

# Chapter 7

## From Information Society to Community Service: The Birth of E-Citizenship

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter presents a perspective of a post-industrial society, through the development of the information society and its deployment, focusing on the possibilities of a service predominant society. The most important point of this exercise is that this approach did not happen as expected in form or time. In the past, the ICT tools were restricted to centers of competence or in organizations. Nowadays, their increasingly presence in individual lives, as well as in their human relationships, is changing social and commercial relations, the meaning of work and political participation of people in a compulsory way, unlike what had happened at the turn of agricultural to industrial Eras. New possibilities happen in a rapid manner in a society based on wealth concentration, when there is association of ICTs with the restlessness of social movements or collective protests demanding better living conditions of minority communities. The increasing information flows have led to the desire of knowledge. However, this search for the social welfare achievements has occurred in a superficial manner, leading to anxiety and depression of common and deprived citizens. A new Citizenship or, better defined, e-Citizenship emerges between their aspirations. Based on facts and observations of recent research on the impacts of ICTs in the last ten years, the approach of a community service changes the daily lives of individuals, despite its acceptance or perception, the presence of virtual media, the growing media innovation and agricultural, industrial and operational processes, as well as the claimed social movements.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

Around the 40s and 50s, it was said that in the countries where industrial revolution had followed its course, the tertiary sector would gain strength and at that time it seemed very natural and, with

the rise of liberal professions, the more qualified professionals had better jobs and factories replaced by quiet rooms. This matter shall be deeply analyzed while trying to find reasons to a change in the initial expectation based on society's new boundary conditions. People do not live on

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by technology and seek for survival, but by the accomplishment of new rights and citizenship. This chapter goes beyond the reflection of social impact results. It also seeks to understand disappointments and what has been achieved in the fight for better life quality in the way to a new citizenship.

Researchers of computer science, communication and society fields have warned a few times about technological development and a possible planetary “cyberdemocracy” that will put the individual “in the vertigo of the future and in the urge of the present, therefore creating utopia and dystopia” (Lemos & Lévy, 2010). Arrangements and productive structures and social relations receive a certain impact due to more accessible convergent technology, transactional information, oblique communication, access to information and knowledge anywhere at any given time and the new forms of internet connection. These changes or transformations shall lead to a more transactional and interactive 21<sup>st</sup> Century Society in comparison to what was expected.

The progress the last century to 21<sup>st</sup> century was followed by profound changes in the oriental and occidental societies, differently what was observed before, with economic, social and political transformations occurring simultaneously, including education for all life, ecologic issue, search citizenship, among several other preoccupations.

The citizen, its community<sup>2</sup> and society are guided to create new behaviors, while leaving others behind, due to new needs. He can adapt based on the access to an enormous volume of information, on the use of information technology and in the growth of services provided. A reader can verify those facts simply by looking around.

It is not the purpose of this chapter to analyze the background of Industrial Era and the beginning of Modernity, as well as the reasons of the supply of goods and services’ growth in the 70 or 80 decades of last century, or to survey the multiplicity of ways or how simple it is to access information and communication in the first de-

cadec of 21<sup>st</sup> century, but, to explore the unfolding of the information society and the possibilities of seeking new citizenship in Community Service.

## **2. THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SOCIETY AND ITS BACKGROUND**

At the beginning of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Daniel Bell, a sociologist from Harvard, defender of postindustrial theory, especially exposed in his famous book “The Coming of Post-Industrial Society” (1973, 1991, 2001), envisioned overcoming the number of industry employees by the tertiary sector, in 1956, as the beginning of the post-industrial era. He grounded his view on the concept of post-industrial society. The post-industrialism theory gained strength, dissemination and popularity, with the work of Peter Drucker (1993), “The Age of Discontinuity” (1969).

Other scholars have called our society with a surprising variety of terms, including knowledge society (UNESCO, 2005), age of information and network society (Castells, 1999, 2001) global village (McLuhan, 1996), *telépolis* (Echeverría, 1999), surveillance society (Lyon, 1995 and 2001), interconnected society (Martin, 1980), interconnected intelligence society (Tapscott, 1996).

But it was due to Alvin Toffler (1986), with his work *Future Shock*, to do an alert to the academy, inviting readers to prepare for a transition so different from what was the transition from agrarian to industrial society (Kumur, 2006), pointing, essentially, changes in the social structure, the transformations taking place in the economic life and career structure, and finally, the new relationships established between theory and experimental practice, between science, technology and the social.

The basic idea of post-industrial society, then mentioned as postmodern, was based not only on the strength of hand labor, but understood as the rapid growth opportunity for professionals

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