IV International scientific conference
«MEDIAEducation»: vectors of integration in digital space

HISTORY OF SOCIAL NETWORKING SERVICES:
A SCHEME OF PRESENTING

Aleksey Pustovalov*

*Corresponding author

Perm State University (Perm, Russia)
theyareeverywhere@gmail.com

Abstract

The article attempts to give an author's model of presenting of periods of development of world social networking services. It includes three stages: a prehistory, a history, and a posthistory.

The prehistory minds prerequisites of their emergence in the second half of the XXth century (the political ones, such as Cuban missile crisis, the Gorbachev's perestroika and Eltsin's collapse of the USSR, and scientific and technological ones, such as the advent of the Internet, its visualization by Tim Berners-Lee's `www, html` and `http`). The history refers to the creation of such biggest world networking services as `Friendster`, `MySpace`, `Facebook` and the biggest national ones such as `Vkontakte` and `Odnoklassniki` in Russia in the zero years of the XXIst century. The general concept of social networking services was fully formed at this time. The posthistory applies to a situation at the turn of 2000–2010s, when social media market was completely divided by major media companies such as `Google`, `Facebook`, etc., and new projects (such as `WhatsApp`, `Instagram`, `Periscope` etc.) were launched quite independently, but when were acquired and significantly promoted by existing powerful media giants. In this period the main Russian independent social networking services `Vkontakte` and `Odnoklassniki` were fully bought by media mogul `Mail.ru Group`. One of the main ideas is that social networking services could appear only after Cold War, in the world of `détente`, when people's relationships all over the world became friendlier, warm, and free of fears..

Keywords: social networking services, social networks, history of mass communication, Facebook, VKontakte.

1. Introduction

Social networking services play a very important role in our society: there is no need to prove this thesis, it's an essential part of life today.

We found 30 507 articles on this topic in Russian Science Citation Index (RSCI) database. They are devoted to various aspects of this phenomenon: their functions, use for training and educational purposes, use for news media, security issues and so on.

Only a few headlines – we found not more than 10 – are devoted to the topic that interests us: a history of social networking services (although this topic is somehow affected in other articles).

2. Problem Statement

2.1. The history of social networking services as a new scientific subject.

The history of social networking services is still neither a training course, nor an academic discipline, nor as well a science subject. But definitely it will find its place between such subjects as the history of journalism, the history of philosophy, the history of culture.

There is already a considerable need to distinguish such a scientific subject: we have lots and lots of information on this topic, which requires ordering and alignment with political and cultural world history, the history of news media and other aspects of existing knowledge.

Serious scientists, heavy metal of scientific thought, are still frankly shy to tackle the subject: this field is very dynamic and changeable, shaken by earthquakes, so it's very risky to plow it.

So the only people who have the audacity to handle it may be students, undergraduates, postgraduates. They feel the importance of this subject, but don't have scientific and even life experience enough to make profound research of it, or they slide to another aspect, which really cares them more (Fomicheva, Kazantsev, 2019; Khismatullin, 2019; Krivonosova, Yakunicheva, 2018). A bright example of such approach is an RSCI-indexed article of a 9th-grade pupil (co-authored with his teacher), which analyses on two pages(!) not less than a "Social networking services: concept, history of occurrence, and the current state of affairs" (Patyukov, Kovriga, 2017). Thus, the story we are interested in, these articles often give as a chronological sequence of various facts, without relying on the political, social, cultural conditions of the described time period. (Good exception is a 2012 article by A. V. Tsareva, "Man on the net: change of web generations", which conceptualizes the history of web as a history of three "web-generations": "creators", "users" and "connected").

We see there that behavioral sciences concept of the *social network* as "a social structure made up of a set of social actors", (*Social Network, 2020*) is sometimes naively equated there with the concept of *social networking services* as "an online platform which people use to … follow other people who share similar personal interests or are interested in their brand" (Social Networking Service, 2020). (*Google Translate* translates Russian collocation "sotsialnye seti" only as "social networks", always and only in one sense). So the beginning of social networking services era some authors see since 1954 when John A. Barnes firstly used the scientific concept of the social network in his article "Class and Committees in a Norwegian Island Parish" (but, course, there were still no social networking service, nor the Internet at all).

It all means that this subject is still waiting for his attentive, experienced and grown-up researchers. So this is a work that should be started.

3. Research Questions

Thereby it seems just timely to pose some questions.
- Definition of clear chronology and periodization of social networking services.
- Clarification of the political and social background of each period.
- Defining a list of events within each period.
- Clarification of the significance of each period for the history of social networking services in general.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of our study is the creation of a general scheme of representation of the history of social networking services. We can divide it into some parts.
- Creation of a whole scheme of the history of social networking services.
- Defining events within each period.
- Clarification of the significance of each period in the political and social context.

5. Research Methods

5.1. Historical (historical genetic) method.

This method involves the consideration of any phenomenon in its development: in the origin, formation, complication, etc. We use this method when describing a set of events and phenomena within the history of social networking services and create its periodization.

5.2. Comparative method.

This method is used to compare two or more objects (phenomena, ideas, results of research, etc.), to select general and different in them for the purpose of classification and typology.

5.3. System method.

This method comes from understanding a system as a set of interconnected elements; it involves a study of the interaction of the system with the environment. We use this method when studying the emergence of new social networking services in niche areas.

6. Findings

The first step for understanding of the history social networking services is to present it in some definite model. We found it necessary to present it as a three-part scheme, preceding the history itself by the part of prehistory – with a description of the conditions, prerequisites for the emergence of social networks on the Internet, and continuing it by the part of a posthistory, when all main social networking services were already created and new projects were possible only in unexpected niches and with the patronage of existing media giants.

6.1. Prehistory: *Cold War* realities

History of science and technology can be closely related to political circumstances and events of the time. And a starting point, from which we are to begin observation of our subject, is that kind.

We start it with the rise of the Internet – a parent of social networking services. The Global network initially was some result of The Cold War, the great confrontation between East and West, blocs of states, the center of one of which was the USSR, and the other – the USA. It was initiated by ARPA (*Advanced Research Projects Agency*, US Department of Defense structure, created in response to the Soviet launching of Sputnik 1 in 1957) as ARPANET.

- 1962: Cold war and Cuban missile crisis as the origin of a global network

In the middle of 1962 Joseph Licklider formulated his concept of "Intergalactic Computer Network" (worldwide netlike computer combination) and in October 1962 (just at the Cuban missile crisis, when USA and USSR were very close to nuclear war) he joined ARPA to make this concept true. Another conceptual work, used in the origin of ARPANET in 1962, "On Distributed Communication Networks" by Paul Baran, who "took on the task of designing a "survivable" communications system that could maintain communication between end points in the face of damage from nuclear weapons during the Cold War" (Paul Baran, 2020). In 1965 ARPA connected two computers, in late 1969 – already four computers were connected in the permanent network (ARPANET, 2020), which became the first step of a future Internet.

So the initial step of social networking services was caused by acute political reasons. USA researcher B. M. Murphy rightly claims that the Internet "was evolved from cold war necessities" (Murphy, 2001).

- Turn of 1980–1990-s: turn of the bipolar world

If the previous step was made only from a negative political background, the next one was political too, but made from a different background.

USSR leader Mikhail Gorbachev's *Perestroyka, glasnost*, disarmament at the end of the 1980-s, Boris Yeltsin's dissolution of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991 put an end to the bipolar Cold War world and led to the creation of a new, multipolar world.

It all had lead to détente, the easing of strained relations between different countries, especially between countries of US-Soviet bipolarity (Kheifets, 2019, 265–266). Political, economic, cultural relations between different countries have improved; people just became more friendly and warmer to each other – which was almost impossible during the Cold War.

And science and technology which are closely related with politics, answered to the new world situation – by inventions of Tim Berners-Lee, the creator of *URL, html, http, www*. He made the network visible, accessible to the average user (not only to a computer specialist, as it was in past times), and connected all countries by his *World Wide Web*. We could not have it in the world torn into two antagonistic poles.

- The 1990s, second half: prehistorical social networking projects

In the further development of social Internet resources, we can see a definite logic, determined by one main factor: people created in the first place what they need the most. What they really missed –

friendship, close relationship, love (it was hardly available without détente during the Cold War) – became more possible after it with the WWW.

Match.com: online dating as a post-Cold War trend

1995, at the beginning of the year, *Match.com* (founded already in 1993) was launched. It became a world-famous, the biggest online dating site, serving over 50 countries in twelve languages; many people considered it as the main service of that type, something known as it is by default. Its frantic popularity was an indicator of what people primarily wanted to find on the Internet, which they could not get before in real life. (Global warming in world politics and human relations coincided at that time with a significant improvement in the quality of contraceptives; it made possible to consider sex not only as a means of procreation but as a means of communication). And it also did not become a coincidence that Jonathan Abrams, the creator of the world's first social networking service, was guided by it *Match.com* when creating *Friendster*. And, of course, *Match.com* stimulated the emergence of many similar resources in different countries.

Classmates.com: "find class members and colleagues"

1995, November 17, was the day when Randy Conrads founded *Classmates.com* – online service which helps to find "class members and colleagues from kindergarten, primary school, high school, college, workplaces, and the military" (Classmates.com, 2020). It also became an online recourse known by default in English speaking countries, also having initiated the appearance of many similar sites all around the world (*StayFriends* in Germany, Austria, Sweden, *Trombi.com* in France, *Odnoklassniki* in Russia, etc.). So *Classmates* was one more area that people needed to master in the virtual world, because it may be the fulfillment of their long-standing desires in the real world.

ICQ: the first instant messaging service

1996, November 15, became the day when *ICQ*, the first online messenger, appeared. *ICQ* abbreviation can be heard as "I Seek You". This call is implemented in the structure of the service: its filters allow you to search for a person by gender, age, place of residence, etc. (characteristics that users themselves leave in their descriptions). What's why *ICQ* became the next step in the development of the social space of the Internet: this project from the very beginning was not limited to online dating or finding classmates (as two previous). It matters that *ICQ*, being created later, already had a much wider base for online communication. And it inspired an appearance of many similar messaging type programs: AOL's *AIM* (1997), Yahoo's *Yahoo! Pager* (1998), Microsoft's *MSN Messenger* (1999), Chinese Tencent's *QQ* (1999) and so on.

Livejournal: glorifying long texts

1999, April 15: *Livejournal*, the most famous blog platform, was launched. That time blogging, the publications of long profound texts and commenting them in a smart, clever way became a means of intense intellectual communication online – one that someone lacked in everyday life. *Livejournal* becomes one of the best-known blog platform and a reference point for those who came after him: *Blogger* (1999), *TypePad*, *WordPress*, *LiveInternet* (2003), etc. (*MySpace*, launched in 2003, was not only the biggest social networking service, but blog platform too). So one more area of Internet social space was mastered.

But, we should add, such kind of blogging, involving the communication with long intellectual texts, was the culmination of a centuries-old tradition, when big book texts were means of expressing someone's knowledge of the world, the phenomena occurring in it. It is symbolic that this blog platform appeared at the very end of the XXth century (and at the very end of the second millennium), because the next, XXIst century, became an era of short texts (that are more suitable to reflect a faster and more variable modern life).

Thus, it is necessary to state that *Match.com*, *Classmates.com*, *ICQ* (and similar online resources) at the end of XXth century paved the way, created the prerequisites for the emergence of *Friendster*, *MySpace*, *Facebook*, etc. – universal social platforms, which involve the communication of any subject, nationality, age, gender, inclinations, goals. They can be called real full-fledged social networking services. It is also symbolic that they were launched just at the beginning of the XXIst century (and at the beginning of the second millennium).

So we can see that political and social prerequisites were very important for the emergence of social platforms of the XXth century; they were actually a product of this post-Cold War situation.

6.2.   History: social media classics

If we talk about the history of social networking services as itself, we should start it from the first decade of the 2000s – the period which was full of different events.

At the beginning of 2000s presidents changed in many countries of the world; in 2000-2001 Russia was headed by Vladimir Putin, the United States – by George W. Bush. September 11, 2001 attacks (and

ensuing "War of Terror"), even for all their severity, however, did not begin a new world confrontation or a new round of the Cold War.

The 2000s were marked by a significant economic boom in Asia. Economic growth was accompanied by rising oil prices, which was favorable for Russia. Digital technologies were widely introduced, e-commerce has been started to flourish. But the main content of the first decade of the 2000s was swift progress of the Internet (dot-com bubble burst at the turn of 1990–2000-s was not a disaster, but rather a symptom of growth) and its rapid spread in a free from the fears of the Cold War world. World of détente, without the fierce confrontation of two superpowers, has become exactly the one in which such a phenomenon, as social networking services, could appear.

The appearance of the first real social networking services in the early years of the XXIst century also has its own logic. This logic is similar to that of the social sites of the 1990s: the new projects occupied those niches that were not yet occupied by the previous projects.

Friendster (2002): a social networking standard

It was the first social networking site with such familiar attributes as universality of communication (unlike *Match.com* focused on dating, and *Classmates.com*, focused on class members and colleagues contacts), the possibility to make friends, a personal messaging service, a news wall, the possibility to share videos, photos, messages and comments with other members. Despite its closure in 2015, it managed to present to other emerging social networking services a standard of structure for this type of social resource.

It gave to the world of social communication a very important and actual concept of a *friend*, which was a part of its name and a key feature of its communication model (looking for friends is possible between friends of your friends, and then – between friends of their friends, involving Stanley Milgram's "Small World" phenomenon). Making "friends" in the Internet became an essential part of new world network culture, and the word "friend" in a meaning "an Internet pal" came just in this form in many languages. And it became a significant characteristic of post-Cold War multipolar world, which people from different cities and countries could be *friends* in such social networking services.

MySpace (2003): my virtual place and multimedia guru

This network has greatly expanded representation of what a resource of this type can be for a modern person.

MySpace was owned by *News Corporation*, one of the biggest media groups (2005–2011). Within this period, from 2005 to 2008, *MySpace* was the largest social networking site in the world; in June 2006 it surpassed *Google* as the most visited website in the US (which never was with another social resource).

The main concept of *MySpace* was that it may become a really comfortable place of virtual inhabitance. We may understand its name as *my place*, *my room*, *my field*, even *my site*. It was the first time in Global Network history, when the account in social networking recourse may play the role of a person's online representation (like a personal website). It might look nice and cool because of design possibilities, accessible to everyone on *MySpace*: you were able to choose one of many proposed account templates, and then adjust it for your own purposes.

MySpace was distinguished by a high degree of multimedia, whose quantity turned into quality. Of course, even *Frienster* gave its members a possibility to share online content.

But only in *MySpace* videos, photos, musical tracks became a unit of communication (not just multimedia elements): you could greet your friends, congratulate, express your emotions using them! That's why at the first stages of the network's development, Chris DeWolfe and Tom Anderson, its creators, invited musicians there (as well as photographers, artists, designers and other people who could publish and share products of their own labor, which other members could legally use on this network). *MySpace* even launched its own music record label (*MySpace Records*), then TV platform (*MySpaceTV*), a computer game platform (*MySpace Games Lab*) and even a blog platform – to make different multimedia possibilities available. All of this made the *space* of their users more extensive, varied and fascinating.

So the meaning of *MySpace* in the field of social communication was in forming of a new perception of the social networking service account – like a personal site, like a place of online representation of a person and promoting multimedia in its various forms as units of communication.

Facebook (2004): SNS giant and killer. Why?
A decline of *MySpace* and a shutdown of *Friendster* was to a great extent a result of a rapid rise of *Facebook* – the biggest social networking service of today. Founded by Mark Zuckerberg (and his fellow Harvard College students) it is in big part the product of his smart programming and brilliant organizational skills.

Facebook did not require a long, diligent setup of a user account, as it was on beauteous, motley, design-sophisticated *MySpace*.

It turned out to be more democratic with a modest, laconic design (besides requiring less time to load). A new user was able to create a *Facebook* account in a half of a minute, immediately rush to look for friends and would not feel humiliated because his friends' accounts would be cooler, more attractive and fancy.

That's why *Facebook* took over the world! When Internet user was asked to choose: a beautiful, but long-tuned, or modest, but quickly mastered interface, the choice of mass was not for beauty, but for the one that required less time.

At this time, three projects were also founded, without which it is impossible to imagine the history of social services: *Skype* (2003), *YouTube* (2004) and *Twitter* (2006).

VKontakte and *Odnoklassniki* (2006): alike, but with an important difference

The main Russian social networking services *VKontakte* and *Odnoklassniki* were launched in the same year in the same country as independent resources. Both projects were oriented on the model of US social sites (*Facebook* for *VKontakte* and *Classmates* for *Odnoklassniki*). Both changed their URL from long and inconvenient to short and nice (*vkontakte.ru* – to *vk.com*; *odnoklassniki.ru* – to *ok.ru*). Both of their founders, Pavel Durov and Albert Popkov, may look like an impersonation of an audience of their services: Both left their projects after full acquiring them by *Mail.ru Group* (in 2014 and 2009).

But the audience of *VKontakte* is young intelligent people from big and medium-sized cities; the main segment of *Odnoklassniki* audience is people from 35 to 60 of small cities and the countryside. *VKontakte* is a complicated and interesting service with a large number of settings and search filters (Morozova 2019, p. 201); *Odnoklassniki* is more simple in design and search settings, with large inscriptions and icons, which are more understandable for aged and inexperienced in Internet technologies people.

VKontakte has a large income from advertising. *Odnoklassniki* tries to monetize many of its options. After the introduction of paid registration in 2008, the popularity of *Odnoklassniki* fell sharply and users began to run away to a competitor, to *VKontakte*.

VKontakte retains the status of Russia's largest social networking service for more than a decade and it still does. *VKontakte* monthly audience is 97 million (Vkontakte. About US, 2020); *Odnoklassniki*'s – 71 million (Odnoklassniki RIF, 2018). *Vkontakte* has more active authors and they write much more texts (The audience of social networks in Russia 2019, 2019).

Moy Mir (2007): great expectations and doubtful prospects

Moy Mir (*My World*) was the most ambitious and promising social network project in Russia. *Mail.ru Group* (which is known as an owner of the most popular email service and well-known search engine) launched it, creating one interface for other *Mail.ru* services (Blogs@Mail.ru, Video@Mail.ru, Photo@Mail.Ru, Answers@Mail.ru).

Mail.ru Group successfully promoted this project, filling it with legal video content under contracts with Russian television channels and online movie theaters, as well as developing applications for online games. But the same content appeared on *VKontakte* and *Moy Mir* began to lose its audience. For some time *Mail.ru Group* administration tried to maintain the place of its social site in Russian top three, automatically counting new *Mail.ru* users as *Moy Mir* members. But it did not help: *Moy Mir* audience decreased from 2014 to 2019 from 25 to 5 million users and now this recourse is not mentioned in reviews of the country's largest social networking services.

6.3. Posthistory: launchings and takeovers

It is a period from the turn of the 2000–2010s and it continues to the present time. Politically and economically it started from the Great Recession (and different *Occupies*), Arab Spring, civil wars and revolutions, a temporary victory of liberal forces in the two largest countries of the world, ending with a rollback to conservatism. The first African-American US president, liberal democrat Barack Obama (2009–2017) transferred his power to conservative Donald Trump. Liberal Dmitry Medvedev's presidency (2008–2012), the first Russian leader, who promoted the use of blogging and social media in politics – with the unprecedented heyday of blogging and *VKontakte* communities that have become independent information actors in all regions of the country (Pustovalov 2018, p. 236) – handed over his power to the prior president, conservative-oriented Vladimir Putin with the subsequent liquidation of *RIA Novosti* media holding (2013), restructuring of *Lenta.ru* (2014) and curtailing of freedom of speech on social media under the pretext of the fight against terrorism.

The authorities of totalitarian and post-totalitarian countries began to show interest in controlling of social services: for massive surveillance (Cockerell 2019), for detection suspicious people's activity

(McDonell 2019), reading user correspondence (Zayakin, Smagin 2018), prohibiting access to them if they do not fit the country's information policy (China and US social services, blocking *Telegram* in Russia, China, Iran, Afghanistan), etc.

When we talk about the posthistory of social services, we mean a situation of consolidation of media ownership at the turn of 2000–2010s, when social media market was completely divided by major media companies such as *Google*, *Facebook* in the US, *Mail.ru Group* in Russia, etc. and they left no place for new actors. New interesting, bright and successful projects, emerging in unexpected niches, were launched quite independently, but then they were fully acquired and promoted by these powerful media giants – even in such a way that their founders, who put their creative power and soul into his projects, had to leave them.

It is also the situation when, unlike former decades, a preferred way to access the Internet was not via computers, but via mobile devices; and projects that arise from this time are mobile Internet-oriented. Young people, smartphone users, become a new huge audience largely influenced the conditions of new web2.0's UGC's Internet. Old-fashioned text blogging, which flourished at the turn of 2000-2010s, lost ground and was gradually replaced by video blogging by the end of 2010; now the word *blogger* by default has come to be understood as a video blogger – on *YouTube*, *Instagram*, etc.

2009: a takeover of *Odnoklassniki*; 2014 – *VKontakte*

In Russia we can count the beginning of this period from 2009, when Albert Popkov, the founder of *Odnoklassniki,* was fired from its board of directors, and the company's property was fully acquired by *Mail.ru Media Group*. This correlates with the event of 2014, when Pavel Durov, the founder of *VKontakte*, resigned from the post of CEO of the company (dissatisfied with the constant restriction of freedom of action), and "VKontakte LLC" was fully acquired by *Mail.ru Group*, so MMG, already owning *Moi Mir* network, became an owner of three largest Russian social services. It is worth recalling that in 2010 *Mail.ru Group* acquired well-known instant messaging service *ICQ*. MMG also has its own instant messaging services *Mail.ru Agent* (2003) and *TamTam* (2017), the most popular email service *Mail.ru*, well-known search engine, and *Amigo* browser. There's an opinion that this kind of *Mail.ru Group* takeovers, inexplicable in terms of antitrust policy, may be convenient for the state as a way of monitoring citizens when the largest social media are united in the hands of one owner. For example, it is proven (Zayakin, Smagin 2018), that the Russian special services read the correspondence of citizens in *ICQ* and it becomes an argument for their accusation.

2009: *WhatsApp* launching; 2014 – takeover

In 2009 *WhatsApp*, the world's largest instant messaging and Voice over IP service (over 2 milliard users worldwide by 2020) was founded by Jan Koum and Brian Acton. It was in a way a revolutionary service, His appearance influenced the situation in the market of mobile operators. Due to *WhatsApp*'s high popularity, their revenue for sending SMS messages between phones has significantly decreased. In 2014 *WhatsApp* was sold to *Facebook.* The uncompromising founders of *WhatsApp*, whose slogan was "No ads, no games, no gimmicks!", left it: Acton in 2017, after a dispute with *Facebook* regarding monetization of *WhatsApp*, Koum in 2018, arguing with *Facebook* over data privacy and the messaging app's business model.

2010: *Instagram* launching; 2012 – takeover

In 2010 *Instagram*, photo and video-sharing social networking service was launched. Unlike other social photo services, it was created right away as a mobile application; the app included live filters, instant tilt-shift, optional borders, one-click rotation, etc. Its growing popularity has become the reason *Facebook* bought it already in 2012. It has more than a milliard subscribers (May 2019), and today it is one of the most prestigious business platforms. But in 2018 Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger, founders of *Instagram*, left the company because of tensions between them and the head of *Facebook* regarding the future of the photo service.

2011: *Google+* ambitious launching; 2018 – shut down

In 2011 *Google+*, a social networking service was launched. It was a very ambitious and promising project of *Google*, which intended to use it as a basic account for many of its services (*YouTube, Gmail, Google Maps, Android, Google Play, Google Music, Google Voice, Google Wallet, Google Local*, etc). It had special features for *Google Android*, events option integrated with *Google Calendar* and other options, supported already existed *Google* services, and *Circles*, original feature, which helps to organize friends into groups, more or less close to the user (which went across various *Google* products and services).

But *Google+* suffered the same failure as the Russian mogul *Mail.ru Group* already had with its *Moi Mir*. Tightly packed social networking service market left no room for a new player in a familiar, non-niche zone (while *Instagram* and *WhatsApp* arose in niches that were initially ignored by existing large

players). *Google+* could not compete with *Facebook* (as earlier *Moi Mir* did not compete with *VKontakte*), despite the powerful support of its other services. Internet user already had *Facebook* in his mind as the main social networking site (which he used by default). That's why new users registered, tasted the service to understand how it works, and then leave, often – forever. So even a big player was not safe from defeat if the game was in this already established, tightly packed market: this rule *Google* should already know with *Buzz, Friend Connect*, and *Orkut*, its previous failed social networking services.

2011: *WeChat* – special rules for China

In 2011 *WeChat*, a Chinese social networking service was launched. It became a huge exception from the rule above, because it was made in a market closed to American players and projects, but each time created its own semblance of successful Western social services. *Tencent*, a company which made *WeChat*, already had such experience in 1999, when launched instant messaging service *QQ* (ICQ semblance). *WeChat* often described as China's "app for everything" because of its wide range of functions (news, payment services, gift service, communal payments, border verifications, etc.). It has over 1 milliard monthly active users (2018) and is rated today as the main competitor to *Facebook* (in an Eastern world, where positions of western companies are rather weak).

2013: *Telegram* launching; still independent

In 2013 *Telegram*, an instant messaging and voice over IP service, was launched by Pavel Durov, the former founder of *VKontakte*. This is a very Russian product: the dramatic story of its appearance is closely connected with the dying, but constantly reviving idea of freedom of speech plagued by the nation over the previous totalitarian period of its development. The idea of the messenger, whose code is impossible to crack to read the correspondence of users, arose at Pavel's head, when special forces knocked to his door. So Durov wanted to create a product in which even the system administrator is not able to view user messages. Then it became the main feature of *Telegram*: unlike other messengers, its creators guarantee to users, that their correspondence will remain a secret for everyone except the correspondents themselves. Durov's refusal to help the authorities in surveillance for the citizens led to *Telegram* blocking in several totalitarian and post-totalitarian countries (Iran, China Russia, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan).

Telegram also connected with posthistory processes of consolidation of the media market. It was made by Durov partly on *VKontakte's* material and creative base, but he managed to bring *Telegram* out, before *Mail.ru Group* fully acquired *VKontakte*. And he placed *Telegram*'s headquarter and main servers abroad, far from the curiosity of the Russian authorities and special services.

It's interesting that *Mail.ru Group*, being much more loyal to whims of the authorities, during *Telegram* blocking in Russia (2018), insistently recommended to use their *TamTam* messenger, whose structure is very similar to the *Telegram*'s and its channels copied the *Telegram* channels (Meduza 2018), even with creating of fake channels of citizen activists like Navalny and Varlamov (Bryzgalova 2018), but, most likely, as in *Mail.ru Group*'s *ICQ*, the correspondence of users there can be read by special services (Zayakin, Smagin 2018).

2013. *Vine*: absorption before serving

Vine was founded in June 2012 based on a fun and promising idea – to host short-form (about 6 seconds) video which users could record by it and edit on the fly or create stop motion effects. This niche was still not occupied by *YouTube*, the net video giant. *Twitter*, appreciated the idea, bought the service four months before its launching in January 2013. *Vine* was not integrated on *Twitter*, but it allowed adding friends from there who also used *Vine*. The service assumed different forms of using video: short-form comedy, music performances, stop motion animation, sound recording, video acceleration, and deceleration, etc.

Vine gave birth a big social networking trend with its idea. But its competitors *Instagram* and *Snapchat*, reacted soon, adding short video sharing. In 2014 *YouTube* added launched a tool, allows converting to GIF animation any video up to 6 seconds.

Competitors' efforts led *Vine* to its end in early 2017. But it got successors, all in China: GIF sharing app *Kwai* was transformed by Beijing Kuaishou Technology Co. into a short video service shortly after *Vine* creation; in 2014 *Musical.ly*, similar service, was launched in Shanghai (then merged with *TikTok* in 2018).

It is one more variant of the new original social project launching and takeover, when it did not continue to be exploited by the owner who acquired it, but its idea continues to be used by other similar projects. Some likable variant we can see with *Twitter* one more time.

2015: *Periscope* : "builds empathy and truth"

In 2015 *Periscope*, video streaming social application, was acquired in January 2015 by *Twitter* also months before the project had been publicly launched. Its idea was noble and more civic-oriented than *Vine*'s. Its author, Kayvon Beykpour, formulated the idea like this: "*Periscope* builds empathy and truth". He conceived his project in 2012, when was in Istanbul during protests in Taksim Square. He read about the protests on *Twitter*, but could not see them; and many people, he thought, wanted the same.

So this service became a continuation of *Twitter*'s keynote – to cover every world event second by second; it could be better if *Twitter*'s text messages would be combined with video streaming.

The periscope became a big sensation in the first couple of years of its work. However, later the number of users began to decline sharply – almost tens of times; this was partly because of a creation of several similar competitor services, partly because the idea of the service itself had lost its freshness and attractiveness.

So the posthistory social media market didn't essentially change in the number of actors. The new ideas gave birth to the interesting and promising projects of small independent companies, which soon (or very soon) was acquired by bigger players (*WhatsApp*, *Instagram − Facebook*, *Vine*, *Periscope − Twitter*, etc.). But even these players couldn't raise their own new platforms if they were aiming at already occupied areas of the closely packed market (*Moi Mir*, *Google+*). A small exception to this rule is *Telegram* (supporting beyond the borders of the market of its country) and *WeChat* (launched on the country which keeps the western social media market out of its borders).

Intention to take power on the new projects arose either for economic or political reasons: it was the question of cash profit or the question of controlling people's minds (in totalitarian or post-totalitarian countries).

7.   Conclusion

So the emergence and development of social networking services are closely linked to world political and social conditions. We propose to consider their history in the form of a three-part scheme (prehistory, history, and posthistory).

7.1.   Prehistory: Cold War and post-Cold War realities

Cold war political necessities spurred the emergence of ARPANET, ancestor of the Internet; but based on the principle of the lack of a single control center, it then began to develop in its own way.

The first successful examples of social services (*Match.com*, *Classmates.com*, *ICQ* and similar online resources) were launched after *perestroika*, disarmament, and détente, initiated by the USSR, after the collapse of the bipolar world in a new, kinder, warmer and more trusting multi-polar world. These post-Cold War projects were still unidirectional, they worked only with one aspect of social communication (dating, class members and colleagues contacts, text messaging, intellectual communication).

7.2.   History: universal social networking services

The rapid development of social networking services at the beginning of XXIst century had political, cultural, scientific and technical background: new presidency (Vladimir Putin in Russia and George Bush in the US), September 11, 2001 attacks (and ensuing "War of Terror"), the economic boom in Asia and Russia. Spreading of digital technologies and the Internet in a free from the fears of the Cold War world. World of détente, without the fierce confrontation of two superpowers, has become exactly the one in which such a phenomenon, as social networking services, could appear.

The projects of the end of the XXth century paved the way, created the prerequisites for the emergence of multidirectional, universal social platforms, which involve the communication of any subject, nationality, age, gender, inclinations, goals – *Friendster*, *MySpace*, *Facebook*, *VKontakte*, etc.

They can be called real full-fledged social networking services. It is also symbolic that they were launched just at the beginning of the XXIst century (and at the beginning of the second millennium).

The appearance of the first real social networking services in the early years of the XXIst century also has its own logic: new projects occupied those niches that were not yet occupied by the previous service(s), step by step enriching the field of social communications (general scheme of social networking service of *Friendster*, design and multimedia of *MySpace*, simplicity and quickness of *Facebook*).

7.3.   Posthistory: launchings and takeovers

Here we mean the period from the turn of 2000–2010s to the present. It politically and economically started from of Great Recession (and different *Occupies*), civil wars and revolutions, a temporary victory of liberal forces in the two largest countries of the world, add ended with a rollback to conservatism (liberal democrat Barack Obama transferred his power to conservative Donald Trump, liberal Dmitry

Medvedev, the first Russian leader, who promoted the use social media, handed over his power to the prior president, conservative-oriented Vladimir Putin). Authorities in some countries began to show interest in controlling social services.

The posthistory social media market remained almost unchanged in the number of actors. The new ideas gave birth to the interesting and promising projects of small independent companies, which soon (or very soon) were acquired by bigger players (*WhatsApp*, *Facebook*, *Vine*, *Periscope*, etc.). But ever these players couldn't raise their own new platforms if they were aiming at already occupied areas of the closely packed market (*Moi Mir*, *Google+*), with only small exceptions (*Telegram*, *WeChat*).

Intention to take power on the new projects arose either for economic or political reasons: it was the question of cash profit or the question of controlling people's minds (in totalitarian or post-totalitarian countries).

So we hope that this scheme of presenting the history of social networking services may be useful for understanding the relevant processes and for further deepening knowledge on this subject.

References

ARPANET (2020). In *Wikipedia. The Free Encyclopedia.* Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ARPANET

Auditoriya sotsial'nykh setey v Rossii 2019 [The audience of social networking services in Russia 2019]. *Popsters.ru*. Retrieved from: https://popsters.ru/blog/post/auditoriya-socsetey-v-rossii

Bryzgalova Ye. (2018). Krupneyshiye Telegram-kanaly i SMI zhaluyutsya na klony v TamTam [The largest Telegram channels and media complain about clones in TamTam]. *Vedomosti*. (2018, April 16). Retrieved from https://www.vedomosti.ru/technology/articles/2018/04/17/766903-telegram-kanali-tamtam

Classmates.com (2020). In *Wikipedia. The Free Encyclopedia.* Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classmates.com

Cockerell, I. (2019). Inside China's Massive Surveillance Operation. *Wired.* (2019, September 5). Retrieved from https://www.wired.com/story/inside-chinas-massive-surveillance-operation/

Fomicheva, T. L., Kazantsev, E. M. (2019). Sotsial'nyye seti: neobkhodimost' ili tendentsiya [Social networking services: need or trend]. In *New Science Generation* (pp. 211–215). Petrozavodsk: Mezhdunarodnyy tsentr nauchnogo partnerstva "Novaya Nauka". Retrieved from https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=42394831

Kheifets, V. L. (Ed.). (2019). Istoriya noveyshego vremeni. Uchebnik i praktikum [The history of modern times. Textbook and workshop]. Moscow: Urait, 345 p Retrieved from https://urait.ru/bcode/442413

Khismatullin, S. A. (2019). Analiz istorii razvitiya sotsial'nykh setey [Analysis of the history of the development of social networking services]. *E-Scio. 1* (28), 73–76. Retrieved from https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=38234043

Krivonosova, A. S., Yakunicheva E. N. (2018). Istoriya i analiz razvaitiya sotsial'nykh setey [History and analysis of the development of social networking services]. *News of higher educational institutions. Light industry technology, Vol. 42, 4*, 11–16.

McDonell, S. (2019). China social media: WeChat and the Surveillance State. *BBC*. (2019, June 7). Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-china-blog-48552907

Morozova A. A. (2019). Mul'timediynyye vozmozhnosti sotsial'noy seti VKontakte [The multimedia capabilities of the social networking service VKontakte]. *Sign: problematic field of media education, 1* (31)*, С. 200–208. Retrieved from https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=38568298

Murphy, B. M. (2001). Mapping the pre-history of cyberspace and the making of social movement computer networks, 1973–1993 (Ph.D. dissertation). Retrieved from Russian Science Citation Index Dadabase (eLIBRARY ID: 5255893) https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=5255893

Odnoklassniki. RIF 2018 (2018). Retrieved from http://files.runet-id.com/2018/rif/presentations/18apr.rif18-zal-4.15-30--boyarskiy.pdf

Patyukov, S. V., Kovriga, E. V. (2017). Sotsial'naya set': ponyatiye, istoriya vozniknoveniya, sovremennoye polozheniye del [Social networking service: concept, history of occurrence, current state of affairs]. *Young Scientist, 2* (11), 75–77. Retrieved from https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=29011029

Paul Baran (2020). In *Wikipedia. The Free Encyclopedia.* Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Baran

Pustovalov, A. V. (2018). Krupneyshiye permskiye informatsionno-kommunikativnyye gruppy "VKontakte": struktura, funktsii, rol' v gorodskom prostranstve [The largest Perm information and

communication groups "VKontakte": structure, functions, role in urban space]. *Sign: problematic field of media education, 4,* 236–241. Retrieved from http://journals.csu.ru/index.php/znak/article/view/117/64

Social Network (2020). In *Wikipedia. The Free Encyclopedia.* Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_network

Social Networking Service (2020). In *Wikipedia. The Free Encyclopedia.* Retrieved from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_networking_service

Tsareva, A. V. (2012) Chelovek v seti: smena veb-pokoleniy [Man on the net: change of web generations]. *Journal of Sociology and Social Anthropology*. *Vol. 15, 5,* 36–54. Retrieved from https://www.elibrary.ru/item.asp?id=20310461

Vizhu soobshcheniya pro messendzher TamTam, gde «kanaly kak v "Telege"». Chto eto takoye? (2018) [I see messages about the TamTam messenger, where there are "channels like in the Tel". What it is?]. *Medusa.* (2018, April 16). Retrieved from https://meduza.io/feature/2018/04/16/vizhu-soobscheniya-pro-messendzher-tamtam-gde-kanaly-kak-v-telege-chto-eto-takoe

VKontakte. O nas [VKontakte. About us] (2020). Retrieved from https://vk.com/about

Zayakin, A., Smagin, A. (2018). «As'ka» i tovarishch mayor. ICQ — yedinstvennyy mesendzher, kotoryy bez problem chitayut rossiyskiye spetssluzhby [„Aska" and Comrade Major. ICQ is the only messenger that Russian special services read without problems]. *Novaya gazeta.* (2018, May 17). Retrieved from https://novayagazeta.ru/articles/2018/05/17/76500-aska-i-tovarisch-mayor

Contact data:
Aleksey Vasilevich Pustovalov, PhD
Perm State University
Philological Faculty
15, Bukireva st.
Perm, Russia
theyareeverywhere@gmail.com