

DIGITAL DIVIDE: THE SOCIAL PROBLEM OF INFORMATION SOCIETY

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Summary

In this article actual problems of an information society are considered. Increase of a digital divide could result in magnifying of opportunities of a manipulation social conscience by means of limitation of a free access to the information, its selection and filtering. It is proved, that under influence of a controllable information stream the specific model of information perception is formed in social conscience. In consequence of this model action, the unequal reflection of a reality is created. It is showed, that absence of equal access to the information allows certain persons and groups of persons to use in own interests the information to which they have access by virtue of the official position or other circumstances which by-turn extends opportunities of corruption at all levels.

It is emphasized, that for overcoming the mentioned problems the vital importance has providing of information openness, availability and adequacy of a reality as only guaranteed by the law and supported by proper social conditions the availability of information resources and technologies for all members of society will allow in full to realize their democratic rights and freedoms.

Introduction

There are no doubts today that humanity is on a threshold of a new stage of the development - an information society, efficiency social and economic development of which depends first of all on creation, production, gathering and dissemination of the information.

Becoming of the information society implicitly will entail deep changes in economic, political, socially-philosophical, morally, legislative and other spheres of society life.

Already now appear such specific phenomena, as an e-money, information riches, electronic government, virtual e-shops, distance education and remote labor relations, the virtual labour collectives which employees are not attached to the common workplace and communicate with the help of a modern information and communication technology. There is evergrowing demand for knack of receiving knowledge, its processing and using with application of modern information technologies.

There is a becoming an information society for which characteristic there is so-called "network" way of people interaction practically in all directions of their activity. [1]. On conditions of global information environment, the leading existence forms of which is internetisation and virtualisation, the new "man of network communication" is formed with his own values and behaviour features.

For today there are a lot of research devoted to investigation of different aspects of information society. For example, the concept of a postindustrial society as panto-sociological and philosophical theory of development is deeply studied in works of E.Toffler, D.Bell, M.Kastels, D. Rismen and Dj. Gelbreit. Among modern Ukrainian scientists an information society studied by V.Gavlovskiy, A.Chuhno, V.Tsimbaljuk, A.Gal'chinskiy and A.Kolodjuk. In this line of investigation actively works Russian scientists A.I.Rakitov, V.L. Inozemtsev, G.T. Artamonov, N.Gendina and others.

Nevertheless, despite of relatively large quantity of the scientific works devoted to research of an information society, the lacks of this society remain the scantily studied phenomenon and practically not covered in the literature. At the same time detailed reseach of information society lacks is very actual because allows deeper to understand their nature and outline the ways of their overcoming. By it, actually, could be denoted unexplored before part of general issue which is examined in this article.

Social aspects of digital divide

Conversion to information society puts to the first plan the social questions concerned with an adaptation of the person, state institutes, normatively legal base, mass media and society as a whole to new conditions.

First steps on a way to information society were accompanied the wide discussion of informatization advantages as the first stage of conversion to a society of new type. Informatization was represented as the huge blessing for society, the state and single people that opens wide possibilities of gathering, processings and interchange of information, inaccessible on the previous stages. Now becomes clear that information society is the phenomenon not unequivocal which has both the advantages and disadvantages. Today, under condition of absence of thorough researches which examine the features of a transitional society, it is necessary to investigate not only positive sides of information society, internetisation, informations and virtualisation which it is much talked about, but also problems which arise out of becoming a new society.

One of such problems coupled on amplification of economic divide at different social levels.

Use of knowledge and information as determining productive force goes mainly to benefit of the advanced countries and the greatest transnational companies. It results in widening the gap in economic divisions around the world, in separate countries and between the different countries. So according to The World Bank in 1973 the gap between the richest and the poorest countries determined correlation 44:1, and now 72:1. Today the half of inhabitants of a planet are living less, than for 2 dollars per day, and 4,5 of 6,1 billion people are living in the countries which develop. At the same time, overwhelming majority of the blessings is owned only 100 million people on the Earth [2].

The gap in the living standards between these two groups during last 20 years has increased almost tenfold. This tendency is very disturbing taking into account magnifying of conflicts in the world, growth of corruption, terrorism, criminality and worsening of the medical providing of people. There is the gap growing in the field of development and use of information technologies between the developed countries and the other world, between the different layers of the population inside the countries grows: between rich and poor, youth and old age people, healthy and invalids and others. The intellectual gap is magnified between those who have an access to modern information and communication technologies, and those who do not.

In his article [3] M.Z.Zgurovskiy points out, that in the world this phenomenon known as digital division or digital divide. The term digital divide refers to the ability of the countries or separate layers of population to use, adapt, generate and disseminate knowledge. The term "informative poverty", which means the poverty on principle of access to modern information and telecommunication technology, was entered in the annual lecture of UNO devoted to the development problems as early as 1997 [1].

Digital divide has several dimensions which are in details described by S.Zhuravskiy and M.Rodionov. The first dimension concerns irregular division of Internet-junction in world regions in comparison with division of number the population which achieves two, and sometimes three times. The second dimensions of digital divide consists in fact that 80 % of information and software world volume today is produced in English whereas 75 % of the Earth population do not speak English. And the third dimensions touches informative inequality in the middle of the separate countries: technological changes result in that some groups of the population which were deprived the modern blessings and opportunities of a civilization, move away from elite part of population yet more. To the first group of people first of all belong low-income family, peasants, people of old age, invalids and in some countries ethnic minority and women also [2].

Hence, the first problem of an information society and negative consequence of informatization consists in further increase of the digital divide in each of its dimensions. The peculiar closed circle of which it is hard to get out is created, because absence of access to modern information and communication technologies and information resource for some subjects of information relations (separate people, social groups and layers, the countries etc.) brakes the further development of these subjects that reduces their opportunities and mental potential in comparison to the better provided with technical and information subjects of information relations. This lag in development in turn does impossible improvement of access terms of first group subjects to new technologies and information resource.

At deeper analysis of the problem of digital divide in information society another aspect of this problem appears. Initial divide of different subjects of information relations in the technical and information sides allows one subjects of these relations to manipulate other.

By the source of threats to social interests of citizens and societies could be essential expansion of an opportunity of a manipulation by a person consciousness by means of shaping around him individual "virtual information space" on the basis of mixing main and second-rate, real and the virtual, valid and invented. In the same way theorists of a postmodernism [1] interpret the process of penetration of new information technologies in different spheres. In this connection extremely dangerous is opportunity of concentration of a mass media in hands of small group of people which may result in manipulation by a public opinion about different socially significant events, and also to destruction of spiritual foundations of society by imposing stranger to his citizen's values.

To the unexpected effects, for example to reinforcement of control above personality and greater manipulation by individual and social conscience, can lead the loss of social orientation of technological development, inherent to industrial society. Uncontrolled distribution of "information weapon" and development of arms race in this area, attempts of prosecution of "informative wars" are serious threats to the states interests in information sphere, which in the turn may cause disorder in social, economic and political spheres.

As most specialists in information technologies, sociologists and philosophers consider, the factors which essentially threaten to the society interests in information sphere are continuous complication of information and telecommunication systems, communications, magnifying an information constituent of critically important objects of infrastructure of society life. These threats may appear as infringement stability of function of the component information infrastructures, the illegal access to information of economic and socially meaningful structures from the side of criminal, including terrorist organizations [1].

Dissemination acquires new type of criminality, related to the theft of pecuniary values, personal information, confidential and commercial information with the help of computer and modern network

technologies. Propagation of currency operations in the on-line mode and swift development of e-money, virtual purses on the one side and that lack of information about safety use of these services in their users on the other side provoke cyber-criminals on the illegal action realization.

As a result of introduction of information technologies in education, health protection, production, a life and leisure, the origin of new means of intercourse become more controlled not only public but also a lot of aspects of people personal life. The quantity of data bases of different character constantly grows, but the order of creation, use and protections of this base developed enough neither on legislative, nor on a technological level. Owing to widespread use of new technical systems of the personal information gathering and processing practically in all spheres of life there is an opportunity of transgression of citizen's legitimate rights and interests by illegal use of information (both functionary and stranger) or its intentional distortion.

The profound analysis of the listed problems of information society give rises to the following reasons. Digital divide comes as the important social problem of the present and if it not has essential sociological, philosophical and legal consideration it will result further in significant negative consequences. The initial condition of digital divide, except a manipulation individual and social conscience, may result in such negative social consequence as propagations of the information crimes. The range of possible information crimes is very wide - from drawing harm to separate persons owing to personal data abduction to the origin of difficult social problems in society coupled to corruption at different levels and destruction of principles of democratic society. Will explain this thesis more detailed.

Some researchers of information society (for example F. Tsirja and M. Platonova) consider that informatization as the process directed to mastering information resources with the purpose of information society creation, inextricably related to democratization of this society. Nevertheless it is not necessary to forget, that limitation or absence of access to new technologies, communication, gathering, processings and data transmissions systems for the certain part of citizens with lightness will result in opposite results as only guaranteed by the law and supported by proper social conditions the availability of information resources and technologies for all members of society will allow in full to realize their democratic rights and freedoms.

The subjects of information relations limited in access to modern technologies, various information, new knowledge and data bases, become defenceless against technically better equipped subjects who own the channels of information transmission, communication means, information resources and etc. It enables the last to limit access to all completeness of the information, to represent it in the dosed and controlled form which allows to point an people ideas and behaviour direction in necessary for them channel. Under influence of a controllable stream of the information certain aims, persuasions, taste and priorities are gradually formed in the people's consciousness. Afterwards in subconsciousness of people the whole model of information perception is developed. This perception model works on the principle of filter: the person trusts only that information which is laid in the preliminary formed template of perception. All information, even trustworthy, which falls short of the established frameworks either is not perceived at all, or is treated as falsification.

These models of information perception are very conservative and it is heavy to change them. Therefore after forming of certain templates and beginning of their action at subconscious level the necessity of further selection and control of the access to information falls off often, because people have not skills of unbiased rational comprehension of information which they receive.

The information volume, with which the person faces in modern daily and professional life, grows in a geometrical progression and though objective borders of the information accumulation do not exist, nevertheless there are borders in person's opportunities and abilities to perceive and process this information. Getting unexpectedly access to the big volume of information, the person loses ability to be guided in it and to place priorities. It is hard for him to separate important information from considerable quantity of empty and background information, it is difficult to understand, what source it is possible to trust, and which transmit the distorted or vicious information from submission of the persons interested in that. And although the person has an access to the information, it is hard for him to orient, what he needs to search, where and how it search. In such situation it is better to not complicate himself life and to consume that information which lies on a surface (or, more truly which is laid out into most noticeable and accessible place). And, according to the laws of perception it is memorized that information, which was repeated more times.

In support of this opinion it is possible to find many examples from the past and modern life. Especially it is a lot of them in politics. For example, the supporters of different political forces draw proofs in favour of their favorites from the same sources of the information (popular newspapers, televisional channels, radios), although their arguments often diametrically opposite. For all that proof and arguments of other side are simply ignored or perceived as untruthful ((black PR from the side of political opponents). The action of built-in mechanism of information filtration increases the use of financial and economic stimulations in the most important and crucial periods of political activity.

Thus, under condition of absence of skills of unbiased rational comprehension of the large amount of different and frequently differing information the incorporated templates of perception and sorting of an input

information (messages) successfully work. As a result of action these perception templates some information automatically gets a label of lies, and another is perceived as truth which is not subject to doubt.

The other side of the problem of digital divide consists in absence of equal access to the information of all subjects of information relations, which allows to the certain persons and groups of persons who by virtue of their official capacity or other circumstances own the expanded opportunities of access to the information to use this access in own interests. It is a question of corruption in all levels: from a banal bribe for giving of the necessary inquiry to realization of difficult corruption schemes at the state level. Reticence of poweris creates an extremely favourable environment for its corruption. Opacity of power structures actions for the community contradicts standards of the democratic state because it does impossible working of democratic establishments, stripes citizen of an opportunity properly to realize the rights and freedoms, adequately to estimate activity of the state bodies and political forces which personify authority in the state, and eventually – to impact on shaping and functioning of power structures [4].

Reticence and availability of complete information is about important events and processes in the state, and also about authority activity destroys majority of corruptions mechanisms in germ, because if the information is available to all there is no for what to take money or to demand special privileges for.

Creation of the effective mechanism of citizens and journalists access to the information about activity of the government agencies and authority is the important factor of counteraction a corruption because the possession of all completeness of the objective information about some malfeasances gives an opportunity of influence and the social control of authority. It is necessary to understand that only independent mass-media are able to carry out functions of corruption counteraction as power agencies and interested persons use own information resourse and controllable or dependent on them mass media in their own interests. Providing of an openness of the government agencies and conditions for creation the real independence of mass-media allows in full to realize constitutional rights of citizens in information sphere.

Conclusions

Summing up stated above, it is possible to point, that besides positive features, the information society has a number of disadvantages. Digital divide comes as the important social problem of the present and if it not has essential sociological, philosophical and legal consideration it will result further in significant negative consequences.

Coupled to digital divide the magnifying of opportunities of **social conscience** manipulation owing to limiting access to the information, may result in forming distorted model of information perception and creation of inadequate reality reflection. The other side of the problem of digital divide consists in absence of equal access to the information of all subjects of information relations, which allows to the certain persons and groups of persons who by virtue of their official capacity or other circumstances own the expanded opportunities of access to the information to use this access in own interests. The question is an opportunity of corruption at all levels.

That's why the vital importance has providing of information openness, availability and adequacy of a reality as only guaranteed by the law and supported by proper social conditions the availability of information resources and technologies for all members of society will allow in full to realize their democratic rights and freedoms and to reduces considerably an opportunities of corruption scheme realization.

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