

## Possibilities and Threats Caused by the Development of Information Society

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*The basic idea of the article is that in the era of information society development not only the functions of the state in information sphere change, but also there are new opportunities and threats. To understand how information functions of the state change, the concept and features of an information society are considered, positive and negative consequences of information society are defined. As a result of this consideration the conclusion on new opportunities and threats for the state and the government is made. "E-government" is considered as a new opportunity, which allows essentially raising the quality of state services, and as a new threat – distribution of virtual communities capable under certain conditions to harm to the state and society.*

**Keywords:** *information society, information sphere, state, public administration, e-government, virtual communities.*

**Raktažodžiai:** *informacinė visuomenė, informacijos sfera, valstybės, viešasis administravimas, e. valdžia, virtuali bendruomenė.*

### Introduction

In 50-70s years of XX century it became obvious, that the mankind enters a new epoch, road to which is conditioned by scientific and technological revolution and rapid development of techniques, first of all, computers. The problem of existence and life of a person in completely “technosized” and “informatized” world could not but occupy philosophers and other scientists that have caused the concept of “information society” to

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life. And any of the authors writing about the given problem, did not doubt of radical updating all life of mankind within the framework of this new formation though the majority of them analyzed a problem from only one side, whether it be from the political, economic or social point of view. It caused great amount of various terms and definitions. It is curious to notice, that almost all suggested terms have a Latin prefix “post”, i. e. “after”, as if their founders expect any world cataclysm, global revolution in technologies and in consciousness of people *after* which the new era suddenly will begin, a new epoch, there will be a new society. For this reason it was so important to find essentially new term simultaneously showing a continuity and basic novelty of the future society. And such term was “an information society”, which was introduced by Umesao Tadao in 1963.

What does the occurrence and development of this new society for the state and the government mean? Let us recollect that one of the basic laws of management, the law of proportionality of the subject and object of management, speaks about ability of the subject as for its potential and organizational-technical maintenance to carry out functional tasks operatively, taking into account changes in a condition of object. Therefore the given work will be devoted to influence of some new aspects which have appeared in connection with development of an information society, on the modern government.

### **1. Concept of an information society**

It is necessary to note, that there is no one conventional definition of the concept “an information society”. As a rule, various authors define an information society by means of enumeration of its characteristics. A typical example is the definition given by A. I. Rakitov [18] serves. In his opinion, the society is considered as an information one if:

- any individual, group of persons, the enterprise or the organization in any point of the country and at any time can receive for a corresponding payment or free-of-charge on the basis of the automated access and systems of communication any information and the knowledge necessary for their ability to live and the decision of personal and socially significant problems;
- in a society the modern information technology is made, functions and is accessible to any individual, group or the organization;
- there are advanced infrastructures providing creation of national information resources in volume, necessary for maintenance of constantly accelerated scientific - technological and sociohistorical progress;
- there is a process of the accelerated automation and robotization of all spheres and branches of manufacture and management;
- there are radical changes of social structures which consequence appears in expansion of sphere of an information work and services.

In the same way it was defined “an information society” by A. Toffler, D. Bell, T. Stounier, I. Kurnosov, etc. However, an exception is the definition given by the Commission of EU, according to which the information society is the one where activity of people is carried out on the basis of the services rendered with the help of information technologies and technologies of communication [16]. However, although the given definition is quite concrete, but at the same time it is a little bit “one-sided”, reflecting only

one aspect of an information society. The similar approach is also traced in works of some other authors. From our point of view, an information society is a more complex concept which demands complex consideration from different positions.

First of all, it is necessary to note, that the information society has naturally come in the stead of its predecessor – to an industrial society as, despite of obvious progress and improvements in many spheres of person's life, the industrial civilization has brought with itself and a number of negative consequences which began to be shown most clearly already in the first half of the XXth century. It is not casual that exactly at this time wide criticism of industrialism appears. One of the first critics of an industrial society undoubtedly is O. Spengler who published the work "The Decline of Europe" in 1922 [22]. G. Markuze also concerns to the most outstanding critics of industrialism with his work "One-dimensional Person: Research of Ideology of the Advanced Industrial Society". In it Markuze ascertains that in an industrial society there is a formation of the standard, one-dimensional person which tries to enthrall the nature, but at the same time becomes himself a victim of the enthrallments. There is "a successful suffocation of those needs which insist on release <...> at the support and unbridling of destructive forces and repressive function of an affluent society" [15]. From philosophical positions E. Gusserle who released the work "Crisis of the European Sciences" in 1954 also criticizes an industrial society [2]. The central theme of the given work was the interaction between new European sciences and philosophy, on the one hand, and daily life from the other.

I. e., it can be noted that to the beginning of the second half of the XXth century pessimistic sights at the future of a western civilization prevailed more than optimistic. At this particular time also there is the concept of a postindustrial society showing, on the one hand, an alternative way of development of a society, but, on the other hand, ascertaining changes which occur to the western society in the "natural" way. These changes have been caused, as it was marked, by rapid development of computer technologies and development of electronic communications followed after that.

It is interesting that practically all authors writing about a new society suggesting names for it used a Latin prefix "post", i. e. "after", as though emphasizing its basic distinction from industrial. In this occasion W. Daizard wrote: "The aspiration to express essence of a new information century resulted in the whole kaleidoscope of definitions" [11].

Many scientists and thinkers wrote and spoke about a society going to change an industrial one, but its first harmonious concept was given by D. Bell in the book "The Future Postindustrial Society. Experience of Social Forecasting" issued in 1973 [9]. Dividing history of a human society into three stages - agrarian, industrial and postindustrial, D. Bell aspired to depict contours of a postindustrial society, in many respects making a start from characteristics of an industrial stage.

The huge contribution to development of the concept of a postindustrial society was brought also by the American sociologist and philosopher E. Toffler who, actually, has entered into wide use the term "an information society". He has released the known trilogy devoted to research of an information society: "The Shock of the Future" (1970) [21], "The Third Wave" (1980) [20] and "Metamorphoses of Power" (1990) [19]. Similarly to Bell, E. Toffler counts the beginning of a postindustrial society the middle of the twentieth

century, namely time when computer technologies reach significant results in the development. The information as the basis of a society of the future, starts to restrict even such sphere traditional for an industrial society as manufacture. The knowledge, and first of all knowledge of hi-tech, capable to generate new knowledge and to be introduced in any sphere of human activity, becomes the basic resource of mankind.

But transition to an information society for Toffler is not reduced only to development of information technologies. Old representations about family, work, morals, human dialogue vary, and there are also huge changes in the sphere of culture, i. e. *in the cardinal image all society varies*. The information society which main resource is the knowledge transmitted by means of telecommunications, and which the main power supply sources are renewed energy sources, is the only possible way of mankind development.

In his third book "Metamorphoses of Power" Toffler shows how features of new information societies influence managerial processes, change them. The key factor in this change is also knowledge. It becomes a basis of authority in an information society: the knowledge can punish, remunerate, convince and change. Having knowledge, it is possible to bypass skillfully undesirable situations and to avoid superfluous expenditure of forces and means, it serves for augmentation of riches and force. And, we shall note, that knowledge for Toffler, is, first of all, the information, the data, representations and images as well as approaches, values and other symbolical products of a society irrespective of, "if they are true", "approximate" or "false".

The considerable contribution to development of the concept of an information society has been also brought by the philosopher and sociologist M. Castels. His book published in 1994 "The Information Epoch" [14] in many respects has added to Bell's and Toffler's concepts. To M. Castels' opinion the new society is characterized, first of all, by the development of computer and telecommunication technologies, therefore a basis of the given society becomes the information. Not the information in its ordinary understanding, as any data on something or about someone, but also the information hi-tech, capable to make the new information which can be instantly put in production for an intensification of production.

It is necessary to note that society, basically, does not set a direction of technological changes; it rather depends on inventions and the innovations received by separate individuals or research groups. But the society can, by means of the state, detain, stop development of technologies (an example to that is traditional societies, e. g. Tibet) or, on the contrary, to stimulate it, that is capable to improve economy, military power or a social welfare. Castels marks to this occasion: "Due to this interaction between microresearch programs and the big markets created by the state on the one hand (war industry), and decenaralized innovation, stimulated by culture of technological creativity and role models of fast personal success, on the other hand, new information technologies came to blossoming". [14, p.76] Hence, *the state is a determinative factor in development of an information society*. Let us recollect that exactly because of unreasoned actions of the state Soviet Union has hopelessly lagged behind the western countries in the field of computer techniques and genetics.

Among the post Soviet authors whose works are devoted to an information society, it is necessary to note V. Inozemtsev ("Modern Postindustrial Society: Nature,

Contradictions, Prospects” [12], “Splitted Civilization” [13]). It is necessary to note, that if Bell and Toffler named an information society as the future one, then Inozemtsev, similar to Castels, considers, that we have already been living in it.

The considered concepts, as well as ideas of other authors which, anyhow, in their works considered its various aspects, in particular T. Stounier, A. Tourain, G. Kan, W. Daizard, K. Jaspers, R. Iris, H. Skolimovski, A. Etzioni, G. Ellul, G. Martin, R. Cohen etc. in many respects have abstract - philosophical character, and early of them are in something utopian. However because of it, their value for understanding today's processes of civilization does not decrease at all. And generalization of the given concepts and ideas allow allocating some “concrete” characteristics of an information society:

1. In an information society which appearance was promoted by revolution in information technologies and computer technologies, the major civilization resource becomes knowledge, its presence or absence determines the further development of a society.

2. In information society there is a new large jump in becoming artificial. As well as the person of an industrial civilization, «the information person» lives completely plunged into sphere of artificial, but essential distinction between people of two epochs is made in interaction with this artificial.

3. In an information society information resources get the greatest value.

4. In modern information society it is difficult to present branch in which information technologies which would not be computerized anyhow would not be used.

5. Due to information technologies those negative consequences of standardization, centralization and massification, resulting into loss by the person of his individual value and his transformation into the general homogeneous mass "we", which so frightened critics of post industrialism of the XXth century, in due course leave in the past.

6. Information and computerization have destroyed traditional representations about work and trades, to work in an information society frequently there is no even a necessity to abandon the house.

7. All these information and computer achievements have made the world global. And, the question is not only internationalization of economy, a world division of labor, etc., but also about significant cultural shift, occurrence of the increasing number of cosmopolitans, «citizens of the world» who are meant as people, not identifying themselves with any certain cultural and social environment with which their ancestors were identified.

8. The social structure of a society essentially changes. Changes occur in three directions: change of social groups, change of a percentage ratio between various social groups, change of types of interrelations between social groups.

9. The information society in many respects allows to return to "pure" direct democracy in that sense as it was understood in the sources in Ancient Greece. It is connected with the fact that occurrence of computer information networks liquidated the main reason of occurrence of representation democracy (this reason, for example, was specified by Montesquieu), namely impossibility of carrying out of regular assemblies of all citizens of the state for the decision of the vital issues.

Thus, the situation when the society already has substantially changed, becoming or having become an information one, takes place, but in functions of the state, functions of

public administration which realization should provide efficient management of public processes, the given change, in our opinion, has not found *to the full* its *practical* reflection.

## 2. Change of functions of public administration in an information society

Though, it is necessary to note, that in many advanced countries the understanding about necessity of change of functions of the state in conditions of an information society grows, but for the present it occurs not at a normative-legal level, and at the best at a level of strategic concepts, charters, intentions, etc. Perhaps, most full necessary changes of activity of the state in conditions of an information society are stated in the *European Strategy of Development of the Information Society*, submitted on behalf of the Forum of an information society by professor F. J. Radermaher in his report on the International symposium "Global Information Society: Figures and Victims" which took place in France on March, 1-5th, 1999. In the strategy it is marked, that for coming out on a trajectory of a steady information society the following factors are necessary [6]:

- active role of the governments in updating market developments of an information society, including policy of liberalization of the market of telecommunication services;
- maintenance for each citizen of Europe of cheap access to universal telecommunication provision on the basis of the open system of services combined to strict observance of standards;
- constant attention to such social aspects of stability, as: validity, general participation in an information society, resistance to social dissociation, avoidance of division into wealthy and deprived in sphere of the competence and access to information-communication technologies (ICT), partner relations between the state and private organizations, investments into large international projects of ICT development, creation of new workplaces, access to education, professional refreshment and training, preparation and retraining at any age, policy of the social consent between all European regions;
- cultural and linguistic variety;
- big attention to ecological aspects of stability: investments into ICT development, lowering loading on an environment;
- observance of the civil rights: protection of consumer, protection of intellectual property, protection of personal data, safety and integration in electronic commerce;
- development of international mechanisms of coordination in technical, commercial and legal spheres;
- development of systems of retraining on distributed multimedia basis, development of systems of professional refreshment for new fields of activity.

Thus, certainly, it is necessary to name not only positive, but also negative consequences of the total "informatisation" arising as a consequence of transition to an information society. In this respect it is interesting enough the known table by Hessig "Consequences of Informatisation in Public Mirror", represented in [18] though it is

not possible to agree with all its information. So, Hessig for some reason has attributed to negative consequences of information society, such as expansion of the state bureaucracy, centralization of management, total control of the state, standardization of work, mass unemployment, dehumanization of work and life in general. However, as follows from the essence and features of an information society that were considered in the previous section, just it allows to reduce the state bureaucracy and centralization of management, not allow total control of the state over information democracy, to make work more individual and humane, to lower unemployment due to expansion of sphere of information services. It is just positive consequences. In our opinion it is also disputable prospective decrease of a cultural level as communication networks increase an opportunity of access to a cultural heritage.

In general, there is a number of works devoted to regulation of information sphere of a society in which it is marked, that it includes: maintenance of the right and technical opportunities for access to the information and information resources for all population; observance of freedom of speech; protection of interests of national minorities, rising generation in information sphere; maintenance of information safety; protection of national cultural heritage, language, an opposition of cultural expansion of other countries; protection of the intellectual property, struggle against piracy; encouragement of a competition, struggle against monopolism (control over concentration of the property in mass-media, allotment of sanctions to merges of the companies, decisions as for disintegration of large companies-monopolists); struggle against computer and hi-tech crimes; control over use of information and telecommunication technologies in official bodies; censorship in global computer networks.

However, it is only separate tasks (though also undoubtedly important) while it is necessary to consider regulation of all cycle of the information in society, i.e. its creation, distribution and consuming. At a *stage of creation* of the information basically it is necessary to speak about use of regulating mechanisms which promote occurrence of organizational and economic preconditions of development and perfection of information manufacture. As practical experience shows, direct regulation at a *stage of consuming* of the information is rather problematic as normatively as well as technically, though it is possible to carry it out non-directly through regulation of other public relations (or influence on other spheres of society), for example, in sphere of education. Thus, the basic regulatory influence on information sphere of society should be carried out at a *stage of distribution* of the information.

Considering distribution of the information, it is necessary to note, that it can be carried out directly and non-directly. At direct distribution the founder of information product, or its interpreter, influence the consumer "directly", by means of direct dialogue. At non-direct distribution between the founder of information product (or the interpreter) and the consumer there is a technology (system of technologies) of fixing and transferring of the information by means of what mass character of the information relations is provided, as well as increased degree of influence of such information products.

It is interesting that historical development of information distribution technologies evidently shows growth of mass character of an information exchange, and, hence, the importance of the information in society, that in turn, is the indicator of necessity of state regulation of information relations.

### 3. E-government: new opportunity

In conditions of increase of the importance of information function of the state public administration bodies are simply compelled to alter their mutual relations with citizens. Thus, development of an information society pushes the given organizations to acceptance of the concept of «the electronic government» or «e-government». In this sense, the electronic government is that infrastructure, which state bodies should create today to change ways of tasks performance. Earlier the information infrastructure of public sector was created for internal use in separate departments and establishments. Now state bodies can give wider layers of the population access to the infrastructure so that the main values of an electronic century – «faster, better, cheaper, more accessible» – have been applicable also to public services.

Undoubtedly, the information society puts many challenges before the state, but also creates a potential opportunity for improvement of process of services granting, hence, increases of efficiency of activity of the state bodies and, in the certain sense, improvements of trust to them. And it is quite natural, as, facilitating citizens` reception of services and access to the information, the state and its bodies become more transparent and accountable. Besides that when citizens are better informed, and the state bodies do not seem to them so far, citizens in the greater degree express the readiness to participate in managerial process that conducts to development of direct democracy.

In opinion of some authors [10], the greatest useful effect from creation of the electronic government can be received due to those services for the population which are given alongside with such consumer resources as access to the Internet and e-mail, commercial portals and websites of electronic commerce. It is explained by the fact that successful projects of electronic public services involve not only those people who are already connected to the Internet, but also bring to the on-line environment people who have not been there yet. The opportunity of useful services rendering basing on systems of the e-government is extremely important for achievement of general access to the Internet.

Nevertheless, it is possible to ascertain, that *state structures frequently not absolutely correctly understand the essence of the e-government*, considering it only as accommodation in the Internet of the information and services, putting an equal-sign between coming out into the Internet by means of creation of the website and introduction of the e-government. But it is not the e-government. Really, thus the certain improvement of quality of administrative services and efficiency of administrative processes is carried out. However, it is though also key, but not unique task of the e-government. There is also a number of other problems, in particular, improvement of quality of decision-making, creation of more open and transparent control system, growth of well-being of society, increase of economic competitiveness of the state, etc. which the e-government also is called to solve. In this occasion R. Traummuller marks the following: “Do not think that all activity of the state (concerning the e-government – V. D.) is connected granting services. There were no services earlier. Now everything is referred to as service. Undoubtedly, if you have arrived, for example, for work by personal automobile and have received the penalty for parking in not the right place, you do not begin to think that it was the service given by city on penalty. Therefore here it is necessary to approach to it with balance” [17].

In connection with it *probable consequences of introduction of the concept of the e-government, being "collateral"*, i.e. not connected with improvement of rendering of services to citizens, growth of an openness of authorities, realization of elements of direct democracy, etc. *frequently are not considered*. However, it is possible to mark out at least two such consequences. First, as a result of its realization, the e-government is capable to become the catalyst of changes not only inside public sector, but also in a society as a whole. It is connected with the fact that the state itself creates conditions for growth of citizens' well-being and creations of "public riches», and there is a direct connection between economic successes of the country, competitiveness of national economy and complexity of procedures and interactions between economic subjects and authority (the given mutual relations are considered in more details in the following part).

Second, as it was marked earlier, in information society the person in the cultural plan is less connected to a place of the residing, but it does not mean absence of his connections absolutely. As a binding force we can name the so-called virtual communities providing unprecedented rallying of various cultures which, perhaps, could not achieve any state, any regime. Even the Soviet Union, aspiring to create uniform "people of a new formation" could not solve this problem that eventually, promoted its disintegration. However the electronic government in conditions of information society can achieve it, as it is a part of virtual space where processes of cultural rallying take place.

In general, "taking out" of the organization to the Internet now is quite a simple task for any official body. However, it is much more difficult to establish such on-line mutual relations with citizens who allow carrying out an estimation of operations, to rule contacts with people and to expand their service. It has happened historically, that the information of the state bodies about citizens developed fragmentary, and various data on each concrete person are stored in the most different interdepartmental databases. However, as a matter of fact, any contact of the state bodies with the citizen, most likely, is a part of some series of the interconnected operations which have been stretched in time. Therefore each time when establishment and the citizen again come into interaction with each other, the state body has an opportunity to adapt the service for needs of the citizen a little bit better.

With this purpose in many countries it has been implemented the so-called control systems of mutual relations with citizens (Citizen Relationship Management) which allow the state bodies to work flexibly and effectively within the framework of the Internet, Intranet or Extranet with the use of XML web-services. Thus with the help of scaled, reliable and economically effective platform Microsoft.NET the state organizations can integrate the information received through different channels and kept in diverse systems, and to overcome borders of departmental structures, having created the uniform center for processing any inquiries made for one visiting or one call. The state bodies can analyze great volumes of the kept information, to reveal typical operations and to define individual needs of the citizen, that, in particular, allows them to give better such services as: definition of the rights to social privileges, search of work, payment of taxes and penalties, prolongation of licenses, distribution of certificates and sanctions, registration on reception to the doctor, reception in schools and universities, registration on habitation, management of traffic, processing of complaints, virtual municipalities, registration of voters, etc.

Certainly, the effect from introduction of the e-government is shown not at once, but in a long-term prospect. Therefore at an estimation of its success, first, it is not enough to approach only from positions of that is achieved for today. Second, it is necessary to take into account that it is in long-term prospect that the e-government represents the greatest value, being some kind of the catalyst of both large-scale changes of all state structures, and public changes. It is the realization of the concept of the e-government promotes change of mutual relations between citizens and the state according to requirements of information society, being a first step to construction of new type of the state – the information state.

#### **4. Distribution of virtual communities: new threat**

If the first works devoted to information society, differed by optimism and even enthusiasm concerning prospects which it has, then for modern researchers of an information society it is characteristically more cautious, and in something a critical sight at it. So, except for the marked problem, it is marked out some more essential ones. To number of those it is possible to attribute, for example, a problem of an inequality in access to new information technologies and means (not only because of impossibility to get them, but also owing to absence of corresponding knowledge, skills), that conducts to a new public inequality.

Absence of censorship in information networks results in a wide circulation of the obscene materials representing threat to moral foundations of a society, in particular children's pornography, materials of neo-nazi sense, etc. The Internet is frequently used for illegal gambling and the conclusion of a bet, distribution of propaganda materials of criminal organizations, recipes of manufacturing of explosive and poisonous substances, weapon, narcotic and psychotropic means, and methods of opening of electronic and other codes.

There are new real threats of use of achievements in the field of new information-communication technologies with a view of aims incompatible with main principles of maintenance of world stability and safety, such as a sovereign equality of the states, non-interference into internal affairs, peace settlement of disputes and conflicts. In particular, for the advanced countries it is created the temptation to use advantages available for them in computer technologies and means of information-psychological influence on individual and public consciousness for information, political, economic and cultural expansion.

This list of problems and threats can be continued. But here we would like to stop on one threat for the states to which practically they do not give any value and do not give, in our opinion, due attention, namely on distribution of virtual communities.

Virtual communities belong to those novelties which the Internet introduces in system of public relations as a whole, it is that which can, in opinion of many authors, change definitely life as well outside of a virtual reality.

In general, the concept of communities has enough long history in the sociological analysis. It is considered, that its bases were grounded by F. Tonnies in the works devoted to consideration of differences between *Gemeinschaft* (community)

and *Gesellschaft* (society) [5]. In Tonnies' opinion, the community is determined as the naturally appeared and having own values association, while the society is consciously generated structure in which basis rational logic is incorporated.

Further Tonnies' ideas have been developed by many known social theorists, in particular, A. Etzioni and A. Macintair. That fact testifying to an urgency of a problem of understanding of essence of modern communities is, for example, that Bell and Newbie as a result of the researches have found 94 definitions of concept "community" though all of them, alongside with differences, and have also something common. From the point of view of this general one rather successful is the definition given by B. Wellman: "Communities are networks of interpersonal connections providing social interaction, support, information, feeling of belonging to a group and social identity" [7]. However it is impossible to consider modern communities including virtual, as «clubs of interests» as many researchers, for example, G. Clarke [1], mark the steady tendency of transformation of modern "society" in "community" (set of communities). Hence, the state should not separate from virtual communities though, certainly, should not also interfere "roughly" with their activity.

Therefore with the reference to the above said, it is important to answer the following three questions: what are the consequences of distribution of virtual communities for citizens? What are the consequences of distribution of virtual communities for the state? How is it possible to provide in practice participation of the state bodies in life of virtual communities?

Answers to these questions have "two sides of a medal". So, answering the first question, it is possible to note two points of view: pessimistic and optimistic. "Pessimists", for example, Rheingold [4] and Meyrowitz [3] consider that virtual communities separate people as they deprive them of their direct dialogue and besides result in decline of moral foundations and ethical standards. However the given point of view is more likely the reaction of non acceptance of new kinds of people's socialization in an information society. In our opinion, more true is the point of view of "optimists". They consider that occurrence of virtual communities became natural reaction to «famine of community», followed after disintegration of traditional communities worldwide.

Thus researchers frequently address to idea of "the third space" which is understood as a place separated both from house, and from work, i.e. these are certain public places in a territorial generality, such as cafes, clubs, bars, etc. As during a suburbanization "the third places" have lost the value, the traditional communities connected to them, have broken up. But the need for communities has remained, and it could be realized due to development of computer networks and occurrence of virtual communities in which forms and methods social exclusion, for example, on sexual basis, religious, racial or a class association, lose the value.

Thus, virtual communities are places where the separate person is free from the social barriers arising in result of "a physical embodiment" of identity, that, undoubtedly, is the positive moment as it promotes formation of socially active, free, having democratic sights and legislative citizens. Last quality is connected with the idea that *any* member of virtual community should follow the rules of the given community, otherwise he "will be expelled" from it.

The necessity of the answer to the second of the designated questions is connected to discussion about influence of virtual communities and cyberspaces as a whole on policy. The representatives of the so-called “radical group”, for example Wriston [8], consider that virtual communities facilitate an opportunity of association of the people making the task of illegal capture of authority. However it is necessary to recognize that there has always been such kind of people who are captured by conspirological theories. Though really for totalitarian regime the extensive space of the Internet which is not subject to the control of authority, can represent certain danger. But for the democratic state aspiring to the maximal satisfaction of citizens` needs, virtual communities have only positive effects, even because they allow to study and understand these needs. Besides that members of virtual communities can in common (including with the state bodies) carry out the activity directed to achievement of socially significant purposes.

Thus, answering two marked questions, on the one hand, it is necessary to ascertain, that virtual communities are capable to benefit both for citizens, and for their interaction with the state. But, at the same time, on the other hand, virtual communities can imperceptibly undermine some state bases. Already now there are so-called “virtual states” having all attributes of statehood (the arms, a flag, the government, laws, etc.), Except for territory. But if to assume that there will be enough citizens of one of such states, they can buy at their desire in common, for example, any island, having created thus the “traditional” state. Or to buy a site on the Moon as who has told, that the territory of the state should be only on the Earth? And let us imagine that there will be more and more similar virtual states and citizens of these states will refuse the real citizenship for the benefit of virtual.

I.e. the traditional states can quite probably face the fact that many of their citizens are not any more theirs and live under other laws, and the main thing, are subordinate to the other government. And, it is not necessary to forget that the form of rule of the virtual states, as well as virtual communities in general, is usually “democratic theocracy”, – the “god”, i. e. the main moderator of virtual space is at the head, his word and decision is obligatory to put into performance (otherwise a member of a community can just be excluded from it), but all other “citizens” are absolutely equal in rights and opportunities, irrespective of the “real” social status, a property status and other characteristics. Besides let us imagine that “god” turns out to be the person pursuing the anti-state purposes and having at his disposal the whole “army” of obedient citizens. Examples of “flash-mob” show, that it is possible to organize very quickly and effectively a big group of people for fulfillment of any action.

In my opinion, the similar situation carries an essential potential threat for the modern states, which in this connection, should participate directly in life of virtual communities, not waving away from them, as from something not serious. It is clear that direct state regulation of activity of virtual communities is unacceptable and also impossible. However state bodies can act *as partners* in creation and maintenance of functioning of the given communities. In practice it can be granting of virtual space on the state portals (for example, like yahoogroups) carrying out various actions and competitions for members of communities, placing of social advertising, creation of places of free-of-charge access for people who independently cannot afford it etc. It will allow, at least, minimizing those threats which can proceed from the existence and development of virtual communities.

### Concluding remarks

Social-economic and scientific-technical transformations which occurred in the second half of the XXth century became the objective precondition of development of information society in which knowledge and information become determining factors of development of society.

In the process of information society development there is an interdependent transformation of all spheres of public life and thereof the influence of the information and telecommunication technologies on growth of well-being at all levels – from individual up to national one grows sharply. And in key concept for the social state “equality of opportunities” the accent is transferred, first of all, to information equality, under condition of the decision of a problem of maintenance of base vital needs of the person.

As a result of it all, forms of maintenance of the state sovereignty are transformed, the role of the states as subjects of international policy changes, there is a sharp acceleration of dynamics of public processes which leads as to growth of opportunities of each person, enterprises, countries, as well as to growth of the threats connected to an ill-intentioned manipulation by the information, including danger of occurrence of global conflicts. It is also necessary to mention the spreading of new forms of communities – virtual communities, which can cause some potential threats both for society, and for the state. Under such conditions the task of the state is definition and consecutive realization of strategic directions of activity in information sphere, maintenance of its development, and by means of it, provision of an easy approach of citizens to information resources of different character.

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### **Su informacinės visuomenės vystymu susietos galimybės ir grėsmės**

Santrauka

Straipsnyje analizuojama sąveika tarp informacinės visuomenės vystymosi ir naujų galimybių bei grėsmių valstybei ir jos viešajam administravimui. Aptariami įvairūs požiūriai į informacinės visuomenės sampratą, išryškinant esminius jos bruožus nurodomos galimos jos vystymosi teigiamos ir neigiamos pasekmės. Akcentuojama, kad dėl informacinės visuomenės raidos keičiasi valstybės vaidmuo informacijos sferoje. Įvertintos elektroninės valdžios įgyvendinimo tiesioginės ir netiesioginės pasekmės visuomenei. Kaip viena iš informacinės visuomenės grėsmių analizuojamas virtualių bendruomenių atsiradimo atvejis, teigiama, kad, esant tam tikroms sąlygoms, jų plėtotė gali pakenkti visuomenei ir valstybei.