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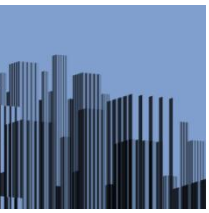

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DEVELOPMENT OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND CHALLENGES OF THE SOCIETIES IN TRANSITION: THE CASE OF KOSOVO

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Abstract: *The development of new technologies is considered a revolution because it has interconnected micro and macro cultures, has influenced socio-economic developments, and is gradually transferring our social life to the virtual one. Today, life without information technology is unimaginable and every communication is done through new technologies. On the other hand, the privacy and misuse of personal data are directly endangering personal freedom. The Balkan countries are as well part of this technological development but are also heavily challenged by different unidentified risks. Kosovo has a young population and is considered to have the youngest population in Europe. About 96.4% of households have access to the internet. This paper aims to analyze the development of new technologies in societies in transition, especially in Kosovo, the challenges, the issue of privacy, and the future of information technology. The methodology applied within this paper is the study of literature and the development of qualitative research. The findings demonstrate that Kosovo has quickly embraced information technology, digitized its public services, and installed some of the region's most cutting-edge technologies, such as 3D printers, but it is also highly vulnerable to cyber-attacks.*

Keywords: *New Technologies; Challenges; Societies; Transition; Kosovo*

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of science, technology, and informatics has recently signaled that the modern world will appear different, with a focus on new technology, particularly digitalization. The emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic has also highlighted the need to have digitized services. As an impact of this pandemic, states have designed public policies, which make it possible for their citizens to work, leering, do fitness from home,

and many other things that have not been done before nor imagined. As Deborah Lupton (2015) stated "we now live in a digital society. New digital technologies have had a profound influence on everyday life, social relations, government, commerce, the economy, and the production and dissemination of knowledge. People's movements in space, their purchasing habits, and their online communication with others are now monitored in detail by digital technologies. We are increasingly becoming digital data subjects, whether we like it or not, and whether we choose this or not" (Lupton 2015). As a result, new technologies have become a part of our social settings, and in some ways, they are also making us addicted, without which life in the XXI century cannot be envisioned. It should be noted that:

> communication technologies, accompanied by the vehement wind of change that tosses our life about in the present period, promise humanity a 'new civilization', an 'information revolution', or an 'information society'. First of all, the progress in the field of communication technologies allows for worldwide access to information with its full diversity, paving the way for the rise of a new network of social relations among individuals and thus leading to the formation of a new domain of social values. In the opinion of the utopists of the digital age, communication technologies will at the same time create chances for more productive and developed employment (Akgül 2017).

This implies that in the era of digitalization and post-digitalization, society will be focused on all its capacities in this matter and that the human world will gradually be transferred to the virtual one. Probably, Johan Günther (2008) is right, who points out that: "today two different internet users live next to each other: a) digital natives and b) digital immigrants", where the first are those people who have grown up with the internet and it for them is a tool, an instrument that is no longer suspected. The latter, on the other hand, are older people in whose lives the internet has now entered.

By analyzing the trends of development of new technologies, especially the use of the internet and social networks, data for July 2021 globally indicate that there are 7.87 billion people (56.6% which lives in urban zones), 5.27 billion smartphone users or 66.9%, 4.80 billion internet users, or 60.9% of the global population and 4.48 billion active social media users or 56.8% of the global population" (Datare Portal 2021). So we can realize that the world is moving at a very fast speed towards digitalization and advancement with new technologies in all spheres. Undoubtedly, in this segment, there are new challenges that will be presented with the development and advancement of technologies, which will be a challenge for societies, democracy itself, interpersonal relations, politics, economy, and other segments of life. New technology developments have considerably permeated the Western Balkan countries, particularly in Kosovo, where the use of the internet and new apps is increasing.

According to the Kosovo Agency of Statistics (2020), "the percentage of households that had access to the internet from their home in 2020 was 96.4% and dominates the age group 35-44, where 19.5% have had internet access at home, from different devices. While, in terms of gender, men use the internet at a higher rate (57.4%) compared to women (40.2%)". This increase in the use of information technology has also affected the increase in the use of various technological platforms, impacted the employment of society, but also the willingness to face new challenges as a society in transition.

This paper aims to analyze the impact of the development of new technologies in Kosovo society, as a society in transition. Also the use of the internet, the relationship between human rights and social privacy, as well as future orientations towards the development of new technologies, amid the need for change and adaptation to the digitalized world, as well as the challenges that new technologies can bring. In the framework of this paper, the following methods have been used: literature study method, legal method, comparison method, and development of qualitative research with in-depth semi-structured interviews. Two interviews have been planned with IT experts/software developers and sociologists/mass communication experts and the same number of interviews were conducted. The interviews, in addition to biographical data, contained over 8 questions, which were open-ended questions and filter questions. The questions were analyzed and cited during this paper, depending on the need and adaptation to other relevant data presented here.

Some of the research questions we have presented in this article are: What is the role of the new developments in information technologies in the enlargement of contemporary society? Can society contests new developments? How much can new technological developments affect inter-social relations, especially privacy? What will be the role of the state in national security? How new technologies have been accepted in societies in transition like Kosovo and how resilient are citizens to new changes?

HUMAN RIGHTS AND SOCIAL PRIVACY

The issue of human rights concerning the development of information technologies, especially the violation of the integrity of the privacy of the individual has become part of the global discussions around the world. The characteristics of modern society are the dynamics of life, the savage capitalism which alienated man, the process of globalization, the lack of time, the fading of inter-social relations, as well as the need to obtain information as soon as possible. It is even assumed that today information is power because he who has information can also have the power. Studies show that

> this technological revolution formed the material foundation for a new type of society. An entire generation has now come of age in the network society, the information age, or to use a term more recently popularised in

> the social sciences, the digital society. This is a society characterized by information flowing through global networks at unprecedented speeds. New undergraduate and postgraduate courses are appearing that specialize in understanding 'digital society', 'digital culture', or 'digital media and society' (Redshaw 2020).

This achievement has made modern man reach the highest pedestals of society, but at the same time also violate the privacy of the individual and that man who in the Middle Ages fought hard for this freedom he enjoys today, to become its robot or what Erich Fromm defines it as 'automaton conformity'.

The digital age is increasingly alienating society and today we are witnessing what social media, sometimes are becoming an even necessary tool for society. Moreover, the questions that arise today globally are how much is new technology restricting the freedom of the individual, and how much do we have social privacy? Because each information technology tool demands data from the user, it can potentially be abused. Actually,

> privacy, as a fundamental human right, has been protected under multinational privacy guidelines, directives, and frameworks in different countries or conventions at the international level, such as the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (article 12), International Covenant on the Civil and Political Rights (article 17) and The European Convention of Human Rights of 1950 (article 8) since the 1950s (Dorraji and Mantas 2014).

Studies underline that "technological progress has created a situation of severe tension and incompatibility between the right to privacy and the extensive data pooling on which the digital economy is based. This development requires new thinking about the substance of that right" (Altshuler 2019). It's important to say that "satellites monitoring, growing automated surveillance and personal smartphones may track every movement of the individual. Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) systems and online purchases are revolutionizing personal information usage and have consequently started to re-shape our understandings of privacy and our requirements of privacy laws" (Dorraji and Mantas 2014, 309). Such monitoring often doubts about how much privacy we have, although we as a society often post our data or store them in applications, including our credit card details, family photos, various posts, etc., which can often be misused or even exploited by hackers for different purposes.

In Kosovo, the Constitution and the Law on Personal Data Protection guarantee the right to protection of personal data and privacy. This right is guaranteed by article 36 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, which includes:

> respect for private and family life, inviolability of the home, confidentiality of correspondence, telephone, and other communications, and protection of personal data. Also, the direct implementation of international agreements and instruments which guarantee human rights and freedoms defined by article 22 of the Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo, such as 1) Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and 2) European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and its Protocols (Rregullatori.com 2018).

Therefore the Law No. 06/L-082 on Protection of Personal Data states that:

> 1. This law determines the rights, responsibilities, principles, and punitive measures for the protection of personal data and the privacy of individuals. This Law determines the responsibilities of the institution responsible for monitoring the legitimacy of data processing and access to public documents. 2. This Law complies with the Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 27 April 2016 on the protection of natural persons about the processing of personal data and the free movement of such data and repealing Directive 95/46/EC (General Data Protection Regulation) (Law No. 06/L-082 on Protection of Personal Data 2019).

This legal basis is in line with the directives of the European Union, but also through strategic documents Kosovo has established policies of personal data protection, protection from cyber-attacks, and protection from any violation of national security. On the other hand, there are often cases not only in Kosovo but also in countries that have much higher cyber security than Kosovo, to have cyber-attacks, to steal virtual identities, to create false profiles, especially in the name of public figures for material benefits or causing general damages. Just to recall the case of WikiLeaks or the Panama Papers, this caused chaos, social insecurity, and psychological confusion everywhere in the world. On one side appear the secret affairs of various states and organized crime by the ruling elites. On the other hand, they gave signals that however everything is monitored by a 'Big Brother'. This showed how far the limit of social privacy can be about information technology. Studies pointed out that they are mostly,

> three relatively recent major digital developments that have affected our concept of privacy greatly. The first of which is the increase in data creation and the resulting collection of vast amounts of personal data—caused by the electronic recording of almost every transaction; secondly, the globalization of the data market and the ability of anyone to collate and examine this data; and lastly the lack of control mechanisms for digital data which existed to protect analog data (Rengel 2014).

The digital age we have entered now will have two sides of the coin: on the one hand, it will have a positive impact on the overall development of society, politics, economics, artificial intelligence, bio-engineering, and other segments. On the other hand, the crossing of the borders through the virtual world, which author Yuval Noah Harari called 'digital dictatorships', can be systems of surveillance and social control. According to him, "in the hands of a non-evil government, powerful surveillance algorithms may be the best thing that has ever happened to humanity. However, the same Big Data algorithms can empower a future Big Brother, and thus we will end up in an Orwellian surveillance regime in which all individuals are monitored all of the time" (Harari 2018).

NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND CHALLENGES OF MODERN SOCIETY

An old proverb says that "within nothingness, there is an infinite potential" (Masuno 2021), although this sounds meaningless, ideally describes the development of modern societies. Simplification to 'the nothing' and digitalization in the minimalist style has reduced the size of the equipment, but on the other hand has expanded and increased the potential of every product, service, or device. Some of the services that were once unimaginable, today are free of charge, some of the services that are now free have turned into lucrative businesses for many individuals, e.g. "sports events are becoming more and more popular, as a result, and the prize polls are getting bigger and bigger. Some of the best sports players in the world are starting to earn wages similar to that of traditional sports stars" (Boggs 2021). Also, the same thing "happens in industry after industry. In recent years, newspapers, grocery stores, and music, movies and TV have been disrupted. It's not that the leaders of incumbent industries don't have sharp strategies and plans. The problem is that they extrapolate their current model into the future instead of envisioning the possibilities" (Johnson and Suskewicz 2018).

The development of technology has influenced the development of modern society but has also produced consequences that have effects, which are now beginning to appear. It should be said that "technology is here to stay, but it's always morphing and expanding. As each new technology enters the scene, it has the potential to improve lives. But, in some cases, it also has the potential to negatively affect physical and emotional health" (Pietrangelo 2019). According to the American Optometric Association (AOA) (2020), "prolonged use of computers, tablets, and cell phones can lead to digital eye strain". This is just one of the problems that have occurred. Other problems are related to sleep, emotions, increased depression, stress, violent behavior, post-traumatic stress disorder by Covid-19, lack of physical activity, and the creation of an internet and technology-dependent generation which has information surplus and knowledge deficit, can undoubtedly be problems of the new millennium. Technology penetrates the interior of the state and directs its most vital components in the same

way as it limits, weakens, or conditions modern man. For example, domestic state policy in modern societies depends on its technological development whether due to cyber security or military technology. Health public policy is also dependent on the development of new technologies, in some countries during the Covid-19 pandemic, thanks to 3D technology, have been produced ancillary materials at low cost for health personnel and citizens of that state. Of course, through technology, some countries have managed to create *ad hoc* hospitals depending on the need to deal with the pandemic. In other areas such as foreign policy, economy, education, etc., technological development helped some countries even after total closure to not experience it as a setback or a waste of time, because they replaced physical spaces with virtual spaces, such as online meetings, online shopping, online learning, etc. While in less developed countries, the pandemic has eclipsed them in almost every segment of life.

While we mentioned some of the negative effects of new technologies and modern societies, we must keep in mind that new technologies have provided equal opportunities. In most countries and countries, while in less developed countries, the pandemic eclipses say in almost every segment of life, a common economic, cultural, artistic, and sports market has been created. As Netflix author and founder Reed Hastings (2020) explains, one of the reasons for Netflix's success is "the rule of no rules, that is, to provide service to all in an uncensored and uncontrolled manner". In this regard, "according to a recent poll involving some 1,150 experts, 47% of respondents predict that individuals' well-being will be more helped than harmed by digital life in the next decade, while 32% say people's well-being will be more harmed than helped. Only 21% of those surveyed indicated that the impact of technologies on people's well-being will be negligible compared to now" (Anderson and Rainie 2018). In other words, new technologies have also blurred and increased societal differences in access to information and the use of the same communication networks or merging into the same idea across the state borders.

SOCIETIES IN TRANSITION, NEW TECHNOLOGIES AND THE FUTURE ORIENTATIONS

The period of transition is "considered as a transitional period in which transformations take place from one system to a new system, including the aspect of politics, economy, culture and other social aspects of the state" (Kamberi 2019). However, what happens when we are dealing with a transition that is more of a technological transition, which brings the world, regions, states, multinational corporations, and individuals themselves in the face of the dilemma of a new technological order. The Balkan Peninsula best illustrates the mixing of different ethnicities, cultures, and religions in a common geographical area. The Balkan countries have coexisted by sharing the challenges, which in addition to political problems have

also come as a result of new global trends. In this regard, Kosovo as a country that has gone through several stages of transition faces like any other country the process of globalization and new technologies, especially with the new challenges from this hyper-development of new technologies, which every day more and more are reaching the top of development. Thus, Kosovo is a lower-middle-income country with solid economic growth performance since the end of the war. However, according to the data, "the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Kosovo was worth 7.61 billion US dollars in 2020, according to official data from the World Bank. The GDP value of Kosovo represents 0.01% of the world economy" (Economics 2021). Although, Kosovo`s diasporas are quite strong and almost a large percentage of the budget in Kosovo as revenues are also remittances. The population structure in Kosovo is mostly young, Kosovo perhaps "has the youngest population in Europe with 53% under 25 years of age" (European Union 2018), who are by and large internet users and connoisseurs of foreign languages. Although a relatively new and inexperienced country in terms of legal infrastructure for new technologies, it is a place where new technologies have found active users. In 2013 the government of Kosovo officially declared the IT industry as a top priority sector for its economy. IT industry "is of strategic importance for the economic and social development of Kosovo for several reasons, such as economic growth, job creation, export promotion, competition, innovation and entrepreneurship, branding and positioning, investment promotion and other strategic benefits" (MED 2018).

The technology sector in Kosovo is thriving despite many roadblocks. The low cost of building digital products and services has enabled Kosovars to rapidly grow the sector, spurring job generation, improving the export market, and increasing incomes. Rapid growth has also been enabled by the following: "70% of the population is under 35 years of age and interested in new and innovative employment opportunities, such as the digital sector. There is more than 85% internet penetration and 90% 3G and 4G coverage across the country. Internet penetration in Kosovo stood at 91.0% in January 2021" (Dweck 2020). Data shows that "there were 1.76 million internet users in Kosovo in January 2021. The number of internet users in Kosovo increased by 156 thousand (+9.7%) between 2020 and 2021. Also, there were 1.10 million social media users in Kosovo in January 2021" (Kemp 2021).

Also, the World Bank has published the Doing Business report for 2020, which includes 190 economies worldwide. The Report assesses the implementation of almost 300 reforms in the period from May 2018 to May 2019. Kosovo in this Report is ranked 57th" (Ekonomia-ks 2020). The Kosovo government has stated that digital is one of six priority sectors for economic development. Kosovo's most daunting economic challenge, however, is its unemployment rate of 45%, the highest in the SEE region (OECD 2013). This is exacerbated by nearly 25-35,000 young individuals entering the labor market each year with only a small portion of graduates finding employment;

resulting in youth unemployment estimated to be the highest in Europe at near 73% (OECD 2013, 12). The threats to the innovation system are three-fold:

> first, is that the best and brightest leave Kosovo altogether; second, that the skills of previous graduates become obsolete as a result of not being used; and, third, the education system is not producing graduates with the skills needed by the private sector. The latter point, in particular, can be seen in selected sectors, such as in information and communication technology (ICT), where skills gaps are present (OECD 2013).

On the other hand, Kosovo has been paradoxically challenged in two forms of new technologies, firstly, the extremely large participation of Kosovo society in the production and sale of crypto-currencies, and secondly, the lack of 3D equipment which has been used by many developed countries to counter the COVID-19 pandemic. Although "the best-known cryptocurrency, Bitcoin, has dropped far below the prices it hit in a speculative bubble in December, it can still provide a living in a country that has the highest internet penetration in the Balkans and the cheapest electricity" (Bytyci and Zuvela 2018). Thus, "Kosovars find cryptocurrencies an alluring investment", said Ermal Sadiku, a software engineer and cryptocurrency expert. Secondly, "there was a lot of dirty money around - and cryptocurrency investment was a fast way to get rid of it" (Bytyci and Zuvela 2018). Nevertheless, the barriers to entry are not negligible. Bitcoin is earned or 'mined' by "using your computer to help process the uncrackable 'blockchains' or digital transaction records that underpin the currency" (Bytyci and Zuvela 2018). New technologies have been easily accepted by the Kosovo society, probably also due to the mainly young population. Regarding this during the interviews with experts of the field, Mr. A. Shala (2021), a sociologist and communication expert, stated that:

> New technologies in societies in transition, such as Kosovo, have been accepted blankly, without any study or any proper educational plan, there is a disparity between the national plan and the use of technology in different strata of society. In this sense we also have the political transition, technology has found societies unconsolidated and the consequences may be bigger than the benefits.

While, in terms of socio-economic development, it seems that new technologies have found a pretty good terrain, because it has shortened bureaucratic procedures and has had an effective and efficient cost, at least so think the experts who were interviewed specifically for that matter. The IT expert D. Hadri (2021) believes that the "needs are enormous, especially in the digitalization of administrations, and the reduction of state bureaucracies, which the development of technology can greatly

help". Data from the Kosovo Agency of Statistics for 2020 underline that in recent years there has been an increase in sales and purchases through the virtual form, as follows:

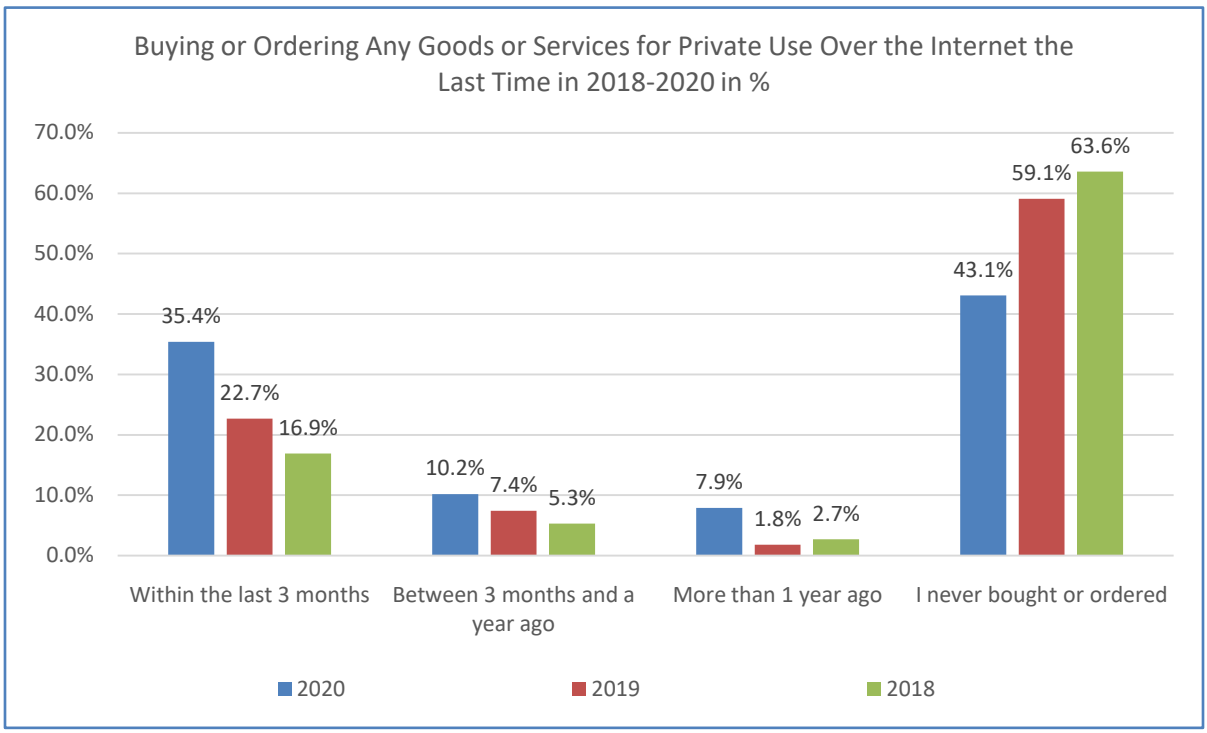

Figure 1: Buying or Ordering Any Goods and Services over the Internet the Last Time in 2018-2020 (Source: KAS 2020, 14)

Figure 1 indicates that in 2020 the purchase or order of goods and services online by individuals 3 months before the interview is 35.4%. Compared to 2019 the purchase or order of goods through the internet increased by 12.7%, while the number of individuals who never bought or ordered goods and services over the internet is 43.1%. However, regarding the countries from which the purchase has been made, the data states as follow:

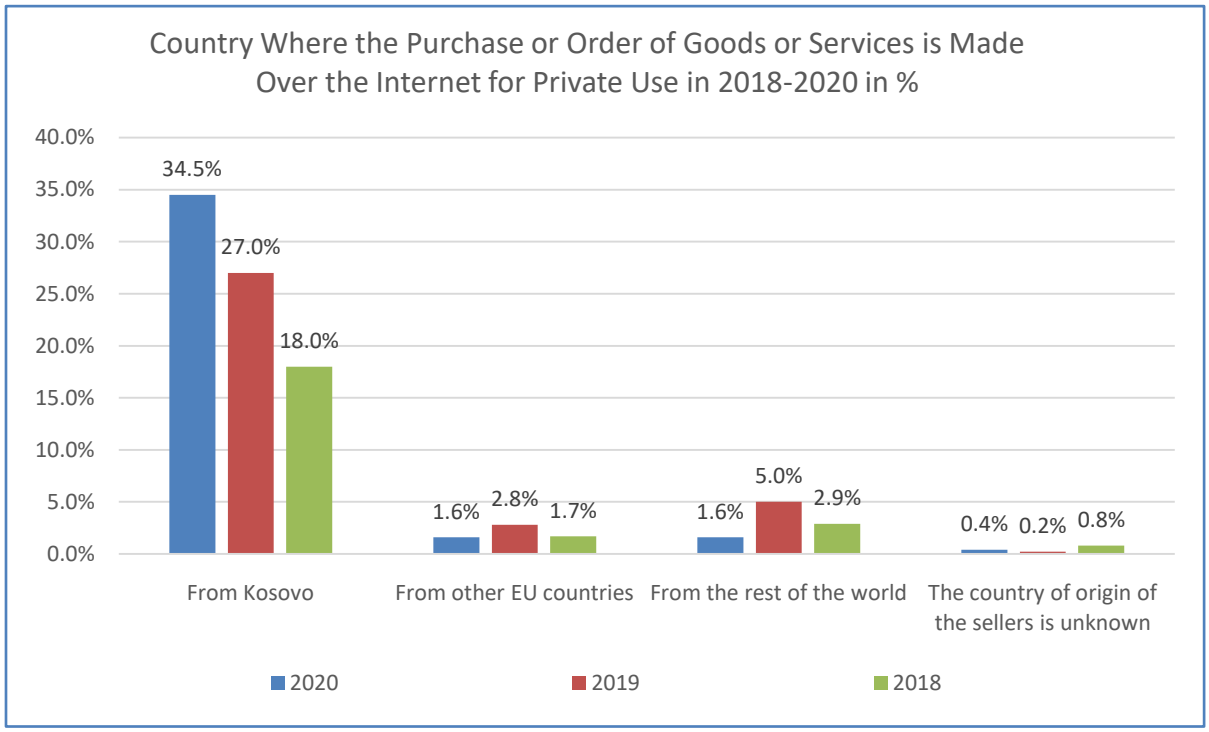

Figure 2: Buying or Ordering Any Goods and Services for Private Use Over the Internet in the Last 12 Months (Source: KAS 2020, 15)

Figure 2 indicates that in 2020 the purchase or order of goods and services over the internet for private use in the last 12 months in Kosovo is 34.5%. Compared to 2019, the purchase or order of goods and services for private use has increased by 7.5%.

In terms of the need for new technology and dealing with the crisis caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, Kosovo was unable to manage the situation using new technologies and instead continued to deal with it using traditional methods, such as purchasing more expensive medical supplies or other equipment. In developed countries, such medical materials are typically created using 3D printers.

The Covid-19 pandemic's occurrence,

> alerted the world to how sudden product demand can challenge the supply chain to an extent where even first-world countries faced serious difficulties in addressing the basic hygienic needs of people. With the outbreak of the novel Covid-19 in late 2019, most countries have been facing serious difficulties with the supply of protective devices among the general public and healthcare workers. Furthermore, for controlling the spread of Covid-19, the protection is not only limited to the healthcare workers but is also essential for any person working in public, especially those who directly deal with and provide in-person services. Given the shortage and importance of protective equipment, designers from all over

> the world have proposed different 3D-printed devices to help prevent the spread of this virus and address global needs (Petch 2020).

Although the role of 3D printers has been proven in the field of medicine, the dilemma that prevails with this technology is that in addition to the benefits, comes the risk of using this technology, for example in the field of security and military technology. Countries like Kosovo, which is considered a 'society in transition', are in a constant challenge in terms of new technologies, given the lack of legal infrastructure, unsustainable economic growth, and political problems which leave no room for governments to focus on innovation and technology. This will be difficult for other Balkan countries as well since

> the future of new technologies will begin to stabilize and the social need for a post-technological period will emerge rapidly, as every good has its dose of risk and social saturation will be challenged by the need for prudence in use and return of social emotionality who will suffer from the tremendous use of technology. The fact that technology has attacked the psychological side of humanity represents satiety and at the same time, emotional fading over time will result in a need to heal the post-technological stress (Shala 2021).

As a result, while globalization and the internet have developed bridges across diverse civilizations, emerging technologies are likely to be challenging for humanity's future.

CONCLUSION

Today, it is possible to assume that the future of humanity is dependent on new technologies. While technology has provided social, material, and cultural benefits, they have also helped to build bridges between different communities and social groups. On the other hand, these developments have intruded into modern people's private lives, exploiting their data for illegal profit.

Kosovo has a young population structure and is considered the youngest population in Europe. As such has adopted new technological developments, including crypto-currencies and 3D printer technology, which very likely are in line with the developed countries. These technologies have advanced and have had an impact on the advancement and development of human resources, the economy, but they have also increased the number of users of the technology, with over 96% of households now having access to the internet and information technologies. The issues that Kosovo, as well as other countries in the area and beyond, face include undoubtedly the misuse of personal data, cyber-attacks, and the issue of privacy, which has put the modern man in

a tremendous Hamlet's dilemma of using information technologies even if it means rejecting them. As a result, the difficulties of the XXI century will be primarily information technology, which will be misused and will confront the human freedom for which he has battled from its inception, not only in Kosovo but also elsewhere.

It is assumed that continued development and ultimate misuse of artificial intelligence might eliminate people's economic worth and political power, and in this segment, the misuse and difficulties of humanity via biotechnology could shift humanity from economic inequality to biological inequality. 

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This article does not contain any studies with human participants performed by any of the authors.

Statement on the welfare of animals:
This article does not contain any studies with animals performed by any of the authors.

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