The Information Society in Ukraine

Serge S. Azarov
Lucky Net Ltd., Ukraine

INFORMATION SOCIETY DEVELOPMENT IN UKRAINE

In order to assess the prospects for the development of the information society in Ukraine, there is a need to consider the possible directions or approaches that such development might take. In *The Diversity within Unity,* Etzioni (2001) states:

Two approaches are to be avoided: promoting assimilation and unbounded multiculturalism. Assimilation–which entails requiring minorities to abandon all of their distinct institutions, cultures, values, habits, and connections to other societies in order to fully mesh into the prevailing culture—is sociologically difficult to achieve and unnecessary for dealing with the issues at hand, as we shall see. It is morally unjustified because of our respect for some normative differences, such as to which gods we pray. Unbounded multiculturalism—which entails giving up the concept of shared values, loyalties, and identity in order to privilege ethnic and religious differences, presuming that nations can be replaced by a large number of diverse minorities—is also unnecessary. It is likely to evoke undemocratic backlashes, ranging from support for extremist, right-wing parties and populist leaders to anti-minority policies.

Taking into consideration Etzioni's recommendation, there is a need to search for an intermediate approach. However, this raises at least two questions. First is when to precisely commence a movement towards a synthetic approach to the construction of the information society, taking globalization into consideration but preserving the local identity. The second question is who—a leader, a certain group, a class, elite, or a society, in general,—should become a "key executor" of such a grand plan? In other words, the first question calls for an answer regarding the time of the "moment of truth" when ephemeral social illusions give way to specific financial and economic plans and programs.

Toraine (1997) stressed that the "moment of truth" being sought should be understood as the last step-wise stage between the industrial and post-industrial eras. This is a result of the gap appearing between the international economy and a nation-state leading to the destruction of such a model of a society that unites instrumental rationality and cultural identity. Researching the new social movements at the end of the 20th century, he developed a so called "action sociology" which he used to state that it is "new and diverse social movements, not political or state institutions" that are the true driving force of progress.

The foregoing sets the boundaries for the answers to the questions posed above. This article now analyzes the social and economic conditions in the development of the Ukrainian civil society in order to expose any "gap between the international economy and the nation-state" as well as the existence of "new social movements."

In such an analysis it is not useful to be overly enthusiastic since it was the Marxist classicists who were the first to write about "the new social movements" and state that "when an idea grips the masses, it becomes a material Force" (Marx, 1848). Of course, what they meant under the notion "the masses" was a new social force; an oppressed class of worker formed during the first stage of capitalism in the process of re-appropriation of added value (peasantry is the capitalism's heritage from feudalism). That is why, bearing in mind Marx, we must ask:

- In what way are "the new social forces" being formed in the post-industrial society?
- Amongst which social strata existing in today's society should we look for the "blessed springs of the information society"?

These questions are the key to exposing the productive and cultural identity of both a person and social environments. On the one hand, these form the new information society. However, on the other hand, they are themselves being formed from the "old" social groups including "workers and peasants," a notorious "middle class," a ruling elite and even the bearers of the incomprehensible "national idea."

IDENTITIES AND THE INTERNET

In examining these questions, it is useful to examine the writings of Castells (1997) in *The Power of Identity* which provides a basis to not only to answer these questions but also to begin discussing a notion of "identity." Castells

dedicates his book precisely to the effects of the emerging phenomena of the information society on the new social movements, state policy and the *personal reactions* of the people in the world to globalization and "sprinter" technological development. Castells' principle propositions are as follows (Castells, 1997):

• The most important feature of the information society is not its dominance of knowledge but in the change in direction of the use of knowledge which displaces previous forms of both personal and property dependency typical of industrial capitalism;

• Globalization gives rise to a tendency to increase identity which can help an individual withstand the external world since the new social structures being formed are networked communities;

• With the beginning of the information era, relations between "society" and the person not only harmonize but become more intense;

• Social and biological traits of human beings, which lock them in the narrow forms of "old communities," are juxtaposed with the global traits that incorporate them into the new world structures;

• The essence of the networked human identity lies in the fact that for the individual, the process of self-identification becomes self-sufficient. Identifying the value orientations of activities of such self identification based on a specific cultural identity, excludes the necessity to address other social structures;

• There are three types of network identity and each of them can play a key role as a driving force of social progress; they are as follows:
    • legitimizing identity, which is typical of industrial society and corresponds to a system of values of a traditional civil society and nation-state;
    • resistance identity, which is typical of a period of transition when a new value system, recognizing the significance of local communities, is formed; and
    • project identity, that is the based upon a personality that is shaped in the information society;

• A role of the new social movements based on the resistance identity and the project identity protests against the existing social structures;

• Whilst the protest identity is destructive, it is a key source of energy to progress from the industrial to information structures; and

• Technology *does not determine* either historical evolution or social changes but is a potential resource for the development of society and provides for different models of social change.

Thus, according to Castells, the new social forces in the post-industrial society are formed during the processes of searching for both personal and group resistance identities in order to form a new project identity in the end. Of course, this approach cannot be expressed by means of unified social and political, or economic rules of behavior or recommendations, since the globalization process is not regionally homogenous. For instance, certain regions, such as the Pacific region, appear to be actively involved in the global economy while other regions including certain African and Asian countries, are prejudiced against or hostile to concepts of globalization.

Whilst acknowledging the role of the Internet in formation of the information society, Castells nevertheless stresses that network communication is not a universal means of communication and is not likely to become one in the near future. He considers that:

new electronic net media do not depart from traditional cultures: they absorb them. Social and cultural differentiation leads to the segmentation of multimedia users. It also increases social stratification among the people. The multimedia public will be populated by two separate populations: the interacting and the interacted and it is critical for all kinds of social effects that there should be the development of an open and horizontal network of communication instead of exclusive and closed on-demand media services. The significance of the multimedia increases tremendously in a system in which reality itself (that is, peoples material/symbolic existence) is entirely captured, fully immersed in a virtual image setting, in the world of make believe, in which appearances are not just on the screen through which experience is communicated, but they become the experience. (Castells 1997, pp. 372-375)

Castells contrasts the old forms of national, religious, class and ideological identity with the new networked identity. It is well accepted that national identity in the nation-states historically determined the legal relations between the state and its subjects. Identity based on formal citizenship plays the same role in the multinational states. However, separatist movements based on the notion of national identity exist even in such developed countries as Canada or Spain.

Today, a religious identity is a base for many Muslim countries. But even in such countries there are contradictions derived from different interpretations of religious principles or Confessions of faith. The same can be said about class and ideological identity which, it can be argued, was never fully employed in any country.

In the early part of the 21st century all other forms of identity, including the impacts of such key factors as

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