

El bloqueo de las redes y la bomba emocional que nos ha atrapad- Geert Lovink dice en ‘Tristes por diseño’ que estamos hartos de internet, pero no podemos dejarlo ni cambiarlo.

<https://www.20minutos.es/noticia/4087811/0/entrevista-geert-lovink-tristeza-por-diseno-redes-sociales/>

English original of email interview with Geert Lovink by Mirentxu Mariño (20 Minutos editor)

MM/20 Minutos: We are, supposedly, tired about social networks, but we can't stop using them. Why is that? Is this only because we are bored, as you suggest in the book? Addiction?

Geert Lovink: We're tired but not because of other people but because of stress and uncertainty about our social and economic conditions that breaks down. Life is not delivering basic security. We have internalized the flexibility and 'disruption' culture that Silicon Valley is promoting without being able to change the basic premises of the system itself. We feel stuck and can't leave. The platforms are monopolies and have locked us in. In general, there is a growing sense of stagnation and regression. I am hesitant to use the medical term addiction to this. We're with way too many to call this dependency a sickness: we are not sick.

MM: Why don't we care about Snowden revelations, Cambridge Analytica and more? Have social networks deactivated us as persons?

GL: Very much so. Here in Europe we have no idea what lessons we should draw from evidence provided by Chelsea Manning, Julian Assange, Anonymous and countless other whistle-blowers, investigative journalists and social movements. It is as if we're frozen. Many of us even know about micro-targeting, manipulative algorithms and the dark side of the 'sharing economy' of Uber and Airbnb—and still we don't act. We don't see how we can organize collective action when it comes to the implementation of alternatives. It is widely felt that it is not enough to address the government. The social media misery is

MM: You say: "Millennials have grown up talking openly about their feelings". Is this a good or a bad thing?

GL: Young people today understand the 1970s feminist phrase ‘the personal is political’ and share their mental breakdowns in public forums. I read this as a positive development because it shows us ways to escape the desperate isolation neo-liberalism is enforcing upon us. A first step towards change is to recognize that you’re not alone. However, if we leave it there, nothing will happen. The expression of feelings of boredom, anger, frustration and sadness can easily turn into a downward spiral—unless we come together, organize ourselves and take action.

MM: Instagram, and at some point, Facebook, will remove the “like” button. Is this a signal of change? Are we prepared for the indifference of others?

GL: So far, only the likes of others has been made invisible in some countries, not the Like button itself. It was the constant comparison with others that drove young people mad. This cynical form of comparison has started to turn against Instagram itself. This is why this comparative recommendation cult has become so (potentially) destructive. We should as soon as possible develop European social media that are not based on these simplistic manipulations of our mental states. We can work together and debate in so many different ways. The problem here is one of reduction. We should demand and build alternatives that do not collect our data (via ‘likes’) behind our backs. The 500+ ‘friends’ are not your friends. Let’s reinvent social online relations that are as rich and diverse as in the ‘real’ world. Forget the persuasion, ranking and persuasion techniques in favor of focused tools that help us to get things done.

MM: Why are the memes so important in political culture?

GL: Memes embody a wider trend towards the ‘image society’. Instead of long policy papers and lengthy debates we get the compressed version that not just communicate the message but is also reflective. Memes help us to take a break, create a distance from dominant news language and official trends in society. Memes also help to speed up and break through the heavy culture of stagnation. Irony is important because we all know that plain propaganda no longer works. In the current trends towards rightwing populism, the message needs to be hidden—and made fun of.

MM: Is it possible to escape fake news, bots and deep fake videos or do we have to find a way to live with them?

GL: These disinformation techniques only work for certain periods when the

'busy majority' has not yet figured out what's going on and simply consumes these messages in a self-evident and subliminal way. Think of it as an arms race. There are now countless firms, consultants and a whole 'moderation' army employed to trace—and then neutralize—fake news. There will be anti-deep fake algorithms that hit back: computers fighting enemy computers, bots against bots. It's not so easy for individuals to simply ignore all this, unless one loses interest in current affairs as such.