapolis.

The current history gives more and more examples of how aspiration of administration and the press monopolies to keep control over media life leads to sharp collisions, and even loud scandals. Among them one of the most visible places belongs to the case of the British *News of the World* which roughly violated a lot of legal and ethical standards. In this situation frank recognition of the Supreme authorities have a prime interest. According to the press, the Prime Minister of Great Britain David Cameron has

declared radical revision of relations between the government and the mass media. The government and representatives of the opposition for many years did not pay attention to the behavior of the press because they have been too interested in support from large media groups, such as Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. Politicians and journalists spent too much time to gain sympathies of each other (Overchenko 2011).

Nevertheless it would be an unrealistic simplification to build a model of governance in the Mediapolis in a rectilinear neoliberal way, backing up only unlimited personal freedom. Parity of freedom of self-expression and public information security remains an intellectual and practical problem forever though growing media resources add more and more new nuances to it which make this problem extremely difficult to solve. More and more actors become involved in the relationship, from securities to millions of ordinary network users. For example, the decision of the Russian *Foreign Intelligence Service* to develop a technique of blogs monitoring caused an active and controversial public reaction. The technique is planned to solve problems at several levels: to examine processes of communities building in social networks, to define the factors influencing popularity of data, to develop methods of the organization and governance of virtual community, etc. The Russian officials are not pioneers in this way. According to news agencies, within CIA for a long time a special division acts which supervises social networks worldwide. Every day analysts look through up to five millions records only in Twitter, trace posts in Facebook and others social nets, as well as analyze the information of local media (Barabanov, Safronov and Chernenko 2012). Hardly was it possible to expect, that so-called competent services will bypass an enormous stream of the open information given by the Internet. But the problem expressed in the “priority – parity” dichotomy becomes much more intricate.

Most likely, for development of true criteria for governance in the Mediapolis it is necessary to define basic representations on regulation in social system. We shall risk offering a generalizing idea: the purpose of social regulation consists first of all in consolidation of the system, and this purpose causes importance of integrative function which journalism and media as a whole carry out for a society. If so, there are bases for anxiety of communication theorist from Ukraine who remarks:

> While the totalitarian countries … create consolidation of social system, the post-Soviet space, due to total commercialization of the virtual field, bases the film-plots on breaks, instead of consolidation. … We understand breaks as points where the system does not work how it should. ... In virtual space (movies) or information space (news) we see and we hear about a situation of breaks. For this reason today there are not and there cannot be movies, for example, about engineers, researchers, cosmonauts, artists because they do not coincide with a mainstream. They are founders of social systems, instead of founders of breaks. (Pochepcov 2012)

Analysis of the environment also includes studying *an infrastructure* of the Mediapolis. Valuable results may be found by collecting maximum possible volume of data on media channels which in aggregate form the uniform space for completely organized being of a society and the individual. To some extent the databases of research (rating) firms may be used as sources of the information though they do not have a task to compose a complete description of the Mediapolis infrastructure. However the reference to problem points in this part of the project is not excluded; this means that there is a field for polemic discussions here. For example, whether the infrastructural environment is comfortable for its inhabitants? Whether it has got a rational substantiation or it is being constructed on the basis of an unpredictability and anarchy? To what extent it is targeted at the accelerated self-reproduction? Whether it has prospects in the future, or it should remain a current accident (if not the past)? Whether division

on transnational and local channels is relevant today? Finally, whether we in Russia "coincide" with tendencies, developed in other Media Cities, and whether it is necessary for us "to coincide"?

In the world there are some precedents similar to the Mediapolis project, carried out in Singapore (another name is “Media City”). This Mediapolis physically exists, as a governmental company, a special area within the “big” city, and a complex of industrial enterprises. The administration of the project describes it as:

> Mediapolis is the realisation of a vision: a media-centric city built to inspire creativity, collaboration and connectivity – where state-of-the art infrastructure, an active community of innovators and creators, and a collective spirit of enterprise make Mediapolis a place where ideas flow, flourish and thrive … Mediapolis is where digital media connects with the community in fun and tangible ways. (Our Media 2012)

For every nation the question of rational choice in favor of such media centric cities (or against) should arise in a context of infrastructure analysis.

There is one more special environment for us, namely *language and speech*. Certainly, in this section of the project it is impossible to reduce observation to criticism of damage to language in network communications and mass media. It is important in due time to catch, whether a new speech as an universal attribute of the individual and a society is born or we met a numerous number of voices, which generates some kind of new Babylon, at least an intergenerational break in inhabitants’ understanding of each other. Who is the source of a fashion and standards, what nowadays (tomorrow) refers to as the speech culture, which institutes are responsible for "governing" speech processes, and whether it is necessary to govern them? Besides, which national and international characteristics coexist in these processes? Perhaps, in general the way leads to a new Esperanto, doesn’t it?

However, speech communication has also much more "prosaic" aspects that one should remember besides discussing Internet-communications. Daily speech practice develops first of all on the basis of direct interaction of people, and for a significant part of the population problems arise at this level. The most contrast situations occur with sharply enlarged migration of representatives of other ethnic, language and cultural communities. The modern Mediapolis, as well as a megalopolis as a whole, opens its borders. For Russian cities it is an extremely disturbing question. According to official statistics for 2011, migratory authorities have registered 1 547 023 foreign citizens (total population of St. Petersburg with Leningrad region consists of 6.7 million). In particular, according to official data, during one year through Pulkovo airport more than 56 thousand citizens of Tajikistan arrived, and many more came by train and from other regions of Russia. In official statistics, in St Petersburg and Leningrad region 80 thousand citizens from Tajikistan live, on informal sources - approximately 150 thousand (FMC 2012).

Demographic realities are those in view of which the speech environment looks essentially distinct from traditional models. New Babylon already exists in a megacity, and nowadays it has less in common with a literary-mythological allegory. Maybe academic linguistics has a privilege not to pay special attention to regeneration of social environment but the practice of a municipal government and self-regulation is compelled to adapt to actual circumstances of intercultural dialogue.

In close connection with popular speech, but in a special mode, the *cultural consciousness* and self-consciousness of the Mediapolis develop. Undoubtedly, essential shifts occur in this area, and hardly all changes have homogeneous character. From a positive side, at least the access of the individual to cultural property extends not only in the borders of a real megacity, but also in a planetary scale. From a negative side, low standards and simplification in culture also became clearly visible. But under a

surface of these obvious changes there are special cultural phenomena which were generated by a media life, first of all by net communication.

Paradoxically, accessibility of gigantic information resources only in the minimal degree promotes cultural interaction with a reality, and provokes laziness in understanding it. The original "mirror" of cognitive activity of the Mediapolis inhabitant serves as the structure of sources of knowledge and representation. Redistribution of channels of media consumption in favor of the Internet does not demand special research; it became a proven fact. We shall use only one illustration. The surveys in St Petersburg and Stockholm, carried out in the frame of comparative research "The Role of Media for Identity and Democracy" have shown the following data: for the 17-year-olds group the highest indicator of reading (books, newspapers, magazines) is 1-2 days/month (near 75%), while nearly every day 70% use the Internet in Stockholm and 38% do the same in St. Petersburg. The surveys were organized in 2007, when there was a rather big gap between Sweden and Russia in access to the Internet. But today the distance became much shorter (Feilitzen von and Petrov 2011, p. 58-59).

In a cultural dimension the use of modern communication technologies can cause neither objections, nor counteraction. The deep anxiety arises in connection with mass refusal of reading. Widely known popular writer of science the Russian professor of physics Sergey Kapitsa (he also was known as the son of the Nobel winner Peter Kapitsa) declared on this occasion:

> We at last came to what we aspired to come to during all 15 years; we have brought up the country of idiots. … The speed of technical development today is very high. But our ability to comprehend all this and to live reasonably in a new technical and information environment lags behind from this speed. The world experiences now a very deep crisis in the sphere of culture. So the situation in our country is typical enough for all other world - in America and in England too people read a little. … Now it is very difficult to find intellectual leaders in general. Probably, because minds are necessary to nobody - sensations are necessary. (Slaves 2009)

It is easy to see, that the main subject of the discussion is not a form of reading but a cultural quality of living in the Mediapolis. Eventually it is not crucially important which channels carry knowledge and valuable representations to citizens. Someone can personally disagree with elimination of paper books and "old" cinema. But everybody should recognize that such elimination became a sign of popular everyday practice, and that is why it requires studying.

Especially it is necessary to reflect on the idols of the crowd. It seems that the time is over for writers as teachers of life, commonly recognized literary samples, outstanding thinkers, and heroes of cinema … Bloggers occupied the places of present idols and prophets, frequently without bright features of personal originality. How does such a replacement affect mass consciousness and behavior? Whether construction of the Mediapolis is equivalent to destruction of the Culture polis (or at least to qualitative pauperization)?

For example, in a specific light the city folklore could be seen. The idols, popular media persons, dominating opinions and estimations - all this belongs not only and not so much to communication via institutionalized channels, but to direct spontaneous interaction among citizens. This way of communication not often draws attention of researchers, first of all, possibly, because of difficulty of studying. Some precedents of studying demonstrate necessity of such projects and high value of findings (Ries 1997).

Certainly, an information exchange in the mass media channels and oral dialogue exist in unbreakable interrelation and mutually influence each other. At the same time they are rather independent systems,

and they were like this during the long history of mankind. Contemporary science tries to include spontaneous dialogue in a number of objects of mass communication researches. It is a true idea that:

> in the communicative environment alongside mass press, TV, radio and the Internet exists one more channel of mass communication … which in circumstances of modern dialogue … is filled by rumors (but not only them) and which is named the Oral Channel. … It has its own effective organization; it is used for collective distribution of a social significant information product … and works via transfer of oral texts from the person to the person by a principle of a speech chain or a network. (Osetrova 2010, p. 13)

Thus, the city folklore and other forms of spontaneous dialogue are integral parts of media life and, accordingly, obligatory objects for analysis, including folklore processes in networks. What myths and legends arise in flows of net communication? Correspondingly, with which spiritual-cultural values they are mixed and how they get on with earlier cultural values?

Separate and profound attention should be paid to the consciousness of the person which has got unlimited opportunities for self-expression and self-realization in the media space. In principle these wide possibilities correspond to the strategy of humanization, as to the ideological basis of civilization leap and motive power of social transformations. How the Russian social scientists write the human factor

> Is the major resource necessary for finishing an industrial phase and transition to a post-industrial phase of the society development. Such a resource cannot “be mobilized” by methods of administrative control and compulsion. If “the human factor” should provide success of plans on the country modernization serious investments are necessary not only in industrial, but even more in non-productive sphere. (Lantsov 2010, p. 74)

There are bases to suppose, that in the sphere of media in the last decades, the preconditions for rising “the human factor” were created, and now the problem consists in its high-grade use in the interests of both the individual and the social community.

4. FINAL REMARK

In this connection a sharp question appears on a readiness of the townspeople to manage that huge potential of freedom which the media infrastructure has given to them. It is a question of whether the individual perceives his personal freedom as an indispensable condition of the normal media life in the Mediapolis, with corresponding emotional support of this rational comprehension. Personal freedom is understood in the highest spiritual context, without any diminutions of its matter and narrowing up to borders of "convenient" using or to a standard set of technological operations (like computer clicks) and so forth. However further reasoning in this direction may lead us away from the frameworks of the concrete project - studying of the Mediapolis as a complex phenomenon. It is possible to agree that each element of its structure deserves special research on fundamental and applied levels. But it is the future development of that plan which for now stays in initial forms of realization.

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