

Information Society, Virtual Communities, Globalization

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Abstract: Information society is kind of society which is economically and culturally integrated with Information and Communication Technology. In this society, availability to information has prominent economical, social and individual role. Information and Communication Technology is considered as the most important factor in developing the Information society. Governments try to lead the countries towards this area. Free information stream, human right, globalization, Information and Communication Technology and media are the bases and necessities of Information Society. In this paper, at first we focus on Information Society and its characteristics. Then, we criticize Information Society and describe the differences between Information society and Mass society. After criticizing the globalization and Information Society, we can recognize the limitations and advantages of Information Society.

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Introduction

Easy and rapid access to information as the result of research results, scientific theories, experiments and researches, evaluating and analyzing the concepts, implementing the technology for achieving the knowledge, using technology for producing and distributing the knowledge are all the aspects which human beings encounter with them entering information society. Therefore, each of Information Society citizens, as the result of accessibility to information democracy opportunities and Information Society which is knowledge based development result, in addition to being affected by the present situation, they consider it as an influential factor and even an index in distributing the knowledge based culture in society. Information has become a symbol of an area in which we live. These days, we can hear many discourses about information explosion, revolution, information technology and even an information society. The term "Information Society" reflects the developing new information technologies and the reorganized society. These days, the information is much more available through informatics networks. This process develops rapidly because of increasing number of information highway users. Information appears as valuable goods in the contemporary area which leads to establishing new industries, jobs and products. That is a reality which makes the economy of society face with new aspects (Mohseni, 1380:9).

We can categorize the substructures of Information Society to three groups:

- 1) telecommunication sub structures
- 2) knowledge related substructures

- 3) Technologic substructures relating information (Mohseni, 2001:22).

In fact, Information Society is the result of different software and hardware connections which root in social-technological structure. We can name some of them here: digital, appearance of new computer languages (Gmail), developing the whole elements of communication networks (optical cable, satellite, telephones) and finally their homogenous link in a structure called internet which frees the network from the last walls (organizational, local and national). Information Society involves new communicational ways through especial instruments such as internet in which we can name friend finding, conferences, electronic debates, research etc. this phenomenon has led to different virtual communities in cyberspace. Therefore, we can say that space with new elements and without geographical and political boundaries affect the social relations (Mohseni, 2001:12).

Appearance of Information Society coincides with different interrelated evolutions:

- 1) Globalization of economy
- 2) Appearance of economy based on knowledge
- 3) Development and vast use of communicational networks and digital messages (Mohseni, 2001:19).

Now the key question is that what are the limitations and advantages of Information Society?

Information Society Criticism

Although Information Society has numerous advantages, it is criticized by different scholars. In the way that some believe that Information Society intensifies the survival conflict instead of releasing us from material constraints. It also strengthens the economical roots in political and social structure (Parsa, 2000:11). The others believe that the more information leads to less meaning and we cannot find deep and precise meaning (parsa, 2000:20).

In other words, we can describe the Information Society as follows: the more rely on production, distribution and using information. It made some industrialized countries to be called Information Society. In fact, this term is firstly used to describe the new characteristics of post industrial societies in which everything is related to information. "Information Society" and the other similar concepts picture a society which mainly depends on information technology to produce different kinds of goods and services. Industrialized societies need motors and internal forces to increase the human efficiency, but in Information Society in order to increase the intellectual works, we need computer technology (Mohseni, 2001:17).

Difference between Information Society and Mass Society

Concept of Information Society is completely different from Mass Society Concept. While the mass society focuses on one way communication, Information Society focuses on mutual ones and tends to expand the interests.

It is possible that in defining and analyzing the Information Society, each of theorists offer different theories which leads to modern societies' recognition. However, we can summarize them in a technological, economical, professional, cultural and place measures. The key concept of this definition is reflected in prominent processing developments, maintaining And transferring information and in fact, using information technologies in all aspects of social life (Webster, 2001: 20-21); or economical measure which sows the rise of a valid sub branch in economical affairs. It is also related to information economy. Economical procedure of information includes the massive statistical tables which dominate the qualitative aspects of information society (Ibid, 33).

Criticism on Globalization and Information Society

Internet has provided an opportunity to make a global informational structure which can link the computer and further communication networks all around the world together (Anderson, 2006). Some

talk about digital slavery in this point (Ogunsola, 2005). Daniel Bell, sociologist, in 1973 predicted the emergence of a society which is called "Post Industrial Society". As Bell stated the new information society has three main principles:

1. Involved in changing from efficient production to service community.
2. Focusing on coding the theoretical knowledge which leads to invention and innovation in technology.
3. Technology provides new ideas which are considered as key for analyzing the systems and decision making theories. In his idea, knowledge not work, but it is source of values.

The main reason of increasing pluralism in post modernism refers to its alliance with contemporary technology. It appears 24 hours informational world and replaced by modern world. World enters a new social cultural system which is called Information Society (Pishgamifard, 2001). Mackenzie defines globalization as a process through which capitalism is formed. It is based on not only transnational structures in product's trade and services but also and mainly in money trade, investment and monetary instruments (Nayyer, 2002). Rosenberg (2005) calls globalization the dominant ideology in 1990s. In social sciences, this concept means that linkage of relationships basically changes the identity of human communities. It also makes a multilayer global government system which can be used instead of an authoritarian state. On the other hand, we have some opposition who believe that globalization is in fact a traditional capitalism and economical imperialism. It can be expanded through new dominant technologies (Block, 2004). Wright (2004) thinks that internet plays as an important role in globalization process and it can maonta9in the obsolete languages and revive them. In the other hand, internet can support the local languages in some situations in which national communications are limited and there are rare traditional storage sources for saving the multi language information. Frank Webster (2005) says that technological aspects in information society lead to growth and development of media (Webster, 2005:1). Information society is introduced in 5 aspects: technological, professional, space, economical and cultural ones. Then, in his technological aspect, Webster states that the general definition of information society emphasizes on prominent innovation in technology. Generally it is said that scientific development in processing, storage and transmission of information and using

information technology has been expanded all over the world. Information and communication technology is considered as the most important factor in developing the information society. Governments try hard to direct the countries towards this area. Free information process, human rights, globalization, information and communication technology and media are considered as the necessities and principles of information society. Information society is one of the contemporary phenomena which expands all over the world as an influential and important factor. Accessibility to information for activities in different social, political, economical, cultural levels helps the development and growth of information society. Information is an important element in information society which has changed the life styles of contemporary person. Holding the First Information Society Conference in Geneva in 2003 and the second Conference in Tunisia in 2005 in which the most countries have participated show the importance of this phenomenon (Deroudi, 2006). From Rise point of view, globalization is a theory whose aim is to explain and describe the events of contemporary events in international space from different economical, social, political and cultural aspects. Globalization, as a theoretical claim, focuses on two main orientations:

- A: active communication systems all over the world
- B: fluid economical situation (Rise, 2001).

Conclusion

These days, massive and new technologies have affected our life and workplace in different aspects. Without these technologies it was impossible to continue the life. Rapid data publication and information as the result of digital age is so that it can be defined as Information Explosion. Globalization, information technology and rapid changes are the challenges of modern age. Globalization aspects are affected by a process that definitely have cultural consequences. Antony Machfro divides this effect to four factors: competition of great powers, technological innovation, production and trade globalization, innovation and modernism (Iranzadeh, 2001:92). In this part we can mention the behavioral effects of globalization on this process. In the way that, globalization, have attacked the behavioral aspect of culture based on attach and domination of technological instruments in capitalism life and economy (Ryazi, 2001:171). The movement in this area is based on different parts. The headlines of these changes and alternations are as follows:

- Information technology develops the human being's thinking power.
- Information technology relates the whole world together.

- Information technology decreases the complications of the world.

The fact that how much is the effect of modern technology and limits the globalization, they are considered as new and modern discussions (Paknazar, 2004:20-22). Thinking in the above mentioned methods, such as capability of communicational physical element's effect on societies or coming over them, cultural limitations and constraints, practical and theoretical procedures can be used in information policy making. These procedures which depends on social principles of each nation, is definitely encounters with practical and intellectual oppositions of social beings. Globalization event can have much more effects in Iran. Iran includes a large number of educated people. If the authorities pay much more attention to this subject, this potential force can compete with global projects of the other countries and follow them in Iran. In the other hand, it increases the work level and efficiency. We should pay attention that globalization is not a choice but it is an inevitable process. The fact that a large number of people live in poverty, is worrying, but it is wrong to think that globalization is the source of this poverty. Globalization is an instrument for destroying the inequalities. In this century, each person is globalized in turn. We can communicate with organizations and the people of all over the world through internet. Now we have access to endless and quiet free information. When the travels are cheaper and easier, we can travel wherever we want. Therefore, this is our personal power that has been multiplied. So we can say that this century belongs to the most courageous and intelligent people who use these technologies. We should accept that globalization process from one hand, it has some threats and dangers, and from the other hand it prepares some opportunities for us. Information Communication Technology (ICT) is one of the most powerful forces in twenty first century. The basic changes of ICT are in people's life style, training and work and also the governments of civic societies. These days the people's identity is affected by society. There is not a fixed social structure but they are affected by a social identity in international area. In order to access sustainable development in information and communication technologies in different aspects of life (physically, spiritually and mentally, economically, socially, culturally and environmentally etc.), we need necessary planning and strategies because in this way we can protect the human life from serious threats and adopt them with these technologies.

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