DIGITAL SOCIETY

Patrick Sawyer (Centro de Estudos Sociais, University of Coimbra)

Definition

Digital Society refers to a state of societal or economic development characterized by a high level of digitalization, where interconnected flows of information permeate society and spread through networks at high speeds. This involves both a significant adoption of and dependency on digital technologies and infrastructure that mediate society, the economy, and political systems (Dufva & Dufva, 2019). Also referred to as a 'network society' (Castells, 1996; van Dijk, 2012), this advanced stage of economic and technological development is often viewed as the next step in the development of capitalist economies, with Jeremy Rifkin (2011) referring to it as a "third industrial revolution" and Manuel Castells (1996) calling it the "information technology revolution" in *The Rise of the Network Society*. Digital society also refers to the totality of new forms of social relations and social interactions that occur under this advanced state of development as a result of society's integration with digital technology.

Context

Contemporary advanced economies have become integrated with digital technology to such an extent that they permeate most of our social relations. The digital society is characterized by an advanced stage of digitalization which touches nearly every aspect of a society. Some of the major technological advances that have transformed social life and are now commonplace include the Internet, artificial intelligence, social networks, smartphones with mobile internet, GPS systems, Cloud computing, E-commerce and digital payments, media streaming and remote work technologies. This advanced stage of digitalization is understood to be a stage of development as well as a form of dependency on digital technologies which mediate social relations and entangle the structures of society (Berry, 2011). The three main sources of this digitalization that are leading to an increasingly digital society are said to be machine learning, platform thinking, and crowd-based action (McAfee & Brynjolfsson, 2017). As with previous stages of economic development, it is also characterized by new forms of social interaction. This can be seen in the wide array of social issues that have arisen over past decades such as (but not limited to) 'fake news,' 'slacktivism,' 'hacking,' 'echo chambers,' digital addictions, 'trolling,' 'online dating,' 'AI psychosis,' 'sexting,' 'bots,' 'crowdfunding,' and being 'chronically online' (Attwood, 2017; Chayko, 2020; Lorenz, 2023; Wajcman & Dodd, 2016). Due to the intensive emphasis on big data, data mining, and video technology, the digital society is also commonly associated with increasing

levels of oversight, surveillance, and privacy issues (Chayko, 2020; Zuboff, 2019), while the central role of multinational tech companies in the economy is associated with dynamics of creative destruction, increasing market concentration and oligopolistic relationships, and influence over information diffusion (Castells, 2023; McAfee & Brynjolfsson, 2017; Zuboff, 2019).

Related Concepts

Algorithm; Digital governance; Digital transformation; E-government; Participation

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