

**NIDA-RÜMELIN, JULIAN, AND NATHALIE WEIDENFELD. 2022. DIGITAL HUMANISM: FOR A HUMANE TRANSFORMATION OF DEMOCRACY, ECONOMY AND CULTURE IN THE DIGITAL AGE. SPRINGER, CHAM. IX, 127 PP. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-12482-2>.**

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### **Abstract**

This book analyzes the various dimensions of digital humanism, taking into account the transformation of democracy, economics, and culture. At every level of modern life, from global politics to everyday routines, the past few decades have seen dramatic changes. In this new reality, critically important is not only the emergence of a new information and communication field that has radically transformed the familiar infrastructure of social life, but also the explosive growth in the pace of change caused by the breakthrough development of digital technologies. In this context, numerous questions arise, not so much related to the experienced consequences of the transition to a digital society, but rather to the continuation of these changes and, more importantly, their unprecedented speed, driven by the radically increased rate of change in the technological and, consequently, social environment. This latter factor dramatically narrows the horizon of foresight and makes even the medium-term future so multifaceted that it becomes almost uncertain. The relevance of this research topic is also determined by the insufficient development of theoretical approaches to international legal regulation of digitalization and digital security in the field of information and communication technologies, the rapid development of the digital environment, and the lack of systemic international legal regulation of relations within it.

**Keywords:** *artificial intelligence, digitalization, moral dilemmas, digital optimization, human self-determination, digital education, transhumanist temptations, internet communication.*

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The uniqueness of the current historical moment lies in the fact that fundamental changes are occurring in real time, creating both unprecedented opportunities and challenges that humanity has never faced before. In this regard, it is important to note that the phenomenon of hyper-fast development is emerging simultaneously with the advent of digital technologies, which are unique in that, while exerting a colossal impact on the entire technological and social infrastructure, they themselves require minimal material resources and minimal environmental change (Nida-Rümelin and Weidenfeld 2022, 1-5).

Thus, ultra-fast development is a characteristic of the dominant progress of digital, information, and communication technologies. Consequently, both phenomena—the historically instantaneous advent of digital civilization and the practically abrupt increase in the rate of change—are inextricably linked.

Another crucial feature of the current stage of development is that, for the first time in history, its defining direction is progress in infocommunications and cognitive technologies. Technology has entered the holy of holies, the sphere that makes humans rational and distinguishes human society from all other biological communities. Accordingly, the ultra-fast development of digital technologies predetermines the inevitability of fundamental social shifts that are unfolding before our eyes and are embodied in such still-new concepts as the information (digital) society, digital civilization, digital world, information (digital) age, and information (digital) revolution (Nida-Rümelin and Weidenfeld 2022, 7-12). In this regard, a philosophical understanding of the new reality (including its social, ontological, epistemological, and anthropological aspects) is urgently needed. This reality is defined by the development of infocommunication (digital) technologies, with their inherent unprecedented speed and simultaneously critical impact not only on the entire technological infrastructure but also on human society and humans themselves, whose biological uniqueness is determined primarily by the ability to accumulate, analyze, and transmit information (Nida-Rümelin and Weidenfeld 2022, 13-18).

The identified problematic field determined the choice of topic and defined the purpose and objectives of this research, which is in line with the ongoing intensive public debate on this highly relevant and multifaceted issue. An analysis of existing strategies for digital humanism and the information society has allowed us to identify and reveal the specific characteristics of the emerging information society culture: the high (dominant) role of information, the global and pervasive influence of information technology on all spheres of human life, and a systemic crisis of responsibility manifesting itself at all levels (Nida-Rümelin and Weidenfeld 2022, 31-34). It has been established that the state of modern society is determined by a state of hyper-struggle between one cultural code and another, leading to the deinstallation of traditional value systems and the assertion of principles of axiological pluralism and relativism, which, in turn, leads to the destabilization of responsibility as a fundamental principle for building sustainable social relations. Indicators were identified that allow us to assess the state of responsibility in the culture of the information society (Nida-Rümelin and Weidenfeld 2022, 19-24). These indicators included attitudes toward information, knowledge, education, freedom, material values, consumption, poverty, violence, and others. It was confirmed that the imbalance between the technical and ethical levels of

societal development leads to a further erosion of responsibility—ethical, political, economic, and legal—both at the level of individual subjects (individual responsibility) and society as a whole (collective responsibility), and, as a consequence, to a systemic crisis of responsibility (Nida-Rümelin and Weidenfeld 2022, 25-29).

Information and knowledge, as the most important phenomena in any society, possess different axiological characteristics in different societies depending on the degree to which the principle of responsibility is expressed. In the culture of the information society during its formative years, it is information that is most valuable, while knowledge is gradually losing its significance (Nida-Rümelin and Weidenfeld 2022, 53-56). The transformation of knowledge from systemic and holistic to discrete is one indicator of society's reorientation from the principle of responsible behavior to irresponsible behavior. Since information (unlike knowledge) is always social and polyvariable, this precludes the possibility of making adequate decisions and, consequently, makes it impossible to correlate the consequences of such decisions with the principle of responsibility (Nida-Rümelin and Weidenfeld 2022, 47-52). Thus, only knowledge is fully associated with responsibility. The modern understanding of freedom, which presupposes the opposition of the individual with their personal desires and aspirations to society as a constraining force, is also antagonistic to the principle of social responsibility, acknowledging a crisis of individual responsibility and becoming a source of social and interpersonal conflicts (Nida-Rümelin and Weidenfeld 2022, 41-45). The only possible way to alleviate such social tension is the acceptance of freedom based on knowledge and the maximization of individual responsibility (Nida-Rümelin and Weidenfeld 2022, 35-40).

In modern conditions, consumption is transforming from a purely economic process into a socioeconomic one, as the purpose of consumption is not so much the satisfaction of vital needs as the symbolic self-realization of the individual. The pervasive orientation of society and individuals toward unlimited consumption, as well as the deliberate stimulation of excessive consumption, are indicators of the mutation and hypertrophy of individual social and economic responsibility, as well as the deformation of collective social and economic responsibility. The emergence of the concept of corporate social responsibility can be seen as one of the ways society can protect itself. It allows for the resolution of existing contradictions between the modern economy and morality, business and the individual, and personal and public interests (Nida-Rümelin and Weidenfeld 2022, 65-68).

Digitalization, primarily the spread of information and telecommunications technologies, continues across humanity. This process serves as the foundation for changes in living conditions, meaning it is not simply a technical and technological process, but also a social and cultural one (Nida-Rümelin and Weidenfeld 2022, 57-64). Therefore, digitalization is moving into the realm of political research and is analyzed as a key factor in concepts of the transformation of modern society. Since the end of the last century, an information and communications environment has been formed in developed countries, thanks to the development of information and telecommunications technologies. Although this environment has not yet fully developed in transitional societies due to historical and sociopolitical factors, its development is nonetheless gaining momentum.

In this regard, it seems appropriate to examine, at a sociological level, the development of a society's information and communications environment and the social and cultural consequences it initiates as one of the fundamental conditions for the transformation of modern society. Research into the development of the information and communication environment in a transitional society is particularly relevant in the context of mature institutional transformations, as the process of adaptation to everyday activities through the use of information and telecommunication technologies begins. This leads to changes in the forms of political institutions, the ways in which they function, as well as their place and role in the social and cultural dimensions of digital society (Nida-Rümelin and Weidenfeld 2022, 69-73).

In the digital environment, there is an urgent need to analyze and restructure the categorical system of institutional analysis as a whole. A need has arisen to theoretically understand the common threads in the process of institutional transformations in digital society, taking place in the context of the development of an information and communication environment. In sociology, research is more focused on practical solutions to improve, rationalize, and enhance the effectiveness of existing social institutions. While not denying the importance of such research in the context of overcoming a protracted systemic crisis in post-reform societies, I would like to point out that today, a qualitatively new society, institutionally speaking, is emerging due to the reorganization of social relations under the influence of information and telecommunications technologies. At the same time, reaching a new methodological level is imperative, as it requires a rethinking of the nature of social development and a search for methods that allow for a deeper understanding of the essence of institutional transformations (Nida-Rümelin and Weidenfeld 2022, 75-79).

Current Western concepts of institutional analysis do not fully reflect the processes occurring in our society: the former focus on the socioeconomic reform of a society in transition, while the latter cannot be transferred in their pure form to national soil and require theoretical rethinking and adaptation (Nida-Rümelin and Weidenfeld 2022, 97-110). Thus, the relevance of this research is determined by: 1) the emergence of the information and communication environment as a new social and cultural space for human activity; 2) the digitalization of everyday practices within this environment; and 3) the lack of a concept of institutional change that takes this process into account.

The integrated model of the global digital and information space is at an early stage of development, which raises the question of developing a unified theoretical concept of the global information society (Nida-Rümelin and Weidenfeld 2022, 117-124), which, as formulated by the author of this study, includes the following provisions:

- the definition of digital optimization, utilitarianism, and artificial intelligence (AI) is largely determined by human perception of information, the availability of information resources, free access to them, and the realization of the human right to information on a global scale. Information space is a space only when it is reflected in the consciousness of an individual, who determines the breadth and content of the information space. This comprehensive model of digital humanism links information society, information space, and information law. Other concepts of digital virtuality exist in the legal literature, based on territorial, technological, or functional approaches, which, in principle, do not

contradict the concept of global information space presented by the author of this book, as they explore this concept from different perspectives;

- the emergence of a global digital space is the result of millions of people worldwide exercising their internationally recognized right to information. Consequently, the global information space is subject to international legal regulation. The global information space is formed on the basis of all information that a person can obtain in the information society. The boundaries of the global information space are the limits within which information is transmitted and disseminated in the information society.
- based on the factors of information exchange in the information society, the socio-economic aspects of digitalization can be identified. According to the author of this study, the network space is a part of the global information space limited by the framework of communication (digital interactive) networks, which provides the right to make information available to the public interactively. An example of a network space is the digital interactive network, the Internet, which is associated with the issue of autonomy and determination in the digital world.

In the context of digital virtuality and internet communication, the ethics of communication between humans and AI is of key importance, as the mechanisms for protecting human rights and extending moral responsibility in the global information space have been fundamentally transformed by information and digital technologies (Nida-Rümelin and Weidenfeld 2022, 81-86). In the context of protecting human rights and freedoms, there are four main criteria for such changes:

- the ability to preserve digitally recorded images, texts, and sounds of human rights and freedom violations facilitates the electronic delivery of these images, texts, and sounds to consumers via the global internet;
- computer networks are actively shaping a global information market, in which previously established territorial boundaries for information exchange are blurring, becoming increasingly transparent;
- the diversity and increasing number of digital formats are used in a wider variety of contexts than ever before;
- the vast majority of processes related to obtaining consumer permission to use copyrighted works and rights to individual human rights and freedoms are currently carried out through computer processing of information and electronic databases. These circumstances, the formation and development of the information society, have initiated the development of mechanisms applicable to the protection of human rights and freedoms in the information space.

In the context of a knowledge society, important dimensions of this study include robots, digital simulations of emotions, autonomy and determination in the digital world, digital optimization, utilitarianism and AI, moral dilemmas, the ethics of online communication between people, the cultural aspects of digitalization, digital education, transhumanist temptations, and other issues that arise in the process of ensuring security in the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs). In this context, the principles and norms of international law, the norms of national legislation

applied to ensure digital security in the use of ICTs, and the practice of their implementation are considered (Nida-Rümelin and Weidenfeld 2022, 87-95).

Therefore, the development of a set of theoretical provisions on the international legal regulation of digital security in the use of ICTs has the following objectives: 1) identify various approaches to regulating digital security in the use of ICTs and determine their specific features; 2) to formulate conceptual approaches to information and communication technologies and regulation of digital security in the sphere of their use in the doctrine of international law and to assess the validity of identifying a new branch of international law, the subject of which is international legal relations in the information sphere; 3) to generalize and disclose the normative-legal and doctrinal bases for regulating digital security in the sphere of ICT use in developed and underdeveloped countries; 4) to outline the prospects for the development of the system of legal support for security in the sphere of ICT use from the point of view of the international legal basis for regulation, as well as the mechanisms of international cooperation in the studied area; 5) to disclose and substantiate the peculiarities of regulating the use of ICT within the framework of international maritime law, as well as to develop recommendations for the progressive development of modern international law in terms of ensuring digital security in the sphere of ICT use in the context of international human rights activities; 6) to identify individual problems and prospects of international legal regulation of the use of ICT in international humanitarian law, as well as to develop recommendations for improving the legal basis for ensuring digital security of ICT in international humanitarian law; 7) develop recommendations for further international legal regulation of digital security in the field of ICT use and its improvement within the UN.

The book argues that an independent branch of international law is in the process of being formed. It assesses the validity of establishing a new branch of digital humanism and international information law, and contributes to its development by formulating its definition, describing the elements that define the field, and conducting a comprehensive study of the international legal regulation of digital security in the field of information and communication technologies.

The scientific novelty lies in the comprehensive study conducted with the aim of generating new knowledge and developing a set of theoretical propositions on digital humanism and international legal regulation of digital security in the field of ICT use. Despite the existence of scholarly works on various sociological and political science aspects of autonomy and determination in the digital world, a comprehensive study of international digital security in the field of ICT use from a digital humanism perspective has not been conducted. To conduct this study, the author of this book examined various aspects of this issue, including digital simulations of emotions, moral and ethical dilemmas, transhumanist and cultural aspects of digitalization, and the ethics of internet communication. The book's novelty also lies in its exploration of issues under-researched in the literature, i.e., a comparative analysis of individual branches of public international law regarding the regulation of digital security in the area of ICT use in education and communication between people and AI. It identifies trends, problems, and prospects that exist in international law regarding the regulation

of ICT use, and offers practical and theoretical recommendations to facilitate the progressive development of international law in this area.

### **Conflict of interests**

The authors declare no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research.

### **Ethical standards**

The authors affirm this research did not involve human subjects.

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