

SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION BETWEEN GLOBALIZATION AND LOCALIZATION

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Abstract

Social transformation is analysed on a macro sociological level against the backdrop of technologically induced social evolutionary and historical trends on a global scale. The major sociological trend in societal change that is identified within this context is a change from communal to associational social relationships leading to an information-based and information-driven type of society labeled as the knowledge society as a major social construction of the postindustrial condition. This trend of globalization, however, does not obscure the forces of local groups and identities that are resisting to a significant degree the power of universalism and generalization. Globalization is therefore seen as a contested term itself, yet a major force of transformation. The tension between global trends and local processes is interpreted within the concept of the network society, following Castells, as a social expression of the application of current electronic communication technology. This is first and foremost reflected in the global financial markets. Localization - the generation of identity - however remains the base for social movements and change and, consequently, the context for the mediation of meanings and symbols. Within this construction globalization would mean a continuous negotiation among different group identities and arriving at a common understanding, and tolerance, of what specific group identities might entail.

1. Introduction

Moving from one millenium into another people are tempted to iconise the figure of 2000 as a power of change in itself. Yet, it is merely a function of humankind's need to count and measure, even the course of time, only to become aware that time is a divider of things that were and of those to come. And because the world population is growing exponentially, even local people become aware of other cultures because of their proximity to each other, also through the modern media. The immediacy of communication media and the ever-expanding availability of information in one's own lifetime create a broadening of horizons and vision to such an extent that nothing stays the same anymore.

In this condition of continuous social transformation people try to make sense of what is happening to them. Religion and its universal truths as embedded in the holy books are supposed, from a social functionalist point of view, to provide at least spiritual security amidst the fluidity of the social environment. A special need is therefore created to be able to interpret the universals into specific applications for diverse situations. The challenge for biblical (and other holy scriptures') interpreters is to understand the forces of universal processes, leading to globalization, and specificity, or diversity, and the emphasis on or need for the local. These two opposing forces, globalization and localization create perpetual social transformation, thereby escalating in an ever-increasing spiral the need to understand the social situation.

The purpose of this paper is to add a sociological perspective to these terms – social transformation, globalization and localization – and hopefully to clarify at a conceptual level the meaning and significance thereof. Sociology has a long tradition of looking at social change and might complement insight in this respect to a higher level.

The approach is first of all, as indicated above, conceptual, and the focus is on societal rather than interpersonal relationships. Social transformation will thus be interpreted as societal change from a macro perspective.

2. Social transformation

According to a dictionary explanation, to transform is to change in form or appearance; in condition, nature or character. The social is concerned with human beings in their relations to each other, their living conditions, and living together in organized communities (Barnhart & Barnhart, 1982). Social transformation, accordingly, refers to change in human relationships, communities and the living conditions of people. It is the processes of change in the condition of life of people, and the qualitative change in the nature and character of human societies.

Social transformation is both a micro and macro phenomenon; it affects interpersonal relationships as well as societal and international relations. It has specific and general antecedents and effects. People respond differently to social transformation, yet major trends can be observed. Sociology tends to take a macro view of social transformation. Broad historical and evolutionary patterns and trends are therefore described. In order to facilitate such a broad description technology will be regarded as a major force in bringing about social transformation.

According to this point of view sociologists have identified *the Great Social Transformation* (GST) (Curry, Jiobu & Schwirian, 1997:42), a major qualitative change in the nature of social relations in societies, as from being predominantly *communal* to predominantly *associational*. Communal societies are characterised by the features such as the following (see Table 1): personalised relationships; an economy based on commodities in the nearby habitat; a low technological level; nonbureaucratic institutions; limited stratification; and a rich ceremonial life. Associational societies, in contrast, have the following features: a complex division of labour; formal social units such as associations, organisations, and corporations; an economy based on manufacturing and related activities, high technology; bureaucratic structures; complex stratification, and strong emphasis on rationality and less on spirituality. The processes that facilitate the GST include industrialization, urbanization, rationalization, bureaucratization, and globalization.

Table 1: Characteristics of communal and associational societies

Characteristics of communal societies	Characteristics of associational societies
Limited division of labour	Complex division of labour in all activities
Family, clan, tribe & village basic social units	Associations organizations & corporations basic units
Personalized relationships	Relationships formalized, transitory, less personal
Economy based on commodities in nearby habitat	Economy based on manufacturing & related activities
Overall level of technology is low	Technology is high
Political institutions nonbureaucratic	Political institutions complex & bureaucratic
Limited system of social stratification	Complex social stratification – large middle class
Rich ceremonial life	Rationality prized, diminished role of spirituality
Limited contact with other societies	Society part of global network of societies
Life is <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less complex • Less diverse • More traditional • More personal 	Life is <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More complex • More diverse • Less traditional • More impersonal

Source: Curry, Jiobu & Schwirian, 1997:44

These two types of societies are of course ideal types. Their linear contraposition is not a true reflection of how social change is realised in history. It would be more valid to say that both conditions can be existing simultaneously, as shall be seen later. Yet, such simplifications are useful to get a feeling of the nature and character of change. However, the analysis needs to move into deeper and more truthful levels from here.

3. Technology and social cultural evolution

In the historical timeline of the earth's evolution, human civilization occupies a tiny spectre of about 15 000 years out of 5 billion years. It was within this brief period of time that the most dramatic and revolutionary events took place affecting human life. Perhaps the most outstanding feature of human living evolved in these years, namely the social aspect of human relations. In order to survive the often harsh exigencies of the physical environment, humans first have to become social beings because in the synergy of group life they were able to overcome the various dangers and threats of their times. Thus from the earliest times of human civilization, human beings developed the ability to generate, share and remember collectively useful information for their survival. Such information was peculiar to certain ages and groups to the extent that it could be called a group's survival culture, generally known as technology. The changes in social life over the last ten to fifteen thousand years can be traced by looking at how it was shaped by technology.

Following Lenski, Nolan and Lenski (1995) it can be shown that a technological breakthrough often has revolutionary consequences for society as a whole. When a society gains new useful information for survival, that is, new technology, new forms of social life become possible and as a consequence also new forms of cultural life at large. According to the Lenskis, the greater the amount of technological information a society has in its grasp,

the faster the rate at which it changes. Technologically simple societies, then, change very slowly. By contrast, industrial, high-technology societies change so quickly that people witness dramatic transformations in the span of their lifetimes. Moreover, technologically complex societies have the ability to accommodate large populations characterized by diverse, highly specialized lives. Societies with rudimentary technology can support only a small number of people who enjoy few choices about how to live.

Five general types of human societies can be distinguished by their technology (Macionis, 1997: 97-103): hunting and gathering societies, horticultural and pastoral societies, agrarian societies, industrial societies, and postindustrial societies. Table 2 gives a selected number of characteristics of each type of society and describes their respective productive technology, social organization and major examples.

Table 2: Societal types based on their productive technology

Type of society	Productive technology	Social organization	Examples
Hunting and gathering societies	Primitive weapons	Family centred; specialization limited to age and sex; little social inequality	Pygmies of central Africa; Bushmen of southwestern Africa; Aborigines of Australia; Semai of Malaysia; Kaska Indians of Canada
Horticultural and pastoral societies	Hand tools for cultivating plants; domestication of animals	Family centred; religious system begins to develop; moderate specialization; increased social inequality	Middle Eastern societies about 5000 B.C; Various societies today in New Guinea and other Pacific islands; Yanomamo today in South America
Agrarian societies	Animal-drawn plow	Family loses significance as distinctive religious, political, and economic systems emerge; extensive specialization; increased social inequality	Egypt during construction of the Great Pyramids; Medieval Europe; Numerous nonindustrial societies of the world today
Industrial societies	Advanced sources of energy; mechanized production	Distinct religious, political, economic, educational, and family systems; highly specialized; marked social inequality persists, diminishing somewhat over time	Most societies today in Europe and North America, Australia, and Japan generate most of the world's production
Postindustrial societies	Computers that support an information-based economy	Similar to industrial societies with information processing and other service work gradually replacing industrial production	Industrial societies noted above are now entering postindustrial stage

Source: Adapted from Macionis, 1997: 102-3

Hunting and gathering require simple technology for hunting animals and gathering vegetation. In order to do so effectively small bands of people of between 24 to 40 constitute these societies. They are based on kinship and the family as a unit obtains and distributes food, protects its members, and teaches necessary skills to children. Life expectancy is very low and it is expected that the world will currently witness the end of hunting and gathering societies on earth as technologically advanced societies have slowly closed in on them.

Horticulture is technology based on using hand tools to cultivate plants while *pastoralism* refers to the technology of the domestication of animals. The application of these technologies generates material surplus that frees some people from the job of securing food, allowing them to create crafts, engage in trade, cut hair, apply tattoos, or serve as priests. They display more specialized and complex social arrangements than hunting and gathering societies.

In contrast to hunters and gatherers who recognize numerous spirits inhabiting the world, horticulturists and pastoralists practice ancestor worship and conceive of God as Creator. They view God as directly involved in the well being of the entire world and take pastoralist views of God ('The Lord is my shepherd ...', Psalm 23). These ideas about God are widespread among members of South African society because Christianity, Islam, and Judaism originated as Middle Eastern, pastoral religions.

Agricultural is the technology of large-scale farming using plows harnessed to animals or more powerful sources of energy. The invention of the plow, irrigation, the wheel, writing, numbers, and the expanding use of metals, most of which evolved about 5000 thousand years ago, qualifies agrarianism as the dawn of civilization (Lenski, Nolan and Lenski, 1995:177). More land could be cultivated, more effectively and agrarian societies were able to sustain larger populations and material surplus. Increased specialization and distinct occupations evolved, bartering became less effective as a trading medium and a money system was introduced, with as a result that trading centres in the form of large cities started to appear. Agrarian societies exhibit dramatic social inequalities and promote the development of elites who are freed from productive tasks to devote their time to the study of philosophy, art, and literature.

Religion reinforces the power of agricultural elites. Religious doctrine typically propounds the idea that people are morally obligated to perform whatever tasks correspond to their place in the social order. Elites gain unparalleled power and to maintain control they require the services of a wide range of administrators. Consequently, along with the growing economy, the political system becomes established as a distinct sphere of life and bureaucracy as a means of societal administration.

Industrialism is technology that powers sophisticated machinery with advanced sources of energy. Steam and internal combustion engines revolutionized production and resulted in social changes that dramatically changed the world more in one hundred years than they had in thousands of years before. Industrialism is the era of the factory, railroad, steamship, skyscraper, automobile, aircraft, nuclear power, electronic communication, and the microchip.

The latter gave rise to *postindustrialism*, that is technology that supports an information-based economy. While production in industrial societies focuses on factories and machinery generating material goods, postindustrial production focuses on computers and other electronic devices that create, process, store, and apply information. In stead of mechanical skills, people in postindustrial societies have to master information-based skills for work involving computers, facsimile machines, satellites, and other forms of communication technology. The emergence of postindustrial society dramatically changes a society's

occupational structure. Less of the labour force are utilized for industrial production, whilst the ranks of clerical workers, managers, and other people who process information swell rapidly. Because of surplus production, the institutionalization of leisure time, and the structural division between work place and home, which brought about the privatization of family and religion, postindustrial society may also be seen as a society in which the service industries, and consequently consumption, are dominant (Bell, 1973). Not only material consumables are mass produced and packaged for mass consumption; so also are ideas, belief systems, and other spiritual products. Because of the accessibility of knowledge, as interpreted information, postindustrial societies are also known as *knowledge societies* (Stehr, 1991).

The Information Revolution, as was the Industrial Revolution, is not confined to industrial, high-income societies. Its reach is so widespread that it is affecting the entire world. In the words of Marshall McLuhan the world has become a 'global community' in which societies are tied together and common patterns of global culture are fostered (Ulloth & Klinge, 1983).

4. Globalization

However, *globalization* seems to be a debated concept itself. David Held et al (1999:1) warns that globalization is in danger of becoming the cliché of our times without precise definition: 'the big idea which encompasses everything from global financial markets to the Internet but which delivers little substantive insight into the contemporary human condition.' Globalization can obscure the strong forces of local identity and cultural formation, it may be added. In the global village there are different neighbourhoods, each with its own identity and social pattern.

Following Held et al (1999:2-14) three positions can be identified in the globalization debate, namely the hyperglobalist thesis, the skeptical position, and the transformational thesis. These three conceptualizations of the current global tendencies are summarized in Table 3 (discussion based on Held et al, 1991).

For the *hyperglobalists*, contemporary globalization defines a new era in which peoples everywhere are increasingly subject to the disciplines of the global marketplace. The main trend is economic globalization that is bringing about a denationalization of economies through the establishment of transnational networks of production, trade and finance. This is also bringing about new forms of social organization that are (or will) supplanting traditional nation-states as the primary economic and political units of world society. A new global division of labour replaces the traditional core-periphery structure of international relations with a more complex structure of economic power. New forms of comparative advantage will arise for disadvantaged groups within societies in the long run but a polarization between winners and losers in the global economy is a real possibility.

Table 3: Conceptualizing globalization: three tendencies

	Hyperglobalists	Skeptics	Transformationalists
What's new?	A global age	Trading blocs, weaker geogovernance than in earlier periods	Historically unprecedented levels of global interconnectedness
Dominant features	Global capitalism, global governance, global civil society	World less interdependent than in 1890s	'Thick' (intensive and extensive) globalization
Power of national governments	Declining or eroding	Reinforced and enhanced	Reconstituted, restructured
Driving forces of globalization	Capitalism and technology	States and markets	Combined forces of modernity
Pattern of stratification	Erosion of old hierarchies	Increased marginalization of South	New architecture of world order
Dominant motif	McDonalds, Madonna, etc.	National interest	Transformation of political economy
Conceptualization of globalization	As a reordering of the framework of human action	As internationalization and regionalization	As the reordering of interregional relations and action at a distance
Historical trajectory	Global civilization	Regional blocs/clash of civilizations	Indeterminate: global integration and fragmentation
Summary argument	The end of nation-state	Internationalization depends on state acquiescence and support	Globalization transforming state power and world politics

Source: Held et al, 1999:10

New transnational class allegiances, between elites and knowledge workers of the new global economy, have evolved and the diffusion of a consumerist ideology imposes a new sense of identity, displacing traditional cultures and ways of life. A new global civilization, emerging as global civil society, is expected to be the result of globalization.

The *skeptics* of globalization argue that globalization is essentially a myth which conceals the reality of an international economy increasingly segmented into three major regional blocs (Europe, Asia-Pacific, and North America) in which national governments remain very powerful. Economic activity is undergoing a significant regionalization and the world economy is actually becoming less integrated than it once was. Governments are also not passive victims of internationalization but, on the contrary, it's primary architects. Some skeptics would argue, according to Held, that the world is experiencing a new phase of Western imperialism in which national governments, as the agents of monopoly capital, are deeply implicated. The convergence of opinion among skeptics is however that internationalization has not been accompanied by the erosion of North-South inequalities

but, on the contrary, by the growing marginalization of many Third World states as trade and investment flows within the rich North intensify to the exclusion of much of the rest of the globe.

Such inequality, as Held's analysis shows, contributes to the advancement of both fundamentalism and aggressive nationalism. Rather than the emergence of a global civilization the world is fragmenting into civilizational blocs and cultural and ethnic enclaves. Skeptics dismiss therefore the development of a global government, and would see it as Western projects with the main object to sustain the primacy of the West in world affairs.

Transformationalists, the third position identified by Held, conceive globalization patterns as historically unprecedented such that states and societies across the globe are experiencing a profound change as they try to adapt to a more interconnected but highly uncertain world. The conviction is that at the dawn of the new millennium, globalization is a central driving force behind the rapid social, political, and economic changes that are reshaping modern societies and world order. In fact, says Held, globalization is conceived as a powerful transformative force, which is responsible for a massive shakeout of societies, economies, institutions of governance and world order. The direction of this shakeout remains uncertain, he claims, since globalization is conceived as an essentially contingent historical process replete with contradictions. Globalization is an open-ended and dynamic process and no claims about the future trajectory of globalization can be made. Globalization should be seen as a long-term historical process which is inscribed with contradictions and which is significantly shaped by conjunctural factors.

Globalization is associated with new patterns of global stratification, Held observes. Some states, societies, and communities are becoming increasingly enmeshed in the global order while others are becoming increasingly marginalized. Relations among regions and societies are becoming less geographic and more social. Globalization forges new hierarchies which recast traditional patterns of inclusion and exclusion. For instance, Held shows, North and South, First World and Third World, are no longer out there but nestled together within all the world's major cities. Rather than the traditional pyramid analogy of the world social structure, with a tiny top echelon and spreading mass base, the global social structure can be envisaged as a three-tier arrangement of concentric circles, each cutting across national boundaries, representing respectively the elites, the contented, and the marginalized, categories suggested by Held.

With reference to power relations, Held indicates that transformationalists believe that contemporary globalization is reconstituting or re-engineering the power, functions and authority of national governments. This entails the unbundling of the relationship between sovereignty, territoriality and state power, because national economic space no longer coincides with national territorial borders. According to Held, a new sovereignty regime is displacing traditional conceptions of statehood as an absolute, indivisible, territorially exclusive and zero-sum form of public power. Moreover he claims, globalization is associated with not only a new sovereignty regime but also with the emergence of powerful new non-territorial forms of economic and political organization in the global domain. Multinational corporations, transnational social movements, and international regulatory agencies are examples listed by Held. In conclusion he says the world order can no longer be conceived as purely state-centric or even primarily state governed. Authority has become increasingly diffused among public and private agencies at the local, national, regional, and global levels. Nation-states are no longer the sole centres or the principal forms of governance or authority in the world.

5. The network society

The influential work of Manuel Castells (1996; 1997) can be subsumed under the transformational thesis. Castells sees the *network society* as the rising implication of global information age. The material base of the network society is an electronic communication network that provides the cyberspace for timeless flows. The qualitative difference of the network society to its predecessors is its networking logic: the power of flows takes precedence over the flows of power (Castells, 1996:469). This is to say that flows are more important than the social interests expressed through the networks. For Castells, we have entered a new kind of society that is characterized by the preeminence of social morphology over social action.

The network society is, as Castells puts it, 'for the time being' a capitalist society (1996:471). It is global and it is structured around a network of financial flows. Information networks enact financial markets and capital is invested globally in all sectors of activity. Financial capital needs to rely for its operation and competition on knowledge and information generated and enhanced by information technology. Technology and information are the decisive tools in generating profits and in appropriating market shares. Finance capital and high technology are increasingly interdependent.

But what are the social relations of the network society? Capitalists and labour can be still identified but in very different configurations than in industrial society. In network society there is an integrated, global capital network, whose movements and variable logic ultimately determine economies and influence societies. There is no capitalist class, because above the diversity of human-flesh capitalists and capitalist groups there is a faceless collective capitalist, made up of financial flows operated by electronic networks. The market laws of supply and demand do not govern this system, but is dependent upon the nonhuman capitalist logic of an electronically operated, random processing of information – a global casino.

Work is available in abundance: there are more jobs and a higher percentage of working-age people employed than at any time in history, says Castells (1996:474). But if capital is global, then labour is local. In the network society labour loses its collective identity and becomes increasingly individualized in its capacities, in its working conditions, and in its interests and projects. There may be a unity of the work process throughout the complex, global networks of interaction. But there is at the same time differentiation of work, segmentation of workers, and disaggregation of labour on a global scale. Labour is disaggregated in its performance, fragmented in its organization, diversified in its existence, divided in its collective action, in Castells' words. He concludes: 'capital and labor increasingly tend to exist in different spaces and times: the space of flows and the space of places, instant time of computerized networks versus clock time of everyday life' (1996:475).

But, as Castells observes (1996:475), beyond this fundamental dichotomy a great deal of social diversity still exists, as working life goes on. Yet, he maintains, at a deeper level of the new social reality, social relationships of production have been disconnected in their actual existence. He explains, capital tends to escape in its hyperspace of pure circulation, while labour dissolves its collective entity into an infinite variation of individual existences. Under the conditions of the network society, capital is globally coordinated, labour is individualized. The struggle between diverse capitalists and miscellaneous working classes is subsumed into the more fundamental opposition between the bare logic of capital flows and the cultural values of human experience (1996:475-6).

The cultural, social and political implications of this base structure in the network society are profound. A major hypothesis formulated by Castells relates to opposing forces

and trends in the network society: 'dominant functions are organized in networks pertaining to a space of flows that links them up around the world, while fragmenting subordinate functions, and people, in the multiple space of places, made of locales, are becoming increasingly segregated and disconnected from each other' (1996:476). He explains, infinite social distance is created between the meta-network and most individuals, activities and locales around the world. For the people, the network society appears to be a meta-social disorder: it switches off nonessential functions, subordinate groups, and devalued territories. It represents an automated, random sequence of events, derived from the uncontrollable logic of markets, technology, geopolitical order, or biological determination (see 1996:477).

The network society represents a qualitative change in the human experience. Castells observes that two fundamental poles of human existence (*viz.* nature and culture) were characterized for millennia by the domination of nature over culture. The codes of social organization almost directly expressed the struggle for survival under the uncontrollable harshness of nature. The modern age, associated with the industrial revolution and the triumph of reason, saw the domination of nature by culture. Now, he claims, we are entering the stage, in which culture refers to culture, having superseded nature to the point that nature is artificially revived as a cultural form. We have entered a purely cultural pattern of social interaction and social organization. This is why information is the key ingredient of our social organization and why flows of messages and images between networks constitute the basic thread of our social structure. We have reached the level of knowledge and social organization that will allow us to live in a predominantly social world. This is the information age that is marked by the autonomy of culture *vis-à-vis* the material bases of our existence (1996:477-8).

6. Localization

Yet, as Castells argues in his second volume (1997), the network society also observes the emergence of powerful resistance identities. The aim of resistance identities is to transform society as a whole, or to create locales where defensive communes may be built, in continuity of the values of communal resistance to dominant interests enacted by global flows of capital, power, and information. These identity formations represent amidst globalization, social diversity or what I would like to call the process of *localization*. This is a significant force as is indicated by Castells' phrase: the power of identity.

How does Castells explain resistance identities as cultural forms in the technological system of the information age? In conclusion to his 1997-volume he succinctly phrased the argument (354-362). The coming of the network society as a faceless system of flows, void of the meaning and function of the institutions of the industrial era, creates the draining away of legitimizing identities (1997:355). The institutions and organizations of civil society that were constructed around the democratic state, and around the social contract between capital and labour, have become empty shells, unable to relate meaningfully to people's lives and values in most societies. This brought about the dissolution of shared identities, which is tantamount to the dissolution of society as a meaningful social system. The assumption of 'the rational economic man' proved to be a dehumanization and naïve conception not observing the strive for power and self-interest in the new era. Traditional values as well as proactive rationality, structured into social movements, formed the bases of resistance identities (1997:356).

Resistance identities are as pervasive in the network society as are the individualistic projects resulting from the dissolution of former legitimizing identities that used to

constitute the civil society of the industrial era. The dualistic nature of the network society, thus, is reflected in, on the one hand, the dominant, global elites inhabiting the space of flows who tend to consist of identity-less individuals ('citizens of the world'); and, on the other hand, those people resisting economic, cultural and political disfranchisement and who are as a consequence inclined to be attracted to communal identity (1997:356).

From resistance identities may emerge project identities (1997:356-7). Project identities are potentially able to reconstruct a new civil society, and, eventually, a new state. In these instances, resistance identities aim at the transformation of society as a whole, in continuity with the values of communal resistance to dominant interests enacted by the global flows of capital, power, and information.

For instance, as Castells illustrates (1997:357), religious communes may develop into religious fundamentalist movements aimed at re-moralizing society, re-establishing godly, eternal values, and embracing the whole world, or at least the nearby neighbourhood, in a community of believers, thus founding a new society. Examples are also offered for nationalism, ethnicity, territorial identity, sexual identity and environmentalism (357-8).

Identity projects, such as the above-mentioned, emerge from communal resistance rather than from the reconstruction of institutions of civil society, because the crisis of these institutions, and the emergence of resistance identities, originate precisely from the new characteristics of the network society that undermine the former and induce the latter. The forces against which communal resistance is organized, and from which new identity projects are potentially emerging, include the sources that caused the crisis of the state and civil society. These forces are globalization, capitalist restructuring, organizational networking, the culture of real virtuality, and the primacy of technology for the sake of technology. Resistance and projects, and resulting identities are triggered by the dominant logic of the network society under conditions and through processes that are specific to each institutional and cultural context (1997:357-9).

However, as Castells indicates, the network society is still reigned by power, yet as a diffused feature in the global networks. A new power is discernible: 'It lies in the codes of information and in the images of representation around which societies organize their institutions, and people build their lives, and decide their behaviour. The sites of this power are people's minds' (1997:359). For Castells, power is therefore an endless battle around the cultural codes of society. Whoever, or whatever, wins the battle of people's minds will rule. Identities are therefore important and powerful. He explains, they build the interests, values, and projects, around experience, and refuse to dissolve by establishing specific connection between nature, history, geography, and culture. Identities anchor power in some areas of the social structure, and build from there their resistance or their offensives in the informational struggle about the cultural codes constructing behaviour and, thus, new institutions (1997:360).

A critical conclusion for social transformation is that the social movements that emerge from communal resistance to globalization are the agencies that will promote social change. They include ecologists, feminists, religious fundamentalists, nationalists, and localists. In order to change cultural codes they must be symbol mobilizers (1997:361). Castells distinguishes two kinds of symbol mobilizers. The first is the prophets. Their role is to give a face to symbolic insurgency, so that they speak on behalf of the insurgents. They declare the path, affirm the values, and act as symbol senders, becoming a symbol themselves, so that the message is inseparable from the messenger. Symbol mobilizers are needed in the transition to the information age, that is, a social structure organized around flows and symbol manipulation (1997:361-2).

The second and main agency, is 'a networking, decentered form of organization and intervention, characteristic of the new social movements, mirroring, and counteracting, the networking logic of domination in the informational society' (1997:362). These movements are the actual producers, and distributors, of cultural codes. The 'decentered', subtle character of networks of social change makes it difficult to perceive, and identify, new identity projects coming into being. We are at a loss, says Castells, when confronted with the subtle pervasiveness of incremental changes of symbols processed through multiform networks, away from the halls of power. But they are the embryos of a new society, he senses.

7. Conclusion

The linear evolutionary models of social change, and their simplified classifications of human societies, are no longer valid representations of the complex and diversified social formations and transformations of the post-modern world. Contrasting and opposing trends and forces all make for a world that is increasingly difficult to grasp and understand. As a result, groups develop their own culturally defined resistant identities in order to build new or adapted codes of symbolism and interpretation. Yet, more information is available than ever, communication networks are globally accessible, and democratic regimes are desirable if not available in social, political and economic organisations.

How does one survive, spiritually or mentally, in this world of immediate changes? Castells' cue is *mediation*. Human communication needs generally agreed upon symbols in order to take place meaningfully. Change in human society means, by definition, the meanings of symbols or the symbols themselves have changed. Therefore, to resist globalising tendencies and their impingement upon individual life, collective action that involves the mediation of meaning or symbols is required. This is not to say, simplistically, that every group can create and develop its own identity; it means that a resisting group has to negotiate its identity with other groups' identities and come to a common, more or less global, understanding of what the specific group's identity might entail. The forces are both towards globalisation of norms and building of specific cultural identities. That is the reason why symbol mobilizers (Castells) include both prophets and networks. Both types mediate the codes between levels and groups.

And herein lies the role of individuals and institutions. Individuals, as prophets, will accept their role on behalf of the group or institution. For instance, they might be those who speak on behalf of the biblical believers on what they interpret as truth for the specific situation, whether that is to resist (to change) or to sustain. In information society, the prophets can only be change agents towards identity (con-)formation. Networks, the second type of symbol mobilizers, by their very nature, will not allow propagandist information to control change directions. The new society that Castells sensed is an informed and decentered society, allowing identities to enrich, and not to suffocate, life.

- **Note**

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