'Psychopower' of Cultural Diplomacy in the Information Age

By Natalia Grincheva

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the phenomenon of digital diplomacy, critically analyzed from the perspective of philosophical psychoanalysis. The study aims to elaborate the theoretical underpinnings of digital diplomacy through employing the conceptual framework of collective individuation and psychotechnologies developed by French critical philosopher Bernard Stiegler. Stiegler's philosophical conception of contemporary politics under the condition of globalized cultural and economic capitalism is employed in this work to explain the dramatic changes in diplomatic relations taking place on the international arena at the beginning of the new century.

Keywords: *digital diplomacy, psychotechnologies, transindividuation, psychopower, 'soft' power*

Introduction

Cultural diplomacy has recently received a renewed interest around the world from governments, cultural practitioners, and academics as a means to understand, inform, engage, and influence domestic and international audiences. Diplomacy has traditionally served to manage relations among states and other parties by advising and shaping foreign policy, which eventually coordinates and secures specific states' interests in the international arena. With the advance of new media communication tools, diplomacy in the information society has gone significant transformations. Digital diplomacy, also known as public diplomacy 2.0 or e-diplomacy, incorporates the inclusive nature of traditional public or cultural diplomacy and refers to the cross-cultural practices through digital and networked technologies, including the Internet, mobile devices, and social media channels.[1]

Though in the last decade digital diplomacy has been the focus of close attention from political leaders and cultural practitioners, there is still a lack of academic engagement with this subject in a more critical and theoretical context. However, it is imperative to better understand how these technologies that externalize cultural memory, national heritage, and identity—as well as human values— work within a larger political context in global communications. This paper aims to elaborate the theoretical underpinnings of digital diplomacy through employing the conceptual framework of collective individuation and psychotechnologies developed by French critical philosopher Bernard Stiegler.

This paper consists of three parts that employ Stiegler's critical theory to discuss different dimensions of digital diplomacy as a practical field in an academic context. The first part, *Phenomenology of Collective Memory*, introduces some important points of Stiegler's theory and provides key definitions and explanations of the main concepts that are heavily utilized in this study to elaborate on the critical understanding of the social, economic, and political processes of digital diplomacy. The second part, *Psychopower,*

further advances the theoretical legacy of Stiegler and discusses it in a broader context of global international relations. Finally, the last part of the paper, *Participative Digital Democracy*, presents the major social and technological concerns of Stiegler's philosophical project in relation to the processes taking place within diplomatic activities carried out in the digital environment. This study does not aim to provide a complete comprehensive framework of digital diplomacy as a new field of theoretical research; rather, it tries to deepen the understanding of the political and economic mechanisms in the international communication and diplomatic activities that are increasingly more complicated and challenged with the advance of digital technologies in the global capitalism system.

Phenomenology of Collective Memory: Transindividuation Processes in the Information Society

In his series *Techniques and Time,* Stiegler claims that human agency is always in need of technical extension and support to sustain oneself and realize individual and collective goals. As such, "technical prosthesis" has always been critical for humans, making possible its ever becoming.[2] Most importantly, the cultural phenomenon of human memory influencing the construction of future development becomes possible only with the advent of techniques and tools. These tools serve as external virtual drives of human experiences and knowledge memory that shape the future.[3]

Stiegler's conceptualization of memory exteriorization is crucial for the present study because it helps to analyze audio-visual and digital technologies and their major influence on human consciousness. These technologies, according to Stiegler, have a strong potential to impact human cognitive processes by constituting consciousness outside of real life experiences. Technical audio-visual and digital objects and tools build future experiences in contemporary society, out of which the principles for memory selectively emerge to preserve the primary moments in an ongoing real-time montage of the present. Digital, electronic dimensions of modern exteriorization technology, as Stiegler emphasizes, results

in erosion of national collective memory being programmed under the contradictory economic and cultural globalization forces in a political struggle for manipulating human consciousness. According to Stiegler, different communication techniques employed by audio-visual and digital industries are the key drivers of the global technical system exacerbation, disorienting individuals and leading to an increasing loss of collective and self- understanding, resulting in a state of "ill-being."[4]

To better explain these processes, the following section provides some background for Stiegler's critical philosophy through defining such important notions as *individuation* and *collective individuation* or *transindividuaton* (used in this paper interchangeably). The notion of individuation is constructed on the premise that an "individual" is never given in advance, but produced or comes into being in the course of multiple ongoing processes. Individuation occurs as a complex interaction of multidimensional processes, some of which can also take place transindividually, or on a group level.[5] These notions, first introduced by Gilbert Simondon (1989), are crucial initial points for understanding larger concepts of political and economic powers that are analyzed in this paper in light of digital diplomacy.

Before explaining transindividuation in more depth, I first refer to another concept from Simondon, *transduction*. Transduction accounts for a mediating process between the world and a living being, which develops a psychic individuation. Such an "exchange of energies" with a world to which any individuation is fully integrated produces a subject, a psychic being separated from the world, but interacting with it as a whole other phase of being by itself.

Transindividuation is understood as a foundation of another layer of environment created through collective meanings. In transindividuation, senses are perceived and transmitted through members of communities, modified and shaped by each one through human communication, thus making collective and subjective life

possible. *In light of Simondon's and Stiegler's conceptions, digital diplomacy can be understood as a cultural transductive process that aims to create shared collective memory and experiences on the cross-cultural level.* As Venn confirms, the information society has been developed through very important technological and industrial transformations made possible by a rapid advance of digital technology, and particularly network technology. This new interactive way of technical cultural transduction is "the technical milieu … what Simondon called an associated technical milieu (*milieu technique associé*) or a techno-geographical milieu," that recreates a long circuit transcending across geographic and cultural boundaries through the net of digital reality.[6]

The digital medium, specifically the Internet, is a type of medium that in many ways redefines the principles of mass communications and provides a techno-geographical milieu of connected minds where the circulation of information shapes the consciousness of people through a transduction bypassing physical boundaries. Stalder also confirms that with the advance of the Internet, network technology culture has been transformed from an object-oriented to exchange-oriented culture, which is understood as a continuous process.[7] The exchange-oriented culture corresponds nicely to Manuel Castells' perspective on the growth of a networked society, where culture consists not so much of content, but of processes; and where the Internet is "an open-ended network of cultural meanings that can not only coexist, but also interact and modify each other on the basis of this exchange."[8]

Stiegler, discussing the processes of globalization and virtualization of contemporary culture, indicates that "…an increase in digital networking will produce a new kind of *temporal object*: one that is delinearizable and inseparable, produced by hypervideo technologies."[9] He sees the future of humanity in light of the increased technotization of human consciousness:

> there will doubtless be an increase in the amount of time spent in front of screens of all kinds, which will be then re-conceptualized and redefined in their functions (becoming

> terminals of tele-action), their various applications expanding into the thousands, most notably at the professional level; these processes will pursue, at an increasingly complex level and with increasing ease and sensitivity, the industrial temporalization of consciousness.[10]

By *temporal objects,* Stiegler means films, radio, television programs, and other media products which reach out daily "to millions, hundreds of millions of consciousnesses."[11] These temporal objects, as Stiegler explains, represent the pursuit of life by means other than life.[12] Stiegler introduces the notion of the temporal object in regard to his theoretical concept of the collective memory. Stiegler's exploration of the technologies of human consciousness manipulation, or tele-technologies as he called them, started from his detailed analysis of audiovisual media (such as cinema) and progressed to the study of digital technologies in his most recent works. However, his framework of tele-technologies, in the broadest sense, serves as a playground for exploration of the "industrialization of memory."

The industrialization of human memory, which includes culture and identity, is now operationalized through the production and wide distribution of industrial temporal objects. The results of industrialization or exteriorization of human memory in temporal objects create technical collective memory, which plays a crucial role in shaping all aspects of life in society because it contains collective experiences from which anybody can draw and, thus, project into the future and transform existence. According to Stiegler, collective memory is a specific form of actualization of the present rather than the conjunction of a human being with an image of the past. The present moment is being actualized via the flow of time and space captured through temporal objects that are the result of a highly selective process of cultural contextualization and are extremely political by nature.[13]

As Stiegler explains, the qualities of temporal objects are able to attract predetermined ways of viewing the past and reconstructing the present. They are the carriers of collective knowledge, experiences,

and ideas that people have had. However, their structures of inheritance and transmission are not biological and genetic but external, which exists in addition to the genetic, like a surrounding layer. Stiegler emphasizes that in the contemporary society human or social beings are formed and shaped first of all through interaction with technical artifacts.[14] The mechanisms that are in place in the reconstruction of human experiences through interaction with temporal objects can be explained by the ability of these objects to represent the past of others while being in the present of an individual in a particular time and space. In this way, temporal objects give access to a past that one has not lived, the past as the "already there" or in Heideger's terms, the *Dasein*, only accessible through techniques. As a result, history, traditions, communities are instrumentalized and can be transmitted to human minds to build a collective memory.[15] In regard to cross-cultural interaction in a broad realm of political international communication, human culture serves as the medium of invention and propagation of collective memory.

Traditionally, collective memory has been understood as "becoming-together" in space with the material cultural objects: in museums, in public heritage sites, in films, in the nonstop stream of images, and in sounds surrounding people in their daily activities. Collective memory produces society out of tradition and into something new through rituals. Reinforcing the political significance of production of a collective memory, Bollmer indicates:

> …it is here we can find the politics of collective memory, as in thinking of collective memory as action beyond cognition, we can understand how political actors—those individual-collectives marked out as different—are constituted, are maintained, are changed and are dissipated.[16]

Stiegler, who started the analysis of the temporal objects in his earlier studies with cinematography, fully associated this media with the history of development of the human consciousness in Western societies. He states that life is "always already cinema" and that the structure of consciousness is essentially cinematographic. With this he emphasizes that reality can be understood as a montage of temporal

perception, because it necessarily involves selection. Employing this framework with the more advanced technologies of the information society, it is relevant to state that the images that are widely circulated across societies through temporal objects, including digital media and the Internet, become lodged inside human minds as the milestones of the present and past. Despite the fact that everybody can relate to them or understand them in completely different ways, they become the poles of contemporary transindividuality. The images received through temporal objects individuate people psychically, and, by that same process, individuate them collectively. As a result, television, cinema, and digital media enable billions of people around the globe to share many key milestones, even though the perspectives of different cultural societies toward these images and ideas significantly differ. In a large measure, a collective memory is being produced on a global scale, and that collective memory serves as a common guideline to all those who live in the interior of a given social and historical configuration.

From an international relations and diplomatic perspective, Stiegler's emphasis on the power of particular cultural objects to dominate in the global context is imperative. Stiegler illustrates his idea of cultural domination through the case of the successful film industry model of Hollywood spreading to an increasing amount of countries, which in turn spreads the American lifestyle around the world. This power of temporal objects to reach and manipulate audiences across borders and dominate the cultural niches of other societies has strong implications in diplomatic relations.

Cultural diplomacy capitalizes on this power of culture and cultural objects by using the art of diplomacy to promote culture, resulting in greater awareness of different populations cultural backgrounds. Such awareness leads to interaction among various players, states, and individuals. Traditionally (and before the rapid advance of tele-technologies) this was achieved by organizing cultural events or a series of cultural activities among countries, employing the instrumentality of "culture" in promoting a country's interests in economic, political, and strategic fields. Though defined

as "the exchange of ideas, information, art and other aspects of culture among nations and their peoples to foster mutual understanding,"[17] cultural diplomacy has served in many historical examples as a powerful tool of cultural propaganda and manipulation.

In regard to digital diplomacy, Stiegler's framework is particularly relevant to excitement in the diplomatic and international communication fields about the advance of the new media channels of trans-cultural interactions. The digital technologies provided means of even faster and more efficient distribution of cultural content that can reach and manipulate millions of consciousnesses around the globe in milliseconds:

> While broadcast networks are still necessarily national for technical and performance-transmission reasons, *the digital network is global*. The integral digitalization that gave rise to the audiovisual, along with the profusion of programming industries (cameras, recording, networks, and digital television), will thus continue to be concretized through the *televisual broadcasting's globalization* and the various services it produces; the image itself will play an increasingly important role, expanding into all sorts of utility activities. The central organs of tele-action will no longer be the current electronic devices in the home; they will become tools for increasingly nomadic work, domestic and professional accessories with multiple functions.[18]

As Hart confirms, "the increased speed of digital devices and innovations in computer networks and digital compression technologies make it both easier and less expensive to deliver words, music, symbols, and images (in fact, anything that can be digitized) to consumers around the world."[19] The global forces operating through new media communication tools are discussed in more details in the next part of the study, which employs the outlined theoretical framework to talk about the political and economic forces that are in place in the current state of diplomatic relations across borders, such as psychotechnologies.

Psychopower, A Global Force: Reaching the 'Hearts and Minds' Across Borders

The main focus of this section is to uncover the mechanics of psychopower and its major role in the processes of global communications in a new emerging realm of diplomatic relations across nation states. *Psychopower* is a term used by Stiegler to refer to modern political technologies that capture and modulate the collective consciousness of societies.[20] This technology, as advocated by Stiegler, is more advanced than the political mechanisms of biopower. The term *biopower* was coined by French social theorist Michel Foucault. It refers to the practice of modern governments and their regulations of human subjects through "an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations."[21] In his work, Foucault used this concept to explain practices of public health, heredity, and risk regulations. The primary quality of this political technology is that it allows for the control of entire populations, which makes possible the development of the modern nation state and the system of capitalism.

Biopower enables the government's direct involvement in fostering the life of the population through creating and maintaining centers of disciplinary institutions and regulatory controls. This power is exercised through institutions, decentralized by the government, such as police, schools, prisons, markets, etc.[22] Biopower operates mainly through intervention into life of people "in terms of, the birth rate, the mortality rate, various biological disabilities, and the effects of the environment."[23]

Stiegler advances understanding of the approaches taken to analyze the political forces to govern and control individuals through unfolding techno-logic and technical indeterminacy. He underlines the limiting conditions of an exhausted biopower that loses its social influence in contemporary culture's etho-political destitution. Stiegler indicates that the growth and development of psychopower is based on the historical unfolding of biopower logic,

which has extended to control every sphere of life, especially the life of the mind. As a result of such a rise of influence over human consciousness, psychotechnologies have become more advanced forms of human engineering that regulate the subjects by holding control over their cognition. Hence, human attention is usually taken as the main object for exercising different ethopolitics, which aim to recreate it as anew. Digital technologies play a great role in cultivating this new ethos, as recent digital aesthetics forayed in digital coding underpin psychopower.[24]

Psychotechnologies are operationalized through global communication channels, which control not so much human bodies, but the ontological essence of human agency through manipulating the consciousness of peoples defining their life being. As a result, psychotechnologies capture, control, and modulate "the neuro-informational circuits of human behavior," that especially prevail in such fields as education, marketing, and a broad range of cultural activities.[25] From the perspective of global communications and international relations, these larger "neuro-informational circuits" are defined by John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt as *noosphere*. This term, originating from the Greek word *noos*, meaning "the mind," came into widespread use in the 1950s and 1960s. According to French theologian and scientist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, it emerged initially as a geosphere, and next as a biosphere, and the world finally turned into noosphere—"a globe-circling realm of 'the mind,' a 'thinking circuit,' a 'stupendous thinking machine,' a 'thinking envelope' full of fibers and networks, and a planetary 'consciousness.'"[26] The noosphere as the knowledge-based ground provides an arena for economic and political struggle where information serves as a major weapon of power and control.

In their analysis of contemporary diplomacy, Ronfeldt and Arquilla indicate that in the information age *soft power*, based on constructing and manipulating the information environments of foreign nations through co-option, will continue to replace the traditional principles of diplomacy and *hard power*, based on military power and coercion.[27] The new technology of soft power involves

a wide variety of non-state actors including cultural industries and transnational cultural corporations to exercise informational control over the consciousness of human minds across borders and cultural communities. The global interconnectivity facilitated by digital technologies and the Internet allow for the unlimited flow of financial, political, and media information directly reaching the populations around the globe.[28]

Historically, national governments have been the primary actors in managing communication with foreign nations. However, with the growing proliferation of social media technologies and advanced information access online, the credibility of national governments as primary cultural diplomacy players in the eyes of foreign publics has dramatically declined.[29] The powerful role of public organizations and commercial trans-cultural industries, on the other hand, has significantly increased.[30] As international relations progressively operate through complex, multi-level, and interdependent networks, the economic factor in the global context in many ways predetermines the political factor in international diplomatic relations. In this regard, though Stiegler sees a supplementary continuity in the relationship between biopower and psychopower, he criticizes Foucauldian biopower because it fails to entail an economic dimension, which he argues has acquired a dominating power in a global context of governance and control.

Stiegler utilizes a more economical or, rather, consumptive view of the biopolitical aspects in contrast with Foucault, who took a more productive approach: "… today the question of biopower is less one of 'utilizing the population' for production than of establishing markets for consumption."[31] The reinforced role of new players in diplomatic relations, both from the civil society sector as well as mere economic powers, have re-constructed the previous top-down approach to international relations and created a system of global networks functioning under the condition of global economic regime of capitalism. The noosphere for Stiegler is a matrix of information networks, where psychotechnologies are being exercised by hegemonic transnational cultural corporations, which aim to control

cultural and information circuits of human consciousness around the globe. Stiegler's major contribution to an understanding of the logic of the "soft powers" in the system of international relations is his detailed exploration of psychotechnologies that are primary economic, consumer-oriented strategies rather than political powers of society governance and control.

Taking an example from 21st century U.S. cultural diplomacy, it is possible to support Stiegler's claim by illustrating that American "culture is now transmitted to remote places around the globe predominantly by the private sector rather than by official public diplomacy efforts. Even as government investment in the movement of culture around the world has declined, the technology of globalization has triggered an explosion in USA cultural exports." Traditional cultural diplomacy in the country in recent years has been shadowed by trade policy, "generating a new point of cross-cultural contact."[32] Although many researchers find this situation dangerous for the U.S. public image, others take it as a logical consequence of the development of democratic society. "The planetary dominance of Hollywood… is a reason why the American government neglects arts diplomacy." The culture of entertainment or relaxation is the product of the profit-seeking private sector, and "its global expansion provides intellectual ammunition to American citizens, both inside and outside of government, who see no reason to promote arts diplomacy abroad at the taxpayer's expenses."[33]

Service-oriented capitalism makes all aspects of human existence just mere objects of the systematic and permanent control of attention and behavior. These service industries, which now penetrate the lives of people on a global scale, destroy the long circuits of transindividuation. It means that in the processes of transindividuation, human consciousnesses are transformed without their direct participation in this transformation.[34] Stiegler finds economic influence on the processes of collective individuation as the strongest disruption of natural transduction process in long circuits, whether it be the predominance of Hollywood production in the "globalization" of the cinema industry or the increasing

commercialization of the Internet. Striegler indicates the rise of the "hyperindustrial" society, where life has been completely reduced to consumption and everything becomes just a service. In such socio-economic conditions, transindividuation becomes completely short-circuited through marketing and advertising. Public life is then disrupted, where the processes of psychic and collective individuation transform into collective disindividuation. Long circuits are destroyed in disindividuation, which causes the loss of collective identity.[35]

In relation to digital diplomacy, it is also imperative to consider the economic factor, which in many cases defines what kind of cultural and informational content is being circulated in the global network of digital reality. From an economic point of view, the rise of the consumerism culture in postmodern society has forced cultural institutions which serve as central nodes in diplomatic relations across borders (under or without a direct government control) to commercialize their structures. This is dictated by the need to adapt to a global economic regime of capitalism where public support is scarce and new sources for financial stability of cultural institutions are required. In this situation, cultural organizations are urged to perform like private businesses; employing marketing strategies, charging for admissions, and selling things and experiences as public commodities.[36] Therefore, in the digital dimension, the cultural national resources that are promoted the most and delivered to the global market for consumption in many ways are shaped by the market demands and populism.

Thus, digital diplomacy, claiming to be a highly political enterprise, in fact in the information age of global economic development functions across different market forces that reach out to domestic and foreign audiences. Furthermore, digital and new media channels of communication are becoming the most influential platforms for exercising psychopowers: "life and bodies now invested in by online corporations such as Facebook and Google."[37] However, the contemporary digital technologic does not just work to create markets and construct consumers but rather multiplies the

market itself, so that it expands throughout the entire spectrum of life reaching the cognitive dimension. Stiegler especially emphasizes the predominant roles of networking and digital technologies to reinforce the market forces:

> an unprecedented and merciless global commercial war in which digital networks are already-are at first and increasingly-weapons in the battle to conquer global commerce-the global commerce of goods and of ideas.[38]

According to Stiegler, industrial control and globalization have "provoked a crisis of social decomposition, entropy, and spiritual disorientation that demands an urgent and radical critique."[39] In this context, Stiegler advocates for developing a "political will" that can counteract the economic hegemony to transform collective individuation processes in society into a more meaningful and healthy one. He calls for the invention of a new "politics of memory" on the international level in response to the economic and phenomenological specificity of contemporary tele-technologies.[40] Given this threat to the possibility of successful psychic and collective individuation, and in agreement with Adorno and Heidegger, Stiegler argues that a new cultural politics of memory needs to develop practices of art, communication, and creation that would keep open and promote ethical and political desire for a meaningful future.[41] That means that it is important to develop policies that will foster a rejuvenation of "the sense of free time" to think and to take care. This cultural ethics and politics would enact a culturally driven will to reverse the industrialization of consciousness within the economy of global techno-capitalism.[42]

The following section of this study will look closer at the questions of democratic engagement of the humanities with the issues of political and social will. The preceding part of this paper provided Stiegler's intake on the mechanisms of psychopower in relation to digital diplomacy; while the next section will look closer at the very nature of digital tools. On the one hand, these tools empower ordinary people to become active cultural ambassadors communicating across borders; yet, on the other hand, they increase

the strength of the economic and political forces taking control of society through the Internet and digital technologies.

Participative Digital Democracy: Citizen Diplomacy in the Information Age

This section provides Stiegler's perspective on the oppositional issues of the nature of the Internet and digital communication that challenges and redefines the diplomatic activities in the information age. First, a brief overview of literature shows the contradictory opinions about the democratic potential of the Internet, which from the one point of view encourages social participation and increases democracy, and from another point of view diminishes the power of people to communicate in an inclusive public discourse.

New technology is discussed by many authors as a potential tool in the revitalization of democracy in its various forms and has been researched through the analytical lenses of political activism.[43] Some scholars indicate that collective uses of the Internet promote social capital that can be significantly enhanced online through participation in online communities and can further lead to strengthened democratic relations in the offline world.[44] Studies that emphasize a significant advancement of a social web that encourages sharing, participation, creativity, and democratic relations can also be traced in a number of publications which discuss a new social paradigm.[45] These publications confirm that the development of new digital and networking technologies has redefined the key principles of human communication in contemporary society. They suggest a new approach to engaging with diverse communities around the world, based on a "two-way," "many-to-many" democratic model of interaction, decentralization of authority, and free content production, consumption, and sharing.

However, there is a body of literature that concentrates on the monopoly, defining powers, and surveillance of social digital networks that shape and control the behavior of people online. As Lessig indicates, "We have every reason to believe that cyberspace…

will not fulfill the promise of freedom…[and] will become a perfect tool of control."[46] Andrew Chadwick also argues that the Internet embodies not only positive values like freedom, community, equality, altruism, and democracy, but also social control, discipline, and hierarchy.[47] As Robins and Webster emphasize, "an important rationale for the deployment of new information technologies is, then, the regulation of political life and the engineering of public opinion."[48] The use of online technologies in building active citizens' communities helps to sustain the processes of social management and control, as well as to maintain political and administrative cohesion, "technology now increasingly fulfills what previously depended upon bureaucratic organisation and structure."[49]

Van Dijck asserts that social norms embedded in interaction patterns within social and digital media platforms are shaped by technological systems' interfaces designed to promote particular economic or political interests.[50] Sociologist Bruno Latour further stresses that socio-technological ensembles of interactive media platforms serve as mediators of social reality, because these systems themselves dictate invisible algorithms and protocols to interpret uploaded objects, guide social interaction, and to affect human behavior through a design of interfaces and navigation.[51]

In regard to digital diplomacy, Michel Foucault's post-structural notion of panopticism (1979) has acquired a particular relevant application within Internet studies. The idea of panopticism is based on the Bentham's (1787) concept of Panopticon, which refers to a particular type of architecture, enabling the mechanisms of observation and surveillance, controlling behavior of individuals to produce self-regulated subjects. Foucault defines panopticism, as "the discipline-mechanism: a functional mechanism that must improve the exercise of power by making it lighter, more rapid, more effective, a design of subtle coercion for a society to come."[52] Significant advances in technology and surveillance techniques have provided new tools for political and economic powers to control human populations through subtle and often unseen forces online. The question of how the social web changes the logic of collective

and individual actions is the focus of research of many sociologists and communication studies scholars. Many researchers attempt to investigate the logic of participation online, revealing that the Internet can enhance some collective efforts and endanger others.[53]

In regard to digital diplomacy, the development of the Internet facilitated the active use of the concept of "citizen diplomacy"[54] —in other words, the power of ordinary people to influence the image of their country being projected on the international arena. Potter summarized the effects of the social media revolution on the diplomatic activities and singled out the key issues arising around the digital diplomacy, which he called cyber-diplomacy. These key issues include interconnectivity among a large number of actors, decentralization of powers and ignoring traditional authorities, acceleration of the decision-making process, amplification of information flows and impacts, and hypertextuality or endless series of links, which transcend the boundaries of information through multiple references to relevant or associated content.[55]

In contrast with this optimistic view of the political democratic potential of the digital environment, Stiegler's perspective takes a more critical view towards the interactive participative potential of the digital systems. In the framework of the psychic and collective individuations, Stiegler looks at the issues of democratic premises of the digital media through the notion of sociation:

> Sociation is the *competence of society* and not just of its representatives… The delegation of competence is a major social competence of the democratic societies. But that competence can be exerted only insofar as it does not constitute a loss of competences on the part of the citizens, but rather the extension of their competences; and it can be exerted only through the pooling of those competences, that is to say, through *sharing and debating them in the time-delayed mode of the political and social organizations*.[56]

Stiegler explains that sociation in a democratic society demands the participation of everyone in political life through the democratic processes of selection of representatives accountable to

the organizations that mandate them. However, in the information society, loss of participation frequently happens when audiovisual and new media start to dominate political life, short-circuiting the processes of psychic and collective individuations. This short-circuiting occurs every time when real democratic participation is substituted by mere representation of participation through media techniques significantly enhanced with the development of social media and digital technologies. As Stiegler indicates, participation in the media representation "is aped, simulated, caricatured, and destroyed by contemporary political marketing techniques – the product of tele-cracy and inspired by it in the form of tele-reality."[57] Stiegler argues that the "real time" of live communications and the "just-in-time" adjustment of politics to public opinion are constantly disrupting the processes of sociation. As he explains, political representatives, through increased media intervention into the social life of people, short-circuit their individuations and in this way short circuit democracy by the active use of demagogy and political populism.[58]

Stiegler criticizes different forms of "pseudo-participative interactivity" pointing out that blogs, Internet sites, and convergence technologies create only a frame of democratic participation without a real distribution of the power. Political marketing thus turns public discourse into a simulacra, which fails to build firm ground for sociation and neglects genuine social participation. Constructing pseudo-participation is achieved through imposing on the associated symbolic milieu, which is the Internet and different modes of communication techniques that previously were used frequently in reality shows. Through representation of active public participation, these programs produce illusions of participation and sociation. In fact, pseudo-participation is short-circuiting different agencies of sociation or transindividuation and is producing in the long run only more frustration and disillusionment.[59]

However, Stiegler's perspective on the digital technology remains open, and he avoids any technological determinism in explaining sociation processes facilitated through new media. Thus,

he asserts that digital technologies do "have enormous potential to counteract precisely that tele-cracy and effect the reconstitution of a democratic industrial society."[60] This opinion is in line with the view of democratic theorist Benjamin R. Barber, who said earlier:

> If democracy is to benefit from technology then, we must start not with technology but with politics. Having a voice, demanding a voice… is the first step citizens can take in assuring a democratic technology. The new technology is still only an instrument of communication, and it cannot determine what we will say or to whom we will say it.[61]

Considering the interactive potentials of the new media technologies and the new opportunities that they can bring to ordinary citizens in their social engagements with political issues, Stiegler actively advocates for the development of "a genuine political program for socializing the digital technologies, supporting systematically, through a reinvented public policy, the constitution of new forms of associated milieus."[62] He insists that the very technologies that are currently used as means of manipulation of human consciousness "are the only possible way to invent new forms of social bond and civil peace." He calls on society to organize itself as a movement to confront and to counteract an unprecedented political and social collapse.[63] Going beyond the technological framework, he proposes the invention of a new organization of society that is based on the "open source" paradigm, entailing people's active participation in the creation of the world in which they live.[64]

In application to digital diplomacy, Stiegler's call for empowering people for more active participation and cooperation with a variety of different stakeholders in the international arena is in accordance with the contemporary rhetoric of public diplomacy leaders and academic scholars who enthusiastically advocate for social revolution in the digital world. Thus, American culture climatologist and persuasion/propaganda expert Nancy Snow points out that "global publics will not allow themselves just to be talked to, but are demanding fuller participation in dialogue and feedback through the help of Web 2.0 communication technologies and new media."[65] U.S. Secretary of

State Hillary Rodham Clinton, in her 2010 public address "Remarks on Internet Freedom," emphasized the powerful potential of the Internet that allows average people to contribute to the global information exchange and influence the information ecology:

> We have seen the possibilities of what can happen when ordinary citizens are empowered by Twitter and Facebook to organize political movements, or simply exchange ideas and information. So we find ourselves living at a moment in human history when we have the potential to engage in these new and innovative forms of diplomacy and to also use them to help individuals be empowered for their own development.[66]

British cultural diplomacy scholars also envision a significant change in the cultural diplomacy paradigm, which they describe "as the shift from few-to-few communication (traditional diplomacy) to … the growth of many-to-many interactions."[67]

However, as Stiegler demonstrated in his recent work, the demagogic and rhetorical appeal of these public speeches should not overshadow the real social and political processes that are currently taking place online. The new cultural diplomacy is indeed facing a social turn in the context of the rapid development of new media communication tools, but how these tools will be utilized and who will control their use and further development is still a challenging and unresolved dilemma for 21st century humanity.

Conclusion

This study outlined the problematic framework of the emerging field of digital diplomacy in the social, cultural, and economic dimensions through a close reading of Stiegler's philosophical concept of the techno-culture. Though a broader and more comprehensive theoretical framework of digital diplomacy is still possible for further elaboration, development, and improvement, the present research tried to raise some important questions regarding international communications in a new light of phenomenology of collective individuation. Stiegler's philosophical conception of

contemporary politics under the condition of globalized cultural and economic capitalism is one way to explain the dramatic changes in diplomatic relations taking place on the global arena at the beginning of the new century.

This research presented the political perspective of Stiegler on contemporary technological advances that, he asserts, cannot necessarily bring success in the processes of sociation and trans-cultural individuation through technical supports to a postmodern end. As he emphasizes in his theoretical explorations, "political appropriation and ownership constitute a condition of material processes of civilization. Stiegler's philosophy of technology has, therefore, tabled in a singular manner how important, and how problematic, this "we" is today in a globalized world."[68] A break between globally appropriated technological networks and economic-political interventions in the formations of the essence of the contemporary communications is a major challenge for contemporary societies. In this regard, Stiegler's philosophy of technology demonstrates the urgent need for a global politics to redefine economic and social conditions to construct healthy democratic communities interconnected in trans-cultural interaction via digital and social networks.

Stiegler's techno-cultural project has significant implications for digital diplomacy as a practical discipline and can be successfully utilized to improve its future development based on the more productive engagement with social, economic, and political issues in a theoretical context. The technological advance of the information society, envisioned by many enthusiastic supporters of digital revolution as a huge progress in the postmodern struggle for democracy, brings about new challenges and threats to cultural development and cultural exchanges in the local, national, and international contexts. Close attention to the political questions raised by Stiegler in his series *Technics and Time* can help academics and practitioners from the digital diplomacy field to focus and address the most important moments of social cultural formations of contemporary networked society in a globalized community.

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Natalia Grincheva is an enthusiastic and energetic international project coordinator experienced in completing arts and cultural projects across Russia, Europe, and the United States. In recent years, she actively engaged in the diplomatic work of International Foundations in the US and the UK which promote the State Hermitage Museum in their local communities (The Hermitage Museum Foundation in New York / 2009–2010, UK Friends of the Hermitage in London / 2010–2011). In both foundations Natalia contributed to the development of the community projects and assisted in organizing a number of public engagement activities, including documentary screenings, exhibitions, and community outreach events.

In summer 2011 Natalia served on the UNESCO Secretariat Committee in Paris to help manage grant applications to the International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD). After that she worked for the Coalition of Cultural Diversity in Montreal as a Research Associate and conducted a research on the international funding sources for global cultural development.

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