

# Vladimir Jerkovic, Slavoljub Hilcenko

---

## Social identity and influences of informational technologies

---

Edukacja - Technika - Informatyka 4/2, 46-53

---

2013

Artykuł został opracowany do udostępnienia w internecie przez Muzeum Historii Polski w ramach prac podejmowanych na rzecz zapewnienia otwartego, powszechnego i trwałego dostępu do polskiego dorobku naukowego i kulturalnego. Artykuł jest umieszczony w kolekcji cyfrowej [bazhum.muzhp.pl](http://bazhum.muzhp.pl), gromadzącej zawartość polskich czasopism humanistycznych i społecznych.

Tekst jest udostępniony do wykorzystania w ramach dozwolonego użytku.

**Vladimir JERKOVIC**

Manager of the City library „Karlo Bijelicki” Sombor, Serbia

**Slavoljub HILCENKO**

Advanced School of Vocational Studies for Education of Teachers – Subotica, Serbia

## **Social identity and influences of informational technologies**

### **Introduction**

When we tend to indicate the design of contemporariness that makes it obviously different comparing to previous periods, than we think, in an empirical sense, about humans and social and apparent reality. Within this paper we firstly talk about leisure and free time where an individual uses new technologies and we talk less about operative and functional or professional aspect of the ICT use. Namely, a human is not a regressive paradigm of sensuous comprehension everything derives from, a human is above that, beyond that, nowadays especially alienated anent estranged owing to the power that produces privileges and acts as a stabilizer of the social structure that dominantly determines reality. No matter how much we try to tackle the notion of identity when creating this review as an *a priori* moment within the contact between a user and factual state it is nit possible to avoid seeing identification as an assemblage as a result of structurally determined position of a user. That assemblage overcomes the frames of the default state but never exceeds the frames of reality as a range of possibilities that has its restrictions. Restricted, lined and circled the life of a modern human is not as we used to understand it not so long ago. The factors that influence this phenomenon are numerous. Informational technologies represent a drastic transition in understanding reality, communication and self-comprehension. An individual is no more an embodiment of an identity we used to know, an individual got beyond it. This kind of cognition offers a new perspective, a *multiversum* to the world of seemingly divided and non synchronized automatisms but an ideal is left aside this time. Namely, a data saturated individual in the world of complicity is aware of his/her powerlessness and impracticability of a fusion of ideals. His/her freedom of choice he/she turns into the liberation of the self. Informational technologies create new identification structures and in this paper the authors intend to stress those qualifications of technological and informational influences that affect conclusively the identity of every individual changing it and differentiating it comparing to the period before the aforementioned influence appeared.

## **The Totality of Virtual Reality and Social Identity**

The action of individual factors regarding the necessities of the moment, in a homeostatic sense, seen as a system, through sustentation of a general or total social group can be understood via prism of exhibited individual acts as cheap, free compensation for the powerlessness of grasping the wholesome width of individual possibilities. Here we do not tend to claim as if some subjective factors such as social groups somehow mechanically reflect some material changes and states but they comprehend them in different ways. The realization of some new ideas and understandings quite often according to their own group interests is conditioned by the level of development of social forms anent the domination some of them present. One of the greatest western sociologists Georges Gurvitch cites that the history of some societies did not have to happen as it had happen necessarily and that the historicism that supports the linear understanding does not and did not represent any kind of predestination but neither Gurvitch disclaim that social reality have always been moving causally, objectively and inevitably [Milisavljević 1965: 33]. That kind of phenomena is called blind forces and does not represent anything more than the life of a society as a whole seen in a functional relationship of all of its particles, inner contradictions and mere dialectics of movement and changes. We will not forget to mention that such rule of development includes powerful involvement of subjective factors that successively have their need to actively affect that blind forces. Subjective distancing from the objective fluency of causality is a constant and is being performed permanently within a scale of oscillation around that unique flow of society development that remains conditioned by material life requirements. Besides the real one and beside the public part of life, there is a part of privacy. Furthermore, besides the everyday life and life within a community there is life mediated by the accomplishments of informational technologies and applications that provide spaceless gathering, communication not being restricted by generation gaps and almost bodiless existence. By mentioning space and place as an illustration of anthropological connectivity of place and socially practiced form we will quote Mark Auge from the book *Non places*: „The totality of a social fact according David Moss directs towards two other totalities: it directs onto an agglomeration of various institutions as its comprising parts and onto agglomeration of different dimensions that determine individuality of each and every of the particles”; for Moss an average man in modern society is any of those who does not belong to the elite whilst archaism recognize only the average. Namely, an average man is alike almost all of the „people of archaic or non developed societies because that man is vulnerable and permeable regarding his/her surroundings and that exactly helps us define as being total” [Ože 2005: 56]. Therefore, sociologically speaking we emphasize the totality of livelihoods. It is certain that we have to grasp the identity of collective consciousness as the presumption of the individual’s identity only in the light of the process of progress and not consider it as something static and predetermined inasmuch as

these consciousness change regarding the aforementioned characteristic of totality and development of any type of group and branching it into all sorts of varieties and types [Milisavljević 1965: 38]. The life of a group or phenomenon and identity of an individual that can be recognized by the others sharing the community, within a virtual media, does not prove its definition by the fact that a single type of actions that is in common but also can be recognized in the expansion that follows the same routes of changes into socially possible and totally existing. Accordingly, the Internet and all the content that can be approached via computer, whether they are on the global net or localized at certain software, they all provide creation of the totality that present itself by collective conceptions, knowledge, interests, experiences, subculture of the young and etc. Similarly, mass media and television affected these consciousnesses before and continue their influence nowadays.

The identity of an individual can be found, recognized or viewed as a product or an effect of the socialization process as permanent category meritorious for the reproduction of the social mechanism that can be followed at various domains of behavior and individuality. Generally told, all the aspects of human behavior and persona are the effect of socialization. Therefore, the identity is an individual characteristic that makes a human being specific and social identity is a consequence of the process of social identification even if there were no necessary spatial connectivity, contact or mutual interaction there is a characteristic feeling or sense of affiliation to a peculiar group. Although there is no social identity established, the users of informational technologies belong to the certain identificational meta group, even lacking formal structure but with its own recognizable traits and uniformities. The fact that people behave the same way, mostly quite similar, even though these individuals are not aware of the their livelihoods being invaded by new technologies and even though they might lack consensual moment at acquiring and acknowledging that they live in the informational era and ages of electronic media, this only purports the fact of their contemporariness in a such a constructed social reality where the use of informational technologies appears as the common denominator.

Informational technologies oppose traditional concept and not only do they execute some pressure but they surpass it and the capitulation of the traditional concept was illustrated by Anders Gunther by rising the question: „Isn't it that the wholesome ever-presence they praise us does not represent the present of unfree and isn't it that the unfree is really the absent one because they treat him/her as if he/she does not exist, like the air we breathe and treat him/her as someone who cannot independently say, or call?" [Anders 1996: 75]. If we take for example some popular contents such as *Face book*, *My Space*, *Twitter*, we may notice that at the *panopticon* of self choices we share our experiences in the air or prosaic state and in the presence of many, actualizing ourselves through our activities in the social networks on the total level.

## **Some Aspects of Informatization and Internatization of Society**

Nowadays we are witnesses of the most widely spread phenomenon of accelerated growth and development of mass communications and informational technologies. Confining informational networks even for the largest national units or states is utterly impossible. Thus, it allows merging national cultures into regional and so long. For this reason „these telecommunication networks and systems and computerized informational webs can act as powerful carriers of a new cultural imperialism only due to the existence of only few huge centers of power embodied in transnational corporations” [Smit 1998: 12]. In such a society, post industrial society, mass produced goods win the game and start to represent global culture. This culture is world wide, without clear center, and the central part is represented by new technologies. It is ever-changing, fluid, timeless and obviously artificial. The effects of this planetary culture are scrutinized and calculated very carefully and maintain its technocratic character. Manuel Castells writes about globalization of crafts, media, communication, criminal but what new he brings out is the understanding of reality in relation to „the absorption of the social time and space, modeling the time and space and by creating monopoly over the organization of these two, produce the networks of domination and power” [Kastels 2002: 17]. Here we talk about the peculiar informational fewer we are thinking about increasing number of computers and other devices in homes that invade the structured time of leisure, where freedom disappears just for the good of exhibiting the pseudo side of human social need to communicate in stead of to save these unstructured free time for contemplation or self-understanding. Justification of the actions of dimensions of identity and the virtually managed frequently gather at what Robert Merton named „non anticipated consequences” of the function that can be clearly determined by a review of non intentional, latent, hidden and forgotten, or miscalculated actions. Merton creates a distinction between „1.the actions that are functional for the system and thus represent latent functions, 2.the ones that are dysfunctional for the system and thus represent latent dysfunctions, 3.the ones that are irrelevant for the system that is not affected neither functionally, nor dysfunctional anent these are irrelevant sort of non functional consequences” [Merton 1998: 45]. But, let us not forget to mention, Merton stresses latency as the crucial and totally consistent subject within the mere realization of self understanding and creating the referential frame. Some functions may be beneficial for the group and less beneficial for an individual. Therefore, we must consider interwoven influence different identities accomplish by the inclusion of new technologies in the process of learning, communication, entertainment and etc. On the other hand, simple usage of these technologies, such as the Internet, does not carry any significance for the structure of the social identity all until some applications and contents do not start to mean the content of consciousness in that regard, they are not

of social value all until they conceive their influence certain aspects of the social life and the referential framework of individual who is not mere user, but also the one who suffers changes by simple involvement with these technologies.

The process of civilization is in constant movement and Norbert Elias points out, as problematical, the fear of not knowing the final destination of this process that, according to him, should mirror in the balance between the demands of individual interests, obligations, social imperatives and [Elijas 2001: 53]. The reconciliation of the difference becomes possible in the virtual world. The people seem to be settling a whole new world, the Planet of e-communications. This matrix produces a *New Age*, post-modern social community permeated by informatical and technological accomplishment, not only as an improvement of a human being, but also as an advancement and instantiation of relationships between the participators in the conversation or communication, in generally. Paul Virilio wrote two decades ago about the ending of the limited world, about tele-presence where the local is some kind of extern domain, distance reality, and global is what is relevant now. „Nothing comes, everything”, Virilio wrote, and warned that „with a global universality of telecommunications in real time, and the Internet as the wild model, the revolution of information has proved to be as the revolution of the systematic delivering that evokes the high tide of rumors, doubts, uncertainties that almost bereaved humanity almost superseded the very ethics of the truth” [Virilio 2000: 50]. Additionally, we may conclude that there is a strong ideology of the informatical and technological influential spectrum that resulted as the consequence. Here, it is appropriate to mention Slavoljub Hilčenko who wrote that „when a man created a computer, he doubted whether he should use it for this or that, and consciously or not he created an electronic copy of himself that has surpassed its creator at many aspects, but it was not meant to teach emotional spectrum of individuality of how to be humane” [Hilčenko 2010]. Hence, there is a limited range of properties informational technologies, and technologies generally speaking, can offer and provide.

In the era of post industrialism the understanding of manipulation and wanted effect has found a new technique at simultaneous cohabitation obviously real benefits and advance that informational technologies introduced. On one hand there is the fact of utility, practical usage of these technologies and on the other hand, there is the assumption that these new technologies create passive humans who acquired a model of vulgar consumerism when started the involvement with these technologies. Regarding our culture and regarding what we cherish, much was told and written on the topic. Veblen Thorstein wrote about these issues, issues such as consumerism, leisure, free time and etc. People can expose their free time within the application of some media and thus point out their status, not only as mere information but also as a status symbol or meaning [Veblen 2008: 123]. We must admit that the usage of these technologies can mean a productive work, but that is not a topic in this article. When using the Internet, mobile phones and other technologies we reach

others instantaneously, we also satisfy some needs and this way, we build a specific identity. The alienation of the individuals and the social anomy resulted as an effect of many factors but informational technologies are quite conspicuous when we think about post modern society. Therefore, the internetized identity has altered and advanced humanity, it changed comprehension of people, function of identification, group affiliation in the digital virtual world and the real one, as well.

These technologies are so tempting because they manage to reach each and every domain so they are especially interesting in acquiring new knowledge, they are able to introduce dimension of entertainment and behavior at the same time that has been until recently quite scarce [Gone 1998: 125]. Learning by new media is more receptive, but real and substantial learning demands adequate media literacy and education for media. The institution of education and the confusion that emerges are partly consequence of the total influence informational technologies and e-media, in general, execute. They changed the perception, social perception, self perception due to the unclear difference between virtual identity as a product and real life identity as the essential one. This post modern implication creates a new man whose prerogatives are substantially different than the ideals and concepts only a generation ago.

Today, on line communication represents a normal and usual communication context and is exponentially growing. The progress of new communication inventions and the spread of the aforementioned, in the era of consumerism, depend only on the number of the users. Everybody has got to use them unless he/she wants to be partly excluded from the society. Social identity as a response on the circumstances should represent the freedom of the individual to chose but if he/she does not chose to participate, that kind of life will be bereaved from a crucial component of contemporariness. As an active and alive identity it has to be admitted since it is more than obvious that socially constructed reality necessary includes informational technologies as the key component nowadays. Namely, the society should take care of it in the sense that this identity can be managed properly and that we should not allow the inflation of too much virtual identity to overflow the conventional and only life. Here we point out the numerous narratives an individual tends to be described by, and the temptation to achieve many of them in virtual media. This ephemeral identity and the changes in social identity are inevitable and what is important is to maintain the difference and the awareness between the user and the technology as a tool.

## **Conclusion**

Identities as the products of the spirit of contemporariness and the dominant discourse are variable categories and are consequences of social, economical and cultural influences. The effects of the media in general and informational technologies conclusively influence social identity in the times of globalization, total

computerization and informatization where the internetization represents one of the key agents of the process of socialization. Computer represent unavoidable decor of everyday life and occupy with their utilities in a logical upgrade of the mass culture. New technologies and the way people use their free time determine the development and formation of the structure of identity. The free access to information, the speed it can be achieved, arbitrariness when it comes to the usage, all of these components create new specific identities. This phenomenon is present at new social stratification, understanding of the value of freedom and at all aspects that mean neo-liberal and democratic surrounding. Computers, mobile phones of new generation, internet devices and other devices with the internet as the totality of the informational domain have offered a pandemic of a brave new world. Accordingly, the pluralism of identities is something ordinary nowadays accompanied by the pluralism of notions, concepts and self image. Mundialization has a single total denominator in informational technologies and social identity, more than ever, has become a result of a complex process we consider the limits of human social being.

## Literature

- Anders G. (1996), *Svet kao fantom i kao matrica*, Novi Sad: Prometej.
- Elijas N. (2001), *Proces civilizacije*, Novi Sad: Izdavačka knjižarnica Zorana Stojanovića.
- Gone Ž. (1998), *Mediji i obrazovanje*, Beograd: Clio.
- Hilčenko S. (2010), *(Ne)humana informaciona tehnologija u učenju đaka*. Naučni skup sa međunarodnim učešćem, „Vaspitanje za humane odnose-Problemi i perspektive”, Zbornik rezimea, pg. 87, 17th i 18th Sept 2010, Filozofski fakultet, Niš.
- Kastels M. (2002), *Moć identiteta*, Zagreb: Golden marketing.
- Milisavljević R. (1965), *Šta su društvene pojave i društvene svesti*, Beograd: Naučna knjiga.
- Ože M. (2005), *Nemesta: Uvod u antropologiju nadmodernosti*, Beograd: XX vek.
- Smit A. (1998), *Nacionalni identitet*, Beograd: XX vek.
- Veblen T. (2008), *Teorija dokoličarske klase*, Novi Sad: Mediteran.
- Virilio P. (2000), *Informatička bomba*, Novi Sad: Svetovi.

## Abstract

The identity is one of the key issues of modern society and when we take into account the influence of media and information technologies on the livelihoods of individuals then it becomes clear how fast identities have been changing and how qualitative transformations they suffered. In the post modern times computers present an unavoidable decor of present but simultaneously they entice with their utilities all users of this scientific and technical paradigm. Social identity is not what it used to be and its relatively loose structure comprises a sequence of even non consistent characteristics of the structure of identity that



have not even been imaginable, until recently, in a such configuration they exist today. New technologies and the way people spend their time at work or their free time determine the development and establishing of the identity structure whilst new specific identities have appeared due to free access to information with the whole latitude of using new media. This phenomenon often reflects on what we refer to as generation gap and additionally on everything that democratic and neo-liberal environment supports in terms of certain behavioral patterns acceptance. Computers, mobile phones of new generation and the Internet, as the totality of informational domain, have offered the post-structural multiversity pandemic of a new world that changed in as much it conceived the pluralism of identities and brand new assemblies of values and attitudes. The onset of a new world was possible due to the concept of a new human that appeared, who has a general common denominator in information technologies.

**Key words:** social identity, information technologies, the Internet, society.