

LIVING IN THE EPOCH OF CHANGES

Norbert Bolz



NORBERT BOLZ is a professor and chairman of the department for studying mass media at the Berlin Technical University. He is the author of the book *The ABC of Media*, which was published in Russian in 2010

Network means of communication with people, such as blogs and twitter, are becoming increasingly popular among officials and statesmen. Yet the use of these

newest means of communication in no way influence the quality of work of these statesmen; it does not facilitate their work nor does it let them fulfill their duties more effectively. Blogs and twitter posts simply further the presentation of a politician; they are the latest political marketing tools of the Internet.

Access to the newest communication technologies allows them to remain in power. Actually, notions about the Internet have seen some changes during the last several years. The Internet has turned from an information processing machine into a forum for political participation. And it fits the spirit of the time fully – democracies of the West are in a state of crisis, while the East is struggling to free itself from the clutches of despotism. We are truly living in a revolutionary time!

Moreover, we are actually witnessing the decline of representative democracy. The parliamentary system no longer seems convincing. Various initiatives have emerged aimed at promoting ‘direct’ democracy. It is clear that citizens want to take back control

of the decisions that shape their lives. As a result, **society is now facing new dangers, the most dreadful of which is a new stratification of society, drawing a division between citizens who are ‘programmed’ and ‘those who program.’**

Old laws are no longer effective, and the recent scandal surrounding Wikileaks is a vivid example of this. Wikileaks has shown that the culture of the Internet is not compatible with the laws and institutions of the 19th century. Nowadays, politicians and lawyers can regulate the flow of information only on a post-factum basis, attempts which are ultimately doomed to failure. Modern society is now facing the crucial dilemma as to whether it should accept the fact that states and corporations cannot function without keeping ‘corporate’ secrets, or whether it should, together with the Internet, stand for total transparency, and transform a crime, as in the case of Wikileaks, into a heroic deed. The shape of our future world will depend on the choices yet to be made by society. ■

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Norbert Bolz, *The ABC of the Media* (‘Das ABC der Medien’). Moscow, The ‘Europe’ publishing house, 2011 – 136 pages.

Norbert Bolz’s new book, *The ABC of the Media*, reviews some of the major aspects of the internal organization and social existence of modern media. It encompasses a rather wide range of modern media, from the press and television (and related processes of shaping public opinion) to computers, multimedia, and robotic technology. The focus of attention is on digital media, whose technical (including military technologies), mathematical, communicative, social, moral, humanitarian, psychological, managerial, and economic aspects are all reviewed in the book.

The author, Norbert Bolz, is a professor at the Berlin Technical University. The book has been conceived as an ABC resource, primarily for students specializing in media studies. It is geared also to all those who are interested in finding out about the computer’s role in human life, as well as about our role in the new digital world.



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