In Search for Unity within the Diversity of Information Societies

Linnaeus University Celebrates a Pioneer:
Professor Gunilla Bradley
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The Question

The Invitation

– Bradley Festschrift theme: “ICT, Society and Human Beings”.
– this addresses a broad area of:
  • the effects of ICT on human beings
  • the interaction between the ICT, the Individual, the Organisations, and the Society.
  • changes in behaviour, perspectives, values, competencies

The Response

– 44 Chapters (excluding the editorial), 58 authors
– question: What do these diverse contributions say to us, taken as a whole?
– method:
  • eclectic approach, “cherry-picking”
  • guided by our preferences, backgrounds, and limitations and aspirations
  • comprehensive, where the whole is more important than its parts.
  • one interpretation of many possible of this very rich volume
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Electronic performance monitoring, Job design and Psychological stress
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Darek M. HAFTOR; Anita MIRIJAMDOTTER, Miranda KAJTAZI
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Examples of some concrete events

Information Societies
emergence of new phenomena

- A man in Sweden found his wife in the western USA, through the Internet!

- June 20, 2009, Teheran, Iran: Neda, young Iranian woman killed by a sniper when participating in a freedom manifestations.

- Within an hour, the last moments of her young life were posted on YouTube, attracting millions around the world, giving rise to a political pressure on to the Iranian dictatorship that few armies in the world could...

  see: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JG1hib8DYkE&skipcontrinter=1

- A successful brain surgery of a severely hurt patient was conducted by a medical team present at various sites in Scandinavia, connected by video links!

- Cyberwar. Modern societies are ever more reliant on computer systems linked to the internet, giving enemies more avenues of attack. If power stations, refineries, banks and air-traffic-control systems were brought down, people would lose their lives.

- The cyber-attacks on Estonia in 2007 and on Georgia in 2008 (the latter strangely happened to coincide with the advance of Russian troops across the Caucasus) are widely assumed to have been directed by the Kremlin, but they could be traced only to Russian cyber-criminals.

  see: http://www.economist.com/node/16481504
Information Societies
what is new?

Use of ICT gives rise to instrumentalisation

• of human reason
• of human communication:
  • creation of meaning
  • sharing of meaning
  • learning & development
which enables new social formations,
with their specific social fabric and ethos!
Emergence of New Human Networks

- Time: non-synchronic
- Space: independent
- Speed: instantaneous
- Content: endless expressions
- Actors: culturally & politically unhindered
Information Societies
converging transformations

In Search for Unity within the Diversity of Information Societies


Information Societies
what is going on?

Production, Self- & Co- Production:
Transformation, Evolution

Human & Societies

Nature

Artifacts: ICT
These societal transformations give a new face to some fundamental social questions:

- What is the Agent vs. Structure relation?
- What is the Nature vs. Culture relation?

• Central question of the Social:

**How is social order really possible?**

- Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679)

_i.e. how can social and fairly predictable order emerge out of actions of large numbers of discrete individuals, very few of whom know each other personally, and of whom only a very small number are at any one time or place in a position to coordinate their actions by means of explicit agreements?_
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Toward human and social wellbeing in a democratic context

Some guidelines for design and use of ICT

- Free & equal access to ICT networks & its information
- Active, unhindered co-creation of the ICT content: the information
- Secure the integrity and accuracy of information
- ICT’s ergonomic adaptations to human condition, incl. physical & mental deficiencies
- Understanding of the various cognitive and affective user profiles, incl. cultural metaphors
- Organizations and communities: cultural, economic, political structures
- Communication, Education and Training processes
- Enable control over the artifact and its function
- Contribute to the de-materialisation of human & social affairs
- Etcetera
Challenges of the human and social wellbeing in a democratic context

- **Conscious & deliberate production of unwanted**
  Creation of ICT-mediated social structures & processes aimed at domination, manipulation and oppression of fellow human beings may now be realized in an unparalleled manner…

- **Cyberwar.** Modern societies are ever more reliant on computer systems linked to the Internet, giving enemies more avenues of attack. If power stations, refineries, banks and air-traffic-control systems were brought down, people would **lose their lives.**

  - The **cyber-attacks** on Estonia in 2007 and on Georgia in 2008 (the latter strangely happened to coincide with the advance of Russian troops across the Caucasus) are widely assumed to have been **directed by** the Kremlin, but they could be traced only to Russian cyber-criminals.
    see: http://www.economist.com/node/16481504

- **Unconscious & non-deliberate emergence of unwanted!**
  Emergence of ICT-mediated social structures & processes that dominate and offend fellow human beings, may now be realized in a never before experienced way

  - **14 year old girl was raped** in a school’s toilet-room, in the village of Bjästa, northern part of Sweden.
  - Yet, the local society chooses to take the side of the convicted young boy and to offend and attack the victim and her family.
    (http://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/mordhotades-efter-valdtakten-1.1069326)
  - The **collective hate emerged through the Internet,** such as the Facebook group: “She was raped – the boy is congratulated”
    http://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/svart-kontrollera-hatet-pa-natet-1.1068939
Challenges of the human and social wellbeing in a democratic context

Open and fair discourse

- Even such inventions as the “ideal speech situation”, proposed by J. Habermas, where communicating individuals are warranted open communication & argumentation, cannot secure just and democratic Information Societies!

Pre-existing normativity

- ICT as such is not a value neutral artifact!
- The use of ICT is highly normative!

- The pre-existing reality, and its normativity, seems to dominate cyber-reality and its normativity, where ICT escalates the working, power and effects....
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An emerging
Self-Imposed Prison of Information Societies

The Human Sphere

Cultural systems → Humanism → Freedom

The Kantian dilemma

The Natural Sphere

Natural systems → Science → Control

The produced ambivalence requires a compass needle

“Let us use this opportunity for redesigning society towards peace, democracy and welfare for all... those who will develop, introduce and use technology that promotes peace, a deepening of democracy, welfare and quality of life for all will be the winners.“

(G. Bradley, *Humans on the Net*; 2001 p. 21)
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Some urgent questions looking for answers!

“Let us use this opportunity for redesigning society towards peace, democracy and welfare for all...”

(G. Bradley, Humans on the Net; 2001 p. 21)

How to secure fair and just Information Societies that provide us with human and social wellbeing?
About this Document

Content: This document presents the final Chapter of the book
"Information and Communication Technologies, Society and Human Beings"
The aim of that final book Chapter is to summarize the content of the whole book,
and to propose an emerging collective message.

Context: Professor Gunilla Bradley is celebrated by the Linnaeus University
with a dedicated Festschrift and a dedicated Celebration Party,
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Purpose: To be presented at the Bradley Celebration Party, August 4, 2010,
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