Chapter XIII

The Electronic Global Village

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to define the architecture of information-communication systems which play key roles in the development of the Electronic Global Village (EGV) as the metaphoric mechanism for the implementation of the Information Wave.

THE BIRTH OF THE ELECTRONIC GLOBAL VILLAGE

During the Communications Age (since the 1950s), the activities of business, organization, and everyday life begin with social action that is defined by communication-mediated choices. A generation ago, Marshall McLuhan proclaimed the advent of a “global village,” a sort of borderless world in which communication media would transcend the boundaries of nations (McLuhan, 1968). “Time” has ceased; “space” has vanished. We now live in a simultaneous happening. The globe is linked by media and visual, icon-like messages. The messages spread out and cause instantaneous, proactive responses. Ever since, history has been driven by a “compressed” capsule of time. One of the mini bangs (the birth of humankind) expands through the communication of ideas. Logistics becomes secondary to symbols. Human minds and cognition are placed in charge of that mini bang’s consequences.

The Global Economic Age (since the 1980s) is a product of liberal democracy and free-trade policy. Market participants are encouraged to compete globally. From these circumstances, we are experiencing a flexible movement of people and goods with less regard for national boundaries. A car made in America by Honda and Toyota is classified as a domestic product. It does not matter that “British” sneakers by Reebok were made in Korea, or that a French ski by Rossignol is made in Spain. What a consumer cares about is the product’s quality, price, design, value, and appeal.

Figure 13-1 illustrates the process of the birth of the Electronic Global Village (EGV) (Targowski, 1990). The result of EGV is an electronic global citizen (EGC), as well as tele-cities, tele-nations, and information infrastructure and services. They may lead toward the healthy human family utopia. This utopia can be perceived as a technique to manage the growing, educated, and aware populations of conflict-less nations.

In 1989 (the rise of Solidarity in Poland) and 1991 (the Soviet Union’s collapse), the world experienced a bifurcation into two paths:
The Electronic Global Village

• A global path of peaceful development of the EGV, in which 1 billion people have a computer password
• A tribal path of national, racist, and religious conflicts, in which about 5.6 billion people do not have a computer password

The international perspective of the information civilization may be stressed by a metaphor: “Jihad versus McWorld” (Barber, 1992). According to Barber, there are two possible futures: tribalism and globalism. The former is a retribalization of large swaths of humankind by war and bloodshed, a threatened Lebanonization of national states in which culture is pitted against culture, people against people, and tribe against tribe.

The latter is being borne in on us by the onrush of economic and ecological forces that demand integration and uniformity and that mesmerize the world of fast music, fast computers, and fast food—MTV; Macintosh, and MacDonald’s—pressing nations into one commercially homogeneous global network: one McWorld tied together by technology, ecology, communications, and commerce.

The globe is falling precipitously apart and coming reluctantly together at the very same moment. The forces of Jihad and McWorld operate with equal strength in opposite directions, one driven by parochial hatreds, the other by global markets.
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