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## NEW FACES OF A CONTEMPORARY STUDENT – DIGITAL E-MIGRANT

*We all need some forms of emigration.  
It is emigration which teaches us to learn again,  
To discover the meanings of smells,  
of words such as to love, tolerate, give chance to fate, risk*  
Mariusz Zalejski\*\*

### INTRODUCTION

The problem of emigration has been accompanying humanity for thousands of years. The new dimension is the so-called e-migration, or emigration in a digital, or more strictly – in a hybrid world. This concept can be captured from several perspectives. The main purpose of the article is to show that a modern student, strongly immersed in the world of electronic media, and in particular on the Internet, is – in accordance with the broad interpretation given above – a digital e-migrant and can

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\*\* Mariusz Zalejski (born 1959) – Polish actor, alumnus of AST National Academy of Theatre Arts in Kraków. A quotation from *Melody of Life*.

appear in many different roles, both positive and negative. An additional goal is to indicate the similarities and differences between emigration and e-migration. The Internet will be seen here mainly as an environment in which young people function, develop social relations, experiment with their identity, etc., and not as a tool that we use.

The subject of emigration and emigrants has been very popular, fashionable and important for several years, and has become the subject of both private conversations and serious debates of world's politicians. This is a complex problem, very contemporary and at the same time delicate, because behind each individual case of emigration there are often difficult, complicated human lives. The subject of emigration stirs up extreme emotions in most people, as it is usually assessed not from the level of reason, but precisely from the level of emotions, strengthened by repeated opinions and stereotypes.

The word "change" is most strongly associated with the word "emigration." It is above all a change of an anchoring place, both in the real world as well as in cyberspace. This last movement is definitely easier and does not give rise to such serious consequences as traditional emigration, which, together with a change of location, also means far-reaching changes related to functioning in a new environment. These are social and cultural changes related to new neighbors, place of residence and possible work, they can even be climatic and weather changes.

A world-renowned Polish sociologist Professor Zygmunt Bauman introduced to the literature five models of the postmodern era man: the pilgrim, the stroller, the vagabond, the tourist and the player (Bauman, 1994, pp. 10-14). The pilgrim strives to achieve the purpose of his own life, which is usually to achieve full identity and to realize his own intellectual and creative potential (Bauman, 1994, for: Szmyd, 2019, p. 74). This model is now in decline, because liquid postmodernism by its constant variability no longer allows a lasting, final goal. The stroller is a mindless collector of sensations, superficially perceiving the outside world, which he usually does not understand. The vagabond carries out the model of a man looking for constant changes, wandering through life with no clear purpose, experiencing subsequent disappointments resulting from unfulfilled hopes. The tourist is a collector of impressions that are the basis for his assessment of the world. The player, on the other hand, is a model of an emotionally cold man, who values the risk and counts on success, which he is supposed to achieve with his own cleverness and luck. It is a dominant model in the modern post-modern world, because for many people life becomes a game. It seems that the models suggested by Z. Bauman should be supplemented with the emigrant and the e-migrant model.

Due to the limited frame of the article, it only indicates the issue, without in-depth studies and considerations. It is, therefore, a McLuhan-style tapestry, requiring – when the need arises – a detailed development of the threads outlined here.

## COMMENTS ON DEFINITION

To clarify further considerations, let us recall the definitions of basic terms such as emigration and immigration. The concept of emigration comes from the Latin word *emmigratio*, meaning the departure from the place of previous residence to another country. The departing person is called an emigrant. The opposite phenomenon is immigration, or the arrival of people from other countries. Emigration and immigration are referred to collectively as migration. In the further context of the digital (hybrid) world we will be dealing with both their variants.

Most often, the causes of migration are political, economic, social, scientific or religious. The research from August 2018 also showed a new cause of emigration as many as 44% of Poles – willingness to travel and learn about the world (*10 najczęstszych powodów...*, 2016). This applies mainly to young people who, thanks to good knowledge of foreign languages and high competences in the area of new technologies, can combine these two passions with professional work, realizing the so-called the idea of *work-life balance*. They form a group of so-called *digitalis nomads* – digital nomads – who, thanks to the access to the global network, take a job from virtually anywhere in the world (*10 najczęstszych powodów...*, 2016).

In the modern digital (hybrid) world, it is also worth introducing a new concept – e-migration. It will mean the mobile activity of people in both directions, i.e. both to the digital world and the exit from it and – this is a broader interpretation of the new concept – the penetration into cyberspace of a wide range of services and human activity (e.g. e-sport). In this sense, the majority of citizens of civilized-developed countries, and especially almost all of the younger generations, can be considered as e-migrants.

The term “e-migrants” also includes quite a large group of Poles who left their country to achieve professional success in the sector related to new technologies, mainly in the USA. With its headquarters in Gdynia, the Emigration Museum calls this group a “technological diaspora.” Although the members of the technological diaspora remain mostly anonymous, the most famous are the late Jacek Tramiel (1928-2012) and Steve Wozniak (born 1950). The former was the founder of Commodore, which initially produced typewriters, then calculators, and finally home computers, of which the Commodore C64 model has found more than 20 million buyers. In 1984 J. Tramiel formed ATARI Corporation and built the successful ATARI 65XE and Amiga models. Steve Wozniak, great-grandson of Polish emigrants, in 1976 together with Steve Jobs founded Apple Inc. and was the constructor of the first personal computers Apple I and Apple II. For his achievements, he was awarded the prestigious National Medal of Technology by US President (Onions, 2018; Karaś, 2018).

While emigration is a phenomenon known for several thousand years, e-migration appears in the Internet age, or more precisely in its phase of 2.0, when the average Internet user has gained the ability to create information and enrich network resources,

and flourishes in the social media era. Emigration refers to the physical movement of people in the real physical (geographical) space and is associated with multiculturalism. It requires greater tolerance and is regulated by international law – the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Workers – Migrants and Members of Their Families (UN Resolution No. 45/158 of December 18, 1990). On the other hand, e-migration is much less connected with multiculturalism – in the network we are dealing with a unified global culture, the culture of cyberspace, the so-called cyberculture. Pope Benedict XVI aptly described the cyberspace with the concept of *continento digitale* – a digital continent.

The motive of e-migration is usually cognitive curiosity, as well as escape from the real world into a seemingly safe and comfortable life of cyberspace. An emigrant can take very little with him – they are limited by the size of their luggage, its weight, etc. But their most important resource is the content of the mind – intellectual potential, knowledge and experience, knowledge of foreign languages, etc. An e-migrant most often transfers the content of his or her mind; hence we are talking about brain drain, because countries that have subsidized the education of departing people suffer tangible losses. It happens, however, that emigrants financially support their families, reducing economic inequalities – especially in Third World countries, and sometimes return, bringing new knowledge and experience, significantly increasing the social and intellectual capital of the country of origin. Due to the positive aspects of the pejorative brain drain, the terms “circulation” or “brain acquisition” are increasingly used (*Migracja ludności*, 2018).

## DIGITAL NATIVES AND DIGITAL IMMIGRANTS

The first and most natural role of the modern student as an e-migrant is the role – however paradoxically it sounds – of the digital native. This name was used by the American educator and media researcher Marc Prensky in relation to young people, especially strongly immersed in the media world, in contrast to the older generation, born in the pre-Internet era – so-called digital immigrants. Digital natives are people who are constantly connected to the internet, for whom the world of electronic media is a natural environment of functioning (Morbitzer, 2014). It can therefore be concluded that the digital natives emigrate most with many of their activities and identity to the cyberspace. This topic is well known, so I will limit my discussion to a short commentary.

To be precise, it should be added that M. Prensky is not the author of the concept attributed to him – he popularized only the division proposed by John Barlow, Douglas Rushkoff and Don Tapscott (Ptaszek, in printing, p. 53). J. Barlow (1947-2018), an American poet, essayist, philosopher, called the “Internet bard,” in 1996 in his *Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace* (1966) wrote: “You are afraid of your children because they are natives in the world in which you will always be

immigrants.” The metaphor of immigrants was also used by an American sociologist, writer, media theoretician, publicist, lecturer, comic scriptwriter, laureate of the prestigious Neil Postman Award for intellectual achievements in the public sphere – D. Rushkoff (born 1961) – when he wrote in his book (1996) entitled *Playing the future. What we can learn from digital kids*: “We are all immigrants entering new territory. Our world has changed so fast that we can barely observe differences, let alone understand them. [...] Without physically moving we had a long journey, which no generation in history had ever made before” (Rushkoff, 1996, after: Ptaszek, in print, p. 55). D. Rushkoff, however, made a division other than M. Prensky – a young generation, easily adapting to the digital world, called “young immigrants,” while the older – distrustful to the digital world – “older immigrants.”

## THE HYBRID WORLD OF E-SERVICES

The modern world has become a world that can be described as the “hybrid world.” We are observing the ever stronger interpenetration of the real and digital world. The hybrid world is a world in which we shape the face of the real world with virtual tools. In this world, more and more services can be provided in the form of e-services – using the network, a high level of automation and low human participation. The most important e-services include: e-finance (electronic payments), e-entertainment, e-shopping, e-reservations, e-offers and online auctions, e-learning, e-insurance, e-medicine (including virtual remote operations), e-books and various information services, which may also have their counterparts in the real world (e.g. press, radio). Along with the rapidly progressing virtualization of our lives, more and more services will be transferred to cyberspace.

## E-SPORT AS A SPECIAL FORM OF E-MIGRATION OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

One of the special forms of human activity, which recently immigrated to the virtual space, causing a lot of controversy, is sport. According to the definition, sport is “a form of human activity, aimed at improving physical fitness within competition, individually or collectively, according to contractual rules” (*Sport*, 2019). The essence of sport is physical movement, caring for one’s own body, and in the holistic view – the development of the physical sphere (although in many sports, especially those coming from the Far Eastern culture, the spiritual sphere is also very important). E-sport, or electronic sport, is – according to Wikipedia: “a form of competition in which players’ activities are computer games. The competition between players takes place both in recreational form and in computer game tournaments (so-called *pro gaming*)” (*Electronic sport*, 2019). Therefore, there is no improvement of physical

fitness; at most one can talk about improving certain dexterity and speed. From the definition of sport, only competition and rules remain in e-sport. E-sport thus omits what is particularly important for proper human development, and in times of technology development which is characterized by – using the term of Professor Józef Bańka – the syndrome of life’s simplification – physical movement. This seems particularly dangerous for the younger generation, which is the only participant in e-sports competitions. And it is dangerous and even misleading to use the name “sport” to refer to anything that has nothing to do with real sport competition. Not every competition, even if it is included in certain rules, is a sport. We dealing with competition and rules in many games, such as board games, the stock exchange, etc., and nobody calls this sport. Some television stations have shown great interest in e-sport, which will probably only worsen the situation. In addition to “e-athletes” quite a large group of fans will appear (in fact they already exist) who will sit in front of the screen and get fascinated by the transmitted games. This situation will also effectively distract them from physical activity.

## MIGRATION OF OUR DATA TO CYBERSPACE

The Internet and all devices connected to the global network are, by their very nature, excellent tools for collecting data about their users, and thus also for surveillance. According to the Freedom on the Net 2016 report by Freedom House, 67% of all Internet users in the world is subjected to surveillance. The development of the so-called internet of things, i.e. everyday devices connected to the Internet is responsible for this process (*67 proc. użytkowników internetu...*, 2019). Such practices belong to the group of hard methods of obtaining information about the Internet users and their preferences. However, we provide a lot of information about ourselves voluntarily, e.g. by logging in to websites that we want to access, or at our own request, often from ordinary snobbery. The example of this can be placing on social websites detailed reports from various events, tours, and even dangerous or controversial events, often enriched with pictures or video clips. Such behaviors are mainly characteristic for young people who want to impress their friends. These people are not always aware of the fact that all information – first of all – is indelible from the network, and secondly – it helps relevant services to collect and develop detailed psychological profiles and a list of preferences, and thirdly – it can be used in the future and contribute to hinder or even destroy our professional or political career.

## DIGITAL DIET – DEPARTURE FROM THE WORLD OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA

As I pointed out in the introductory remarks, the concept of e-migration will be understood as two-way mobile activity of people, i.e. both to the digital world and departure from it. I devote this part of my reflections to the journey from the digital world to the real one, which happens much less frequently and requires a high level of consciousness.

Some Internet users, especially young people, spend too much time on media activity. This applies to the Internet, television, computer games and mobile phones. There are many pathologies of using information technology tools, the most dangerous of which is Internet addiction. This includes several different forms of addiction, for example from social networking sites, network games, instant messengers, erotic and pornographic sites or from information. The common denominator of these addictions is spending too much time on one of the forms of online activity mentioned here. It is estimated that the percentage of addicts amounts to approx. 5% of the general population of the Internet users, which in the case of Poland – according to the latest available data – gives the number of about 1.49 million people (IWC, 2019).

In addition, many of them are not addicted, but they rub against this thin border or simply violate the common-sense limits of time spent on network activity. The research conducted by Gemius – an international research and technology company investigating the behavior of the Internet users – published in the report in March 2018 shows that Poles spend an average of 2 hours and 6 minutes a day browsing the Internet, which is 766.5 hours per year, i.e. over one month, the twelfth part of our life (*Jak Polacy korzystają z internetu...*, 2018).

In this situation, the so-called a digital diet (see Johnson, 2012) or – postulated by some church hierarchy post 2.0 (Konkel, 2013). The idea of both concepts comes down to resignation in a selected period or more critical and selective use of networks and devices of information and communication technology. In view of the above-mentioned data one can limit oneself and the time saved can be spent on relaxation or precious, direct and warm contact with the family.

This is the experience of a six-month disconnection from modern technologies – the Internet, smartphones and television described by a journalist Susan Maushart (2014) holding a PhD in media ecology in an excellent book entitled *E-migrants. Six months without the Internet, telephone and television*.

The state of our health depends largely on the quality and quantity of meals consumed – this principle should also be used when “feeding” the minds with information. The idea of a digital post has found a wider reflection in the “digital detox” action. Some hotels offer a few days stay, during which devices used for communication and communication with the network are locked in a safe, and guests are given a massage, aromatherapy and other forms of relaxation, allowing discovering the charms of life in the real world.

The digital diet requires a new interpretation of freedom. It can be understood as freedom from the tool itself. With free will, a man uses the tools available to him or he can give them up. Freedom from the Internet should be seen as the lack of internal compulsion to constantly be on the web, often associated with addiction; this freedom means at the same time the ability to use this modern medium in a rational way, both in a temporal and substantive sense.

## HIKIMORI AS AN ESCAPE FROM THE REAL WORLD

A drastic example of e-migration is hikikomori. This name, introduced in the 1990s by Japanese psychiatrist Tamaki Saito (born 1961), comes from two Japanese words *hiku* – retreat, give up, leave and *komoru* – be in the castle and protect yourself, stay in the temple and pray, enter and hide, be inside and not go out, etc. (Hikikomori, 2019). It means a social withdrawal – a situation in which a person for over 6 months almost all the time stays at home without contact with the public. At the same time, the same name is used to describe people affected by this syndrome. Hikikomori have an inverted circadian rhythm – wanting to avoid contact with other residents sleep during the day, moving the activity to night hours.

Hikikomori is a form of social escapism – an escape from the expectations of other people. The reason is the rebellion against the pressure of success (also educational and professional) that young people in civilized countries experience from the environment, especially in Japan, and more recently in China and South Korea, as well as in European countries, including Poland. It is estimated that about 55% of Japanese people aged 13-24 of whom 80% are men, have experienced being hikikomori. Hikikomori is therefore called the Japanese virus of loneliness, because it means the rejection of the whole society, including their own family and close relatives. In people affected by hikikomori, there is often a tendency to aggressive behavior towards the loved ones.

Hikikomori is a social disease in Japan, but it is not considered a mental illness. It can, however, be caused by an existing disease, as well as – due to a specific lifestyle – it can lead to it. Hikikomori is a very specific, culturally alien form of e-migration – it is a migration to the world of loneliness, in which contacts with other people have mainly (and in principle only) virtual character.

## NOOSPHERE – A PLACE OF A NOBLE MEETING

A particularly noble, though rather utopian, example of e-migration of human thoughts, achievements of science and culture can be noosphere (Greek *nous* – reason, mind, spirit). This is a futuristic concept of the French theologian, philosopher, anthropologist and paleontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955),



which consists in building a common sphere of thought and consciousness produced collectively by individuals, societies, nations and cultural circles; it is the sphere of earthly consciousness created by all human generations, it is also a collective heritage of humanity (Pacewicz, 2019). In a sense, therefore, the noosphere prophetically contains the idea of globalization.

The Canadian media scientist, successor and student of Marshall McLuhan – Derrick de Kerckhove (2001) proposed two stages of building the noosphere. The first stage is called planetization, or creating a material base using new techniques of interpersonal communication and exchange of information to meet and get to know representatives of different cultures. This is a technical stage that has already been achieved. The base is the Internet, enabling global communication. The second stage is called convergent unanimity – uniting minds and hearts in the “mind of the minds.” Unfortunately, this stage has not yet been accomplished by humanity, and its negative features still stand in its hindrance: hatred, jealousy, distrust, lack of tolerance for other views, materialism. The optimistic vision of P. de Chardin, emphasizing what people connect, not what divides them, is still waiting for fulfillment.

## A DREAM OF IMMORTALITY

An eternal unrealized dream or – to use the term of world renown of the late professor of medical science, Andrzej Szczeklik – unfulfilled Promethean dream of medicine is the transformation of *homo sapiens* into *homo immortalis* – an immortal man. As the professor writes, the questions: “Does death end everything? Will we disappear like smoke without a trace? And will there never be anything left?” and whether human consciousness can survive after death, are posed by almost all races and societies and almost all responded positively (Szczeklik, 2012, p. 63).

Recently, the concepts of using the media to provide people with digital immortality have appeared. The achievements of genetics, robotics, computer science, nanotechnology and pharmacology are developing strongly. Transhumanism appeared – philosophical, intellectual and cultural trend, striving to improve the human condition and create a new – “posthuman” species. Transhumanism is also an ideology and worldview, and faith in the possibility of humanity’s achievement of immortality.

Transhumanists believe that “death can soon mean only a «change of status» – from a biological to a virtual or post-biologic state of existence, where the extension and extension of the body is technology that restores its vital functions” (Gałaszko et al., 2016, p. 65). Transhumanism has recently received ideological support in the form of immortalism – the view that human existence does not end with biological death. Research on immortality is dealt with in the newly created discipline of science – immortalology. Such research is conducted mainly in research centers in the USA and Russia.

One of the leading transhumanists – currently a Russian scientist specializing in cosmonautics and cybernetics – Aleksandr Bolonkin (born 1933) predicts that “achieving digital immortality will be possible in two decades, and by the middle of the 21st century this technology will be financially available for all the inhabitants of the Earth” (Gałuszko et al., 2016, p. 65, see also Olzacka, 2019). So far, however, it has not been possible to develop technology to transfer the contents of the human brain to the computer or virtual cloud, including its knowledge and – which seems particularly difficult – awareness.

## FINAL REMARKS

Emigration is always a journey into a new, often unknown place. It is an escape from something and at the same time a new path towards something new. It carries a lot of risks, but also a hope for a better life, it is a chance for new discoveries, learning new cultures, differences, it is a lesson of tolerance. The sentence contained in Mariusz Zalejski’s thought used as a motto – “We all need some forms of emigration. It is emigration which teaches us to learn again, discover the meanings of smells, of the words: love, tolerate, give chance to fate, risk” has a deep meaning.

In the article, the subject of consideration was e-migration related to human migration or various services to the virtual space or withdrawal from the digital world. It is worth recalling, however, that virtuality has accompanied the man almost from the beginning of his existence. We usually associate it with a computer-simulated reality, but there is also a so-called soft virtuality, which is of a cultural nature and means internal, man-made “products” of his intellectual activity. These are thoughts, ideas, dreams, beliefs, etc. (Morbitzer, 2015, p. 415), so these components that are available to each of us. Therefore, we can risk the statement that in this broader sense we are all e-migrants, but most often we do not realize this fact, and in the past we could not name it in this way.

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## NEW FACES OF A CONTEMPORARY STUDENT – DIGITAL E-MIGRANT

**Keywords:** emigration, immigration, digital natives, digital immigrants, noosphere, digital diet, digital immortality

**Abstract:** The problem of emigration has been accompanying humanity for thousands of years. The new dimension is the so-called e-migration, or emigration in a digital, or more strictly – in a hybrid world. This concept has been precisely defined in the article. The main purpose of the article is to show that a modern student, strongly immersed in the world of electronic media, and in particular on the Internet, is – according to the broad interpretation – a digital e-migrant and can appear in many different roles, both positive and negative.

## NOWE OBLICZA WSPÓŁCZESNEGO UCZNIĄ – CYFROWEGO E-MIGRANTA

**Słowa kluczowe:** emigracja, imigracja, cyfrowi tubylcy, cyfrowi imigranci, noosfera, cyfrowa dieta, cyfrowa nieśmiertelność

**Streszczenie:** Problem emigracji towarzyszy ludzkości od tysięcy lat. Nowym jej wymiarem jest tzw. e-migracja, czyli emigracja w cyfrowym, a ściślej – w hybrydowym świecie. W arty-

kule pojęcie to zostało precyzyjnie zdefiniowane. Głównym celem artykułu jest wykazanie, iż współczesny uczeń, silnie zanurzony w świecie mediów elektronicznych, a w szczególności w internecie, jest – zgodnie z podaną szeroką interpretacją – cyfrowym e-migrantem i może występować w wielu różnych rolach, zarówno pozytywnych, jak i negatywnych.