

Chapter 3.3

Establishing a “Knowledge Network” of Local and Regional Development Subjects

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INTRODUCTION

Efficiency of collective action, aimed at social development, in many ways depends on the level of being well-informed and the intensiveness of knowledge sharing between the social agents, which are the professional corporate communities in this domain. Modern information technologies allow influencing the social development by establishing of Internet networks for geographically separated social agents who collaborate on the basis of “horizontal” communications. From this point of view, the Internet can be considered a catalyst of inter-group communication and an instrument for decentralized projection of social development. There has been no sociological research conducted in Ukraine to find out the ef-

ficiency level of cooperation between social agents using an Internet network to share information and knowledge concerning local and regional development. But even a general overview of the Ukrainian Internet shows an unsatisfactory state of such cooperation. Indirectly, this is proved by the data regarding the Internet content for 2002, which demonstrates that scientific research and educational organizations represented only 4.4% of the Internet content (Bryzhko, , Tsymbaliuk, Orekhov, & Galchenko, 2002, p. 101). We have all the grounds to state that computer databases existing in Ukraine do not meet the requirements of the local and regional development. Further, they do not contribute sufficiently to the professional growth and development of the professional communities’ ethical standards.

In the present situation, the environment for virtual information is one of the effective mechanisms enabling global changes on all levels of social modernization—international, national, regional, and local. As a result, this mechanism has to become an element of special public information policy and a key factor of strategy-building activity of social agents who act in the sphere of local and regional development. Thus it is suggested that the following elements of information processes need to be revisited:

- a. information (knowledge);
- b. type of communication, setting the modes of behavior in the information space; and
- c. type of social agents (participants) that form the value and goal structure of the information space.

These components in whole should give us an answer about the possibility of effective information interaction in the sphere of local and regional development in general but particularly relevant to the Ukraine.

As one of the resources, information is also an object of separation, and in this sense it is an object of information policy. In the purely administrative aspect, this last concept for the most part is interpreted as trends and methods of independent institutional objects—a state, its individual agencies, bodies of local self-governance, organizations, and institutions dealing with information collection, dissemination, and storage. The purely administrative context of information policy, in spite of wide variety of tasks that should be accomplished in the course of this activity, consists of the quantitative monitoring of information flow. Judgment about information openness and closeness of an information policy object are made on the basis of quantitative assessment of information flow index. In this perspective, information stands as an object of information policy. This orientation of the government authority's

activity has achieved some success, which is demonstrated in particular by the establishment and functioning of the unified Government Web Portal and the setting into operation of the new communication trunk and zonal fiber-optical lines. The issue of information “electronic governance” systems and their implementation into public administration (E-Government) is also being developed (Klimenko & Litvinov, 2003), as well as variants aimed at broadening the possibilities of public access to the Internet. Further, the number of local self-governance bodies using the Internet for managerial purposes and for ensuring transparency of their work is gradually extending (Baiev, 2003). This gives us the ground to assert that the State of Ukraine, in the purely technical perspective, has the primary characteristics of an Information Society. The technological basis available allows a large information array of the activities of central, regional and local authorities, to become available for a wide circle of societal users.

However, the situation with regard to the control functions over the effectiveness of information is different. This task is a more difficult one for the subject of information policy. A useful information policy has to implement its policy in such a way that allows particular information to reach an appointed target group and results in an expected effect. In such circumstance, the task group (social agent) becomes an object of information activity, while information develops a meaning of an administration influence tool. From that standpoint, information should be viewed as a complex of information measures, which are aimed at changing behavior and attitude towards the knowledge of certain social groups. These measures create possibilities of extending the sphere of power of the state through methods of civil influence that, according to the Declaration of the World Summit on the Information Society, also include information methods (The World Summit on the Information Society, 10-12 December 2003, Ge-

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