



Chapter I

The Taxonomy of Information Societies

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Abstract

This chapter introduces the taxonomy of 14 information societies from the data society to the self-sustainable society: surviving members. Their essence and role in civilization is characterized and their paradigms and measurements are defined. The information society is considered as the force of change and a question is raised: is it a new tool of thought or a new way of life? The future trends of the information society are reviewed, and in conclusion there is a hope that the information society will make humankind more aware of its being.

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to define the evolution and key indicators of the information society, which is being triggered by the information wave in the last 25 years. Several aspects of the information society will be reviewed, and their developmental path will be defined. The fast development of the global economy,

which is based on info-communication technology (ICT), is supported by the information society. Depending on the different levels of a given country's development, the information society has different levels of complexity and influence on the global economy and vice versa. Hence it is important to recognize the information society's different phases of development and their solutions and internal and external consequences. The question arises whether the information society is a new tool of thought or a new way of life. The answer to this question is provided by this chapter.

The Forces of Change

The "information society" is a fuzzy concept. It is considered the answer to the problems created by the postindustrial *modus operandi*. In a modern economy growth is owed to advances in info-communication technology. By the beginning of the 21st century, the need for information handling and processing in world societies is being shaped by the following trends:

1. Politics in the post-Cold War Era. A new world order may lead to the formation of 1,000 countries and a highly decentralized "international society." This physical disintegrational trend will require tools to integrate these entities informationally. Eventually this new system of nations will be based on a new info-communication infrastructure, which needs new info-communication systems and services.
2. Democratization and peacemaking. Societies would like to be better informed, therefore they need more communications based on free speech and solutions, like the Internet.
3. Globalizing information. This is caused by the proliferation of ICT and is a major driving force in the transnationalization of the world economy. Estabrooks (1988) predicts that programmed capitalism in a computer-mediated society will integrate all national markets and create one international market.
4. The globalizing economy. A network of 50 global corporations now "rule the world" because they apply the global information infrastructure. ICT is at the core of the current process of economic globalization (Madon, 1997).
5. Population growth and health threats. In 2025 there will be about 9 billion people, which will generate at least twice as many transactions as currently processed today. This means more needs for the ICT capacity.

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