

regulations that determine who may or may not see information held by organizations—governmental or otherwise. These laws fall within one or more of five categories:

1. Access to information—other than personal information—held by the state in all its forms (e.g., freedom of information, which has archival access legislation as a subcategory).
2. Access to information about the individual. The sectoral scope of such laws varies from one national jurisdiction to the next, but the trend is toward coverage of state, private, and voluntary sectors (e.g., data protection).
3. Power of state agencies to pass personal data from one to another for certain, specified purposes (e.g., data sharing; strictly speaking a subspecies of data protection, but worth distinguishing because of its growing social and political salience).
4. Protection for employees who make unauthorized disclosures of information whose release may be seen to be in the public interest (e.g., whistleblower).
5. Determination of when state officials may or may not disclose confidential information held by the state. They also identify the sanctions to be imposed on those who make unauthorized releases (e.g., official secrecy).

It will be immediately apparent that this typology is based both on the organizational scope of the laws and the character of the information to which they relate. They may be combined in many ways, and they have been adopted by states in quite different sequences. In many states, all five categories may now be found alongside one another, integrated with varying degrees of success.

A number of official secrecy regimes had been established by the middle of the twentieth century (e.g., the British Official Secrets Act 1911), but the development of the broader family of information access laws is mostly a phenomenon of the second half of the century. It has its origins variously in a reaction to totalitarianism, in a mistrust of the democratic state, in consumerism, and in libertarianism. There is a growing debate about whether the rights enshrined in these laws constitute fundamental human rights. International legal instruments do lend support

to the argument that information privacy rights have this status (for example, the European Convention on Human Rights). But there was some suggestion in the latter part of the twentieth century that the European Court of Human Rights was also willing to infer a right to information, albeit a partial one, from other rights in the European Convention.

The spread of this family of laws across the Western world and beyond has been encouraged by donors and development agencies (who see freedom of information as a bulwark against corruption) and by trading blocs (notably the European Union, which has sought agreements with its trading partners to secure the application of data protection principles to trans-border data flows).

The speed of development of information access laws increased sharply in the last two decades of the twentieth century. The advent of the information society meant that greater economic and social power was vested in the control of access to information. Technological change also brought with it a raft of new legal challenges, not least those governing the definition in statute of basic information concepts whose significance had been transformed in the electronic environment (e.g., “original” and “record”). It seems probable that technological change will drive the renewal of information access regimes within shorter and shorter cycles for the foreseeable future.

—Andrew McDonald

See also Data Protection; Electronic Records; Freedom of Information; Open Government

Further Readings and References

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INFORMATIONALISM

All societies are to a certain extent shaped by human activity that produces subjective and objective information—cognition, communication, cooperation,

and the informational products produced by these processes can be found in all societies. All labor is based both on mental and manual aspects, that is, on a dialectic of mental labor and manual labor. Nonetheless, the terms *informationalism*, *information society*, *postindustrial society*, and *knowledge-based society* are reserved to characterize a social formation that is shaped by knowledge, information technology, science, and expertise as immediate factors of social production in its entire realm. Social production is increasingly shaped by mental and informational labor and less by manual labor. Informationalism is a mode of development of modern society that is structured by and based on knowledge, science, expertise, and information technologies.

Technologically achieved increases in productivity allow the reduction of the share of manual aspects and the increase of the share of mental aspects of labor, that is, the composition of labor shifts from the dominance of high-energy manual labor to the dominance of cognitive, communication, and cooperative labor (informational labor). Informational labor and informational production dominate and restructure all realms of the economy and society. The emergence of the information society is a multidimensional shift that involves the rise of knowledge as a strategic resource in all societal areas. Information has become, besides labor, capital, property, and power, a defining characteristic and mechanism of modern society. This shift has ecological, economic, political, and cultural dimensions and is accompanied by both new opportunities and new risks in all subsystems of society. Networked computer usage has resulted in a real-time globalization of social relationships; knowledge flows today transcend national borders; and they result in the globalization, intensification, and time-space-distanciation of social relationships and establish a more intensive and extensive interconnection of humans. The twentieth century has seen an unprecedented increase in intensity, extensity, and velocity of global communication that is closely related to the rise of radio, television, satellite transmission, the micro-electronic revolution, and digital fiber-optic cable networks or digital data processing. We today live in an information society in the sense that information

and information technologies have become immediate forces of production that influence and change all subsystems of society. The increased informational character of society is the result of the rising importance of expertise, scientific knowledge, and information technologies.

The information economy can be characterized as an economy where labor is mainly cognitive, affective, communicative, and cooperative labor. Such labor produces symbols, social relationships, knowledge products, and expertise. Services, especially information-based services, have become the main sector of the economy. Networked electronic communication allows a reorganization of the corporation and mediates the emergence of transnational corporations, flexible production systems (lean production, outsourcing, just-in-time-production), and the decentralized, networked firm. Informational labor, communication, information products, research, expertise, and marketing have become central aspects of value production. There is an increasing importance of engineering, management, researchers, and technological jobs in firms. The information economy has a polarized social structure, both low-paid/low-qualified and high-paid/high-qualified informational labor have been rapidly increasing. Hence, one can also speak of the rise of a white-collar proletariat, a cybertariat, or cognitariat. The main antagonism of the information economy is the one between information as a public good (open source) and a commodity (intellectual property rights).

Characteristics of an informational polity include the emergence of e-government, electronically networked forms of surveillance, global virtual political communities, discussions about the potentials of e-democracy and the threats of e-populism, and new forms of protests and social movements that have been described as cyberprotest and cyberactivism. The main antagonism of informational polity is the one between the potentials of e-democracy and networked forms of political participation and digital, networked surveillance and control.

The Internet and the computer are the main technologies that shape informationalism. They both have their origin in military developments, but have been

generalized and commercialized. Capitalist restructuring has been the main driving force of informationalism—hence one can describe the dominant societal formation adequately as informational capitalism; without capitalism, the emergence of an informational mode of development would have taken place more slowly. Informationalism is a mode of development that allows capital accumulation in faster and more productive, flexible, efficient, and rational forms. Informationalism and capitalism are mutually connected, but can't be reduced to each other. Informationalism has enabled the post-Fordist restructuring of capitalism; the logic of capital accumulation has coined the rise informationalism.

—Christian Fuchs

See also E-Democracy; E-Government; Fordism and Post-Fordism; Network Society; Public Information

Further Readings and References

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INSTITUTION

In ordinary language, institutions signify core concepts of governance, such as the executive, parliament, and judiciary. In current political science, institutions take a broader meaning. They are formal rules (including constitutions), informal norms, and shared understandings that constrain and prescribe political actors' interactions with one another. Institutions are generated and enforced by both state and nonstate actors (such as professional and accreditation bodies). Within institutional frameworks, actors may have more or less freedom to pursue and develop their individual preferences and tastes.

Institutions have always been a major subject of social science research, particularly in political science

and sociology. Their importance has been reinforced, since the 1980s, with the emergence of new institutionalism and its intellectual streams—rational choice, historical, normative, and sociological institutional theories.

Why do actors adhere to institutions? From a rational choice institutional perspective, with its instrumentalist logic, people follow norms because they want to avoid sanctions and maximize rewards. For instance, members of parliament, in a parliamentary regime with closed-list elections, are more likely to adhere to norms of party discipline, in hopes of being remunerated with a future executive position, than are members of the U.S. Congress, who are less dependent on the president for their future political career.

Normative institutionalism, however, explains actors' adherence to norms in reference to their perception of some actions as appropriate or inappropriate for people in their role. For instance, a minister may resign as a result of a crisis related to her ministerial department, following an informal norm of proper behavior in such circumstances, regardless of whether she perceives this action as instrumental to her future reelection prospects.

Sociological institutionalists claim that the strength of some institutions results from their taken-for-granted nature: Actors adhere to norms because they cannot conceive an alternative form of action. For example, a prime minister may respond to a political crisis by nominating an independent public inquiry, headed by a supreme court judge, because this has become the standard response to instances of crises.

Institutions have been shown to have a major impact on political processes and outcomes. Rational choice institutionalists emphasize institutions' role in shaping the degree of stability and change in a polity through the determination of the number of players whose consent is necessary for a change in the status quo. Historical institutionalists highlight institutions' path-dependent effect, whereby the contingent choice of one institution over another—for example, private over public provision of pensions—results in actors' investment in adaptation to the selected institution and therefore in its durability and in stable divergence of countries' institutional forms. Conversely, normative