

Modern society is witnessing a rapid change which undoubtedly happens with the development of information technology. Our consideration based on the future inevitably leads to a question: where will the society be taken by information technology? Researchers show mixed attitude towards the question. For example, Alvin Toffler believes optimistically that human equality will be accelerated with power weakening resulting from the development of information and internet technology, while some pessimistic ones think that the emerging technology leaves the society sinking into deepening loneliness rather than blesses people with peacefulness.

We should answer such a question before choosing our stance: how is information technology changing our society? Indeed, it contains two aspects: 1. the relationship between information technology and internal elements of the society; and 2. the creation of value of social change, which can be deduced from the development status of the society before the emergence of information technology.

How is information technology interrelated to the social system? In general, studies on the social system are carried out from perspectives of economy, politics and culture. Then how does the technology interact with social economy, politics and culture? It is certain that the 3 factors represent people's social relationships in different areas. In other words, the basic domains of social life are comprised of communications with various patterns in different areas. It is by changing patterns of communication that information technology permeates the society in all-round way before changing the whole social system. Hence the process can be briefly summarized as a basic framework "Information Technology -- Patterns of Communication -- Society".

Exploring the future is accompanied by revisiting the history. Information within the historical space-time structures remains during social development and change, so the development only makes sense when figuring out by historical comparison the social progress having been made. In order to study how the society is progressing under influence from information technology, it is necessary to make clear what kind of influence it is, for which technical and social conditions before the birth of information technology have to be explored. When investigating such a historical relationship, what we focus on should be the joint evolution of the components of the basic framework "Information Technology -- Patterns of Communication -- Society" under the information-stream-driven dynamic mechanism instead of the isolated fields.

Therefore, the study can be conducted in following logical ways:

1. Cross-sectional argumentation (on the interaction among information technology, patterns of communication and the society): Technical conditions available for human's information activities differ with stages of social development. Hence features of the communication tools, which vary with the technological background, have resulted in and limited patterns as well as scope of human communication. Besides, the communication patterns have taken over the basic structures of such aspects in social life as economy, politics and culture, with corresponding values created.
2. Longitudinal argumentation (on the information-driven social civilization evolution):

Historical change results from the all-round evolution of the social system. The evolution from one civilization form to another has its own internal impetus, and information production, as well as information activities, is accompanied by all other production and living activities. In this sense, it is the information flow that causes the creation of dynamic mechanism driving evolution of the civilization system.

3. The interactional and evolutionary relationship between subsystem elements: The information system, as a type of subsystem, contains such elements as communication tools and corresponding communication patterns, which are undergoing self-adjusting, overlying and complicating during the course of history. The process differs from the evolutionary trend featured with repeated renewal of background technology based on which the system is established. It is also necessary to probe such complicated evolution witnessed by the information system.