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Volume\_I

# CITIES IN THE NEOMEDIEVAL ERA

*Edited by Grzegorz Greg Lewicki*





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Social Foresight Wrocław 2036/2056. Project of the European Capital of Culture Wrocław 2016

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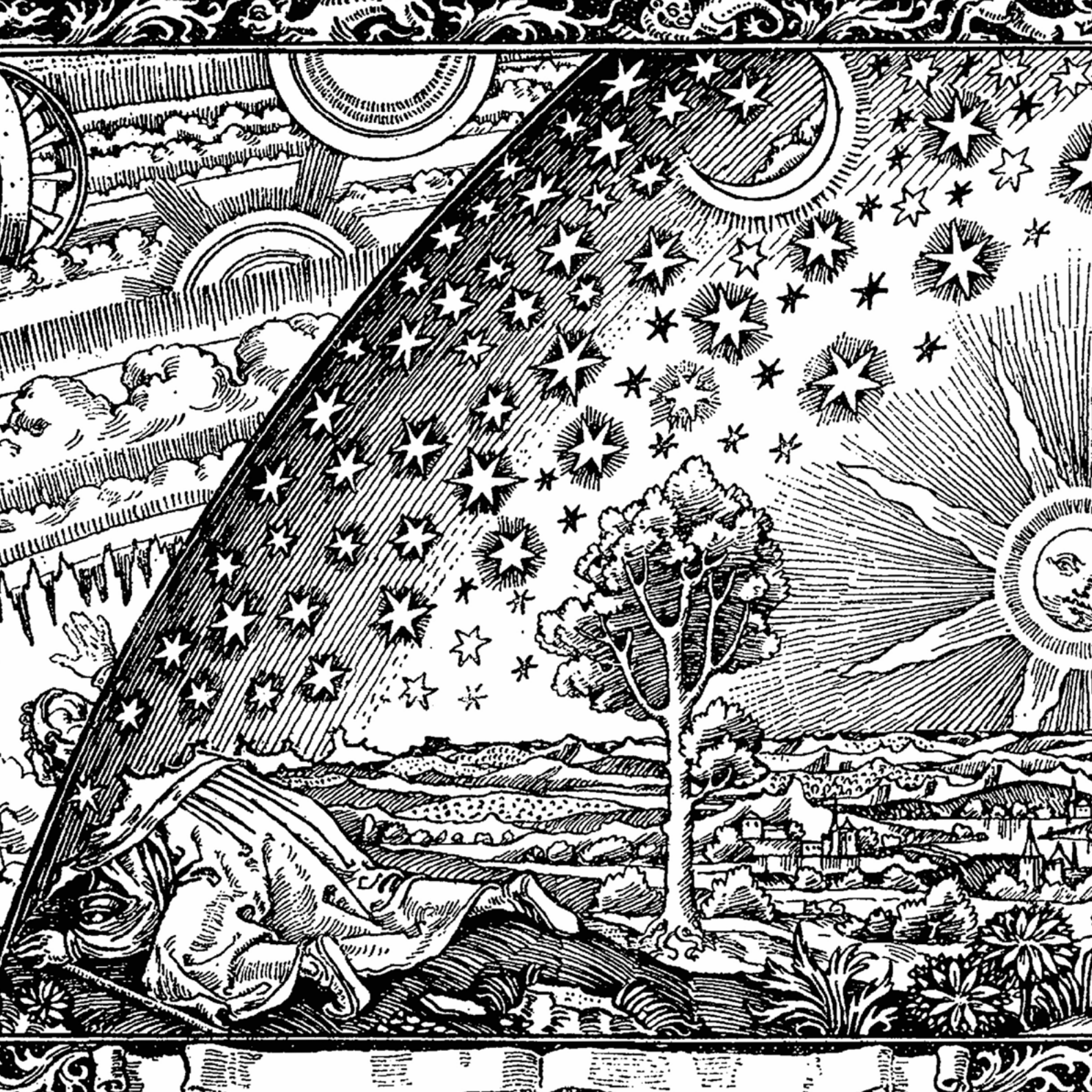
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Intro

# Return to the Future.

Neomedievalism, Globalization, Cities.

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*Grzegorz Lewicki*  
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*“What is required to make a good Middle Ages? First of all, a Great Peace that is breaking down, a great international power that has unified the world in language, customs, ideologies, religions, art, and technology, and then at a certain point, thanks to its own ungovernable complexity, collapses. It collapses because the ‘barbarians’ are pressing at its borders; these barbarians are not necessarily uncultivated, but they are bringing new customs, new views of the world”.*<sup>1</sup>

Umberto Eco

Illustration – „Flammarion engraving” from Camille Flammarion, *L’Atmosphère: Météorologie Populaire* (Paris, 1888), p. 163). In: Wikimedia Commons. Public Domain.

1 U. Eco, 1998, p. 78. The essay was first published in English: U. Eco, 1986.



Umberto Eco, an excellent Italian writer, had a great understanding of the medieval political and social reality. We can see that clearly in his novel, *The Name of the Rose*<sup>2</sup>, but also in his essays: as shown in the above quote from *Living in the New Middle Ages*, Eco attempted to compare the Middle Ages with modern times, searching for analogies and generalizations. He believed that many of the problems typical of the Middle Ages have returned in modern times, and termed them collectively: “neomedievalism”.

However, for many of us the phrase “neomedievalism” is usually associated with ignorance. ‘This is simply a return to the Middle Ages,’ people say when trying to stigmatise someone’s backwardness, extreme conservatism or strong affection for the past. Hence, one may ask: does being accused of having connections with the “new medievalism” always give a reason to be ashamed? Nothing could be further from the truth! The term “new medievalism” (also: “neomedievalism”), popularised by Umberto Eco and others, in recent years has gained some popularity in the humanities, but also in prognostics, which is looking for a new language to describe the world in the era of globalization. Many essayists and scientists in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries have arrived at the conclusion that social, political, or economic trends in the era of globalization can be compared, in some aspects, to similar trends that took place over a thousand years ago in the Middle Ages. What is astonishing, these analogies are often justified and self-implicit. We can see clear evidence of this in essays whose authors first spontaneously coin the term “New Middle Ages” to describe an aspect of global transformation, only to discover later that “neomedievalism” consistent with their understanding already exists.<sup>3</sup> Another example of this can be found in academic works which reveal similarities be-

2 U. Eco, 2012.

3 See e.g. L. Jęczyk, 2006; P. Wąglowski, 2014.

4 E.g. R. Cesaretti et al., 2016.

tween the modern social and political structure and that of the Middle Ages, although their authors seem to be unaware of a wider trend called neomedievalism.<sup>4</sup> It is clear that new medievalism invades our reality, is banging at our doors, and finds its way into cyberspace.

What is new medievalism about? Will cities become more powerful than countries? Shall we expect a new mass migration of people, similar to the one that created the western world after the fall of the Roman Empire? What advice would a medieval town crier give to modern provincial governors? Are we at risk of a new illiteracy and a permanent shortage of information? Not all of these questions will be given clear answers in this volume, but we will certainly get closer to some conclusions.

5 Sometimes these two words are considered different in terms of semantics, see: M. Dietrich, 2014.

We will do it in the spirit of foresight, which is a specific method of prognosticating.<sup>5</sup> What is the difference between foresight and general prognostics? While prognosticating seems to simply suggest that certain events will happen in the future, foresight (*fore + sight*) is like looking forward in a more active and planning way, and thus is more strongly rooted in reality. Foresight is not so much about answering the question “what will take place?”, but rather “what will take place and what can we do?” – so it is about the strategic planning of future actions based on established, already visible trends. One can say that foresight means “planning the future”.

### Middle Ages There and Back Again

Firstly, we need to make clear what we mean by saying “new medievalism” or “the neomedieval era”. This is necessary, especially that the two terms have appeared so far in very different, often absurd contexts, which are incompatible and mutually contradicting, or apparently consistent but in fact lead to contradictory consequences. Even in the last few decades the concept of “neomedievalism” has been used by theorists representing such diverse disciplines as political science, religious studies, historiography, information theory or cultural studies.<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, due to this ambiguity as well as intellectual disconnectedness of various academic fields, neomedievalism has not been properly integrated into a coherent theory. Although phenomena labelled “neomedieval” have been discussed in various disciplines, very few attempts (if any at all) have been made to develop neomedievalism as a holistic, interdisciplinary theory of global changes, useful for the purpose of foresight. Instead, it has functioned in many circles as a fuzzy and ambiguous label word, which can be, in the postmodern manner, stuck blindly to a variety of

6 For more information about the different types of neomedievalism and sources of an integral theory see: G. Lewicki, 2010. Major hypotheses and summary of this paper in English: G. Lewicki, 2010B.

problems. It is worth, therefore, giving at least a brief explanation of different definitions of this term, to make it clear what neomedievalism is and what it is not in the present volume.

Alas, probably the earliest use of the term “neomedievalism” in the 20<sup>th</sup> century should be probably attributed to Nikolai Berdyaev, a Russian catastrophist. I say “alas” because this use of the term is peculiar to the extent of having some pejorative connotations. Hence, neomedievalism as seen in this volume, developed for the purpose of foresight, must first things first distance itself from Berdyaev’s understanding of the word.

In 1924 Berdyaev wrote an extravagant essay *The New Middle Ages*, which is at some points a self-contradictory, catastrophic speculation stemming from the moral trauma of the First World War.<sup>7</sup> The essay, which is in large part a collection of clichéd statements on the inscrutable nature of the past, is here and there intersected with specific insights into the future. An example: human life is supposed to be simplified, and for some reasons – unfortunately unexplained by the author – parliaments, the press, and even the stock exchanges will disappear.<sup>8</sup> What stimulated such peculiar way of thinking? Berdyaev believed that civilization, with its deadly technology, has led to tragic wars, so it must now move backwards to a lower level of complexity, which is achievable through a return to traditional religiosity, but again he does not explain how exactly the whole process is supposed to work.

Berdyaev deserves to be seen as a person who caused damage to neomedievalism, since his work established a semantic link between neomedievalism and escapism (escape from the problems of the present day) as well as reaction (i.e. extreme conservatism), the two attitudes which are not very useful in prognostic practice. Moreover, he reinforced the conventional notion of “new medievalism” in the sense of “backwardness”. It is exactly in this spirit the term was later used by Isaiah Berlin in his essay of 1953 that criticised British conservative intellectualists who praised life in the countryside and expressed the fear of technological progress (e.g. G.K. Chesterton). Berlin called them neomedievalists.<sup>9</sup> Due to the risk of neomedievalism being associated with such meanings, a clear statement has to be made here: neomedievalism in prognostics, addressed in this volume, has nothing to do with Berdyaev, essays of concerned catastrophists or tirades about the superiority of the past over the present. Therefore, it has nothing to do with the most popular meaning of “the new Middle Ages”, the meaning which is hurled as an insult during the heated debates and political disputes.

Neomedievalism in this volume should also not be associated with references to the Middle Ages in popular culture, entertainment, music, or linguistics.

7 Cf. H. Elzenberg, 1991.

8 M. Bierdiajew, 1997, p.138.

9 I. Berlin, 1953.

Umberto Eco, in his essay of 1986, listed ten unimportant “neomedievalisms” of this type, including medieval topos in film industry, sectarian apocalyptic visions, fascination with historic reconstructions and fantasy-themed entertainment.<sup>10</sup>

10. U.Eco, *op. cit.*

### How Many Medievalisms?

Which neomedievalism are we then addressing? According to Eco, if we want to create decent, neomedieval analogies to the past, we must remember that we cannot look for explicit analogies. Eco is more focused on trends, processual similarities and generalizations of particular problems. He proposes (in the passage quoted before the introduction) to search in modern times for social and political processes such as a breaking down of universal power expected to ensure the Great Peace, or mass migrations, which change identity and culture on a large scale. It is rather clear that the problems mentioned by Umberto Eco are generalizations inspired by the transition from Antiquity to Middle Ages: the prototype of the great universal power was the *Pax Romana*, transforming later into *Christianitas*, while the prototype of the great migration was *Völkerwanderung* – the migration of peoples which changed the face of the Roman Empire and prepared the advent of the Middle Ages.

*The neomedieval era means future shock, alienation, segregation and the fear of everyday risk*

Eco spots signs of neomedievalism in further processes such as the alienation and structural decentralization of metropolises, which – like in the Middle Ages – become enclosed boroughs with minorities who reject integration; the lack of and triviali-

sation of information (that does not result from shortage, as before, but from the excess of information); the sense of all-embracing existential uncertainty and risk; the tendency for continuous updates, adaptation, overwriting and extension in culture without concern for primary sources, as well as other problems.<sup>11</sup> Of course, Eco presents these neomedieval references as loose, essayistic ideas, but – as a rule – thanks to him we know at least what a neomedievalist-prognostic should be inspired by: the search for contemporary trends that are characteristic of medieval times, or trends that in sum characterise the Middle Ages better than any other historical period.

A more systematised approach to neomedievalism is presented by Hedley Bull in his classical work on the theory of international relations, *The Anar-*

11. See more in: G. Lewicki, 2010, *op. cit.*

12. H. Bull, 2002 [1977].

*chical Society* published in 1977.<sup>12</sup> Hedley Bull – independently from Umberto Eco – was inspired by the Middle Ages to describe global transformations that took place after World War II. He claimed that we are going to abandon sovereignty in its classical sense, characteristic of the era of nation states, and evolve towards a sovereignty relying on an overlapping network of interrelations, competencies and multiple centres of power. Bull’s neomedievalism in international relations is reflected in: “(1) the integration of countries into larger organizational units, with the European Union being an obvious example; (2) the disintegration of countries which become increasingly dependent on external players; (3) the collapse of the state monopoly on using violence, e.g. the emergence of private anti-state organizations (e.g. terrorist groups), seeking to take over the existing states or creating new ones; (4) the existence and development of supranational organizations - multinational corporations, global political movements, international non-governmental organizations, churches, intergovernmental organizations (e.g. the World Bank); and (5) technological unification of the world, or simply globalization (Bull does not use this term).”<sup>13</sup>

The consequences of Bull’s neomedievalism for collective identities and digital augmentation of reality were described in 1998 by Stephen Kobrin<sup>14</sup>. He assumed that the new medievalism will foster social, ethnic and political conflicts, since the overlapping interrelations and the fragmentation of collective identity will create conflicts of political and civilizational loyalty. To prevent this the new Middle Ages will need an ideological binding material (binder) comparable to Christianity to ensure loyalty and unification of collective identity.<sup>15</sup>

One can add that at the end of the 20th century a very interesting trend emerged in American medievalistic studies, which helps in defining neomedievalism as a whole.<sup>16</sup> By refuting the notion of the Middle Ages as a synonym of the Dark Ages, American medievalists demonstrated that this false image was branded by the culture of the Enlightenment, strongly opposing the Middle Ages. The Enlightenment reserved positive connotations (progress, dynamics) for itself, while downplaying the past (ignorance, stagnation). But in fact, the Middle Ages was an epoch of constant cultural actualisation and progress, and of awareness of insolvability and changeability,<sup>17</sup> – so it was abundant in phenomena which kept capturing the attention of postmodern philosophers such as Jacques Derrida<sup>18</sup> or Umberto Eco.

Summing up, civilizational or cultural neomedievalism was apparently first sketched by Umberto Eco, whereas Bull obviously started to speak about it in political sciences; in turn American neomedievalists introduced it to histori-

<sup>13</sup> G.Lewicki, *op. cit.* 2010, p.84.

<sup>14</sup> S.J.Kobrin, 1998.

<sup>15</sup> Kobrin, *ibid.* and some other authors search for the modern analogy of the Christian binder in ideologies and systems such as liberalism, democracy, or faith in the power of technology and ecology. In my opinion, the binders of the future are, however, philosophical and religious systems with metaphysical roots, such as Christianity, Islam, Confucianism, Hinduism or non-religion.

<sup>16</sup> H. Bloch, S. G. Nichols (eds.) 1996.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> G.Lewicki, 2010, *op. cit.*, p.79.

ography. Interestingly, these three medievalisms share some features: Eco and historiographers show the fluidity of the Middle Ages and its trend towards the overwriting adaptation in culture; Eco and Bull point to the fragmentation of power, the emergence of large political organisations and the growing interdependence of various actors as key phenomena of neomedievalism. Such a recognition of similar processes by researchers representing different disciplines suggests that neomedievalism can be transformed into a coherent theory of global changes, not just restricted to one or two academic disciplines. In fact it is all ahead of us.

In this spirit, in addition to the three medievalisms described above, neomedievalism in economics and sociology can also be distinguished.<sup>19</sup> Neomedievalism in economics would mean the intrusion of ethical considerations into economic theories and the emergence of neo-feudalism, which means a popularization of paternalism in job relations: in an era of dynamic social changes and high financial risk, more and more people are ready to improve the stability of their life by waiving some freedom and individualism. In return for unconditional servility and feudal availability from early morning to late evening, people receive economic security and sometimes also other types of protection, for example corporate health care. This trend is particularly evident in the western world, among the working class and the precariat, that is, a part of the population financially viable from day to day, but too poor to save anything.<sup>20</sup> Another neomedievalistic feature in economics would be an open return to public discourse on the class system and social classes (called “estates” in the Middle Ages).

Neomedievalism in sociology is an uncharted territory. In the social dimension, neomedievalism would mean the future increase in the social importance of missionary religions (e.g. Islam, Christianity) and philosophical and religious ideologies, the increased popularity of beliefs open to transcendental values,<sup>21</sup> as well as predicting the ethnic and religious frictions related to migration, fragmentation of political power and religious fundamentalism. Such an approach would be partly in line with neomedievalism in political science and culture.

Some time ago I worked with other editors of the journal *Pressje* on the neomedieval interpretation of the achievements of Pitirim Sorokin, one of the fathers of American sociology.<sup>22</sup> A print of the Flammarion engraving was used for the cover page of that volume. Why did we use it? Because it illustrates the intentions of neomedievalism: the engraving was probably created in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as an illustration for a book in the field of a modern science – meteorology<sup>23</sup>, but it made reference to the Middle Ages, showing a man gazing at

19 *Ibid.*, pp.85-87.

20 Cf.P.Arak, G.Lewicki, 2015.

21 Transcendence, in very simple terms, means there is something that defies the ordinary human experience, something which cannot be comprehended with the senses.

22 “Pressje. Teki Klubu Jagiellońskiego”, 2010: “Witajcie w nowym średniowieczu”.

23 C. Flammarion, 1888, p. 163.

imponderables<sup>24</sup> and multiple levels of cosmology unsolvable at that time. The engraving depicts a missionary who in the pursuit of knowledge of the world arrives at the edge of the universe, where the earth touches the sky.<sup>25</sup> Beyond this point spread celestial spheres, as well as the mystical circles which may refer to the Old Testament vision of Ezekiel (Ez 1: 4-28). How is all this related to neomedievalism? Symbolically. Of course, not because medieval cosmology is of any importance here, but because, just like the missionary depicted in the engraving, neomedievalism penetrates unsolvable spaces (future); because both medievalism and the engraving were created in modern times but still refer to the Middle Ages, and because neomedievalism also aims at understanding the multileveled dynamics of the world.

As to Sorokin himself, he concluded – on the basis of empirical research – that social and cultural systems<sup>26</sup> undergo periodic changes depending on the strongest type of people’s beliefs. In times of a sensual culture most people – of course – trust their senses; in times of ideational culture they rely on intuition related to, for example, religion, while the idealistic culture integrates both these approaches. Studies by Sorokin suggest that the modern sensual culture of the western world is transforming today towards one of the two other types. In the same spirit we can interpret the prognostication of the Spanish philosopher Jose Ortega y Gasset, who assumed a periodic re-evaluation of mass beliefs and a looming change similar to that described by Sorokin.<sup>27</sup> Neomedieval aspects can also be seen in deliberations by Arnold Toynbee, a British philosopher of history, who in the 1950s predicted the establishment of a universal state in Europe, which would be in line with the intuitions of Umberto Eco, just as the alienation of social religious groups, and unrest caused by fundamentalism Toynbee spoke of.<sup>28</sup> Interestingly, the term “neomedievalism” was used in a similar sense by Slavoj Žižek, an authority in left-wing intellectual circles. “A new Dark Age is looming, with ethnic and religious passions exploding, and Enlightenment values receding”, he said in one of the interviews.<sup>29</sup>

Along with neomedievalism in sociology, we can also distinguish neomedievalism in urban planning, and even in urbanology (according to Stanisław Lose, a philosopher from Wrocław, urbanology differs from urban planning because of its focus on the human in the urban space, not on the structure of the city, for which human activity is only a by-product).<sup>30</sup> Neomedievalism in urban planning would be characterised by searching for analogies, both in structural changes within the city (urban planning), as well as social, cultural and demographic changes (urbanology). Interestingly, the existence of this type of neomedievalism is already confirmed by the studies which suggest that modern urban institutions fundamentally resemble those from the Middle Ages.<sup>31</sup>

24 Imponderables, things intangible, elusive, unmeasurable, and sometimes even impossible to define.

25 After: C. Flammarion, *op. cit.*, figure caption.

26 Sorokin understood socio-cultural systems as an integral whole consisting of religion, philosophy, science, art, ethics, law, forms of social, political and economic organisation, lifestyles, customs, mentality, etc. (P. Rojek, 2010, p.19).

27 J. Ortega y Gasset, 1962.

28 Cf. G. Lewicki, 2012.

29 S. Žižek, 2015.

30 Ł. Medeksza, 2016. Urbanology might be semantically close to “urban sociology”.

31 R. Cesaretti et al., *op. cit.*

### **Towards Integral Neomedievalism**

This initial review of neomedieval ideas is far from being complete. Neomedievalism is a theory in the making which continues to evolve and still has not reached its final integral form. To recapitulate the discussion here, I believe the New Middle Ages for the purpose of prognostics should be defined as:

(1) a period of continuous actualisation, improvement and multidimensionality in culture and its manifestations in politics and culture; a period which departs from thinking about progress in linear terms characteristic of the Enlightenment;

(2) a time in which we can observe trends and social, economic, cultural and political processes comparable to the those in the medieval period; these comparisons may mainly concern the transition from antiquity in the Middle Ages and early Middle Ages, but allowing references to later periods (this reservation stems from the fact analogies cannot be clearly narrowed to a specific, short period of the Middle Ages because of ontological problems encountered by all direct historic analogies,<sup>32</sup> and because the advancement of civilization since the Middle Ages irrevocably changed some civilisational circumstances; as a result some medieval circumstances cannot reappear<sup>33</sup>);

(3) a period characterised by the medievalisation of towns and cities as well as changes in urban planning and urbanology comparable to the Middle Ages, such as isolation and fragmentation of identity, alienation of social groups, segregation, migration and deterritorialization of law that allows for territorial entanglement of different legal systems;

(4) a period when psychological phenomena will be manifested on a mass scale, such as troublesome uncertainty of the future, the future shock, the sense of all-embracing risk, misinformation and insolvability, as well as fragmentation and overlap of different types of identities; this will lead to increased occurrence of social unrest and riots;

(5) a period of feudalisation of capitalism, that is a gradual return to the hierarchy of servility obligations, the rediscovery of ethical aspects in economics, as well as the return to discourse on social classes in capitalistic democracies.

32 Cf. A. Gelfert, 2016.

33 Expecting all medieval phenomena from the past to reappear in a neomedieval epoch would necessitate a strictly cyclical and counterintuitive theory of history, with no place for progress, whereas in fact history may be better conceptualized as a spiral – with the cycles reappearing, but each time in a partially different setting. History understood in this way is both cyclical and linear at the same time.



(6) a time of fragmentation in social relations, in which religious groups will gain political and civilizational significance, and religious and ideological binders of identity will be appreciated again and proposed as a guarantee of stability in societies;

(7) a period in which the nation state, in order to survive, will have to become a network state by redefining its role as a participant in multi-level, network structures; in this period, regional powers – as a rule – will seek to create and maintain at all costs geographically and/or culturally expansive international structures.

Neomedievalism in my interpretation can be labelled network neomedievalism or integral neomedievalism,<sup>34</sup> because it puts a strong emphasis on network mechanisms and proposes a holistic approach, theoretically integrating various types of neomedievalisms and connections between them. One could say that the main interest of a scholar aiming at developing integral neomedievalism should be examination of modern times in search for the group of phenomena, processes and macrostructures typical for the era of the Middle Ages, as opposed to the era of the modern nation state.

When compared with other theories of globalization, such as world systems theory, a theory of global capitalism or global society theory<sup>35</sup>, neomedievalism as understood in this essay may in fact have at least a few practical advantages. First of all it focuses on the processes of long duration. Such focus allows for identifying explanatory patterns that are stretched in time, throughout ages, thus transgressing a few other approaches that may miss the cyclical nature of some civilizational phenomena (this feature is shared with Wallerstein's world systems theory).<sup>36</sup> Secondly, neomedievalism is a useful theoretical "stitch" that can link and relate different arguments coming from many disciplines within humanities by analysing neomedieval phenomena in various dimensions of reality (culture, society, international relations, urbanism etc.). Thus, it offers a broader descriptive framework. Thirdly, neomedievalism is also inspiring for potential researches as it employs thinking *per analogiam*, i.e. it utilizes historical analogy to stimulate generation of statements about developmental trends, while at the same time acknowledging the limitations of historical analogy as a tool of prognostics and foresight.

### Let's Behold the Middle Ages! Four Critical Stabs Against Medievalism

Legend has it that St. Augustine, a key medieval philosopher, once walked on the seashore trying to conceive an explanation for the mystery of the Holy Trinity. At

<sup>34</sup> The term "network neomedievalism" was first proposed in G. Lewicki, 2010, *op. cit.*, the term "integral neomedievalism" is used for the first time in this paper.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. W.I. Robinson 2007.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

one point he saw a little boy using a sea shell to carry water from the sea and place it into a small hole in the sand. ‘What are you doing, my boy?’ asked St. Augustine. ‘I am trying to bring all the sea into this hole. I will do this sooner than you will comprehend the mystery of the Holy Trinity,’ the boy answered. By saying so he suggested that St. Augustine was trying to achieve the impossible by putting immensity into a limited frame. Some opponents of the new Middle Ages may also argue that neomedievalists are trying to squeeze an extensive integral theory of civilizational change into a limited frame of neomedieval analogies.

There are, of course, many potential ways to challenge the theory of neomedievalism. The critics may use at least four major arguments to do so. In the first argument they completely deny the reason for making comparisons between modern times and the Middle Ages, because the two periods allegedly differ too much in terms of their social and political systems. This line of criticism assumes that the Middle Ages, with their entirely different social and economic system et cetera, is a period that – in principle - cannot be at all compared to modern times (“there are too many differences to compare anything”). This argument was used, for example, by critics disapproving of *Europe as Empire*<sup>37</sup>, a book by Jan Zielonka, who used neomedievalism in international relations as an analytical framework for the evolution of the European Union. Such objection can, however, be dismissed by one argument proposed by Umberto Eco about the impossibility of drawing fully adequate historical analogies. Having said that, drawing less adequate analogies should not be treated as something *a priori* flawed.

The second argument given by critics concerns the choice of the Middle Ages as a reference period. In other words, neomedievalism is criticised for its very low specificity. In this spirit, the soundness of comparison between modern times and the Middle Ages is questioned by indicating that many allegedly neomedieval problems occurred in other epochs as well, e.g. in ancient times, and therefore it is pointless to treat them as a hallmark of neomedievalism. Critics argue, for example, that “people also migrated in other historical periods”, or “universal states were established not only in the Middle Ages”. This argument can be repudiated in at least two ways: by defending the analogy by, for example, making it more detailed (e.g. “but people have not seen migrations on such a large scale as today since the Middle Ages”), or emphasizing that the power of medievalism does not stem just from pointing at single processes, but rather from connecting the coexisting factors, thus offering a conjunction. A persuasive counter-argument in the defence of neomedievalism would take the form: “maybe migrations alone are not specific just for the Middle Ages, but the coexistence of migrations and factors X, Y and Z altogether give a good foundation for drawing neomedieval analogy”.

37 J. Zielonka, 2007; R. Dannreuther, 2007, p. 119

The critics that adhere to the third argument complain in turn about conceptual imprecision. They sceptically ask neomedievalists which period they specifically refer to: the early, middle or late Middle Ages, and what neomedievalism actually means. This particular argument is relatively easy to repel by giving a clear and accurate definition of the concept and emphasizing that neomedieval analysis does not necessarily, in every single case, have to concern exactly the same phase of the Middle Ages due to general problems with direct, holistic historical analogies and the uniqueness of each subsequent stage in the progress of civilization.

The fourth argument shows criticism towards particular assumptions of neomedievalism in specific disciplines. With respect to neomedievalism in political science, critics may argue that it is wrong to assume the decline in the importance of the nation state, because the future may

*Neomedievalism may become  
a coherent theory of globalization.  
It is all ahead of us*

be quite the opposite, and nationalism will return as a historical driving force. This argument may be invalidated by indicating that “the decline” in question does not concern a total decline of importance of states in general, but rather the decline of traditionally conceptualized nation states and their subsequent transformation into network states (which will possess a different set of tools than the classic nation states).

Certainly, the above overview of critical opinions does not exhaust the subject. Its aim is only to demonstrate that the existing critical reservations towards neomedievalism are often inappropriate. Apparently, despite the variety of potential objections, neomedievalism in political science and its most important assumptions still have a large group of enthusiasts.<sup>38</sup> Other types of medievalism can also be effectively defended against opponents of this type of integral theories in the humanities.

One should remember that analogies with the Middle Ages are used here not to stimulate a general, philosophical-historical discussion on the cyclical nature of history, but for pragmatic and cognitive reasons,<sup>39</sup> and for easier mapping of trends for prognostic purposes. By creating analogies we obtain analytical material and information about the past evolutionary pathways of entire groups of co-existing processes which – in terms of quality – are comparable to those taking place in modern times.

### **Overview of the Content. Five Building Blocks of Medievalism.**

In this volume the attractiveness and usefulness of neomedievalism for prognostic

<sup>38</sup> Cf. N. Finn, 2004, p.27; see also reference to other authors: John Breuilly (London School of Economics), Anne-Marie Slaughter (Princeton), Ian Goldin (Oxford) et al. in: D. MacKenzie, 2014.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. A. Gelfert, *op. cit.*

purposes is illustrated in five essays by experts specialized in various academic disciplines. These essays emphasize the trends and predict the consequences of certain processes, but also suggest solutions which may help cities to better navigate through times of neomedieval transformation. The experts whose essays are published in this volume deal with international relations (Paweł Musiałek), political geography and the construction of new forms of spatial identities (Prof. Kees Terlouw), urban public policies (Michał Zabdyr-Jamróż), religious studies and cultural identity (Prof. Piotr Kłodkowski), as well as journalism and media theory (Grzegorz Greg Lewicki and Jarosław Włodarczyk). Of course, these disciplines by no means exhaust the list of research areas where neomedieval phenomena can be observed. The integral, complete analysis of network neomedievalism in all its forms goes beyond a framework of a single anthology, and is still a challenge for the humanities, especially because – as I said before – there have been very few attempts to tackle this issue in a systematic and holistic way.

40 Some essays in this volume, in particular the introduction and the last essay by Lewicki and Włodarczyk contain minor revisions as well as a few additional passages in comparison with the Polish language version of the volume published in 2016 (see: G. Lewicki, 2016).

What is the subject of individual articles?<sup>40</sup> Paweł Musiałek presents in more detail the assumptions of neomedievalism in political science by juxtaposing the ideological frictions of the Middle Ages, which led to the emergence of the nation state and modern trends that weakened the state, thus paving the way for a return of the Middle Ages with its overlapping interrelations. According to Musiałek, the European Union is a completely unique phenomenon on a historic scale, and in many layers it refers to “the concept of the political” characteristic of the Middle Ages. Another author, Prof. Kees Terlouw, analyzes the consequences of the transformation of the nation state into the network state for cities and metropolitan areas. According to Terlouw, in neomedieval times, apart from “thick identities”, characterising, for example, nations, cities will strongly benefit from “thin regional identities” and their potential to integrate network structures. These thin identities will enable the integration of urban networks irrespective of the framework set by the nation state. The third author, Michał Zabdyr-Jamróż, also focused on urban policies, argues that neomedievalism, comprehended as a direct adoption of organisational solutions developed in the Middle Ages, may be a useful tool for solving problems which bother urban planners and politicians in our times. As shown by Zabdyr-Jamróż, the adaptive nature of medieval urban policy that was built upon human spontaneity, can help to effectively reconcile the interests of different groups and even create cities with a unique, individual character. The fourth author, prof. Piotr Kłodkowski, addresses neomedievalism in culture by describing the surprising but probable consequences of multiculturalism. Based on an analysis of the institutionalization of Islam in India, Kłodkowski concludes that in the face of rapid demographic changes in Europe we may soon wake up in a fragmented reality no longer having one legal system but different systems for different groups, depending on their declared religious identi-

ty. Finally, we uncover an aspect of neomedievalism in social affairs: together with Jarosław Włodarczyk we analyse the consequences of the widespread information overload and the global misinformation that follows from it. In our world of more and more automated flows of information it is time to reform journalism and education, and to consider the taxation of data sorting centres, such as largest social networking portals.

The present volume is accompanied by footnotes and an extensive bibliography, so the readers can acquire more knowledge on the issues which, due to limited size of this publication, could only be mentioned briefly. References often indicate directions in which neomedievalism, as a theory of globalization, can be developed. Welcome to the New Middle Ages!

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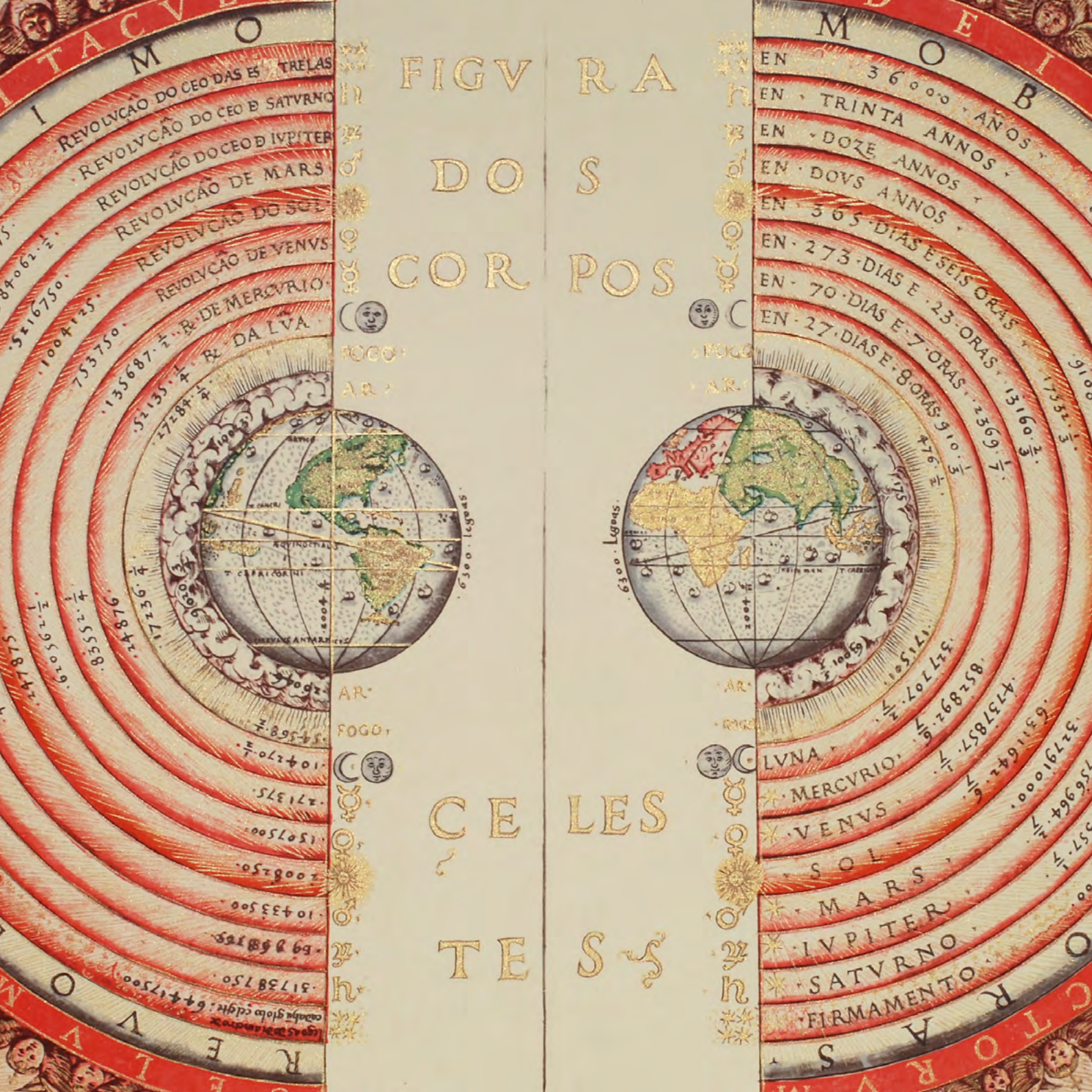
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# Europe's Full Circle.

Sovereignty of States and Cities in the Neomedieval Era.

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*Paweł Musiatek  
Jagiellonian Club*



***The European Union spilled over to cover nearly all of Europe, just like the late Roman Empire once did. Will EU survive, or will it yield to the pressure of conflicts and internal unrest? One thing is certain. In the labyrinth of Brussels-based entanglement of competences, the sovereignty of states evolves rapidly. The cities may benefit from this.***



Many intellectuals feel resentment towards the Middle Ages. One may get the impression that, from the 5th until 14th century, Europe was nothing but a “black hole” in which nothing of relevance happened, or at least nothing that would have left a lasting impression on contemporary identity. The legacy of the Middle Ages has been widely underestimated. The roots of the problem are traceable to the era of Enlightenment, during which the medieval times were roundly condemned. It is during this time that many intellectual circles in Europe rejected achievements of the Christian tradition; in this spirit, the role of the Middle Ages in the shaping of the European civilization has been downplayed and little attention was attached to this period in history.

It seemed that – according to the linear model of civilizational development typical for Enlightenment – the civilizational evolution would bring us even further away from the medieval period. However, the transgression of modernity took place in accordance with a totally different logic. As a result, Europe has gradually moved away from the very modernization it was planning to spread across other cultures. It turned out that the emergence of the ‘late’, ‘liquid’ modernity,<sup>1</sup> or postmodernity does not necessarily mean moving away from the Middle Ages. On the contrary, more and more scholars assume that many of the features of postmodernity may in fact have much in common with the medieval period. A new term – neomedievalism – has been coined based on these conclusions to describe and explain the global transformations we are now witnessing.

The term has been predominantly employed in humanities, including the science of historiography and the philosophy of culture. It has been most comprehensively defined in the theory of international relations as an emerging new political system where various hierarchical relations coincide, and the centers of authority overlap to stir tensions, which in its essence resembles the medieval political order. In an attempt to upkeep political integration of states in a world based on a network structure, traditional thinking about modernity with a focus on an ethnically homogeneous state needs to be revisited.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Z. Bauman, 2000.

The idea of neomedievalism in the theory of international relations has been coined by Hedley Bull, the principal representative of the English School of international relations theory. It was Bull who first invented the notion of new medievalism and used it in his most notorious work, *“The Anarchical Society”* published in 1977.<sup>2</sup> Bull presented five factors as evidence of this process: (1) integration of states leading to formation of inter-national units, (2) disintegration of states, (3) the states not longer holding the monopoly of violence; (4) emergence and spread of supranational organizations; (5) technological unification of the world.<sup>3</sup> The idea of neomedievalism was also popularized

2 H. Bull, 1977.

3 Quoted: G. Lewicki, p. 84.

### *In 1977 Hedley Bull sketched neomedievalism as the theory of international relations*

by Anthony Clark Arend, who published his book *„Legal Rules and International Society”* (20 years after Bull's book), in which he argued that the erosion of traditional sovereignty of countries would proceed even faster than expected in the direction indicated by Bull.

How exactly can the return of the Middle Ages be described and what consequences it yields for states and cities? In order to answer this question, one should analyze the evolution of sovereignty from the Middle Ages onwards, until the Modern Era and the present day. This is because the idea of sovereignty is crucial for understanding the transition from Middle Ages to modernity and from modernity to neomedievalism.

### **The Waning of the Middle Ages and the Dawn of National State**

There have always existed political communities (such as the Greek *polis*, city-states, or the late Roman *respublica*), but a state as we know it today first came into existence in the modern era. It is also the case with the idea of sovereignty: its development was first impeded by the concept of unity of the Hellenistic world, and then by the Ancient Roman idea of an universal empire.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, the political communities of the Middle Ages cannot be deemed “sovereign”. The notion of sovereignty had not existed at that times. In fact, in medieval times, such notion would be considered an inconceivable, blasphemous usurpation: after all it is God who – in theory – was the only sovereign<sup>5</sup>, whereas monarchs and the Pope were merely seen as God's servants, as expressed in the universalistic concept of *Christianitas* community.

4 R. Kwiecień, 2004, p. 24.

5 However, the God was not referred to as a “sovereign”.

A political community of the Middle Ages was mainly modelled on the then existing structure of the Church, as a body made up of many organs with diverse functions. The head of this complex body supervised the functions of its organs, but its control capacity was limited in scope.<sup>6</sup> In consequence, a medieval state was composed of many interpenetrating, partly dependent structures based on social, professional, religious, and territorial characteristics. They all had autonomous laws, as well as class-based, profes-

6 J. Bartyzel, 2007.

sion-based, and territory-based privileges. In other words, a state was not internally sovereign, which means it had no authority to take independent decisions over affairs happening within its own territory.<sup>7</sup>

In terms of international relations, political communities were far from being sovereign because – at least formally – states were subordinate to the church authority embodied by the Pope, and the political authority embodied by the German Emperor. What is interesting, this general distinction between internal and internal (or international) was not that obvious.<sup>8</sup> According to Saint Paul, secular political authority was said to be „from God”, which perhaps best explains why political power in the medieval Europe was limited in its essence. In the same spirit, Francisco Elías de Tejada y Spínola argued that authority is limited ‚from above’ – by the Divine Law, ‚from below’ – by the privileges of social classes and social bodies, and ‚backwards’ – by tradition and customs.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, sovereign territorial states did not exist. But this was about to change. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, according to the concept of French legalists working to reinforce the power of king Philip IV of France, a monarch became the supreme judge, the highest legal instance for all social classes instead of having direct authority only over king’s vassals who ruled over politically subordinate realms.<sup>10</sup> Only two centuries later, the authority of the monarch was further reinforced, from then on the king became not only the supreme judge, but also the supreme law-maker.<sup>11</sup> Earlier in history, laws were ‚discovered’ rather than enacted. Law was ‚discovered’ by human conscience, as it was said to be based on the divine law, thus derived from customs and tradition. In the process, the customary, common law unfolded, which evolved from the judicial practice rather than being enacted by a proper law-making institution.

The primacy of law enacted by a monarch over customary law was further underpinned by the revolution in philosophy, inspired by Descartes, who glorified the human reason. The rationalism in the spirit of Descartes advocated limitless human cognitive abilities and argued for the supremacy of codified laws that progressively replaced the concepts of divine law, natural law, or customary law.<sup>12</sup>

These processes coincided with the emergence of the modern theory of the state. It was first formulated by N. Machiavelli, who introduced the notion of a state as the supreme good towering over all social classes.<sup>13</sup> The modern state came into existence in the 16th century, and the concept of a modern state was associated with a change in the perception of a political community. A community as such ceased to be perceived as an organism made of organs performing various functions. Instead, it started to be perceived seen as a mechanism that can be brought into motion by an ‚engineer’, an external driving force. Political authority and a sovereign became separated from “the organism”. A sovereign was no longer a mere supervisor of processes

7 A. Wielomski, 2009.

8 J. L. Holtzgreffe, 1989.

9 J. Bartyzel, *op. cit.*

10 *Ibid.*

11 H. J. Berman, *za: B. Szlachta*, 2003, s. 18.

12 J. Bartyzel, *op. cit.*

13 A. Wielomski, *op. cit.*

14 J. Bartyzel, *op. cit.*

15 B. Szlachta, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

16 J. Caporaso, 2010, p. 51.

17 R. Kwiecień, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

18 P. Kaczorowski, in: S. Sowiński, J. Węgrzecki (eds.), 2010, p. 61.

19 A. Edward, 2011, p. 79.

20 L. Ehrlich, 1958, p. 123.

that take place independently; instead, he became a kind of a ‚social engineer‘, like a clockmaker who designs and refines the mechanisms of a clock.<sup>14</sup> In consequence, the concept of a society as an entity subordinate to the king was born.<sup>15</sup>

Quite obviously, the whole process concurred with the first stage of secularization fueled by religious wars, abuses and corruption of the Church, and religious reformation that limited the influence of the religious sphere on politics. Whereas the medieval Christian civilization defined human life through social and class divisions rather than territorial delineation, the new, emerging thinking was ‚territorial‘ due to inspiration by the concept of a state and enacted law. Territorial divisions have grown in importance.<sup>16</sup>

If the God's will that had long sanctioned the subordination of people to the authority of a king is not an important factor anymore, then what should the cornerstone of the king's authority? In response to this question, the concept of sovereignty emerged to lay the foundations for a new social order and emancipatory aspirations of individual nations.<sup>17</sup> In Europe tormented by religious unrest, it was the concept of sovereignty that promised to restore the feeling of security and stability to local population. After all, only a powerful sovereign, with extensive powers and tools to shape reality was able to successfully compete in the new international setting consisting of numerous, independent monarchs, liberated from the limitations brought about by ‚God's hand‘. A sovereign authority was then intended to free the ruler from the constraints of traditional, religious, and moral obligations.<sup>18</sup>

Jean Bodin was the first scholar who came up with the theorization of the idea of sovereignty. As understood by Bodin, sovereignty was the ability to exercise political power over a territory in a fully autonomous manner, independently from other entities. Bodin's theory justified amplification of central authority at the expense of various social bodies that created a complex pattern of relations characteristic for feudal social order. Bodin postulated that religion's influence on politics should be curbed in order to prevent religious wars that afflicted Europe in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>19</sup>

The French scholar also laid the foundations for the legal independence of monarchs from other bodies of the international law.<sup>20</sup> The year 1648 is believed to be the turning point that put an end to the church's supremacy as well as papal and imperial authority over the states. This is when the Peace of Westphalia was signed in the cities of Osnabrück and Münster, ending the Thirty Years' War and medieval striving for universalism (expressed in the aspirations of the German Empire to rule over the world, and the papal concept of *respublica Christiana*). From then on, an international system has developed in Europe that was based on sovereign nation-states that enjoyed freedom in pursuing their own foreign policies, limited only by the sovereignty of other states.

The Peace of Westphalia created a firm basis for sovereignty, territoriality of political authority and citizenship. It also set the tone for a clear-cut division of politics into

domestic and international affairs (*inside – outside*). The internal policy set up rules governing the relations within the state, whereas foreign policy's goal was to maintain relations with other states.

### The Waning of Westphalian era and the Dawn of Neomedievalism

What is the reality of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? In fact, we apparently reenter the medieval times. One of the most important factors indicative of the emerging neomedievalism in the world order is the evolution of the notion of sovereignty in the context of international law. At its origin, this term essentially denoted independence of a state from all other international authorities and its autonomy in the governance of internal affairs. Sovereignty in international law was interpreted in a very broad meaning of the word,<sup>21</sup> creating conditions for nation-states to establish themselves as we know them today.

Such an understanding of sovereignty in fact held back the development of international law: the absolute sovereignty of all states as the governing principle separated individual states instead of bringing them together.<sup>22</sup> Therefore with time the interpretation of sovereignty progressively changed to set the framework for individual states to interact with each other in a civilized way and to create a real community. Today, state sovereignty in international law should be understood as a capacity and a means to exercise the functions of a state independently of other entities, but within a framework of (international) law and with accountability for its own actions.<sup>23</sup> Sovereignty is no longer perceived as an unlimited freedom, instead, it is understood as the capability of a state to have rights and obligations emerging from international law and to exercise the functions of a state.<sup>24</sup>

The contemporary evolution of international law is certainly a challenge to sovereignty in the classical sense. This is mainly due to tendency to codify international law. This tendency largely takes the form of recognizing common universal values and supreme interests shared by an international community, and in setting up common standards and norms of international cooperation<sup>25</sup>. The whole process is one of key manifestations of neomedievalism in international relations. It affects international law in two distinct aspects:

it changes the material scope of law – international law now increasingly governs not only relations between states, but also the internal affairs of states,

it changes the personal scope of law – legal standards are now established for both natural and legal persons in a state.

21 Por. E. de Vattel, 1958.

22 R. Kwiecień, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

23 J. Kranz, *Jak zrozumieć suwerenność? Próba opisu*, in: S. Sowiński, J. Węgrzecki (eds.) *op. cit.*, p. 31.

24 *Ibid.*, p. 42.

25 E. de Wet, 2006, p. 51-76.

These trends have been reinforced especially after World War II. The notion of sovereignty has evolved. All in all, it may be concluded that, from the end of the Middle Ages onwards, we have come a long way from the idea of sovereignty that restricted the international law to the idea of international law that limits state sovereignty.

The current stage of development of international law apparently marks a departure from the guiding principles of the modern-day political governance and – in a way – it progressively restores the rules which prevailed in medieval Europe: the obligations of states increasingly penetrate the internal legal order and govern matters which used to belong to the state law.

Interestingly, the erosion of state structures accelerates, fueled by contemporary visions of conflicts at civilizational borders<sup>26</sup> as well as internal conflicts and tensions within civilizations.<sup>27</sup> The tensions between the West and Islamic fundamentalism are identified as one of the threats. Preventive measures against these threats are implemented through international law, which further accelerates decomposition of the structures of traditional state. The whole process also creates favorable conditions for the development of hybrid centers of power, some of which are far from being rooted territorially. This is the case, for example, of the so-called Islamic State that has conquered vast territory of Iraq and Syria to establish its own caliphate. There are many more state-like structures that operate in a similar way, although they are definitely smaller and not necessarily religion-driven. In general, such processes undermine the belief that a nation-state is the crowning achievement in the historical development of political communities, and prove that Bull was right when he argued that the emerging world order would be made of both states and numerous non-state actors.

26 S. Huntington, 2011.

27 P. Kłodkowski, 2005.

### Neomedieval Europe: the European Union as a Network

Europe has witnessed the most far-reaching changes in political governance. Paradoxically, the decomposition of the modern-era Westphalian order is most dynamic in the areas where the concept of *respublica Christiana* and the idea of a nation-state first originated. Through the European integration after World War II, Europe has once more embarked on a search for a universal formula. The establishment of the European Union should not be perceived in pure political terms since the EU is not yet another international organization. Quite on the contrary, this is a very peculiar structure that has no equivalent in the history of Europe to provide a reasonable explanation for its emergence. The EU is in fact unprecedented: this is a unique type of organization, a hybrid harboring features of a classical interstate organization and a supranational organization.<sup>28</sup> The supranational component is what makes the EU so unique.

28 A. Gruszczak, 2009.



A 'supranational organization' can be understood as a particular type of an international organization that progressively – with the growing scope and spread of its competences – creates an independent, autonomous legal order different from that of international and domestic law. What is also important, a supranational organization becomes independent of an international agreement that laid the foundation for its establishment, by creating derived or secondary law.<sup>29</sup>

To conclude, supranational cooperation is a higher level of international cooperation. It breaks the Westphalian model of horizontal cooperation between states, which consists of merely coordinating independent actions of states.<sup>30</sup> Supranationality becomes a new organizational logic of the public authority, whereas the supranational component of the EU's identity abolishes the so far inseparable unity of political identity and political organization of a state. However, it still allows for the existence of nations.<sup>31</sup> In conclusion, there were territorial states without nations in Europe between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, and there are now nations without fully-fledged territorial states in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>32</sup> The supranational space incorporates supranational institutions, community law, their competences and governance, policies, axiology and a specific legislation process – based on a community, as well as decision-making by qualified voting.<sup>33</sup>

29 J. Barcz, 2006, p.28.

30 J. Ruzskowski, 2010, p. 36.

31 O. Weaver, *op. cit.*, p. 422.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 423.

33 *Ibid.*, p. 51.

Details	Intra-state relations	International relations	The European Union
Prevailing relations	Hierarchy	Anarchy	Multilevel governance
Related entities	Citizens	States	States, regions, international institutions
Features	Heterogeneity, multiplicity of roles, specialization	Homogeneity, function-related similarities, autonomy	Heterogeneity, functional diversity
Relations	Vertical, centralization, interdependence	Horizontal, decentralization, coexistence	Intermingling of internal and external sphere
Dominant factor	Authority, administration, law	Power, adjustment, combat, competition	Governance, regulations, negotiations

Figure 1. The European Union versus other forms of political organization (source: J. Czaputowicz, 2004, p. 21)

Through the complex institutional backbone, as well as the EU policies and the particular legal status of the EU, the European integration creates a unique political system that still continues to modify its elements. Although the EU is not a state and has little in common with the traditional sovereignty, it is capable of decision-making, taking concerted actions, regulating markets, solving conflicts, producing commodities, generating profits, and running elections. These are by no means trivial competences. By creating laws and institutions, the European Union constrains the impact of anarchy in that it transforms the international system to become increasingly similar to an interstate system.<sup>34</sup> The differences between internal relations, international relations, and the EU political systems are summarized in the table.<sup>35</sup>

34 P.C. Schmitter, p.17, quoted: J. Czaputowicz, 2004, p.12.

35 *Ibid.*

36 L. Hooghe, G. Marks, 2001, p.3–4, quoted: J. Czaputowicz, 2004, *op. cit.*, p.22.

The multilayer governance, which is widespread in the EU, has several features that distinguish the EU from all other organizations.<sup>36</sup> First, the governments of states no longer have a monopoly on the decision-making process at the EU level; in fact, decisions are made at a number of levels; secondly, decisions in the EU are made collectively, and governments are no longer in control of the decision-making process; thirdly, the traditional division into external and internal domain in the EU becomes blurred because of the growing importance of transnational associations and companies, acting as equal partners for states in problem solving.

37 J. Ruzzkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

There are also five levels where various actors operate in the political system in the EU<sup>37</sup>: supranational (supranational institutions); transnational (corporations, associations of entrepreneurs, fractions in the EP); international (international institutions); national (states); and regional (regional and local authorities).

38 P. Machado, *The Concept of "Network" in Legal Literature – A Survey*, w: A. George et al., 2001, p.8.

This multi-level political system of the EU can be examined as a political network, or a system of relatively stable, non-hierarchical, and interdependent relations between various stakeholders. A political network has several distinctive features:<sup>38</sup>

organizational structure includes both public and private actors,

cooperation is institutionalized to a limited degree, many activities are informal;

the interrelations between individual members of the network are the crucial factor;

a system of regulations exists that governs the relationships between its members, both limiting their particular options and offering specific possibilities;

mutual learning options.

Member states, European institutions, European political parties, and regional authorities are the core members of the system. Apart from the European politi-

cal parties, all political actors participate in two systems: the EU system, and the state system, and compete with the nation-state for the loyalty of the citizens.<sup>39</sup> In consequence, authority in the EU is vested in one of nine types of institutions that together create the decision-making network. The division of power as seen in the case of Poland:

39 J. Czaputowicz, 2003, p.150.

Levels / Authority	Legislative	Executive	Judiciary
Supranational (EU)	European Commission (initiates the law), EU Council, European Parliament (lawmaking)	European Commission	The European Court of Justice, Court of First Instance
National	Parliament (Sejm and Senat, lower and upper chamber)	Government / Council of Ministers	Court of Appeal
Subnational	First-tier and second-tier municipal councils, regional assembly	Head of a commune, mayor, provincial and county management board	Regional and district courts

What is multilevel governance in the EU and how does it differ from the traditional state governance? A multilevel governance model is not an alternative for state authority; instead, it offers new quality, or an additional layer that creates a network over the existing relations. Its distinctive features are best displayed by comparing a centralistic state governance model with multilevel governance. In a state, political decisions are taken in a formal way, with a strong government acting as the center of power, accompanied by weak or negligible involvement of non-state actors. Multilevel governance is centered around pretty much the opposite:<sup>40</sup> it is focused on cooperation-based and dispersed decision-making model. Also, it invites non-state actors to join in, and the center of governance can be located outside the state, which reflects a more general trend of ‘deterritorialization’ of multilayer governance systems. Finally, the decision-making process covers not only formal mechanisms, but also overt non-formal mechanisms, including unofficial negotiations of representatives of the government with the EU officials.

40 Quoted: J. Ruzkowski, L. Wojnicz (eds.), 2013, p. 78.

41 J. Czaputowicz, 2003, *op. cit.*, s.150.

42 T. Diez, R. Whitman, 2002, vol. 40, no. 1, p. 6, quoted: J. Czaputowicz, 2004, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

*In Europe, history has nearly  
come full circle: from the  
dusk of medieval era to the  
dawn of neomedievalism*

43 K. Szczerski, 2009, p. 30.

44 G. Lewicki, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

45 Zob. J. Manners, 2002.

46 The European Parliament expressly states that "the EU's mechanisms for building consensus and taking concerted action make it a model for a rules-based international order" (European Parliament, 2011).

47 PE also underlined that "it is essential to ensure that all policies decided and actions taken are also in accordance with international law, including the principles laid down in the UN Charter" (European Parliament, 2010).

In the European Union, the distinction between international sphere and intra-state affairs is getting increasingly blurred. There is no distinction between hierarchical order within and the archaic order outside. The European system becomes increasingly similar to an intra-state system through diffusion of national and supranational systems.<sup>41</sup> These two spaces intermingle: the international sphere intervenes in the domestic intra-state domain, while the intra-state space enters the international sphere.<sup>42</sup>

Throughout the process of the European integration, a state undergoes a major transition. It becomes one among many sources of power, still the dominant one, but it no longer holds a monopoly in the decision-making process, while 'external' actors are increasingly perceived as equal partners. This also means that su-

pranational structures or similar structures operating in other states become an equivalent point of reference for some actors within a state (companies, regional authorities), both in terms of cooperation and decision-making.<sup>43</sup>

The infiltration of various political orders and the overlapping of the authority vested in various actors including non-state actors reflects the political structure of the medieval times. The 'networking' of states is not limited to the EU. Today's states in and outside Europe enter into multilevel relations to become 'networked' states, "from nation state to network state".<sup>44</sup> However, the concept of national identity is by no means outdated. On the contrary, the national identity is what guarantees that the citizens of network states, the nodes of a network, continue to maintain their relationship with the center of power.

Similarities to the Middle Ages are visible not only in the political system, but also in the vision of the desired international order of the EU. This vision is expressed by invoking universal values (with the European Union as a 'normative empire'<sup>45</sup>) and is closely convergent with the medieval mission of the Christian European states to spread Christianity worldwide. The EU does not define any specific geopolitical or geoeconomic interests: in general it perceives itself as an international exporter of its own development model and the political culture of Europe.<sup>46</sup> It has ambitions to run foreign policy based on actions that are fully legal, in order to safeguard justice and limit the use of violence.<sup>47</sup> For these reasons, the EU strives to consolidate the global governance, international institutions, while the respect for international law is the EU's top priority. Moreover, the EU uses a language that utilizes moral categories.<sup>48</sup>

The idea of European integration is, in a sense, similar to the medieval longing for universalism and unity and it closes the chapter of a traditionally defined modern nation-state. In this sense, we travel back to the medieval times. In this sense, in

Europe history has nearly come full circle: from the waning of the Middle Ages to dawn of neomedieval era. Interestingly, Germany as the driving force in these processes is what medieval and modern times have in common. Just like the integration of the European Middle Ages was initiated by the German Empire, Berlin is so far the unquestionable leader of the European Union. The evolving role of Germany in the EU is best rephrased as “from Europeanisation of Germany to Germanization of Europe”.

### Neomedievalism in Cities

The emerging cross-linked political structure also affects cities, which become increasingly empowered. This can be taken as an indication of ‘medievalization’ of present-day cities. This phenomenon is most apparent in global agglomerations, which in fact become a kind of modern city-states. The revenues of the biggest cities worldwide often exceed the budgets and populations of states. The development challenges faced by city authorities can be even more complex than the challenges tackled by the governments of states. The biggest urban centers around the world have multiple economic links. They are increasingly active in the international arena, while mayors and presidents of cities run their own ‘foreign’ policy, in parallel to the traditional foreign policy pursued by the central government. The growing interaction between cities bears many similarities to the medieval Hanseatic League, a commercial confederation of towns of Northern Europe, which grew in political and military power by protecting their economic interests and made it more difficult for traders from outside Hanse to succeed in business. Many thinkers are inspired by this phenomena and come up with bold visions of the future. Jan Zielonka, known for his concept of “Europe as Empire”,<sup>49</sup> suggests that the European states might be soon replaced by a looser form of community of cities, regions, or even religious organizations, similar to the one existing in the Middle Ages. According to Jan Zielonka, the nascent system may be better prepared for new challenges than the existing amalgamation of nation states.

The boldest vision of the future role of cities was presented by Benjamin Barber, notorious for his bestseller, “*Jihad vs. McWorld*”.<sup>50</sup> In his book “*If Mayors Rules the World*,”<sup>51</sup> Barber argues that city mayors are more competent than ‘ordinary’ politicians to solve contemporary problems. As a result, he argues, cities should now take over the functions traditionally vested in states. Barber’s concept to some extent refers to the medieval history of Genoa or Venice. Barber can be extravagant in his writings, in which he promotes utopian ideas of creating a ‘world Parliament’ made entirely of mayors. It is highly questionable whether such proposal is feasible and whether it would be able to find any remedy to the problems it would be faced with. Why? Because:

48 Notably, there is a broad spectrum of values enumerated in the resolutions of the European Parliament. The EP highlighted that the general objective of the EU foreign policy should be to contribute to peace, security, the sustainable development of the Earth, solidarity and mutual respect among peoples, free and fair trade, eradication of poverty and the protection of human rights, in particular the rights of the child, as well as the strict observance and development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter (*ibid.*).

49 J. Zielonka, 2007.

50 B. Barber, 2005.

51 B. Barber, 2013.

1. After all, some people live outside the city. The cultural differences between a town of several thousand inhabitants and a metropolis are no smaller than between rural and urban areas in general (especially in contemporary villages, which largely become 'little towns').

2. Towns and cities vary in scale, population, and in the challenges they face, which calls for a more complex approach than a simple decentralization.

3. Moreover, cities will be reluctant to accept responsibility for many contemporary problems, most notably terrorism, or the international monetary system, etc. However, they can help states solve these problems.

4. There is one more fundamental question to answer before cities are assigned additional functions in order to vindicate the culture of local government focused on problem-solving at the expense of ideological conflicts. Mayors have a specific style of exercising public authority, which is attached to an institution rather than an individual human.<sup>52</sup> When equipped with new functions, a former mayor will in all probability think and behave in a way that reflects his/her new office, while city authorities will become more 'political' instead of making politicians more 'city-oriented'.

5. Despite the development of urban activism, the national/state identity rather than urban identity is still the cornerstone of political identity. Cities are still perceived as a space to live in rather than a community that offers an answer to the question of "Who are we?"

6. The culture of inter-city cooperation can flourish in conditions of limited competition, while assigning state-like functions to cities will also increase the competition between metropolises. This could once again lead to international anarchy.

Barber's main argument – a city as a remedy for dysfunctional state, and the crisis of democracy – is incorrect in its own right, although the theory can still yield interesting observations. First and foremost, it calls for a rethink of the role of cities in a networked world. The networked reality definitely changed the context in which cities operate. Cities will not replace states, but their function will definitely evolve. This conclusion should be followed up closely, especially in Poland, where there is still a deficit of political thinking accounting for the role of cities in the policy of the state. In his articles published in "Nowa Konfederacja" monthly, Rafał Matyja asked the biggest question concerning this area of public policy. He discussed the question

52 R. Matyja, 2015.

of how many cities in Poland should be capable to act as urban centers that fulfil the actual rather than formal urban functions and whether they are taken into account in the governmental policies.<sup>53</sup> Matyja is right in pointing out that it is necessary to decide on this question because the tools for development of urban areas are largely beyond the reach of the cities, or even beyond the control of other local governmental authorities.

53 R. Matyja, 2016.

### What's next? The Dangers of Medievalism

The growing international interdependence, which was widespread in the Middle Ages, became the distinguishing feature of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. The modern world, however, is far from being a civilized heaven that will experience an era of eternal peace. Aggressive geopolitics has become a part of our reality: areas of influence, buffer zones, strategic regions, and directions of expansion are redefined as we speak on the ruins of American domination.<sup>54</sup> Neo-medievalism does not easily translate into collision-free governance. With the transformation of politics in accordance with the network logics, all actors that aspire to the role of key stakeholders compete fiercely as there is much at stake. Neomedievalism brings along wide-ranging uncertainty and strategic risk.

54 K. Szczerski, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is unlikely to spell the end of nation-states. On the contrary, with the growing international tensions caused by the erosion of post-Cold-War logic, the problem of a state as an actor in international relations will attract more attention.

In the nearest future, we will witness deceleration of the process that has blurred the authority of states to the advantage of other phenomena taking place in international relations. In the past some political scientists thinking in neomedieval framework thought a state was undergoing the process of marginalization to become merely 'one of many' actors in the global arena; they believed this process was to be accompanied by the hollowing-out of state authority as the decision-making center, whereas the state authority was to be disseminated in multiple directions. This state of affairs was to emerge from economic globalization and the supremacy of business interests over state interests; the blurring of boundaries and development of regional forms of integrated supranational governance (the European Union), cultural unification based on virtual networks of contacts devoid of state identity; and as a result of accepting the right of an international community to interfere with the internal affairs of states in defense of superior interests.

*European Union promotes  
a vision of international order that  
was typical for the Middle Ages*

*We are witnessing an evolution:  
from the traditional nation state  
to the network state*

Despite the advancement of neomedieval phenomena, the decline of Westphalian-like states is losing its impetus. Why? The striving for survival of states is underpinned by the social principles within states – citizens' refusal to accept dissolution of a state, the persisting role of a political community in the upkeep of social order and economic interests, the persistence of democracy based on equality and civil rights as a means to make political decisions, or the power of state administration as a system that safeguards the much desired order in a chaotic, continuously changing world.<sup>55</sup>

55 *Ibid.* p.25.

The return of political realism does not imply the reemergence of a 19<sup>th</sup> century concept of a nation-state based on ethnicity and rivalry among superpowers. The new order will be still centered around states, but the game will continue in a changed, neomedieval context. The state has definitely lost its dominant position as the exclusive platform of political action: public authorities no longer fully control the social and economic processes taking place within the borders of their states, nor do they enjoy a procedural monopoly in the decision-making process, whereas the nationality or citizenship are no longer the sole point of reference for translocal identity of citizens. The backbone of state's success in a neomedieval world is the ability to create procedural solutions, to agree and implement priorities between various decision-centers (political, social, or economic).<sup>56</sup> The states that are not able to skillfully operate in a neomedieval networked reality will become marginalized and can

56 *Ibid.* p.29.



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Strona 22 – The Ptolemaic geocentric model of the Universe according to the Portuguese  
cosmographer and cartographer Bartolomeu Velho (Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris), 1568.  
Za: Wikimedia Commons. Public Domain. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bartolomeu\\_Velho\\_1568.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Bartolomeu_Velho_1568.jpg)



VM ad Mosam, vrbs et natura loci,  
 et populi frequentia, et edificijs, et Ampliff.  
 ijs nobilib, Speciem prebet orbis duar, coniu  
 magnifico Cuius iconem, ad Topographi  
 ornandum, Venerandus Et Egregius vir  
 lo Monte Ecclesie S. Seruati] Traiecten: Sa  
 sus fria et penicillo ad viuum accuratissi  
 contulit.

- |                                     |                                     |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 S. Seruati] Canonicy Collegiũ     | 16 Conuicti vici; vulgo: Den heya   |
| 2 S. Marie Coll: Cano:              | 17 S. Andreu, Dill/ Der magden str. |
| 3 S. Iohan Bapt: Eccles] Parrochia: | 18 Den Neuwen kaff.                 |
| 4 Parochia S. Nicolai               | 19 S. Alorij                        |
| 5 Parochia S. Mart: in foro hony    | 20 S. Vincentij                     |
| 6 Parochia S. Mart: in opp: vick    | 21 S. Eurygali                      |
| 7 Augustineyfes.                    | 22 S. Georgij                       |
| 8 Dominicon                         | 23 S. Marie Ad litus                |
| 9 Franciscan                        | 24 S. Catharine                     |
| 10 Crucifery                        | 25 Pons Alf; lapideus decem archu   |
| 11 Bogardi                          | 27 Coll: et domus Societat: Icau    |
| 12 Anzmitz / Teutonicoz             | 28 Pratorium / Wick                 |
| 13 Ecclesia Et Domus D.D.           | 29 Dom Praygfr: Alcyfen in          |
| 14 Luffard                          | 25 Infirmerium publicum             |
| 15 Altes vegines                    | 30 Porta S. Petri. Luffth m         |

# Trading Identities.

Neomedievalism and the Urban Future.

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***Forget the nation state. It is the city that will make history. In the neomedieval era thin identities will blossom under thick, traditional ones. As a result regional cooperation of metropolitan areas will prove more effective than central planning. Tired of national identity? Time to forge your own.***

## Introduction

•••→ The Middle Ages have for the last centuries been used as an object of fear and contrasted with the benefits of modernisation delivered by ever stronger nation states. But this modernisation narrative of the nation state has been challenged in the last decades. Globalisation has not only brought people in the world closer together, but has also challenged established certainties. Especially the project of the nation state of national integration and national development has been challenged by globalisation. After the period of national integration we are now entering a period of renewed fragmentation, questioning the taken-for granted dominance of national territories. This has sparked a renewed interest in the Middle Ages, an era in which the nation state was not so dominant. This essay focuses on the changing role of cities in the New Middle Ages. It discusses not only how cities and their urban networks tear the traditional fabric of the nation state apart, but also to what extent urban networks and regions can play an important role in new forms of network based economic, political and civic integration in the future.

The dominance of territory as an integrative framework was connected to modernity but is now challenged and transformed. Spatial fragmentations are linked to the growing importance of an ever increasing number of urban networks crossing the traditional boundaries of the nation state. The declining importance of the fixed national territories and the growing importance of cities has some similarities with the Middle Ages. Against this backdrop, a role of the cities can become crucial not only as the current drivers of economic development, but also as the future forerunners of the new forms of civic bonding. This is because the cities can build on a sense of community within their boundaries to organise and coordinate networks between cities and their surrounding regions. Certainly, the multitude of partially overlapping networks around cities cannot be controlled by a central political power, but it can be partially coordinated through some form of a shared identity based on dialogue. This does not mean that networks replace national territories as the main integrative force. It does mean, however, that the relation between networks and territories change. The focus of

development, regulation and identification shifts away from the clearly demarcated national territory to cities, urban networks and urban regions deprived of clear borders.

All this resembles in some aspects the mediaeval period before the emergence of the nation state. Of course, neomedievalism does not imply an expected return to the Middle Ages. Rather, it calls for a renewed interest in how spatial diversities can be integrated through urban networks operating partially outside national territorial frameworks and hierarchies.

### **The nation state between the Middle Ages and neomedievalism**

The idea of the nation states as the basic building blocks of the world has dominated politics since the Middle Ages. The fragmentation, which was characteristic for the Middle Ages did not disappear entirely, but the dominant political discourse focused on territorial consolidation externally and internally. Reality changed, however, much slower than political ideologies. What is interesting, many academics these days narrow the nation state down (as a political reality) only to the period just before and after the two world wars<sup>1</sup>. Peter Taylor<sup>2</sup> makes a useful distinction of how the role of cities has changed over time. During the heydays of the nation state cities were contained in their functioning, they were subjugated to the centralising nation state. Before that cities were rampant at least when they were not controlled by a central empires like the Roman or Ottoman empire. The European cities in the Middle Ages were rampant in the sense that they were relatively free from the political constraints of weak territorial rulers. Cities could develop their own small and large scale trade networks, thus integrating their surrounding region and sometimes extending them to larger parts of Europe. The crisis of the nation state releases the cities from the yoke again and returns to them the opportunities to more independently shape their future and experiment with the new forms of cooperation.

1 S. Halperin, 2013.

2 P. Taylor, 2013; P. Taylor, 2014.

### **The internal and external territorialisation of the nation state**

A political drive towards the state and national sovereignty has spread over Europe and the Americas since the American and French revolutions, and since the decolonisation in the mid-twentieth century it followed to the rest of the world. As a result, the world became increasingly divided into national territories. This was linked to the idea that the modernisation of each national society would free people from “the cloisters” of the Dark Middle Ages and lead them into a bright future spearheaded by the USA<sup>3</sup>. Territorialisation was an important aspect of this dominant western version of mod-

3 W.W. Rostow, 1960.



ernisation. The economy was capitalistic, but regulated within the national territory by nation states through the creation and regulation of a national market. The differences and inequalities within the national territories were – after the Second World War – subject to welfare state policies (aimed at homogenising the economic differences in the national territory). Not only internally, but also externally, the national territory was used by the nation state to regulate society. For example, the nation state regulated foreign trade through border controls.

Apart from the economics, the politics also became territorialised. Externally, national sovereignty was to be protected by international relations backed by national armies. Internally, the sovereignty of the people was linked to democratisation focusing on citizen rights for people living within the national territory. What is more, identities also became territorialised. Nationalism not only unified the population within the territory of a nation state, but was also used to mobilise the population militarily and otherwise against other nation states. These economic, political and cultural territorialisation were aspects of the modernisation of society aimed at moving it away from the Dark Middle Ages.

It is important to stress that this development towards a world formed by nation states reflected more the development of the dominant political ideology – faithfully followed by mainstream academics – than the physical reality of international economic flows and power relations. The nation state was conceptualised as a container of relations, but this was more an ideal than reality. Hence, it is not astonishing that its assumptions have been increasingly questioned over the last decades. According to John Agnew this dominant conceptualisation of the nation state falls in the territorial trap of viewing states as unified territories, societies and actors<sup>4</sup>. It suffers from the statism of an assumed spatial congruence between society, economy and politics within the same borders. Such state-centrism suffers from three main factors: the spatial fetishism of reifying social space as static and unchanging; from the methodological territorialism of assuming that all social relations are organised within a territory; and from a methodological nationalism of assuming that the national scale is the dominant level of social developments<sup>5</sup>. Despite the multitude fissures and divisions within a nation state and despite the fact that crucial relations transcend the borders between nation states, a state imagined as a national community is an important political construction.

“The nation” has always been something of a normative ideal. “The idea of ‘identity’, and a ‘national identity’ in particular, did not gestate and incubate in human experience ‘naturally’, did not emerge out of that experience as a self-evident ‘fact of life’. That

*International system is undergoing a crisis. A totally new Time-Space will soon emerge thereof*

4 J. Agnew, 1994, p. 53-80.

5 N. Brenner, 2004; D. Delaney, 2005.

6 Z. Bauman, 2004, p.20.

idea was forced into the *Lebenswelt* of modern men and women – and arrived as a fiction. It congealed into a ‘fact’, a ‘given’, precisely because it had been a fiction”.<sup>6</sup> But it is an important fiction which is crucial in the legitimation of power of the nation state.

7 K. Terlouw i J. Weststrate, 2013, p. 24–35.

Leaving the nature of the nation state aside, it is evident its emergence transformed the role of cities . In the Middle Ages cities were important political players, not only as city-states, but also as key political actors within the mediaeval territorial states.<sup>7</sup> However, with the advent of the nation state their political role was reduced to that of a

*Thick identities are rather backward looking, as opposed to thin identities, which are future oriented*

8 P. Taylor, *op. cit.* 2013.

municipality implementing policies decided by the nation state. Economically they were still the centres of innovation, but their economic power and transnational linkages were regulated by the nation states and curtailed by their policies of territorial integration and homogenisation.<sup>8</sup> Cities were still the cultural centres, but were controlled by nationalistic policies.

In the Middle Ages, however, cities – especially larger trading cities, like Amsterdam, Cologne, Barcelona and Wroclaw to name but a few –were dynamic entities that thrived not only thanks to external relations, but also thanks to the dynamics of interaction between the communities coming from different ethno-cultural backgrounds. This cultural, urban diversity was smothered by the nationalistic policies of nation states.

### **The crisis of the nation state and the urban future**

In the last decades the economic, political and cultural projects of the nation state are being challenged by the developments, through which cities emerge as key players. Economically, cities are considered as better suited to provide the best innovation and business climate than the cumbersome nation state. Cities can give business the necessary specific tailor-made business climate giving entrepreneurs the necessary edge to be successful in the global competition. This trend is already visible, and will get stronger in the future. Cities can profit from this specialisation, while they are part of large global networks. For instance, the automotive and consumer electronic industries in Wroclaw not only sell their products on the European market, but are also a part of European manufacturing networks. These urban networks are becoming increasingly unbound from the nation state. This will in turn result in economic fragmentation and different specializations of the cities as well as increasing inequalities within the cities themselves.

The decline of central control by the nation state frequently leaves more political space for cities to organise their own urban region. Attention is now shifting from the urban network of large cities to larger entities – that is to say to metropolitan regions. This process will contribute to the creation of an even more complex and layered assemblage of networks. Within the metropolitan region, its internal networks including smaller cities and rural regions will increasingly contribute to the competitive potential of the whole region. But also the connections between whole metropolitan regions will form clusters of urban networks across national borders. Many metropolitan regions, including Wrocław, already cooperate on the European level to learn from one another's experiences in order to further strengthen their position in the future.<sup>9</sup> Cities thus not only increasingly become part of international urban networks, but they tend to organise their surrounding regions.

Many of the assumptions on which nationalism is based are also being eroded. Globalisation exposed the impotence of nation states to support their population in face of worldwide economic competition and increased international migration, which undermines the assumed historical ancestry and homogeneity of the nation. The importance of national identities is further challenged by the increased individualisation through which individuals gain more freedom with whom they associate and with what (international) life-style groups they feel connected.

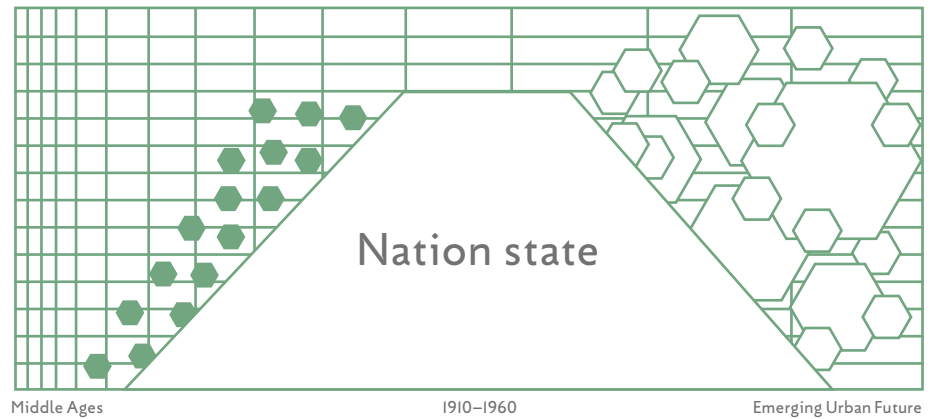
Thus the nation state as a regulator of the national society within its territory is challenged externally by the permeability of its borders and internally by its decline of regulatory and homogenising capabilities. Like in the Middle Ages, cities are becoming

9 Cf. METREX: The Network of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas.

Aspect	Middle Ages	Nation state	Urban future
Cities	Rampant	Contained	Released
Political authority	Fragmented	Territorial centralisation	Fragmented globalising networks
Economy	Feudalism	National market regulation	Global competition
Urban economy	Market region	National market	Urban networks
Civic ideology	Roman-catholic church	Nationalism	Neoliberalism
Civic identity	Complex layered	Nation	Complex layered

Table I Structural characteristics of the Middle Ages, the age of the nation state and the urban future

Figure 1. The rise and decline of the nation state



more important economically as part of increasingly more complex and expanding urban networks that transcend national boundaries. They also become more important for their surrounding region. This is linked to their increasing political role within the nation state, which is relinquishing many of its centralised regulatory powers. Cities also become more important in more complex forms of identity formation. On the one hand this is the result of the undermining of the conceptual assumptions of the nationalism and the nation state. On the other hand it is linked to the growing importance of cities and their international and regional position. At the same time, the growing importance of cities changes the focus of spatial identity discourses among the people: from identification with the nation, to identification with these complex, layered, emerging urban structure .

The trends that suggest the advent of the future in which cities emerge as more dominant will be further discussed in this essay. Table 1 and figure 1 give an overview of some characteristics of the three epochs: the Middle Ages, the age of the nation state and the urban future.

Figure 1 depicts the rise and possible further decline of the nation state. It shows the preponderance of a finely meshed and territorial fragmented structure in the Middle Ages: in medieval times the borders of numerous flimsy territories constantly changed and were very porous. Later on these territorially unstable areas gradually became even larger.

The municipal and provincial amalgamations of the last decades are in some way a continuation of this trend towards larger administrative territories. All over Europe a decentralisation of power at the cost of the nation state has resulted in pressures towards municipal and provincial amalgamations. The solid stars in the figure 1 illus-

trate the emergence of the prosperous and independent cities at the end of the Middle Ages and account for the fact that their wealth provided the resources for the nation states to emerge. After a period of absorption by the nation state the cities tend to emerge again, but not so much as separate, independent cities, but rather as the nodes in diversified urban networks. The size and the dots of the stars in the figure 1 indicate that the cities are no longer predominantly market towns for their surrounding region, but function more as nodes in the gradually extending and overlapping urban networks. The larger and more solid stars towards the right in figure 1 suggest that in the future these urban networks will possibly become more important and develop into stable political constructions competing directly with the declining nation state. Figure 1 is however dominated by the solid pyramid indicating the homogenising and fixed territorial character of the nation state. The upward slope on the right indicates the trend towards nation state formation, which until recently dominated political and academic thinking. Figure 1 also shows that although the rising trend of nation state is in crisis and its development is now being reversed, the nation state is still a dominant force.

### Neomedievalism and structural crises in social development

To better understand this current crisis of the nation state some academics make comparisons with the Middle Ages. Some regard neomedievalism as a possible scenario when the centralised territorial coordination of nation states would continue to fragment and urban networks would further increase their significance.<sup>10</sup> This will result in a mosaic of allegiances that are difficult to coordinate. Some expect that collective identities will focus on larger entities like “Europe” or “liberal values”, or “Christian values”, which will provide some integration and bonding comparable to the bonds of identity offered by the Roman Catholic Church in the Middle Ages. This process, coupled with a renewed focus on smaller entities like local communities can create new forms of politics, alliances and allegiances.<sup>11</sup>

It is now clear that neo-medievalism interpreted in this spirit does not imply “a return to the Middle Ages”, but calls for a renewed interest in dealing with fundamental crises in social structures. Where do these crises lead to?

According to Immanuel Wallerstein the current crisis signifies the transgression from one *structural TimeSpace* to another. The word *TimeSpace* reiterates the inseparability of time and space for human self-understanding. Following Fernand Braudel’s types of social time (short-term “episodic history”, medium-term “cyclical history” and long-term “structural history”), Wallerstein extends them by attaching a spatial dimension to each one, thus obtaining different types of *TimeSpaces*.<sup>12</sup> The first type, “eternal

10 H. Bull, 1977; G. Lewicki, 2010.

11 S.J. Kobrin, 1998, p. 361-386.

12 I. Wallerstein, 1988, p.289-297;  
I. Wallerstein, 1998.

TimeSpace”, is characterised by general explanations that disregard the specificities of time and space. This TimeSpace has dominated the social sciences until recently and took the form of the search for general laws of behaviour. Those who operate within this TimeSpace conceptualize social change as eternal progress starting in the Dark Middle Ages. Wallerstein criticizes this search for universal laws, but also seeks to go beyond the short-term analysis of particular events and places typical for the second type: “episodic TimeSpace”. He therefore focuses on the third type – “structural TimeSpace”, which analyses long-term phenomena and qualitative changes of the social system. When a transition from one “structural TimeSpace” to another takes place, one can speak of the fourth type: “a transformational TimeSpace” that – Wallerstein believes – becomes reality right now.

Once, the capitalist world-economy as we know it was a new *structural TimeSpace* that emerged out of the late Medieval crisis of feudalism in Northwestern Europe. A large scale and expanding division of labour based on market competition replaced the coercion-based local division of labour which characterised the Middle Ages. However, we now face a new crisis. Wallerstein compares the crisis of the Middle Ages that gave birth to the modern world-system with its nation states, with the current crisis of the world-system. He claims that what will emerge is a new, yet another fundamentally different *structural TimeSpace*<sup>13</sup>.

13 *Ibid.*

14 S. Sassen, 2008.

Saskia Sassen<sup>14</sup> also compares the current crisis and the transformation of the nation state with that at the end of the Middle Ages. This can help to avoid what Saskia Sassen calls “the endogeneity trap” that leads a researcher to limiting analyses to the subject studied: “[W]e cannot understand the x - in this case globalization - by confining our study to the characteristics of the x itself - i.e., global processes and institutions”.<sup>15</sup> This means that analyses of globalisation should not be limited to the burgeoning worldwide trade, new communication technologies, the emerging global institutions, the growth of transnational corporations, the growing importance of cities and the decline of the nation state since the 1980s. More attention to both the local scale and a longer time-frame is necessary to better understand globalisation. To avoid the endogeneity trap one must look beyond simple dualities of scale and time. Only studying the different relations between the local scale and many other scales allows us to avoid the scale duality between the national and the global. Studying the periods before, during and after the golden age of the nation state avoids the time duality which contrasts the period of the nation state with the current period of globalisation.<sup>16</sup> It must be highlighted that the nation state is not a kind of primordial condition which is now challenged by globalisation. There were certainly important long distance relations before the period of the nation state. This does not suggest that there are no fundamental changes between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.<sup>17</sup> Analysing earlier periods gives a much more nuanced and complex picture than “models of current social change, which are

15 *Ibid.*, p.4.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 394.

17 I. Wallerstein, 2000.

typically geared toward isolating key variables to create order where none is seen. (...) Looking at this earlier phase is a way of raising the level of complexity in the inquiry about current transformations”.<sup>18</sup> History is important to understand the continuities and changes of the building blocks on which assemblage the general structure of these periods is based.<sup>19</sup> Each new phase reassembles the constituent elements of the previous period in a new way. To understand globalisation it is therefore important to study the evolution of these building blocks and how they become transformed in different assemblages, like the cities and nation states.<sup>20</sup>

19 *Ibid.*, s.13.

20 N. Brenner, *op. cit.*;  
P. Taylor 2013, *op. cit.*;  
M. Kitson et al., 2004, s.991-999;  
S. Halperin, *op. cit.*

### Towards a global urban economy

Over the last decades, there emerged a huge literature on the growing importance of cities and globalisation.<sup>21</sup> Cities are now internationally ranked on their performance in the global networks and on their local economic potential. A wide array of indicators is used to measure the relative performance of cities in the global economic competition. For instance, in the ranks calculated by the *Financial Times*, Wrocław tops the list of “emerging cities business friendliness”.<sup>22</sup> Improving urban economic performance and the position in these rankings is increasingly linked to policies that improve the global economic position of cities.

21 FT 2014.

22 I. Gordon, 1999,

Indeed, urban competitiveness has become an important topic in policy discourses. However, academics tend to be more sceptical to this idea. Some point out that urban competition is hardly global, but rather limited to nearby cities.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, especially economic geographers stress that it is not cities or regions, but firms which compete with one another.<sup>24</sup> However, so far the discussions about urban competitiveness are dominated more by policy concerns than by academic investigation. One can say that “the policy tail is wagging the analytical dog”<sup>25</sup> as the policymakers everywhere have jumped onto the urban competitiveness bandwagon.<sup>26</sup> Hence, an urban development industry has emerged which transformed these analytical concepts into ‘policy facts’. As a result, cities and urban regions are affected by globalisation and regional competitiveness regardless whether these are real, but because they are acted upon.<sup>27</sup>

*The power of the cities keeps growing. Great metropolitan regions will soon have their say*

23 M. Kitson et al., *op. cit.*

24 G. MacLeod, 2001, p. 809.

25 M. Kitson et al., *op. cit.*, p. 991.

26 A. Lagendijk i J. Cornford, 2000, p. 210.

27 M. Purcell, 2002.

Unfortunately, the assumption that a whole urban community benefits from the increased competitiveness of a city suffers from the same methodological problems as the national community. Such assumption is rendered false when applied to national community, (which was already discussed above) due to the territorial trap that as-

28 K. Terlouw and J. Weststrate,  
*op. cit.*

sumes congruence between territory and community. The concept of an urban community suffers from similar problems: according to Mark Purcell the growing focus in political debates on urban interests falls into “the local trap” i.e. assumption that there exists something like a singular urban community that has shared, common interests.<sup>28</sup> As a result of such thinking, cities tend to be reified just like territories and their constructed, man-made character is ignored.

One can develop Purcell’s thought by saying that the focus on the shared interest of urban communities in globalising networks falls into “a nodal trap of urban competitiveness”. What is this trap? It takes the form of an unjustified assumption (similar to the one from territorial trap) that there is an assumed homogeneity of interests within the urban community between the elite and the rest of the population. The city in this approach is treated like a territory, reified into an unchanging homogeneous unified actor.

Certainly, this nodal trap to an extent differs from the territorial trap, as it does acknowledge that well-being of the political communities in a city is fundamentally related to its linkages with other cities. Moreover, it focuses not on a single scale, but

*In fact global players value their own global networks more than local city networks they operate in*

on both local and global scales. In spite of this, the idea of “the urban competitiveness for the urban community” still falls in a nodal trap, because it assumes that the members of diverse global, non-local networks share more interests with their urban neighbours within

a city than with their own networks involving many cities. Such way of thinking is oblivious to the fact that the urban neighbours of the global actors in fact participate in different global, national, regional, or local networks. It is for instance assumed that the local branch of a bank has more common interests with local building firms, than with the other branches of that bank. In other words, the node is assumed to be more important than the network and that clustering of nodes coming from different global networks in a city creates a common good for the entire urban community. This overrides (or better: conceals) the common interests of the urban elites collaborating in their global networks.

Obviously, as to policy making, a shift from succumbing to the territorial trap to succumbing to the nodal trap is a danger that must be avoided. How to do it? In the Middle Ages people learned to deal with multiple loyalties and identities. But in the Middle Ages it took centuries with many conflicts to work out some ways to deal with these complexities. Unfortunately, the increased frequency of social change in the twenty first century does not give us so much time to work out new ways to deal with these complexities.



## From urban competition to urban and regional cooperation

The focus of the debate on the economic role of cities is shifting from individual large cities to urban networks and metropolitan regions. Cooperation and coordination between cities and their surrounding area is increasingly regarded as important for stimulating their competitiveness. The policies that aim to do so not only focus on factors affecting the economic competitiveness, but also on how to organise important local, regional and national political and economic actors in a form of multi-level governance.

It is a general observation that cities not only compete but also cooperate. They cooperate in new institutional arrangements to cope with the problems a crisis-prone globalising economy generates. They also cooperate on the new tasks they receive from the nation state following the decentralisation of power and responsibilities.

The ‘new regions’ created in such cooperation are sometimes based merely on the cooperation between of adjacent administrative territories. However, it is not always the case. The new regions increasingly consist of complex urban networks, linking cities with each other and further with local and regional administrations. They are complex while they increasingly include administrations from different administrative levels (local, regional, national) and non-administrative partners, like business (organisations) and other groups of stakeholders. The organisation of these new regions and urban networks is based more on the cooperation between policymakers of different public administrations and non-state actors – like business associations – in networks, than on an administrative hierarchy of geographically fixed territories. This reminds us of the Middle Ages, which consisted of different territories and networks that were used to look after the interests of local stakeholders.<sup>29</sup>

Of note is that new regions and urban networks frequently cover different policy fields, partially overlap in space and lack clear spatial borders. As a consequence, local actors are confronted with many different new regions and urban networks. Some conceptualise these new regions as a problem linked to the crisis-prone capitalism. According to Neil Brenner<sup>30</sup> this “mosaics of scalar organization” cut across the classical nested administrative hierarchies to create a “continued institutional and spatial disorder.”<sup>31</sup>

Other authors conceptualise new regions as a viable solution. For example, Bruno Frey labels these regions as FOCJs (Functional Overlapping Competing Jurisdictions) and regards them as an alternative to the hierarchical system of a centralised state.<sup>32</sup> FOCJs emerge bottom-up in response to the complex geography of problems. Their flexibility enables them to provide public goods more effectively and efficiently. FOCJs are not an alternative, but a complimentary administrative structure. The area of these functional regions is defined by the specific task they have to fulfil. Their

29 *Ibid.*, p. 296.

30 B.S. Frey, 2005.

31 B. McSweeney, 1999, p. 77-78.

32 A. Paasi, 2012, p. 1206-1219.

size fits the scope of the interests of the stakeholders, like local business associations cooperating to collectively promote the competitiveness of their region. Such conceptualisation results in a layered administrative landscape of multiple coexisting and partially overlapping new regions. This can be justified by the specific spatial shape of the problems they address, but the legal framework on which the cooperation (mostly informal) in these new regions is based is in fact more problematic – as is their democratic legitimation.

### **The identity of urban networks and regions**

One way to counter the fragmentation linked to the crisis of the nation state and the growing importance of urban networks is related to the new ways in which different identities of communities, cities, regions, nations and continents are being constructed. New forms of identities can provide alternatives for the civic bonding based on the nationalism (that focuses on the territory of the nation state). Identities are not some fixed facts, but constantly evolving social constructions. “Collective identity is not ‘out there’, waiting to be discovered. What is ‘out there’ is an identity discourse on the part of political leaders, intellectuals and countless others, who engage in the process of constructing, negotiating, manipulating or affirming”.<sup>33</sup> This means that spatial identities are not something tangible and fixed, but rather something formed through the so called “identity discourses” – the proposed ways of bonding uttered by many groups, which are subsequently disputed, agreed upon, reinterpreted and transformed. Identities, as a result, are social constructs – the entities created and governed by society itself. As Anssi Paasi puts it, when describing regional identity: “Rather than as an empirical entity defined in terms of its inherent qualities or as the product of the identification of its inhabitants, regional identity is understood (...) as a social construct that is produced and reproduced in discourse. The discourses of regional identity are plural and contextual. They are generated through social practices and power relations both within regions and through the relationship between regions and the wider constituencies of which they are part.”<sup>34</sup> Thus, spatial identity discourses are always related to other competing or complementary discourses. They emerge out of interaction with other identities.

The role of national identities in both national and international politics has been extensively acknowledged and studied. The rise of nationalism and the decline of localism since the nineteenth century in Western countries were commonly regarded as the opposite sides of the same coin. What is interesting, the decline of local urban identities was seen – at that time – as a welcome sign of the breaking of the bonds of traditional medieval societies that were viewed pejoratively – as societies that solely

33 A. Smith, 1982, p.149-161;  
A. Paasi, *op. cit.*

34 A. Confino, 1997.

restrained individuals in their path toward modernity. Hence, phenomena such as individual freedom, democracy, economic development and welfare, were linked to the imagined future community of the nation, which as a two-faced god Janus not only looked backwards in history at the Dark Middle Ages, but also forward at the bright future of modernity. In this view, urban and regional identities were seen as a relic of the divisive medieval past, which was finally being surpassed by more future-oriented, modern and integrative nationalisms.

All nationalisms stress the homogeneity of the nation and the exclusiveness of the relation between the individual and the nation. They leave no room for other significant competing collective identities.<sup>35</sup> Hence, modern individuals were to identify predominantly with their national community. Although local and regional identities did not disappear at that time, they were reformulated as the historical setting of the national discourse which focuses more on integration and development away from the old localism characterised by fragmentation and stagnation.<sup>36</sup>

It took many centuries for this hierarchal relation between local, regional and national identities (with the nation and civic activity on the top) to emerge, mature and thicken. It had sufficient time to become institutionalised and thickened. However, the newly formed reality of urban networks and regions hardly has the time to develop these kinds of thick spatial identities. These new identities are in fact much thinner and more subject to change and competition than the traditional thick identities. Below, table 2 gives an overview of the key characteristics of the thick, territorial identities and the thin, more network based identities.

What are the features of these two types of identity? Thick spatial identities are more backward-looking and value the spatial community as a political goal in itself. They focus more on bonding within a territorial community, while thin identities focus more on bridging between networked communities.

Thin spatial identities are more forward-looking and value more the effectiveness of their especially economic policies. Moreover, thin spatial identities are more functional and linked to sectorial policies and special interests and stakeholders, while thick spatial identities are more integrative. Whereas thin spatial identities are created around a few - often economic - characteristics, thick spatial identities cover a broad range of cultural, social, political, landscape and economic characteristics. Also, thin spatial identities are more changeable. Their spatial form and meaning can be adapted to changing circumstances. They are less based on static territories with a fixed meaning, but focus more on fluid networks and dialogue.<sup>37</sup>

The growing importance of thin spatial identities can be illustrated by comparing

35 A. Smith, 1982; p.149-161;  
A. Paasi, *op. cit.*

36 A. Confino, 1997.

*Like in the Middle Ages, the people of the future will have to deal with complex and overlapping entities*

37 K. Terlouw, 2009; Z. Bauman, *op. cit.*

the traditional region Lippe with the modern region OWL which is based on cooperation in an urban network. Both are located in the North-east of the German federal state of Nordrhein-Westfalen.

Lippe has a very strong traditional thick regional identity rooted in its rural landscape, regional traditions and long history. It is a strongly institutionalised region within a territory which was already formed in the Middle Ages and which has hardly changed over the centuries. Its rural landscape is hardly touched by industrialisation and urbanisation. After centuries of being an independent state, Lippe is now an administrative district. But its thick regional identity discourse focusing on its history and the landscape within its territory, now hinders Lippe from effective participation in new forms of regional cooperation, like that of OWL.

In 1989, in Bielefeld - a large city just outside Lippe - important regional companies together with the regional chambers of commerce founded an association - to promote the region Ostwestfalen-Lippe (OWL) as a business location. As its complicated name suggests, Ostwestfalen-Lippe has no established regional identity. Ostwestfalen-Lippe wants to communicate a regional identity which is different from both the more rural Westfalen and the declining industrial Ruhr area. By advertising its many mid-sized cities with thriving local companies, they communicate a distinct thin regional identity. Its regional identity discourse is thus based on economic characteristics, is offensive, expansive and future oriented. It focuses its communications not on its own population, but on entrepreneurs. Its communicated regional identity has shifted over time from correcting a negative image of backwardness, to promoting OWL as an innovative and cooperative business community showing the rest of Germany how to improve global competitiveness through networking and deregulation.<sup>38</sup>

38 K. Terlouw, 2012.

### **Conclusion: the layering of urban networks, regions and their identities**

Like in the Middle Ages, the people of the future will have to deal with complex, multiple, competing and overlapping economic as well as political entities. Like in the Middle Ages, cities and regions will have considerable autonomy towards territorial states. The urban centrifugal forces now challenge the legitimacy of the political system based on the coherence between collective national identity and political territory. Together with the nation state the thick territorial spatial identities are now being challenged as well. Thus, new forms of spatial identities are needed to legitimise and stabilise this fragmenting political system. But this does not mean that the new, thin, relational identities are to replace the traditional thick territorial identities. How they will relate to each other in the future?

Urban networks and regions will become more numerous and important and depend more and more on future oriented, thin spatial identity discourses focusing on strengthening very specific elements on which they want to base their economic competitiveness in the global economy. But in order to legitimise their political decisions they have to link these thin economic identity discourses with elements of the historically rooted thick identities. Urban networks and regions can thicken their thin

Aspect	<i>Ranging from traditional thick:</i>	<i>To future oriented thin:</i>
Spatial form	Closed	Open
	Territorial	Network
Organisation	Institutionalised	Project
Participants	General population	Administrators and specific stakeholders
Purpose	Broad and many	Single
	Culture	Economy
Time	Defensive	Offensive
	Historical oriented	Future oriented
	Stable	Change
	Old	New
Scale focus	Local and National	Global

Table 2. Aspects of spatial identity discourses (source: K. Terlouw 2009)

economic regional identity discourse by referring to a glorious past, even though this was long before the administrations in these regions started to cooperate. They do this to widen their support base from policy makers to the general population.<sup>39</sup> Urban administrations sometimes use different spatial identities for different audiences. Thin urban identities focusing on economic competitiveness are more used to attract outside investors. In turn, thick urban identity discourses are frequently used as an ideological shield to conceal the drawbacks of these neoliberal policies for the general population, by focusing on the supposedly shared interest of all members of a urban community.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>40</sup> K.R. Cox, 1999.

But these new thinner and layered identity discourses of urban networks and regions are not simply replacing national identities. Over the last decade all over the Western world there is a resurgence of a new form of nativist nationalism. Traditional nationalism was more based on the horizontal confrontation across

*Paradoxically, nationalism, in combating transnational globalization creates transnational ties itself*

the border with neighbouring nations at the same spatial scale. A new nativist nationalism, however, focuses more on the vertical power relations across scales: native nationalists now cooperate across borders to reduce the influence of the European Union and limit

globalisation in general and international migration in particular. But even this resurgence of nationalism that opposes globalisation and thin identity discourses focusing on urban competitiveness and international urban relations does not signal a return to the traditional nation state. Why? Because nativist nationalism also creates new bonds across territorial borders, thus adding a further layer to the complex relations and identities of cities, urban networks, urban regions and the administrative territories of the nation state and Europe. The application of neomedievalist perspective to the study of these problems can help us to understand how to deal with the globalized urban future.

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Illustration – drawing of Maastricht, by Philippo Bellomonte from 1580 or 1582.

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: König haubt  
 Süd-Ost anzusehn,  
 le güter Sitten,  
 ndern Seiten mittlen,  
 er Schütz geschehn,  
 länger stehen,  
 in Lob erhöhe



Stadt Bre  
 Zeiger der vorneh  
 1. S. Nicolay. — 10. S. Dor  
 2. S. Nicklas Thor. — 11. N. Begr  
 3. S. Anthoni — 12. S. Elis  
 4. S. Barbara — 13. Doo Reb  
 5. S. Hedwig — 14. S. Mag  
 6. Zeugt Haus — 15. Tafel  
 7. Schweiß Thor. — 16. S. A. g  
 8. Corp. Christi. — 17. Kay. B  
 9. S. Hic. — 18. S. Hic. Jecutte  
 10. S. Hic. — 18. S. Chri  
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# Rational or Reasonable?

The New Middle Ages as the Era of Deliberative Cities

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***Innovation? Not necessarily. Sometimes it is renovation or restoration that works better. It seems that urban policies could benefit from a return to the medieval model. As a result, the city could begin to build creatively on human spontaneity, instead of allowing for urban chaos to spread, or to the contrary - total control. Emotions of the people are back in the game - to the distress of technocrats.***



The upcoming new Middle Ages will have a scent of urban air. Of course, not the one contaminated with smog as we breathe today. It is rather the urban air which „makes one free”<sup>1</sup> according to a medieval maxim. Just as the city once freed people from the shackles of the feudal order, today it should empower them in a collective action. In my text I argue that the challenges facing modern cities – especially Polish ones – require neomedieval solutions that are inspired by the Middle Ages.

Why should the inspiration for urban policies be neomedieval? It is because the challenges facing the city resemble the ones which have occurred since the early Middle Ages. The response to these challenges was developed by the high and late Medieval era.

We shall start with answering the question what the early Middle Ages was like in Europe. First of all, it was a period of dramatic de-urbanisation, namely a process of gradual decomposition of the earlier urban entities<sup>2</sup> in the aftermath of depopulation due to diseases, wars and the collapse of the former political systems. Certainly, the reasons for today’s depopulation processes are indeed different. However, looking at the process of disintegration of cities existing as a kind of unified social organisms, even today one can see that de-urbanisation has become a reality; urban areas are following the neoliberal vision of spatial (dis)order. City dwellers flee to suburban areas which are perceived as a substitute for a dream village, or lock themselves up in strongholds of “gated communities” in order to keep a safe distance from other social classes and cultures.<sup>3</sup> Nowadays, cities no longer stimulate or reinforce social relations, but instead they have become the space of alienation and anonymization. In many cities this is manifested by disappearing urban centers, which have been converted into huge office and shopping centers, being the destination for people commuting from remote suburban settlements. The urban fabric is also eroding due to endless vehicle traffic – various parts of the city are intersected by untraversable torrents of cars. Whole stretches of urban land are being turned into socially useless

1 For centuries, the medieval phrase „city air makes one free” has commonly referred to the freedom which – under the common law in force at that time – was vested in peasants after a full year of living in a city. In the 20th century this phrase was horribly distorted by Nazi Germans who displayed the notorious slogan “Arbeit macht frei” above the entrance gate to the extermination camp in Auschwitz.

2 W. Gruszkowski, 1989.

3 T. Mohd et al., 2015.

swamps of parking spaces. It is clear that the cities are breaking apart, or sprawling.

In addition to the ongoing alienation apparent in social relations, another feature of the new Middle Ages is the growing complexity of social, legal and economic relations. This state of affairs is demonstrated by a number of concurring processes, and further aggravated by the proliferation of actors on the social scene. In consequence, the traditional „rational and expert” policy management is no longer sufficient. Moreover, these problems are getting even more difficult to resolve, as their general nature is less and less clear. Any attempts to disentangle this chaos produce further difficulties, or even a complete mess.

Both these problems – i.e. increasing complexity and disintegration – were adequately responded to in the Middle Ages. For their unique and useful features, the neomedieval solutions may prove to be relevant and applicable also today.

*Due to the growing complexity of social relations, traditionally understood governance becomes insufficient*

When speaking about the new Middle Ages, obviously I do not mean the return to the world of classic feudalism, muddy streets or city walls guarded by the guilds. I imagine the urban new Middle Ages rather as a recall of a cer-

tain type of perception of the city, the beginnings of which could be already traced back to the high Middle Ages, and its mature form to the late Middle Ages. Before I proceed to the details of this approach, I will explain why this category has been addressed. I reckon the new Middle Ages to be like the one described by Grzegorz Lewicki in *Pressje* – as networked, eclectic, complex and (to an extent) postmodern.<sup>4</sup> Such a metaphorical term for this concept seems to be the most suitable to reflect the nature of these changes – both the postulated ones, as well as those already taking place. In this approach, neomedievalism may also serve as a convenient forecasting framework to show the differences between what is already the past, and what is to come.

On the one hand, we are dealing with something new, which will replace the attitudes prevalent for decades. On the other, the reference is to what already existed, and what is rejected as supposedly „old-fashioned” or „unenlightened”.

First and foremost I wish to reassure all those who associate the new Middle Ages with the extravagant, religious vision by Nicholas Berdyaev<sup>5</sup>. I will not dwell upon the role of spirituality and the church in public life. Instead, I will focus on a broader urban policy, covering civic economics, social relations and spatial development. I will try to show these transformations from the perspective of political philosophy and policy analysis, as well as to demonstrate that significant reform of self-governance is pivotal for the urban changes that will bring tangible benefits to the citizens. Among the most promising projects, I wish to point to the theory of deliberative democracy and deliberative governance interpreted in the neomedieval spirit.

4 G. Lewicki, 2010.

5 M. Bierdajew, 1997.

## Urban Planning – Now and Then

One of the best known medieval processes which became the main expression of urban experience in Polish territory – including Wrocław – was called a ‘location’. According to the PWN Encyclopaedia, “location” is a term derived from Latin which „in XII-XIV century meant the establishment of a new village or town, sometimes even transformation from existing settlements by spatial regulation and legal exception, usually on the basis of a new settlement law.” Most definitions focus on the spatial dimension of this institution, emphasizing that „it consisted of designing a reasonable layout of a settlement.”<sup>6</sup> But we must remember that the establishment of separate rights and self-government for the inhabitants was an integral part of this process, owing to the specific socio-economic functions the cities had to perform.

6 Encyklopedia PWN, 2016.

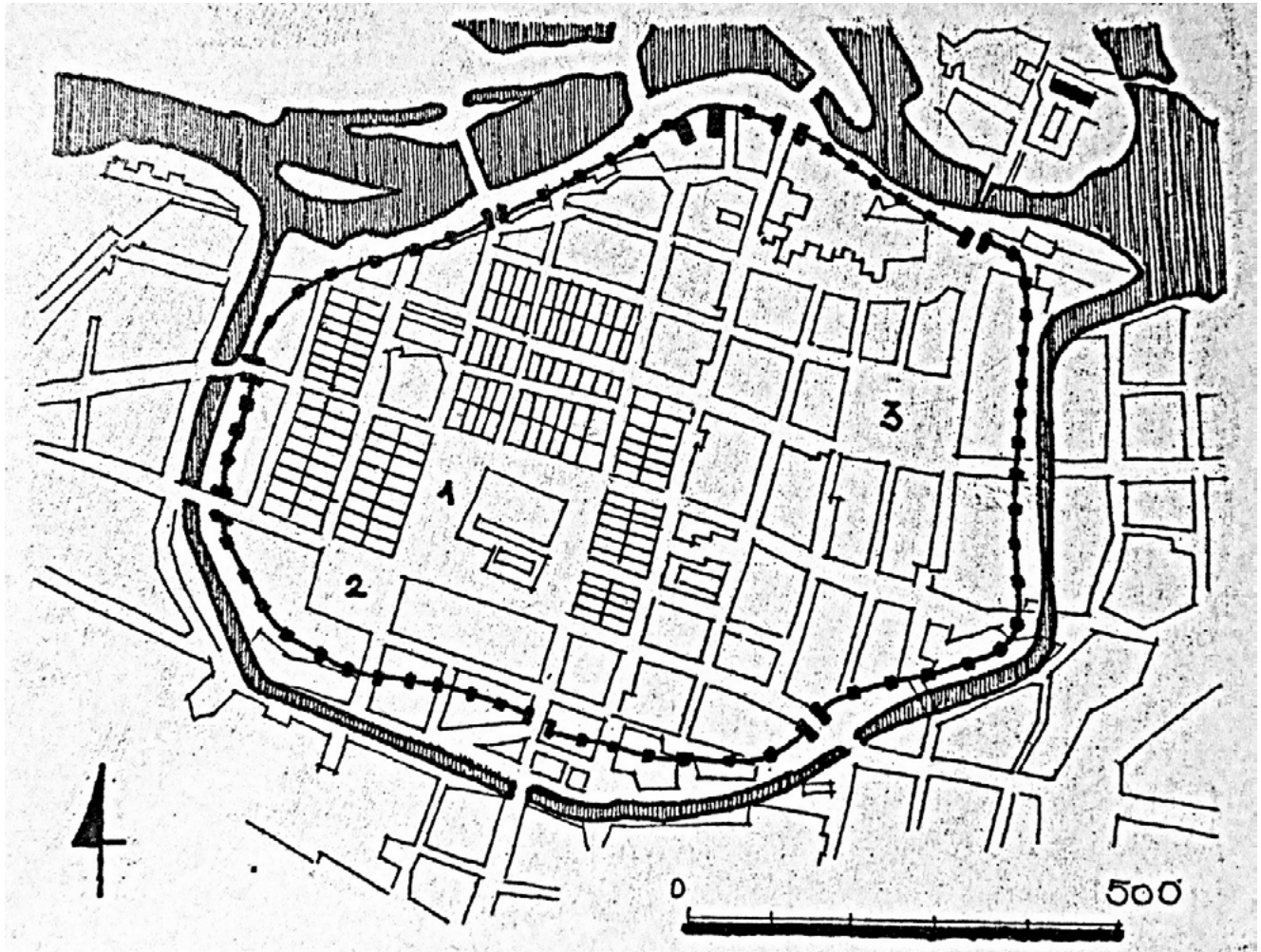
For many centuries, the Magdeburg law, also called the German law was the main model rule applied in cities in our part of Europe. Wrocław was one of the first cities in Poland established according to this principle. „The act of location” is commonly associated with founding, which meant the establishment of the city as a new political unit, planning its spatial layout and the creation of its political and legal system. It was associated with laying the foundation stone for the construction of a house according to a specific design – from scratch – and implied the act of granting a kind of a small local constitution. However, a closer glance at Wrocław clearly reveals the difference between the actual, medieval location and our modern, idealistic image. Our idea of the process of location is apparently determined by the modern image of an utopian colonization; the establishment of a completely new city according to an ideal plan. On the contrary, Wrocław was in fact a group of existing settlements, combined in the course of several subsequent locations, and ultimately stitched into one common political and economic organism.<sup>7</sup>

7 R. Eysymontt, 2009

Such an integration was typical of medieval locations effected in Poland under German law; most of them were implemented on the territory or in the immediate proximity of existing settlements.<sup>8</sup> Interestingly, the preliminary street grid plotted on a rectangular plan – with sites earmarked for a market and a town hall – in many places was subject to subsequent modifications intended to preserve the existing buildings. On account of the priority of preserving the old, in medieval cities the streets which harmoniously intersect, often suddenly become curved, crooked or meander around the buildings.<sup>9</sup> The same applies to granting rights and self-government; Henryk Samsonowicz notes that „the development of urban legislation was a long process in which the moment of granting the German law was neither the first nor the last act. [...] Granting the town privileges was an important moment in the life of the city establishing standards of civil and criminal law, and the extension of judiciary immunity. The scope of local government competency was determined much

8 W. Gruszkowski, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

9 *Ibid.*





later, on the basis of customary practice and the outcome of the clash of social forces that influence the formation of a municipality.”<sup>10</sup>

Therefore, the medieval locations were not just acts of founding or creation understood as “conceiving.” Their aim was rather to organize the existing structures, provide governance, and coordination – that is putting the chaos back to order. This is what distinguishes medieval locations from two other pure types of urban planning: early-modern utopianism and late-modern *laissez-faire*. What were those other two types like?

Specialists refer to modern utopianism as Baroque city planning, which is commonly associated with classicism and enlightenment, with towns designed according to the principles of geometric structure. This approach entails complete destruction of the old structures to replace them with broad roadways and tall buildings. That is how Christopher Wren’s London was supposed to look after the fire of 1666 (eventually, however, not all went according to the plan). It is of course how Paris was designed by Haussmann, who in the nineteenth century replaced the old Paris lauded by W. Hugo in *Les Misérables*. A model example of Baroque city planning is Washington DC, the capital of the “New Roman Empire” – the U.S.A. According to the original plan by Pierre L’Enfant and his successor - A. Ellicott, the spatial layout of the city perfectly reflected the constitutional division of powers in the new republic. Therefore, „the starting point in l’Enfant’s design was the location of two main buildings - the seats of the executive and legislative power.”<sup>11</sup> As a result, two dominant perspectives stretch from the Washington monument: the one heading eastwards along the famous The Mall towards the impressive Capitol, and a broad avenue leading to the north and closed by the White House. Interestingly, both planners underestimated the role of the Supreme Court – the third most prominent power in the American political system – choosing a less representative location to that body.” It is, of course, explainable as Washington was designed in 1791, whereas the Marbury v. Madison precedence, which established the judicial review – took place as late as in 1803. „Ultimately, the Supreme Court building was erected near the Capitol. To commemorate the original location designated to it by l’Enfant, it was named Judiciary Square”.<sup>12</sup>

The other extreme of city planning spectrum is represented by the examples of late modern *laissez-faire*. This developed with the industrial revolution and the rapid migration of population from rural to urban areas in search for work. The phenomenon of uncontrolled urban sprawl – including the formation of limitless human settlements, slums or shanty towns built without any spatial plan or providing the neces-

Fig. 1. Wrocław. „One of the medieval Polish metropolises. Next to the castle-town and castle-suburbium (9<sup>th</sup> cent.) on the Cathedral Island (Ostrów Tumski North-East) the Old and New Town were established in two location processes, with a Market (1), Salt Square (2) and Nowy Targ [New Market] (3). The number of markets indicates the commercial functions of the city” (Source: Gruszkowski, 1989, s.6).

10 H. Samsonowicz, 1965;  
Z. Kaczmarczyk, 1961.

*Wrocław is in fact a collection of a few settlements, bundled in the course of subsequent locations*

11 M. Motak, 1996.

12 *Ibid.*



sary sanitation and demonstrating a blatant lack of public supervision are characteristic of this trend. It is typical of both the nineteenth-century industrial cities, as well as today's developing countries, and it results in the formation of a so-called conurbation – a boundless urban agglomerate, „an ocean of bricks and concrete.” This phenomenon was so startling for 19<sup>th</sup> century aesthetes, that it even triggered the return to the utopian countryside loving visions, including the concept of garden-cities.<sup>13</sup>

It should be emphasized that *laissez-faire* (non)planning is not only a stage in the social-historical development, but it is also a system intentionally designed according to particular ideological principles, often aimed at increasing the freedom of entities with substantial economic power. In other words, a system in which the rich are winners. According to this model, the city is a big arena of overt market competition, which is manifested by an aesthetic cacophony (the imperative of visual garishness of advertisements, sometimes referred to as the „Victorian eclecticism”<sup>14</sup>), appropriation and fencing of public space (the imperative of increasing the value of the property). Poland is a good example of this model, with ill-devised law and the hegemony of private property over the principles of socio-economic sustainability.<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, on the one hand we have a Procrustean bed of rigorous geometrism – a total project – the designer's perfect dream, that unfortunately creates alienating, overwhelming and simply inhuman spaces. Such a project is, poetically speaking, a work of art created by „a dreamer in his dream space. Let the others get upset and tired with it.”<sup>16</sup> As a result, the projects thus created often require a complete demolition of the old plan. On the other hand, however, we have an absolute lack of vision – the ‘urban Darwinism’ – referring to the idea that whoever has better methods of persuasion and more resources – is a winner.

It seems that the medieval type of spatial planning can be found somewhere between these two extremes. It aims at some order, but does not impose any strict forms. In this perspective, this order is a certain frame<sup>17</sup> to fill in, inspired by utopia, but non-exhaustive and flexible, allowing plenty of room for spontaneity and systematic, context dependent improvements. A model example of this harmony would be building pavements where paths have been trodden by the people themselves. Neomedieval spatial planning is therefore open, adaptable and respecting positive social practices and habits (interaction patterns and communication trails), while leaving some room for new practices to be developed by the residents. The Middle Ages, which established a framework for modernity, formed cities according to such a mixed model: it imposed a grid of roads and squares, marked the frameworks for buildings, but also gave a lot of freedom. It also allowed for measures derogating from these rules to preserve a precious monument, either for the sake of variety of style, or due to natural constraints.

Fig. 2. Washington DC as an example of the Baroque city planning (source: Wikimedia Commons, “L'Enfant Plan”, September 2016).

13 A. Czyżewski, 2001.

14 C. Harvie i H.C.G. Matthew, 2000.

15 S. Filip, 2013.

16 R. Nowakowski, 2001, p. 68.

17 U. Eco, 1998, p. 74–101.



## Deliberative Democracy in the New Middle Ages

Nowadays, one of the toughest challenges faced by modern cities is the growing complexity of contemporary problems combined with the ever growing number of so-called stakeholders – namely the parties interested in influencing and shaping the urban space. Such a configuration of urban problems requires innovative approaches. Meanwhile, especially in Poland, the traditional model of policy making is continuously used, leaving no room for consideration of that increasing complexity. This typical Polish model is referred to as „positivist” (in the philosophical sense), or „rational.” It is considered „rational” for its being focused on the so-called instrumental rationality and separating reason from emotion. In this perspective, emotions are associated with the irrational sphere of political competition for power (politics), whereas reason is identified with the professional civil service and the pursuit of “common good” (policy).

Taken as a whole, all these create an image of a polity somewhat mimicking David Hume’s vision of the mind, where emotions define policy objectives and the reason selects the means to achieve them. Rationality is purely instrumental, and the politics operates in the sphere of emotions – with the political will setting the objectives and „holding the mind on a leash.” This entails the so-called positivist philosophy, for which the only source of real knowledge is science or expertise. In such a rationalistic approach, politics is recognized as a dirty game for power and emotional whims. As human vices cannot be entirely erased from policy, to save the remnants of rationality, the so-called positivist „firewall” is introduced to separate politics and civil service.<sup>18</sup> All these measures are intended to protect the public debate against the „dirty”, “non-intellectual” emotions and demands of the crowd. This modernist and basically obsolete approach suits a model of democracy understood as a system of elites’ competition, in which collective emotions are represented by the elected politicians, and the rationality characterizes exclusively actions of rulers and experts.<sup>19</sup>

Unfortunately, this simple, „rational” solution does not work in the modern world. Like in the Middle Ages, we are confronted with a number of factors that make classic, „modernist” political mechanisms obsolete. The contemporary urban problems are characterized by:

complexity and contextual determinism (it is impossible to separate the problem from its background);

*Middle Ages aimed at creating an order that recognized the value of human spontaneity*

Fig. 3b. ‘Picturesque London’. A satirical sketch from *Punch* magazine (1890) presenting the logical consequences of the then-contemporary trends in visual advertising.

18 M.A. Hajer, 2003, p. 88–112.

19 J.A. Schumpeter, 2009.

20 K. Collins and R. Ison, 2006.

uncertainty regarding the scope of the problem and the solution;<sup>20</sup>

involvement of a vast number of stakeholders with different, usually conflicting goals.

21 R.L. Ackoff, 1990.

22 D.A. Schön, 1995.

23 H.W.J. Rittel and M.M. Webber, 1973.

These problems take such complicated forms that many professionals call them bluntly „messes”<sup>21</sup> or even „real live swamps.”<sup>22</sup> Their specificity often lies in the fact that they are „wicked”, i.e. the parties in dispute are unable to agree even as to the nature of the issues under consideration.<sup>23</sup> Such a „mess” can no longer be effectively resolved using traditional, modernist methods; the top-down, „rational” political arrangements may only cover the issue in dispute, leaving its essence unchanged, thus making the grounds for multiplication of problems and outbursts of social discontent.

24 C. Argyris, and D. Schön, 1978.

Therefore, not only the decision making process needs to be reorganized, but also its complete redefinition is required. In this situation of the ever increasing complexity of the problems we are facing, a new paradigm of public policies as a „social learning” model ought to be adopted. Social learning rejects the concept of politics understood as a process of delivering information to a passive recipient of information that will obligingly implement the top-down decisions. On the contrary, it postulates that public policy becomes a mutual learning mechanism based on the feedback loop.<sup>24</sup> Social learning would involve challenging policy standards and objectives, considering the unrecognized variety of stakeholders.<sup>25</sup> In public policies, social learning is a part of the „adaptive management” tradition.<sup>26</sup> In this context, the theory of deliberative democracy is often referred to as the one that can respond to these new challenges.

25 K. Collins and R. Ison, *op. cit.*

26 C. Blackmore, 2007.

What does the theory of deliberative democracy postulate? Firstly, it emphasizes the great importance of the discussion process preceding any decisions. It attempts to make each and every decision well contemplated and adopted in the fullest possible understanding of the problem. It also emphasizes the educational value of democracy, and therefore seeks citizens’ engagement.<sup>27</sup> The concept of deliberative democracy does not fit the idea of direct democracy in its basic understanding that all decisions should be taken in referenda following traditional public debate. It is the very debate – as emphasized by theorists of deliberation – that needs to be improved. Currently, debates are in fact dominated by sensationalist media and eristics, thus they preclude any possibility for the citizens to learn empathically from each other.

27 M. Zabdyr-Jamróz, 2014, p. 302–307; D. Held, 2010; A. Peisert, 2010; B. Szlachta i A. Krzynyówek, 2006; J. Węgrzycki, 2008; J. Węgrzycki, 2009.

### **Three Discourses in Parliament Assembled**

Why should the idea of deliberative democracy be interpreted in the neomedieval spirit? The first reason is the fact that for many years the proponents of deliberative

democracy (pursuing the political philosophy „from Plato to Habermas”) have been rather distrustful of the presence of emotion and self-interest in public life. According to them, these elements should be rather avoided in a debate, since emotions may open the way for eristic manipulation, while self-interest – provoke selfish bargaining without consideration of the common good. Therefore, it was assumed that there is a single, enlightened, objective and overriding „public reason”, comparable with the expert discourse i.e. the scientific or academic perspective. Actually, this approach was very modernistic and it resulted in forcing everyone to engage in such „expert” dialogue. It did not bring the expected results, though. Science became distorted in mediatized political discourse. Preferences based on emotions and expertise are notoriously masquerading as expertise devaluing its quality. With this in mind, the contemporary deliberative theory tends to rehabilitate emotions<sup>28</sup> and self-interest<sup>29</sup>, and restore their rightful role in shaping public policies – in parallel with the expert knowledge. Pursuant to this idea, the public reason has to rely on authentic solidarity. Certainly, the objective of such a reason would be the elimination of bias. But reason in this sense no longer requires any pure, procedural impartiality. It strives towards a kind of „omni-partiality,” i.e. the fair consideration of all the parties’ self-interests and emotions of all parties.<sup>30</sup>

Such an understanding of deliberation – as a „parliament” of emotions, self-interest and expertise<sup>31</sup> is a sign of opening the deliberation to the entities representing all the aspects of public life concerned; for example the citizens involved in social movements (emotions); developers, business and municipal authorities (self-interests) and planning experts (knowledge). It is a thoroughly neomedieval approach because – similarly as in the Middle Ages – it is an attempt to tackle the complexity of the problems and handle the participation of many stakeholders in the debate. This approach directly suggests the idea of deliberative negotiations; it clearly argues that public life will never be free from the conflict of interest, and that the worst thing that may happen to us is an attempt when someone’s particular self-interests and emotions pretend to be objective and neutral expertise (and unfortunately this is often the case in contemporary public debate).

Only by acknowledging the complexity of our world and not trying to fit it in our abstract notions, may we allow more room for agreement between actors speaking different languages. Language of emotions, interests and expertise constitute separate discourses. That is why the most fundamental challenge for municipal policies is often to encourage passionate activists, selfish businessmen and arrogant scientists to speak a common language. Without their mutual understanding, public policies will never lead to the comprehension of the scientific evidence, will not consider the concerns of citizens and will not satisfy the interests of various parties.

This is why contemporary deliberation can be likened to the late medieval parliaments, which were – in fact – institutions combining the most important agents

28 I.M. Young, 1998; J.S. Dryzek, 2002.

29 J. Mansbridge et al. 2010.

30 M. Zabdyr-Jamróż, 2015.

31 M. Zabdyr-Jamróż, 2016.

Tab. I. Three discourses of public life (developed by: Michał Zabdyr-Jamróz, 2016)

Subject	Emotions	Self-interest	Expertise
Description	Feelings, opinions, values, ideologies, etc.	Particular self-interests of individuals or groups	Academic or professional knowledge – formulated according to certain rules (eg. scientific method)
Pure form of discussion:	Eristic debate	Bargaining	Expert panel
Stakeholders:	Urban activists, politicians, etc.	Developers, entrepreneurs, municipal authorities, etc.	Scientists, lawyers, public health specialists, etc.

in the country, the „three estates”: the monarch, the people and the elite. A similar arrangement was adopted in the Sejm (or Diet) of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (although the „people” were just the gentry), and in the Westminster model of parliament. This type of institution proved to be an effective means to build social consensus regardless of the diversity of interests and beliefs.<sup>32</sup>

The three aforementioned discourses would be referred to in the modern, neomedieval reinterpretation of the deliberative idea. Imagining discourse as certain language practices, a manner of talking and thinking about particular problems, often mutually exclusive, I think that today, it is the discourses, rather than social estates (classes) that need to be represented. These discourses comprise of expert knowledge (science), self-interest (business) and emotions (social movements, politically mobilized citizens). Only if they all are allowed in the discussion on public policies (on their own rights) we may be able to seek consensus. These discourses will inevitably determine urban policy, whether we like it or not. If any of them is excluded, it will nevertheless impact the policy – though not openly – in a pathological way. Example of such pathology are self-interests or emotions disguised as allegedly objective expert opinions. Another would be a systemic ignorance to emotions of embittered citizens, which ultimately leads to protests impeding even the most sensible initiative.

Summing up, good governance in the age of mediatization requires a neomedieval approach: three discourses being combined in their own right, ensuring mutual understanding and development of a common language. This will allow for a reconciliation of self-interests and public passions with evidence-based policy.

Maarten Hajer, former head of the Dutch Environmental Impact Assessment Agency provides an example of such deliberative design. The proceedings of the British

31 M. Zabdyr-Jamróz, 2009;  
M. Zabdyr-Jamróz, W. Czabanowski, 2010.



Pure types of discussion:		Eristic debate	Bargaining	Expert panel	Deliberation
Discourse:	emotions	×			×
	self-interests		×		×
	expertise			×	×

Tab.2. Deliberation vs. other forms of discussion (developed by: Michał Zabdyr-Jamróż, 2016)

Food Standards Agency basically take into account not only expertise, but also the interest of food industry and consumer organizations, even though the latter, as commentators have remarked, would persistently stick to their positions for almost “theological reasons”. The objective of deliberation – in such cases – is neither to debunk the concerns of citizens nor to calm them down. In addition to providing an explicit explanation of test results, the Agency sincerely discusses the concerns expressed by the public as well as their reasons, all are taken into account. Hence Hajer described the Agency as an example of a new type of public authority in the era of „policy mediation.”<sup>33</sup>

33 M.A. Hajer, 2009.

In Polish cities, a basis for such deliberative design can be urban planning; especially the new Act on revitalization in force since 2015 or planned urbanistic-architectural code. The former provides a legal definition of a „stakeholder” and strengthens the role of social consultations. Through the institution of the Revitalization Committee, a more participatory and not just advisory involvement of different civic actors could be ensured. It is worth noting again that the supposed antagonism between more democratic and more competent decisions can be overcome.

*We must get rid of the myth that reasonable decisions necessitate pure, rational impartiality*

Various policy appraisal methods, such as the health impact assessment, by design take into account the feedback from the local community to ensure responsiveness and identification of all relevant environmental, social, economic determinates of health.<sup>34</sup>

34 M. Zabdyr-Jamróż, 2015B.

### Conclusion: Restoration Instead of Innovation

The new challenges for Polish cities do not always require institutional innovation; sometimes they rather need some form of renovation. Today, the late-modern institutions often lack the complexity which had existed previously, but was abandoned

– intentionally or by accident – at some point in history. As a matter of fact, some improvements that are currently missing, may be called neomedieval in character. What should be adopted from the Middle Ages is a vision of compromise in urban policies; a vision rejecting the full-scale Baroque urban planning on the one hand, and the turbo-capitalistic spatial Darwinism on the other. To successfully achieve these goals, the strictly positivist policy making should be significantly modified.

Such a renovation of the Medieval approach to urban policies is worthwhile. Strict interpretation of rationality puts excessive demands on policy makers and stakeholders. This may lead to a form of „tunnel vision” which results in overlooking a number of important issues, and consequently excluding them from the public discussion. Under this approach, unfortunately, the disenfranchised policy actors are forced to either „sit quietly” or to behave “non-conventionally” by protesting, striking, etc. On the contrary, this approach rewards stronger players giving them great freedom to push their agenda under the guise of fabricated research and crafty eristics.

Another quality of the Middle Ages worth embracing is the recognition of actual social and economic differences. Pretending that social differences do not translate into political influence is detrimental, and in the long run is used by the powerful to keep up the appearances of objective „rationality”. I do not mean that the policy should reflect economic strength in a feudal fashion. It is more about noticing that this strength translates into power in a political system. Only then will it be possible to compensate for such inequalities. Urban policies should also be sensitive to another kind of human needs – the need for respect, safety and dignity. Disregarding emotions in politics often turns against even the well-thought-out plans. Attempts to force some policies against the public opinion and important stakeholders are increasingly likely to result in the so called end-of-pipe deadlocks. Therefore, the ability to build coalitions in order to implement particular policies is of such great importance.

The traditional policy-making approach recognizes the chronological primacy of political will over the contents of the policy itself. It is only when the politicians choose general objectives that the administration sets out and implements the details. This type of instrumental-rational approach not only ignores important changes in social expectations, but above all seems to forget that often „the devil is in the details,” that arranging the particulars in the implementation process often changes the essence of the policy itself. Therefore, the postulated change of approach requires the modification of this sequence. We need to collectively determine the content of policies and, at the same time, build a political will through coalition-building. This is a „small” lesson that we should learn from the Middle Ages.

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**Recentissima  
ASIAE**

**Delineatio**  
 Qua IMPERIA ejus, REGNA et STATUS  
 Unacum novissimis RUS SORUM detectionib;  
 circa MARE CASPIUM et TERRAM YEDSO alias dictam  
 per illor: Expedi et Excursionis factis, summum  
 dirigente

IOH. CHRISTOPH. HOMANNI M.D.  
 Cum Gratificis: SAC. CAES. MAJ. PRIVILEGIO  
 Noribergae



C. L. de Tobura

# Wrocław and New Delhi.

On Metropolitan Cultural Identity, Islam  
and the Millet System

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***Islam, Catholicism, liberalism – denominations and ideologies have not only their principles, but their own rights and preferred laws. Hence the times of a single, unified national law for all citizens might be over. How about two parallel legal systems? How about three? Last but not least, we are witnessing a great migration of peoples – with some of them carrying their own preferred laws. The problems arise once one starts to live under a system of law one does not identify with.***



### **Ryszard Kapuściński in memoriam**

The theory of universal globalization could seem very convincing at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> and at the very beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It was generally agreed that the prevalence of technology will gradually accord with aesthetic and then ethical universalism, imposing uniform patterns on the residents of New York, Novi Sad and Nowy Sacz alike. Pretty soon, however, it was noticed that this rather natural process of total unification collides more and more with equally strong but opposite tendency to accentuate differences rather than similarities, which could be defined as „a globalization of the differentiation process.” This refers not only to politically neutral and fairly obvious issues, such as aesthetic taste (for example in the field of culinary and literary or musical culture), but most of all quite fundamental matters like human rights. What is considered universal in Europe or in the United States in this domain, does not necessarily have to be regarded as such in the Muslim world or in South-East Asia<sup>1</sup>.

1 This issue is discussed in more detail in my book titled „On the illusion of universal values” (P. Kłodkowski, 2002)

### **Multicultural identity in neomedievalism**

The question what is really allowed and what constitutes an insurmountable hurdle concerns the boundaries of multicultural policy which to a greater or lesser extent makes a part of a social policy. And it is not just in Europe, but also in North America, in some parts of the Middle East or India. It is in the context of „multiculturalism”, which as such is a vague concept (allowing for many interpretations), that the intriguing notion of „neomedievalism” appears. It may be further combined with an era of post-modernity, which is similarly ambiguous a notion. The theorists of neomedievalism often assume that in the coming decades cultural identity will become fragmented

according to ethnic and religious criteria, thus changing the map of global identity links for a long time to come. But are they right?

Indeed, a meeting or even a clash of different ethnic or confessional groups may result in a number of conflicts. But it may also impose various compromises which allow a relatively peaceful co-existence of various communities in a city, province or the entire country. Certainly, the co-existence of many diverse communities that differ in religion, patterns of social life, and even physical appearance may raise some questions about their identity, their cultural background, religious or even national heritage. It triggers such considerations like 'Am I a European, a Swede, and possibly a Christian at the same time, or perhaps above all, I am a Swede living in Europe, and the question of faith is something absolutely private?' 'Am I an Arab living in Paris, or perhaps a Muslim Frenchman of Arab origin?'. 'Am I a Hindu now living in London, or rather a Briton whose parents come from India? Am I a Pole from a mixed Polish-German marriage, or perhaps a German living in Poland, and maybe I consider myself a person from the borderline between these two nations and who does not intend to curb their own identity? Blending different cultures, languages and religions in

*We return to the world that selects  
legal norms you have to comply with  
based on your personal background*

a small metropolitan area can help build multi-layered identities, but can also force people to choose a single identity, giving them the psychological comfort of identification with some clearly defined religious, ethnic or language group. 'I am first and foremost a Muslim, and other

issues are of secondary importance,' 'I am first and foremost a Pole, and since the majority of Poles are Roman Catholics, it is how my nationality and religion is defined,' 'I feel French and I am French, and the origin of my parents has nothing to do with anything' - all these clear declarations of identity may coexist with the declaration of belonging to several groups simultaneously. An interesting example, illustrating precisely the latter approach is Amin Maalouf, a writer who emigrated from Lebanon to France. He considers himself a French writer and he writes in French, although his native language is Arabic. Furthermore, despite being an Arab, he is not a Muslim. He is a member of the Maronite community. All these make him an Arab, a Frenchman and a Christian at the same time. Then what is his real identity? As Maalouf writes: *"Many a times, since I left Lebanon in 1976 to live in France, I have been asked with the best of intentions, whether I feel, rather a Frenchman' or ,rather a Lebanese'. I invariably reply, ,The one, and the other alike!'. It is not to maintain any sort of balance or to demand that justice be done, but it is for the simple reason that providing any other answer – I would be lying. The thing that makes me I feel myself and no one else is the fact that I come from the borderland of these two countries, two or three*

*languages, several cultures. Those are exactly the qualities my identity is defined by. Would I be more honest if I amputated a part of myself?"*<sup>2</sup>

2 A. Maalouf, 2002, p.7.

It is not easy to determine whether this phenomenon of complex identity, as is the case of Amin Maalouf, will continue to grow in popularity and attain global acceptance, or it will rather fade away as the process of reducing identity to a single dimension becomes more apparent. An answer to this question will be gradually unveiled over the next decade, although the responses are likely to vary in different countries.

Interestingly, defining one's own identity and affiliation with a chosen community (or communities) is not just an ordinary exercise in cultural anthropology, but it may have very practical consequences in social life. A citizen of a democratic state, remaining loyal to one religion or another may require that his freedom of religion and public practice of their customs be guaranteed, which in turn may be contradictory to applicable local rules. Restraining by law and imposing the same cultural patterns on all citizens regardless of their religion does not always bring the anticipated results, and certainly it does not contribute to social stability nor it reduces the sense of alienation experienced by minority group members. On the other hand, the absence of common traditions and principles of functioning in a culturally complex society may rapidly result in the deepening of existing divisions and the rise of mutual hostility and physical violence. Such circumstances prompt the question about a different understanding of the law or rather specific philosophy on the man vs. the state, giving rise to such a law. In other words - as suggested by Michał Zabdyr-Jamróż - multiculturalism starts to occur in the guise of neomedievalism. 'The cause of this trend of 'medievalisation' occurring in various political and legal domains should be sought in a number of processes associated with the advent of postmodernity. A crisis, or rather a gridlock of the human rights concept shall be considered the most significant phenomenon.'<sup>3</sup>

Zabdyr-Jamróż emphasises the role of (future and perhaps probable) legal solutions, which may be of particular importance in a multicultural society. According to Zabdyr-Jamróż, "*in the model of a modern state applies the principle of territoriality of law which is mandatory in a given territory. The Medieval rules assumed the personality of law, i.e. the combination of the law in force in a given community with people originating from that community. [...] It is evident that in the field of the civil law a partial departure from the doctrine of territoriality occurs. We are returning to the world in which it is the origin that determines the subordination to a particular legal and normative system. Immigrants would bring in their laws along with them.' Just as in the Middle Ages, the judge - when a convict stands up before him - will not address any national law, but would ask instead: 'By what law do you live?' And will issue a verdict according to that legal subordination"*<sup>3</sup>

3 *Ibid.*, p.70.

From the perspective of continental Europe (but not the UK), this solution may currently seem rather unlikely. However, the possibility of its implementation in the

near future cannot be ruled out, especially in the context of the material demographic changes taking place in Europe. The contemporary ethnic composition of population in individual countries will undergo substantial transformation because of the increasingly dynamic migration primarily from the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia. This phenomenon will, in all likelihood, have a significant impact on the final composition of entire societies in Europe; as well as on their culture, customs and the whole philosophy of the state and the law.

At this point, let us propose an important, albeit moderately insightful thesis: the most rapid cultural and legal transformation will first occur in selected metropolitan areas which are attractive for all newcomers, both from the country and from abroad. A multicultural metropolis may even follow different rules from those in force in the country (despite the prevailing and uniform law formally applied throughout the state), which is a consequence of a complex ethnic and cultural composition of its citizens, their norms of behavior and conduct and the type of social relationships they form. The analysis of the phenomenon of a metropolis and its collective identity, or rather the analysis of the collective identity of its citizens and their sense of belonging to a chosen cultural group, research in „borderline” areas and the subjective sense of the position of an individual within the metropolitan community, all these approaches are relevant but certainly do not allow for an exhaustive description of the entire phenomenon.

*Many a time did I come back to my discussions with Kapuściński on the phenomenon of cultural clash*

Let us demonstrate a comparison of two metropolises - Wrocław and New Delhi, which may seem an intellectually provocative experiment. They seem to be very distant – and not only in a geographical context. To justify this procedure,

let us provide only one argument: in the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century, there were certain Asian metropolises that were forced to adopt some European models; currently there are some European metropolises that are forced to accept certain standards originating from South Asia or the Middle East. In order to understand what directions are likely to appear in the process of the European mega-polis transformation, we should look at the functioning of some metropolitan communities outside the Old Continent first.

**A metropolis as a part of personal identity. A dialogue with Ryszard Kapuściński**

During my meetings with Ryszard Kapuściński in Krakow<sup>4</sup> I mentioned that I come from Wrocław, which means that it is the place of my birth. Kapuscinski immediately asked about my parents: which part of Poland they originated from, when they came

<sup>4</sup> Informal meetings with Ryszard Kapuściński in 2003-2006.

to Wrocław, how long they lived there. He assumed, in fact quite correctly, that they were not indigenous citizens of Wrocław, and like millions of other Poles arrived to the Western Lands after WWII. For Kapuściński, Wrocław has been a classic example of an urban cultural melting pot, but more in the sense of *multicultural-multinational melting pot*, not a *multicultural-multiethnic melting pot*<sup>5</sup>, although some elements of the latter were certainly present there. I explained that my mother's family came from Volyn, which at that time was a part of the Second Polish Republic, and that we lost all our pre-war property there, but my father came from Lomza, although most of the documents demonstrate that his family had lived in Warsaw for a long time, and quite probably even as long ago as in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Both parents came to Wrocław to study, probably in the belief that it was that part of a „new promised land” and it would be much better to make a decent living there than elsewhere; furthermore, it could provide good education as many lecturers came largely from the pre-war Lviv and Vilnius universities. It was Wrocław that was the destination for the officers of the Second Republic who were ‘blacklisted’ by the communist authorities of the time for political reasons, and who preferred to live in that new environment which was often perceived as potentially less repressive than other parts of the country. For example, my maternal great-uncle Colonel Michał Drzystek-Drzewiński who in September 1939 was a Chief of Staff of Lviv's V Infantry Division, settled in Wrocław. As a high-ranking pre-war official, he did not expect any promotion of course; it was rather a dignified life in his familiar environment of Lviv intellectuals who met regularly in their favorite coffee shops that he was looking for in this city.

For Kapuściński, it was a fairly typical story of the creation of a new micro-world, or rather a complex process in which the attempts to re-create the old pre-war models and structures (for example, in the Wrocław academic community) were confronted with a top-down plan of a new society based on completely different ideological principles than those prevailing before WWII. I remember that he was particularly interested in the creation of a modern city structure almost from scratch, as he knew it well from his peregrinations in Asia, Africa and Latin America. What he meant was mostly the comparison with the old colonial cities of European empires, especially those cities that had to reconstruct and sometimes literally create their own legend and identity in the newly established states, by tailoring selected historic facts accordingly. We talked on several occasions about the complex phenomenon of citizens' identity in these new-old urban settlements. It is over there where the history – often perceived as “foreign” and „distant from our own experience” - had yet to be „tamed” and accustomed to the newcomers' capacity to adjust to such culture, and who were not always genuinely interested in an objective past of the place where they came to live, but most probably were more eager to impose their own cultural patterns that they brought from their homeland. It was even more complex on account of migration, as despite being administratively regulated – it

5 In other words, this multiculturalism of Wrocław has been attributed to the diversity of cultures existing within a single nation, as opposed to the diversity of cultures originating from various ethnicities.

has a constant impact on the city structure, which in turn has to continually reconstruct its cultural identity to the form that is acceptable for the majority of its citizens. Moreover, the increasingly autonomous parts of the metropolis are becoming distinctive, usually on account of a specific ethnic, or confessional-ethnic composition, inhabitants living by their own rules and regulations, not necessarily compliant with the legal system being formally in force throughout the country. The city, with all its complex multicultural richness, remains often in opposition to the state-level administration imposing uniform standards of legal or even moral conduct, and enforcing penalties in case of their violation. Naturally, this phenomenon is characteristic mainly of countries with extremely complex cultural composition, whereas it is hardly apparent in those communities which are referred to as highly homogeneous in terms of ethnic and religious composition or language.

In my discussion with Kapuscinski I added jokingly that for me Wrocław was only the starting point for what was then the typical migration of peoples in the post-war Poland. My parents moved from Wrocław to Zielona Góra only to move later to a totally distant part of the country - Rzeszów. It was this capital city of the Podkarpacie region that I ultimately chose to be 'my' city, although to this collection of such 'personal' cities I shall add Krakow where I lived for seven years as a student and then as a doctoral student. This collection extends far beyond Poland to include Cork in Ireland and Islamabad in Pakistan where I spent a total of one and a half years pursuing academic programs. I asked Kapuściński whether we assumed some part of the identity of each of those cities (and countries), to take it to a new home, because such was my personal feeling. I do not remember his exact response, but in general he reckoned that it all depends on the cultural potential of a given city - whether it allows for some freedom of development, or tries to impose the existing patterns on a newcomer. Apparently, this issue is more complex, because the potential to impose the city's unique cultural models obviously increases with the number of migrants arriving, their diversity and social positions, but also may be curbed by applicable laws or customs followed by existing residents. Such meetings of various groups of a different cultural background may be a source of immense creativity in many areas, but can also generate severe conflicts and permanent divisions if the room for a dialogue is reduced to a minimum. We discussed this subject only twice, and those were not very long conversations. We arranged a longer meeting in February 2007, just after my return from the subcontinent. Unfortunately, we never met again, and the news of Kapuscinski's death in January of the same year reached me in India.

### **Wrocław and New Delhi – forming a new identity**

Many a time did I come back to my discussions with Ryszard Kapuściński and considerations on the phenomenon of cultural clash in selected metropolitan areas, both

in Europe and in Asia. For almost six years, I lived in one of the largest cities in the world - New Delhi, which with almost 22 million inhabitants now is even greater than Mumbai, if you take into account the so-called metropolitan area. Paradoxical as it may seem, New Delhi has some features in common with Wrocław. In the similar period both cities survived the trauma of an exodus of part of their population who were forced to abandon their houses in the dramatic aftermath of the war and in post-war Europe and Asia, both had to embrace completely new residents who totally changed the existing structure of the local population, and both cities changed their political status: Wrocław, once German, became Polish, whereas Delhi, once the capital city of the former British Raj (British Empire in India), became the first mega-polis of the newly established Republic of India. Of course, there is a plethora of differences between these two metropolies, but several similarities are also worth noting. What is important is that these common traits are not limited to these two cities, but they illustrate a much broader phenomenon transcending borders and continents. In this very matter, globalization processes tend to assume similar shapes.

One of those similarities pertains to the functioning of relatively small local ethno-cultural communities constituting a historical link between the past and the present. These communities are a specific example of a particular limbo between the two dominant communities. This limbo condition was often the cause of alienation and suffering, especially in the period of political and cultural transformations resulting from the said change of the status taking place in those two metropolises in the late 1940s.

Indeed, New Delhi is a multicultural agglomeration, although it is the tradition and language of the people from the north that prevails. Its characteristic feature may be for instance the signs with street names in the main districts written in four languages and four alphabets: English, Hindi (Devanagari alphabet), Punjabi (Gurmukhi alphabet) and Urdu (Persian-Arabic alphabet). This gigantic city has managed to create its own new identity, to adopt new citizens and their descendants, integrate different ethnic groups and religious organizations (although this process proved to be successful only in part), and to incorporate ancient history into the modern narrative about the city's position in the country.<sup>6</sup> Wrocław, obviously proportionally, underwent comparable phases of forming its own identity, but the scale of Wrocław cultural diversity is difficult to compare. Both metropolises have an immense potential for development, clearly visible in many areas, attracting people from all over the country and abroad alike.

<sup>6</sup> See the latest transformation of New Delhi in 20 century described by R. Dasgupta in *Delhi. Stolica ze złota i sru* (R. Dasgupta, 2016).

### The history of Anglo-Indians

There is no doubt that the life of Anglo-Indians - the people whose identity was in a limbo between the culture of the British Empire and the traditions of the local In-

dian population was a fairly well described phenomenon in the literature on the contemporary history of Delhi. One of the best-known representatives of this genre was James Skinner (1778-1841), a buoyant figure on the borderline of the history of the conquest of the subcontinent by the British and the „cloak and dagger” type of stories. His father Hercules was a son of the mayor of Montrose, and his mother – a princess of Rajputana, but for her in-laws she always remained „dear Jeannie.” As described by William Fraser - one of the most prominent officials in the East India Company - James Skinner looked like a „native Moor, not a Negro, but Desdemona Moor, Moor of Venice”. Probably Skinner spoke English as his mother tongue, but was also fluent in Persian - the language spoken at the court of the Mughal dynasty. He was considered an excellent leader, with a honorary nickname „Sikandar Sahib” (meaning a warrior prince), and a founder of two regiments of cavalry, which to this date form a part of the Indian Army. Due to his mixed ancestry, he could not freely rise to higher ranks in the Imperial Army; moreover, he aroused suspicion among the Indian population who had every reason to doubt his loyalty and commitment to local tradition. He had to prove extreme bravery to win the recognition of the British, among whom he had indeed many influential friends. Such personal friendships would not allow him, however, to break down the existing racial and class barriers. William Dalrymple, one of the most renowned Scottish writers and outstanding expert in Indian culture, described him in the Anglo-Indian context: *“In the years that followed there were several humiliating rebuffs by the British establishment: Skinner’s estates, given to him by the Mahrattas, were revoked; his pay and rank were limited; the size of his regiment cut by a third. It was only much later, after a series of astonishing victories over the Sikhs and the Gurkhas, that Skinner’s Horse was officially absorbed into the Company army and Skinner made a Lieutenant Colonel and a Companion of the Bath.”*<sup>7</sup>

7 W. Dalrymple, 2016, p. 157-158.

In the old district of Delhi, near the historic Kashmiri Gate, there is an Anglican St. James’s Church, also known as Skinner’s Church. Obviously, this church was founded by James Skinner and it is also his resting place. The building itself can not rather be regarded as a prime tourist attraction of the capital city, but it is a frequently visited place by people interested in the history of contemporary India. It reflects not only the long-lasting rule of the British Empire, but tells a lot about the complicated lives of those who upon birth were destined for one of the two different ethnic and cultural communities. According to William Dalrymple, *“The Skinners at least had some place in Delhi society, but year by year things only became more difficult for most other Anglo-Indians. Increasingly they came to suffer the worst racial prejudices of both Indians and British: the Indians refused to mix with them; and despite their fierce and unwavering loyalty to the Union Jack, the English rigidly excluded them from their clubs and drawing-rooms. [...] Realizing there was no longer any secure place for them in India [once it was independent – PK], the Anglo-Indians emigrated en*



*masse. Some 25, 000 made new homes in America, Canada and Australia, where their hockey team, the Harlequins, gained brief celebrity. Many more emigrated to England. There, 'back home', their distinct character became lost in the post-war melting pot; some, like Engelbert Humperdinck (born Gerald Dorsey from Madras) and Cliff Richard (born Harry Webb, the son of an Anglo-Indian train driver from Lucknow) became famous – though not until they had thrown away their old names and identities like a set of unwanted and unfashionable clothes”.*<sup>8</sup>

8 *Ibid.*, p.160-161

The initial reluctance of ethnic Indians towards the Anglo-Indian minority did not result solely from their own racial or caste prejudice, but it was also a response to the behavior of the latter group. In his memoirs, written during his studies in India in the 1920s, Mircea Eliade strongly emphasized the racial awareness of the Anglo-Indians, who regarded their community as much higher than even the highest caste of native Indians. They built a kind of a social „sanitary cordon” around themselves which separated them quite effectively from the majority population.<sup>9</sup> This attitude and behavior must have provoked ardent resentment, needless to say for centuries India has been a country or even a civilization in which social, class and caste divides constituted a permanent element of existence and in practice closed communities did not fuel such controversy as in other parts of the world, particularly in Europe. Obviously, Eliade illustrated the state of affairs existing almost one hundred years ago, in a completely different political context of the subcontinent. Currently, the scale of intercultural and social mobility is far greater, whereas the very issue of the Anglo-Indians, whose number is likely to amount to several hundred thousand, lost all its social or political significance. Admittedly, however, the Anglo-Indian minority is officially and constitutionally recognized in the Republic of India, bestowed with two seats in the lower House of Parliament - the Lok Sabha, while in Delhi they are commemorated by the aforementioned St. James’ Church.

### *Comparing the destiny of Anglo-Indians with the Silesians is very risky, but intellectually tempting*

9 See, M. Eliade, 1999.

The Anglo-Indians are undoubtedly a prime example of a victim of the changing identity of the State and a city. Once the British left India, they lost those few privileges they enjoyed and which filled them with a sense of their roots and their own position in a multicultural society. They constituted a substantial community in Delhi as well as in Calcutta, and the loss of the former capital of the Empire by the Europeans led to their gradual exodus. Paradoxically, the former imperial order – which they were not always able to benefit from either socially or politically - was still subjectively perceived as better than the new order introduced by independent India. Maintaining their own customs, independently formed in the Anglo-Indian minority, cultivating a specific English dialect (along with the command of the local language, usually Hin-

di), and ultimately keeping intra-community relations - all these could be of decisive importance for the survival of a certain autonomy, distinguishing them from native Indians. Of course, over time, this distinction has become less noticeable, but the sole awareness of the existence of their own community formed over centuries was of paramount significance.

### The Silesians and the community of Polish-German origins

Comparing the destiny of Anglo-Indians with the Silesians living in Wrocław is a very risky, but intellectually tempting exercise. The Silesians accentuate their individuality stemming from different traditions, specific language or culture in a broad sense. Even if the dispute about the ethnicity or nationality – so important in this context – is politically and emotionally affected (similarly as in the case of the Anglo-Indians), one cannot deny that their community must find their own place between the neighboring

*Maintaining dual identity in the times of great transformation may become an onerous burden*

Polish and German cultures. According to the National Census of 2011, 3048 residents of Wrocław declared „Silesian” as their „national-ethnic affiliation”. In all probability, every such declaration has a more or less subjective reasoning, as eventually it is the awareness of one’s

own autonomy that determines the choice of the given identity. Obviously, without objective facts (such as the language, parents’ origin, fostered culture, etc.), such a choice would be difficult to justify, or at least it would not be easy to convince others of the rightness of such a decision. According to Maciej Łagiewski, director of the City Museum in Wrocław, such a decision may prove to be particularly controversial: *“To me, the term Silesian is clearly associated with the Upper Silesian areas [...] People who define their nationality as Silesian must be inseparably linked to all what is considered Silesian; i.e. keep regional folk costumes, have a taste for Silesian cuisine and know and speak the Silesian dialect. As a Silesian, I identify myself with this archaic land which is rooted in the Silesian tradition. In Wrocław, however, there are no indigenous Silesian people [...]; a few years ago, the Governor’s Office tried to popularize regional patriotism among Wrocław citizens. They distributed car badges and flags of Lower Silesia”*.<sup>10</sup>

10 A. Wojciechowska, 2013.

In Wrocław, the people who originated directly (ie. through their parents) from the Polish-German borderland, and who experienced similar ambivalent feelings toward these two dominant communities were for obvious reasons much closer to the Anglo-Indians. Children from mixed Polish-German marriages had to decide about their

own identity having no alternative or the third option given, as was in the case of the Silesians. Davies and Moorhouse analysed this phenomenon, pointing to the psychological and cultural boundaries dividing the two communities. In a song titled „Zwei Dimensionen” by Eva Maria Jakubek there are many emotionally loaded words which may be appealing to different groups in various places all over the world:

*“I live in two dimensions  
of the language:  
one - familiar  
learnt in the cradle  
the other - forced  
in the treadmill of everyday life.  
The first - beloved  
the other – hated...  
until I knew it.  
Then it opened the door  
to a different world  
that I entered bemused...  
how different the customs,  
arts and culture,  
history -  
Who am I  
to despise them?  
The heroes and myths  
traditions -  
now so much familiar  
After all those years”<sup>11</sup>*

11 E. M. Jakubek, 2011, p. 472.

Entering another world and another dimension of one’s existence must have been a lengthy process. Given the drama of contemporary history, the very process of changing one’s own identity - and its specific „extension” - was probably not too well received by those who were not experiencing the problem of redefining their own language and national-cultural identification. According to Davies and Moorhouse, *“The life of children from mixed Polish-German marriages was often a difficult one. A woman, whose German father helped Polish underground soldiers during the war later married a Polish woman in Poznan, kept very ambivalent feelings about her school days in the post-war Wrocław. Although she spoke Polish like a native, she was not entirely accepted by her peers. She had a German name, but there was nothing special about it. She could not understand the reason of that distrust,*

*which altogether caused a long-term distress. It was only with time, and with the help of sympathetic friends, that she began to understand their situation better. [In] normal times, bilingualism and dual identity may be a great asset, but in the post-war Wrocław, the community was not a typical one. It consisted mostly of uprooted people who lost their homeland and were yet not sure whether they found another one. Not only would such people do they utmost to be Poles, but they also wanted to believe that everything around them was purely Polish. They belonged to a generation claiming that 'in Wrocław, every stone speaks Polish.' They were not interested in any nuances; they would even make the life of those who reminded them that the reality is more complicated – unpleasant.*<sup>12</sup>

12 *Ibid.* p. 472-473.

This dual identity, imposed by their own origin and history becomes an onerous burden in times of rapid transformation. It comes as no surprise that those 'borderland people' - from Wrocław and from New Delhi alike - in the post-war period had to experience very similar ambivalent feelings and often faced an imposed alternative. On the one hand, the Anglo-Indians and the Silesians and particularly the children of mixed Polish-German marriages on the other, were in a similar situation in the existential dimension, so typical especially of those parts of the world where rapid political changes forced the modification or re-interpretation of own cultural identity. It was the case in India and Poland, however these two countries differed in terms of political and economic conditions. It is worth noting that the „borderline communities” were relatively small, which naturally aggravated the emotional drama of their members. In this context - that cultural identity they created and often cherished - may be tentatively defined as a „borderland identity.” It would characterize the communities existing between relatively large communes, in this case the nations, although we cannot yet exclude other configurations like the different religious groups of a complex ethnic composition.<sup>13</sup>

13 It is about different religious communities existing within the nations where Christianity, Islam, Hinduism or Buddhism prevails. The Druze community may serve as a good example: their religion combines the elements of Islam, Christianity, Gnosis et al. They live in the Middle East, particularly in the territory of Lebanon and their native tongue is usually Arabic. In terms of politics, they shall be identified among Muslim Arabs, Christian Arabs and the Jews. See: N. Abu-Izeddin, 1993.

In no way can these presented similarities obscure the substantial differences which are being gradually phased out with time. In the case of Wrocław, the vast majority of the arriving newcomers defined themselves as Poles with the distinctive ethnic identity and religious affiliation. On the contrary, the situation was more complex in the case of Delhi. The population of newcomers basically defined themselves as Hindu, whereas a great number of incumbent citizens who did not emigrate to Pakistan remained Muslim. This religious divide had its cultural and then political dimension. The process of stabilizing and recreating a new, multicultural agglomeration must therefore consider the existing social structure, which is one of the greatest challenges, both for local and central authorities. The systemic solutions implemented in New Delhi were in fact observed across the entire country.

### The millet system in Europe as a manifestation of neomedievalism

It seems possible that the policies originating from a distant subcontinent could well apply to contemporary Europe, replicating - not always in a deliberate and purposeful manner - the patterns existing in different civilizations, if not *de jure*, at least *de facto*. It is naturally connected with the presence of many different communities in Europe, who originate from the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia. The process of integrating the newcomers into the existing European culture is in principle quite complicated and progressing with time. This applies not only to the first generation of migrants, but also to the subsequent ones, who decide about preserving selected elements of their own culture and religion, and this in turn may incite conflicts with part of the local community. Although it currently pertains to contemporary Wrocław only to a limited extent, but in a longer perspective migration may extend to reach the capital of Lower Silesia, as well as other agglomerations in Poland. This would entail a plethora of challenges and problems, but one aspect which is fundamental in the process of building and functioning of a multicultural community is worth addressing here. This concerns relatively large communities whose distinctive feature was (and still is) their religion. In such cases, religion is not only a metaphysical message, but it also provides the code of social conduct which is rooted in the whole philosophy of law that is binding upon a group of its followers.

In Europe, where the Muslim community constitutes a growing part of the population, it is the traditional Islamic codes of social conduct and behaviour that may prove to be attractive for the public in many countries. What are these standards like? There are many of them, but the millet system which was applied in the Ottoman Empire<sup>14</sup> will certainly serve as a reference for the Muslim community, and not only in Europe alone. The foundations of that system date back to pre-Islamic times; it existed even in the Persian Sassanid dynasty, which ruled until the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD. The millet system adopted by Ottomans granted every religious community a very high degree of autonomy in the field of criminal and civil law, taxation and tax collection, and practising their own customs and traditions. An official head of a given millet, like the patriarch of Constantinople for instance, reported directly to the Ottoman Sultan. Millet was based on religious affiliation rather than ethnic or linguistic relations. This way *millet-i Rûm*, or 'the people of Rome' – a term which referred to the Orthodox Christians, former subjects of the conquered Byzantine empire – comprised Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs or Georgian communities. Separate millets, with a high degree of autonomy in terms of their laws and customs existed among Jews or Roman-Catholics, though the latter came into being as late as in the nineteenth century. The most powerful was naturally the Muslim millet, which comprised both Turks and Arabs, as well as Kurds and Albanians. Since Islam was the official religion of the empire, all disputes

<sup>14</sup> This issue is only highlighted here, more details are described in my essay on contemporary Muslim communities in Europe (P. Kłodkowski, 2016).

15 On the reforms in the Ottoman Empire see: J-P. Roux, 2003, B. Lewis, 2003 and B. Lewis, 2001.

between Muslims and non-Muslims were settled according to the principles of Sharia law, which naturally placed almost every follower of Islam in a privileged position. This broad autonomy granted to particular communities was not unconditional, though - all the followers were expected to be loyal to the Sultan, which was relatively easy in times of peace, but undoubtedly a big challenge for the Ottomans at the time of armed conflicts with some states, nominally or actually Christian. A reformation movement in the Empire, the so-called Tanzimat was supposed to gradually align the rights of all citizens of the Ottoman Porte (irrespective of their faith), but this in turn aroused discontent among the dominant group of Muslims who had been at the top of social hierarchy. The main aim of Tanzimat<sup>15</sup> was to build a strong common identity among all the inhabitants of the empire, but it ultimately led to ever greater internal tensions, especially because Christians – for obvious reasons – did not refuse to co-operate with the Western powers and Russia.

For several centuries, it was possible to maintain relative harmony in the multinational and multireligious country; it was not only until the twentieth century that the bloodiest internal conflicts in the Ottoman Empire broke out. It is worth noting that

### *Traditional Islamic codes of social conduct and behaviour may prove to be attractive for the Europeans*

substantial freedom was guaranteed not to individuals, but to individual communities on account of which a follower of a given religion was regarded only in the context of their own group of believers that served as a point of reference and provided stability and security. In other

words, in contrast to the trends prevailing in Europe, the future human rights codified in the Ottoman Empire were based on an independent community rather than on the autonomy and freedom of the individual. This philosophy of law and social construction in the Islamic world survived until modern times despite many attempts of modernization. A more or less developed concept of the millet in relation to religious minorities - and not only the Christian ones - was accepted after WWII in many Muslim countries, such as Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Iran. Its analogy to the presented concept of „legal neomedievalism” as described by Zabdyr-Jamroz is striking.

### **The concept of Millet and Sharia law in contemporary India**

Quite exceptional application of the concept of the millet system is also apparent in India - formally a State governed by secular law, derived from the British tradition. In principle, Indian Constitution and legislation give no advantage to any ethnic group

or religious community, and the philosophy of the State is characterized by the term „dharmnirpekshta”, commonly translated as „secularism”. It denotes, however, a different meaning of secularism from the European or particularly French understanding, namely represented by the absence of religious symbols in the public space. In India, „dharmnirpekshta” means that all religions are treated as equal by the state, although Hinduism – the denomination of nearly 80% of the population - is slowly gaining a dominant position in the political and cultural spheres. Meanwhile, the Muslim diaspora has been present in the subcontinent for over a thousand years, and now amounts to approximately 180 million members, that is approximately 14% of the country’s population. Muslims ruled in India for centuries, and the Mughal dynasty (16<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> / 19<sup>th</sup> century) was ranked among the most powerful in the world of the time.<sup>16</sup> When laying the foundations of the empire in South Asia, the British quite effectively applied the *divide et impera* principle, which allowed them to establish and maintain alliances with leaders of various religious communities. Supporting the autonomy of Muslims in the empire was intended to prevent the attempts of cooperation and solidarity over religious divides which might be made by the opposition; for this reason a number of Hindus and Muslims filed their claims against London administration separately, or even in the atmosphere of sheer mutual hostility. That autonomy was sanctioned by „The Muslim Personal Law Application Act” i.e. the law passed in 1937 allowing the use of Islamic jurisdiction in the field of civil (but not criminal) law with respect to the members of Islamic Diaspora. Following the departure of the British, and after the bloody partition of the subcontinent into India and Pakistan, the first Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru decided to maintain all legal privileges for Muslims. The introduction of the secular constitution and implementation of secular law for all was indeed the main purpose of the ruling Indian National Congress, although Nehru tried to govern in a conciliatory manner and avoid any political decisions that could result in another series of dramatic religious conflicts. The Muslim community was therefore guaranteed separate laws on inheritance, marriage (polygamy), divorce, establishing religious foundations or education, while this autonomy did not include any separate provisions of the Criminal Code which would apply to all citizens without exception. Although the term „Sharia” is not used in this context but is replaced with a phrase „Muslim civil law”, these terms are naturally interrelated in the contextual and adjudicatory sense. While Article 44 of the Constitution proposes the introduction of a uniform civil law for all citizens regardless of their religious affiliations in some unspecified future, but despite several reformatory attempts made not only by liberals, but also Hindu extreme fundamentalists, such changes have never resulted in the ultimate unification of legislation, and thus eventual elimination of all sharia law from the Republic of India. Any reformatory attempts have always been confronted with the strong opposition of various Muslim communities, defining it as

<sup>16</sup> There are numerous books on the history of India, in particular on the Mughal dynasty; the best-known publications available in Poland include J. Kieniewicz, 1985, S. Wolpert, 2009 and the most relevant in this context W. Hansen, 1980.

„a desire to weaken the religious identity of Muslims.” In a democratic system, in which the voice of powerful religious, ethnic or language groups is heard, the pronounced opinions of opposition will restrain pragmatic reformers, and India is no exception. As the most populous (numerically) democracy of the world, with 1.2 billion people, India maintains the millet tradition, which has not undergone any significant changes over the past century.

### **Conclusion – the borders of metropolis transformation**

The millet system which may be considered as an example of the legal neomedievalism is clearly visible in metropolitan areas, often divided into separate districts inhabited by selected religious or ethnic communities. New Delhi is of course no exception. The divisions according to ethnic, language or confessional origins, but also wealth are a standard, and seldom provoke any serious disputes. Hardly anyone is surprised with a separate system of inheriting, arranging marriages or determining the quotas for members of different communities during enrolment to government or academic institutions applied with respect to each religious group. It is fairly easy to guess based on address whether a person lives in a neighborhood inhabited by Muslims, poor Christians or perhaps middle class Hindu. Managing diversity means in this case a proper distribution and enforcement of separate customs and laws.

The solutions once typical for India or more broadly for many areas of South Asia and the Middle East, nowadays are gradually reaching Europe. For example, the United Kingdom takes into account the former multicultural and imperial experience and gradually accepts additional legal regulations derived from Sharia tradition. A good example is the Muslim Arbitration Tribunal - remaining outside the local judicial system - which formally settles civil disputes among the members of the Muslim community living in the United Kingdom. It operates under the Arbitration Act 1996, which allows for the use of alternative arbitration formulae. Apart from this court, Muslims may also seek assistance of the Islamic Sharia Council which refers to traditional Islamic jurisprudence. Nowadays, there are over 100 Muslim institutions of similar kind in different cities, but this number is expected to rise in the future. In the perspective of British law, they are not equivalent to ‘the court of law’ which is a court in a strict sense, but some form of mediation center or arbitration tribunal as already described.<sup>17</sup> It is difficult to predict whether such solutions are likely to be adopted in other European Union countries, but such a possibility can not be ruled out. In other words, will legal and social policies typical of New Delhi be transferred to London and Bradford, to be further applied in Amsterdam, Barcelona, Munich or Milan in the same or similar manner? And in the decades to come, also in Warsaw, Wrocław and Tricity (Trójmiasto)? These questions, or rather serious dilemmas prompt us to formulate

<sup>17</sup> See. P. Kłodkowski 2016, *op. cit.*



the following questions: are there any – and if so what are the limits to the transformation of the city's identity? Will the cultural compromise resulting in the application of the concept of neomedievalist law ultimately lead to stability and social harmony, or it will rather instigate increasingly severe conflicts between various communities? Should the identity of various groups of citizens of a metropolis (basically of the same nationality) be treated with equal respect, or rather should a certain model identity be imposed so as to unite the members of various ethnic and religious groups? But again, what if that imposed model identity becomes a major hotbed of communal conflicts? It seems impossible to provide a clear answer to all these questions, and in fact it is not about providing the answers. This is rather an issue which requires a solid analysis and careful observation of the phenomena taking place all over the Old Continent. Perhaps the solutions which worked (or failed) in Munich or Stockholm may be applied (or completely rejected) in Madrid or Vienna, and some time later - in Wrocław. Needless to say, such a thorough observation requires a truly global knowledge.

*Great Britain already allows for legal solutions that come from the tradition of Sharia law*

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During frequent conversations with my parents we go back in our thoughts to Wrocław, but to Wrocław as we remember it several decades ago. For my parents, it is a city of their student years, their first professional steps and deep friendship, long walks, and Sunday dinners in the new family circle. They recall the street network, their favourite restaurants, their house in Głogowczyka Street, the lectures at the university and venerable professors whose names they still remember. Wrocław in their memories is an ideal city, a mythical destination enchanted in the not-so-distant history. It is an interesting coincidence, but it is the same way that we discuss with my wife about New Delhi where we stayed for almost six years. We remember Khan Market district where we often shopped, we recall Lodhi Garden and Nehru Park where we would go for Sunday walks, the India Gate which symbolizes the recent history of India. We recall many friends and acquaintances who probably originated from all ethnic and religious groups, and with whom we had dozens of talks. For us New Delhi is gradually becoming a distant and magical place, a part of personal history shaping our own identity, just as Wrocław is in the memory of my parents. I am convinced that this subjective image of the city has the same weight as an objective picture based on historical facts, statistics and figures illustrating the dynamics of its development. Sometimes I think that such subjective pictures are of even greater importance. For each and every citizen (also former) individually, as for all dwellers collectively.

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Illustration – *Recentissima Asiae Delineatio: Qua Imperia, eius Regna, et Status, Unacum novissimis Russorum detectionibus circa Mare Caspium et Terram Yedso alias dict. per illor. Expedit. et Excursionibus, factis sistuntur.* Author: Johann Christoph Homann. In: Wikimedia Commons. Public Domain. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1730\\_C.\\_Homann\\_Map\\_of\\_Asia\\_-\\_Geographicus\\_-\\_Asiae-homann-1730.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1730_C._Homann_Map_of_Asia_-_Geographicus_-_Asiae-homann-1730.jpg)





VERSOTTENE MEER

E B R I U M

In diesem Meer werden die  
Stoßfisch und Bickelhöring gefangen

UND VOLLE MEER

STOLIDUM

Geilhausen

MARE  
SCHLARAFFENBURG

Völheim

Accurata  
UTOPIA TABULA

Das ist  
Der Neu-entdeckten

SCHALCK - WELT

oder des so oft benannten, und doch nie erkantten  
SCHLARAFFENLANDES

Neu-erfundene lächerliche Land-Tabell  
Worinnen all und jede Laster in besondere Königlich  
Provinzien und Herrschaften abgetheilet  
Beyneben auch die nächst angränzende Länder  
der Frommen des Zeitlichen Auff- u: Unterg:  
auch ewigen Verderbens Regionen  
samit einer Erklärung  
anmuthig und nutzlich vorgestellt  
durch  
Authorem Anonymum



# News wars.

Information, Journalists and Media in the Neomedieval Era.

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*Grzegorz Lewicki / The Jagiellonian University*  
*Jarosław Włodarczyk / International Association of Press Clubs*



***The city has become an information jungle. How can we fight the unbearable overload of information? The answer may be: information warehouses, payment for quality, investment in education and taxing social networking sites. We should not be lured into thinking, however, that all this will allow us to retain our freedom. It may turn out quite the opposite. After all, who likes to read bad news?***

### **Introduction: Medievalisation of Information and Fredro's Donkey**



We will start this text with a quote from a blog. Why not? After all, in the information chaos of the neomedieval era, information that can be picked out from the Internet may be of higher value than the homogenised pulp of content spilling out from some of the traditional media.

„The concept of the information society has been formed along with the accelerating development of communication technologies” – a Polish lawyer and information expert Piotr „Vagla” Waglowski remarked in his website in an entry on the intellectual inspiration drawn from the medieval era. „People did communicate also in the Middle Ages, however the media back then belonged to the very few who were able to use it. When reading about the Middle Ages, I juxtaposed this conclusion in my mind with my previous observations of the present times. Suddenly, I experienced a kind of enlightenment and thus I came up with the title of a book, in which I could assemble all my thoughts: ‘The New Middle Ages’.<sup>1</sup> However, according to Waglowski, a quick browse of the web was enough to find out that the New Middle Ages had already been described long time ago. How was it possible that the concept of neomedievalism as an idea of great relevance for an expert on digitalization had circumvented him for so long?

There are at least two reasons for this to happen. The first is the fragmentation and disorderliness of the neomedieval theory<sup>2</sup> itself which may render it unattractive for some researchers. The second is the phenomenon of the contemporary information chaos which may be termed „medievalisation of information.” What does it mean? Basically, nowadays, similarly to the Middle Ages, access to reliable information is heavily restricted and people are chronically uninformed. While in the medieval reality this shortage of information resulted from the lack of information in circulation, today it is rather the effect of overabundance of information. In the medieval, illiterate ‘dark age’ there were no media sources in the contemporary meaning: in their place there were the town criers announcing official messages, messengers, or innkeepers knowl-

1 P. Waglowski, 2014.

2 More on that subject in the preface of this book.

edgeable about the local situation and last but not least – bards who would spread the news from geographically distant regions. In the medieval era devoid of television and newspapers, the common man consumed very little news content. Contrary to this, today's media are comprehensive, multi-channel information tubes, whose principals and owners are involved in the murky structures of political power, selecting information and profiling it according to criteria which are not fully transparent. In such era of ubiquitous information channels assaulting our senses with news content on the bus, at home and in the street, people are force-fed with excessive information. This overabundance makes us incapable of handling this multiplicity, rendering us unable to sort out the information received, interpret, and then pick what needs to be imprinted into our cognitive network. Waglowski regrets that „there is so much information, and so little time to analyse it... More and more people give up reading sophisticated texts and resort to digesting some stupefying information pulp. Sometimes, they respond to longer texts with an unconcerned „tl;dr”. It is also symptomatic that they use such an abbreviation, instead of writing the phrase „too long, did not read” in full.<sup>3</sup>

3 *Ibid.*

4 See. Por. J.A. Moore, in: B. Winterhalder and E. A. Smith 1981, p. 194-217.

5 Marginal cost is a cost that comes from acquiring one additional unit of some good, in this case of a unity of information.

6 J. Tainter, 1990, p.99.

7 According to Tainter, in many contemporary societies, it is possible to observe the phenomenon called in economic terms „the law of diminishing returns from investment in information acquisition.” See *Ibid.*

8 A. Fredro, 1880.

9 See e.g. V. Polonski, 2016.

To some extent such information clutter is the outcome of the increasing complexity of civilization.<sup>4</sup> The very growth of human settlements gradually increases the need for communication and information processing. Finally, at a certain stage of social development, there is simply too much information around, compared to the cognitive capacity of human senses. As noted by anthropologist Joseph Tainter, in such a case the quality of information processing worsens and the marginal cost<sup>5</sup> of obtaining information becomes too high and thus unacceptable<sup>6</sup>. In other words, suddenly we realise that the amount of time, psychological concentration and knowledge required to sort out and interpret the information is too large to successfully process this information. Paradoxically, we give up absorbing information due to its oversupply and subsequent mental confusion.<sup>7</sup> In principle, one could say that contemporary people resemble the donkey from a fairytale by Polish poet and playwright Aleksander Fredro<sup>8</sup>. The said donkey was faced with the overabundance of food, which made him unable to consume anything. As a result, the poor animal “starved and passed away between mangers of oats and hay”.<sup>8</sup> What is worse, the social media we use only bolster this phenomenon up, because algorithms tend to narrow down the access to further information through supplying only pre-defined and selected content comprising what we might like and basically what we de facto know.<sup>9</sup>

## Hypereditors and Soul Control

Consider the following situation: in front of the airport terminal in Wrocław, two cars crashed leaving some injured and casualties. Someone calls the police and an ambu-



lance. Since there are police officers and an ambulance on duty at the airport, the aid arrives at the scene after two minutes. But the viewers around the world may watch live coverage of that accident five seconds after the call was made. On phones, web portals, on traffic media and services for drivers or for people traveling from that airport, on the sites targeting specific users – a special live report along with short comments is already available. Some viewers would watch blood and distress, while others would receive traffic updates.

Although live news broadcasts do not work this way yet, this is what the automated acquisition and transmission of targeted information will look like in 5-10 years' time. This information will be prepared and profiled by artificial intelligence tools using advanced "data mining" techniques, which extract data from various communication forms (video, audio, etc.). As a result, machines on hypereditors' servers will detect a notification about the accident, identify airport cameras which can best show the faces of people involved, and next, based on the available data (location, car models, facial features, the number of people, flight schedules, personal details of the victims and perpetrators based on their smartphone location and passenger lists) will create automatic news with the victim's profile photo and – if possible – a zoomed picture of the grieving relatives. What is more – the entire process will take a fraction of a second. Information will become automatically available, while a supereditor will maximise its effect in global circulation.

This vision is closer to reality than some would expect. From 2015 on, Associated Press agency relies on algorithms to create simple, short news (e.g. recaps) related to economics and sports<sup>10</sup>. "For many, these automated stories will lead to cost savings or, more importantly, free up their reporters to do more in-depth local coverage" – claimed Barry Bedlan, one of deputy directors of AP at that time.<sup>11</sup> The company behind this undertaking, called Automated Insights, created Wordsmith platform that allows for data mining to subsequently embed the resulting content into natural language schemes that conform to the norms of AP. According to James Kotecki from Automated Insights, the software is capable of generating two thousand simple news per second, should the need arise.<sup>12</sup> In turn in 2016 algorithms received another prerogative from AP, namely editing standard news for the purpose of TV and radio broadcasting.<sup>13</sup> The process of automation advances fast: Associated Press estimates that by 2020, as much as 80 percent of the agency's content might be prepared by the robots.<sup>14</sup> Anyway, who are those hypereditors mentioned earlier? The concept of a hypereditor has been formulated and introduced here to define the individuals dealing with processing and aggregation of someone else's content as well as denoting the processing

*There is so much information around!  
From this overload both misinformation  
and new analphabetism follow*

10 Wirtualne Media, 2016B; J. Kreinberg, 2016.

11 J. Kreinberg, *op. cit.*

12 R. Miller, 2015.

13 Wirtualne Media, 2016B, *op. cit.*

14 *Ibid.*



Facebook krever at Aftenposten fjerner dette historiske bildet fra vår Facebook-side. Her er Aftenpostens svar:

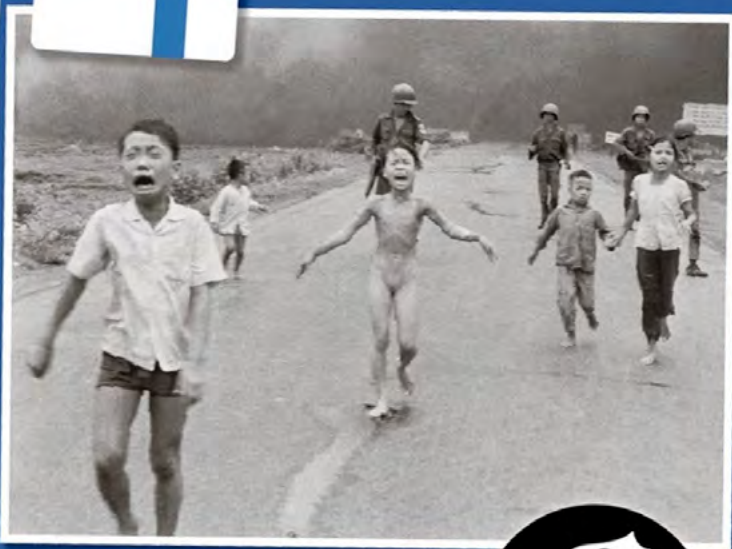


FOTO: MILITÄR, AP/WIDEWORLD

# Dear Mark Zuckerberg



Jeg skriver til deg for å fortelle hvorfor Aftenposten ikke vil etterkomme Facebooks krav om å fjerne eller redigere dette viktige dokumentarbildet.

**Espen Egil Hansen, sjefredaktør**

Lik dette Kommenter Del

algorithms themselves. That is why the term „hypereditor” is used in two meanings: first, a hypereditor is an entity selecting content (e.g. Facebook), and second – the algorithms for collecting, processing and targeting the information created by these entities. The notion of „hypereditor” is a neologism combining the terms “hyperlink” and “editor”. The term „supereditor” – on the other hand – is used to define a person employed by a hypereditor, who determines the dynamics of content distribution once it is hyperedited by the algorithm.

Basically, hypereditors are responsible for combating information overload – a typical feature of our neomedieval era. Obviously, some hyperediting work is already performed today by algorithms screening the content of such applications as Facebook, Google, Twitter, YouTube, or Snapchat. However, above such algorithms there are live supereditors who broaden the range of some content and block or limit the reach of other.<sup>15</sup> Both in the US and in Poland, the users would complain, for example, that Facebook’s supereditors discriminate conservative content<sup>16</sup>. Oftentimes, the complaints also concern professional incompetence and hastiness of such supereditors. For instance, on September 8, 2016 Espen Egil Hansen, editor-in-chief of the biggest Norwegian newspaper Aftenposten published an emotional letter to Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, concerning the trend of adopting the position of supereditors by persons managing social media.<sup>17</sup> The immediate reason for the letter was the removal of the notorious Vietnam War photo with a naked girl fleeing a napalm raid<sup>18</sup> by Facebook (from the FB profile of a Norwegian writer Tom Egeland). Hansen accused Zuckerberg of depriving journalists of their competence and recalled the thought by Orwell who claimed that the role of free media is to show people not only what they want to watch, but sometimes also what they do not want to see. „Editors cannot live with you, Mark, as a master editor” – Hansen claims.<sup>19</sup>

No wonder it is Facebook that is in the spotlight of the public opinion today. It has become not only the largest global information platform, but also a means for discussion and opinion exchange. It is Facebook that dictates what one and a half billion people who devote their minds and souls to it will come to know. In the neomedieval reality of information oversupply, new centers of incredible and hardly measurable power over souls are being established in the shadow of information sorting hubs such as Facebook and Google. It came to this, that the greatest global superpowers and civilizations (e.g. USA, China, Russia, European Union) crave to possess their own information search engine and their own global social networking site for sorting information.<sup>20</sup> What is more, the “political” power of such companies is greater than the power of many countries. Ministers of foreign affairs across nation states will soon start to recognize this fact by appointing new ambassadors, whose sole mission will be to develop separate diplomatic relations with these companies. In fact, this is already happening: in January 2017, Danish Minister of Foreign Affairs Anders Samuelsen

Fig.1. The cover of “Aftenposten” newspaper, showing the picture Facebook’s hypereditors arbitrarily removed from the portal (source: E. E. Hansen, 2016).

15 M. Isaac, 2016.

16 *Ibid.*, see also: Wirtualne Media, 2016.

17 E.E. Hansen, 2016.

18 N. Ut, 1972.

19 E.E. Hansen, *op. cit.*

20 See G. Lewicki, 2015.

announced his plan to appoint a new ambassador with mission to deal with tech-giants such as Google, Apple and Microsoft. This is because, Samuelsen argued, they affect Denmark just as much as entire countries. “These companies have become a type of new nations and we need to confront that”, he added.<sup>21</sup> All this marks a return of the tradition typical for the Middle Ages, with private actors being officially recognized by the rulers as peers of other rulers.

21 The Local, 2017.

Unfortunately, the process of sorting information does not make us any freer. It becomes less and less possible to reach beyond the set of information which had been preselected by the targeting algorithms that assume we want some things. Why is that so? One has to understand the mode of operation of content selection algorithms: they devise our psychological profile and guess our identity based on the information we disclose. Such a profile must be as precise as possible, so that we can be offered the most suitable things according to our alleged needs. A good example may be a notorious case from the US, where a shop sent some teenager an e-mail with congratulations on her pregnancy along with an offer for infant related products. Although the teenager’s father was furious at the shop manager, he later returned with an apology once he learned that his daughter was indeed pregnant. The shop had known about it earlier on the basis of products she bought; the shop’s algorithm reckoned that if a young woman buys a cocoa butter cream, a large bag and a blue baby blanket, she must be expecting a baby.<sup>22</sup>

22 See G. Lewicki, 2013.

Obviously, similar mechanisms work within social networking sites; if our previous web behaviour indicates our fondness of football, appetite for red wine, green peas and interest in mattresses for kids, the algorithm determines that we are unlikely to be interested in learning about the discovery of a new moon in the solar system. As a result, our interests as well as our and our friends’ opinions determine the scope of information we receive. We end up entangled within our closed world, in the so-called information “filter bubble”<sup>23</sup>, seeing and knowing less and less. Naturally, we can effectively recover from this condition by searching for information about the next moon ourselves, so the algorithm will notice this and the next time we will actually be supplied information on some astronomical discovery. However, the news of the Nobel Prize in chemistry may still miss us.

23 This term has been first published in the book “Filter bubble” by E. Pariser (2011).

Interestingly, hypereditors are perfectly aware that access to free information from the media is a prerequisite for the every existence of services they provide. Although they are responsible for selection and sorting information, the content is mostly produced by someone else – the users and external media. Just try to imagine Facebook or Google without any content from traditional media! All what would be left are jokes, videos, kittens and futile discussions. On the other hand, on many information portals the traffic from social media makes up more than half of all visits. It seems that Google understands this symbiosis better<sup>24</sup>, and together with some news desks it keeps searching for

24 E.g. attempts by Google Living Stories, Google Fast Flip, Google News, Digital Media Initiative.

appropriate solutions to continue sharing the content on the web and making it profitable at the same time. Although initiatives implemented by Facebook<sup>25</sup> so far provide only additional traffic on media portals and boost brand recognition, the company is apparently working on increasing the amount of content created by its users and at the same time developing artificial intelligence to produce such content. However, given the evolution of media business model from advertising to paid content, Facebook may lose this race, as long as consumers expect something more than entertainment and headlines. Even if Facebook succeeds in providing some links, the user will soon encounter a paywall<sup>26</sup> and he will need to pay to read on.

In spite of all this, in times of information shortage resulting from oversupply, the aspect of key importance is not the access itself, but the selection of information. People are increasingly aware that some invisible hand determines what they see and read. Therefore, in the new Middle Ages we will struggle – quite intuitively – to win some influence over the hypereditors’ and supereditor’s choices. Nowadays, the hypereditor’s and supereditor’s methods of operation remain undercover. All we know is that they must act in accordance with some principles, that they follow the interests of the company whose services we use (e.g. Facebook would force some content on you, whether you like it or not). For this reason, content filters that openly allow users to select multiple hypereditors with different preferences and „tastes” will gain competitive advantage in the future.

However, even choosing a credible hypereditor may not save us from another plague of the information overload, namely, fake news and narratives based on untrue statements. From Kremlin’s propaganda that deliberately distorts information as a means of hybrid warfare, through fake content proliferating for someone’s short term political advantage, to fake news that merely generate profits from pay-per-view advertisement – one thing is certain: fake news spread fast. What is worse they are almost never followed by corrigendum (official correction). As a result, the fog of misinformation clogs our minds. Unfortunately, the youth – which, according to a popular myth, processes information better than older generations – is not vaccinated against misinformation whatsoever. According to Stanford research involving almost 8 thousand students, 82% of them could not distinguish between real news, fake news and sponsored content or advertisement. Instead of trying to assess the source of information, they tended to judge credibility of information based on the amount of details or presence of a picture.<sup>27</sup> The authors of go on to elaborate the concepts of school lessons that would arm students with comparative and analytical skills helpful in recognizing fake content.<sup>28</sup>

By the end of 2016 Facebook, which had previously downplayed the issue of fake news, announced it is working on mechanisms that will limit its spread<sup>29</sup>, whereas BBC appointed a permanent Reality Check team responsible for identification and correction of fake news.<sup>30</sup> “The BBC can’t edit the internet, but we won’t stand aside either” said BBC news chief James Harding. “We will fact check the most popular out-

25 E.g. Facebook Media.

26 *Paywall*, software restricting free access to the paid content on a website.

27 Stanford, 2016.

28 *Ibid.*, p.5-7.

29 BBC, 2016.

30 J. Jackson, 2017.

31 *Ibid.*

32 S. van der Linden, 2017.

liers on Facebook, Instagram and other social media”, he added.<sup>31</sup> What is interesting, strictly academic articles that contain psychological advice regarding countering fake news start to surface as well.<sup>32</sup> All this suggests the information chaos of neomedieval reality already became unbearable and we finally admitted that the need for remedies is urgent.

### How to be Informed – the New Information Circulation System

The process of disinformation arising from overabundance inevitably causes the narrowing of cultural competences and knowledge, reduced tolerance for other views, and ultimately – isolation. The physical proximity of people in the cities does not translate into the proximity in actual relationships. When acquiring knowledge mainly from the Internet and social networking, we inevitably behave as if we were constantly dining at the same restaurant, full of our friends, where discussions are mostly nice, the menu is well known and the dishes are of satisfactory standard; after some time we have the impression that the whole world must be basically to the likeness of this particular restaurant.

Moreover, the phenomenon of content oversupply leading to isolation will grow stronger, because the volume of the Internet content is growing exponentially. In 1996, the Internet was used by 77 million people globally, in 2005 there was already 1 billion users, in 2010 – more than 2 billion, and in 2016 the score is nearing 3.5 billion.<sup>33</sup> This trend was followed by the dramatic growth in the amount of available content. Twenty years ago, there were just over 250 000 web pages in the world wide web, whereas today this number has exceeded 850 million.<sup>34</sup>

33 Internet Live Stats: Internet Users, 2016.

*Simple news are already created  
by robots. Will newspapers  
be edited by algorithms?*

34 Internet Live Stats: Total Number of Websites, 2016B.

35 Pew Research Center, 2016.

36 Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2016.

In order to find their way in the chaos, people abandon traditional media and endeavor to select the content through social networks. According to a research conducted in various developed countries, regardless of cultural differences, people born after 1990 use traditional media (TV, press, magazines, radio) less and less, whereas they search for information mainly through social media in news portals and sites run by trusted traditional sources and agencies. According to a survey by Pew Research Center conducted in 2016,<sup>35</sup> 62% of adult Americans read or watch news in or through Facebook, Twitter and other social media. According to the data contained in the „Digital News Report 2016”<sup>36</sup>, globally for 51% of people under 45, social media are the primary source of information. At the same time, television remains the main source of news for the entire population, however in this case statistics show an evident trend of TV losing its dominant position to the advantage of the Internet.

While news portals usually provide brief information free of charge, more and more often the content of online editions of traditional media sources is paid. However, most of the young audience, accustomed to open sources (and demonstrating smaller information needs compared with their parents), usually limit themselves to reading headlines and story leads at best. This superficial plethora of information creates false impression of being well informed, thus further reducing the demand for information. In addition, as was mentioned above, the information filtered by algorithms means leaving out important content and relevant comments, opinions and ideas. This process had already been noticed in 1996 and named “cyberbalkanization”.<sup>37</sup> The authors define this phenomenon as dividing the audience into subgroups of like-minded people who are isolated in their own virtual communities without any contact with other views.

The enthusiasts of new technologies often raise an argument that in the past children and young people never read so much as they do nowadays. However, the manner, quantity and most of all the low quality of information content they receive - paradoxically - should be regarded rather as deprivation of information. This trend may become aggravated, as the habit of reading news on the Internet may soon disappear and besuperseded by watching video spots.

30 M. Alstytne, E. Brynjolfsson, 1996.

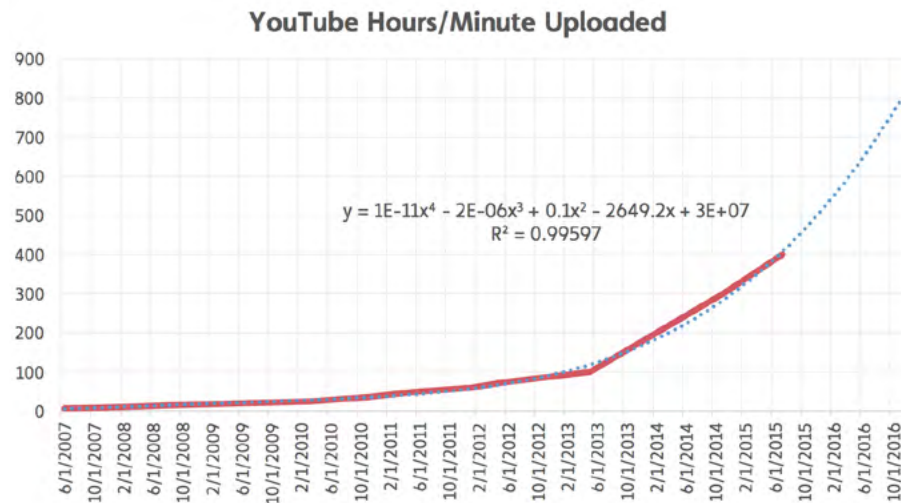


Fig. 2. New video content on YouTube per minute (source: M. R Robertson, 2015)

Today, on the YouTube portal only, there are over 600 hours of new video content uploaded every minute, totaling a striking 864 000 hours a day. To watch all videos uploaded on a single day only we would need 100 years<sup>38</sup>. As reckoned by Nicola Mendelsohn, Vice President of Facebook Europe, Middle East and Africa, in 5 years' time

38 M. R Robertson, 2015.

35 C. Zillman, 2016.

40 R. Bohn, J.Short, 2012.

all content presented on the site will be video footage. Last year, video content uploaded by Facebook users enjoyed a billion hits a day, while today it is more than 8 billion.<sup>39</sup> This stimuli and information overload, in addition to creating a false sense of being informed, has also a negative intellectual, emotional and social impact. The daily portion of digested information, comprising at least 100 000 words and images or 34 GB of data<sup>40</sup> from the Internet, television, advertisements, phone calls, e-mails - forces our minds to flee, seek isolation and in a long run may cause mental illness, including depression or schizophrenia.

### Remedy: Professional Journalism and Information Warehouses

The changing customer expectations and increasing „media illiteracy” resulting from the information overload, as well as the new system of information distribution and consumption compel journalists and media outlets to adopt a drastic change in their approach. Apparently, today’s society is not ready to pay for general information, but perhaps it will opt for paid subscription or one-off fees for the interpreted information, namely the so-called quality journalism content. Such journalism provides verified, true, neutral, and educational content, in addition to reliable, knowledge-based and intelligible interpretation.

41 U. Beck, 2002.

42 R. Kurzweil, 2005.

Why do we think that such content will be so attractive for some people that they will be willing to pay for it? First, there will be more and more information to come. As it was mentioned earlier, the ever increasing organizational complexity of societies in the global era generates more data and escalates the risk our civilization is exposed to every day.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, the technological progress which boosts the information flow by itself, is growing exponentially.<sup>42</sup> Society will strive to disentangle the resultant information chaos, or at least to alleviate it by making it more controlled.

43 See also: S. G. Nichols, 1991; cf. G. Lewicki, 2010 (main thesis and summary of this essay in English: G. Lewicki, 2010B).

44 A. Toffler, 1990.

Secondly, what people need is mental stability. In the Middle Ages, emotional balance was achieved by referring to religion – in view of the incomprehensible complexity of the world, it was assumed that it must be consistent with some plan of an omniscient God, who protects his followers from uncertainty, instability and disinformation<sup>43</sup>. With no tools to solve everyday problems, in the Middle Ages this was generally accepted as imperative. Contrary to this, the new Middle Ages slowly generates tools for more effective - albeit only partially – relieving those daily uncertainties. The frightening instability of life makes people of the neomedieval era seek remedies to the so-called „future shock,” which Alvin Toffler defined as an overwhelming social confusion experienced in response to ever accelerating dynamics of social, economic, demographic and political evolution<sup>44</sup>. Those who find insufficient information irritating need reliable, trusted sources of news, which provide a made-to-measure inter-



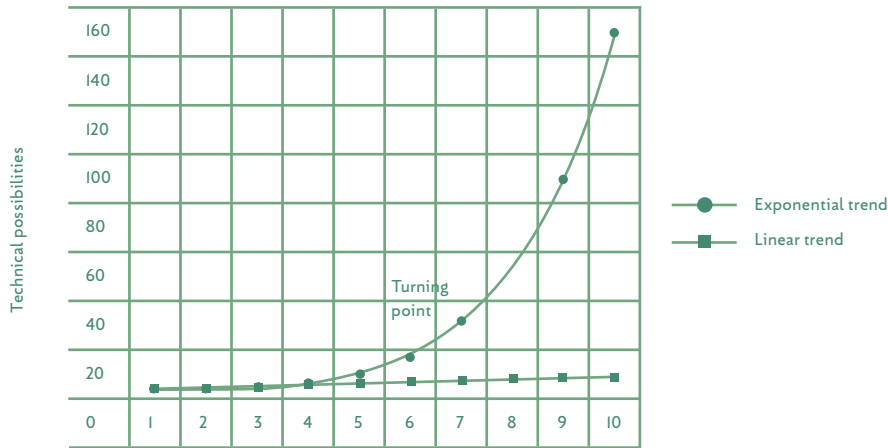


Fig. 3. Exponential function of the technological progress (source: R. Kurzweil 2005, p.10)

pretation of facts especially for them. This is the reason for today's popularity of paid media subscriptions such as „New York Times” – they are perceived as trustworthy by the readers who buy not just a paper, but also a subjective (and not necessarily true) conviction that someone, on their behalf, efficiently selects the facts, interprets reality and separates important information from the glut of neomedieval junk.

That is why today the paid content will not only respond to the typical news queries i.e. „who, what, where, when, why,” but also “how, ‘what is missing, what is the context, what are the different opinions, and what next” (many researchers started use the term ‘original reporting’ to refer to such a developing quality journalism).<sup>45</sup>

Eight years ago, these changes were prophetically described by Charlie Beckett from the London School of Economics, „The model of journalism is being transformed from a product into a process, from a transaction into a relation, and from production into service. In the course of these changes, new technologies and new forms of interaction with the public redefine the essence of journalism”<sup>46</sup>

Due to declining media budgets, redundancies and salary reductions in the editorial offices, the traditional all-thematic media find it difficult to maintain a satisfactory level of knowledge and a sufficient number of profitable audience. While the smaller media (e.g. industry-specific, local) enjoy a permanent group of interested readers willing to pay for content, and the big ones are still on air on account of the economies of scale, the average media are losing their grounds. Therefore, the media market consolidation is inevitable, and will be followed by further specialization process.<sup>47</sup>

In consequence of the aforementioned consolidation, News Warehouses will be created. These will be transnational media organizations providing information from all around the world, from all areas of life, to satisfy the needs of hypereditors, portals and

45 C.W.Anderson, 2011.

46 C. Beckett, 2008.

47 It is worth noting that the average media may find their chance for survival in specialization, but only if they invest in the discipline they are known for (eg. reportage, culture) and constantly increase their level.

48 A challenge for journalists in the twenty-first century will be the professional training, mastering new techniques of telling about the events, acquiring technological skills so as to be able to provide a multimedia broadcast while paying attention to the quality of materials, presenting only confirmed facts and showing expert knowledge of subjects covered. Moreover, journalists must learn how to engage the audience in their materials, be open to discussion and maintain their

*Information sorting hubs, like Facebook or Google, have tacitly become the centres of incredible soul control*

49 The slogan of probably the first in the world civic journalism service OhMyNews, founded in South Korea by Oh Yeon-ho on 22 February 2000.

50 S.D. Cooper, 2006.

51 European Parliament, 2016.

52 *Gallup Poll Social Series: Governance, 2015.*

53 See. G. Lewicki 2010, *op. cit.* The need for “a guardian”, already described by Immanuel Kant, is manifested not only in the need of a trusted information distributor, but also – by many – in the need of economic stability, the result of which is defined – in the neomedieval spirit – as a new feudalism. Its distinctive feature is the willingness to entrust one’s fate and freedom to someone who in exchange for conformity and availability will provide a stable and predictable income and care for the fate of the vassal.

traditional media. The biggest news agencies of today, including AP, Reuters, and the great editorial offices providing content for other media, such as „The New York Times” will develop into the future News Warehouses. These new entities will be larger than the now-famous „ordinary” agencies or editorial offices, and their business model will also be changed; it will be based on a closer collaboration with hypereditors. It will be news Warehouses that will deal with the distribution of pulp content (general information), whereas traditional media will focus on quality journalism. Therefore, the future of journalism will promulgate specialization and development of the forms which the public will be ready to pay for, including documentary reports, interviews, investigative journalism, analyses, commentaries, photographs, columns, essays, as well as specialist and local information, which is not in the scope of News Warehouses’ interest.<sup>48</sup>

What is interesting here is that in the neomedieval era, the potential of amateur journalism – that is blogs and information from social media – will be of increasing importance on the news market. The public seems to have placed its belief in a slogan of the year 2000 – “Every citizen is a reporter.”<sup>49</sup> While it is commonly thought that the traditional media is the „fourth power”, Stephen D. Cooper has already labelled amateur journalism the “fifth power”<sup>50</sup>.

Such journalism, however, may entail the risk of mixing information with opinions or facts with commentary. Amateur journalism provides also a great area for disinformation thus serving various corporations, lobbyists, and even foreign countries.<sup>51</sup> Fake profiles on Facebook and Twitter are commonplace, as is the phenomenon of paid trolling (posting paid comments) or pseudo-information pages on Facebook.

The current situation is a neomedieval mess; the public is flooded with unverified information, and the traditional media make more and more mistakes due to financial constraints. As a result, the consumers’ trust levels fall (in the US, confidence in the media has fallen from 55% in 1998 to 40% in 2015)<sup>52</sup>.

In spite of this trend, people want to believe that they have access to reliable and relevant information, because some of them want to entrust the their ‘information well-being’ to credible editors from traditional media, demonstrating traditional attributes of the journalistic profession (ethical principles, honesty, responsibility, transparency, knowledge, a sense of public mission). It is particularly due to the fact that paid content producers, hypereditors and supereditors are lacking these qualities. The need to be informed is of course connected with a more general neomedieval trend, i.e a strong need of a „guardian” who will keep control – for us – over various dimensions of instability and complexity of the world.<sup>53</sup> Even today, many people can not find their way in the information jungle by themselves without a guide. Therefore, such guides and editors

will become the new information priests, celebrities with hundreds of thousands of followers pursuing their impressions and opinions. Interestingly, since it is urban space that is an area of particularly intense interactions between humans and surrounded by the torrent of content rushing from everywhere, it will be the city dwellers who will be the trendsetters supporting new gurus of traditional, ethical journalism by paying for the selection of news and providing the content with meaning and proper context. The public media should play a pivotal role in the neomedieval system of information flow. This is due to the fact that they are not subordinated to traditional market mechanisms based on profit, as they enjoy state funding or common subscriptions guaranteed by law. That is why the public media should maintain the highest quality, to be a model of journalistic contents, selection of topics, presentation of unpopular or uncommercial content, and professional standards. The precondition for such public media is, however, a stable and high funding guaranteed along with independence from political world.

A new model of financing in the case of traditional private media is the paywall system. At the same time, the editors should ensure anonymity to the users. Interestingly, limiting free access and the introduction of paid content will be much easier in the non-English speaking countries. According to research, in these countries more than 20-percent of users already pay for content on the Internet, while in English-speaking countries this proportion is smaller by a half.<sup>54</sup> What causes such a difference? Firstly, it is due to the non-English content on the Internet being scanty, making the pool of non-charged information in national languages limited. Secondly, in some countries a strong tradition of newspaper subscriptions still exists, and it may be reflected in a more visible trend of paying for digital information.<sup>55</sup>

54 Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2016.

### Will Facebook be Taxed?

Unfortunately, the recent changes in the media market are a real threat to democracy. Although democracy can still function well without traditional newspapers, it could not function without diligent, inquisitive and professional quality journalism. Furthermore, the politicians, without journalists scrutinizing their activities would quickly alienate, radicalize, and consequently the quality of politics would deteriorate. The neomedieval trend of seeking an „information guardian” is not strong enough to guarantee the survival of quality journalism by means of market mechanisms. At this stage it is difficult to predict the percentage of population ready to make regular payments for reliable and quality content. If we were to take for granted Aldus Huxley’s historiosophical conclusion that “the masses prefer rather [straightforward] happiness to truth and beauty”,<sup>56</sup> then a more stable and predictable life will become the most

56 A. Huxley, 2004 [1932], p. 20; cf. A. Huxley, 1950.

desirable ideal of the neomedieval age - instead of freedom of choice guaranteed by access to reliable information. If this observation turns out to be true, the quality of journalism will face more difficulty, although most likely it will endure.

And what is the situation like today? False information and slander in social media have become commonplace. It seems it hardly bothers anyone, even though everyone can notice it. Unfortunately, the impact of bogus and false information on citizen attitudes seems to intensify, and ultimately it may impact election results. The flow of information and opinions provided by „friends” from social media has no credibility filter which traditional media are trying to apply to the content they provide.

A survey this year by Ricardo Gandoura of Columbia University<sup>57</sup> proves that declining the editorial offices of the traditional media remain credible and principal sources of information for majority of voters, yet if the downturn continues, it will lead to the depletion of information provided to the public. At the same time, the mechanisms of social media aggravate the process of inhibition of the users confining themselves in

the information filtered bubble, blurring the difference between journalism and non-journalism, including advocacy, lobbying and disinformation. These overlapping phenomena lead to further fragmentation and undermine the “common

### *Content tailored for individual consumer engulfs us to form a filter bubble. How to puncture it?*

public agenda” – i.e. a common scope of public debate, a universal catalogue of issues of importance for a given society, which constitute the foundation of values recognized by the voters. This process results in deepening the alienation of people living side by side under the single canopy of a city.

Therefore, the introduction of a tax for large websites such as social platforms seems reasonable, as the content they produce is of little value, and it is only derived from information provided by users and traditional media. Their business model is clearly restricted to being a sorting engine yielding profits from the knowledge produced by others and acquired absolutely free of charge. In biological terms, such a form of life is known as ‘parasitism’. It may be compared to a cable operator providing a TV signal to subscribers’ houses but not paying television stations for the content, and keeping all profits in their pocket. Such a tax, which could be called FaceTax, should not be introduced at the national level, but as the first global tax ever, according to the worldwide reach of such websites. Perhaps the United Nations could become an organization that would oversee the enforcement of such a tax. Only large platforms, such as those having more than 100 million users but creating little valuable content would be obliged to pay such a tax. FaceTax should be appropriately high to compensate for its harmful impact (e.g. half of the income generated), and all the amounts from the tax should be used to support impartial quality journalism and media education.<sup>58</sup>

57 R. Gandour, 2016.

58 After we had suggested taxing Facebook in the Polish edition of this book (Lewicki, 2016 accepted for publication Oct 2016), a similar line of thought emerged in the essay by Roy Greenslade for „The Guardian”. The author speaks about “a digital economy bill to ensure digital giants pay a 1% levy in order to fund investigative public interest journalism” (R. Greenslade, 2016).

## Media Literacy in the Brave New World of Information

Protection of freedom of speech, freedom of expression, and the right to information is our duty. In his essay “Freedom of Press” George Orwell wrote: “If liberty means anything at all, it’s the freedom to tell people what they do not want to hear”.<sup>59</sup> Huxley added that either humanity would enjoy superficial happiness, or freedom. One cannot get the two at the same time, as freedom endangers stability.<sup>60</sup>

Apparently, we prefer quiet and stable happiness as we are losing freedom. Today, even the most important but unwanted information must get through more and more filters and algorithms to reach us. Therefore, we need journalists and editors who will rummage through the information maze and select important information from the pulp, and who will help us know and understand, rather than stick to a false sense of being well informed. To make city life more bearable, and to mitigate the negative effects of medievalisation of information, public policies enabling the reform of the entire information flow are absolutely necessary.

We should also focus on appropriate media education and introduce to the curriculum classes in big data acquisition and understanding different sources of information, as well as courses in verification and critical interpretation of facts. For better or worse, it came to this that an average young citizen will have to learn an assortment of skills typical for a professional journalist. It is of particular importance because if young people will not possess these skills, they will become “digital alphabets” of the new Middle Ages.<sup>61</sup> At the same time, high quality of academic education for future journalists combining the foundations of the profession and new competencies which are necessary to manage the fragmented digital environment is equally important. Only if these conditions are met, will the public appreciate good journalism and will be more eager to finance media, while journalists will be able to fulfill and accomplish their social mission.

Meanwhile, based on the scientific work of Professor Nick Bostrom, a philosopher at the University of Oxford, the Bank of America wrote in this year’s report to its customers that with 20-50% probability we are living in a computer simulation<sup>62</sup>. In such a „Matrix” it is the machines and pre-defined algorithms that bear the responsibility for the global information flow. However, if we do not live in such a simulation, and the responsibility for the information circulation is borne by the people, it is worth supporting professional journalists. Who – if not them – would ask difficult questions in the new Middle Ages?

59 G. Orwell, 1972.

60 More in: G. Lewicki, 2008.

61 See A. Toffler, *op. cit.*

62 N. Bostrom, *Are You Living In A Computer Simulation?* Faculty of Philosophy, Oxford University, *Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 53, No. 211, 2003, p. 243-255. (see. P.S. Laplace, *A philosophical essay on probabilities*, Forgotten Books, London 2012). Bostrom’s thoughts echo the philosophical idea called causal determinism, which – in one of its definitions – assumes the existence of „Laplace’s demon,” that is an intellect which knows the location of all the elementary particles and all forces that influence it. If such intellect had enough computing power, it could predict the behavior of all particles in the universe. Therefore, it would never be in doubt, and the past, present and future would be clearly determined.

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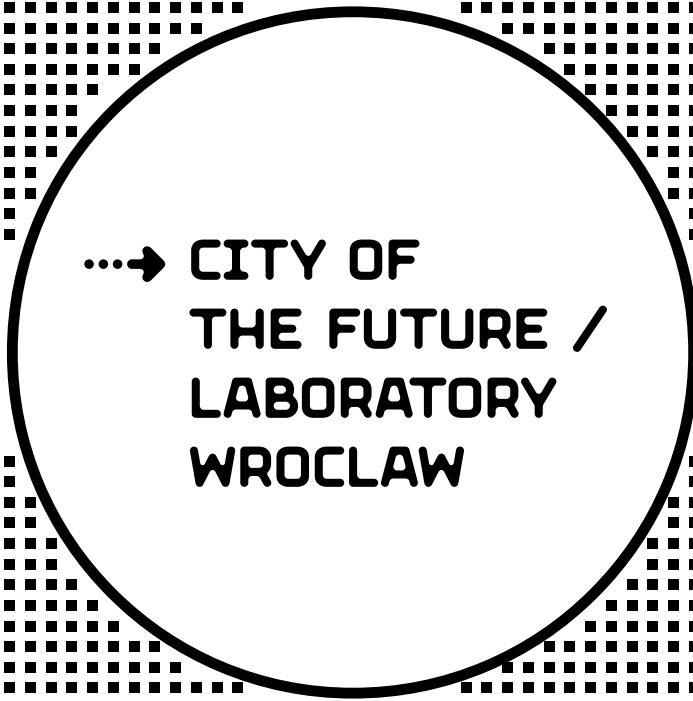
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