# Virtualization of Society and Glam-Capitalism

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# Virtualization concept

- 'Information society' and 'Knowledge society' are utopian concepts ignoring the logic of social and cultural change

- The concept of **'virtualization'** introduced in the 1990s is more adequate

- **Virtualization is the replacement of real objects and actions by images and communications**

- **Virtualization of society:** traditional institutions prescribe doing real things and real actins but people instead operate with virtual objects – images, that makes social institutions a kind of virtual reality

- **Virtualization of social institutions:**

- ✓ in economy the added value creation process depends more and more on virtual assets – brands rather than on traditional real assets

- ✓ in politics parties and other organizations lose their role in the struggle for power while virtual political power – image of candidate(s) becomes critically important

- ✓ in culture value and influence of scientific or art-projects is determined more by virtual creativity – promotion in communication networks than by real artistic or research activities

# Virtualization of society and the role of digital technologies

- The logic of virtualization, being expanded into social life, stimulates the usage of computers in all domains of human life

- Popular view of virtualization as computerization, as a process determined by technologies, is misleading

➢ *It is not computerization that makes society virtualized, rather virtualization of society makes computerization the requirement for various human activities*

- For the virtualization the most efficient technologies are those which provide
  ✓ work with images
  ✓ building the networks
  ✓ managing an access

- Such technologies are ICTs and because of that all ICTs are intensively used and integrated in social practices by the end of the 20th century

# The ICT Matrix

| message<br><br>contact | Two-dimensional | Multi-dimensional |
|---|---|---|
| 24/7 | Printed media | **Internet** |
| scheduled | Radio | TV |

- all ICTs can provide transmittance of information – messages contributing to human knowledge

- but communication as very social process i.e. symbolic exchange creating and maintaining relations and community is provided by computer multimedia much better than by the rest of ICTs

- new ICTs based on digital network technologies provide:

✓ *combination of text, visual images, video, and sound*

✓ *interaction in the real time and virtual space regime*

✓ *the 24/7 access to communication network*

# Virtualization technologies in contemporary Russia

**The role of digital technologies is growing in the people life**

- According to the national statistics (Rosstat) by 2012
- ✓ there were about 70 computers per 100 households
- ✓ there were about 40 computers per 100 workers (including 20 Internet-connected PCs)
- According to the survey by 'All-Russian Center of Public Opinion' (wciom.ru) in February of 2012
- ✓ the Internet users were **55%** of adult Russians, and **36%** of them used the Internet every day
- ✓ **82%** of the Internet users had accounts in so called social networks (in 2010 – **53%**)

**But TV remains the dominant tool of virtualization**

- ✓ **90%** of adults mentioned TV among their sources of information, while Internet news lines were mentioned by **22%**, and Internet forums and blogs only by **8%** (survey by 'Public Opinion Foundation' (fom.ru) in 2012)
- ✓ **60%** of adults chose TV as the 'main source of news', and Internet was chosen by only **23%** (survey by 'All-Russian Center of Public Opinion' (wciom.ru) in 2013)

**Different generations live in different virtual realities**

- ✓ TV is source of information for **96%** of 'baby-boomers' and for **81%** of the 'Generation Y' respondents
- ✓ forums and blogs are sources of information for **2%** of 'baby-boomers' and for **21%** of the 'Generation Y' respondents
- ✓ **50%** of the 'Generation Y' have chosen the Internet as the main source of news, and only **11%** of 'baby-boomers' made the same choice
- ✓ TV is the main source of news for **34%** of 'Gen Y' but for **72%** of 'baby-boomers'

# Logic of glamour

# Glam industries

- Components of glamour as an esthetic form or life style are **luxury, erotic, exotics, 'pinkness',** and **'blondness'**

- Glamour-intensive production of trends is driven by the same **'Big Five'** and provides extraordinary growth rates even in the general recession time

- Luxury industry,

- Sex industry,

- Hospitality industry,

- Fashion industry,

- Beauty industry…

- … exemplify **trans-industries** using technologically different products as raw materials for creation of the specific added value
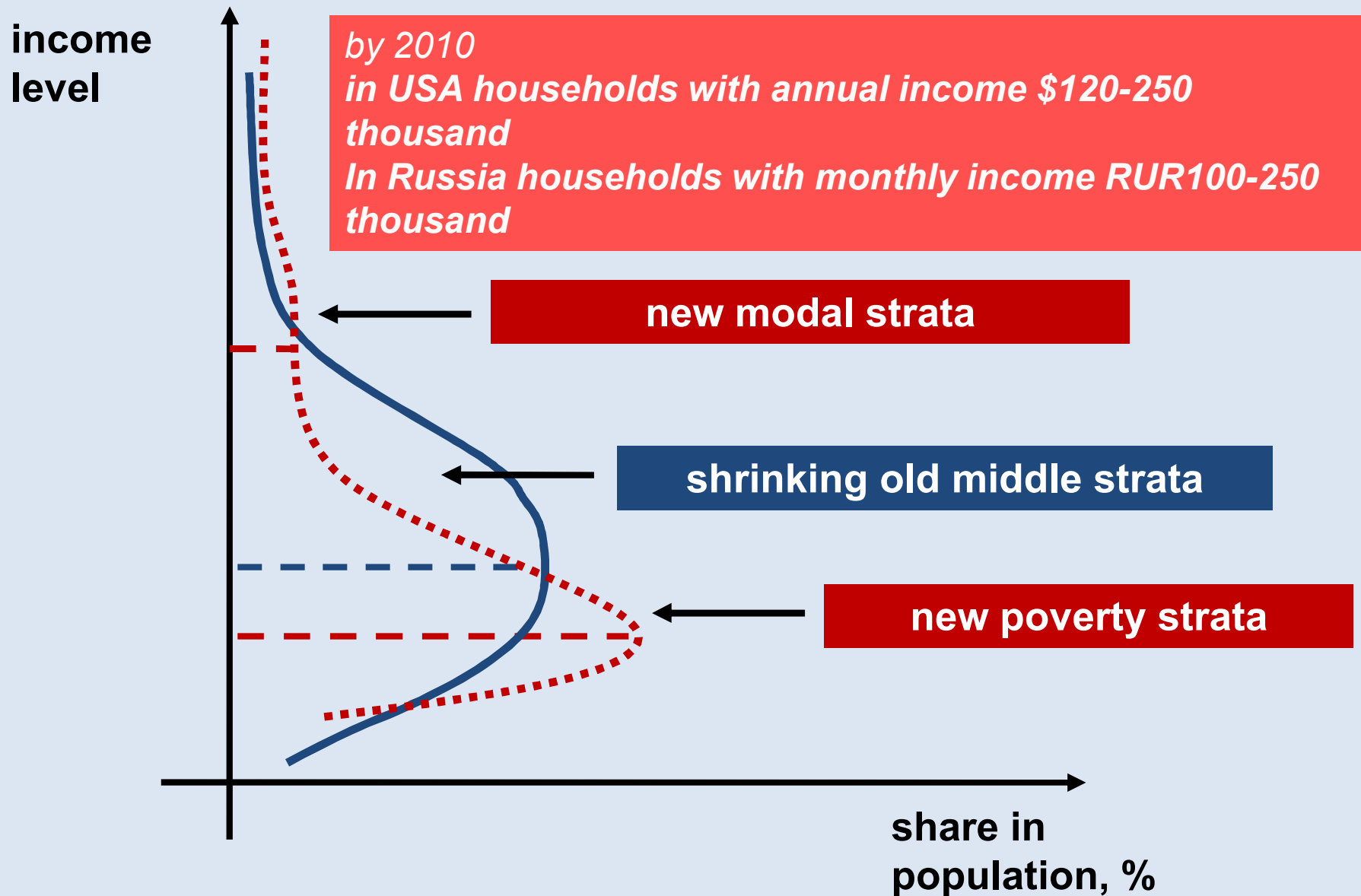
# Glamour-industrial complex
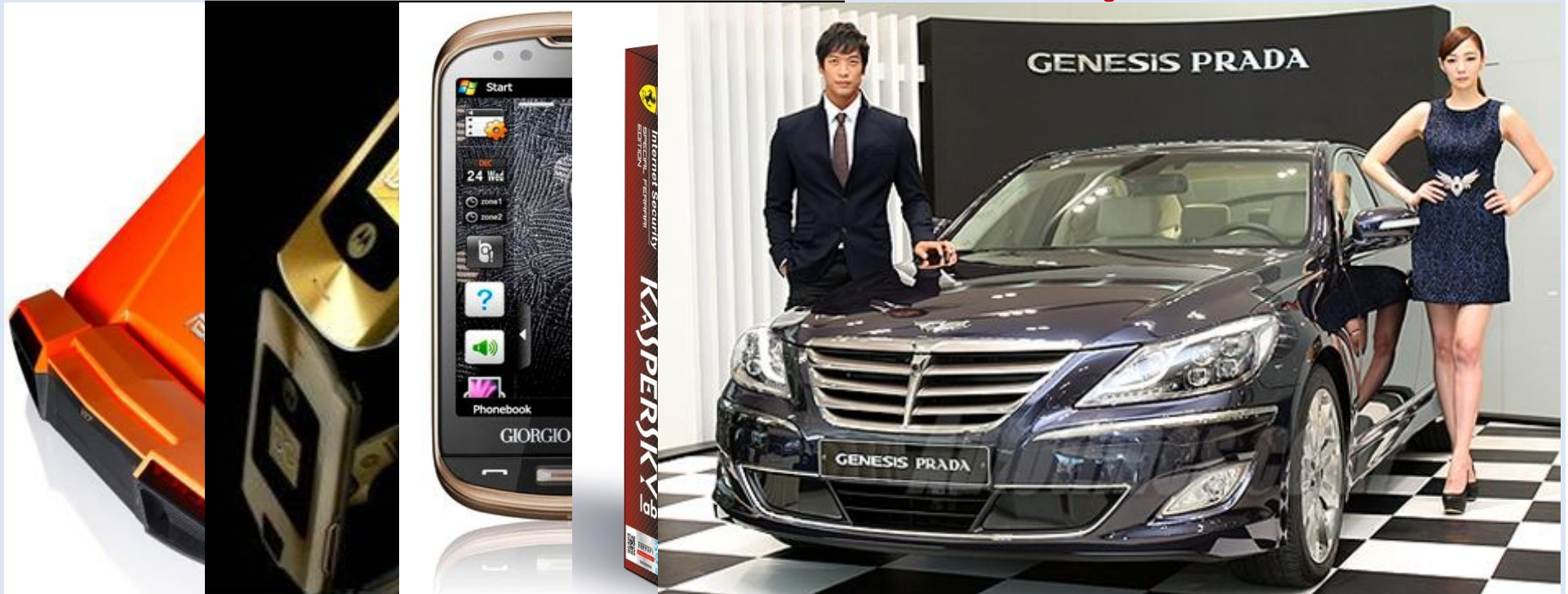


- In the glam-capitalism system exploited are not workers but middle strata consumers

- Owners of trends and trend makers compose new status groups: **glam-capitalists and glam-professionals**, which are core of new modal strata above shrinking traditional middle class

- Despite of apology of glam-capitalists and glam-professionals as 'creative class' (R. Florida), capitalization of trends is **based rather on copyright** that is monopoly on mass production of practically costless copies priced like original

**Bimodal stratification: from 'lemon' toward 'pear'**

income level

*by 2010*
*in USA households with annual income $120-250 thousand*
*In Russia households with monthly income RUR100-250 thousand*

new modal strata

shrinking old middle strata

new poverty strata

share in population, %

# Bimodal stratification in Russia

| | Russia (2011) | Moscow (2011) | Sakhalin Region (2011) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Average monthly income per head, rubles ($1=RUR30) | 20755 | 47319 | 32268 |
| above 35000 | 14,5 | 42,4 | 31,4 |
| 25-35000 | 12,1 | 14,2 | 17,0 |
| 15-25000 | 24,8 | 20,2 | 25,3 |
| 5-15000 | 41,3 | 21,1 | 24,5 |
| below 5000 | 7,3 | 2,1 | 1,8 |

# Glam-democracy

# Technological turn to mobile communications

- Many social and cultural changes demonstrate the shift from the virtualization logic focused on brands and networks toward the glam-capitalism logic focused on trends and flow-structures

- That shift from virtualization to glamour can be seen also in the main technological tendency of recent decade

- 1981 - IBM introduced **PC** standard

- 1989 - **Web 1.0** where users get access to the sites designed by IT-professionals and by people with special skills

- 1996 - Nokia introduced first communicators (predecessors of **smartphones**)

- 1999 - **Web 2.0** where unskilled users get possibility to generate their own content on the sites-platforms provided by IT-professionals (the rise of so called social networks)

- During the 2000s the technological format **'PC+Internet'** was displaced by the format **'mobile gadget+Web 2.0'**

- ✓ in 2005 worldwide shipments:  about **140** m of desktops, **60** m of laptops, **50** m of smartphones

- ✓ in 2010 global shipments:  about **145** m of desktops, **200** m of laptops, **300** m of smartphones, and **12** m of tablets

# Alter-social movements

# Alter-capitalism

- Reaction of glam-capitalism to alter-social movements is initially oppression and then absorption and exploitation of their creativity

- Absorption of alter-social movements could be seen in
  - ✓ open source used by big IT-corporations
  - ✓ 'free' access provided for the viewing advertisements
  - ✓ commercialization of torrents
  - ✓ stretching of luxury brands
  - ✓ 'guerrilla stores' and 'guerrilla marketing'

- Creators of trends converging attitudes and patterns of glam-capitalism and alter-social movements do not restore authenticity against imagery but find value in **fluid authenticity**

- Alter-capitalism is becoming an 'after Baudrillard' regime: **capitalization of flow of originals without copies**

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