RACHID BOUMASHOUL

Re-articulating Information Society Discourse(s)

A Cultural Studies Approach to Postcolonial Locale(s)

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ACADEMIC DISSERTATION
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For Touda and Lamia Mouhmy

And though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so Truth be in the field, we do injuriously, by licensing and prohibiting, to misdoubt her strength. Let her and Falsehood grapple; who ever knew Truth put to the worse, in a free and open encounter?

— John Milton, *Areopagitica*, 1644

Many people seem to assume as a matter of course that there is, first, reality, and then, second, communication about it.

— Raymond Williams, *Communications*, 1962, p19

Since we all know that *we* were conquered and imperialized, and since *how* and *why* are not always so obvious, I have found it invaluable to focus upon the arsenal of techniques accumulated to serve western imperialism, and upon the structures and process whereby the West constrains events, determines our views and actions, and shapes our realities.

— Chinweizu, *The West and the Rest of Us*, 1987, xxii.

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Rachid Boumashoul

Monday August 17th, 2009 Tampere

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Prelude

Since Samuel Morse's 1906 telegraphic messages, the history of international communication has witnessed many moments of ebb and flow. These moments have to do with two major concerns: first, the unequal flow of information between the North and the South, which was debated in international fora dealing with information issues. The second concern is the question of 'regulation' and the reduction of 'risks' that new technologies brought about. Additionally, while states seek more regulation of communication technologies, the private sectors of national economies seek more and more deregulation of the market. The issues surrounding the history of international communication are not limited to the state and the private sector. The Southern countries have their own priorities and see themselves as disenfranchised from the advantage of having a say on the development of communication. These countries called for the establishment of a 'new world information and communication order' (NWICO), where the flow of information should be multi-directional rather than uni-directional, i.e. from the North to the South. For a rough chronology of the events that have marked the history of information politics and policy-making, one can begin by 1906 when the German State Secretary of Post Office, Kraettke, called for an international meeting to regulate the radio telegraph messages that started to flow over the borders. His remarks led to the foundation of the 'International Radio Telegraphic Union'.

By the end of the 1930s, the order of what I call informational discourse started to take a new turn. The issues of regulation and control of the potential dangers of information surfaced, especially that the aftermaths of the First World War were still visible. With the Bandung Conference of 1955, a new dimension was added to the issues of international communication. This has to do with the then mounting calls to decolonize information among the newly liberated countries, so that they can participate in the future of communication.

The mutual distrust between the 'East' and the 'West' took different flaming tones. The newly independent countries were still categorized as countries with either socialist or capitalist leanings. The Western countries were suspicious that the newly independent countries' participation in the future of information management was but an alibi to maintain tight censorship and limit the application of democratic rule in their newly independent territories. In addition, the Soviet suppression of freedom of information was a security concern to the Truman administration. This led to the worsening of the Cold War, with its already shaky relationships. Subsequent attempts to reach international agreement on the flow of information suffered a setback with the UNESCO's declaration of 1978. In the declaration, the former colonized countries contested the *ideological* nature of information that Western countries disseminated.

With MacBride's Commission, which was composed of members from both industrialized and developing countries, came the "*deus ex machina*". The Southern countries welcomed the report, but their complacency did not last. The 1980s may be described as a moment of lost opportunities to reach definite and durable resolutions in information balance, given the huge number of bodies that were participating in the negotiations. Their task dealt with what Kleinwächter (1991: 87) calls 'various aspects of communication problems'. It is during this time that the 'cultural' aspects of information were highlighted. The contribution of the newly independent countries added a new dimension to the understanding of the cultural nature of informational flow. Their agenda were at variance with the agenda of the Western countries. Accordingly, the understanding of *the nature* of information was 'fragmented' because of the multiplicity of informational interpretation. This multiplicity was not limited to the nation states involved,but also concerned the organizations that were entrusted with finding solutions to the issues of international communication. Kleinwächter (1991: 8) argues that: "this contradictory movement gets most obvious when, on the one hand, comparing the UN and UNESCO activities with ITU and GATT activities on the other hand both at the beginning and at the end of 1980s." (ibid.)

Since the 1980s, matters got worse. The general assembly that gave a promise to create NIICO (The New International Information and Communication Order, Belgrade meeting 1980), by the end of 1980s, just abandoned the idea of elaborating the NIICO declaration. The beginning of the 1990s saw a shift in information debates, since the focus on politics became the main concern of all ITU and UNESCO. The unseating of Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow (who represented the hopes of the South) in 1987 quickened the failure of NWICO (New World Information and Communication Order). Since then, the international communication scene took what one may call a *cultural turn with a technological face*. As Kleinwächter (1991: 8) argues:

> The fact that US trade representative, Carol Hill, criticized the EEC guideline of October 3, 1989, which shall foster the European film and television production for the strengthening of the European cultural identity, as a fundamental violation of the principle of the free world trade, is the first signal for a changing conflict structure.

Because of its importance in defining power relations, between the Northern and the Southern countries, the nature of information itself has become a contested site. In addition, the globalizing of markets and the increasing power of conglomerates coupled with new issues, such as the utility of information in a global context, had more implications. The global aspect of information brought new challenges such as terrorism, spam, viruses, copyright, hacking, phishing etc. Some of these issues are already addressed at the level of international conferences, while others may surface in the near future. The question of information at the beginning of the third millennium resulted in more debates on 'Internet galaxy', which focuses on the continuous enmeshing of Internet networks around the globe. The Southern countries' call for an international summit on information society (Geneva 2003

phase and Tunis 2005 phase) is another call for equitable international information 'order'. Here, I use the word 'order' loosely because each 'order' denotes institutional repression as Foucault (1977) argues in *The Order of Things*. The inclusion of civil society in the debates of the WSIS (World Summit on Information Society) has added a new dimension to the international debates over communication, especially in its relationship with the state and the private sector. The symbolic power that the nature of information took in the global negotiations made it necessary to study the cultural aspects of the informational discourse. In other words, the study of information as a 'regime of truth' is constructed through the act of contextualization within different locales.

In this work, I deal with the method of articulation to explore its explanatory value in accounting for the capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of production. Furthermore, my concern is also with the power relations that link international stakeholders with the concept of information. For example, in Chapter VI, I attempt to analyze the discourse of WSIS (World Summit on Information Society) that is articulated in the documents of Geneva (2003) and Tunis phases (2005). I will also be referring to the Arab and African contexts as categories for analysis. I do not suggest that Arab or African locales are one homogenous entity because articulation can work even at the intra state level. Therefore, the application of articulation as a theory and a method is instrumental to examining the cultural, economic and political joints of the informational discourse contained in the WSIS declaration of principles. The objective is to draw attention to the complexity of the issues of communication, at the heart of which lies the processes of information and power exchange.

As I sketched above, the history of information discourse at the global level faces interpretative problems. In other words, the mission of the free flow of information, which capitalist countries endorse, is seen as a continuation of the economic inequality in the less developed countries. Articulation, as a method of pinning down social phenomena and relating them to specific contexts, traces those moments when information becomes disinformation for others. Garnham (1990:30) explained that information in 'monopoly capitalism' has been commodified. Therefore, I will be using some political and economic analyses as tools for highlighting informational discourse *critically.* The documents of WSIS (World Summit on Information Society) take the notion of information generically. They pay little regard to the differential nature of the processes that 'established' the concept of information. Therefore, I will also address the different stakeholders that attended both Geneva (2003) and Tunis (2005) phases.

I believe that the awareness of the complexity of the notion of information advances our understanding of what global players *mean* when they talk about *regulation*. The notion of regulation has been the leitmotif from Milton's (1644) *Areopagitica* to McLuhan's (1964) mantra 'the medium is the message'. Now, is it still valid to argue that the medium of Internet chooses its environmental consequences? Has the notion of political regulation of information remained the same after the techno-cultural turn? In the ensuing re-articulating practice, I aim at linking the seven

chapters (which I regard as different angles) to re-articulate the links of what seemingly stands as a 'homogenous' informational discourse. Put differently, this work is a re-articulation of information society discourse from the perspective of different locales. It follows Marx's dissection of the notion of 'metabolism', that he (1973: 670) explained in the *Grundrisse:*

> [I]n the human body, as with capital, the different elements are not exchanged at the same rate of reproduction, blood renews itself more rapidly than muscle, muscle than bone, which in this respect may be regarded as the fixed capital of the human body.

Research question and structure of the study

It is high time the practitioners of cultural studies began to rethink the theories and methods of media analysis in alternative locales, for instance in postcolonial contexts (the Arab world included). This study is a contribution to the debate on innovative methods raised, for example, in the first symposium of the Arab media center at Westminster University. Sakr (2007) comprised empirical data collected, especially in chapter five and chapter seven, which serve as a cogent evidence for the urgent need to re-articulate the methods of media analysis within alternative locales. In this study, the alternative locales designate the postcolonial contexts, the Arab-world, and, one may even add, Latin America. Tariq Sabry (2007:155) has rightly expressed the need to contextualize the role of media analysis in the Arab world:

> A meaningful articulation of the media's role in the construction of a democratic Arab public sphere cannot take shape outside a 'thick' understanding of contemporary Arab culture and society. Such an articulation requires us to build epistemological bridges to problematics inherent to contemporary Arab thought. Habermas' 'public sphere' did not come from nowhere, and its articulation as a normative concept was no accident but a long and continuous philosophical argument that can be easily traced to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, or even Plato.

Tariq Sabry's warning that Arab cultural studies needs to find a 'tense' that captures symbiotically the past and the present provides convincing evidence that alternative cultural studies need to develop new approaches and methods that can answer for both the local and the global. This concern is also expressed in the Nordic context that finds itself in a status of in-betweenness. Lehtonen and Fornäs (2005:2) have expressed their concerns as follows:

> Being in-between has advantages as well as disadvantages in the relational interplay that forms world politics as well as cultural studies. As intellectuals in the research field of cultural studies, it is easy to identify the latter (….) Nordic cultural studies scholars cannot use our mother tongues in internationally oriented seminars, conferences and publications.

The interplay of the local and the global has made it necessary to rethink the methods that may account for both the particulars of the local and the necessities of the global. The seven chapters of this study attempt to contribute to developing the

method of articulation, which is an offspring of cultural studies' search for renewing analytical tools and methods, with the ultimate aim to fill the void within alternative cultural studies. The need for explanatory methods is also expressed by ESRC (The Economic and Social Research Council) which funded research projects dealing with innovative methods, especially those related to the cultural practice and reception in alternative locales. In the case of the Arab world, the method of articulation helps to avoid the conflation of the 'past' and 'present', or what Sabry (2007) calls the Arab 'cultural tense'.

Articulation, as a method of non-guaranteed linkages, allows exploring the dynamics within the local and the global level. Contrary to the analytical methods that sprang from the imperialist cultural models and dependency theory, articulation accounts for the responsibility of both the local contexts and the global factors in the shaping of certain cultural configurations. In other words, the local, in dependency theories, is always presented as a passive recipient of global agendas. Such approach, exemplified in Samir Amin (1990)'s concept of 'delinking', does not sufficiently question the local's dynamics that are also responsible for the maintenance of global cultural hegemony. Sakr (2005) has rightly pinpointed the need to find a method that accounts for both cultural globalization and cultural imperialism when she (2005:35) writes "as a set of tools for explaining the Gulf media landscape, the theory of cultural imperialism would seem to belong to the past." Sakr's analysis of the dynamics that link the Gulf media with global show that alternative analytical tools are needed to account for both the global and the local. Sakr (2005:37) argues that:

> This question in turn poses the dilemma of whether to analyze the available data in the light of cultural globalization or of cultural imperialism. Shortcomings of the latter approach are well known. For instance, to focus on external media influences is to disregard the renowned "insubordination" of audiences (Golding and Harris 1997:5).

However, this is not to suggest that cultural imperialism analytical tools are of no value. This study intends to develop articulation because it has the ability to describe the dual space where cultural imperialism and cultural globalization models overlap. Articulation is not blind to the question of ownership, and it is aware of the local specificities. By virtue of its ability to build linkages that are necessary and transient, articulation allows the description of both the local claim for a home made 'cultural tense' and brings in the global at the same time. Therefore, my purpose in this study is to explore the analytical possibilities that the method of articulation may offer for media and cultural practitioners in the alternative locales, especially those that are under the grip of authoritarian regimes. My study of the informational discourse is an instance where the local and the global meet, as it is well expressed in different fora of World Summit on Information Society. The articulation of informational discourse is also a means to articulate the different economic and cultural linkages that necessarily bind the local with the global.

The discourse of information society falls within media and communication studies paradigm. Annabelle Sreberny (2008:9) argues that:

> Media studies, like all the social sciences, are embedded in the historical experiences of Western industrial capitalism, liberal democracy and bounded nation-states. Even the sub-field of International Communications, perhaps the dominant approach of the late twentieth century, essentially looked out with a scoping gaze from the West toward the rest of the world and proffered a set of assumptions about media dynamics in political, economic and cultural contexts that were for the most part totally 'foreign' to the authors.

The complexity of the global flows has made accounting for the linkages between the capitalist centers and the informal modes of production more challenging. My focal argument in this study is that theories (like postcolonial and dependency theories) that have long been used to account for the unequal development thesis fall short of accounting for the intricate complexities that surfaced. This is because of the contingency of global flows, or what Arjun Appadurai calls 'deterritorialization'[1]. This work positions itself as a contribution to the propositions about the concept of 'articulation' put forward by various scholars such as, to name a few, Bruce Berman (1984), Stuart Hall (1989), Lawrence Grossberg (1991, 1992), Mikko Lehtonen (2000) and Jennifer D. Slack (1996, 2005). The utility of articulation lies in its awareness of the above and below global dynamics. It accounts for the logic of capitalism without undermining its tendency to what Berman (1984: 129) calls 'the tendency of capital to take labor as it finds it'. The interesting aspect of this concept is that it recognizes the contingency of the linkages between different modes of production (mainly capitalist and pre-modern forms) and does not guarantee the durability of the connections. Unlike dependency theory best illustrated in Samir Amin's concept of delinking, Berman (1984: 129) argues:

> Articulation was initially developed from the structuralist concept of a 'social formation' – consisting of the hierarchic linkage of several modes of production under the dominance of the capitalist mode – as a vehicle for explaining underdevelopment and the apparent persistence of pre-capitalist forms and relations of production at the periphery of the global system... How does capitalism become dominant in regions such as Africa without replicating itself in each instance?

This work has three main objectives: first, advancing the use of the concept of 'articulation' in the description of different modes of production. I take here the informational mode of production that produced information society discourse as an offshoot of the capitalist mode of production. Second, I target the application of this concept in the non-Western locales, especially the postcolonial Arab world. I will be referring to the Arab-Islamic world; not in the sense that all Arab countries share the same internal structural dynamics. On the contrary, the concept and method of articulation is aware of the internal variables within the region generally referred to

[1] Naomi Sakr (2001: 27) suggests an interesting application of Arjun Appadurai's concept of 'deterritorialization' to the study of satellite channel ownership.

as ‘Arab-Islamic’. I use this geographical demarcation loosely in the same logic that Annabelle Sreberny (2008) used it, to describe the ‘Middle East’ for a “merely linguistic convenience to demarcate a starting point of analysis”. This is because the concise definition of what one means by the Arab-Islamic world shares the same strategic problems with the practice of naming other geographical groupings. One can just refer to numerous literatures that try to define the area we call ‘Europe’. Bartlett‘s (1994) *The Making of Europe: Conquest, Colonization and Cultural Change* is illustrative of this question of labeling. Also, Roderic H. (1960) "Where is the Middle East?" poses the same question with respect to the Middle East. In fact, one of the reasons that convinced me to adopt the method and concept of ‘articulation’ is its utility in explaining more adequately the internal as well as the external forces that have made the rift between the pre-modern and the capitalist modes of production. Third, this work aims at endorsing a self-critique (chapter 5, 6) within the boundaries of the Arab nation/states that could explore the possibility of building up the necessary foundation for an alternative conception of information society and its ultimate objectives that are declared in the World Summit on Information Society. Objectives that have so far been over-ambitious with regard to the realities of the developing countries in general, and the Arab region in particular. Adopting articulation will, I hope, contribute to a cooperative assessment of the political and economic nature of the linkage between different modes of production, mainly the linkages between the informational and pre-capitalist modes of production.

It is not, however, my purpose to relate a detailed genealogy for the cultural formation of the intellectual Arab-Islamic history. Many works have covered this concern succinctly. One may refer, for example, to the three volumes of Marshall G. S Hodgson (1974) *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization,* or Albert Habib Hourani (1983) *Arabic thought in the liberal age, 1798-1939*, or Jonathan P. Berkey’s (2003) *Formation of Islam : Religion and Society in the Near East, 600-1800.* My interest is *methodological* and my reference to the specificity of the Arab and African contexts springs from their symbolic position as recipients of technology for at least 50 years or so, i.e. since the era of formal colonialism ended. Discourses that have been ‘writing back’ to the center were more often a ‘reaction’ to the colonial shock, and very few studies have tried to conduct structural analyses of the internal dynamics that have led to current imbalanced informational flow. Therefore, I find it urgent to adopt a method that would account for not only the North/South informational imbalances, but also one that could rethink the local processes that have kept their methodological complacency and found subterfuge in blaming the ‘West’ for their internal failings through theories like ‘dependency models’. Berman (1984: 133) convinced me that:

> First, articulation should be seen as a process of struggle and uncertainty, the particular historical field in which European capital and the colonial state attempted to control labour power and production of African societies…We confront instead a process of uneven capitalist development in which logical necessity confronted the historical reality of conflict and the limitations of instrumental capability. The

> diverse patterns of transformation and preservation equally represent unforeseen and unintended outcomes, reflecting both African resistance to capitalist penetration and the inability of European capital and political forces to overcome such resistance in specific contexts.

It is the specificity and resistance of these African and Arab contexts that the later chapters of this work deal with. In chapter 4, I am referring to the duty of Arab cultural studies to redefine the cultural 'keywords' used to describe the informational discourse that has made the media not only definers of reality but also constructors of public opinion. Based on evidence from the publications of the center of Moroccan cultural studies, there is still that reiteration of 'I' / 'Other' type of analysis, which is another postcolonial pitfall of demarcating and homogenizing the 'Orient' from the 'Occident'. This stems mainly from the methods used to explain the postcolonial condition. The praxis of cultural studies in the Arab world should bypass this bifurcation of cultural discourse, and the introduction of the concept of 'articulation' may shift the focus of cultural studies for a radical contextualization of the main cultural primer movers that led to colonialism. The method of articulation can also provide a basis for a rectification of cultural failings that marked the ruling ideas in the relatively young Arab states[2]. Therefore, my choice of cultural studies as an approach stems from its interdisciplinary nature and from the possibilities it provides for developing the uses of 'concepts', not simply because we merely want to use them, but as Deleuze (1988) defined 'the concept' as a one that we use out of 'necessity' (par nécessité)

Subsequently, rethinking the concept of 'delinking' (chapter three and four), the technology transfer thesis (chapter four), the Arab cultural paradigm (chapter five), the documents of the World Summit on Information Society (chapter six), and the postcolonial condition (chapter seven) are necessary steps to attain articulation's optimal goal to contextualize discourse. Articulation checks the limits of what has come to be known as the informational mode of production. It is not my intention, however, to delve into the above intricacies of the postcolonial theory, or even the detailed trajectory of the Arab intellectual history, for such a task deserves a work on its own. My concern here is to refer to the processes that have slowed down a comprehensive approach to the global challenges that have persisted since the 1980s and which have to do with the structural differences between information rich contexts (the North) and information poor ones (South / East). The arrival of the Internet has even made it urgent to pose questions not only of political or economic nature, but also of *cultural* one. Articulation, as a theory and method that originally emanated from the Marxist critique of dependency theory, has been undergoing different readings from different vintage points. The primary sources that I have consulted are mostly the works of cultural theorists coming from different cultural background. I am especially referring to the development of the concept of articulation within the cultural studies frame. I will also be referring in

[2] I particularly refer to the nature of work produced at the Moroccan Center of Cultural Studies. <http://moroccancsc.blogspot.com/>

later chapters (especially chapter five and six) to some of the Arab thinkers who practiced articulation somewhat unintentionally, though not systematically (Malek Bennabi, Mohamed Arkoun, Abdullah Laroui, Hassan Hanafi and others), but who never used the concept as such. Therefore, I hope that this work will contribute to introducing this systematic tool that could account for the failings of the somewhat outmoded analytical tools like the 'dependency theory models', and which will rejuvenate the practice of cultural studies in the Arab region and, hopefully, elsewhere.

The first chapter deals with the question of methodology of doing research in the age of information society. In this chapter, I raise the issue of 'beginnings' in the study of information society discourse. I refer to the importance of starting points in the study of essentially global issues. Information society, being a global phenomenon, needs a careful study about *where* and *when* it did start. The project of cultural studies especially has a practical value, since it endorses the contextualization of the act of talking about a phenomenon. The field of cultural studies calls for a revision of the grand narratives that produced complacent generic statements without heeding the necessary contextual factors that intercept our theoretical postulations. Thus, I allude to Edward Said's work *Beginnings* (1975) to stress the necessity of contextualizing the discourse of information society, and to test its limits. It is an attempt to call for a critical study of 'mass' communication, and more specifically, the new media, especially the Internet that has proved to be the main channel to reach out for the global audience in real time, irrespective of the specificities of different cultures.

In the second chapter, I will be dealing with the main drive that fuels the proliferation of the idea of 'information' and its impact on the social, economic and political spheres where it operates. Thus, I will be concerned with the method of articulation and the theoretical and practical implications of its use in the study of ICT research that lies at the heart of information society. In this chapter, I endeavor to build on the notion of articulation by applying it to the discourse of information society. This chapter addresses the methodological scope that runs throughout this work, i.e. the concept of articulation.

The third chapter will mainly be devoted to questioning the *nomos* or the 'law' that governs the social formation of the capitalist discourse. I will especially attempt to dissect the implied discourse of technology, using some of Sartre's notions, especially his thesis on the 'good / bad faith' dichotomy. I will be using Sartre's notions of 'good / bad faith' and the concept of 'shame' only with respect to their relevance to the re-articulation of the economic and social forces that have formulated and produced the informational discourse in the West. In addition, the notions of 'self/other' will be instrumental in surveying the counter-possibilities that check the ongoing generalization of the practice of mapping out the post-industrial age and its values on the *rest*. The study of capitalism in this chapter will also address its intrinsic relationship with the market and politics. I will address the political economy of information and some of the counter theses that were

advanced by 'third wordlist' economists, especially Samir Amin's theory of 'delinking'. This chapter will wind up with the study of the infrastructure of information society in the Arab world and the examination of some of the obstacles that still beset the full unleashing of a sound alternative informational mode of production. This chapter also tries to add on to the concerns of Webster and Robins (1999) about the understanding of a more complex phenomenon that many studies tend to reduce to categorical readings (textual, ideological, economic etc.). It is a move beyond the simplification of an essentially complex object of study.

The fourth chapter is a contextual work. Building on the previous chapters, I try to test the meaning of information society in a non-European context. It is an attempt to focus on the mechanisms of information society in contexts that have their own historical, social and political configurations. This chapter highlights the significance of cultural studies in the study of local phenomena. The chapter will also address the nature of the state in the Arab-Islamic world. It will try to bring about the alternative view vis-à-vis modernity. Thus, I will analyze the nature of the informational articulation in the Arab World and end up with a note on the question of technological transfer.

The fifth chapter addresses some fundamental issues that I deem central in information society and which need a close reassessment. This chapter deals with the intellectual history that has formed the Arab-Islamic 'informational experience' that is intrinsically linked with the political, economic and cultural formation within the Arab world. This chapter also presents a view on the specific traits that characterize the nature of information and communication in the Arab-Islamic world. This specificity should be taken into consideration when making plans of action to connect differential spaces into one network.

The sixth chapter is a deconstructive reading of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) and discusses the implications that such reading brings about in the Arab context. It is an analysis of the discourse adopted in the official documents of the WSIS agenda. The chapter also includes a study of the stakeholders (state, private sector, civil society) of WSIS phases (Geneva (2003) and Tunis (2005)). I will be mainly concerned with the question of civil society in the Arab World. It is a comparative study of the nature of information society in both Arab and Western countries. The origins of the concept, its applications and implications in the Arab world will be the substance of this chapter.

The seventh chapter is a study of the postcolonial condition through the discourse and theory of postcoloniality. I will be presenting the works of Edward Said and Homi K. Bhabha and through their conceptual formulations, I will try to find parallels with the nature of information society discourse and provide some further methodological ways whereby to approach the uses of technology in the postcolonial context – an aspect which was absent in the work of Said (1978). The postcolonial theory is of ample importance in the sense that it offers the necessary tools to demystify the normative discourse, be it informational, technological or

political. This chapter also deals with the question of translatability or non-translatability of technology from the advanced industrial centers to the tributary and agrarian modes of production.

Chapter One

Introduction

> The problem of beginnings is one of those problems that, if allowed to, will confront one with equal intensity on a practical and on a theoretical level. Every writer knows that the choice of a beginning for what he will write is crucial not only because it determines much of what follows but also because as work's beginning is, practically speaking, the main entrance to what it offers. Moreover, in retrospect we can regard a beginning as the point at which, in a given work, the writer departs from all other works already existing, relationships of either continuity or antagonism or some mixture of both... Is a beginning the same as an origin? Is the beginning of a given work its real beginning, or is there some other, secret point that more authentically starts the real work off? (Edward Said 1975:3)

In the beginning of his academic life, Edward Said wrote *Beginnings* (1975) to reflect upon the act of beginning as a new turn in the process of reviewing and creating new ideas. Said's reflections on beginnings led to his main breakthroughs in literary criticism and the field that came to be known as postcolonial studies. The beginning of any project is always important, as one has to short list some choices and leave out others. This research project is no exception to the rule. At the beginning of this work, I have to alert the reader that my choice of references has been in tandem with my consistent belief that any approach to the formative discourse of information society has to be *methodologically critical.* Given the aura surrounding the discourse of information society that started with the publication of Manuel Castells' trilogy *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture* (1996, 1997, 1998), one is tempted to survey the main works that have had influential effects on the histography of information society discourse. This work will especially focus on the implications of living within a technologically laden culture. I understand technology as one of the main constructs that have led to the production of a new culture whose heart throbs in bits and bites. Raymond Williams (1977) reminds us that when dealing with a social phenomenon, one has to break it up to its basic social practices. In other words, it is always more useful to deal with basic constituents of a social phenomenon, rather than with the fully formed concepts. In this regard, Williams (1977:11) argues:

> When the most basic concepts…are suddenly seen to be not concepts but problems, not analytical problems either but historical movements that are still unresolved, there is no sense in listening to their sonorous summons or their resounding clashes. We have only, if we can, to recover the substance from which their forms were cast.

Accordingly, questioning information society discourse and its economic, cultural, and social constituents is one beginning of this work. I will revise and, hopefully, add to the existing work that has described, evaluated and criticized the multifarious

aspects of the phenomenon that we abstract as information society (IS). Many works have been written in the field, some of which have focused on the economic aspect of the phenomenon, others on the social processes that are at work, and some simply on the bureaucratic aspects of it. Even reading the documents written about information society, one is struck by the variety of the linguistic registers and styles that are used to talk about this 'emerging new form of living'. A secondary question in this undertaking is to add to the diversity of the ways in which we talk about information society and its technological, social, and economic aspects. I have strategically chosen to write about information society and its practical component 'technology' using cultural terms and cultural register. Technology has already been studied under different departmentalized disciplines (philosophy, centers of technology, departments of journalism and communication, sociology etc.). Andrew Feenberg, who is one of the students of Herbert Marcuse, insists upon the necessity of adopting a critical approach to technology. Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional Man* (1964) is also a signpost that reminds us of the necessity of a critical paradigm that can account adequately for communication systems. In *Alternative Modernity: The Technical Turn in Philosophy and Social Theory* (1995), *Questioning Technology* (1999), and *Transforming Technology* (2002), Feenberg insists upon the importance of hermeneutic and constructivist methods. Feenberg tries to deconstruct the discourse underlying the mass use of technology in the advanced capitalist societies. In that respect, I find his work illuminating, and his assessments fall in the camp of researchers who deal with technology as a non-neutral result of the economic, social and cultural progress; rather, he considers technology itself as a constructor of a 'reality'. Describing his approach to the study of technology in his webpage <http://www.sfu.ca/~andrewf/>, Feenberg adopts four basic analytical instruments[1]:

> Hermeneutic Constructivism: Instead of regarding technological progress as a deterministic sequence of developments, we have learned to see it as a contingent process that could lead in many different directions. I have applied this approach, he says, to several important issues in technology. Feenberg's work shows how the illusion of neutrality and autonomy of the technical professions arises from the way in which they construct their history.
>
> Historicism: Technology is the byproduct of a constellation of social forces and any serious study of the technological 'rationale' should take into account those constitutive social forces.
>
> Technical Democracy: technological progress requires a viable democratic space that allows the sharing and discussion of technological matters within the public space.
>
> Meta-Theory of Technology: There have been many attempts in philosophy to define the essence of technology and to distinguish the specific difference between the modern and pre-modern technologies. These various theories are unilateral and fail to grasp the full complexity of their object.[3]

[3] Andrew's study of the critical theory's application to the computer is very instrumental in shaping the vicissitudes of the social effects in a technology–based environment.

This constructivist approach allows us to see the workings of technology not as a finished product, but it also permits us to have an inside view into the process of reality making. While the work of Andrew Feenberg seems to present a cogent account for the constructivist stance, I am more inclined to adopt the Latourean approach to technology because it has brought a serious attempt to 'liberate' the technological discourse from the traditional distinction between the social constructivist approach and technological determinism. In *Pandora's Hope* (1999:298), Latour argues, "in the realm of techniques, no one is in command– not because technology is in command, but because, truly, *no one* and *nothing* at all is in command, not even an anonymous field of force." Latour's approach tries to free the technological discourse from any commitment to the subject-object distinction. This dichotomy has always led to a misreading of the complexity of the technological question. As I argue in this work, the distinction between the 'Self' and 'Other' needs to go beyond a simplistic bifurcation of different agencies. That is what I suggest when I discuss the change of the informational structure from the hierarchical to the horizontal mode (as in the discussion about the rhizome p.39).

Latour's work is also significant in advocating the necessity for a 'third space' of interpretation (a new jargon to describe the intricate relationship between the subject and object). This move towards a third space is also what I argue for later in this work where I revise Samir Amin's (1985) notion of 'delinking', which distinguishes between the less technological locales or the pre-capitalist modes of production and the technologically rich locales, or the capitalist modes of production. This demonizing of the informational rich as it is manifested in its technological objects seems to fail to see that the recipients of those artifacts are also actants (to use Latour's concept) in the making of the informational structure through the local wealthy pockets that were created by the postcolonial condition. Therefore, my contention is that there is a need for a more 'interstitial' or 'third space' type of discourse that liberates different actants from simple diabolical stances. A Latourean alternative provides an explanation to the 'essence' of technology by replacing the notion of subject-object with a more comprehensive revision of the factors that contribute to cogent meanings that come as a result of the interaction between subject, technology and locales. In this work, I use the notion of subject dually to mean the industrialized agency and the object as a symbolic metaphor to represent both techniques and their recipients in the pre-modern locales like the Arab contexts.

It is here that articulation is most instrumental, because as a method, it distinguishes between different discourses and helps to attach specific meanings to their contexts. Yet, it does not call for a complete bifurcation of subject-object. All it does is save us from the essentialist stances; and that is what Latour himself alludes when he argues, "truly, *no one* and *nothing* at all is in command" (1999:298). Latour's work is an attempt to revise the *ad hoc* attribution of subjectivity or agency to technical objects, but it is not a dispossession of techniques from an actant role either. In fact, Latour's position shows that because

we still see the technological object outside of the subject, as an 'Other', we fail to understand the interaction that necessarily binds both subject and object. Therefore, there is a need to re-articulate this relationship, with a view to open up a 'third space' that can define the technological discourse in a more comprehensive way.

I want to refer to the polyphonic aspect of the practice of talking and writing about technology and information society to avoid any one-dimensionality of analysis in time and place. I believe that a serious study of the discourse of information society needs to take into consideration this variety of discourses. Hence, my opting for the cultural studies analysis is a strategic choice to make use of the wide range of critical possibilities that such analysis provides. The field of cultural studies has been at the interstice of many border-bound departments. The field of cultural studies allows the opening of the horizon of analysis and its results have "the sky as the limit", so to speak. Technology, given its ubiquitous presence, needs engineers, sociologists, philosophers, and critical theorists, political and economic constituencies so that a fair analysis can take shape. Technology[4] and information society discourse should also be in the *interstice*, travelling among cultures and structures of various national economies. Information society discourse is not fixed yet, for it is like a being in a constant exile. It is never a part *of* something and yet the focus of *all* coagulated disciplines within the academia.

For the purpose of this research, I have opted for the analysis of information society discourse, as it exists between different modes and cultures: colonial/ postcolonial, capitalist/agrarian modes of production, democratic/ non-democratic states, and West/ Orient. This series of dichotomies provides the yardstick whereby to unveil the 'unchecked' discourse that accompany bright images of multi-cultural faces 'enjoying' the benefits of the new means of communication. In my analysis to these new media, I hinge upon the analysis of those moments when the ideological component of technology is instilled in the psychological grid of the consumer in market-based economies. One basic latent line of argumentation that shapes this work is the comparison between the meaning of information society in the advanced capitalist countries, and the meaning of information society in the countries where information economy and information-driven mode of production are slowly emerging, due to the obvious digital divide, and other factors that will be detailed in this work. In addition, it is a call to approach technology and information society discourse *critically.* It is my aim to contribute, hopefully, to the re-articulation of the primer mover(s) that lie at the premises of the discourse of information society. My aim is practically a situational one, as I emphasize the importance of the context where our talk takes place.

[4] I am dealing here with technology *only as one* manifestation of the information society discourse. For more in-depth analysis on this position I refer you to Hamid Mawlana's *The Myths and Realities of the 'Information Age': A Conceptual Framework for Theory and Policy'* (1984) and Kaarle Nordenstreng's interview with Claudia Padovani (2005) published in *Global Media and Communication.*VOl. 1 N. 3 pp. 264-272.

In *The World, the Text and the Critic,* Edward Said (1983:242) captures this sense:

> The critical consciousness is awareness of the differences between situations, awareness too of the fact that no system or theory exhausts the situation out of which it emerges or to which it is transported. And, above all, critical consciousness is awareness of the resistance to theory, reactions to it elicited by those concrete experiences or interpretations with which it is in conflict. Indeed, I would go as far as saying that it is the critic's job to provide resistance to theory, to open it up toward historical reality, toward society, toward human needs and interests, to point up those concrete instances drawn from everyday reality that lie outside, or just beyond the interpretive area necessarily designed in advance and thereafter circumscribed by every theory.

I would consider that this work has reached its goals if it creates in the reader's mind a double conception of the above and below dynamics of cultural, economic and informational production. Additionally, in this study, I would like to contribute to the formulation of the concept of 'articulation' as an analytic tool that can be applied to describe the specificity of media practice in the Middle East, especially contexts where the postcolonial condition has left a dissymmetric economic structure.

Another objective in this project is the assessment of the situation of economies that are not yet ready to compete with the advanced economies. I will be mainly making cross-reference to the Arab countries' situation, and more precisely, the North African context and the Middle Eastern region. The Finnish model of information society has been a very instrumental yardstick whereby I compare other experiences of information society around the globe. Many conferences have been taking place at the heart of the University of Tampere[5], opening comparative views on peripheral experiences. The discourse of cultural studies has offered the tools of analysis necessary for tackling the multifarious ramifications of information society. The analysis of information society across this work takes the technological discourse only as one manifestation of the capitalist deep structure that is classically implied in the relationship between the ownership of the means of production and their effects on the economic and social levels of a given society. This research is not a technology-centered type of work. The importance of this work takes significance, hopefully, from its tracing of the behavior of capitalism in different locales and different contexts. I find sense in Wolfgang Kleinwächter (2005) statement that information society is only 'an added layer' to the already existing economic and social layers that constitute the system that triggered off the post-industrial society. Therefore, talking about information society requires a grounding of the discourse of information society within a specified locale, for the economic potential and the social processes do differ from one context to another. Articulation method's focus on the linkages between different locales has an explanatory value to account for the local dynamic and the global flows.

[5] Attendance of the e-global conference, May 2005 allowed me an insight into both the Japanese and Finnish models of information society.

The beginning of the information society age as it was articulated in Daniel Bell's (1976) path-breaking *The Coming of the Post-Industrial Society* is a sign of a new beginning. The age of information society is a *sign* since it has a doubly articulated function (to use Hjelmeslev's understanding of a sign), i.e. the plane of expression (enunciative in Foucauldean terms) and the plane of meaning. The plane of expression may refer here to the digital aspect of the information age (the use of mobile phones, the images of real-time news broadcasting, the convergence of media into one machine, real-time video-conferencing and net-meeting etc.). The plane of content is the plane of *meaning*. It is the site where ideas are contested, and this is my point of interest in this research. I emphasize the importance of beginning, because the beginning of information society was not a coincidence and its *place* of beginning (Western Europe) is of much significance. John Urry (2004) has explained the profound changes that [6]Britain witnessed throughout the 19th century in all respects of social, economic, political and artistic life. The contextual adverb *where* is very important in this respect. Some of the queries this work tries to engage with include the meaning of information society for the postcolonial locales or what is referred to as 'Third World'; albeit I hesitate to assign this classificatory epithet to any region of the globe[7], especially after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and the end of the Cold War. Additionally, the active enlargement of the European Union induces one to opt for the notion of 'emerging economies' that seems to be a more realistic appellation.

The UNESCO publication issue titled *Science for Information Society* (2003: 6), which was prepared as a boosting document to encourage the adoption of the WSIS declaration of principles and plan of action, describes the process of information society as having multiple targets:

> *These technologies are not merely tools;* they inform and shape our modes of communication and our thinking and creativity processes. How should we act so that benefits of these ICTs accrues to all humankind and does not become a privilege of a small number of economically developed countries? How can access to these information and intellectual resources help to overcome the social, the cultural, and the linguistic barriers to participation in knowledge societies? (Emphasis added)

The fact that these technologies are not mere tools is a very revealing statement. It implies that as we use the technological tools, we will have to shape our thinking to accommodate the new "values" that are intrinsic in the machine. The report seems to highlight the positive sides of these tools in the sense that they provide us with not just information but also knowledge.

There are many readings to the phenomenon of information technologies and its effects on society. Information technologies have certainly created a George

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[6] For an ample understanding of those changes, check John Urry Part 3 in *The Information Society Reader* (Webster, *et al.* ed.) London: Routledge. 2004.

[7] For more analysis on this concept, I refer you to Sidney W. Mintz's article titled "On the Concept of the Third World" (1975) which appeared in *Dialectical Anthropology* Vol.1 N. 1

Lamming's (1960) notion of 'occasion for speaking' out one's mind via the Internet, for instance; but some are skeptical of the long-term effects of the machine. Besides, a minority represents the Luddites, or what I prefer to term as the abolitionists camp, i.e. they see technology as a dangerous innovation that could strip them of their handcrafts.

Information society is not a one-dimensional discourse. It tampers with the desires and expectations of the consumers. It makes the life easier, services quicker and the life style more refined. Yet, is that all? Stuart Hall once told Lawrence Grossberg that ideologies work only at the plane of *the common sense*. Grossberg (2000:148) writes, "So this chapter takes another lesson from Stuart Hall: I remember him once saying that the more 'obvious' a statement, the more ideological it is." In the *Whites of their Eyes: Racist Ideologies and the Media,* Hall (1981a:12) reiterates this approach:

> Third, ideologies 'work' by constructing for their subjects (individual and collective) positions of identification and knowledge which allow them to 'utter' ideological truths as if they were their authentic authors. This is not because they emanate from our innermost, authentic, and unified experience, but because we find ourselves mirrored in the positions at the center of the discourses from which the statements we formulate "make sense". Thus, the same "subjects (e.g. economic classes or ethnic groups) can be differently constructed in different ideologies.

Technologies do not offer us value-free services, they position us vis-à-vis a social and economic order that produces a cluster of values. When one buys a computer, one also has to adapt to the computer through having some basic notions on how to use an ergonomic desk and accessories of computers that can be considered as signs of the economic system that produced them, i.e. informational capitalism. Now how does this system of values (capitalism) positions differentiated audiences? What does it mean to introduce technologies to the Arab-Islamic world for instance? A conservative would ask, are technologies a kind of 'Trojan horse' to disintegrate the long established conservative 'values' of the Orient? Or as Talal Asad (1985: 104) declared that, 'the conceptual revolution of modern science and technology helped to consolidate Europe's world hegemony. Why are the Arab governments so keen on introducing technologies to their homes on the condition that they do it at their pace? However varied they may seem to be, they unite in their questioning of the main consequences of informational capitalism − the main latent question of this endeavor, which requires us to find alternative methods, such as articulation, to analyze the increasingly networked information mode of production.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, I highlighted the importance of the notion of beginning in the study of information society discourse. I have also pinpointed the constructivist aspect of technology by alluding to the methodological roadmap that Andrew Feenberg (1995) has suggested in the dissection and analysis of technology. Besides, I referred to the Latourian's (1999) conception of a networked informational society.

This conception matches the explanatory value of articulation. This is so because articulation works on the linkages, rather than on the effects through re-articulating North / South, above / below binaries that account for the dynamics at both the intrastate as well as the interstate levels. The conceptual potential of articulation covers the local and the global, and the following chapter highlights the importance of the method in informational research, together with a definition of articulation and its role in deconstructing the dynamics of informational society.

Chapter Two

On method

This chapter foregrounds the importance of method in the social studies inquiry. The method of articulation with its openness to non-guaranteed linkages allows the challenge of the seemingly solid social formations and discourses. In this chapter, I attempt to apply articulation to informational discourse that seems to present itself as the solution to global insatiable need for democracy. I will also question the process of technological coagulation; and how the technical intentional agency aspires to impose a certain mode of life imbued with information. The application of articulation to informational discourse seems to be a new kind of research and requires more studies, as Slack (2005) suggests when she reminds us that more applications of the method of articulation are needed in different types of research and from different locales. This chapter targets the application of articulation to unveil the 'unsaid' in informational discourse.

Doing information society research

> I am not sure that I know what the Internet is; I am not sure that anyone does. The popular embrace of the concept of the Internet, and the market's enthusiasm to be part of it, has certainly muddied the waters. (James T. Costigan)

Information society research is quite young. It is situated at the crossroad of multiple discourses and disciplines. It shares with cultural studies the tendency to be under a mobile umbrella (to use Grossberg's (2002) metaphor) rather than under the fixed roof of established fields. Sociologists, mathematicians, psychologists, engineering technicians, biologists, environmentalists, and common people all have their say when it comes to technologies that surround them on daily basis. Thus, both cultural studies and informational studies are bound by a common future, since technologies work only within a specific culture. The burden of cultural analysts is to provide accounts of whatever affects the culture within their varied contexts.

The issues of information society research are mainly articulated in the concepts that are used to describe the phenomenon at hand. The question of the technological and social essence of what we mean by information society is a serious matter. *Information Society: The Rise of the Third Industrial Age* (2001) contains many attempts to delineate and demarcate a phenomenon that is essentially defying limitation. Erkki Karvonen (2001) has raised justified concerns about the meaning of the notion of 'information society' that seems to be normalized by everyday use, but only few stop *to reflect* on what they mean when they utter the phrase

'information society'. As I mentioned in the first chapter, Raymond Williams (1977) reminds us that tackling a social formation necessitates the analysis of the basic constructs that constitute the fully formed concept or discourse. In other words, instead of looking at the established or finished form of a concept like information society, it is more productive to analyze the processes that have formed it. In the case of the concept of information society, many attempts have been devoted to defining this mutable and complex concept. I am referring to the meticulous definitions or rather questions that were advanced by Frank Webster, Erkki Karvonen, Kaarle Nordenstreng, Raimo Blom and others have studied the problematic nature of the phrase 'Information Society' (2001). For instance, Webster (2001) has rightly pointed out the difficulty of defining the phenomenon of information society. He chooses an alternative strategy (using questions), which is actually safer and more constructive than giving outright statements of 'fact' or unchecked postulations. In this regard, he (2001:275) writes:

> For instance, is it an economic phenomenon (where the monetary worth of information is telling) or is it a matter of changed occupations (where increased numbers of people are employed in informational jobs such as teaching and research)? Or is it, more straightforwardly, distinguished by the prevalence of information and communication technologies (and thus, a matter of technology)? Is it more to do with spatial relations (such as the 'flows' of information between 'networks' of people and places)? Or is it a cultural issue (where what matters is the explosion of symbols and signs in television, fashion, design and so on)? Or is 'the information society' something which is characterized by a shift away from 'practical' toward 'theory' (hence society in which abstract models shape social destiny)?

The number of questions raised can be stretched depending on the perspective of the researcher. A philosopher may as well ask the following: is information society a bad or good faith in the Sartrean sense? A semiotician may question the codes, signs and traces that information society leaves behind, and which might tell something about the phenomenon. Umberto Eco (1976), for example, would have said, if information society is a sign, then it is a lie, for every sign is anything that is used to tell a lie. A web designer might have another set of questions. Why the web pages are imbued with so many cookies, why cookies register data about my computer? Why do they save my PC's ID? How can we escape surveillance? An online 'shop keeper' might have practical questions like, what are the effects of information society on my business opportunities? Is e-bay a safer means for money transfer? And the string of questions can be extended depending on the user's rapport with technology.

Kaarle Nordenstreng (2001) asks, "*so what?"* This is a very interesting question because it brings forth *the utility* of studying the phenomenon, which brings the political economy of information society under scrutiny: 'We can not eat information after all', Nordenstreng adds. In the same vein, Karvonen (2001:48) has raised direct questions about the disciplinary status of information society research.

For instance, he has cited the Machlup's concern about the problematic of defining 'knowledge':

> An analysis of 'knowledge', on the other hand, seems to be a philosopher's task, though some aspects of it are claimed by sociologists...When I tried out the title of this study on representatives of various disciplines, many were surprised that an economist would find himself qualified to undertake this kind of research. If these things have to be explained, 'let George do it'. George is always someone in another discipline.

Castells (1996) in his seminal trilogy *The Information Age*, as Karvonen (2001) notes, has not ventured to give a straightforward definition of the concept: "I have no compelling reason to improve on Daniel Bell's own definition of knowledge."

One of the compelling questions about the terrain of our study is the demarcation of the limits of such enterprise. Is it possible to distill technology from the military yoke? Is communication in the information age an elitist practice? Who are the audiences of the information highway? How is the agenda set? What is an online community? What does information society mean for the postcolonial state? How should communication studies deal with online communities? Is the Internet changing the conventional way of doing politics? What is collective memory in the informational society?

I raise these questions to open up new vistas for further research, and to suggest that there is much work ahead before the full understanding of information society discourse could coagulate. Herbert Schiller (1969) expressed his concern about the self-sufficiency of communication systems when he examined the military origins of telecommunications and, more specifically, the tangled relationship between communication research and the Defense Intelligence Agency in the USA, and the fact that most of the key players within the communication systems are contained by the defense department. Additionally, the American communication model is exported elsewhere. In this respect, Schiller (1969:87) explains: "In Finland, on the level 45 per cent of the shows are live and 55 per cent of the shows are filmed. Imported U.S half-hour series account for 85 per cent of the filmed variety." While the percentages might have changed, the grip of the American films on the Finnish local level is still visible. Most films are imported from the U.S, and they are often subtitled in English or in Finnish.

As for the small states that have political independence, but not economic independence, the hazards seem to be more serious than those that confront the Finnish context. The problems that Finland may have to heed, according to Schiller's analysis, are mainly in the cultural plain, i.e. the content of the media transmitted from the corporate economies. For many developing countries and especially in Africa, their vulnerability to the corporate media is not only posed at the cultural level. The corporate economy worsens the already fragile economies of the new 'independent states' by encouraging dependency and passive development

strategies (aids, fixing programs like MENA, USAID and the like). Schiller (1976: 1) also gives an account of this:

> The attainment of political independence by more than ninety countries since the Second World War has directed attention to the conditions of economic helplessness and dependency that continue to frustrate at least two thirds of the world's nations.

Given this tendency to technologically 're-colonize' the world by regulating it via Bill Gates' window(s) and the backdoors, not only of computers but also of economic systems raises many questions and concerns about the 'real' intentions behind the insistence of post-industrialized centers to extend 'the benefits' of information society to the peripheries. This extension is, in fact, an instance of articulation as Bruce Berman (1984: 134) argues:

> Within the process of articulation, then, capital trends to produce its own antithesis in internal capitalist forces struggling with it to accumulate and appropriate the surplus value produced. In concrete terms, this involved the emergence of pockets of wealthy peasants employing wage labour and attempting to accumulate capital, i.e., in transition to capitalist production as well as using the proceeds of investments in trade and savings from wage labour for reinvestment in agriculture or even petty manufacturing. This interior transition to capitalism directly confronted the merchant capital that served in the colonial period as the active agent of articulation, linking the petty commodity production of Africa with metropolitan industrial capital.

Pauly (1991:1) delineated the nature of communities online. For Pauly, these communities are not so much different from the offline communities in the sense that they keep their *elitism*. Conditions of subscription, fees and circling off the boundaries are still maintained spatially, though they are not like conventional communities, for they transcend the local level to embrace the global. This may indicate the implications of having a global elitist community that acts and interacts online and creates its own terms that are essentially set in the realm of the digital. This fight for space online reminds us of the scramble for Africa that deterred colonial powers (in this case electronics companies) from their internal conflicts to focus on the invasion of other 'small economies'. A simple example shows this tendency. A recent success of a Web Office browser called 'JotSpot' was immediately obtained by Google, and the 'free spaces' that were given to users at the beginning by 'JotSopt' were simply closed off. Online users were left to read a disenfranchising note: "We've closed off new account registrations while *we focus* on *migrating to Google's systems*. If you'd like to be notified when we re-open registration, enter your email address below (emphasis added, *cf.* <www. jot.com>)".

However, the scramble for space is not a new one. Alexander Hamilton, who worked as a secretary of treasury under President Washington, believed that for "the nation to survive and prosper, it must win the lasting confidence of executive and financial elites." (Altschull 1990: 114). Even Jefferson, who was considered a democrat and 'the best friend of the press' (ibid. 114), believed that his vision of equality meant equality among 'propertied class in a propertied nation'. Therefore,

the notion of elitism is still pertinent within the realm of online politics, because what has happened is only a shift of the ground where space is contested. This poses legal questions for information society researchers as to the fate of online communities and, even worse, as the tendency of electronic elitism poses threats to offline communities for the simple reason that they have no 'property online' in the Jeffersonian sense. Pauly (1991:9) has succinctly articulated this concern as follows:

> One obvious critique is that electronic communities are, and will continue to be, elitist, no matter that it is widely believed that 'community' implies some sort of ' openness' and sense of belonging. Community is, in some ways, inherently elitist, at least insofar as it is predicated on the notion that some belong and others do not. At present, the élites are most likely to use computers and Internet services, and it may well be that the élites are finding community for themselves.

This state of affairs shows the necessity of reflecting on the process that has created information society, not just the analysis of the products (computers, mobile phones, the web etc.) that fill the market. The historical formative factors and phases that have made the information society such a complex apparatus have become the object of many questions. This is what Steve Jones (1999) demands in his article "Studying the Net: Intricacies and Issues." In the subsection titled the 'need for reflection', he (1999:9) maintains that:

> One imperative is for reflection. Scholars studying the Internet must be reflexive, for (at least) two reasons. First, because we have all, scholar and citizen alike, become *savvy* media consumers. The 'I-Know-that-you-know-that-I-know' game is played out every day in countless advertisements, marketing plans, newscasts, comedy programs, even in conversations between us (and perhaps within us), to the extent that one might suspect we can never again find naïveté.

Thus, the first principle that one should bear in mind while doing information society research is the *critical distance* to break up the spell of the technological discourse. The second principle that I would suggest involves the *non-reductionist mode of analysis.* By this I mean that doing information society research within the academia requires the linking up of the projects within a larger spatial terrain of struggle, namely the social, economic and political arenas. Information society does not exist in vacuum[8]. It is the outcome of formative conjunctures, which occur in specific contexts and involve differentiated agencies. The world of academia is by no means secluded from the external world of business and market rules. Jones (1999:101) reminds us that:

> Academia is not without its connections to the world of commerce, of course, and the Internet is implicated in several such connections (not least being in connection to

[8] For the instrumental role that information society discourse has played within the academia, Frank Webster's *Sociology, Cultural Studies and Disciplinary Boundaries* provides a good analysis to the ways whereby Information society has helped to break away from the class-centered analyses, especially with the change in what Webster calls " the occupational structure" of Western society.

> new forms of delivery for education, a matter of great import, but not directly related to those at hand). Academia fame and fortunes can be made: Scholars can be first to identify Internet-related phenomena; they might write a dissertation that Microsoft buys; or they might find themselves on the cover of Wired Magazine, earning a $50,000 'Innovation Grant' from Merill Lynch for ' potentially profitable dissertations'.

Clearly enough, the age of information society is an age of *redefinitions*. Conventional and seemingly solid assumptions are melting into air. The academia is now induced to account for the new phenomena that many users have taken normatively. Among these, much research is to be done about MUDs (Multi-user domains), MOOs (Multi-user domains object-oriented), and more sophisticated enterprises like the human brain-computer interface. Cyberspace communities, cyber crime, and cyber law are indeed new domains that need more careful exploration and obviously new methodological tools that are geared to the nature of the medium and to the message at hand.

Castells' (1999) describes the new age as an age of networks where nodes interact among themselves and "where only speed matters, not size". What matters in the information society times is not how big a company is but how fast its mechanism works. Once a node is shut off from the network, it simply becomes marginalized, i.e. it becomes a 'loser' in market terms. The winner in the world of information society is the one who abides by the new criteria of efficiency: speed, utility, cost efficiency and safety that include risk-free artifacts. Products exist not only in the factory, as was the case in the Fordist Model, products in the information age are not linearly organized, their structure does not follow the mechanical chain of routine activities and the organization of institutions where information workers' labor is not hierarchical. It is rather a horizontal, contingent, flexible, malleable and mutable structure that is composed of interacted nodes (that may take social, economic, political, ecological, entertainment and leisure-like forms). Thus, any research method that tries to probe within the functioning of the information society mechanisms must declare what stance it takes, what method it applies, and what possible trajectories it might take. In a study of the online social networks for example, Laura Garton (1999:75)[9] has strictly clarified that:

> When a computer network connects people or organizations, it is a social network. Just as a computer network is a set of machines connected by a set of cables, a social network is a set of people (or organizations or other social entities) connected by a set of social relations, such as friendship, co-working, or information exchange. Much research into how people use computer-mediated communication (CMC) has concentrated on how individual users interface with their computers, how two persons interact on-line, or how small groups function on-line.

[9] Laura Garton (1999)'s study of social networks offers a good source for understanding how 'pieces and parts' function in the age of the Internet. Her study of the notion of 'center' and 'periphery' has shown that social networks in online communities are greatly affected by the attitudes that users hold vis-à-vis the medium and the nature of social interaction.

The study of social networks is of paramount importance because the Internet, being a network of networks, presupposes an extensive study of its nucleus that is determined by economic, social and political factors. So what is a social network? The social network analysis is composed of actors and decentralized agencies. Each node within the agency functions as both recipient and enunciator of signals. Social networks online have traits of what linguists call the 'total feedback' nature of language: one can hear what one speaks at the same time. Once one makes a mistake, one can correct himself / herself on the spot, or stutter. This mechanism may also be applied to the interactive nodes in a virtual social network. Yet, the most salient pattern in the study of social networks is the focus on the principles of connectivity, relation, and organization. This type of research has flourished principally in sociology and communication studies. However, the aim of social network research is not to formulate prescriptive rules. On the contrary, it targets the *description* of the functioning of the network with a view to anticipate the possible outcomes. Garton (1999:76) states that:

> The International Network for Social and Network Analysis (INSNA) is a multidisciplinary scholarly organization that publishes a referred journal, Social Networks, and an informal journal, Connections. Social network analysts seek to describe networks, trace the flow of information (and other resources) through them, and discover what effects these relations and networks have on people and organizations. They treat the description of relational patterns as interesting in its own right – for example, is there a core and periphery? And examine how involvement in such networks helps to explain the behavior and attitudes of network members-for example, do peripheral people send more e-mail and do they feel more involved?

The focus on the relations and connections between the center that *own* strong communication systems and the peripheries that *consume* these gadgets is of major interest to me in this work. Most importantly, the economic, social and cultural structure governing the relationship between informational economies and semi-industrial or agrarian locales is of focal importance for the articulation of the features that distinguish the capitalist modes of production from the pre-capitalist informal economies. This is so because society has become a network of relations in an increasingly globalized world. Phenomenologically speaking, one may refer to Edmund Husserl's (1982: 483) argument that has initiated the study of the mechanism of relations, asserting that parts and subparts are necessary to each other so that 'the whole' takes shape. I will briefly state his argument concerning this investigation of *parts* and *wholes:*

> 'Pieces' are essentially mediate or remote parts of a whole whose 'pieces' they are, if combinatory forms unite them with other 'pieces' into wholes which in their turn constitute wholes of higher order by way of novel forms. The difference between the parts nearer or further about the whole has accordingly its essential ground in the formally expressible diversity of foundational relations.

Accordingly, the study of networks is a study of parts or pieces (in Husserlian terms) so that the identity of 'the whole' can be fathomed out. In the informational

age, our human relationships, or more succinctly, our face-to-face interaction is being shifted by a mediated noematic relationship with the machine. There is a constant effacement of the 'natural' and a continuous nourishment of the phantasmagorical through technology and machinery. This proclivity requires joined intellectual contributions from all the fields of technological research to grasp the meaning of the continuous tendency to put everybody online. Accordingly, a study of social networks is crucial in the sense that it sheds light on the particularity of each medium, and how its messages are channeled and with what effects. This includes the study of media types (both audio and video). For example, one possible research question could be: is the message conveyed via a synchronous device the same as one transmitted via an asynchronous communicative medium. File types are also a beguiling type of research. What is the meaning of recycling in an online environment? What is the meaning of digital memory? Are there racist relations online? Moreover, how do they express their intentionality?

The focus on the units and pieces in an online environment is relevant for the study of the structure and organization of social relationships online. The nature of the unit and its organizational structure is still a vivid object of research. The structuralists have embraced a hierarchical organization of knowledge. Linguists teach syntax in the form of a tree, where the dominant node is marked in bold type with a capital X (X being noun phrase for example) to signify the beginning of analysis. In syntactic courses, teachers put both the NP (Noun Phrase) and Verb Phrase (VP) *at the top* of visual representation. The verb phrase should always be raised in the process of segmentation and then branched into two (verb (V) and Compliment clause (CP). The VP marker should always be high in the analysis on the page while the sub-nodes follow. Do the social networks respect the Chomskyan structuralist hierarchical model? In other words, are the networks organized in the form of a tree where the higher node *controls* the subservient ones? Deleuze would definitely dismiss this approach. For Deleuze (1993:28), the relationships are 'poststructural'; they are no longer hierarchical and they do not follow a mechanical order that is determined by a dominant S or X. Relations within the Deleuzean Model are *Rhizophoraceae.* They are densely interrelated and *horizontally* organized. Concretely put, I present here his argument of the rhizome:

> The world has lost pivot; the subject can no longer even dichotomize, but accedes to a higher unity, of ambivalence or overdetermination, in an always-supplementary dimension to that of its object. The world has become chaos, but the book remains the image of the world (....) a rhizome, as subterranean stem is absolutely different from roots and radicles. Bulbs and tubers are rhizomes. Plants with roots or radicles may be rhizomorphic in other aspects altogether: the question is whether plant life in its specificity is not entirely rhizomatic.

Representational analysis is very important in the analysis of any social or business network. In the case of Internet research, one may investigate the relationship that exists between 'A', 'B', and 'C'. Let us assume that the node 'A' knows the node

'B' and the node 'B' knows the node 'C'. A relevant question would be, what is the nature of the relationship between 'A' and 'C'? Is the relation between these nodes equal? Alternatively, does a node 'A', for example, need the escape hatch 'B' before connecting with 'C'? And so on.

Other elements could be used in the study of networks. *The content principle*, for example, deciphers the kind of content that convergent media convey. At this stage, a Computer Mediated Communication (CMD) researcher may ask, how is content compressed? At what cost? Who are the agents (agency) to whom the message is delivered and with what effects? Are there Ego-centered networks (Garton, 1999), and what is their composition?

Karvonen (2001) has sketched the etymological roots of the concepts 'knowledge' and 'information'. He states that the principle of content is not of much interest for the electrical engineers, for their primal concern is logistical and accuracy-driven. Thus, the mere fact of contesting the nature of information displaces many communication models, like the Shannon-Weaver Model (1947)[10] that did not take into consideration the context of imparting information. The Statistical Theory of Signal Transmission (STST) understands information as a constellation of electrically charged signals that are composed of a source, a transmitter, and, at the end of the communication act, the receiver and the destination. Between these two ends, one finds the probability of noise. By way of application, this noise can be cultural, if the process of information transmission is done without paying attention to *the nature* of the information that is related to different social communities especially across cultures, a possibility that has become the main trait of the informational mode of production. Information study research (ISR) is not carried out in this mechanical way. Information in the information age has become a currency that is increasingly taking a global face. It is compressed, transmitted, consumed or used, and even deleted and recycled; not in a one-way process (Shannon's model) but in a multi-directional model, a network model where everyone is a receiver and sender of information at the same time. Information has displaced the vitruvian perception of man, where 'Man' is in the center and the environment is revolving around him/her. In a network, technology moves to the center whereas 'Man' moves to the periphery, or is at least decentered. Yet, the unfolding informational age has not yet destroyed the book and paper. This justifies Nordenstreng's (2001) question 'so what?'

Rethinking articulation

The concept of articulation has been used to describe the relationship between discursive elements and the elements that contribute to the formation of a 'social pattern' within a 'specific context'. The significance of this concept lies in its focus

[10] See the appendix section for a visualization of Shannon's model (1947).

on the coagulating character of various elements over a certain period under certain conditions. Articulation could be understood as the condensation of temporal and spatial or contextual elements within a specific conjuncture. Likewise, the discourse of information society did not cement overnight; it has been in the making for at least thirty-six years, i.e. since the publication of Daniel Bell's (1973) path-breaking book *The Coming of the Postindustrial Society*. In this section, I address the concept of articulation and review the different models that have so far been propounded to explain it, with a view to open up plains of application of this concept in the domain of ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) and to the discourse of information society in general. The main models I will be reviewing in this section include the works of Grossberg (1992), Mikko Lehtonen (2000), and Stuart Hall (1986).

What is articulation?

Foucault (1970) explores the links between articulation and representation. For a discourse to bloom, the lexical component one uses in his/her speaking about a phenomenon should be coherent, they should speak to each other according to different positionalities of 'succession, subordination, consequence etc.' Foucault (1970:98) explains that :

> There exists a certain amount of play between the articulation of language and that of representation. When we speak of 'whiteness', we are certainly designating a quality, but we are designating it by means of a substantive; when we speak of 'humans' we are employing an adjective to designate individuals that subsist by themselves.

Foucault argues that every thing can be discourse if the strata that condition its becoming discourse are fulfilled. The first stratum that constitutes the articulation of any discourse is the linking and blending of elements of language (adjectives, nouns, prepositions, and even the blank spaces that separate them in a string of propositions are valuable). Still, this is not enough, since the mere existence of isolated elements in a vacuum will not produce discourse – in the case of this study, information society discourse. The second requirement is that the attributes that are residual in the adjectival and nominal words need to be *concretized in* individuals. Otherwise, we will end up with the verb *to be* that links words but to no effect. Thus, representation is as important as connectivity here. Foucault (1970) applies the same linguistic mechanism to machinery when he (1970: 100) argues that:

> In the same way, the most rudimentary machines presuppose principles of movement that most differ for each of their organs to the same principle, of which the organs are then only the intermediaries, the means of transformation, the points of application.

Foucault's (1970) conceptualization of articulation is very sophisticated in the sense that he builds the conceptual field where the joining of discrete elements takes place, simultaneously paying a close attention to the representational load of the components. The ultimate end of such system of articulation is the building up of

what Foucault calls the 'regime of truth'. It is the system that comes as an end product of the process of cutting language (or machines) into pieces, ordering them according to a system of classification (following their functional power within the whole system). The regime of truth takes place only as a result of concretization of the conceptual systems of representation in objects and bodies that are exterior to language, but by the power of *the word,* they become a part of our designation that we choose to attribute to them. In a sense, we capture them and pigeonhole their essence into a word, an image or a sign. In plain words, for a phenomenon to exert its hegemonic power, it has to break the resistance of the objects of its discourse. This occurs only by 'talking about' a set of meanings constantly until the saturation of the semantic field that is available at its disposal within a clearly defined context. Likewise, informational discourse is generally perceived only from point of view of a finished discourse that everybody knows. Everyone knows that computers are part of the 'new times' and one just needs to learn a few tricks to cope with the machine and start surfing. Little attention is paid to the constitutive *processes* (social, economic, political and others) that formed the coming of the finished product. In a Foucauldean sense, information society discourse could be seen as a 'new regime of truth' that is eager to convince the informational consumers of the new possibilities that informational commodities may offer. Hall (1977:345-49) has explained this notion further in *Foucault and Discourse* wherein he explains:

> Thus, the study of discourses of madness, punishment or sexuality would have to include the following elements:
>
> 1 Statements about 'madness', 'punishment' or 'sexuality', which give us a certain kind of knowledge about these things;
> 2 the rules which prescribe certain ways of talking about these topics and exclude other ways which govern what is 'sayable' or 'thinkable' about insanity, punishment or sexuality, at a particular historical moment [11]…

Similarly, information society discourse is formed in the ways we talk about it in the media, or in conferences such as those of the World Summit of Information Society (WSIS)[12]. In this work, I try to make a connection between the formative discourse of information society, and its 'regime of truth', with the material application of that discourse in different contexts. This is an issue that Foucault did not discuss much in his formulation of the power / knowledge constructs because as Hall (1977) argues, he was 'too much absorbed in discourse'. Therefore, my endeavor is to situate the informational discourse within the field of cultural studies that has produced useful vocabulary to capture the sense of the different social formations. I also target the re-articulation of the links of these formations to the

[11] Reprinted in Seale, Clive (2004) pp. 345-49.

[12] For ample information and documentation, please visit the official site. URL: <http://www.itu.int/wsis/index.html>; there are interesting documents about the conception to the informational age and the reactions by the state, civil societies and the private sector. I will discuss these issues later in chapter VI.

political, economic and even ecological agendas. Articulation calls for a re-examination of the complacency with which many stakeholders (i.e. the governments, private sectors and civil societies) in the domain of information society approach the discursive formation of a necessarily global phenomenon. Let us begin with the definition first. Lawrence Grossberg (1992a:54) defines articulation as follows:

> Articulation is the production of identity on top of difference, of unities out of fragments, of structures across practices. Articulation links this practice to that effect, this text to that meaning, this meaning to that reality, and this experience to those politics. And these links are themselves articulated into larger structures, etc.

The analysis of any social, economic, or political reality is not a matter of simple determination. It is not a relation of guaranteed interstices between different networks. The relation is complex. Grossberg (1992) has advanced a sophisticated method that escapes the mere outright reductionist oversimplifications of social formations. In the context of information society, I find parallels between this position and the one taken by Webster and Robins (1999) in their analysis of the political economy of information. (I will discuss this point in the next chapter.). In his study of the social production of meanings, Grossberg (1992) has pointed to three main vectors: the source of the production (or the background), the actors on the set of meanings (the agents), and the theory of effects (the product of discourses).

The first vector or terrain of meaning production rejects the previous models of communication that essentialize the relationship between the outcomes and the signifiers (the traditional audience / text relationship), and between the signifier and signified. Grossberg refutes this approach and considers it too bigoted and too simple to account for the multi-layered realities that are intrinsic to our lives.

As in the definition provided by Grossberg (1992), one finds parallels between practices and effects. Thus, one can say that statements such as ‘white’ or ‘black’ have essentially meanings that are interwoven with the psychological and cultural fabric of the speaking subject. Or when one adopts the political activity to fight industrial wastes on the grounds of his/her affiliation with a green party that has certain ecological positions; or when a minister of finance in a developing country calls for reducing debts lest his country should remain dependent on the ‘benevolence’ of a corporate market. Or, in journalism when this story (for example about one immigrant) corresponds to that meaning, (a stereotypical image built into the collective memory of a people about immigrants, for instance). The commodity corresponds to alienation; that what it is, its essential identity etc. For instance, when alienation becomes part of the intrinsic components of commodities that consumers buy, albeit unconsciously, with the machines.

This position means that some authority and agency is constructed through discourse and that discourse becomes the site of defining the cultural paradigm of this or that context and whoever inhabits it. Grossberg (1992:53) has provided the

alternative strategy of articulation that is, by virtue, of anti-essentialist practice. 'It would have to start with the principle that nothing is guaranteed, that no correspondences are necessary, that no identity is intrinsic. If there is nothing essential about any practice, then it is only defined by its effects; it is in the production of its effects that the identity of a practice is given'.

Articulation offers a means to review the different moments of conjunctures. It does not accept to be reduced to simple base / superstructure type of reasoning. The moments of production always involve elements that are not intrinsically identical. They are identical at the moment of their production, but they are not necessarily guaranteed to be identical in the post-effects moments. This is also the synthesis of Ensio Puoskari (2005)[13] in his study of Grossberg's theory of affect:

> Grossberg's Deleuzean-inspired approach conceptualized the socio-cultural world as a multiplicity of irreducible planes or fields in which particular structures of institutions are not fixed or external to practice, but are the provisional outcome of a series of articulations between entities that are *continuously* made and remade.

The continuity of different economic, cultural and social practices is what gives the idea of articulation its currency and usefulness. In the information age, the event seems to have the predominance. Each day, the collection of the economic events must yield numerical tables where market 'winners' and 'losers' are to be charted or articulated for *that* day. The next day provides *new* articulations and so on. The stock market is on the flow twenty-four hours, seven days a week. There is no space for the fixing of any discourse, let alone the hope to make it universal. This explains Grossberg's (1991:60) critique of the classical Marxian formulation, or rather his revision to the practice of the Marxist approach, especially the notion of social and economic relations, as they were presented in *Das Kapital:*

> Similarly, Marx described the fundamental structures of capitalism: the contradiction between capital and labor; and the contradiction between the forces and the relations of production. This seems true of any capitalist society. But Marx assumed that the two contradictions were, in the end, identical. It is perhaps truer to argue that, in a specific social formation (nineteenth-century Western Europe, with its peculiar history and conditions); the two articulations were articulated together. They were temporarily and concretely, identical.

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[13] *Viestintä, kulttuuri ja populaari. Lawrence Grossbergin ajattelun tekstijärjestelmä-analyysi (2005)* has encapsulated Grossberg's analysis of popular culture and especially the notion of 'affect'. Also, Puoskari's (2004) '*A Desire Called Cultural Studies :We Gotta get out of this Place'* fleshes out the exploitation of affect (in rock music) by the conservative forces to distill a cluster of neoconservative meanings while pushing aside and dispelling others; and ultimately leading to the depolitization of the American youths . Similarly, information societies focus' on the dissemination of information in a series of nonstop infotainment messages (music for instance) calls into question the processes that are at work within the discursive structure of 'information society discourse'. More on Puoskari's study can be found in his essay published in *The European Journal of Cultural Studies*. (Vol. 7(2) 167-176. I am thankful to Puoskari for generously sharing his reflections on his thesis.

No articulation is a lasting one. This is the frame that Marx overlooked both in his elaboration of the economic statements about value and labor, accumulation and the set of social relations and forces that cement between different members of the same social niche. The terrain of meaning production is not a field of prescription. For prescriptions always run the risk of entering the realm of selection. This latter entails that a subject opts for a selected set of elements, while omitting other elements, deemed as irrelevant. This is the terrain that articulation tries to dissect: the plane of making meaning, or straightforwardly, the semantic *agency* where meanings are produced and disseminated. Grossberg's (1991) approach to articulation enlightens and analyses the discourse of power from within. It does not call for its total rejection. The background is the same, but the practice of its functioning always needs to be reconsidered at the edges of each articulation. He (1991:55) argues that:

> Too much of contemporary theory treats contexts as the beginning of analysis, as a background which exists independently of the practice being studied, and which can therefore be taken for granted. But the practice of articulation does not separate the focus from the background; instead, it is the background that actually articulates the focus.

This amounts to saying that the background should not be taken for granted, but it should be acted upon in such a way as to produce a new set of relations. Articulation, in this sense, refuses both the uncritical acceptance of the already existing structures, and the fetishization of contexts. Articulation offers what Grossberg (1991) describes as 'a theory of contexts'. Yet these contexts should not be seen as final and unchallengeable. On the face of it, these contexts are sustained only as long as the articulated elements are maintained in a moment of production within the general overall circuit of cultural exchange. The context's validity and currency ends with the ending of a certain articulation, i.e. the eventual beginning of a new one. This is probably what Grossberg (1991:54) alluded to when he was trying to shed light on some aspects of this complex phenomenon:

> Articulation is the construction of one set of relations out of another; it often involves delinking or disarticulating connections in order to link or rearticulate others... Articulation is a continuous struggle to reposition practices within shifting field of forces, to redefine the possibilities of life by redefining the field of relations – the contexts – within which a practice is located.

Articulation always involves the notion of delinking, but it is not limited to it. This notion is reminiscent of Samir Amin's (1985) work that I will rethink in due details in the next chapter. According to Amin (1985), delinking of relations is a necessary stage in the formation of meanings. Talking about articulation is talking about the moments that make up power presentable, distributable and consumable by a non-definite audience. Manuel Castells (2001) has declared the end of mass audiences and the rise of networks. This makes meanings even more debatable and our conceptions of power more liable to constant articulations. This is what the post structuralists endeavored to allude to when they declared the end of fixed structures

and tree-like hierarchies. Grossberg's work is mainly informed by that of Foucault, Deleuze and Guattari. Their denial of prescribed structures is a first move to explain articulation. Grossberg (1991) explains the patterns along which articulation takes shape: First, the effects of a particular articulation are not lasting. They are always temporal and their existence is determined by the nature of the practices that are involved within a specific context. Grossberg articulates this when he (1991:57) says, 'while we cannot reduce the reality of a context to a single plane of effects, contexts do offer us various ways in which these planes can themselves be structured together.' Second, Grossberg (1991:57) views articulation as a historical creation. This means that relationships do not enter into symbiotic connections without a minimum of commensurateness. The linking of various relations feeds on 'libidinal images' of share and profit that are intrinsic to any social relation. The meridian point here is that the effects of these relations yield new relations that cut across different relations to create a new articulation that is both informed by the previous conjuncture and at the same time moves beyond it. The challenge that faces these formations is not a structural one; it is mainly a moral and even ethical one, for formations are always built up while others disappear. Some meanings are pushed aside while others are centralized. The articulation of groups, nations, economies or information businesses always imply a procedure of 'linking' and 'delinking'. It is an interactive attitude vis-à-vis the other groups, nations, and corporations. Grossberg (1991:57) has explained this procedure as follows:

> At any moment, such organizations are complex, contradictory and structured; within them, certain forms of practice are dominant, others are tolerated, still others are excluded if not rendered radically unimaginable.

To have a more tangible rapprochement of these contesting elements that live within and through articulation, one may look at the work of Deleuze (1993), for he offers a comprehensive theory of the behavior of these organizations through the notion of 'rhizomes' and 'assemblages'. In *Rhizomes versus Trees*, Deleuze (1993: 31-2) invites us to speak in terms of *planes of consistency:*

> All multiplicities are flat, in the sense that they fill or occupy all their dimensions: we will therefore speak of *a plane of consistency* of multiplicities, even though the dimensions of this 'plane' increase with the number of connections that are connected to it. The outside defines multiplicities…By the abstract line, the line of flight or deterritorialization according to which they change in nature and connect with other multiplicities. The plane of consistency (grid) is the outside of all multiplicities.

Logically enough, the flatness of the rhizomic type of structure makes the social formations and by extension social network formations make all the constituents fill in a specific space in the network – at least temporarily. The rhizome is in this sense both a continuation and a break away from the various formations. In other words, it is a *turn*. Deleuze makes this articulatory relationship explicit when he (1993: 31-2) writes, 'a rhizome may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines.' For, as Deleuze (1993: 31-2) argues:

‘every rhizome contains lines of segmentarity according to which it is stratified, territorialized, organized, signified, attributed, etc. as well as lines of deterritorialization down which it constantly flees.’

Similarly, articulation is formed in the cuts and breaks of the overall process of fixing the traditional relations (economic, social, political, cultural, etc.). Not only within one mode of production such as the capitalist mode, but also across discrete modes of productions that are interlocked in the current global mixing of the former colonized contexts with their former colonizers, in spite of their economic, cultural and political structural differences. This has fateful consequences for the functioning of the whole mechanism that feeds on the interconnection of these relations. The third pattern in Grossberg’s analysis of the mechanism of articulation brings the final stage in the fixing of structures. Grossberg (1991:58) argues that:

> Structure operates as well in distinguishing the level at which particular structures, contexts and organizations function. It is in this sense that we have to distinguish between the concrete and the abstract. A particular event or practice, empirically given, has to be made concrete by constructing its context, by describing the complex systems of articulation, which make it what it is.

Clearly put, any event or structure of events cannot be concrete unless it is contextualized. Contexts, in this sense, are the *real* planes of articulations. They are the sites that inform other particular events or groups of events about what strategy they should follow to let them in the overall structure. All structures within the network are necessary to the shaping up of the network of networks, so to speak. Grossberg (1991:58) adds to this a very plausible warning:

> If the analysis ignores the appropriate level of abstraction for a particular structure, it is likely to become dysfunctional. In other words, every context is a piece of other contexts and vice versa; contexts exist within each other.

Grossberg’s account of articulation draws attention to the terrain where the politics of power operate. It is a move beyond the essentialist views that claim that a set of economic, cultural or social formations necessarily yield a pre-defined set of events and meanings. The notion of Deleuzean rhizomic organizational structure offers the possibility to understand the intrinsic relationship between the constituents of the plain of power production. Deleuze (1993) maintains that even those moments of ruptures should not be viewed as the collapse of the complex system of networks, for all the sub-networks function within the same subterranean structure. Therefore, what Deleuze (1993:32) calls ‘moments of flight’ are mere detours within the same network. Let us read how this works:

> There is a rupture in the rhizome whenever segmentary lines explode into a line of flight (or turn), *but the line of flight is part of the Rhizome.* These lines are always tied back to one another. That is why one can never posit a dualism or a dichotomy, even in the rudimentary form of the good and the bad. *You may make a rupture, draw a line of flight, yet there is still a danger that you will reencounter organizations that restratify everything, formations that restore power to a signifier*, attributions that reconstitute a subject-anything you like, from Oedipal resurgences to fascist

> concretions. Groups and individuals contain microfascisms just waiting to crystallize. Yes, couchgrass is also a rhizome. Good and bad are only the products of an active and temporary selection, which must be renewed. (Emphasis added)

The temporal nature of all articulations calls to question every set of social formation both at the inception of its discursive formation and at the end of its coagulation. A proper understanding of the working of the signifier and its functional role in all formations requires recourse to the seminal work of Ernesto Laclau (1996), especially *Emancipation(s)*.

Accordingly, Laclau (2001) argues that any articulation that does not refer to 'the real' risks reducing all its constituents to a mere 'empty signifier'. In other words, the signifier – that is not concretized as Foucault prefers to call the process – in a specific image of individual becomes a mere empty vessel with no meaning. There are deep connections between Deleuzean concern for the consequences of making a rupture in the network and the consequences of this act. Ernesto Laclau (1996) is of much relevance to this eventual contingency. In *Emancipation(s),* Laclau (1996:14) writes on why empty signifiers matter to politics:

> An empty signifier is, strictly speaking, a signifier without a signified. This definition is also, however, the enunciation of a problem. For how would it be possible that a signifier is not attached to any signified and remains, nevertheless, an integral part of a system of signification? An empty signifier would be a sequence of sounds, and if the latter were deprived of any signifying, function of the term 'signifier' itself would become excessive. The only possibility for a stream of sounds being detached from any particular signified involves; something is achieved which is internal to significations as such. What is this possibility?

Before exploring this possibility, let me explain how Laclau conceptualizes political formations. For Laclau, the sociological focus on the group as a viable unit of analysis is a shaky ground since taking -a priori- the solidity and homogeneity of the group is, according to Laclau (2005), a false start. In other words, the study of the group, if it is to be done in a rigorous way, has to go through the process of decomposing the constituents of that group through adopting constructivist method. This agrees with what Feenberg[14] calls for in the study of technology, i.e. a constructivist analysis to technology and implicitly, a constructivist analysis to any discourse that is the by-product of technology, mainly the informational discourse that I refer to in this research as information society. Laclau (2005) calls for a shift of strategy in the analysis of political categories. In his own words:

> The route I have tried to follow in order to address these issues is a bifurcated one. The first path is to split the unity of the group into smaller unities that we have called

[14] Cf. chapter I of this thesis p. 7 where Feenberg calls for a constructivist method to analyze technology. The study of technology, as I understand this rearticulating endeavor, goes in parallel with the re-articulation of political categories in Laclau (2005) and of the category of religion in Hall (1995). With respect to this latter, the re-articulation, as Stuart Hall (1996:12-15) understands it, is explained, albeit briefly, in his essay titled "Response to Saba Mahmood".

> demands: the unity of the group is, in my view, the result of an articulation of demands. This articulation, however, does not correspond to a stable and positive configuration which should be grasped as a unified whole: on the contrary, since it is in the nature of all demands to present claims to a certain established order, it is in a peculiar relation with that order, being both inside and outside it. As this order cannot fully absorb the demand, it cannot constitute itself as a constant totality; the demand, however, requires some kind of totalization if it is going to crystallize in something which is inscribable as a claim within the 'system'. All these ambiguous and contradictory movements come down to the various forms of articulation between logic of difference and logic of equivalence …. As I argue, the impossibility of fixing the unity of a social formation in any conceptually graspable object leads to the centrality of naming in constituting that unity, while the need for social cement to assemble the heterogeneous elements once their logic of articulation (functionalist or structuralist) no longer gives this affect its centrality in social explanation (preface,ix-x)

It is important to note that the background of articulation is shared among different manifestations of the 'sub-terrain' (to use a Deleuzean term). The flight or deterritorialization are mere beginnings of new articulations in the same way an offshoot is a new beginning of a new branch in the rhizomic structure. In the case of 'Other' contexts, one description to capture their models of evolution would be to consider them as equivocal. Laclau (1996:36) writes:

> One would be inclined to argue that the same signifier can be attached to different signified(s) in different contexts (as a result of the arbitrariness of the sign). But it is clear that, in that case, the signifier would not be empty but equivocal: the function of signification in each context would be fully realized.

The Other contexts, if linked blindly to the same signified (let us say, for instance, the realization of informational capitalism), their situation would be equivocal, or I would prefer to use the concept *interstitial*. Put differently, the alternative locales such as Arab and postcolonial contexts in general find themselves caught between the need to harness elements of progress championed in the 'West', and at the same time, they have to deal with the legacy of colonialism locally. Their situation is both linked to the global through international organization, but still they have their dynamics dictate different layers of power stratification at the local level. The concept of 'interstitiality' captures the highly cemented and yet not identical relationship in the supranational level. Life in the interstice is marked by both cohabitation and separation. Articulation is also marked by this sense of continuity that makes, at the same time, any process of signification simply *without guarantees*.

In *The Cultural Analysis of Texts,* Lehtonen (2000:18) presents the second model of articulation. I find it easy to agree with Lehtonen that the procedure of meaning formation is fraught with risks, not even a work of 'the deranged or scatterbrained scholars'. The mere cutting up of the meaning formation into different worlds is very significant. For instance, Lehtonen distinguishes five different types of worlds: the world of sign systems and technologies, 'the world of texts', 'the world of

contexts', 'the world of readers', and 'the world of articulations'. It is methodologically significant because from the start, one may understand that the practice of meaning formation is not given. Rather, the construction of meanings is an outcome of various agents and elements that *inhabit a certain context.* Lehtonen's (2000) call for a '*radix'* in our approach to the study of language implies that capturing meaning in a given context cannot be fully obtained without a radical contextuality of the phenomenon.

Let us take for example Lehtonen's (2000:110) study of 'the world of contexts'. He gives the example of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.* The example of the dialogue between the mouse and the duck says it all:

> 'I proceed.' Edwin and Morcar, the earls of Mercia and North Umbria, declared for him: and even Stigand, the patriotic archbishop of Canterbury, found it advisable –'
>
> 'Found *what*? Said the Duck.
>
> 'Found *it*,' the Mouse replied rather crossly: 'of course you know what "it" means.'
>
> 'I know what "it" means well enough, when *I* find a thing, 'said the Duck:
>
> 'It's generally a frog or a worm. The question is, what did the archbishop find?'

Lehtonen (2000:110) comments that "the duck 'understands' the context-bound nature of the pronouns, 'I', 'you', 'she' and 'he', 'it', 'this', and 'that' and other pronouns are empty signs as such, which are fulfilled by referentiality only in their contexts''

It is exactly this referentiality potential of the deictic components that the practice of articulation hinges upon. Articulation does not work in vacuum. It is the process of making each deictic noun phrase (NP) or verb phrase (VP) relate to other phrases and constitute *a* specific meaning under specific referential rules. Let us take a classical syntactic problem, advanced by Noam Chomsky (1957). The sentence 'colorless green ideas sleep furiously' is not syntactically ill formed. It respects all the rules of phrase marking and word order in the English language; yet it is *semantically aberrant*. It has no sense, not for the syntactician but for the semanticist. For a syntactician, it is a good sentence. It respects the 'phrase structure rules'.

> Colorless green ideas ---------- NP (noun phrase) acting as subject function
>
> Sleep furiously ---------- VP (verb phrase) acting as a predicate
> (Verb and Adverb Complement)

For a semanticist (whose prime concern is meaning), these inner grammatical relations have no sense because we can not conceive of something that is 'colorless' and 'green' at the same time and even more aberrantly an idea that has some color. Of course, it is semantically aberrant to say that an idea sleeps, and even more ambiguous to say that ideas sleep 'peacefully' or 'furiously'. The relational role that controls the lexicon with its place in the sentence shows the importance of referentiality. This highlights the crucial role of contexts which Lehtonen (2000:110) has rightly stated in the following:

> As much as the meanings of linguistic signs depend on their position in relation to other signs, the meanings of texts are ultimately impossible to study detached from their contexts, since texts as semiotic beings do not exist without the readers, inter-texts, situations and functions that at all times are connected to them.

Subsequently, the articulation of meanings always involves the joining of new meanings under certain *specific* conditions (linguistic, contextual, political, social, technical, etc.) in a specific period. Lehtonen (2000) has meticulously sketched some of the focal layers that constitute the structure of any articulation. Also, the formation of meanings has to account for the moment of production (the world of signs), the moment of signification (the world of texts), and the moment of reception (the world of readers). For the understanding of the latter, Lehtonen (2000:133) agrees with John Fiske's (1989b:56) examination of television texts and their audiences:

> There is no such a thing as 'television audience', defined as an empirically accessible object, for there can be no meaningful categories beyond its boundaries – what is 'not the television audience'? The 'television audience' is not a social category like class, race, or gender – everyone slips in or out of it in a way that makes nonsense of any categorical boundaries: similarly when in 'it' people constitute themselves quite differently as audience members at different times – I am a different television 'audience' when watching my football team from when watching *The A-Team* with my son or *Days of our Lives* with my wife. Categories focus our thinking on similarities: people watching televisions are best modeled according to a multitude of differences.

The act of reading is a different beginning; a new articulation that depends on who is involved in the reading under what spatial and temporal conditions. Because the human mind does not resist emptiness, it always needs certain order, certain fillers to make sense of texts and contexts. This is where Ernesto Laclau's notion of *empty signifiers* and Lehtonen's study of linguistic deictics meet. One cannot tolerate a text where all deictics have no reference. Similarly, a sign remains empty if it is ambiguous, or at least an equivocal signifier. That is why I opt for the concept of interstitial. This concept ensures both reference and at the same time opens up spaces for action in all its conventional forms (social, political, ecological etc.)

Now let us turn to how Mikko Lehtonen (2000:158) defines articulation:

> Articulation offers a theory of contexts. It dictates that one can only deal, and from within, a specific context, for it is only there that practices have specific effects, those identities and relations exist. Understanding a practice involves theoretically and historically (re)constructing this context (...) From the point of view of the theory of articulation, texts articulate with contexts and the articulated texts and contexts further articulate with subjects and cultural practices (...) Hence, articulation can be conceived as *recontextualizing*, as loosening the relationship between text and its previous context (at *times even as detaching the text totally from its previous context*), and bringing new contextual elements along, or even linking the text totally with a new context. (Emphasis added)

Lehtonen (2000) has rightly put the statement 'at times even as detaching the text totally from its previous context' between brackets. It is not easy to decide how and why the breaking away from an epistemological construct can be made. It is strategically safe to put this breaking away liable to all contingencies. I am more inclined not to accept the complete detachment from the previous set of meanings. That is why I have chosen the concept *interstitial.* It is a technical tool that serves articulation, thanks to its combination of both local and global contexts, a kind of 'third space'. Interstitiality manages to find a differential space that marks its own distinctiveness. In his analysis of the postcolonial condition[15], Stuart Hall (1996) maintains that it is not possible to break away from the old set of meanings. Hall explains this intertwined relationship when he (1996:248) argues that postcolonial life "is characterized by the persistence of many of the effects of colonialism".

Consequently, any new articulation (name it informational discourse or otherwise) that does not heed the local dynamisms in the postcolonial context will simply lead to interpretative disarray. And we have witnessed this in the political practice of Algeria, for example, where the abrupt tendency to break away from the meanings that were in fixation for one hundred and thirty years brought years of bloodshed and fundamentalism which still persist since 1962 (Algeria's 'political independence') to this day.

Now, I would like to consider Hall's definition of articulation and its political implications for the subsequent study of the information age that is often presented as a 'new era'. Stuart Hall (1986:53) defines articulation as follows:

> An articulation is thus the form of the connection that *can* make a unity of two different elements, under certain conditions. It is a linkage, which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential at all time. You have to ask under what circumstances can a connection be forged or made. So, the so-called 'unity' of discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be re-articulated in different ways because they *have no necessary* 'belongingness'.

Articulation offers the possibility to decipher the seemingly coherent 'unity' of the 'real': a break away from determinism that reduces all social ills to the economic base. Articulation helps to unpack the common sense. The latter always comes to our perception in a deceiving unity (in the form of a semantic package). The common sense is presented to us with no inventory. Therefore, articulation is a way to trace back the track of any discourse and attend to the moments of its formation. The building blocks of social categories that united to form a hegemonic discourse may be disjoined and cut into their 'cab-lorry' constituents. Thus, articulation is intrinsically linked to the effects of discourse production. Hall (1989:67-8) notes that:

> Sometimes the cycle of articulation, disarticulation and re-articulation seems to offer a comforting new political logic. But re-articulation is attractive only so long as we think we are going to do the rearticulating, we don't like it so much. That has

[15] For more details, please read chapter VII.

> happened not only in these two horrendous examples, it has been happening to us perpetually over the past ten years. That is how, in my view, Thatcherism has understood hegemony much better than anybody on the Left. Its effectiveness shows that disarticulation and re-articulation need not necessarily be directed at any progressive, humane or socially just end. It has no necessary political belongingness. But that should not disturb us *theoretically.*[16]

Hall underlines the transient aspect of any hegemonic practice. He gives hope that no articulation is lasting forever. In any discursive formation, if the mechanism of its formation is dismantled, new effects can be brought up to the scene. This flexibility gives articulation its lubricity to account for a myriad of discourses. In order to understand the mechanism of articulation, it is necessary to unpack its concomitant concepts.

Hegemony is the closely linked concept to this strategy of unpacking and dismembering of seemingly unified concepts. The concept was mainly developed out of the work of Antonio Gramsci (1992), who revised classical Marxist discourse from the impasse of reductionism, and offered instead a fresh approach to how the institutional superstructure could be changed without necessarily wiping the slate of progressive endeavor. Gramsci's *Prison Notebooks* has proposed instead a plan of action for intellectuals so that they can implement the praxis of their postulations in society. But one cannot understand the real workings of articulation without referring to hegemony, which according to Stuart Hall always works through difference and consent. In this respect, Hall (1995:69) argues:

> I have always understood hegemony as *operating through* difference, rather than *overcoming* difference, but I have never really been able to get that notion across. People imagine that the subordinate groups in a hegemonic formation must be reconstituted in the image of the dominant formation. On the contrary, hegemony is an authority which can be constructed *only* by continuing to recognize difference. Patriarchal hegemony does not remake women in the image of men, for example: it provides the secondary or subaltern place for that which it recognizes as different.

Gramsci started the project whose main objective lies in rearticulating Marxism by rejuvenating Marxism and saving it from its dogmas. Gramsci (1992) detected the problem when he said that hegemony comes to us without an inventory in the form of 'common sense'. And it is articulation that offers the tools to unpack the 'common sense' and return it into its constitutive blocks. Todd Gitlin (1994:45) puts it lucidly as follows: "It was Gramsci who, in the late twenties and thirties, with the rise of fascism and the failure of the Western European working-class movements, began to consider why the working class was not necessarily revolutionary, why it could, in fact, yield to fascism."

Gramsci (1992) made it clear in his *Prison Notebooks* that the stress should be on the human agency and not on hailing the economic crises. He was disturbed by the

[16] Here, Hall was engaging with two essays one of Homi Bhabha and another of Jacqueline Rose. The discussion took place at the ICA, London, 25 January 1989.

penetration of the 'common sense' in the layers of a blithe working class. But what is the meaning of hegemony? And how is it relevant to the study of articulation? First, I will advance the definition of the concept and then see how the work of Ernesto Laclau, Raymond Williams and Stuart Hall help us see the vicissitudes and patterns along which this concept articulates at various moments in the making of social, political or informational discourses.

Raymond Williams (1977) has provided conspicuous definitions to some highly charged words in the English language. Among these, we have the concept of hegemony. Williams (1977:108) defines hegemony as follows:

> For 'hegemony' is a concept which at once includes and goes beyond two powerful earlier concepts: that of 'culture' as a 'whole social process', in which men define and shape their whole lives; and that of 'ideology', in any of its Marxist senses, in which a system of meanings and values is the expression or projection of a particular class interest.

Hegemony is not a static concept. It is always subject to be revived and consolidated. It is not a concept that is bound in a temporal grid. Hegemony is also flexible. It always tries to take the shape of 'the pot' where it is poured in, like water. It emulates the seemingly acceptable behavior of the masses. It always wears the cloak of normality. Williams (1977:112) describes this living aspect of hegemony in the following words:

> A lived hegemony is always a process. It is not, except analytically, system or structure. It is realized complex of experiences, relationships, and activities, with specific and changing pressures and limits. In practice, that is hegemony can never be singular. Its internal structures are highly complex, as can readily be seen in any concrete analysis.

This is precisely the objective of articulation. It aims at capturing those moments when these living experiences sediment in daily life. It aims at decomposing discourses that give the impression of compactness. It is like the cut up technique in cinematic art where the director interrupts the successive flow of images (visual texts) to add up, modify or reposition the scenes etc. Hall (1986:83) writes that:

> A theory of articulation is both a way of understanding how ideological elements come, under certain conditions, to cohere together within a discourse, and a way of asking how they do or do not become articulated, at specific conjunctures, to certain political subjects.

Therefore, the soft power of any hegemonic act is liable to be dismantled from within regardless of the nature of the discourse in question. It may be a speech of a ruling party, a grand discourse, national discourse, capitalism, technology, pictorial texts etc. The power of articulation has been taken to the edges of the political discourse in the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985), especially in their seminal *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. In the latter, they asked for a return to the basics or what Mikko Lehtonen (2000) called a return to the *radix*. Their strategy tries to go beyond the disappointments that resulted from the maldefinitions of the concept 'hegemony'. They ask for a post-Marxist(s) strategy that would unite

the left in such a way that their moves become more committed to the radical political call for democracy. This is akin to what Grossberg (1991: 385) surmise in the concluding chapter of *We Gotta Get out of This Place,* when he calls the Left for a reconsideration of the risks of conflating morality with the art of the possible[17], i.e. politics:

> But while it is necessary to connect politics to people's moral commitments, it is a serious mistake to confuse political struggle with a demand for moral purity. If politics is the art of the possible, and if the Left wants to be politically effective, then it must question the basis for its own strategies and decisions. In the first place, it has to articulate its own politics to people's moral and emotional life rather than attacking them.

Similarly, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985) have been very critical of the previous blithe conceptions of hegemony. They take political action to the limit of its fulfillment. They have even been disturbing the possibility of any hope to pin down a semantic formation. The contingent nature of meanings makes them liable to constant re-articulation and dis-articulation. This is what Laclau and Mouffe (1986:1) call 'the logic of the contingent':

> Even in the humble origins in Russian Social Democracy, where it called upon to cover a limited area of political effects. The concept of 'hegemony' already alludes to a kind of *contingent* intervention required by the crisis or the collapse of what would have been a 'normal' historical development (...) Finally, with Gramsci, the term acquires a new type of centrality that transcends its tactical or strategic uses: 'hegemony' becomes the key concept in understanding the very unity existing in a concrete social formation.

Hegemony, hence, becomes a tool that captures the deceptive unity of discourse which imbues all the layers of the social constituents of cultural paradigms. Hegemony is the silent power that makes linkages between the antipodes and presents itself in the mask of normality. It is the negotiation of different sites of power within various classes. Strinati (1995:165) elucidates this point in the following terms:

> "...Dominant groups in society, including fundamentally but not exclusively the ruling class, maintain their dominance by securing the 'spontaneous consent' of subordinate groups, including the working class, through the negotiated construction of a political and ideological consensus which incorporates both dominant and dominated groups."

Dominant groups in a society leave the nature of agency undefined. For example, in the age of information society where progress is determined by technoparks, Silicon Valleys and media corporations, one may just see the parallels of how these new

[17] I find the same parallelism in Stuart Hall's *Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left*, (1988). In the chapter '*Gramsci and Us'*, Hall calls for the flexibility in the practice of politics and in the subsequent theoretical constructs, i.e. we do not have to wait for Gramsci to solve our current problems. Each conjuncture requires specific set of answers.

technocrats saturate everyday life with messages and instill values that always take the shape of normality. The idea of the working class in Gramsci's times has not changed completely. It has just metamorphosed into a new functional nature. The media in our times are no more than handy to politics as it was during the interbellum. Technology has itself become the articulation of a new set of meanings. This will be the focus of the next section, to which I now turn.

Informational discourse and articulation

The concept of articulation is a double-edged concept. It can be understood as a theory and it can be understood as a method. In this work, I am taking the concept of articulation as an *interventionist* method to explain the seemingly homogenous presence of informational discourse in countries of the so-called 'third world'. This study is an attempt to *articulate* the context of these countries to the discourse of information society that promises a 'high-tech world' where everyone will have the privilege to share, express and exchange ideas with 'Others' on an equal footing. Michel Foucault, while he has provided an excellent listing of different planes upon which power exerts its influence, has been unhelpful to explain the complexity of the *relations* that hold between those discourses[18] (Hall: 2004). The utility of articulating technological culture using articulation as a method lies in the possibilities that articulation offers for the cultural analyst. I am using articulation here in the way that Jennifer Daryl Slack suggested in her later work (1996, 2005). Discussing method is not always a 'fun job' as Pertti Alasuutari (1995) put it, but it is a necessary task since it provides the researcher with means to tackle variable issues that need variable approaches.

This work is not about an ethnographic type of analysis where the researcher goes into the field and tries to penetrate the 'subjectivity' of 'Others' so that he/she can draw conclusions that are based on symbolic interactionism. Cultural studies as Alasuutari (1995:3) states clearly:

> (…) does not *oppose* symbolic interactionism or ethnographic methodology. Actually, they were both, along with other trends such as French structuralism, important ingredients in its development. But the real gist of cultural studies is to make use of all theories and methods in order to gain insights about the phenomena one studies.

Therefore, cultural studies does not refuse the use of any method, be it from the qualitative family or from the quantitative one. The main concern of cultural studies is to render a method sophisticated and effective enough to explain the complexity of 'silent but present' relations that cement social discourse about social phenomena. The uses of articulation allow the researcher an aperture to avoid

[18] In 'Foucault and Discourse' , Hall cites the downsides of being 'too much consumed by discourse' without paying attention to relations among discourses in *different contexts.*

determinism, essentialism and reductionism. All these unattractive 'isms' are always laying traps for researchers of social formations. Stuart Hall (1996:142) explains that:

> The theory of articulation, as I use it, has been developed by Ernesto Laclau, in *Politics and Ideology in Marxist Theory*. His argument there is that the political connotation of ideological elements has no necessary belongingness, and thus we need to rethink the contingent, the non-necessary, connection between different practices – between ideology and social forces, and between different elements within ideology, and between different social groups composing a social moment etc, etc. He uses the notion of articulation to break with the necessitarian and reductionist logic that has dogged the classical theory of ideology.

Articulation can be then understood to mean the unraveling process of the coagulated discourses and the tracing of the *nature* of the linkages between and *within* different discourses. It is a debunking strategy to question loose elements within the chain of social and discursive formation. Hall has used the metaphor of the lorry and the cab to illustrate the workings of articulation. As a lorry can be connected to a cab, *under certain conditions,* it can also be dislodged, disarticulated, or disbanded when the formative conditions that were necessary but transient cease to have any effect. One can connect a lorry to reach his/her summerhouse. Once there, the lorry can be disconnected and the cab can rest. Alternatively, another metaphor is that of the bus ticket whose validity ends when one reaches her or his destination. The social contract that binds the driver to the passenger (that requires the driver to take responsibility for the safety of the passenger as a return for the monetary value that the ticket symbolizes) ends once the passenger gets to her destination or when the one hour inscribed in the ticket's value is over. Articulation, in this way, weaves contingent connections among elements that are arbitrary, but whose connection is necessary when the social conditions are ripe for the linkage.

As I stated above, I am using the method of articulation in the sense explained by Hall, Laclau and especially in the work of Jennifer D. Slack (1989) where she "contextualizes technology, although she develops her work on articulation more explicitly in her later work"[19]. I have opted for her formulation of the method of articulation, for it is well informed by the works of Hall (1996) , Laclau (1982), and Deleuze (1993) who have discussed different levels and applications of the articulatory practice. The work of Slack (2005) has culminated in a roadmap to the cultural study of what she rightly calls the emerging 'technological culture'. Slack (2005:128) argues that:

> To think of technology as articulation insists, as should now be obvious, that technologies are not mere things. Rather, they consist of complex articulations that have been typically thought of as the context of technology. But as you can see, one of the insights of articulation is that context, or culture, is not something 'out there'

[19] In personal communication, Slack (2008) says that all her work has been concerned with articulation 'even though the earlier work does not use the term'.

> out of which technology emerges or into which it is put. Rather, the particular articulations that constitute a technology *are* its context. There is no culture *and* technology; rather there is *technological culture.*

Slack's (2005) is one of the few books that have sought the methodological application of articulation to the technological culture that has been the product of the infusion of technologies in the informational city, so to speak. Before discussing the articulation of technologies in non-Western locales, let me expand on the concept of articulation as a method to shed light on one of the perspectives that Slack proposed in 'Contextualizing Technology' (1989), 'The Theory and Method of Articulation in Cultural Studies' (1996) and *Culture and Technology: A Primer* (2005). Slack (2005:112) describes the concept of articulation as follows:

> The concept of articulation is perhaps one of the generative concepts in contemporary cultural studies. It is critical for understanding how cultural theorists conceptualize the world, analyze it and participate in shaping it. For some, articulation has achieved the status of theory, as in 'the theory of articulation'. Theoretically, articulation can be understood as a way of characterizing a social formation without falling into the twin traps of reductionism and essentialism. …But articulation *can also be thought of as a method* used in cultural analysis. On the one hand, articulation suggests *a methodological framework* for understanding what cultural study does. On the other hand, it provides strategy for undertaking a cultural study, a way of 'contextualizing' the object of one's analysis. (Emphasis added)

In this sense, Slack (1996) describes the terrain where the work of articulation takes place. Articulation allows both theorizing different social formations locally without necessarily losing sight of the dynamics that are at work at the global level. On the other hand, she (1996: 112) reminds us that a certain amount of 'Deleuzean vigilance' is necessary when thinking of articulation as a theory and/or as a method. This is so because it can lead to the 'excess' of formalism that Stuart Hall pinpointed when he acknowledged that 'articulation contains the danger of high formalism' (Hall 1980a: 69). Hall made that reminder, as Slack (1996:112) notes, "during the height of the Althusserian structuralist moment in cultural studies, when the threat of formalism was paramount, we still need to be sensitive to the warning today – even if for slightly different reasons." The power of articulation as a method lies in its modesty, in its awareness of the limits of discursive practices, and above all in its utility as a method to question complacent positions.

The method of articulation is radically grounded in the present. It seeks to trace the links of the enmeshed connections that constitute discourses or 'Foucauldean regimes of truths' that people position themselves within, without paying much attention to the contingent and unnecessary relationships that have constituted those discourses in the first place. Nonetheless, the articulatory method is not just about connection and infusion. It is, above all, like Slack (1996:114) argues, about the '*process* of creating connections much in the same way hegemony is not domination but the process of creating and maintaining consensus or of co-coordinating interests'

The method of articulation is also about questioning the modes of production that cut across this work. It allows us to question the implications of connecting two or more modes of productions, without paying attention to the formative conditions that have led to the coagulation of each mode of production. Therefore, when I question the notion of technology transfer (chapter seven) or the Arab cultural paradigm within which communication is contextualized (chapter five), I am questioning the mode of production that informs the contexts where technology is packed and the meaning of its reception in the context of the consumption. That is what I refer to in this work when I question the translatability of technology in chapter seven. By applying articulation to the different modes of production, one is trying as Slack (1996) and Kuan-Hsing Chen (1994), to avoid reduction, for a reductionist stance fails to explain the working of hegemony and can not account for the forces of subordination and domination. The naïve assumption that one mode of production has a universal value and its applicability is valid everywhere just slurs over the contextual conditions that are a necessary part of the specific planes of practical application of different modes of production. In my methodological approach to articulating technology, I will expand a bit more on the role of the context in engaging with 'alien' modes of production in chapter five.

For now, I draw a parallel between the focus of the method of articulation on accommodating different combinations under specific contextual requirements *and* the working of hegemony, which recognizes difference as Hall (1995:69) explained, in reply to Homi K. Bhabha. One of the purposes of articulation is to unveil the moments when a hegemonic discourse, informational or otherwise, start to make the cement of a social formation, i.e. to make a social fabric appear as normal. For instance, the mere fact of keeping on persuading the viewers of the commensurateness of abortion with the ideal pursuit of freedom in a society manages to persuade some if not many and to *position* them within a discourse by neutralizing their resisting tendencies. Alternatively, let us re-examine the example of Stuart Hall (1995:69), who argues that 'patriarchal hegemony does not remake women in the image of men, for example: it provides the secondary or subaltern place for that which it recognizes as different'. An articulatory practice revolves around the axis of re-articulating, and disarticulating the aberrant moments of social formation. The proviso in Hall's formulation of hegemony suggests that the seemingly different linkages between different modes of production does not mean that the dominant paradigm tries to maintain a neutral presence in the dominated contexts (as in the postcolonial condition, for instance). Laclau (1982) in his formulation of the concept of articulation tries to avoid economic determinism; and accordingly, evades some of the lapses that certain ethnographic methods take for granted especially in their benign faith that the interviewee, for instance, says the truth and does not *adjust* his/her answers to what the ethnographer wants to hear. This is what Hall tries to save the method of articulation from when he talks about the necessity of wrestling with what one does not know , rather than with what one 'speaks with profound fluency' (Hall, 1992: 80). In other words, articulation seeks to challenge the complacent discourses that one thinks 'to speak fluently'. It is a call

for a constant re-examination of the social, cultural, and economic structures that are essential in any tracing of social change within different social contexts.

The method of articulation has the potential to explain adequately the workings of hegemony, for it refuses to be in-boxed into a boundary-laden set of choices. This goes against the hegemonic insatiable longing for the fixing and fixation of necessarily 'unstable' discourses into a set of selectively defined principles or guidelines that we generally refer to as 'common sense' or 'natural patterns of behavior'. Laclau has added a buffer zone to the explanation of class struggle, as Slack (1996:161) retakes in this point:

> A class is hegemonic not so much to the extent that it is able to impose a uniform conception of the world on the rest of society, but to the extent that it can articulate different visions of the world in such a way that their potential antagonism is neutralized.

The mechanism of hegemony as stated in Laclau's statement is akin to Sun Tzu's commandment: "to fight and conquer is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting." That is exactly what hegemony is keen on. It is what Laclau calls the 'neutralization' of resisting forces if one cannot overcome them. Articulation captures those moments when hegemony, while recognizing difference and feigning multiplicity, instills a certain malicious 'order' whose sole objectives are control and surveillance. Just like when one downloads a license key or crack from a party that presents itself as GNU (a computer operating system for 'free' software), one benefits from the 'free' software at the determents of her/his own privacy. The seemingly 'democratic website' snatches the personal computers ID and installs malicious programs once you click 'OK'. This very consent is what hegemony is after, and articulation tries to examine the implication of such service/client contracts. Articulation is about shifting our primary questions from the claim that there is nothing beyond discourse to the questioning of the very constitutive formation of that discourse. Hall (1986b: 56) elucidates this point in the following terms:

> If what is at issue is the operation of the discursive, it is easy to leave behind any notion that anything exists outside of discourse. Struggle is or isn't potentially articulatable with anything and society becomes 'a totally open discursive field'

In this study, I am using the method of articulation as an interventionist method to re-examine what I consider a discourse of information society without inventory that pays little or no attention to the necessary contextual differences that claim their inalienable right to have a 'say' on the formative procedures of information society discourse. Thus, through this work I attempt to map a new detour in the applications of discursive practices within neocolonial contexts and bypass, hopefully, the pitfalls of theories like dependency and unequal development that have dominated the field of communication studies for long. This is partly what Slack (1996:125) calls for to consolidate a full conception of the genealogy of articulation:

> Considering the role of specific articulations such as those of gender, race, ethnicity, and neo-colonialism; foregrounding the politics of institutionalization; and finally, considering the influence of strategic interventions practiced among the ranks of the practitioners of cultural studies.

The usefulness of articulation as a method is due to its being informed by the theoretical flank of articulation theory. While Slack (1996), especially her later work (2005), seeks to push further the domain of application, the theoretical framework seems to be established, but kept open, by cultural theorists emerging from different contextual references ranging from the continental philosophy of Gilles Deleuze (1988) to the work of Stuart Hall (1996) , Lawrence Grossberg (1991) , Laclau & Mouffe (1982), and many others. I agree with Slack's (1996) concern that for the genealogy of the method of articulation to be strengthened, it needs more serious work from all fields where politics and power interplay, like in gender studies, political economy, neocolonialism, environmental studies etc. In this work, I attempt the application of articulation to the postcolonial and Arab contexts, (or what I call 'alternative locales'). The aim is to advance the use of the method of articulation in the study of media content and politics, especially in countries under 'authoritarian regimes', because many local forces of production need linkages with the transnational and at the same time have to negotiate with the local authority. Articulation allows this possibility.

This study is a call for a critical investigation of the processes that have led to the bifurcation of needs (the industrialized nations asking for more acceleration of putting people online) while the postcolonial ones are calling for breaching the divides that the WSIS's (World Summit on Information Society) 'voluntary' solidarity digital fund does not suffice to fix. It is also an investigation into what makes information society discourse adopt Orwell's (1945) motto that 'all animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others'– a state of affairs that the international information 'order' has been reflecting since the unseating of M' Bow and the burial of NWICO (New World Information and Communication Order), which was a missed attempt to redress the unequal informational order. A process accelerated by the globalization process since the 1990s up to the two phases of the World Summit on Information Society that took place in Geneva (2003) and Tunis (2005) respectively.

Articulation as a method to unbolt the mechanism of technological culture

The method of articulation allows checking the process of borrowing from seemingly unmatched theoretical resources; in this work, technology and its formalized discourse of information society are the issues I am concerned with. Slack (2005) has made it explicit in the title of the book *Culture+ Technology: A Primer* that the result of adding culture to technology gives what she calls

technological culture. Indeed one cannot escape the necessary properties that are built into the computer chip. As I will discuss later in this work (in the section, 'Why is re-articulation needed in the Arab context? Chapter five'), when one buys the Internet's gadgets, one also buys the social and cultural relationships that are installed, or rather, prescribed in it. This is what Slack (1989:337) suggests when she writes: "by now, it should be obvious that what the abstract term technology means is itself an articulation. What technology is, its definition and identity is a non-necessary set of specific connections formed in the conjuncture of other social forces, practices, identities, and ideologies."

One has to take the wording here with diligence: when we say that technology is an articulation, an entailing question would be: under what *contextual conditions* was that articulation formed? To put it differently, *how* and *where* did the articulation or the fixing of social relationships take place and under what mode of production? These are serious questions for initiatives like the one offered to the African country whereby there will be a distribution of green hundred-dollars laptops for the children of Africa as a 'solution' to a more structural problem (Negroponte's initiative). Slack (1989) calls for rethinking the *problematic of the context.* Her focus on the salience of *connections* and social *relationships* that binds technologies is a subtle critique to technologies that are destined for an undifferentiated consumer. She invokes Heidegger's notion of 'presencing' or 'location' that constitutes the site of consumption.

In this work, I use Sartre's notions of 'Self' and 'Other' as far as these notions are illustrative of the postcolonial condition. Additionally, the study of parts and wholes (both in Husserl's *Logical Investigations* and in Sartre's notions of 'Self' and 'Other') add up to the debate raised by Slack's call for a sharpening of the application of the method of articulation. Therefore, my use of those Sartrean and Husserlian concepts is only limited to their relevance to explain the nature of articulation between the capitalist mode of production and the pre-capitalist mode of production. The 'self/other', 'whole/parts' stand for those modes of production respectively. Stating that technology is an articulation as Hall (1995: 67-8) acknowledges is troubling to the articulating selves since it throws them into reconsidering the underpinnings of their argument: this is his suggestion as he maintains that "when it is we who are rearticulated, we don't like it very much'. Therefore, my postcolonial positioning of information society discourse (chapter seven) is not a call for a 'Luddite position'. It is a call for reconsidering the agency of the capitalist mode of production in the contexts of the recipients of informational discourse, mainly the pre-modern contexts. Therefore, the role of the Internet that is presented as a solution to solve the 'Third World's problems needs some critical approach to articulate the nature of the global cultural flow (Appadurai's 1990 model). This is because the headquarters of ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) is in Silicon Valley and the impacts of the decisions taken there are global. Additionally, the case of technology transfer is also one of the loose bolts within the discursive formation of informational

society (chapter four). Therefore, I share my conviction with Slack and Wise's (2005:128) proposal for *critically* rethinking the 'labeled technologies' that are offered to postcolonial countries as 'innocent' machines whose sole aim is to serve and entertain:

> We propose that you think about technologies in terms of articulations among the physical arrangements of matter, typically labeled technologies, and a range of contingently related practices, representations, experiences, and *affects*.

Articulation as a method is useful to the study of technology at the informational age because it is not bound by any field variables. In other words, Internet studies deal with a medium (the Internet) that is run by a private body (ICANN which is mainly a technical body) whose relationship with the US government is an *articulation* (i.e. a temporary contract that can expire). This means that any discussions on the future of the Internet have to be taken into the frame of no guaranteed arrangements. This is an instance of articulation where the contract between Internet bodies (such as ICANN) and political institutions is subject to change. Contracts are renewable but their nature is subject to change. Therefore, the nature of the contract between ICANN and the USA government is the best example that shows that articulation method is useful for the study of technological applications within different contexts. We know that ICANN's contract will end on 31st of December 2009 after which no one knows how the future of the Internet management and governance will be. The question of who will be controlling the root server resources allocating IPs will also be raised. Additionally, the issues of legal jurisdiction are also an ongoing thorny matter. All these concerns are issues of articulatory nature, where the relationship between decisive bodies (technical or governmental) is not guaranteed or permanent. They are, rather, contingent, temporary and liable to change. The core of the issue in an articulatory and methodological practice is to describe a seemingly stable situation. The debate over information society takes for granted, for example, the stability of the Internet or at least evades facing the possibility of an eventual breakdown in the communication systems. It always pushes for more consumption of software. Therefore, an articulatory practice is needed not to halt the move forward, but to check the process that leads to the formation of 'unchecked' concepts like 'Information Society'. Additionally, articulation is useful to reassess the validity of all this faith in the salvation through the technological paradigm. If information is an ideology as Slack (1984) explains, then one has to rearticulate and disarticulate the contextual forces of production where modern technology emanated. Slack (1984: 247-56) puts it lucidly when she notes that:

> The information revolution, stripped or else, is a hollow signifier. Alone, it is the ink on this page, the utterance from these lips; it is meaningless; it has no necessary relationship to any thing in reality, any thing signified. As is the case in the relationship to any thing signified in general, the utterance or ink marks, 'information revolution', bear no necessary correspondence to any thing 'out there'.

Indeed any approach to the technological discourse has to account for the signified or the multiplicity of signified(s) that technology refers to. Most importantly, an articulatory approach to technological culture as Slack (2005) puts it has to take into account the complexity of the social context wherein it is positioned. For without the recognition of the necessary complex nature of the social formation, one would fall in the trap of underestimating the ideological nature of what Marx calls in *The German Ideology* (2001: 92) the 'means of mental production'. Stuart Hall (1985:91) emphasizes this complexity of the context when he declares:

> Althusser persuaded me, and I remain persuaded, that Marx conceptualizes the ensemble of relations which make up a whole society – Marx's "totality" – as essentially a complex structure, not a simple one. Hence, the relationship within that totality between its different levels – say, the economic, the political, and the ideological (as Althusser would have it) – cannot be a simple or immediate one.

It is within this framework that I would like to approach the discourse of information society that is being 'talked about' and driven by different stakeholders, whether in 2003 (Geneva phase) when these stakeholders (mainly governments, private sectors and civil society representatives) met; or in 2005 (the Tunis phase) when the issue of 'Internet governance' surfaced. The back-grounding or at least the secondary attention given to the DSF (Digital Solidarity Fund) is very telling and confirms that the discourse of information society seems to underplay the immediate needs of the global community and maintains the fusion of the monopoly capitalism while it offers infotainment. However, before drawing any conclusions, I will proceed in my addressing the different clues that help us have a clearer idea of the 'technological riddle' – to use Pertti's Alasuutari's (1995:7) metaphor that a research is like a riddle). In his words:

> Consider the following example: 'What is in the morning on four, the daytime on two, and in the evening on three legs?' This riddle, describing the human life span, illustrates the basic idea of unriddling. Any single hint or clue could apply to several things, but the more hints there are to the riddle, the smaller the number of possible solutions. Yet each hint or piece of information is of its own kind and equally important; in unriddling – or qualitative analysis – one does not count odds. Every hint is supposed to fit in with the picture offered as the solution.

Likewise, I see this work as a riddle with seven clues (chapters). Each chapter offers an angle from which the process of re-articulating (unriddling) the discourse of information society makes the full picture. My objective in this work is to contribute to the discussion concerning the applicability of the theory and method of articulation to other objects of studies, especially technology. Slack (1996, 2005) has laid some of the foundations that are useful in the application of articulation not only to technology, but also to other fields of inquiry. Slack (2005) suggests that articulation can be applied in postcolonial contexts and that more work is required in such fields so that the theory of articulation enhances its explanatory field. My intention in this study is to contribute to the theoretical part of this explanatory endeavor. It is in this respect that I try not to limit to myself contextual reference or case study bound type of analysis. Rather, I adopt a cross comparative approach to

the empirical data that can help to understand the process of articulating information discourse in the postcolonial contexts. Therefore, my objective is to add another block to the field of applying the method of articulation from the standpoint of alternative locales.

The process of decolonization that Morocco, for instance, experiences has pushed me to reflect on the need for a critical approach to the one-dimensional discourse of information society. For this reason, I adopt a comparative study of statistical cases from different contexts that are seemingly different but whose epistemic nature is more or less the same. I refer here to the input from North Africa and sub-Saharan Africa. In this work, I re-articulate the discourse of information society in both contexts since they share the same postcolonial trajectory despite the necessary singularity of each postcolonial experience and context (every country has its internal dynamics, yet postcolonial countries occupy the recipient position in informational discourse). Thus, this will explain my reliance on material that comes from a wide range of postcolonial contexts. For instance, I cross-refer to the work of Samir Amin (1974, 1990) and Amin Alhassan (2004). The first represents the writings that focused on the Middle East and the second those that try to understand the postcolonial conjuncture in sub-Saharan Africa. My position is to enhance the comparative approach *without* underestimating the *contextual specificity*. To accomplish this task, only an explanatory theory and method can account for the changes and challenges in each context and ultimately give us a complete image of the direction of any discourse. Therefore, I wish to contribute to the enhancing of the theory and method of articulation and to reiterate Slack's (2005) call for the need of more applications from different types of research disciplines and backgrounds. The question of how to do this is fully explained in the introduction of this work, and in more details in chapter two of the work. Pertti Alasuutari's (1995:7) statement that doing research is an unriddling practice captures one meaning of the process of re-articulating the seemingly secure discursive positions.

Technological coagulation: the question of intentional agency

> Articulation is the construction of one set of relations out of another, it often involves *delinking* or disarticulating connections in order to link or rearticulate others. Articulation is a continuous struggle to reposition within shifting field of forces, to redefine the possibilities of life by redefining the field of relations – the context within which a practice is located. For the effects of any practice are always the products of its position within a context. The significance or effects of an event or practice of history, and its critical reconstruction, displacement and renewal. (Grossberg 1992:54)

A sound account of the soft power of technology necessitates a careful study of the components of the technological apparatus. Technology does not exist in vacuum; 'some' people make it for the use and consumption by 'Others'. Technology is an articulation whose driving force is a complex set of events or small mechanistic

cogs. At times, each cog behaves in a docile way, executes the commands; at other times, the same cog turns the tables on the agent, and breaks the system to start other turns. But before delving into the discourse of the technological apparatus as such, let us first make an account of the elements that behave as *the qua* machinist in the overall system. Grossberg (1992:38) gave three keywords that will help us in the task of unbolting the machine. The first of these is 'interpellation'. I agree with Grossberg that the media have transmitted popular culture for mainly economic reasons. Grossberg writes that one of main objectives of the media is 'to maximize the profits of the emergent cultural industries (....) and to help create an economy based on mass consumption' (1992:38).

While this function is undoubtedly tenable, I am reluctant to accept that the function of the media in the information age is solely limited to the transmission of popular culture. My argument is that they have *become the popular culture.* This seems to highlight the role of technology, but its consequences are very significant especially as the huge dissemination of popular culture has rendered consumers indifferent to the social, economic and political processes that are instilled in the capitalist commodity. The finished product becomes a mere floating event that serves the capitalist chain through attracting more consumers. Technology has indeed displaced the message to become itself the agent of a new message that is still unfolding. Former president George W. Bush in his state of the union address encouraged students to opt for mathematics and science, lest the USA should be overtaken by the arising Indian and Chinese dragon valleys. The focus on science in a political speech is not mere articulation of words for a political routine. The capitalization on science by the political agency has consequences on our conception of what might be the fate of agency. Are 'we' to forsake our agency and to hand it to hackers and technopunks? Is technology's tissue coagulating at the expense of the ecological environment? Is the human agency in danger?

Grossberg's (1992) "Articulation and Agency" sheds light on some relevant tools that may help us in the dissection of the language of the information age. The first of these conditions is the identification of the playing actors in the fixing of roles within the information society. I prefer to call this process a coagulating process, for it is both unnoticed, yet it firmly fixes the cuts. Grossberg (1992:14) writes:

> Identifying the politics of any struggle ultimately requires a map, not only of the actors and agents, but also of what I shall call the agencies of this struggle. This pinpoints one of the most theoretical issues: the relationship of subjects, actors and agency.

What is, then, the nature of this relationship in the informational society? The article titled *Cybernetic Imagination of Capitalism* specifies the historical context that has marked the evolution of the social, economic and political conceptions of new technologies. Webster and Robins (1999) have articulated the basic traits that have characterized the history of information society. They especially refer to the highly charged concept of 'mobilization' that, by an ambiguous coincidence, means both organizing the populations and their movement toward a 'new' horizon. This

dual meaning of mobilization (organization and movement of populations) was concretized by the double functioning of technology in the nineteenth century factory. Technology was used both as a means of surveillance and as a means of production. It both articulated the workers within the capitalist apparatus (work relations) and subjugated them at the same time to the ultimate targets of capital. And by a swift spin, it turned the pre-capitalist artisans into a means that serve the diversified, wage-based factory owned by wealthy pockets left by the colonial legacy. This is probably what Webster and Robins (1988:47) partly imply in their succinct description of the forces of production:

> Control was then truly structural. The time clock and the assembly line prevailed. Relations of power, subsumed into the functioning of technology, became automatic and invisible. Fordism represents the culmination of relative mobilization as a regime within the factory.

However, the mobilization process is not complete. The power relations that Robins and Webster articulated took place within one cog of the overall machine. The factory itself does not exist in isolation; it is a part of the global market. I mean that the factory power is only one monad that interacts with other agencies, including the consumers. More interestingly, the factory (as a site of production) interlocks with the workers who are both the means of production and the object of production. Fordism, indeed, has redefined the economic roles within society. The focus on accelerating production and disseminating industries led to the bourgeoning of new links within the capitalist chain, for example, the promotion of advertising and its inclusion as an integral part of the production process. It is no longer superfluous to the production circuit. Rather, any industrial production needs a section dealing with advertising and selling the products to consumers.

Thus, Fordism led to the purchasing of large volume production and increased the appetite of consumers. Webster and Robins (1999:112) refer to this as the *growth of consumerism as a way of life.* The Fordist model also convened or articulated with the Keynesian economic policies that signaled the interventionist role of the state in the production process. The state assumed the role of arbitration in the event of industrial conflicts. It also seized the employment market. Other traits of the Fordist mode of production involved *the annexation of time and space respectively.* Under the Fordist model, both time and space underwent a radical restructuring. The centralization of the production units and the blending of private time with work time ushered in the first symptoms of the collapse of the system.

The reshaping of power in everyday life and the effacing of symbolic borders between the private and the public kindled the coming of the Post-Fordism era. David Harvey (1989) has made an interesting account of the main conditions that urged the restructuration of Western economies in the early 1970s. He particularly delineates the general proclivity to mass consumption that faced the Western markets, which were already saturated because of over-production. In addition, the fierce competition that these markets faced from Japan and the newly industrialized countries (NICs), mainly Korea, Taiwan and Singapore contributed to the increase

in production. In addition, the increase in oil price because of the OPEC decision to push up the prices led to the dismal results that were visible in the high inflation rates.

In the era of 'post-Fordism', a new articulation of power and social configurations was created. The main features of this re-organization included the re-modeling of labor objectives and space. Production turned from mass production to small-scale goods, with a view to increase customization with little investment. This new modeling of goods led to the shaping of the need for niche markets. Post-Fordism has also brought about a new wave of political and social forms and practices, namely the decline of the working class and the political backdrop that fueled their political aspirations.

The articulation of these forces of mobilization has set the terms for not only the lived life of the consumers, but also for the revision of the stakeholders in the age of information society. The very functioning of the state has undergone erosion. The proliferation of the ICT networks, the automation of work experience and the disappearance of some jobs and their replacement with others, the increase of surveillance and the intense policing of the public space have altered the formative communities that set society on a firm capitalist line. Mobilization in the information society did not kill leisure, free time and the consumption zeal; it has just *modified* them.

Webster and Robins (1999) explain that the likelihood that the realm of 'leisure' and 'free' time will also be further subsumed under the regime of consumerism – the trends apparent in Fordist society – will expand and deepen. Commodified entertainment and services will be oriented towards increasingly privatized and passive recreation and consumption.

Although the categories[20] of time, leisure, space and consumption are redefined to suit the needs of a new articulation, they do not necessarily lead to a free and equal *access* to the fruits of economic assemblage. My concern here is with the possibility of extending the articulation of information society to the non-Western contexts. The question one may pose at this stage is whether the reconfiguration of the 'post-Fordist' mechanism can lead to a real 'free polymorphous information society'. 'One that is composed of innumerable mobile groups' (Webster & Robins, 1999: 114). Is it imaginable to have an information society that could extend the space of its transaction beyond its center of creation? Grossberg (1992:116-7) in his analysis of the nature of social formation within history writes:

> The second view sees history as the product of forces (agency) transcending the structure of history itself, it presupposes an ontological difference between structure

[20] The revision of these categories has become the leitmotif in the analysis of the new social stratification caused by the rise of new professional sectors, especially those dealing with the increase in the service occupational 'work stations'. This has made many categories traditionally used to describe social change (the main theme of sociology) fade away.

> (history) and agency. Historical subjects (whether individuals or groups) are not only the authors of actions but the agents of history(...) Contrary to this view, cultural studies suggests that what individuals are, as human beings, is not guaranteed or intrinsic to them. 'Humanity' is the product of social practices which define what it means to be human (....) different people in different societies struggle to define the boundaries of human nature, if only to be able to exclude some people or practices: 'savages' 'infidels', 'the insane', 'the criminal', 'the sexually deviant', 'women', 'blacks' etc. have all been excluded both semantically and functionally, at different times and places.

I retain from this exposition of the human relation the notion of excluding other categories from social struggles. Information society, being the result of a long process of articulation and reconfiguration, poses challenges to the semi-industrialized countries and the postcolonial society in general. The questions that loom at the horizon are germane to the very essence of information society. The World Summits on Information Society (WSIS) that took place both in Geneva (2003) and Tunis (2005) have so far revealed that information society is faced with managerial, political, cultural and even historical setbacks. The increasing abyss between the information poor and the information rich within and across nations is among the concerns that dominated the reports of countries in the South. Also, the issues of controlling root servers, Internet governance, free and open source software (FOSS), privacy, security matters and management have all signaled that struggle in the information age has taken new forms mainly due to the polymorphous character of the groups or nations involved. So, what are the elements that articulate our understanding of information society discourse?

Articulating information society

> Technological change can only be understood in the context of the social structure within which it takes place. Yet such an understanding requires something more than historically specific description of a given society. We must be able to locate technology in the level and process of the social structure underlying the dynamics of any society. (Manuel Castells 1989:7)

Castells has defined the nature of the links that combine the different modes of production with the multifarious social structures within which they operate. One cannot conceive of a ready-made standardized mode of development that can be translated to other contexts. Modes of production are, in fact, the result of different contextualized conditions and processes of production. Such conditions draw their nature from different relations of production that constitute the overall character of a given economy in a given context. The economic development of the European societies is a result of a constellation of historical, economic, cultural and even environmental specificities that triggered off the industrial phase. Likewise, the emergence of information society era is a direct result of a long succession of many historical, economic, social, and political events that combined in order to create

new means of production and new means of consumption. Castells (1989:7) makes it clear that we are witnessing the rise of a new mode of production that requires a new adaptation to its mechanism of relations:

> The analytical focus here is on the emergence of a new mode of development which I call 'the informational mode' in historical interaction with the process of restructuring of the capitalist mode of production. Therefore, one needs new definitions for concepts like mode of production, mode of development, and restructuring. Such definitions, if they are to be theoretical and not simply taxonomic, require succinct presentation of the broader social theory that lends analytical meaning to such concepts as tools of understanding social structures and social change.

Indeed, the international social community is at the doorstep of an informational economy that necessarily requires new analytical methods, and immediate restructuring of both capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of production. This orientation is articulated in the declaration of principles and plan of action that summarize the global aims of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS). Both Geneva declaration of principles and Tunis declaration show that the choice of technology[21] development and distribution is strategic to all the stakeholders (governments, private sectors, and civil societies). The main problem here is how we could transplant the informational mode of development from the industrial centers to the non-industrial contexts. In other words, is it possible to 'copy' and 'paste' European industrial articulation to the non-Western contexts? If articulation is mainly a theory of contexts that links this meaning to that context, this mode of development to that plane of production, and this meaning to that cultural experience, what could be the cultural and economic consequences of Western technology in the pre-capitalist or agrarian modes of production?

In his analysis of tributary cultures, Samir Amin (1989) has argued that social development is not an even process. His main hypothesis is that capitalism, as we know it in the West, cannot yield the same results in other cultures that have not experienced the same economic, cultural, and social development as the industrial West. Amin (1989:7) refers to the incommensurability between what he calls *economism* and the tributary mode of production. He explains this incompatibility as follows:

> My hypothesis is that all tributary cultures are based upon the preeminence of the metaphysical aspiration, by which I mean the search for absolute truth. This religious or quasi-religious character of the dominant ideology of tributary societies responds to an essential requirement of the social reproduction of these societies. By contrast,

[21] Kaarle Nordenstreng notes the change of approach in the discourse of WSIS summits vis-à-vis the previous central theme of NWICO (New World Information and Communication Order). The focus in the NWICO was politically oriented. The WSIS discourse is more technologically driven. The change of global conjuncture has created a change in the *nature* of our understanding of communication itself. For more on this, please read the complete interview of Kaarle Nordenstreng with Claudia Padovani (2005).

> the culture of capitalism is founded upon the renunciation of this metaphysical aspiration in favor of a search for partial truths.

Amin (1989:48) has expressed his skepticism as to the easy transfer of packaged values and modes of thoughts to other contexts. In his analysis of the Mediterranean and Arab-Islamic cultural experience, he notes the following characteristics that shaped the medieval Arab-Islamic world:

> In various writings published in Arabic, I have tried to characterize the nature of the social and political struggles that shook the medieval Arab-Islamic world. There is the latent, permanent conflict between the people and the authority, which bears all the characteristics of the class struggle characteristic of tributary societies. The people (peasants and small crafts people) suffer the permanent oppression and exploitation *typical of all tributary societies*.

The tributary character of the Arab-Islamic region and its family-based system makes the study of the impacts of the informational economy on this region urgent. This is because the values hailed by the information society agents collide with the interests of the ruling elites in the Arab-Islamic region. The introduction of information and freedom of expression shakes the grounds that legitimate the existence of the many political systems in the region. In the same vein, Amin (1989:49) writes:

> The examples could be multiplied. Arab-Islamic social thought remains imprisoned by the objective conditions of tributary society. It goes around in circles, sometimes colliding against the wall of rationalizing scholasticism, and sometimes running into the wall of formalist submission; sometimes it gets caught in the impasse of the ascetic flight.

The historical background of the Arab-Islamic region is necessary in the analysis and understanding of different hindrances that surround the realization of the global aims of information society. I will analyze the political and cultural question in chapter five. Now, suffice it to say that the articulation of information society is not a copy paste practice. It is a more complex process that has to take into consideration the different variables that shape each mode of production. The Western mode of production had passed different stages before it initiated the 'informational mode' of production. Schumpeter (1947) states that capitalism appears as 'the last stage of the decomposition of feudalism'. In the case of non-Western societies, one can not state with ease that capitalism is a post feudal stage, since most landed economy is still under the grip of a cluster of families that are linked politically with the state. The same concern can be expressed vis-à-vis the move towards the informational mode of production. This is because the informational mode of production is not a break away from the already existing modes of development, but a mere added layer to the long standing established economic relations that have shaped the relationship between the heavily industrialized West and the newly emerging economies of the postcolonial societies.

Manuel Castells and Peter Hall (1994) propose three main contemporary economic revolutions:

1 The technological revolution based in information technologies (genetic engineering and the discovery of new sources of energy)
2 The formation of global economy, the European Economic Area as an example
3 The emergence of a new form of economic production and management, which Manuel Castells calls informational

The articulation of these economic revolutions is still problematic, for the following reasons: first, the economic revolution that aims at the creation of a global market or a global economy is still hampered by the dual nature of its globalizing proclivity. Global economy targets global markets, regardless of the condition of 'Other' social and economic structures that might not be ready to reap the same benefits. This is so, because the *nation state* will keep the frontiers solid, and it will prohibit a free flow of people coming from the non-EU area, for example. This makes the economic revolution a purely 'double speak' enterprise.

The second reason that makes the process of globalizing the technopoles an arduous one is the issue of administration of the economic production that Castells calls 'informational'. Most importantly, the issue of informational governance or what is referred to as the '*e-governance* issue'.

This seemingly complacent process of globalization of information is still hampered by questions that are relevant to the daily practice of the users of information. Issues of freedom of expression, privacy, intellectual rights, health, and security are among the issues that any approach to global administration of information needs to account for. This is emphasized by the reversal of the economic models. In the era of information society, the informational economy takes a horizontal shape rather than a vertical form. This is what I alluded to when I discussed the change from the tree-like mode of representation to the rhizome-like shape of economic production. Castells (1994:3) describes this shift as follows:

> Furthermore, the informational economy seems to be characterized by new organizational forms. Horizontal networks substitute for vertical bureaucracies as the most productive form of organization and management. Flexible specialization replaces standardized mass production as the new industrial form best able to adapt to the variable geometry of changing world demand and versatile cultural values.

Indeed, the articulation of economic relations in the informational age reflects the nature of informational structures within different organizations that allow the management and execution of different stages of the economic chain. The main challenge in the information age is not how big an economic enterprise is, but how *fast* business moves across different networks, and how *fast* it responds in the event of some contingency.

The three stages described above do not find, as yet, their materialization in the tributary mode of production.

The technological revolution takes place in limited industrial centers, where major technopoles have mushroomed from Silicon Valley to the Keihin region in Japan (Kanagawa, Saitama and Chiba). East European, the Sub-Saharan and Arab regions still await a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), for the superhighway flow is up to now unidirectional. Their economies are still a domain of limited families, and the economic structure lacks a decentralized model. The reasons for the economic slowdown are variably bureaucratic, political and historical. This leads me to rethinking the much-hailed tendency to create a global economy whose main terms are the free flow of capital but not the free flow of people.

The informational mode of production puts much stress on the free flow of information without paying much attention to the multiplicity of the terrains wherein such imparted information works. This means that the global economy has to face the global discontents that accompany the unequal 'free flow' of information. The increasing rate of terrorist incidents in the beginning of the 21st century is a clear sign of the dark side of the ubiquitous role of technology. Some of the terrorist networks that have emerged are the result of the postcolonial discontent, and the economic sell out of national assets to the multinational corporations are examples of the reasons behind such discontent. Other reasons are linked to the weakening of the state on the international level, and its incapability of finding national solutions to its subjects. More analysis of the trans-economic challenges will be the substance of the next chapter, wherein I will trace the nature of the relationship between the politics of informational economy and capitalism(s); and more precisely, the subservience of technology to the logic of monopoly capitalism.

Chapter summary

I started this chapter with the allusion to the importance of defining the concept of 'information'. I presented the definitions given to this concept because of its focal importance as an object of the study. I also stressed the importance and *the need* for a critical stance in the study of information society discourse. This need springs from the necessary interconnectedness aspect and results of the informational society. Therefore, the decisions in the age of the net are taken globally and that foregrounds the importance of transnational social networks. (I gave the example of the social networks as an instance of linkages and connections that only articulation is capable of accounting for.) I also presented some theoretical constructs that deal with parts and wholes that are necessary to the study of any constructivist phenomenon. After that, I raised the issue of the change in the structure that the informational phenomenon has brought about, i.e. the change from the virtual order to the horizontal one. Therefore, I invoked the Deleuzean (1987) rhizomatic notion that helps to dissect the horizontal detours in the structure of information society discourse. In other words, the change from the notion of vertical branching that takes a tree-like shape to the notion of network in the information society implies

that there is no necessary guaranteed order. This contingent proclivity of information society led me to retake my focus on the methodology of articulation and its usefulness in the study of information society. Towards the end of this chapter, I raised the notions of intention and agency in the study of informational discourse, and their relevance to the ultimate objectives of the capitalist machinery.

Chapter Three

Capitalism and information society discourse

This chapter is an attempt to draw the parallels between the nature of informational capitalism and some of the elements that constitute the nature of capitalism, mainly the enhancement of market values and the subordination of nature to industrial progress. The aim is to trace the study of internal forces and mechanisms of the capitalist system and the informational economy that is mainly dependent on the capitalist economic structure that triggered off informational economy. In this analysis, I advance a critique to the values upon which market economy is founded. The objective is to check the validity of informational discourse in alternative locales. For this purpose, I adopt Sartre's notion of 'good and bad faith'. Sartre's analysis of the double speak of international politics has allured me to try an application of this dilemma in the domain of information society discourse. Therefore, I will be using Sartre's notions as far as they match the objectives of deconstructing the informational discourse.

The essence of informational technology

The technological takeoff that the human development has witnessed since the coinage of the concept of 'information society' is not a mere mechanical adventure. It is a development of the human experience itself. The exigency to describe this development is not a mere choice. It is a necessity. It is so, because the human being's embarking into the "informational mode of production" enunciates the move toward a new human phase in the direction of defining the society of tomorrow. Herbert Marcuse (1989) has touched upon the main components of the features that constitute the cosmos of the scientific query. His essay is mainly an analysis of the philosophical foundations of the Hegelian system. However, there are intrinsic parallelisms that portend that the phenomenology of mind in the Hegelian system reflects largely the spirit of technological capitalism as a 'bad faith' in the Sartrean sense. In other words, technology is the pretext whereby capitalism extends its power over new territories, using other means different from those used in the beginning of colonial projects of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In order to get a sense of this closed off conception of the global nature of technological expansion, which is driven by economic movers and the ambiguous *desire* to keep the benefits of the technological globalizing mission within the limited borders of the West, let us read how Hegel (1899:99) reads the geography of the world:

> At this point we leave Africa, not to mention it again. For it is no historical part of the world; it has no movement or development to exhibit. Historical movements in it – That is in its northern part – belong to the Asiatic or European World. Carthage displayed there an important transitional phase of civilization; but as a Phoenician colony, it belongs to Asia. Egypt will be considered in reference to the passage of the human mind from its eastern to its Western phase, but it does not belong to the African spirit. What we properly understand by Africa, is the unhistorical, underdeveloped spirit, still involved in the conditions of mere nature, and which had to be presented here only as on the threshold of the World's History.

It is clear that Hegel dismisses Africa from his account of history. It is a place that has no agency and no traits of development. Hence, for Hegel, Africa needs to be mentioned as a merely helper in the making of 'our' history – a mirror through which we can measure 'our progress'. The development of technology does not fail to follow this logic. The density of communication technologies in Manhattan outbalances the technological density of five or six African countries put together. The thing at stake here is not only the need to empower the African states so that they can reach a technological agency of their own; the core of the matter lies in the moral drive and the ideological fabric of the capitalist system. The centric approach of the capitalist logic refuses alternative visions of the World Order. The reactions to Sean MacBride report are only a manifestation of this conflict over agency.

Herbert Marcuse (1977) made it clear when he wrote in the *Phenomenology of Mind* that 'the idea of a universal 'I' is an abomination to common sense, albeit the self-centered 'I' is nurtured in our everyday interactions. When I say 'I' see, hear, and so on, I put everybody in my place, substitute any other 'I(s)' for my individual 'I'. When I say 'I', this individual, I say quite generally 'all Is', everyone is what I say, everyone is 'I', this individual I.' It is this subsuming nature that shapes the inner mechanism of the machine of mechanical enslavement (to use Deleuze's phrase). Hegel in his philosophical cosmos argues that in order to grasp the reality of things, one has to go beyond the appearance of things, so that one gets the gist of discourses. In other words, one has to be alarmed of the ins and outs of objects (in the Wittgensteinian sense). The essence of technology, in this sense, is not as it may seem. It is neither the facilities it offers, nor the speed of the services, nor the preservation of space through compressing data into bits and bytes, mp3s, zip files etc. Technology has its own *codes,* and any serious approach to the nature of the technological message has to start by looking at how the technological code *signifies,* and by examining the political and social forces that shape the choice of this or that technological strategy or policy. The disparity between the advanced economies and the 'developing' ones has been the result of a struggle between different historically and culturally constructed subjectivities across different epistemic moments. One can consider that the colonial 'I' and the colonized 'I' amply described by Albert Memmi (1974) and Rachid Boumashoul (2002) are still in a constant search for the definition of the rapport that links him/her with the 'Other'. Herbert Marcuse (1977:114) articulates this schism between those who decide and those who execute as follows:

> The individual can become what he is only through another individual; his very existence consists in his 'being for-another.' The relation, however, is by no means one of harmonious cooperation between equally free individuals who promote the common interest in the pursuit of their own advantage. It is rather a life-and-death struggle between essentially unequal individuals, the one a 'master' and the other a 'servant'. Fighting out the battle is the only way man can come to self-consciousness, that is, to the knowledge of his potentialities and to the freedom of their realization. The truth of self-consciousness is not the 'I 'but the 'We', 'the ego that is we and the 'we' that is ego.

Hegel, laying the foundations of the phenomenology of mind, did not expand the 'We' category to Africa. When he suggested that the 'I' ego should be substituted for the 'We', he did not solve the problem. The 'We' itself is problematic. It does not extend to every one, because it is set within the contextual limits that make its application reductive. Marx, who lucidly adopted Hegel's understanding of the social relationship as a battlefield between the 'master' and the 'servant', helps us to understand the mechanism of what I call the 'hyper-capitalist mode of production'. For Marx, the chasm between freedom and bondage is expressed in the nature of the relationship that holds between the owner of the means of production and the deprived artisan in an ideological paradigm. The plane of its practice is labor. Marx's account of the relationship between lordship and bondage makes it clear that man is reduced to a cog within the overall machine of production. Thus, the 'being' of the labor man, who in the technological age metamorphosed into a service man, is the type of labor he executes within the whole mechanism. Herbert Marcuse (1977:116) says that the labor man works on objects that do not belong to him but to another. He cannot detach his experience from these objects; they constitute 'the chain from which he cannot get away. He is entirely at the mercy of he who owns these objects'. More importantly, he maintains that what characterizes this relationship is 'dependence of man on man' and this dependence is 'mediated by things'. These 'things' are essentially technical in the information age – the face to face society has metamorphosed into the computer/computer interaction.

The notions of mediation and dependence are of paramount importance for the understanding of the essence of technology. Let me first explain what the concept of 'dependence' means in the context of technology and communication saturated systems. In his lecture entitled 'The Transfer of Technology', Samir Amin (1977:172) writes:

> It is in this context that the problems of the transfer of technology must be placed. Transfer of what? Transfer to whom? If it is a question of modern technologies, we will have to bear in mind that these are capitalist technologies, and that they are, moreover, controlled by the monopolies. Hence, we will be transferring, at the same time as the technology, the underlying capitalist relations of production. Moreover, by this transfer we will not be escaping the domination of imperialist capitalism. On the contrary, we will be extending its scope by integrating the periphery more firmly into the imperialist system.

It is clear that those who talk about technological transfer do not consider the heart of the matter – the essence of technology as such. The reports of the two World Summits on Information Society (WSIS) that took place in Geneva (2003) and Tunis (2005) show that the aim of technological monopolies is not empowering the societies of the periphery, but the main drive is the annexation of more markets at the periphery. The meager amount of money allocated to the '*voluntary* digital solidarity fund' is a case in point. Reading the comments made by various civil society representatives makes it clear that the description of the 'digital solidarity fund' as of a 'voluntary nature' signals that commitment to extend the benefits of 'Information Society' to the 'Other' non-Western nations is founded on a Sartrean 'bad faith', so to speak. Thus, talking about 'leapfrogging' into the digital age without tracing back the essence of technology and its formation in the capitalist womb falls short of a comprehensive assessment to the challenges of a global equitable information society. Amin Alhassan (2004:98) has well articulated the option of leapfrogging. While he accepts the possible merits of this strategy, he alerts that:

> The new conjuncture of global digital capitalism has produced a new form of illusion that equates development with the connection of major postcolonial capitals to the global digital hub while their rural communities are left out.

I share Alhassan's concern about 'rural discontent', for the infrastructure of postcolonial states has not yet fully integrated the rural areas in the economic development. In Maghreb, for instance, the statistic figures of rural exodus are in constant increase. The urban centers are not ready to host peasants who have lost their lands, either as part of the centrality of power in major African states or because of ecological- related factors, drought for instance. Logically enough, it becomes hard to talk about 'information society' when the state has to deal with shantytowns and urban ghettos.

The discourse of information society is a highly *selective* one. I explained above that its roots are not to be found in the appearance, i.e. the bright venues that it promises to offer. My standing is contextual. I take the argument back to its beginnings. One cannot figure out the just functioning of the 'informational mode of production' without dismembering its components. In his study of human consciousness, Hegel has postulated that freedom of the individual lies in his self-sufficiency. Herbert Marcuse (1977:119) has reiterated this position as follows: "Indeed, if freedom consists of nothing but complete self-sufficiency, if everything that is not entirely mine or myself restricts my freedom, then freedom can only be realized in thinking."

The voluntary nature of 'the digital solidarity fund' portends the capitalist system's inertia to extend the benefits of information society to other less privileged nations. Thus, the 'We', as Hegel (1899) has articulated, does not in fact include the African. Hegel, while formulating his thesis on the 'The Phenomenology of Mind', had in view the European 'We'. Africa remains outside the mainstream formulation

of historical progress. Marcuse (1977:120) expressed this straightforwardly in the following terms:

> This process is the process of history itself. The self-conscious subject attains his freedom not in the form of the 'I' but of the 'We', the associated 'We' that first appeared as the outcome of the struggle between lord and bondsman. The historical reality of that 'We' finds its actual fulfillment in the life of the nation.'

This unequal conception of the 'Right' to possess and direct the flow of communication leads us to question the essence behind the ambivalence of the 'informational mode of production'. 'Digital divide' has become a sort of buzzword that refers to this *maldevelopment* of communication. Bill Gates (1996:15), one of the omnivorous representatives of the technological boom, states that:

> Most sites on the World Wide Web are in English so far, which confers economic and entertainment benefits on people around the world who speak English. English speaking people will enjoy this advantage until a great deal more content is posted in variety of languages – or until software does a first – rate job of translating text on the fly.

This confirms that 'digital divide' is a policy matter. The access to the networked computers in the information age is dictated by political, economic and cultural decisions that should be solved globally. Besides, how can this be realized if Africa, as a narrative, is put outside the decision circle? I am especially referring to the issue of Internet Governance. Amin Alhassan (2004:98) has rightly underlined that 'we need to interrogate the mythic purchase of the concept of digital divide and how it shapes policy thinking and direction.' The notion of myth is very revealing here. To pin it down in the context of information society, I will discuss how Roland Barthes has dissected the components of myth making.

Barthes (1973) has proposed that myth making is a mode of naturalization par excellence. Myth does not hide things; rather, it reveals the ideological basis that fuels the myth. By way of application, let us consider what Bill Gates (1996:15) suggests:

> It should be obvious by now that I am an optimist about the impact of the new technology. It will enhance our *leisure* time and enrich our culture by expanding the distribution of information. It will help relieve pressures on urban areas by enabling people to work from home or remote-site offices. It will relieve pressures on natural resources because increasing numbers of products we use to our interests. Citizens of information society will enjoy new opportunities for productivity, learning, and entertainment. Countries that move boldly and in concert with each other will enjoy economic rewards. Whole new markets will emerge, and a myriad of new opportunities for employment will be created.

The image that Gates presents seems so optimist indeed, yet it remains a *myth*. I do not mean that I am pessimist or even worse a 'Luddite'. But, the phenomenology of technology is far more complex than what Bill Gates propounds. One may just ask, how can countries leapfrog into the information age with the so called '*voluntary* digital solidarity fund'? How about the security and health-related issues of

technology? And what is at stake concerning health-related and ecological issues in the promised information age? Gates gives no account of that. The subject, in the information age, is soaked in a sea of information that surrounds him/her on every corner; and yet it leaves him/her with no substantial content. Jean Baudrillard (1993:18) says:

> It's of little consequences whether the contents are completely real or unreal, or hyper-real; the important thing is that the medium continues to roll. So communication is drawn into this cycle of panic. It seems to become immediately an unlimited, proliferating system. There is a kind of imperialism of communication (....). Fundamentally, it is a domain where you can no longer interrogate the reality or unreality, the truth or falsity of something. We walk around in a sphere, a mega sphere where things no longer have a reality principle. Rather a communication principle, a mediatizing principle.

Baudrillard (1993) expresses here some of the concerns that the 'Information Age' promises. The machine-man circuit puts man on the threshold of an age where the gray area between what it means to be human or machine becomes difficult to demarcate. Nicholas Gane, in his response to Frank Webster (2005:13) argues:

> In an age in which technologies both penetrate and shape the human body in increasingly sophisticated ways, for example, through new 'brain-computer interfaces', which effectively remove all remaining boundaries between human bodies and machines – what exactly does it mean to be 'human'? Does the human refer to the body, to a core and sacrosanct set of liberal values, or both?

Baudrillard (1993) has also alerted us to the disappearance of art itself. We have entered an age in which signs refer to themselves. The old distinction between the signifier and the signified disappears. The corollary of technological density is the ubiquity of signs that refer to themselves, i.e. no content remains. Even the human becomes a mere chip of bits and bytes filed in some bureaucratic office. Baudrillard (1993:18) provides an insight into this proclivity:

> Q: Therefore we are all becoming images?
>
> B: Yes, in one way or another....not only are there screens and terminals in technical terms, but we ourselves, the listeners, the TV spectators, become the terminals of all this communications network. We ourselves are screens. Lastly, the interlocutors are no longer exactly human beings.

In terms of art, Baudrillard has also made insightful comments that make us question the essence of technology. He argues that 'art arrests the gaze'. It 'arrests contemplation'. Yet, in the age of continuous flow of images and information, it is hard to imagine the possibility of enjoying a work of art. All metamorphoses into a transient event! Technology has redefined a work of art. If one wants to see the Mona Lisa, s/he has only five seconds to do that because there is a long queue of consumers who need to take a picture. The Mona Lisa becomes an event that is compressed in time. This justifies the question of Baudrillard (1993:147) when he asks:

> Can we still talk of a 'work of art? It is becoming something else. It is not exactly a commodity but it passes into the condition of a sign which must be able to circulate like any other. Therefore its own time and place, its uniqueness, is effectively removed.

Concisely, there is a need to dismember the parts of the whole technological apparatus to understand its inner functioning to prevent, as much as possible, that the machine goes off hand and alters the very humanity of 'Man'. The WSIS (World Summit on Information Society) focuses on the technological aspects of the process, which is a sign that not all the multifarious aspects of the information age are taken seriously. The logic of capitalism and its political consequences are absent from the debates, i.e. the discourse of information society is being devoid of any political analysis of the phenomenon of information, which was not the case in the context of 1970s, when debates over NWICO (New World Information and Communication Order) were of political nature. Information society saw its birth in the cradle of capitalism, and no serious analysis of the background of this added layer can do without analysis of the nature of informational capitalism. The analysis of the nature of informational capitalism is the main task of the next section.

The structure of capitalism: is information society a case of 'bad' or 'good faith'?

The study of capitalism and its manifestations requires a close examination of the study of the fields of application and the contexts where the mechanisms of capitalism operate. The owners of the means of production target not only the maximization of the surplus value, but also the inclusion of the 'Other' elements that may stand as potential obstacles in its way. Therefore, the study of capitalism and the existential challenges that accompany its application require more understanding of the 'Self' owning the means of production, and the 'Other' that is generally considered as the object of reproduction, and as a potential challenger to the capitalist 'Self'. I have chosen Sartre's assessments of the psychological work of the 'Self' and the 'Other' because he has provided a very useful constellation of principles that may help to understand both the 'Self' and the 'Other'. The first principle is the freedom of choice. Sartre made a strategic choice when he decided to break away from the German conception of phenomenology. For Heidegger, the whole objective of phenomenology is the study of 'Being'; Sartre chose to make it tilt to the study of freedom. Sartre declared that existentialism is the key word to reshuffle the objectives of the phenomenological study. He borrowed Husserl's model of intentionality to show that any activity is essentially redistributed and reconstructed through its existence.

Indeed, his work *Existentialism and Humanism* (1977) has shifted focus to study man *per se*. The disillusionment created by war and the near desperate situation that

characterized the nations of Europe led him to call for the return of the lived experience. Central to his thought is the question of 'authenticity'. He made a reversal of the situation when he claimed that the philosophies from Plato to Kant had thought our essence in a wrong way. For Sartre, 'Man' is the center of the universe. He/she makes of his/her life what he/she chooses to make of it. This is what he meant in his statement that 'Man's existence precedes his\her 'essence'. While he acknowledges the limitations of choice, he still maintains that man *still* makes choice despite those limitations. For Sartre, authenticity stands in opposition to 'sincerity'. This means the refusal to wear masks, the acceptance of one's fate as it is. Authenticity is a call for free action, free choice. Sartre provides this model to reject any 'pre-given essence' created by some metaphysical force. The acceptance of the pre-destined creation leads to quietism of inaction and inertia.

Sartre's work, in fact, reiterates the Dostoyevsky's maxim that 'If God is dead then all is permitted'. Sartre declares that his rejection of theological dogmatism is equal to his rejection of secular dogmatism. The replacement of a set of unquestioned maxims by another set of unquestioned ones will only lead to the same results. In *Existentialism and Humanism*, he argues that the triumph of the 1917 revolution did not necessarily lead to the triumph of the proletariat. This has very significant meanings. Nothing is guaranteed[22] and history is merely a *tabula rasa* slate. We write in it what we *do.* This is termed the *phenomenology of action.* The second principle in the thought of Sartre is the phenomenology of temporality. This means that man is positioned in time and space and defines himself within the continuous flow of a specific time-space definers, unlike inanimate beings. This temporality makes the human being responsible for his actions. Within the limits of our class, our conditions, nationality etc. we make individual choices that should be responsible. This is what one can call the phenomenology of *choice*. Yet, this freedom of choice poses other challenges to the individual. It creates a situation that makes him/her feel what Sartre (1977) calls anguish. He contends: "anguish is the very condition of action, for action presupposes that there is a plurality of possibilities, and in choosing one of these we realize that it has value only because it is chosen." Thus, the phenomenology of choice involves an inner persuasion that makes the individual try to legitimate his actions by dispelling other interpretations that may lead him to anguish.

Having presented some of the theoretical constructs, let me discuss Sartre's very interesting theory of the 'Other' that he has articulated in *Being and Nothingness*. This theory will be helpful in the analysis of the mechanism that underpins the machinery working for capitalism, and will ultimately prove that Sartre has also contributed to phenomenology of technology. Dreyfus believes that Sartre's

[22] This conception matches the central claim of articulation that 'nothing is guaranteed' and that social relationships are in constant review. This means any analysis of the discourse of information society should take into consideration the factor of 'contingency' and ' surprise' that are both central elements in the cultural studies framework of analysis.

contribution to the study of technology is of little importance. I take a different stance, for Sartre has provided the tools to disarticulate the ideological discourse that feeds the actual state of affairs of capitalism and its technological extensions. Before discussing this, let me first introduce his postulations.

Technology and Sartre's concept of 'shame'

In *Being and Nothingness* (1977:301-2) Sartre declares:

> Here we are dealing with a mode of consciousness which has a structure identical with all those which we have previously described...In fact, no matter what results one can obtain in solitude by the religious practice of shame; it is in its primacy structure of shame before somebody.

In this statement, Sartre wants to expose that shame in privacy takes its full realization when it is positioned against the 'Other' (which I take in this research as a symbol that stands for pre-capitalist modes of production). It is the presence of the 'Other's consciousness that mediates 'shame' to the 'Self' (which stands for the capitalist mode of production). The question here is whether technology is doing the same thing. Is the discourse of information society a process of exposing the capitalist 'Self' to the undefined 'Other'? Can we say that Internet and the booming ICTs mediate 'shame'-in its Sartrean sense- to a plurality of consciousnesses? Because of its ubiquity, technology reaches everyone and cuts across a plethora of 'consciousnesses'. Take the example of the city. I propose the city as a typically informational space for two reasons: First, the city is a public space that allows the mixture of different types of 'consciousnesses', the place where both the 'Other' and the 'Self' face each other. Second, the city is the site of the gaze that Sartre accounted for in *Being and Nothingness* (1977). The city is a place where networks act and interact. Each individual sees the 'Other' and he/she is conscious of being seen by the 'Other'. One can take a picture of anyone without his or her knowledge or without his or her consent. Each 'Self' tries to define itself against the 'Other' who wear or use certain technological artifacts. Thus, technology is a handmaid of shame projection. It is a tool that allows the 'Self' to practice the act of shaming the 'Other'. Sartre (1977:305) says that, "If animals are machines, why shouldn't the man whom I see pass in the street be one? What I apprehend on his face is nothing but the effects of certain muscular contractions, and they in turn are only the effect of a nervous impulse of which I know the course."

Technology makes us see the 'Other', and it lets them be aware that 'We' see them. This makes them feel what Sartre calls 'shame'. Thus, technology is the means that allows the 'Self' to exert *silent* power over the 'Other'. This constitutes the crux of the matter in many researches that deal with surveillance and technology as means of shaming the 'Other' (*cf.* Agre, Philip E. 1994, Bensman, Joseph & Robert Lilienfeld 1979). Technology, in this respect, is a means to bring in the exteriority of the 'Other' with the interior mechanism of the capitalist mode of organization.

Let us take the example of television: Raymond Williams (1974:15) articulates this intrinsic relation between television and society in the following way:

> It is often said that television has altered our world. In the same way, people often speak of a new world, a new society, a new phase of history, being created 'brought about' by this or that new technology: That we have got so used to statements of this general kind, in our most ordinary discussions, that we can fail to realize their specific meanings. For behind all such statements lie some of the most difficult and most unresolved historical and philosophical questions. Yet the questions are not posed by the statements; indeed, they are ordinarily masked by them.

This reading of the bourgeoning of television use reveals that the same logic is applicable to the Internet. This is exemplified in Manuel Castells' description of the ongoing restructuring of capitalism and the rise of a 'new society', where networks interact. Therefore, the informational mode of production makes it necessary to think in terms of networks and relations. Indeed, Raymond Williams, through his study of television, has shown that technology is an integral part in the constitution of the subject. To use Sartre's terminology, it is the means to articulate the 'Other' through the act of shaming him/her. Though Williams (1974) has focused on ideology as a basis of industrial production, his positioning of the place of technology in society has traces of Sartre's theory of shaming. Let us consider Williams' (1974:20) synthesis:

> These effects of inscription are fundamental, the area of the intersection of film in ideology by industry and machine as institution of the subject, as institution of image position and their shifting regulation on the figure of the subject. The hypothesis, in short, is that an important – determining – part of ideological systems in a capitalist mode of production is the achievement of a number of machines (institutions) which move the individual as subject – shifting and placing desire, the energy of contradiction – in a perpetual retotalization of the imaginary.

It is very important to note this organic relationship between the capitalist machinery institutions and the mode of production. Raymond Williams gives us the tool to understand how the mechanism of shaming works in a capitalist context. His study of the articulation of ideology within the production chain reveals that the circuit of production is not homogenous, since it is composed of institutions whose aim is to reproduce the 'official' imaginary. This reproduction only takes shape when the 'Other', who is outside the 'Self', internalizes and assimilates the imaginary that the capitalist machines articulate. Note that he equates institutions with machines. This is strategically revealing because machines are efficient only when their constituent parts or cogs function in a mechanical fashion. Thus, the creation of meaning is determined by the type of articulation that binds the subject with her/his locale. Williams (1974:26) explains further:

> As for the *machine,* this is cinema itself seized exactly between industry and product as the stock of constraints and definitions from which film can be distinguished as *specific signifying practice.* That formulation, in turn, needs to be opened out a little. Signifying indicates the recognition of film as articulation. Practice stresses the process of this articulation, which it thus refuses to hold under the assumption of

> notions such as 'representation' and 'expression'; it takes film as a work of production of meanings and in so doing brings into the analysis the question of the *positioning* of the subject within that work.

This positioning of the subject within the framework of the capitalist work has its parallel in the definition of the self vis-à-vis the 'Other'. The 'Other' of the capitalist system is that which *does not accept to be subsumed* by what Williams loosely termed 'work'. This work is of a distinctive nature. It is a 'work' that involves the erasing of some values and the creation of others as a means to integrate the pre-capitalist indigenous and peripheral structures into capital. In his seminal essay, "Notes on Deconstructing 'the Popular'" Stuart Hall (1981) has succinctly articulated this process in the following terms:

> 'Cultural change' is a polite euphemism for the process by which some cultural forms and practices are driven out of the center of popular life, actively marginalized. Rather than simply 'falling into disuse' through the Long March to modernization, things are actively pushed *aside*, so that *something else* can take their place.

The question now is why the capitalist 'Self' is so concerned with articulation of certain meanings at the expense of others. To answer this question, we have to understand the interconnectivity that characterizes the global flow of information. The coming of the industrial age or what we refer to as 'information society' has urged a redefinition of the terms of the human relations that are the harbingers of all other subsequent economic, cultural and ecological relations. Sartre has provided a frame that allows understanding of this mechanism of networking. The declaration that the for-itself refers to the for-others is not a simple statement. Sartre (1943:120) writes:

> Therefore if we wish to grasp in its totality the relation of man's being to being-in-itself, we cannot be satisfied with the descriptions outlined in the earlier chapters of this work. We must answer two far more formidable questions: first that of the existence of the 'Other', then that of the relation of *my being* to the being of the 'Other'.

Through surveillance and ubiquity, technology has brought about both the definition of the 'Other' and yet has problematized the definition of the 'Self'. This 'Self' refers here to what Raymond Williams termed 'the work', the capitalist paradigm that defines culture for us and dispels (or to use Hall's word 'pushes aside') any alternative definition. Why this concern with the formation of the 'Other'? The answer might be found, as Sartre (1943:90) believed, in the theory of causality:

> Can we make use of causality here? …Causality could in fact link only phenomena to each other. But to be exact, the anger which the 'Other' feels is one phenomenon, and the furious expression which I perceive is another and different phenomenon. Can there be a causal connection between them? This would conform to their phenomenal nature, and in this sense I am not prevented from considering the redness of Paul's face as the effect of his anger; this is a part of *my ordinary affirmation*. But on the other hand, causality has meaning only if it links the phenomena of one and the same experience and contributes to constituting that

> experience. Can it serve as a bridge between two experiences which are radically separated? Here we must note that by using causality in this capacity I shall make it lose its nature as an *ideal* unification of empirical appearances.

The maxim that one may derive from this theory is the maxim of intrinsic connectivity. Information society, as a constellation of technologies, cannot work in a closed network. It *necessarily* needs to reach out for other networks. It is a necessity because meanings are not stable and they are subject to constant redefinition of positing – the causality of the nature of information society which requires a new method that accounts for the linkages and connections that hold among different networks. Articulation, by virtue of its ability to check those connections, serves as an explanatory tool to account for the complexity of informational networks. Additionally, I emphasized the phrase 'my ordinary affirmation', for Sartre has revealed that signifying emanates from one end to reach out to the other end, i.e. the 'Other' who is both out of my affirmation, but still he is *subject to* my affirmation. Connected networks are subject to the same logic. Not all the nodes within the network are on equal footing, albeit the fact that they are interactive. There are nodes that define or impose a certain affirmation on the 'Other nodes' within the same network. Thus, the defining network enters in an eternal causal relationship. This maxim of causality may also help us shed light on the working of mechanistic capitalism. In a market economy that is on the flow for twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, all the integral parts of the node have to contribute to the making of the market network. This means that any node or smaller network which lags behind, owing to quietism or inaction, or what Sartre calls 'inertia', the fate of such network would be to be 'pushed aside' by the whole mechanism.

Sartre's phenomenological system of existence is reminiscent of what Albert Memmi calls 'Dependence Theory'.[23] The 'Other' is necessary, but still it is exterior to my existence. This is actually the main moral drive of rhizomic form of informational capitalism. Let us read this connection in Sartrean (1943:102) terms:

> The existence of a system of meanings and experiences radically distinct from my own is the fixed skeletal framework indicated by diverse series of phenomena in their very flow. This framework, which on principle is external to my experience, is gradually filled in. We can never apprehend the relation of that 'Other' to me and he is never given, but gradually we constitute him as a concrete *object*. He is not the instrument which serves to predict an event in my experience, but there are events in my experience which serve to constitute the 'Other' qua 'Other'; that is, as a system of representations out of reach, as a concrete and knowable object. What I constantly aim at *across* my experiences are the Other's feelings, the Other's ideas, the Other's volitions, the Other's character. This is because the 'Other' is not only the one whom I see but the one *who sees me*.

[23] If one looks at the discourse of information society as a continuation of colonizer discourse vs. the colonized resistance, Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1998) offers a very good account of the nature of this relationship.

The 'Other' in this perspective is the object of my study. The 'Other', as a category, is significant, because it helps to constitute the 'Self'. This is what Sartre alluded to when he declared that 'the for-itself' refers to 'the for-others'. Yet, there is ambivalence here akin to the ambivalence that Homi Bhabha (1985) articulated in his "Signs Taken for Wonders". The ambivalence crops up when we consider the 'Other' as *object*: How reliable is a self-definition that is based on constituting the 'Other' as *object*? In his theory of the 'Other', Deleuze (1993:50) has expressed this concern:

> By comparing the primary effects of the Other's presence and those of his absence, we are in a position to say that the 'Other' is. The *error* of philosophical theories is to reduce the Other sometimes to a particular object and sometimes to another subject. (Even conception like Sartre's, in *Being and Nothingness,* was satisfied with the union of the two determinations, making the 'Other' the *object of my gaze.* Even if he gazes at me and transforms me into an object.) But the 'Other' is neither an object in the field of my perception nor a subject who perceives me: The Other is initially a structure of the perceptual field, without which the entire field could not function as it does.

Clearly enough, the 'Other' is not merely a passive object of the gaze as Sartre has postulated. He/she is exterior to my experience, and yet necessary to the 'Self'. Deleuze stresses the political results of the presence of the 'Other' within the overall structure, or what he calls the 'field'. Similarly, capitalism as a system of socio-economic relations cannot work in the void. It reaches out to 'Other' peripheral parts of its mechanical composite. This proclivity makes the 'Other' subject to transformation, regardless of its compatibility or non-compatibility with the core. The periphery is desirable because it is necessary to the definition of the 'for-itself'. This means that the European experience of industrialization cannot be kept within the boundaries of its birthplace. It needs to comprise those scattered bodies that exist in the periphery. I referred to this experience in the introduction. This passage from Landes (1969:23) essay on the 'European Experience of Industrialization' delineates this stance:

> Economic history has always been in part the story of international competition for wealth; witness the literature and politics of mercantilism- or the title of Adam Smith's classic study. The industrial revolution gave this competition a new focus – wealth through industrialization – and turned it into a chase. There was one leader, Britain, and all the rest were pursuers. The lead has since changed hands, but the pursuit goes on in what has become a race without a finishing line. To be sure, there are only a few contestants sufficiently endowed to vie for the palm. The rest can at best follow along and make the most of their capacities. But even these are far better off than those who are not running. No one wants to stand still; most are convinced that they dare not.

This line of argumentation brings us back to the notion of 'shame' that I started this section with. Nations, like individuals, construct their inner selves and their choices in interaction. The nations that do not join in will be irrelevant to the main pursuits of global market, i.e. wealth. They have no other choices. This does not contradict

Sartre's phenomenology of choice. It is true that 'sovereign' nations have choice to decide whether to join or not. Yet, the causality theory and the global nature of the present economic pursuits leave them with a limited choice. All *must* join, though with relative variations. This means that they have choice to choose the degree and pace of their involvement. Landes (1976:69) gives us a further explanation:

> The laggards have good reason to be concerned: the race is getting faster all the time, and the rich get richer while the poor have children. It took man hundreds of thousands of years to learn to grow corps and domesticate livestock and, in so doing, to raise himself above the level of subsistence of a beast of prey… it took another ten thousand years or so to make the next advance of comparable magnitude: the industrial breakthrough that we call the Industrial Revolution and its accompanying improvements in agricultural production.

This analysis leads to infer that the information society age is only a continuation of the previous 'changes' of what sociologists call social change; it is just another opening made in the same system − Capitalism. Information society, as Kleinwächter (2005) suggests, is 'only another layer added to the already existing layers'. This leads to the same concerns that surfaced during the first industrial breakthrough reappear. Frank Webster (2001) has expressed a similar concern that Landes (1976:263) has sketched out above:

> And the Reason is clear: the peasantry is antipathetic to market civilization. Peasants are largely self-supporting, they are skeptical of technological innovation, resistant to wage labor, and distanced from market organization. As such, their ways of life have been diminished by what Kevin Robins and myself (1999) refer to as the 'enclosure' of the earth by business practices, by which we mean the incorporation of activities once outside into the routines of business realm.

The reason for this conflict of interests can be traced back to the 'politics of shaming' that Sartre writes about. The 'Other' who does not accept to be constituted by the for-itself always resists the objectification and taming. This is what Deleuze refers to when he expresses his refusal to take the objectification of the 'Other' in the Sartrean formula. For Deleuze, each being is at the same time the subject and the object of the gaze. In his *Critique of Political economy,* Marx (1859) maintains that:

> The general conclusion at which I arrived and which once obtained, served to guide me in my studies, may be summarized as follows: In the social production which men carry on they enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will; these relations of production correspond to a definite stage development of their material powers of production. The total sum of these relations of production constitute the economic structure of society – the real foundation on which rise legal and political superstructures and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness (preface, iii)

Sartre would certainly not agree on the deterministic part of the argument. For Sartre, the 'for-itself' determines its own consciousness, thanks to the maxim of choice. But Sartre would agree with Marx on the interconnectedness of human relations. Sartre refuses determinism because, for him, meaning is always subject to

redefinition. It is a meaning in constant making – in continuous re-articulation. This explains why he refused to answer a student of his when he sought his counseling during the war. The student was in a situation of anguish, he did not know whether to join the British Forces to fight the Nazis or to stay at home in Paris to look after his ailing mother. Sartre's answer was 'you are free, therefore choose.' Therefore, the phenomenology of choice makes the mechanical way, whereby Marx traced the making of the superstructure, flawed.

However, Marx's (1859) description of the workings of machinery is germane to our analysis of the underlying workings of capitalism whereof information society discourse has developed. He explains further:

> Thus, apart from the dearness of the machines made in this way, a circumstance that is ever present to the mind of the capitalist. The expansion of industries carried on by means of machinery, and the invasion by machinery of fresh branches of production, were dependent on the growth of a class of workmen, who, owing to the almost artistic nature of their employment, could increase their numbers only gradually, and not by leaps and bounds. (Preface, iv.)

I emphasized the branches of production because production, like the whole capitalist system, has also its genetic layers. In the age of 'information society', information itself has become the battlefield. Information as a commodity has become the site that defines the 'Self' and the 'Other', on economic and socio-cultural norms. This means that the amount of information that one possesses allows him/ her to project himself/herself as he/ she wills, by virtue of the principle of choice. Information has *become a branch of production,* because it has traits that made it liable to be the objective of machinery. This is what Marx refers to, albeit coincidentally, when he says 'the invasion by machinery of *fresh* branches of production'. In other words, machines have become an integral part of the production chain. Therefore, in the age of information society, information has become a commodity; and whoever wins the informational space is liable to win time, and therefore, money. This is the ultimate stage of informational de-territorialization. Sartre (1966:313) sheds light on this stage when he alludes to the battle for self-definition in the idealist formula.

> Idealism, to be sure, reduces my body and the Other's body to objective systems of representation. For Schopenhauer my body is nothing but the 'immediate object' but this view does not thereby suppress the absolute distance between consciousnesses. A total system of representations ─ i.e., each monad can be limited only by itself and so cannot enter into relation with what is not it. The knowing subject can neither limit another subject nor cause itself to be limited by another subject. It is isolated by its positive plenitude, and consequently between itself and another equally isolated system there is preserved as a *spatial* separation, as the very type of exteriority. Thus, it is still *space* which implicitly separates my consciousness from the Other's.

Now, as space has become the sphere that makes 'the for-itself' and the 'Other' combine, one question remains: what is the nature of such combination? Deleuze (1993:204), in his definition of capitalism, straightforwardly calls the spatial

combination between the core of economic advancement and the periphery a *machinic enslavement.* In other words, he distinguishes between *machinic enslavement* and *social subjection* as two separate concepts. There is enslavement when human beings are constituent pieces of a machine that they compose among themselves (in the factory, for instance) and with other entities (animals, tools) that may exist beyond the factory building. Then, there is subjection when the higher unity constitutes the human being as a subject linked to a now exterior object, which can be an animal, a tool, or even a machine. The hailing of salvation in technology might also lead to the change of human nature interaction with environment. This is what Latour's (2005) ANT theory of connective agencies foretells.

The human beings' relationship to the technological effects – which I consider as exterior tools – has brought about a new conjuncture where different subjectivities interact without preliminaries. By this, I mean that contingency has become the 'only game in the town', so to speak. A computer engineer develops a machine for health purposes, but his own intelligence could be misused by some unscrupulous information consumer located at a different terminal within the informational web that connects people and ideas with no gate keeping. This constitutes the downside of the technologically driven information society. The next section deals with this notion in detail through the example of 'bad faith' in its Sartrean sense.

'Bad faith' and the spirit of information society

> We have come into an electronic dark age, in which the new pagan hordes, with all the power of technology at their command, are on the verge of obliterating the last strongholds of civilized humanity. A vision of death lies before us. As we leave the shores of Christian western man behind, only a dark and turbulent sea of despair stretches endlessly ahead…unless we fight! (Castells 2000)

Our age is an age of fundamentalism. Everyday, once one switches on TV or reads news on the web, all one reads is news of killings, abduction and bombs exploded here and there. Violence has accompanied man ever since the first crime in humanity when 'Cain killed his brother Abel'. However, the highly mediated aspect of fundamentalism and intolerance in our times gives it a special interpretation. The reasons are multifarious, but the major one is the ubiquity of technologies. The Internet especially makes one plugged in to the stories of fundamentalism in nonstop flow. Manuel Castells (1997:5) has delineated the main portends of our times. He writes:

> Christian fundamentalism is a perennial feature of American history. From the ideas of post revolutionary federalists, like Timothy Dwight and Jedidiah Morse, to the pre-millennial eschatology of Pat Robertson, through 1900 revivalists, such as Dwight L.Moody, and the 1970s reconstructions inspired Rousas J. Rushdoony.

Castells traces the major formative phases of fundamentalism, and how the mere use of media by a handful of fundamentalists have accelerated the displacement of many ideas and their replacement by others. Variable versions of Christianity have invaded the terrain of the media and tried to highlight their agendas that are in most cases political rather than 'well meaning'. The United States, especially, remains a deeply religious nation. The line between the state and the church is on many occasions blurred. The highly mediated speeches of the Bush administration showed that politics speaks in theological terms. This has dangerous implications ─ which leads us to the dissection of the relationships between religion and the practice of politics in the media. First, let us define what we mean by fundamentalism. Klaus Stierstorfer (2006) argues that:

> Here it already becomes clear that fundamentalism can be understood as one reaction against the basic tenets and consequences of modernity and its eventual culmination in modernism: secularization and the "privatization" of religion, the emergence of science as the predominant paradigm, and the experience of general fragmentation and the breakup of traditional systems of belief. Used as a term of affirmation by religious groups that wanted to resist modernism's effects on their way of life and thought, fundamentalism as a label soon lost its attractiveness, however, through its pejorative appropriation by its critics, but also through unintentional self-deprecation.

Within the Islamic world, this description finds its concretization in Islamist groups in Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt, where fundamentalists fear that their religious 'values' are being undermined by the technological developments that are being mainly controlled by 'the infidel'. Additionally, the postcolonial condition has laid the ground for the quick mushrooming of many cells that endorse fundamentalism. The absence of democracy in these countries, caused by many successive coups against the 'Will' of the people of those countries, created a flow of fundamentalist groups that want to carry on their agenda by any means necessary. The postcolonial condition has created states that do not have direct concerns with their people. The possession of the means of production in the hands of a small oligarchy eroded the social and economic structure. In 1970s, a survey in Tunisia found that 48 percent are illiterate; most of them were from impoverished areas. Islamism is very predominant among university students in Egypt. Burgat (1993:15) notes that the age of the militants who were sentenced in 1987 was circa 32 years.

This leads us to suggest that religious fundamentalism is inextricably linked to the state and to the practice of politics, albeit it is not overtly stated. And this is what makes the Sartrean notion of 'bad faith' explain the media relations that are controlled by conglomerates, mainly in the 'West'. Before discussing this notion of 'bad faith', let me first discuss the relationship between the church, the state and the media. In *Christianity and Politics*, Hugh Montefiore (1990:5) sums up this relation with the state as follows:

> First, it must loyally give the State everything necessary to its existence …. Second, it has to fulfill the office of watchman over the State. That means: it must remain in principle critical toward every State and be ready to warn it against transgression of its limits whatever such a State demands that lies within the province of religio-

> ideological excess; and in its preaching the Church must courageously describe this excess as opposition to God.

Montefiore gave this lecture to defend the idea that opposition to the state is equal to opposition to God. This strategy has taken many shapes and built an inventory of concepts that would destroy any spirit of criticism to the state. The idea of anti-Semitism, for example, was largely used by many fundamentalists to shame any voice that wants to criticize the practices of the state. Technology's role in this respect is undeniable mainly through its practice of intense surveillance. David Lyon (1994:12), in the *Electronic Eye: the Rise of Surveillance Society,* makes an account of the increasing totalitarian proclivity of advanced societies:

> The Fact that the advanced societies are falling over themselves to adapt and upgrade their computing capacities does not mean that they are sliding down a slope into tyranny, however, if intensifying surveillance is a crucial component of totalitarianism, democratically-minded citizens would be justified in at least asking questions about the role of new technologies in government. After all, was it not in a highly civilized, rational, bureaucratic society that the techniques of Holocaust were conceived and executed? As Zygmunt Bauman reminds us, moral standards are easily rendered 'irrelevant' to the technical success of bureaucratic operations. The objects of bureaucratic operation-people- are easily dehumanized.

If the state adopts these measures of the irrelevancy of moral standards, the only strategy that it will be using is 'bad faith'. Technology will be mainly a means to an end. It is the bait to hook alternative approaches to life and politics. Therefore, there is a risk of replacing the ethical categories by technological values. Max Weber (1985) has made an insightful analysis of the intrinsic relationship between capitalism and religion. Weber has drawn parallels between the spirit of capitalism and the capitalist mode of production. The phenomenal roots of today's economic practice are to be found in the intrinsic relationship between ascetic Protestantism and the economic conduct. This means that all the moments of economic production that constitute the capitalist machinery must respond to the divine 'call' of the 'Book'. This is manifestly patent in the practice of the puritans who advocate that the idea of 'the call' implies hard work and specialization of occupations. This specialization makes individuals separated individuals, but united only in their subservience to the 'call'. Weber's (1985:332) reference to the example of the ascetic monk just proves how religiosity feeds capitalism by engendering counter effects to what it claims to abhor, as this passage relates:

> Externally, the ethic of religious virtuosos has touched this tense relation in the most radical fashion: by rejecting the possession of the economic goods. The ascetic monk has fled from the world by denying himself individual property; his existence has rested entirely upon his own work; and, above all, his needs have been correspondingly restricted to what was absolutely indispensable. The paradox of all rational asceticism, which in an identical manner has made monks in all ages stumble, is that rational asceticism itself has created the very wealth it rejected. Temples and monasteries have everywhere become the very loci of rational economies.

Technology[24] is the means whereby the puritan is *forced* to do his work in response to the calling. But this obedient response is mainly done at the expense of his humanity and with counter-results to what he aspires for. The specialization of work has reduced man to a chip within the general capitalist machine. He is but a cog that fulfills the objective of the market. If that chip, by any chance, becomes invalid, it is thrown out of the system, because the system aspires for efficiency in a highly competitive world. This is what Marx calls 'alienation or reification' of labor. Technology is not a disinterested element within the capitalist system. On the contrary, it has its soft power that makes the worker respond interactively so that production can be accelerated, multiplied or distributed. In a service society, which is another name for information society, technologies redefine all the previously held assumptions about the relationship between man and the world. Marx (1844:15-8) explains alienation as follows:

> What, then, constitutes the alienation of labor? First, the fact that labor is external to the worker, i.e. it does not belong to his essential being; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He is at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home. His labor is not voluntarily, but coerced; it is forced labor. It is therefore not the satisfaction of the need; it is merely a means to satisfy needs external to it.

Indeed this notion of forced labor is commensurate with the idea of the 'call' discussed above. The human essence is no more decided from within. It is no freer in the Sartrean sense. It is forced to respond to the Puritan call's formulation of work. The human essence becomes 'inauthentic' because it does not respond to its inner call, but only becomes a docile means to reach ends that are exterior to its own nature. Differently stated, man lies to himself. This is the joint point where the spirit of capitalism and external forces like the puritan notion of 'call' convene. Every action within the specialized system of production becomes a mere bit within the digital cosmos of capitalism. The 'for-itself' loses its essence because while working, it is not necessarily finding joy and pleasure. The 'for-itself' merely executes, in a docile way, what is already ordained. In St. Paul's words: "He who will not work shall not eat' holds unconditionally for everyone."

The account of technology's relationship with post-modernity is another pattern that shapes the notion of 'bad faith'. Information society, or the mode of information as Mark Poster calls it, has brought about new definitions to our understanding of

[24] The religious roots of the technological boom are of great importance, but not much research has been conducted to that end. I hope to make this idea of the *interpretation* of technology within the theological arena the goal of a future project. Here, I just allude to one variable, the religious code – mainly the puritan element – which helped in the post-industrial take off.

contemporary societies and to the human being who inhabits them. David Lyon (1994:18-9) paints this scenario:

> (….) At the same time, this 'postmodern condition' is characterized by the collapse of belief in science, technology or democracy, having fallen into some disrepute during the twentieth century, have now lost whatever universal power they might once have thought to possess. ..People trust themselves to complex technologies because they seem to promise convenience, efficiency, security and reduced uncertainty. Simultaneously, we worry that in so doing we may be denying something important to a worthwhile human life. But what that 'something' is becomes increasingly hard to define.

Sartre (1943) explains this ambiguous 'thing' in *Humanism and Existence*. In plain terms, he calls for freedom from the pre-established meanings that are made outside of the willing 'Self'. Conveniences, real time speed, security all materialize at the expense of our inner symbiotic hygiene. This is what Sartre has warned us when he (1943:95-96) argues that:

> The human being is not only the being by whom negatives are disclosed in the world; he is also the one who can take negative attitudes with respect to himself. In our Introduction we defined consciousness as 'a being such that in its being, its being is in question in so far as this being implies a being other than itself'

The 'false being' that characterizes the information mode of production has its sources, as discussed earlier, in a constellation of factors. The interlocking of fundamentalism with capitalism, the alienation of the worker in the workplace, and the dependence of man on information in the postmodern condition, all knitted together shape the hypereality of the postmodern condition. Why is it so? Sartre's (1943:95-96) analysis led him to conclude that 'we shall willingly grant that bad faith is a lie to oneself, on condition that we distinguish the lie to oneself from lying in general. Lying is a negative attitude, we will agree to that. But this negation does not bear on consciousness itself; it aims only at the transcendent.'

In his study of the patterns of bad faith, Sartre provides us with the tools that help us flesh out the mechanism of contemporary society. The question of science and its definition in today's society may lead us to rethink the postmodern condition as bad faith. Technology has become both part of the capitalist body and beyond the human body. It is important to note that technology, which is the practical part of science, came as a product of a long history of scientific progress. While technology is necessary to the service-based society that has sprung out of the industrial society, it *dispossesses* the human being out of his 'real' being. Technology leaves the human beings dependent on the machine (no one can do without e-mails in the information society age).

To exemplify, we can refer to the famous Sartrean example of the woman who finds herself in a bad faith situation. Once her companion seizes her hand in a 'warm moment', she finds it hard to either choose between taking her hand away, thus spoiling the charm of the hour; or engaging herself and thus *losing* her respect. Sartre (1943:97) argues: 'this is a case where the woman's consciousness and her

hand are *disjoined'* or I would say *disarticulate*. Her hand is part of her, *and yet* not part of her. She engages in a process of selection and pushing aside of certain meanings. Briefly, her hand, Sartre argues, becomes 'a thing'. Similarly, information is at the same time part of our times; and yet, it is a means that may deprive us out of our essence. It is like the Sartrean 'hand metaphor'.

'Bad faith' is the malaise of our times. Media institutions say what they do not mean and political programs promise what they do not deliver. Information society promises the 'emerging economies' the possibility of enjoying the same benefits that information technology has bestowed upon the advanced industrial countries. Information society, if it does not take into consideration the variable social and economic conditions that shape each context, risks the possibility of turning its discourse into a 'bad faith' one.

Technology, owing to its subservience to the machinic system of enslavement (to use Deleuze's phrase), has reduced man to a desiring machine whose scruples are dehumanized and devoid of meaning. Antonio Gramsci has an interesting account of the inevitable consequences of the informational mode of production, especially those aspects related to education in Italy. In *Selections from the Political Writings 1910-1920,* Gramsci (1978: 25-7) argues that:

> Our party has still not settled on a concrete education program that is in any way different from the traditional ones (...) but we have gone no further than that. Education in Italy is still a rigidly bourgeois affair. The direct taxes paid by the proletariat can only be attended by the children of the bourgeoisie, who alone enjoy the economic independence needed for uninterrupted study. A proletarian, no matter how intelligent he may be, no matter how fit to become a man of culture, is forced to either squander his qualities on some other activity, or else become a rebel and autodidact. Culture is a privilege. Education is a privilege. And we do not want it to be so…what the proletariat needs is an educational system that is open to all. A system in which the child is allowed to develop, mature and acquire those general features that serve to develop character. In a word, a humanistic school (….) A school of freedom and free initiative, not a school of slavery and mechanical precision (…) Technical schools should not be allowed to become incubators of little monsters aridly trained for a job, with no general ideas, no general culture, no intellectual stimulation, but only an infallible eye and a firm hand (….) Of course, meanly bourgeois industrialists might prefer to have workers who were more machines than men.

Gramsci reminds us that developing *techne* (word used to highlight the practical aspects of science) is not the only be all and end all of life; that there are moral, ethical and social priorities to be taken into consideration. Education in the information age is paying little importance to 'culturing' the character of man instead of the infatuating passion to accelerate production and mechanize workers. Gramsci made plain definitions of culture and education, when he surmised that they are an 'advantage', which means they are not available to the underprivileged. Jerry L. Salvaggio (1989:105) quotes Schiller in his critique of information society when he argues that 'schools and research in the United States is quixotic.

Researchers study a world that does not really matter, whereas ignoring the one that does. Much of the work that is done 'seems' to be dealing with reality.'

Gramsci, in his zeal for a more equitable world, has proposed that education should change its programs to suit *all*. In fact, he is deciphering the 'bad faith' of the educational system within the capitalist system. Here we have to make a distinction between good faith and bad faith. For the notion of 'bad faith', as explained above, Sartre's description of the woman's hand is a case in point. As to 'good faith', it implies saying something, no matter how erroneous it might be, but with a 'good intention'. One is *sincere* when he meant something, though s/he expressed it wrongly. 'Bad faith' is the opposite of that. One lies to oneself and one *knows* that one lies to her/himself. Gramsci (1920: 14) has made a succinct account of 'bad faith' and 'good faith', when he argues in "What Do We Mean by Demagogy?" that:

> The anarchist saddle the Marxist communists with the label 'dictatorial', which is meant to make them a laughing-stock. So why should Marxist communists not call the anarchists demagogues? Is it perhaps because the anarchists (or at least some of them or even many of them) are in bad faith? To the class, it matters little whether a defeat is due to good faith or bad faith. What matters is not being defeated. What matters is achieving liberation, and so being able to do away with classes – and hence the State. Once and for all.

Liberation in Gramscian sense may be equated with Sartre's notion of freedom. The aim is not to be manipulated by an exterior machine that may have 'bad faith' consequences. The formation of that machine started with the abolition of handicrafts and jobs that made man feel what he makes, i.e. man intends what he makes. Watching a handicraftsman in a semi-capitalist state is reminiscent of the pre-industrial age. Man makes objects, but he projects himself in the making of objects. An already programmed machine that makes his contribution to the shaping of the product meaningless does not steal his humanity from him. In a semi-capitalist state, one may still see an old man carrying a piece of metal in his hand and writing texts that appeal to his identity, or at least to what he thinks to be his own identity. This kind of job is entirely lost in the heavily capitalist centers where time is money. The expression "aika on rahaa, paljon aikaa, on paljon rahaa"[25] (which is Finnish, meaning, "time is money, a lot of time is a lot of money") says it all. One can read this expression daily, written in capital letters, on both sides of a public bus. They are not mere words; they reflect the notion of time in the 'informational age', passed to the public sphere through the network of local transportation. Max Weber (1930: 50) has made the roots of this connection clear as follows:

[25] The first time I read this sentence was on an e-tampere bus. This e-bus stops in various strategic points of the city of Tampere and has many computers aboard. Finns can go and consult the mobile IT bus technicians. For more info on the e-Tampere project please visit <http://www.etampere.fi/>

> Waste of time is thus the first and in principle the deadliest of sins. The span of human life is infinitely short and precious to make sure of one's own election. Loss of time through sociability, idle talk, luxury, even more sleep than is necessary for health, six to at most eight hours, is worthy of condemnation. It does not yet hold, with Franklin, that time is money, but the proposition is true in a certain spiritual sense. It is infinitely valuable because every hour lost is lost to labor for the glory of God.

It is very important to pay attention to the interlocking of spirituality, politics and economy. The mention of Roosevelt is not *ad hoc*. In 1929 crisis, Roosevelt came to office in November 1932, for the first of four terms. By March, there were 13,000,000 unemployed, and almost every bank was closed. The implementation of the 'New deal' allowed no waste of time. Capitalism was set on firm track. Machinery is the spirit that accelerated the materialization of much of the ideals of the 'elite'. Max Weber (1904) has delineated the religious significance of the good use of time. The time factor has been instrumental in the formation of capitalist machinery. This leads us to the study of the nature of informational economy and its global implications. That will be the substance of the next section.

Definition. What is informational economy?

In the first volume of his trilogy, Manuel Castells (2000:101) defines informational economy as follows:

> The informational economy is global. A global economy is a historically new reality, distinct from world economy. A world economy – that is, an economy in which capital accumulation proceeds throughout the world – has existed in the West at least since the sixteenth century, as Fernand Braudel and Immanuel Wallerstein have taught us. A global economy is something different: it is an economy with the capacity to work as a unit in real time, or chosen time, on a planetary scale. (….) It was only in the late twentieth century that the world economy was able to become truly global on the basis of the new infrastructure provided by the information and communication technologies, and with the decisive help of the deregulation and liberalization policies implemented by governments and international institutions.

Informational economy is a new epistemic break in our understanding of the modes of production and commodity circulation. It is a new mode of production because it requires new strategies to meet new challenges. The question here is whether the involved parties raise the same questions. In the above definition, Castells makes a clear and revealing distinction between world economy and global economy. The former is not a new phenomenon since it goes back to early times when money and exchange were invented; the global economy is a new phenomenon, for it involves many parties acting as a unit and, more importantly, the possibility of acting together in real time, which is unprecedented. The economic, cultural and social transformations of this practice are already at hand. The increasing awareness of other cultures and the easy transfer of information from one end of the world to the

other makes the global communities shrink, for better or worse, to one community. In the health sector, for instance, the finding of one case of bird flu in one country creates immediate responses from the world community at large. The same trait is noticed in the aftermath of some events that are linked to a myriad of issues: freedom of expression (the cartoon issue in Denmark), terrorism, a 'wrong human error' that causes a search engine to malfunction etc. The global economy is now obliged to find answers not only to national questions, but also to global challenges. No nation can shut the doors and remain nonchalant to the global flow of information. In the information society era, each nation has to remodel its national mode of production to suit the global economy. This remodeling is and will be a difficult business. Why is it so? Because the starting points of different national economies are not the same, as pointed out earlier in reference to Samir Amin's study of tributary mode of production, mainly his study of the pre-capitalist economies in the Mediterranean and Arab-Islamic locales.

The informational economy is actually a continuation of the previous economic models that developed in the West. Information economy is the natural result of capitalism. Castells (1989:9) notes that:

> The history of capitalism is oriented toward profit maximizing, that is, toward increasing the amount and proportion of surplus appropriated on the basis of the control over the means of production. Statism is oriented toward power maximizing, that is, toward increasing the military and ideological capacity of the political apparatus for imposing its goals on a greater number of subjects and at deeper levels of their consciousness.

These push and pull factors between the interests of statism and capitalism are one of the challenges that face the global economy. The nation state refuses to forsake its economic power, which is one of the symbols of its sovereignty to the global stakeholders. This situation makes the state undergo pressure from above (global) and below (national levels). The informational economy is the heir of two distinct modes of production: First, the agrarian mode of development that relies on the quantitative increase in the means of production (land) and labor. Second, the industrial mode of production, that relies on the introduction of machinery and the qualitative use of energy. With the informational mode of production, the emphasis is on the quality of knowledge and the speed of production chain. More importantly, in the informational mode of production, knowledge itself becomes a commodity and a source of revenue. This is a radical shift from the landed economy to the virtual economy. Therefore, informational mode of development has called for a restructuring of capitalism and the production circuit. Castells (1989:52) defines this restructuring in the following terms:

> By restructuring is understood the process by which modes of production transfer their organizational means to achieve their unchanged structural principles of performance. Restructuring processes can be social and technological, as well as cultural and political, but they are all geared towards the fulfillment of the principles embodied in the basic structure of the mode of production. In the case of capitalism,

> private capital's drive to maximize profit is the engine of growth, investment, and consumption.

The concept of restructuring the informational economy is of focal importance. It shows that despite the consensus that may be reached across national economies concerning the benefits of maximizing profit, little consensus is reached as to how to restructure the national economies so that they can meet the global economic challenges. This state of affairs has many reasons: first, each national economy has its own logic and its own economic organizational dynamics. The gross national product (GNP) of any country is determined by its ability to own and control means of production, and its ability to maximize the surplus value. The second challenge of restructuring also concerns the social and cultural constituencies of every national economy. The lack of restructuring is the main hindrance for many developing economies. Most of the postcolonial economies still ail under the pressures of the global market, debts, dysfunctional administration, and the alarming reports of the World Bank. Consequently, their populations are not yet ready to draw the ultimate benefits from the global change. What are the main reasons for these setbacks? No ready-made answer can be given to this question before examining the political economy of information and the ways whereby it shapes the service-based society.

The political economy of information and delinking

> Whatever else the immense output of the mass media is intended to achieve, it is also intended to help prevent the development of class-consciousness in the working class and to reduce as much as possible any hankering it might have for a radical alternative to capitalism. The ways in which this is attempted are endlessly different; and the degree of success achieved varies considerably from country to country and from one period to another – there are other influences at work. But the fact remains that 'the class which has the means of material production at its disposal' does seek to use them for the weakening of opposition to the established order. Nor is the point much affected by the fact that the state in almost all capitalist countries 'owns' the radio and television – its purpose is identical. (Miliband 1977: 50)

Political economy of information, as Marx and Engels (2001) argued in The German Ideology means 'the control of the means of mental production'. The history of technological advancement changed at the level of technological innovation, but the idea of regulation remains present. From Milton to McLuhan and from McLuhan to Castells' trilogy, the idea of regulating the mental production has never been absent. Nicholas Garnham (1990) has made an account of the classical relationship that holds between the base and the superstructure. While he argues that Williams has escaped determinacy by moving the debate over base and superstructure to the considering of the superstructure as a process itself which is autonomous and not just mechanically linked to the base, his analysis does not account for what I call the articulatory link that binds the base itself to the

superstructure. 'For it suffices not to say that the superstructure is independent from the base, an ample analysis of the political economy has to account for the linkage, or more precisely, the articulatory process that makes ideological effects move from the base to the superstructure. In other words, while one can ensure the shipping of computers from an industrialized nation to a non-industrialized one, one cannot guarantee that the ship will not sink during the journey, so to speak. This is what articulation tries to highlight. Instead of looking at the base and superstructure as the only sites where power is formed and contested, articulation brings to our knowledge another level that is more often than not glossed over, i.e. the procedural terrain. Therefore, before shipping a load of computers to a third world country, both the industrial sender and the consumer have to consider the meanings of this act of transfer (an issue I will address in more details in the next chapter). However, before addressing the political and economic implications of information on the third world countries one has to pause and ask, how should we think about information? The methodological perspective helps us find our way through the maze of many complex connotations that are associated with the concept of 'information' and to which I referred to at the beginning of this research (cf. Karvonen, 2001).

In 'How to Think about Information', Dan Schiller (1988:32) asks 'why was not the status of information a major topic of economic theory in 1700, 1800 or 1900? Why was it only in the postwar period that the economic role and value of information took on such palpable importance?' These legitimate questions reflect that the definition of the word 'information' itself has undergone continuous revisions. In 1933, the *Oxford English Dictionary* gave no hint of the profound changes that this concept has undergone. It only cites that information is 'an item of instruction' and that it existed since Chaucer (OED, 1933). In 1961 edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word information was redefined as an idea, the communication of news, a complaint (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 1961: 274). In 1976, mathematicians radically changed the definition of information, especially engineers who commodified the notion of information. For engineers, information came to mean 'measurement' and profit. In other words, information is a data that can be valued and measured like any other resource. (Wiener, 1961:11) The *American Heritage Dictionary* (1982:660) defines information as 'an act of informing or being informed'. It also means the knowledge derived from study, experience or instruction. *The Collins English Dictionary* (1995:400) adds that information means an agency, office etc. providing information.

This shows that the concept of information is an evolving concept whose meaning changes as the temporal and spatial conjunctures change. The development of informational theories since 1933 shows, the mutative nature of the concept of information. The political economy of information refers to the combination of political economy and information. What is, then, the nature of this combination? Political economy has always been concerned with the historical evolution of the market economy. Information since the post war period has become the main

battlefield for many states around the globe. The main concerns of the international community culminated in the Mac Bride Report of 1980, which called for the promulgation of the idea of '*many voices, one world'*. The direct links between economy and information technology made any decisions that may affect the management of information purely political ones. This is clear from the *Collins English Dictionary* definition that information has become to mean an 'agency' and an institutionalized office that *issues orders*. This makes information an active determining factor in world economy, and especially a harbinger of economic hegemony. In his book *On Globalization,* Bruno Amoroso (1998:80) explains:

> Globalization's attempt to gain control over these phenomena can be seen in its replacing the old concrete walls by new electronic walls, thereby turning the peripheries of capitalism into the townships of globalization.

The focus on technology is not to say that one has to fall in the trap of technological determinism. The main concern here is the study of *the conditions* and *processes* that have made countries in the West enjoy huge opportunities to move smoothly to the information age, while the majority of the people around the planet are still scoring high rates of illiteracy. Added to this, they do not realize that the future of market economy will be much affected by the organizational terms that have been marshalled by the invention of the Internet. Flis Henwood and Sally Wyatt (2000:3) relate the story of Tony Blair's 'encounter' with technology. The news story reads:

> In October 1999, The Guardian reported that the British Prime Minister Tony Blair was about to 'Take his first tentative steps into information technology' (The Guardian 25 October 1999: 8). He admitted his incompetence in the face of a computer, and attended a two-hour training session in a shopping centre to be instructed in word-processing, e-mail and the Internet. The Guardian accompanied its report of Blair's introduction to IT training with an article by the Prime Minister in which he marveled at the 'speed of change of the new industrial revolution sweeping the world.' He asserted that the future of the nation was dependent upon technological success, arguing computers and the Internet were empowering economic growth, and that ensuring Britain was not divided into computer haves and have-nots was fundamental to the building of a fair as well as prosperous society.

The story of Tony Blair has many readings: first, his stumbling before a computer shows that despite the ubiquitous presence of computers, at least in the West, even prominent politicians are still lacking the skills of dealing with the machines. Blair's insistence that technology should be spread on a large scale insinuates the organic relationship between politics and information technology. Bruno Amoroso (1998:79) explains the major causes that brought about globalization in the following:

> A technological explanation of the major causes of globalization and of the new guises taken on by the accumulation process is possible so long as it is predicated on the accumulation that technology is not the fruit of the inscrutable events of the human destiny but the result of the deliberate choices that social classes and strata make us linked to the instrument of domination. The well-known technology gap has been widening dramatically since the 1970s. The number of countries and industries

> capable of sustaining the evolutionary pace of the new technologies is getting smaller, with devastating effects on the production systems within and without the orbit of the triad.

There are many reasons for such uneven development. In his book titled *Maldevelopment: Anatomy of a Global Failure*, Samir Amin (1990) has delineated the major problems that have blocked the democratic distribution of opportunities among nations. In the case of Africa, Amin (1990) notes the failure of the agriculture reforms in most parts of the Arab and third world countries. In addition, the political question of democracy in the third world has slowed down the process of economic performance. On the external level, Amin criticizes the US policy in the Middle East and its one-sided view of the global issues. Amin (1990) expresses his concern as follows:

> The world is currently faced by a project of systematic US domination operating through the military control of the planet. This global strategy is not that of constructing a "benevolent Empire". It closes all avenues allowing for the progress of democracy. It does not even provide an adequate political framework for the deployment of a "fair global market". It is a strategy aiming at the plunder of all the resources of the planet for the exclusive benefit of major global corporations.

It follows from this that the US project of domination makes all its potentials, including information technology, subservient to its plans. Herbert Schiller (1991:135) alludes to this intrinsic relationship when he traces the history of the electronic industry:

> The industries that manufacture the messages and imagery that create the national and international cultural atmosphere have grown greatly in size, breadth and productive capability in the years since World War II. Expanding, merging, and transnationalizing, these industries now represent an awesome concentration of cultural power and influence, at home and in the world at large.

The malaise of many third world counties is that their economies are still under the effects of the postcolonial condition. The colonial legacy made states inherit a rigid bureaucratic system that does not favor economic flexibility. In addition, the organizational structures of most postcolonial institutions follow a semi-feudal order where the king, emir, president, or colonel is at the top of the state machinery. The head of the postcolonial state holds both political and economic power in his hands, and any attempts toward the horizontal functioning of power remain relative within such structure. The selection of leaders and politicians follows a corporate-like manner. Schmitter's (1979:13-15) definition of the concept of corporatism helps us to better understand the postcolonial quagmire:

> Corporatism can be defined as a system of interest representation in which the constitutional units are organized into a limited number of singular, compulsory, non-competitive, hierarchically ordered and functionally differentiated categories recognized or licensed (if not created) by the State and granted a deliberate representational monopoly in exchange for observing certain controls on their selection of leaders and articulation of demands and support.

This is not to say that corporatism is the only reason for the slow adaptation of postcolonial economies to world economy. Other reasons are to be found in the internal systems of the newly founded states. Kasoma (2000:22) argues that the African continent lacks real participation of all the representatives of civil society at the decision making board. That is why he hails the multiparty system:

> Multiparty politics are about citizens of a country enjoying unfettered rights to express their political views as well as receive political views from others without hindrance from anyone, including the government, as long as such expression and receiving does not infringe the rights of other citizens. This is what democracy is partly about.

The *maldevelopment* of the African continent is not due to the lack of will to adopt the new technologies, but the real reasons are to be found in the political structure of the so-called third world countries, *and* in the relations that bond them to international institutions. Nonetheless, I agree with Amin (1990) that there is inequality at the heart of the global economy and that the gap between affluent nations and 'emerging economies' is unspeakable, but I re-articulate the alternative that he provides. I especially refer here to his thesis of *delinking* (1985:30) where he argues that:

> The response to the challenge of our age that we propose is called 'delinking'. The concept is to some extent half of an equation 'adjustment or delinking'. We shall not expand here on the theory of delinking but, to avoid any misunderstanding, say merely that delinking is not synonymous with autarky but only subjection of external relations to the logic of internal development (whereas adjustment means binding internal development to the possibilities afforded by the world system). In more precise terms, delinking is the refusal to submit to the demands of the worldwide law of value, or the supposed 'rationality' of the system of world prices that embody the demands of reproduction of worldwide capital. It, therefore, presupposes the society's capacity to define for itself an alternative range of criteria of rationality of internal economic options, in short a 'law of value of national application'.

The idea of delinking underestimates the nature of the relationship that links the national economies with the global economic flow. The 'ideal' of delinking, i.e. choosing what to appropriate and rejecting what does not fit, contradicts the logic of soft capitalism that has managed to create a global flow of information, money, and people (as Appadjurai's model of 1990 stipulates). This is so because informational capitalism overrides the contextual boundaries and influences the national decisions in different ways. One example may suffice to elucidate this point.

The debt problem

Bruno Amoroso (1998:121) sketches the risky nature of dependence in the following:

> At the origin of this problem and its current exacerbation lies the cut off of credit banks trying to collect the credit granted in preceding years, which in

> 1970 amounted to US$ 100 billion, in 1980, US$ 650 billion and in 1990 US $ 1.5 trillion. Yet the serving of this debt (interest on the loans) amounts to far more than the loans themselves. Between 1983 and 1990, the developing countries paid US$ 150.5 billion to service the loans, a sum thus representing a net capital transfer to the wealthy counties… Thus between 1986 and 1990, transfers to the IMF alone have totaled US$ 31.5 billion, or about 22% of all capital funneled back from the South and East to the North.

The results of economic marginalization and the Western non-concern with the real needs of the masses have resulted in a political destabilization. In the countries of the Maghreb[26], for example, one can witness the presence of the global economy in the local. The social panic and the non-responsible reaction of the political elite to the immediate needs of these nations brought many setbacks to the development of this region. In Algeria, the military rule continues to decide the macro policies of the nation. The only favorable technological investment for the military junta in Algeria is largely focused on purchasing arms. The latest arms deal was made with Russia. Algeria agreed to buy 7.5$ billion worth of arms, and Russia writes off $4.74 billion of Algeria's debt. (Reuters, 11th March, 2006). Moreover, the 1991 consumer price index (base 100 in 1980) was 309.6 in Algeria, 217.7 in Morocco and 236.5 in Tunisia. The same index for food commodities was respectively 249.0, 217.3 and 244.6. Amoroso (1998:126) relates the natural results of such inappropriate decisions of the postcolonial political elites as follows:

> While the average decline of family income in Morocco from 1982-1986 was about 12%; the drop was much sharper for families employed in the informal sector. It was the underlying cause of the 1981 Casablanca revolt, which left dozens dead and hundreds wounded, and the riots of 1984, which forced the government to withdraw the cutback in subsidies and the price increases for staples.

On the political level, Africa has had many unconstitutional political changes. A close look at the statistics is very much revealing[27]. The legacy of colonialism has undoubtedly left its mark on the economic, cultural and political spheres of the decolonized nations. For example, the political wing in Algeria has inherited not only the administration task, but also the burden of building the infrastructure of the economy anew. The FLN (National Liberation Front) was struggling to break away from the colonial influence through the nationalization of the gas industry, only to fall in bad economic choices. The only period of economic revival was during the presidency of Chadli Ben Jdid, who was in power between 1980 and 1984. This period was a 'fixing phase'. Chadli was trying to fix the bad choices of Houari Boumdien, the colonel who made the first *coup d état* against Ben Bella, the first president of independent Algeria.

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[26] The *Maghreb* is defined as the region of North Africa that includes the countries of Morocco, Algeria, Tunis, and Mauritania. It is positioned against the *Machreq*, which includes all Arab countries west of the Nile.

[27] *ref*. Appendix table 4.19. See Appendix for tables.

A similar course of events took place in Morocco; the first government faced serious challenges to liberate its economy from the Western influences. The declared aims were summarized in the slogan '*nationalization and arabization'*. This slogan shows that the first independent Moroccan government was concerned with the identity of the national economy. The French influences on the national economy were huge. This is especially witnessed even today as most of the educated elites are alienated from the 'profound Morocco'. The result of this political stumble is clearly seen in the North African development indicators. In the case of Morocco and Algeria, the unresolved crisis of Western Sahara[28] adds to a stagnant situation that has led to the freezing of the regional development of an 80 million-population market potential, i.e. the so-called 'Maghreb Arab Union' which has never had a constructive meeting since its first creation in 1989.

Consequently, one can state clearly that the postcolonial state is a remake of the colonial past, only in disguise. Stuart Hall (1996:284) points out that political independence did not mean that the colonial values disappeared from the scene. The postcolonial life 'is characterized by the persistence of many of the effects of colonialism'.

Another inheritance of the colonial period was the awkward process of state building. The notion of state in many African and developing countries is still embryonic, for the pre-independence period was not based on any central state. On the face of it, in the case of Morocco, for example, the country was divided in two blocks: the *makhzen*[29] region or the domain of the central power, and the *bled siba*[30] *(anarchy region)* where the largest majority of subjects lived. The process of state building in North Africa is a strenuous project. The North African regimes still use tools that breach on many occasions the international declaration of human rights. The numbers of prisoners of opinion is still appalling and the human right reports are not very promising, especially in matters of the freedom of the press. The cases of Zouhir Yahyaoui (one of the first net activists in Tunisia who died aged 36 in prison), Fouad Mourtada (26 year-old facebook prisoner), and Mohammed Erraji: <http://www.rsf.org/article.php3?id_article=28449> (blogger sentenced and released) are cases in point.

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[28] This political problem is one of the major leftovers of colonialism. It still hampers the economic progress in the *Maghreb* region because of the political schism it has created between Morocco and Algeria ─ Two countries that are supposed to be the founding blocks of the *Maghreb* 'Arab' Union.

[29] The term *Makhzen* refers to the central power in Morocco. It is another word for the state-centered power.

[30] Siba' is the word for the refusal of regional areas to submit to the state making in Morocco. This word especially denotes the refusal of tribal confederations to give in their power to the *Makhzen*. This explains that the notion of the state in the Maghreb should be studied carefully, for some places still claim regional control of economic resources, the Rif region in the North of Morocco is a case in point.

As to the situation in Sub-Saharan Africa, it is not any better than the North African condition. Rather, the situation could be described as worse. The bloody conflicts that have wasted much human and economic potential are numerous. Here is a sketch of the main conflicts that have shaped the recent history of Sub-Saharan Africa. (*Ref.* Appendix table 4.23)

It is clear that undemocratic political changes and social upheavals have deeply hampered any possibility to focus on the human empowerment, which is a necessary requirement for the development of a strong structure which is a precondition to building information society. The main character of these conflicts is that country borders caused most of these wars. This is basically a negative legacy of colonialism in Africa, since most of the conflicts were fought over land. A case in point is the question of Western Sahara that hampered the North African economic progress since the two main countries (Morocco and Algeria) that should have been the building blocks of the 80 million market potential are involved in a sterile 'cold war' for a petty search for regional hegemony. This a very revealing list of wars that have been witnessed during the process of state building in some Sub-Saharan African countries. (*Ref.* Appendix table 4.22)

In fact, the reason for the economic slow down of many African countries is that most of them have not yet had a complete decolonization. They remain attached to the politics and economics of the ex-colonial power. The table (*ref.* Appendix table 4.22) shows that colonies, despite their formulaic independence, kept being defined as adjuncts to the former colonisers. The clustering of these countries into German colonies/ British Colonies/ French colonies/ and Belgian Colonies indicates that these countries have not yet broken the economic ties that relate them with the former colonisers. This dependency exists in different economic spheres despite the efforts made by many countries to 'nationalise' their economic and educational sectors. In his study of economic fundamentalism in Ghana, Amin Alhassan (2004:217) came to the conclusion that:

> The postcolonial state as an institution with its own dynamics on the one hand is organically different from its representative constituent, the postcolonial nation; and that the World Bank and IMF, as institutions of globalization have developed a certain correspondence and alliance with the postcolonial state. This development also coincides with a period where 'information society' discourses in the developed world are transferred to the developing world as a third epochal transformation that Third World governments cannot afford to miss.

The grouping of former colonies in a cluster whose title is the former coloniser shows that the postcolonial state keeps some symbolic correspondence with the former colonial powers. This is what Amin Alhassan insinuates when he talks about the 'alliance' between the global powers and the postcolonial state. This alliance is at the expense of the postcolonial nation, since the absence of democratic procedures has left the colonial subject in the globalisation limbo. Tremendously important is the economic dysfunction that Africa has inherited due to the strenuous and still ongoing process of decolonisation. (*Ref.* Appendix table 4.22)

Additionally, the debt problem continues to haunt many fragile economies in Africa, especially those that rely on agrarian mode of production. A close look at the economic performance of the Moroccan economy shows that, the debt burden is a constant problem that impedes the full unleashing of the development potential of the Moroccan economy. The IMF, the World Bank, the Paris Club are all new circles through which the postcolonial relationships retain their vitality. Africa suffers most because it hosts the countries that are described as heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC). Many summits organised to relieve those countries from their debts (e.g. Gleneagles Summit, 2005, Kananskis Summit, 2002, and the G8 summits) are but a manifestation of the economic problems caused by the colonial moment and the impatience of the industrial centres to open new markets. The question here is whether debt relief is the only answer to the issues of development and empowerment of postcolonial states. This statement of Amin Al Hassan (2004:154-5) about the situation in Ghana elucidates the point:

> The World Bank's involvement in Ghana's telecom sector started in 1971 when the government approached the Bank to help it modernize the infrastructure, improve service quality, extend the coverage area of telecom network, and strengthen the overall capacity of then Post and Telecommunications. The wisdom of the time was that natural monopolies were good, at least for Ghana's development purposes. The bank approved a loan of 23 million US dollars for the project implementation. But according to the bank's own assessment, 'the project failed to meet the objectives mainly due to the difficult economic conditions in the country during the implementation period and management and financial weaknesses with the P&T'.[31]

The situation is not any better in other Sub-Saharan countries. The newly 'independent' countries reflect that the crisis is a structural one, since the rates of debt remain nearly fixed. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the debt burden has slowed many of these economies. Some countries are pleading for debt relief, others, are still asking for the rescheduling of the debts. This leaves us with the assumption that Africa has not yet gained its full economic independence. The question is, who will pay the bill for the sweeping global changes that have weakened the state and deepened the cleavage between the haves and have-nots in Africa? The second table (ref. Appendix 4.7) gives a clear view on the main reasons why the thesis of delinking that Samir Amin suggests is outmoded when it comes to applying its theoretical constructs in contextually alternative locales, such as the postcolonial world. On the health sector, the situation is not any better. A quick look at the death rates in Africa since, the 1950s is a startling example that there are many urgent fields that need swift action before engaging in any talk about reaping the benefits of information society age. Therefore, the empowerment of the population should be the priority in the African countries.

The population rates also show that the future is not any better for the newborn in Africa, if the economic performance of these countries remain stuck in the problems

[31] For a map that shows the geographical location of countries that still ail under the debt burden (*ref.* Appendix.)

mentioned above. More kids will be born, but the money allocated to each new born is very slim. The poverty indicators in Africa, especially in Sub-Saharan regions are alarming, as the global poverty map indicates. (*ref*. Appendix)

Additionally, the urban infrastructure of many African cities is not prepared to host a real and sustainable information takeoff, given indicators that show that African cities will be filled by the year 2010, while their economic infrastructure is not ready to host the flows of internal drift toward the towns. Please see the table that shows this proclivity (*ref*. Appendix table 4.9).

The infrastructure of 'information society'

> What is called the 'information society' is, in fact, the production, processing, and transmission of a very large amount of data about all sorts of matters-individual and national, social and commercial, economic and military. Most of the data are produced to meet very specific needs of super-corporations, national governmental bureaucracies, and the military establishments of the advanced industrial state. (Herbert L. Schiller 1981:25)

A close look at the deep structure of information society reveals that its foundations are composed of two processes: first, the process of profit *generation* and the process of exploiting that profit for economic and political ends. The first is readily seen in the desire to produce large amounts of data-based resources in all areas of economic activity. One can think of the defense sector in Western societies, where information gathering and assessment is part of the daily routine of policy makers. Schiller suggests a very critical moment in his definition of information society: the moment when the processes of data gathering and analysis are made to serve governmental bureaucracies, regardless of the ethical impacts of those policies on the domain of individual rights. Within this perception, the individual becomes a mere number in the mega machine that has to recycle the data, use it and if necessary delete it. This leads us to the second process that hinges on the idea that all information is to be used for certain specific goals. No information is useless. Even your dissatisfaction with software that you tried on your computer may be profitable to big IT companies. For instance, while deleting some dysfunctional software from your personal computers, you may get pop ups that request you to report the reasons of your disappointment with the product. This bit of information is directly transferred to the company's servers and specialists will adjust the software and fix 'bugs', so that they can enhance the quality of their products. Information, in this sense, is both circular and subservient to the big companies that deal with the end consumer (whether they are satisfied with the product or not) as a source of information, and thus, as a source to generate more profit. Noam Chomsky has referred to this important role of information in the interview with Rosie X. Chomsky explains in <http://www.zmag.org/chomsky/interviews/95-geekgirl.html>:

> …However there's a downside, several in fact. One aspect of it which is hard to quantify, but I see it very clearly myself. I am deluged with mail, in fact, I spend 20hrs a week or so just answering letters, and often they are long interesting letters. It's a reflection of the fact that global society is much atomized.

Information society has been the direct result of the economic and social processes that took place during the early decades of the nineteenth century Europe. The aim in the early urban social life brought about services and new styles of living, but the machinery that was installed 'took away' certain liberties. John Urry (2004) has traced some of those nostalgic elements that were necessary for social change that characterized the post-industrial society. Already in 1820, a network of a rudimentary form of the train was built. People were increasingly mixed in urban locales. Additionally, the change in the nature of work, the creation of new types of jobs, the breaking of the classical social class-order, privatizing some sectors of industry, and colonization were the bottom line that shaped the moments of change from the industrial age to the post-industrial mode of production. The European Empires (mainly British and French) felt the need to move beyond their borders to seek more resources and raw materials for their markets.

The colonial moment is of strategic importance, for many models of industrial revolution were mapped onto the colonial locales. In the case of France, for instance, it endeavored to build railways in the Sahara of the Sahel (present-day Algeria and Mauritania). In fact, the iron ore train in Mauritania was first designed by the French to carry out tons of crushed rock and other resources towards the Western market. Similarly, the first road network in Morocco was a French idea, especially in the mountain regions of the South. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the colonial presence brought its design to ease control and exploitation of West Africa. Amin Alhassan (2004) has surveyed some of the strategies that were used by the colonial agents in Ghana. In this respects, he (2004: 127) writes that:

> Going through the archives of this period, one comes across a long chain of correspondences between London and the colonies of West Africa, suggesting that the pressure to privatize was quite strong. To resolve the problem, the Secretary of State for the colonies in London constituted a two-member committee to investigate problems associated with broadcasting.

The tendency to privatize the communication sector is still taking place, not only in the Sub-Saharan Africa, but also in North Africa. In Morocco, during the first decades after the independence, the Moroccan economy made some structural changes. The process of liberalization of the market, which was started in the early 1980s was accelerated in the 1990s, especially in the emerging semi-industrial sectors. The intervention of the government was essential and, as a result, the GDP averaged 5.6% in 1968-72 and 7.5% in 1973-77. However, since 1976, uncalculated political decisions led the country into a period of recession and economic disequilibrium. The crisis of Western Sahara triggered off a state of emergency in the country and the economy was held back. The war with the neighboring Algeria over the colonial legacy of borders led to the stalemate in 1981, when Morocco had

to rely on the help of IMF and in return make structural adjustments. The IMF structural adjustment program led to the acceleration of the process of privatization. The latter made a break in the social structure which was predominantly agriculture-bound.

New forms of economic activity started to take ground in the big cities, mainly in the axis of Casablanca, Rabat, Fez and Marrakech. King Mohammed VI described the period of 1980s as the period of 'missed opportunities' and launched, since his access to the throne in 1999, a series of reforms that targeted a more liberalization of the economic sector. The media sphere saw the creation of other TV stations (*Al Maghrebia* and *channel 6*). Morocco has reaped some of the benefits of the liberalization of the media market. Yet, the state keeps a close eye on the themes that are published, especially those that are critical of the ruling family, for instance. Censorship within the postcolonial nation/state is one of the major problems that face the media in the Arab world.

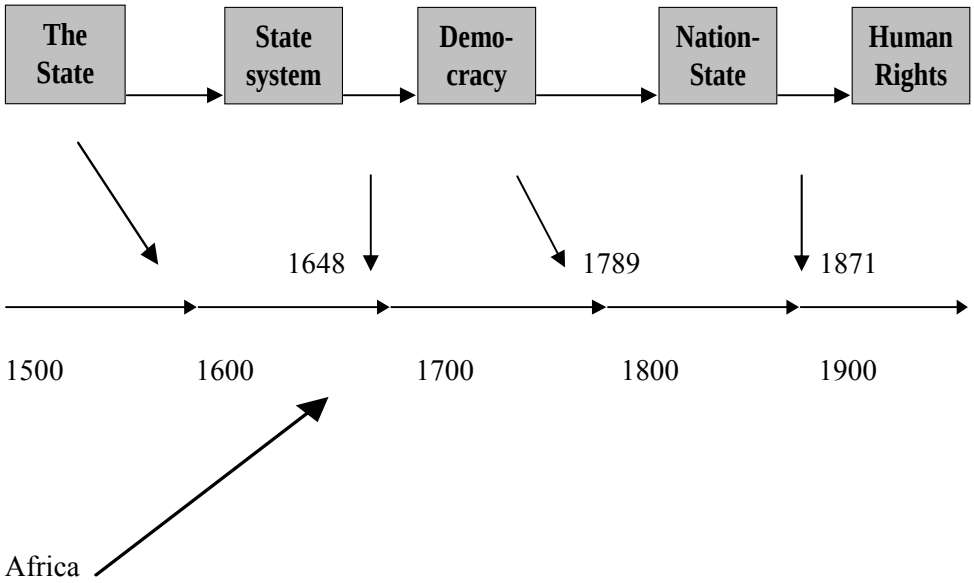
The situation in Algeria is more acute, since the state keeps close control over major newspapers, and only those that hail the government are free to publish. *Al khabar* (state owned newspapers) is the most successful one in terms of market circulation. Many journalists see that the colonial moment has brought about a fraction of colonial spirit at the very home of those who fought to purge their countries from the mechanisms that ruled the centers of colonial power. The structure of information society does not work in a void. It is a cog within the capitalist system that uses whatever resources to reproduce itself and, of course, to keep the production machine going. The borrowing of the notion of the nation-state and its implementation in the periphery has necessitated the use of similar capitalist strategies which are used in the 'center'. Alhassan (2004:69) has well captured this moment in his analysis of the possibilities of communicative infrastructure and, especially, of how the Internet could bring some positive change to Africa:

> In a nutshell, the material fabric that serves as the sphere for public imaginings in that community of citizens is the communicative infrastructure. This infrastructure ranges from the print to the electronic media, for the logic of multilingual nationalist imaginings requires technologies of mediation that bind beyond common language. Incidentally, modernity, which produced the idea of nation-state, also invented technologies of mediation to serve as the avenues for flows. While new and globalized technologies such as the Internet pose a threat to location and localization of nationalist imaginings, such as argued by James Carey and Robert Reich from different perspectives, the limitations it imposes on the nation is not a *fait accompli.* To say that the Internet will inaugurate an end to localized imaginings is to be deterministic. How the effect of the internet will pan out in the postcolony will depend on how people and the state relate with technology and the general question of development within the framework of national formation. In particular, the state has had an unpredictable trajectory from its colonial origins in the business of development.

In fact, the importation of the ready-made form of state within the postcolony is a mere hapless move. The incumbent structure of the state in the ex-colonies is still a

nascent and fragile one. The place of technology is not yet firm. Logically enough, the leap from the agrarian economy to the information society seems to be overstated in the documents of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS). The question of the state is central here. One just has to look at the history of the state formation in the West and its 'construction' in the periphery to deduce that the path is still rocky for many postcolonial countries before they can reach a functional state that allows them to reap the ultimate benefits of the information society model of economic production:

Fig. 4.1: State building in Europe and Africa



Source: GeoHive

However, this formula does not necessitate that African countries need to follow the same trajectory or logic of state building. Africa might, and in fact should, follow their own internal time and logic, and not just ape the Western ready-made models. The above schema serves two objectives: first, the necessary difference between the history of state building in different contexts. Second, it helps to understand the internal logic of Western capitalism that tries to dictate a certain time course on the 'young states' referred to as postcolonial states. The work of Doreen B. Massey (1999:147) is very illuminating in this respect:

> Moreover, as well as querying the ethnocentricity of the idea of time-space compression and its current acceleration, we also need to ask about its causes: what is it that determines our degrees of mobility, that influences the sense we have of space and place? Time-space compression refers to movement and communication across

> space, to the geographical stretching-out of social relations, and to our experience of all this. The usual interpretation is that it results overwhelmingly from the actions of capital, and from its currently increasing internationalization. On this interpretation, then, it is time space and money which make the world go around, and us go round (or not) the world. It is capitalism and its developments which are argued to determine our understanding and our experience of space.

Therefore, one should not take the above model as a necessary trajectory for the African countries to follow. It is only another proof that capitalism that generates our notions of space and time tries to impose political models for countries that went through the colonial period. Hence, our methods to disarticulate the discourse of informational capitalism have also to evolve so that they can account for the different planes of interaction between the capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of production. This is what articulation targets, since it accounts for both the dynamics with the national state and, at the same time, deconstructs the links between the postcolonial state and the advanced capitalist centers.

The idea of the nation-state is still a debatable idea even today in many of the postcolonial locales – the emergence of sub-national claims for a regional autonomy of Riff region in Morocco and Kabylie region in Algeria are cases in point. The case of Western Sahara and the associated problems that were the consequence of the highly rooted tribal mode of social structure do not ease, as yet, the move to the industrial era. The process of state formation in Africa is still fighting its edges, i.e. the border problems. This colonial heritage has squandered many resources and delayed the formation of strong urbanized forms of life. This is not to dismiss the possibility of installing the necessary infrastructure of an informational mode of production. The question is whether it is possible to leapfrog from fragile economies into the information age without going through the 'natural course' of evolutionary development? And, at what pace? These concerns are expressed in Kaarle Nordenstreng's (2001:160) surmise that:

> The state may have exhausted much of its progressive role in the industrial world, where the welfare state has been nearly completed or according to some interest groups even overdone that it should be rolled back, with the civil society and the so-called third sector assuming a greater role in the management of society. But the developing countries are far from ready for this. In these countries, it is mainly the state that can ensure that poverty and inequality can be seriously treated, and counting on the civil society or NGOs would be largely wishful thinking.

It is to this inequality that I turn to in the following section.

Non-equal development or the politics of 'Animal Farm'

> The U.S. leads the world as producer, consumer, processor, and exporter of communication goods and services. Americans preside over the bulk of the channels and the content of the worldwide information flow. American professionals, businessmen and women, civil servants, educators, and leaders in virtually every

> field operate increasingly in international frameworks; the same is true of the nation's information and cultural gatekeepers. (*Chronicle of International Communication,* January 1980, 1)

Since the demise of the colonial era, both the colonial powers and the newly 'independent' nations were looking for new ways to change the structure of their economies. Yet, both the colonized and the colonizers realized that their links can not be broken, for the degree of former involvement in the colonies and the unexpected wave of decolonization in the 1960s brought discontents both in the advanced countries and in their dependencies. In the industrial economies, mainly in the American economy, significant changes took place. Herbert Schiller (1981:2) describes these changes:

> Consider the shrinking percentage of the blue-collar workers in the labor force, with the near-doubling (inflation discounted) of the gross national product since W.W.II. The expansion of research and development in governmental and business budgets and the flowering of major new industries built on the technologies of solid-state electronics and information processing; the transformation of family-owned big business into multinational conglomerates under multilayered middle-management administration; the substantial growth of the not-for-profit private governmental sectors of the pluralistic U.S economy; the proliferation of the control functions of the Federal Government into many aspects of the economy.

In addition to these changes, new industries have appeared in the last 50 years. More and more people are in contact with computers. The world division of labor is more and more decided by how well computer skilled one is, and how many software utilities they can use for specific jobs. Bell (1973:133) describes this shift as follows:

> Because of a combination of market and political forces, a new international division of labor is taking place in the world economy…It is likely that in the next decades traditional, routinized manufacturing, such as textile, shipbuilding, steel, shoe, and small consumer appliances industries, will be centered in this new tier (e.g. Brazil, Mexico, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Algeria, Nigeria) that is beginning to industrialize rapidly.

Schiller (1981:13) cites Bell's belief that this change will not be overnight. Rather, it will be a gradual process:

The response of the advanced industrial countries will be both protectionism and the disruption of the world economy or the development of a 'comparative advantage' in, essentially, the electronic and advanced technological and science-based industries that are features of post-industrial society. How this development takes place will be a major issue of economic and social policy for the nations of the world in the next decade.

Bell (1973) stressed that the advanced industrial countries would boost the science-based industries. His doubt about the manner that this development would take is justified, because the industrial countries had to develop their industries and, at the same time, provide markets beyond their national level. This means the

involvement of the less developed countries. This state of affairs interlocks, for better or for worse, the industrial countries and the less industrial ones. Therefore, the world economic structure has made the market rules and the market criteria the main challenges that face the world economy. Already in 1975, a UN resolution (N: 3362) explains the process:

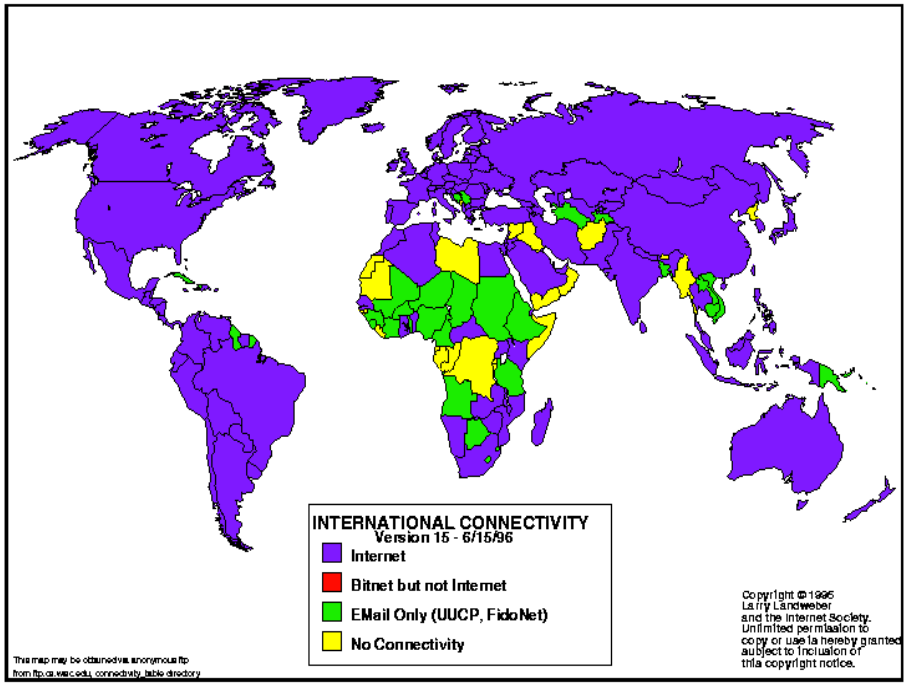
> Developed countries should facilitate the development of the new policies and strengthen existing policies, including labor market policies, which would encourage the redeployment of their industries which are less competitive internationally to developing countries, thus leading to structural adjustments in the former and a higher degree of utilization of natural resources in the latter.

This resolution has created the following situation: the main direction of the linkages in this division of labor – and the international system of which it is a part – is such that the developed countries provide the consumption patterns, technology, skills, capital etc. for the developing countries, which then establish production facilities to serve the markets of the North.

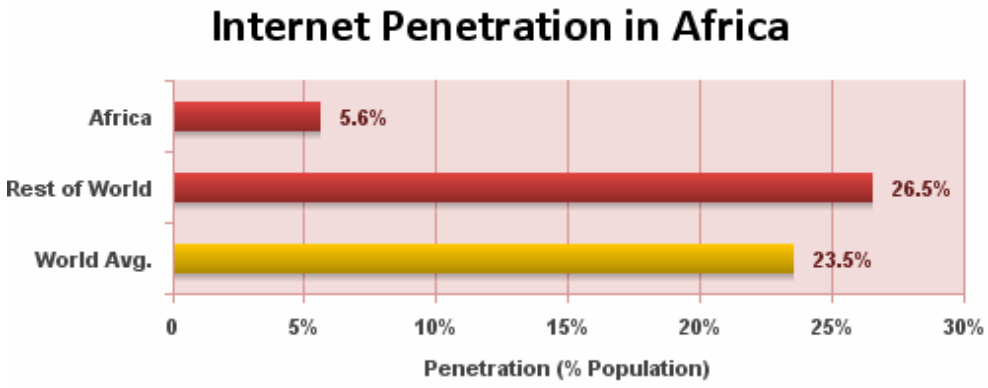
The formulation of the international economic order and the distribution of roles were the logical cause for the unequal development. On one hand, we have countries that have moved into the information age, while the developing countries' situation has deteriorated. Likewise, the new international information order follows the same path since information has become the valuable harbinger of the corporate global economy. What I call the 'Internet Order' in the 1990s has created an urgent need to transfer more technology to the developing countries, for technology and information play a vital role in the new information order. The basic contributions of information are: first, the *integration* of the transnational corporate system, and second, the deepening of the 'dependency' of the peripheral world on hardware, software, training, management, administration, software, and maintenance which are mainly borrowed from the advanced post-industrial countries. This explains why the UN is so keen on organizing the World Summit on Information Society. Schiller (1981:16) explains the reasons of technology transfer in this fashion:

> The less developed nations are not to be denied the new technology. On the contrary, technology is being pressed on the poorer countries in an atmosphere of urgency. 'We must offer to expand communication systems abroad; urges one promoter of U.S. information policy.' Imaginative use of our satellites and earth stations, shared time on our broadcasting channels, crash projects to produce cheap newsprint – all and more are readily possible. Technology's role in the less-developed economies will be extended, but under the auspices of the transnational corporate system. This, it is reasonable to believe, is intended to assure the implantation of Western developmental models-of production, administration, consumption, and education.

The disparity between the USA and the African countries in terms of Internet connectivity is stunning. The African map is still not highly connected with respect to the rate of the population density. This map says it all:



Source: GeoHive



Source: Internet World Stats - www.internetworldstats.com - Dec. 2008
Copyright © 2009, Miniwatts Marketing Group

The reasons for this startling inequality are to be found in the formative historical, economic, political, and cultural elements that made the global economy and its allied political agencies divide the world in two main blocks: developed, or what I call the established, industrial societies and the developing, or the less 'coagulated economies'. The theory of development could serve as a means to understand the reasons behind the idea of what I prefer to term as 'global informational crises'. Nevertheless, while the theories of unequal development describe the results of informational imbalances, they lack the explanatory value of articulation that studies the linkages and processes that are responsible for the uneven global flow of information.

A critical and cultural account of this global inequality has to go deep in the study of the roots of the problematic of the 'centre/periphery'. This problematic is not only limited to the economic plane of interaction. One finds it also in the concepts, the way of talking about the other cultural locales. Cultural studies' concern with contextualization has been very important in alerting us to the risk of being subsumed by the beguiling character of the 'centre'. The field of cultural studies, in this respect, tries to fix that economy to that context, that historical condition to that historical locale, this informational mode to that market etc. It is in this vein that I study the articulation of cultural studies across diverse contextual sites in the next chapter. The next chapter is an attempt to remind us that talking about information society without specifying the context is a risky business, since not all nations have the same *keywords* and not all nations have the same perceptions of modernity. The following chapter will examine the categorical assumption about modernity from the Arab-Islamic perspective. This will give us an inside view about the main challenges that await the Middle Eastern region so that it can come fully aboard an informational mode of production that is congenial to its cultural experience.

Chapter summary

In this chapter, I continued my articulation practice by examining the intrinsic relationship between the logic of capitalism that targets maximizing profit and raising the surplus value of the capital, with the logic of the informational economy. I invoked some of the theoretical constructs in Sartre's conceptions of 'good faith', 'bad faith' and 'shame'. These notions have been useful to describe the surface discourse of informational economy and the unsaid discourse of informational economy. I also tried to test the validity of the informational discourse against the realities of the economies of the periphery where technological culture is transplanted. Therefore, I highlighted the attempt of Samir Amin (1985) to provide an alternative to evade the grip of monopoly capitalism through his notion of delinking. This chapter has also provided an analysis of the concrete economic realities of the postcolonial societies mainly in Africa (notions of debts, and non-equal development, for instance). These realities have necessitated the use of articulation as a means to check the unexamined connection between the periphery and the most advanced centers of informational economy. Articulation deconstructs

both the internal dynamics that bind the postcolonial pockets and the nation within the postcolonial state. Additionally, it studies the consequences of thoughtless linking of the pre-modern modes of production with the advanced economies.

Chapter Four

The Arab World and articulation

This chapter addresses the necessity for a decentralised understanding of information society, and also for a decentralised method to analyze informational discourse. For this purpose, I underline the need for a decentralised cultural studies project that would provide assessments to the nature of the challenges that information discourses face in each context. Therefore, this chapter deals with the nature of the state in the Arab-Islamic World, and the meaning of technology transfer to countries where the industrial structure is different from the centres of informational economy in the West. In addition, I will re-articulate Amin's (1985) notion of 'delinking', to which I referred to in the previous chapter. The alternative I offer in this chapter is the foregrounding of articulation as the most appropriate method that can allow a clear and reasonable analysis of the immediate needs and realities of pre-capitalist modes of production.

"It Works for Me" – cultural studies at the interstice: Arab-Islamic culture and information society

> What is being described here is, to some extent at least, a simple Anglocentrism. Just as Britain is the only nation not to put its name on its postage stamp-since they invented it, presumably, only the subsequent users need to nominate themselves – there is a consistent pattern of ex-nomination in the applied British cultural studies. It is Popular Culture: The Metropolitan Experience, not English Popular Cultures; it is Television: Technology and Cultural Form, not Television in Britain; and so on. British cultural studies speak unapologetically from the centers of Britain and Europe, both of them locations where the perspective from the margins is rarely considered. (Turner 1992:642) [32]

The field of cultural studies is a conceptually productive and problem-solving field, but only if *we* make it so. This is the premise from which I want to start my analysis of the status of cultural studies and its relevance to the clearing out of many foggy

[32] Graeme Turner (1992) provides a succinct account on the search of peripheral locales for an 'accustomed' definition of cultural studies. The closure of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies CCCS (2002) has just emphasized the need for such de-centralized drive to view cultural studies as a field that is destined to harness different cultures. North American version of *New Keywords: a Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (2005) is a case in point.

horizons that beset its advancement[33] in alternative locales. However, my intention is not to talk about or on behalf of the different contexts where culture, the most contested notion in the field, seems to relate, subsume and interpellate other fields of research, especially, sociology, economics and politics. Graeme Turner (1992) in the above citation and in the essay from which it was quoted ("*It Works for Me": British Cultural Studies, Australian Cultural Studies, Australian Film*) opens up a very critical issue within the discourse of cultural studies, i.e. the scope of the context that any theoretical category is able to encapsulate, i.e. the limits of representation. Turner (1992) expressed his skeptical position vis-à-vis the practice of transplanting highly charged cultural categories in contexts whose structure is not congenial with the affective and perlocutionary effects that accompany the 'act of talking about' 'Other' locales. Differently put, cultural studies, according to Turner, needs more breaking away from the status of being a mere adjunct to a 'radiating center'. My aim in this analysis is to push further the analysis that Turner's essay raised, and to examine the nature of the body of knowledge that exists in the North African context. It is an attempt to clear up the constituent elements that make up the basic ingredients for the launching of a North African 'brand' of cultural studies. At this stage, I will address the importance of contextualizing within the realm of cultural studies in the light of the industrious work done so far by Grossberg in his attempt to define the limits and the possibilities offered within the most contested field since the Second World War. Turner (1992:640) expressed his concern for the specificity of the Australian brand of 'cultural studies' in the following terms:

> While I believe this highlights a theoretical problem within cultural studies as a whole, in this paper I want to consider some particular questions raised by this movement, questions about the cultural specificity of British cultural studies and its usefulness within other political and national contexts – in this case, Australia.

The project of cultural studies is not an essentializing or reductionist project. Raymond Williams always resisted the closure of the field whose message is to break up the normatively held ideas about culture, communication, literature, politics and many other categories that Williams addressed in his erudite *Keywords*. Grossberg (2006:1-32) sketches some of the urgent questions that intellectuals and scholars of cultural studies have to address so that the field maintains its revitalizing aspect. He calls for new pathways toward a possible future where cultural studies could engage with 'the complexities of the current conjuncture' and find a new language to address the possibilities of a breakthrough – a move that is much needed to boost the hopes for an 'alternative modernity'. This can never be achieved without the consideration of the four problematics that Grossberg suggests as the main axes of future research. These are (1) economism, (2) capitalo-centrism, (3) productivism, (4) economic essentialism.

[33] This concern is expressed by Lawrence Grossberg 'We know where We're Going, but we don't Know where We're at: Cultural Studies and the Road to Nowhere.'

Now, what I want to do is to emphasize that any discourse on cultural studies should state, at the outset, *where* and about which social formation they are talking. This is what Turner (1992) has delineated in his fierce defense of the specificity of the context – in this case Australia. Turner, in his essay, reminds us of Ruthven (1989) who calls for an Australian version of *Keywords;* the direct importation of the same categorical concepts from the British center, according to Turner, does not serve the real project of cultural studies. This is due to the variability and the difference between Australian and British theoretical practices. Turner uses the example of cultural criticism and the conventions within which it tries to operate when dealing with the aspects of Australian life as he argues "distinctive – not of a class or of a subculture but of the nation". In this respect, he refers to Tony Bennett's (1988b:34*)* eloquent argument that:

> This foregrounds an important difference between the European contexts from which Fiske, Hodge and Turner derive most of their theories and the Australian situation to and in which they are applied. Definitions of the distinctiveness of English culture, for example, are so massively mortgaged to bourgeois concepts of the nation that the self-respecting leftwing critic would rarely regard this ground as worth struggling for – although the situation is different in Scotland and Wales. In these cases, as in Australia, the fact that definitions of the national culture are, in part, shaped through the process of their emergence in opposition to the dominance of imported cultures lend such questions a political pertinence which, in other contexts, would be lacking.

The argument at work here is that the notion of the national in the Australian context contains alternative potentials that are alien in the construction of the British context. The category of the colonial past vs. the category of the imperial past of Britain serves as an instance where the Australian imaginary of the colonial legacy is not the same as that of a nation trying to "recover from an imperial past". The same could be said about Canada, which still strives to define the cultural features of an identity that could 'unite' all Canadian nationals. Laura Mulvey (1986:10)[34] gives us a picture of the interpretation of the category of 'national identity' in Canada:

> The question of Canadian identity is political in the most direct sense of the word, and it brings the political together with the cultural and ideological immediately and inevitably. For Canada delineated by multinationals, international finance, U.S economic and political imperialism, national identity is a point of resistance, defining the border fortifications against exterior colonial penetration. Here nationalism can perform the political function familiar in Third World countries.[35]

The question of context is a very instrumental idea to dissect the myriad ramifications of the concept of 'culture'. The real project of cultural studies defies any fixing within a specific discipline. It refuses to fall within the *cul-du-sac*

[34] Quoted in *Cultural Studies* (1992), p.10.
[35] Quoted in Graeme Turner's (1992) 'It Works for Me': British Cultural Studies, Australian Cultural Studies, Australian Film (pp.640-50) in *Cultural Studies* (Grossberg, Lawrence. ed. Et al) New York : Routledge.

situations. Yet, the field of cultural studies has so far failed, according to Grossberg, to reinvent itself and to 'relocate' its project to the pressing conjuncturalist struggles (Grossberg, 2006). Another reason that still blocks the real unleashing of cultural studies' potential is what Grossberg describes as the 'centrality of certain kinds of questions'. Grossberg (2006) describes this situation as follows:

> Yet, as dispersed and diverse as it is, I still think one can talk about its 'center' if you will, which is to say that certain kinds of questions, assumptions and theories are dominant, pull all sorts of researches into their orbit, at least within the influential Anglo-American and European axes of cultural studies if less so elsewhere. The question is whether that center is appropriate to the present context (conjuncture), and whether it is effective as a political and intellectual practice. I do not mean to deny that there is a lot of interesting and important conjectural work being done around the world, and also in the United States, Britain and Europe. Nor do I want to suggest that all work done under the sign of cultural studies must address itself to these issues. I do want to suggest, to repeat myself, that the continued existence of a particular center, as it were, pulls a lot of work into its orbits, posing questions, offering theories and validating methods that may not strengthen our engagement with, or our ability to address questions to, the current conjuncture.

The question of centrality and the immediate influential role of the Anglo-American and European 'axes' raises some concern about the future of cultural studies elsewhere in what I call the 'emerging cultural' traditions that occupy the geographical spheres outside the afore-mentioned axes. In this work, I attempt to touch upon the possibility of listening to other versions of cultural studies that could offer a plenitude of insights into Grossberg's attempt to reconfigure the universal dimensions of doing cultural studies. Put differently, I try to study the hermeneutics of cultural studies in locales that are outside the Anglo-American and European centers. Therefore, I share with Sabry (2007) his concern about the character of an Arab cultural studies project. The notion of conjuncture is also of great relevance here, for conjunctures are processes of formations. They cut across national and transnational barriers. This drives us to give much heed to the contribution of 'Other' locales in shaping our increasingly global times. Grossberg (2006) is cautious in his placement of these conjunctures, not only within the limits of the national formation, but also at the international level. Grossberg (2006: 6) argues that:

> I began with this sense of the radical contextualism and conjuncturalism of cultural studies because I think it has four absolutely crucial implications: cultural studies is supposed to be hard; cultural studies is supposed to be surprising; cultural studies has to avoid allowing either theory or politics substitute for analysis; and cultural studies is supposed to be modest. Such radical contextualization interrupts any desire that we speak before we have done the work, for then we are likely to abandon the commitment to complexity, contingency, contestation, and multiplicity, which is a hallmark of cultural studies.

Contextualizing culture is half of solving the problematics of context that I mentioned earlier at the beginning of this analysis. Any formation of cultural

studies has to reflect the mood and the scope of its context. It has to distill the relevant questions and maybe create new categorical yardsticks to gauge the cultural depth in its immediate terrain of symbolic play. The nature of challenges and the language used to describe the cultural concerns within the Anglo-American and European traditions would not do, for instance, to capture the spirit of the cultural mood in the Middle East or North Africa. Stuart Hall (1990) says it all:

> It needs a whole range of work to say that what it is text in this context. What it is in relation to this culture that would genuinely separate it from earlier work or work done elsewhere. I am not sure that Cultural Studies in the United States has actually been through that moment of self-clarification…I do think it matters what it is in particular situations…It's the precise insertion of a certain kind of critical practice at an institutional moment and that moment is precisely the moment of academic institutional life in this country.

One may also add Grossberg's (2006:3) synthesis that:

> The context is the beginning and the end of our researches. The trajectory from the beginning to the end provides the measure of our success at mapping, at arriving at a better descriptional understanding of the context. Cultural studies requires a 'rigorous application of […] the premise of historical specificity

This historical specificity baffles all attempts to map out theoretical categories on contexts and sites where the trajectory of history took different course from the one that produced modernity in the West. I am using here the term 'West' not to designate a homogeneous grouping of nations and peoples; I am rather using to it in the categorical sense presented within the field of colonial/postcolonial studies. A reference to the discourses and practices unleashed the period of colonization and the expropriation of lands, memory and life style of other locales that lay at the outskirts of Europe.

Now, the question I want to ask within this scope of analysis articulates as follows: Is it possible to break away from the centrality of theoretical categories produced in the center of cultural studies? Can we talk of a North African specificity of cultural studies, for instance? What are the limits and ultimate objectives of contextualization of cultural studies? In fact, this section is only a 'scratch on the wall' to search for the local specificity of North African interpretation of cultural categories and keywords encapsulated in the register of cultural studies. As a North African myself, I attempt to find ways that could help us shed light on the contextual specificity of North Africa and the possibility of offering an alternative reading of modernity, albeit the fact that the processes that produced modernity were elsewhere in the neighboring continent, Europe. This encounter with modernity was the major concern of most Muslim and Arab theorists since the early decades of the 19th century. Contextualizing cultural studies within the Arab-Islamic World requires certain premises to be cleared out when dealing with the highly contested concept of 'culture' in the Middle East. Any cultural studies project in the Arab region has to take into consideration the intricate links between religion and culture. Sabry (2007) argues that the conflation of the cultural tense in the Arab

world is mainly due to the failure of intellectuals to articulate the 'past' with the 'present' in such a way that will keep both the cultural reference alive and at the same account for the political and economic urgencies of the 'present'.

The analysis of how cultural studies matters in the so-called 'peripheral locales' requires a close dissection of the planes of thought that have shaped the formation of the incumbent social configurations. Talking about cultural studies or information society discourse in the Arab-Islamic world needs the situating of the cultural underpinnings that feed the process of defining science and knowledge. In what follows, I will first present the typology of Islamic revivalists and their project to revitalize the dormant social structure under which millions of subjects ponder their position in relation to modernity. In the modern era of Islam, the typology of thinkers looks like this: first, there is the fundamentalist group that is mainly composed of the purists, literalists, scripturalists, religious ideologues/ revolutionaries, restorationists, and restitutionists. The major figures that represent this cluster are Muhammad Ibn-Abd Al–Wahab (1702-1762), Sayyid Ahmad Barelvi (1786-1831) Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949), Sayyid Abul A'la Maududi (1903-1979), Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1902-1989), Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq (1924-1988), Ali Akbar Hashimi Rafsanjani (b.1934-). This first cluster is extremely opposed to modern secular ideas, practices, and institutions that are contrary to *Shari'a* (the law that dictates the cultural codes of everyday life in Islam). They vigorously advocate *Ijtihad* (independent reasoning, especially in matters of Islamic law); and they are extremely cautious about compatibility of politics and cultural programs with the letter and spirit of Islam.

The second group is composed of the traditionalists whose views are conservative. Their figures include Muhammad Qasim Nanautwi (1833-1877); Rashid Ahmad Ghangohi (1850-1921), and Ayatollah Sayyid Kazem Shariatmadari (1905-1986). They firmly believe in the doctrine of *taqlid (imitation)* whereby legal rulings of one or more schools of Islamic jurisprudence are followed blindly and unquestionably. They are also keen on preserving 'Islamic' customs and traditions popular among Muslims in their particular locality or region. They are also very skeptical about the role of the global media, and some even try to block many avenues that are considered as hallmarks of freedom in the Western context (e.g. Internet filtering in Saudi Arabia). This group is more contextually oriented and thinks only through and within its religious locality. The Third group, and which interests me more, is the group of *Modernists* whose major figures were Jamal Ad-Din al-Afghani (1838-1897); Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898); Muhammad Abduh (1849-1905); Muhammad Iqbal (1873-1938); Ali Shariati (1933-1977); Mehdi Bazaargan (1905-), and Abolhassan Banisadr (b.1933-). This cluster of thinkers within the Islamic tradition believes that, the decline in scientific research in the Arab world is due to rigid, doctrinaire, and dogmatic orthodoxy promulgated by fundamentalists and traditionalists. They envisage an Islamic state that incorporates liberal and democratic manifestations, though they openly oppose secularization in principle, theory and rhetoric. Their view of society is built on

progressive Islam and /or Islamic nationalism. They also think of the state pragmatically since they do not see that the land of Islam (*Dar Islam*) is in direct antagonistic relationship with the *dar-al Harb* (the land of war, i.e. the land of infidels). This dichotomy hardly preoccupies them. They are more interested in the filtering of technological cultural components so that they can preserve the 'authenticity' of the Islamic appropriation of technologies.

Such is the typology of Islamic revivalists. Their accumulative work has substantially shaped the process of social and cultural formation both in their immediate contexts and across the Arab-Islamic world. In a rare interview conducted by Michel Foucault during his first visit to Iran in September 23, 1978, one can get an immediate first hand feeling of the crucial role of contextualizing our discourse when we conceptualize the category of 'culture' that cuts across multifarious contextual barriers, especially at the age of global cultural interaction. Foucault's journey to Iran provides us with an insight into the focal importance that the category of religion and culture takes from one context to another:

> Parham (*interviewer*): …Now with your permission, I would like to speak of something that is closer to our particular situation in Iran, that is religion. Could you please tell us what your opinion is of the role of religion as a world perspective and in social and political life?
>
> Foucault: One of the statements I have heard repeatedly during my recent stay in Iran was that Marx was really wrong to say, "Religion is the opium of the people." I think I must have heard this statement three or four times. I do not intend to begin a new a discussion of Marx here, but I do think that we ought to reexamine this statement of Marx's. I have heard supporters of an Islamic government say that this statement of Marx 's might be true for Christians, but it is not true for Islam, especially Shiite Islam (…) In the Christian centers of the world, the situation is more complicated. Still, it would be naïve and incorrect if we said that religion in its Christian form was the opium of the people, while in its Islamic form it has been a source of popular awakening. I am astonished by the connections and even similarities that exist between Shi'ism and some of the religious movements in Europe at the end of Middle Ages, up to the seventeenth or eighteenth century. These were great popular movements against feudal lords, against the first cruel formations of bourgeois society, great protests against the all-powerful control of the state. In Europe in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, before they adopted a directly political form, all such movements appeared as religious movements.[36]

At the end of his interview, Michel Foucault suggests that Europe has crossed the religious conjuncture after strenuous fights against the religious grip on the state. The Arab-Islamic World has not managed yet to bypass that phase; since religion is still a major component of the social configuration and formation of Islamic locales and cultures, it is necessary to gauge the strategic implications of power when it is enmeshed with the religious symbols. The modern Arab-Islamic state has been built

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[36] The complete interview can be found in *Dædalus*, Winter, 2005. Foucault's visit is one of the rare accounts of Foucault on the religious formation in Iran.

on a bizarre fusion of religious notions and secular entities, and that was the second conjuncture of social change in the Arab-Islamic World. The first conjuncture occurred when the Othman empire managed to gather all Islamic countries under one symbolic Caliphate (a sort of super–state) ‒ this latter was terminated in 1924 by secularists like Kemal Atatürk. The Islamic world is entering a new phase that has been built upon the condensation of previous contradictions. The postcolonial/postmodern conjuncture pushes these locales to devise new exits and harness the 'values' of the global market while finding out ways to keep what they deem as 'authentic' intact .

The USA free trade agreement with many Arab/Islamic countries indicates that the 'emerging economies' are fixed between two dire choices: The first is to harness the Western values (this was the choice made by Shah of Iran, for which he paid the price by being ousted). The second choice is to succumb to the internal forces that see in Islam an alternative to modernity, especially the fundamentalist type of thought which feeds on the continuous failings of incumbent Islamic/postcolonial states to redress the huge gaps that exist among the subjects of their dominion. This is reminiscent of Stuart Hall (2000)'s statement that the nation-state "will not disappear, but it has to bear the pressure from above and below."

Then, any serious attempt to map out cultural studies in the Islamic World, for instance in North African context, needs to treat social progress from both relational and contextual viewpoints. Relational since the present day crisis of democracy, for instance, is but the result of the constant clash between what Williams (1958) calls 'the dominant and the residual'. The accumulation of social and economic frustrations since the 1950's, i.e. since North African countries got 'independence', has created and is creating the necessary ingredients for a contingent social change. To capture the applicability of categories developed within Anglo-American traditions of cultural studies, one has to adopt an articulatory approach, because a theory of articulation, as Grossberg (2006) reminds us, "understands history as the ongoing effort (or process) to make, unmake and remake relations, structures and unity (on top of differences)".

This is precisely what is underway in the North African context. These societies are mired primarily by the colonial legacy which has shaped collective consciousness, and which still feeds constant changes within their internal structure. I point out that the *Maghreb* region is distinct from the *Mashreq*, which includes all Arab countries from Egypt eastwards. The *Maghreb* countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunis, Libya and Mauritania) are experiencing a somewhat common conjunctural condition, for their internal cultural structures are more or less similar. They were under the grip of the same colonial master, i.e. France (except Libya that was an Italian colony). The articulation of social and religious vectors is the same (they are all Sunni Muslim adopting the Malikite school of thought). They experience similar attempts to remake, review and revive a moderate version of Islam that would link up with the neighboring European countries. In other words, these countries are living the same conjunctural moment in their oscillation between the Western system of

democratization and a dense historical legacy that has always defined itself against the 'Other', This 'Other' being essentially European. Hall (1988: 127) points out that the concept of conjuncture delineates 'the complex historically specific terrain of crisis which affects – but in uneven ways – a specific national-social formation as a whole'.

I believe that Anglo-American articulation of cultural studies in their respective territories should not ignore the other contextual events taking place elsewhere. This is what Graeme Turner (1992) tried to insinuate in his defense of the specificity of Australian cultural studies, to purge out the unnecessary influences that might alienate the Australian cultural studies from its context. In this sense, he agrees with Lawrence Grossberg's concern that one of the stumbling blocks of cultural studies at the present conjuncture is that it tends to subsume all other experiences of the cultural into the orbit of the center. In this regard, Turner (1992:652) explains:

> That is, I am trying to work through what is both a general and a personal (and perhaps you're right, a male) problem of trying to understand the ways in which British paradigms have distorted approaches to Australian cultural studies. I am arguing that this is a problem for Australian cultural studies in general.

Similarly, the practice of contextualizing cultural studies in the North African region is not a simple move in space with ready-made conceptual constructs applicable to *any* situation. Rather, it is a 'trespass' to absorb binary oppositions such as secular/religious, or black/white naively and transplant them forcefully into the North African locale. Articulation helps us to keep all movement across the cultural 'borders' checked. The objective is to keep the North African cultural studies exempt from the global march toward the center, which itself still questions the premises upon which modernity has been stratified. Grossberg (2006:12) informs us how the center of cultural studies got into trouble in 1980s since it could not answer to issues of:

> globalization, regionalization, financialization, the rise of new perspective political alliances of various sorts around the world, the end of the cold war, the political interventions of multinational corporations, *the growing power of religious formations* – all made the organic crisis obvious and defined a changing conjuncture to which the center of cultural studies seemed unable to respond. (Emphasis added)

The religious component is crucial to understand the formations that influence any serious study of the formation of cultural studies in the North African context. In Morocco, for instance, one cannot discuss the political spectrum without alluding to the religious underpinnings that nourish legitimacy in the Moroccan political system. If class was the byword that resonates within the British political context, religion seems to determine most of the cultural formations in the Arab World. As I will argue later in this work, the Moroccan political, social and cultural structure does not follow the logic of the state as we know it in the West. Rather, it follows

the logic of the monarch's house[37] that controls the cultural, political and economic sectors in Morocco. The return of the religious component in the configuration of the cultural in different contexts is very visible, and this leads us to question the direction which modernity is taking and alerts us to the consequences that such choice of articulation of power, religion and social change could bring about. This makes me more concerned with the character of capitalism in the North African context, and different postcolonial contexts, where religion plays a major part in politics and defines all aspects of everyday life, including communication. What is, then, the *nature* of modernity that ensues from its harbingers, especially mass communication systems and the discourse of information society that started to be articulated since the publication of *The Coming of the Post Industrial Age* (Bell, 1976)? Grossberg (2006:15) seems to share the same concern when he discusses the potential dangers surrounding the actual configuration of social formations, be it in his own immediate contextual space, i.e. USA, or elsewhere. This concern is best articulated in this statement:

> I do not think any settlement, any balance in the field of forces, has been reached during the past thirty years, although it is clear that certain fractions have been gaining power steadily and have a sometimes disproportionate power to shape the possible futures from which the society must choose. Yet, I do not think we can say what the outcome is going to be; whatever the coming modernity, the mergent reconfiguration of modernity, is going to be, it will not be the simple realization of any one project. Although again, it is clear that over the past three decades, the so-called New Right (comprising various new conservative fractions, various religious fractions, and various corporate-capitalist fractions) seems to be exerting the most powerful determining pressures and pushing the country (if not large parts of the world) in particular directions.

One is duly concerned about the character of these directions, not only in the 'center', but also from alternative positions that interpret modernity, relying on different categorical constructions. This reminds us that the real project of cultural studies should be open and against all closures, as Raymond Williams (1989:158) describes it:

> As you separate these disciplines out, and say, 'Well, it s a vague and baggy monster, Cultural Studies, but we can define it more closely – as media studies, community sociology, popular fiction or popular music', so you create defensible disciplines, and there are people in other departments who can see that these defensible disciplines, that there is properly referenced and presented work. But the question of what is then happening to the real project remains unknown.

Grossberg (2006:6) reminds us that the construction of a sound political history of the present requires a bold opting for radical contextualization. This will save us

[37] For an ample understanding of the interlocking relationship between the bureaucratic practice and the production of culture, please read Pierre Bourdieu (1997): "De la maison du roi à la raison d'état" Un modèle de la genèse du champ bureaucratique ", *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales*, 118, Juin, p. 55-68.

from falling into simplistic essentialism. To this end, I examine the modernist understanding of science and technology in the Islamic discourse, for it claims to have its alternative modernity and even challenges the condensed articulations created elsewhere. The channeling of capitalist values and categories through the media and the complex systems of communication has brought the very discourse of capitalism under scrutiny, especially from the periphery that claims to have its own model of democratic values. One does not have to overlook the historical formations that link the progress of various societies with various starting points; and which capitalism claims to unite them technologically into one network with little heed to the subsequent effects on different planes of work, mainly economic and cultural sites. The cultural component of information has vehemently returned in the headlines of newspapers – the war on Iraq, the politics of fear, financial panic and the quarrel over definition and identification. The cultural understanding of science in the Islamic tradition, for instance, determines the form and structure of intellectual undertaking in the countries that take Islamic cultural references as their basic reference. For, instance, Jamal Ad-Din Al-Afghani's (1838-1897) commitment to an unorthodox 'Islamic philosophy' provides us with an instance where an Islamic modernist propels science. Afghani (1968a) suggests that the modern world necessitates a new view of human agency, expressed in "activism, the freer use of human reason, political and military strength". He also adds, "If someone looks deeply into the question, he will see that science rules the world. There was, is and will be no rule in the world of science" Yet, in the very same essay, Afghani (1968a:104) assesses his surmise by saying that:

> A science is needed to be the comprehensive soul for all the sciences, so that it can preserve their existence, apply each of them in its proper place, and become the cause of progress of each one of those sciences. The science that has the position of a comprehensive soul and the rank of a preserving force is the science of *falsafa* or philosophy, because its subject is universal. It is philosophy that shows human prerequisites. It shows the sciences what is necessary. It employs each of the sciences in its proper place. If a community did not have philosophy, and all the individuals of that community were learned in the sciences with particular subjects, those sciences could not last in that community for a century…that community without the spirit of philosophy could not deduce conclusions from these sciences. The Ottoman government and the Khedive of Egypt have opened up schools for the teaching of the new sciences for a period of sixty years and until now; they have not received any benefits from those sciences.

Afghani (1958, 1968a) represents an 'alternative' view to the study of science in the Islamic World, for he considers that the main purpose of science is to provide the basis for "the stability of the social order". This is not attainable without the use of critical approaches to the foundation of these sciences and technologies, as Afghani (1968a : 14) argues: "It [the philosophy of science] is the foremost cause of the production of knowledge, the creation of sciences, the invention of industries and the initiation of crafts." This critical approach is reminiscent of Robins and

Webster's (1999:114), where they called for a cautious reading of the long-term objectives of modern technologies.

> The 'Information Revolution' is, then, not simply and straightforwardly a matter of technological 'progress', of a new technological or industrial revolution. It is significant, rather, for the new matrix of political and cultural forces that it supports. And a crucial dimension here is that of organizational form and structure…What they permit is the development of complex and large –scale bureaucratic organizations, and also extended corporate structures that transcend the apparent limits of space and time (transnational corporations).

Thus, a sound assessment of the discourse of information society requires a parallel study of the trajectories that have formed the age of 'information society' in the Western industrial centers; and a close watch on the 'Other' definitions of science that exist elsewhere. In other words, the local can speak for itself while the global tone is in the making. There are different trajectories that act and interact in other locales especially as we are living in the age of globalizing markets, and also, most importantly, the globalization of social and cultural norms. It follows from this analysis that the technological revolution that is abstracted in the epithet of "information society" is not a matter of technology alone. Rather, there are cultural and political processes that are at work, and their effects are not limited to the Boulevards of the post-industrial context, but are felt in the furthermost towns around the globe. This is what John Urry (1995: 128) articulates herein:

> A bewildering array of developments has recently occurred which have undermined the obvious coherence, wholeness and unity of individual societies. Such developments include the growth of multinational corporations whose annual turnover dwarfs the national income of some individual nation-states; the spectacular development of electronically transmitted information, which enables geographically distant units to be organizationally unified.

Urry (1995) has envisaged the roots of the industrial revolution that have been condensed historically to give birth to the post-industrial age. He alerts us that the move from the former social structures to the urban form of organization has had its tremendous consequences on the social processes that clustered to produce information society as we know it today. Urry (1995) was very precise when he underlined the importance of the change in the nature of work and employment during the early decades of the 19th century, especially with the inclusion of railways within the public sphere and the restricting of boulevards. The Parisian Boulevard, which was designed by the Baron Von Haussman, transformed the notion of circulation within the public space. The most important change was the dramatic change in the notion of public gaze. Boulevards provided the space where traffic flows, but also the context where that very traffic becomes *under* the gaze of the city dwellers. Baudelaire's first experience of the Boulevard tells us how the individual felt the change in the early moments of modernity. Baudelaire, in his succinct description of the modern urban life, writes, "I was crossing the boulevard, in a great hurry, in the midst of a moving chaos, with death galloping at me from every side" (ibid.127)

The Boulevard metaphor is one portend to the present that is marked by the tendency to restrict the space where human beings ebb and flow. The Silicon Valley has created automated boulevards where technology users can be brought under surveillance. It is a shift in the public space form, but not a change in the *managerial* intention to pigeonhole people into fixed spaces where they can be easily watched. Bauman's (1998:52-54) notion of 'synopticon' is of much relevance here. On a Boulevard, every one watches the other, and everyone is watched. It is a space where interaction is limited by well-structured borders that constitute the Boulevard (say administrative buildings, restaurants, banks, etc.), and the space of flow and the direction of flow is pre-determined by the designer of the Boulevard. Similarly, the automated boulevard has thrown the post-Industrial subject into the alleys of the automated society. Urry (2004:129) reminds us of one very striking mantra that characterizes the social change and life in the informational mode of production: "As the New York Times puts it, firms had to 'automate, emigrate, or evaporate'. […] The development of new forms of electronically transmitted information and of jet transport and travel has permitted extraordinary levels of vertical disintegration and special relocation."

Besides, the service-based society has brought about change not only in the public space through mixing people in an undifferentiated manner. This change is also a psychological one. Urry (2004:131) underlines that nostalgia is also an element that marks the 'post-industrial societies'. People are distanced from their immediate experience of everyday life through the highly technologically imbued public space:

> Nostalgia then for industrial times past is a widespread and permanent feature of PI Britain. It is believed that here has been a huge loss, that a plethora of skills, solidarities and meanings that were bound up with particular places, have been eroded forever.

History in this sense is future-oriented. The move from wage-based work to service-based society is a strategic change to direct society towards futurist dreams whose traits are not yet clear. Jean Baudrillard (1988:166) seems to share the same attitude when he articulates his argument of the *hyperreality*. In *Simulacra and Simulations*, Baudrillard argues that we are losing touch with the 'real' and that modern technologies have shifted the global ground towards a 'hyperreal state'. This is what Baudrillard (1988:166) insinuates when he writes, "Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal."

This notion of hyperreality is very instrumental in the study of the move from the 'original' to the 'copy'. Baudrillard in his study of technological forms of the most advanced cultures shows his concern for this notion of symbolic exchange that ultimately leads to the end of meaning and the celebration of the amnestic and the transient image. For Baudrillard, the mass media and everyday technologies are but a harbinger for the creation of simulacra that transfers the real world into the phantasmagorical one, and the 'real' into the hyperreal.

> If the state is confused with civil society, and if its specific end is laid down as the security and protection of property and personal freedom, then the interest of the individuals as such becomes the ultimate end of their association, and it follows that membership of the state is something quite different from this. Since the state is mind objectified, it is only as one of its members that the individual himself has objectivity, genuine individuality and an ethical life. (Hegel 1967:156)

For Hegel, one of the important functions of the state is the ultimate use of coercion. The state through its institutions aims at ensuring the rights of individuals through bureaucratic machines. Hegel was writing about the state in the western tradition to explain the relationship between the state and the social forces that work at the level of the civic, i.e. civil society. Hegel maintains that the processes that shape the work of the state systematically differ from those that characterize the processes that lie at the heart of civil society. Unlike Thomas Paine (1791) who defended democratic principles in *The Rights of Man*, Hegel's system of thought has a complex understanding of freedom that he divides into subjective and objective, individual and social, theoretical and practical. Hegel (1967:206) sees the freedom of press as follows:

> To define freedom of the press as freedom to say and write whatever we please is parallel to the assertion that freedom as such means freedom to speak as we please. Talk of this kind is due to wholly uneducate, crude, and superficial ideas.

Additionally, Hegel argues that the mechanism of the state should operate in such a way as to make the executive branch a mere bureaucracy dependent on the monarch. Hegel (1967) limits the right of legislation to the owners of landed property. This means the exclusion of the paupers, 'the workers and women'. Not to mention his outright exclusion of other lands that exist beyond Europe; Africa has no existence in the mechanics that govern the Hegelian rationale. This has been considered as a major setback in the Hegelian system.

Hegel's differentiation between the 'European Spirit' and the 'African Spirit' induces us to question the nature of the state in the 'Middle Eastern Spirit'. My choice of Hegel is dictated by the major influence his work has had on providing the philosophical back up to what we know today as capitalism. Before sketching out the traits of the Middle Eastern kind of state, I attempt probing into Hegel's views on the civil society. The linkage between the state and the civil society in the Hegelian paradigm will give us a preliminary yardstick whereby to see the nature of the state and civil society in the Arab-Islamic World. For Hegel (1967:130) the civil society exists only in the moments of economic exchange. Thus, the ultimate target of civil society is the nourishment of the capital and that entails the necessity for rules that organize labor and exchange:

> When men are this dependent on one another and reciprocally related to one another in their work and the satisfaction of their needs, subjective self-seeking turns into a

> contribution to the satisfaction of the needs of everyone else. That is to say, by a dialectical advance subjective self –seeking turns into the mediation of the particular needs through the universal, with the result that each man in earning, producing and enjoying on his own account is *eo ipso* producing and earning for the enjoyment of everyone else. The compulsion which brings this about is rooted in the complex interdependence of each on all, and it now presents itself to each as the universal permanent capital [….] which gives each the opportunity, by the exercise of his education and skill, to draw a share from it and be so assured of his livelihood, and thus by means of his work maintains and increases the general capital.

This shows that the mechanism that governs the workings of the civil society is to be found in the *economic exchange* that involves all the members of a specific society. It is not to be found in the political realm only. At least in terms of the order of things, the economic factors play the major role that unites the active elements in the Hegelian postulates about the state. The relevance of this approach to civil society was enhanced in the post 1789 France and served as a model to trace the borders between the state and the civil society. In *Rights of Man and Common Sense*, Thomas Paine (1994) discusses the major traits that have distinguished the civil society from the state.

First, the distinction between the state and, the civil society was born and clarified out of a desire to justify armed revolution. Second, the definition of the state mainly took connotations of power and war. Third, the connection between the state and democratic theory has no natural link. This very arbitrariness of relations makes articulation suitable to account for the non-guaranteed links that bind society and its institutions. This is justified by the polysemic nature of interpreting the role of private property, for instance. For both Paine and Hegel, private property and market were intrinsic constituents of civil society. Yet, for Paine, their existence is a ground for the fulfillment of democracy, while Hegel argues that private property and market economy exist only to deny the democratic form of the state.

Fourth, the notion of civil society is equated with economic purposes. This has led to establishing a popular vitality within the Western societies. The birth of labor movements in Western Europe shows that they played a key role in the check and balance of power. Civil society in Western Europe became more aware of its dialectical relationship with the state that assumes two contradictory roles. It both guarantees individual rights and regulates them according to its own logic. Here we have to distinguish between two types of logic: the logic of the state and the logic of civil society. The logic of the state may cause suffering for the individual if the latter does not comply with the system of the state. The logic of civil society tries to mend those moments when the state breaks away from defending the needs of the individuals or minority groups. The civil society, thanks to its economic and symbolic power, may force the state to ease the bureaucratic hurdles that slow down the economic performance of individuals in the Western society.

After surveying this organic relationship between the state and society in the Western paradigm, I would like to examine the possibility of mapping out the

nature of the relationship between the 'state' and 'civil society' in the 'Middle Eastern Spirit', following Hegel's system of categorization.

The state in the Arab-Islamic World

In his categorization of the states of the world, Tony Barnett (1996:5) describes the situation of the *Maghreb* and the Middle East as follows:

> Most contemporary nation states in Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Latin America are either part of the response to colonialism or the direct creation of colonialism. While in the Middle East and North Africa, colonial boundaries (derived from the French and British division of the administrative units of the Turkish empire) cut across a fundamental 'Arab' identity, itself questioned by the existence of other local identities based on ethnicity (the Berbers in Algeria and Morocco, the Kurds in Iraq) and of communion (the division between Shi' and Sunni Islam and between Maronite Christians and Muslims in Lebanon).

The birth of the 'modern' state in the Arab and Islamic world has been an arduous process. If capitalism has prepared the ground for the establishment of the social order necessary for the blossoming of civil society in Western Europe, the non–European state formation, mainly in Africa and Asia, is the result of a complex mixture of diverse identities, languages and cultures. In Algeria, the National Liberation Front (FLN) seized power and imposed one party rule that still mires Algeria. In the *Mashreq* (East of the Nile), various clan-based families imposed religious hegemony and formed their own 'states'. In the case of Saudi Arabia, for instance, the state was built on the platform of a 'marriage of convenience' between religion (*Wahabism*) and the politico-religious power of the Al Saud family. The same scenario took place in Kuwait and UAE where a group of families dominates the political scene. In Yemen and most of North African countries, the state drives its legitimacy from different grounds. In the 'Sherifian' kingdom of Morocco, the king claims his legitimacy from being a direct descendent of the prophet. The rest of North African countries (Algeria, Mauritania, and Tunis, Libya) are under the 'aegis' of military regimes that eradicate any opposition when they see that their own aims are in danger. The military junta in Algeria is a case in point. The result has produced a sort of Western style institutions (parliaments, parties, associations). Yet, the core of the practice of politics remains deeply rooted in the tributary mode where the legislation is done not in the name of the logic of the state, but in the name of religious or military ruler.

The case of Morocco is very interesting in that it manifests the linkage of two contradictory political behaviors. The king is the head figure of the religious sphere, and at the same time, he is the head figure of secular Morocco. This ambiguity has spilt much ink about the nature of the state in the Moroccan media. Among the issues raised is the king's fiddling with the judiciary power through decrees that abrogates the 'independent' role of the judiciary system. The media law for instance has been ailing under the 1935 decree that made it clear that any mention of the

royal family means the hutching up of the journalist or the newspaper involved. The 1935 decree was abolished in 1995 but its effects are still hovering on journalists' editorial choices. Thus, the role of the fourth estate within the political niche is still wrestling with the established political system that holds the straps of the political agency.

To find the deep roots of what went wrong in the Arabic and Islamic countries and how that relates to state formation, one needs to spotlight on the elements that compose the Islamic consciousness. According to Mohammed Arkoun (1977:70), there should be a systematic way to approach the Islamic consciousness:

> How to approach this consciousness? Must a privileged place be given to the guardians of the safeguard and operation of religious institutions and property? What importance is to be assigned to official discourses that magnify Islam's merits in classes and in school and university manuals, in the numerous articles in newspapers and specialized magazines? Islamic discourse is more abundant than ever; its abundance, multiplicity and wide diffusion have already ensured the triumph of the collective subject over the individual subject.

Therefore, individuals get meaning only when they are subsumed by the collective aims of the group. This latter gets its meaning and its congruity when it affiliates itself with the notion of the *Umma.* This indicates that the trajectory of the 'Western World' as it is explained in Hegelian and Thomas Paine's approaches, does not find its match in the Middle Eastern socio-psychological formation. Anwar Al-Jundi (1978: 7) explains that most Islamic interpretations of consciousness hinge upon the following percepts:

> It is Islam that feeds the human reason and the soul from the polytheisms and worship dedicated to some one other than God.
>
> – Islam recognized man's inclinations and sentiments…everything that is instinctive and natural in him; it included these in his innate nature (*fitra*) in order that they might be perfected in the individual and in the species. So the state has to play the role of the improvement of the soul (*tahdib al-nafs);* this means that man must free himself from the inclinations of his soul, of his desires and passions and submission to anyone other than God.
> – Islam recognized that immutable unchanging laws (*sunan)* which continue to apply according to the order assigned to them control human existence.
> – Refusing to accept the separation of religious from societal life, Islam has consequently a complete system covering the general lines to follow by man in his behavior towards himself and towards the community.

The Islamic 'state' underplays the role of any progressive version of science and foregrounds the 'appeasing version' of theological inquiry, i.e. the primal importance of religion, according to many Islamic states, is to ensure the preservation of the status quo. The religious figures who govern in the name of religion assume that science is unable to explain everything and that faith has no contradiction with science. In fact, all science is just a mere path to prove the importance of the creed. This has led to inertia in seeking 'truth' scientifically. Abu

Hamid al-Ghazāli's (1058-1111 CE) controversial book Tahafut al-Falasifa (Incoherence of the Philosophers) has taken grip on many of his students. The result is so obvious; there was a fall and decline in the Islamic view to sciences. Qadir (1988:179) has captured this downfall as follows:

> The downward trend in scientific enquiry which set in soon after the glorious period of Islam is still continuing and the Muslim world finds itself at the end of a long period of progressive decline. There is, practically speaking, no science and no technology in the Muslim countries. They have to depend for their security and developmental needs on technology borrowed and purchased at exorbitant rates from the West or in some cases from Russia or Japan. The Muslim countries have been reduced to the position of exporters of raw material and importers of manufactured goods including sophisticated technology and advanced science.

Within Western countries, the secularization of the scientific field has helped a great deal in the surpassing the infringements of the religious agency. The Islamic state gains its legitimacy from different sources, mainly the populist utilization of religion to convey a 'selected' interpretation of the material endeavors of the people who live under the Islamic form of government.

With their focus on the Umma (Islamic nation) and the collective community, many Arab-Islamic countries have limited the access to information, and until the early years of 'independence era' violence was used as a means to deter anyone who would read newspapers. (Adarb bi zaraweet 'ala man yakra Gawazee t/ literally: beat the hands of those who read gazettes). The neo-colonial state in North Africa has followed the same logic, but the manner of drubbing the hands of those who circulate opposing ideas has changed to take the form of driving alternative information sources to bankruptcy. For instance, Le Journal and Nichane are two newspapers that were banned from circulation. Many newspapers went into financial disaster because the war of opinions that they stated has backfired against them. The case of the newspaper Nichane which 'broke' a taboo in the issue titled 'How Moroccans Laugh at Religion, Sex and Politics', and which led to the closure of the paper, shows that the space of freedom of expression is still under serious fetters. It follows that the practice of censorship in the Middle East is a common practice. The Internet is also another domain that undergoes such surveillance guided by Islamic interpretation of the ethical codes of communication.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia controls the information its citizens can readily access on the World Wide Web through a sophisticated filtering system that draws upon commercial software from the United States. (Secure Computing Smart Filter). ONI (Open Net Initiative) has tested filtering in Saudi Arabia over a three-year period and found that the Kingdom's filtering focuses on a few types of content: pornography (98%, drugs (86%), gambling (93%), religious conversion, and sites with tools to circumvent filters (41%).

The same scenario takes place in UAE:

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) seeks to establish itself as an economic and technological leader in the Middle East, encourages Internet use for this reason, and yet blocks its citizens from accessing a substantial number of Web sites. The UAE government extensively blocks content that it considers objectionable for religious and cultural reasons, though not, apparently, material related to political dissent. The state's policy-makers have sought to resolve this tension by instituting an Internet filtering system based upon the Smart Filter commercial blocking service. Of the 8713 URLs that the Open Net Initiative (ONI) tested in UAE, 1347 were blocked (15.4%). Compared to most other countries in the world, UAE's filtering is extensive.

The disparity between the conditions that have produced the Western style of civil society and the Middle Eastern Spirit type of social life has many ramifications that help us understand how the articulation of information society in the former countries does not have the same overtones as in the latter ones. To approach the consequences of information society in the Arab/Islamic World and the Western economies, one has to dissect the implications of the world economy for both camps. Samir Amin (1990) has cleared many vicissitudes of those hurdles that still beset the economic development in the Arab/Islamic world. In his book *Maldevelopment – Anatomy of a global failure,* Amin (1990:25) writes:

> ... In Algeria, more than a century passed between the time of Abdel Kader and the 1954 insurrection. Algeria's past was distant; a long, dead period elapsed between the old nationalism and the new. In Tunisia, the transition was more rapid. Modern nationalism was formed by a direct breach with the old nationalism. The break came between the two wars, and it was a break between men who knew one another personally. In Morocco, the Protectorate was of such recent date that the old nationalist generation has survived almost up to the present day, and the break was delayed until after independence. Nor can the device of the Protectorate be regarded as wholly irrelevant to the issue, since it enabled old structures to survive, even though they had long outlived their function. Examples of these were the Makhzen[38] or the Bey of Tunis and the Sultan of Morocco, which lingered on long after the Makhzen of Abdel Kader, had been entirely destroyed and forgotten. Moreover, the social structures that lay behind these social forms were not in every case identical. The Algerian landed aristocracy had long disappeared – indeed, Abdel Kader himself did more to destroy it than did colonization – while in Morocco this class was actually reinforced by colonization. The situation in Tunisia lay between these two extremes. Even though these structures are today gradually losing their importance in the face of the rapidly rising tide of the petty bourgeoisie – a phenomenon common to all three countries – they did for a long time condition the nature of the national movement. Last but not least, the difference in legal status was to condition the French attitude towards the Maghreb countries in the last period before independence.

[38] The notion of *Mekhzen* has a repressive connotation in their collective memory. It is the commonly used name to refer to the 'state'.

In the North African context, Amin (1990) has tried to trace the roots of the economic slow down of the *Maghreb* countries. In the case of Morocco, for instance, *the Mekhzen* (central power) has mismanaged the administration of land. Much of the land was seized by the petty bourgeoisie and mostly linked with the royal family, at the expense of small farmers who remained secluded in the mountains, using very rudimentary means of production. In addition, the miscalculated policies adopted by the postcolonial state have led the country to enter a period of cultural uprooting. The results were and are still obvious. Only 51.1 % can read and write standard Arabic. The unfinished program of Arabization has certainly slowed down the cultural and economic empowerment of the country. In Algeria, the successive coups d état and the failure of the agrarian and economic 'revolutions' advanced by president Boumedien regime led the country into a tunnel of political instability which saw its bloodiest heydays in the 1990s, and which still haunts the political economy of Algeria to this day. In Mauritania, the same scenario of political instability has paralyzed its economic performance. In Tunisia, the question of individual liberties is still prime news. It even turned the course of the last World Summit on Information Society from its main agenda. Much ink was spilt on whether Tunisia was an ideal choice to organize a summit of such magnitude as WSIS. Another major setback in the Arab politics is that economic purposes are not given priority. The political debates take priority. Mosad Zineldin (1998:75*)* has well noted that:

> While other countries liberalized and set out to attract new investment, many Arab countries were content to print glossy brochures saying how they could provide facilities, which in fact existed only in the brochures... We Arabs, as usual, watch, wait and see; we should by now, however, have had enough of this non-productive practice. Others have undertaken reforms and are consequently making progress. We are still content to watch, wait, and see.

The North African case is very illustrative. Five countries (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania, and Libya) have all the economic and human potential to develop into a strong market. However, these countries have, at best of their reforms, only reached a semi-industrial stage after nearly fifty years of 'nominal independence'. Less time was needed for South Asian countries to flood the Western markets with their products (Taiwan for instance). The reason for this *maldevelopment* in North Africa is due not to the scarcity of economic resources or to the innate poverty of that area. The real reasons are to be found in the managerial incompetence of the leaders who have so far ruled North Africa. This can be seen in the ongoing cat and mouse game between the Moroccan Alouite regime and the Algerian military regime regarding the question of Western Sahara. This conflict is at the top of the agenda of both countries in their regional struggle to settle the accounts caused by the purely ideological and personal conflicts between the late king Hassan II and the then Algerian president Huari Boumdien. Morocco and Algeria of today are the results of poisonous gift left by colonialism and endorsed by, the petty bourgeoisie in both countries, i.e. the question of borders. To give another example of the immediate economic effects of this regional struggle

between Rabat and Algiers, one has just to gauge the economic activity in the cities that lie on the border between the two countries. When borders are closed, the economic performance is next to nil. And when they are partially opened, people breathe a sigh of relief. Mosad Zineldin (1998:76) explains that:

> The main dilemma is that Arab countries often compete with each other rather than cooperate with each other. Thus, one could not assume that the current circumstances of Arab or Islamic countries are favorable for an Arabic or Islamic form of economic integration. Arab countries are in a great need to cooperate, build up *trust* and alliances with each other to achieve some synergy effects, and to be able to create some economic balance in the global era. Without socio-economic integration between Arab countries, there is no interdependence relationship between Western (economies) and Arabs (…) The Arab League has never been able to grasp the importance of the economy as a means of realizing political goals. Business and commerce were things that Arab politicians looked down on. They considered them the effects, not the causes, of political action. But now, with the emergence of various international blocs, the issue no longer needs to be argued.

Given these set of challenges that face the Arab country, one is inclined to trace the features of the current possibilities of articulating an Arab version of information society, to which I turn now.

Articulating information society in the Arab-Islamic context(s)

Lawrence Grossberg (1997: 177-8) articulates his definition of articulation as follows:

> "Articulation" refers to the complex set of historical practices by which we struggle to produce identity or structural unity out of, on top of, complexity, difference, contradiction. It signals the absence of guarantees, the inability to know in advance the historical significance of particular practices. It shifts the question of determination from origins (e.g., a practice is defined by its capitalist or working-class genesis) to effects. It is the struggle to articulate particular effects in history that Hall seeks to find at every level, and in every domain of social life.

Grossberg's definition offers a method to pin down practices and to situate them within specific contexts. In the above section, I approached the problematics of state politics within the Arab-Islamic contexts. In what follows, I attempt framing the meaning of information society *within* the Arab-Islamic society. In his *Reflections on the International System,* Samir Amin (2007:2) declares that:

> My central idea and I want to insist on this, is that capitalism is not only a world system, but also a world system that is imperialist by nature. At each step of its development, since the conquest of America in the sixteenth century, it has been a system that has produced and deepened polarization, what I have called the 'center-periphery'. This has been my central line, the central axis of everything I have produced on the evolution of the world system, the challenges of development, and the appreciation of experiments, whether socialist or other, against these challenges. Therefore, imperialism is not a recent phenomenon. It has been tied to the

> development of monopoly capitalism at the end of nineteenth century, as Lenin analyzed. But it is a much older phenomenon than that. Of course the world expansions of capitalism and imperialism have passed through successive phases, each with their own particularity. Thus the shape of 'center-periphery' polarization and the shapes through which imperialism expresses itself have changed, have evolved. But the polarization has never been reduced, it has always been deepened. And so the system has always been a capitalist imperialist system.

The alliance between the global economic systems and the newly created bourgeoisie within different locales has been channeled through political signposts. In the North African context, the very moment colonial powers moved out of the country they made sure that the economic dependence of the former colonies would remain intact. The neocolonial fragile 'states' had to sign accords that delineated, for instance, the nature of relationship between colonial Morocco and postcolonial Morocco; Aix-Libain accords are a case in point. In those accords, the transitory government signed an agreement that describes the relationship between 'independent Morocco' and France as a relationship of "dependence and interdependence". The results of these accords are still visible in the economic choices of Morocco. Big businesses are intrinsically linked with the French economic market. For example, Maroc Telecom, the main telecommunication company in Morocco is a subsidiary of France Telecom, and controlled by Vivendi Universal that possesses 53% share of its capital. Aix-Libain accords (1955) with Morocco and Ivian accords (1962) with Algeria are but indicators of the subtle persistence of the postcolonial relationships that France still maintains with its friendly regimes in North Africa. The main economic sectors in North Africa are mainly run by French affiliated institutions; this is what explains the intensive use of French in the closed economic circles. The pending question is how do the elite in the 'national' economies perceive the proliferation of the new technologies? In other words, what future awaits the North African governments and societies in the face of the global economic capitalism in the age of technological forms of life (to use Scott Lash's (2001) expression)?

To answer the above-mentioned questions, one has to look at the nature of the relationship between civil society in the periphery and the notion of information society, the latter being the latest manifestation of the capitalist evolution in the West. In his attempt to decipher the signs that baffle the Islamic societies, Hamid Mowlana (1988b: 17) explains:

> Muslim societies in general have a rather skeptical view of the West's information and media expansion, to say the least. The history of colonialism shows that the West extended its hold on Muslim heritage and resources not only economically and politically but also culturally and through the expansion of their communication media and control of information.

This justifies the skeptical view of the Arab media that are broadcast from Western centers (radio *Sawa* for instance). Some Arab media analysts consider that Radio *Sawa* for example is an aggression against the 'cultural specificity' of their local

cultures. In this regard, Yahya Elyahyaoui (2004), (a Moroccan media analyst) argues that:

> We are fully convinced that radio 'Sawa' aims to infiltrate the Arab media system and reconstruct its form and content.... Neither Radio 'Sawa' (nor its TV channel) can mend by words or pictures what (U.S.) policy-makers have broken with deeds and practices....U.S. behavior towards Arabs, as well as towards Muslims, has created strong feelings of rejection that cannot be mended by the performance of a radio station (or a TV channel), but only by changes in the form and in content of its behavior.... Radio 'Sawa' is an aggressive station par excellence (see online resources)

The reason for such skepticism is that the reception of news in the Arab/Islamic countries undergoes a different decoding, which is mainly informed by the conceptual framework that is nurtured through the official and local media. Besides, the head of states in the Arab-Islamic cultures have been decided largely from the top. The notion of society in Islamic countries is not based on free elections and the results of the ballot system; the political practice is only a façade to show 'good will' to engage with the international democratization. The *real politics* and the real results have always been prepared behind the closed doors within ministries of interior. The Islamic-Arab political systems justify their undemocratic practices on the ground of a biased understanding of the social priorities that are dictated by the religious tradition. In this respect, Hamid Mowlana (1990: 225) maintains:

> The concept of society in Islam is based on divine law, which finds the foundation of world order in the principle and theory of *Tawhid* (unity and oneness of God). Accordingly, the concept of society is neither sectarian nor racial and tribal but universal. Life, according to Islam, is an organic whole, and all components – political, economic, religious, and cultural – are parts of the whole. *Society is governed by law, that is, the divine law, but this law precedes and controls society*, and not the other way around. (Emphasis added)

The idea of controlling the society in the name of divine law is politically laden. And it is one of the main reasons behind the various economic and social ailings of most Arab/Islamic countries. The heads of states regard themselves as *khalifa* (viceregent of God) who have the right to interpret the religious text, and this has caused a close alliance between the *Ulama* (the men of religion) and the king. The contradictions that such roles engender are multi-faced. Additionally, the irreversible process of the spreading of the technological forms of life has sent shock waves in the Arab and Islamic countries since the invention of the Gutenberg press in the middle of the fifteenth century. Since then, "the Islamic world fell short in adopting new technologies due to political, economic, and social factors both internally and externally" (Mowlana 1990: 221) .

As early as in the nineteenth century, the notion of the civil society started to be used in the Islamic World. After the collapse of the last political gathering that united nearly all the Islamic countries in one caliphate, i.e. the Ottoman Empire, the arrival of the colonial powers in the Middle East, together with their projects of

modernization, has altered the structure of the Oriental countries forever. The creation of elite whose members have studied in the Western capitals helped in introducing the idea of nationalism that has no history in the Arab/ Islamic world. Nasserism swept over all the Arab countries and the Arab public opinion was defined not in relation to its internal nature, but against the regional struggle for power, especially against Israel and its supporting powers. Most Arab regimes are skeptical of the new technological form of life, especially of the fact that the first established newspapers were managed and initiated by colonial vice-regents. Mowlana (1990:224) argues that the reason may be that most Arab-Islamic states have failed to execute a healthy modernization.

Modernization movements in Islamic societies over the last hundred years have in part failed because they were unable to elaborate a coherent doctrine based on the unity of spiritual and temporal powers. Hence, the interconnection of what is known as civil society and the state that are two instrumental categories in the World Summit on Information Society, needs much heed since the notion of the civil society in Islamic societies has different overtones. Islamic reformism, despite its idealistic unity, failed to take into account the multidimensional aspects of the *Ummah (community)*, and instead its political culture, its mode of mobilization, and its administrative framework came to reflect the appearance of the modern nation-state system and its bureaucracy.

It is very clear that the break up of the Ottoman Empire and the fast secularization of many Arab- Islamic countries has caused an *implosion* in most of the Middle Eastern countries. Some have borrowed the socialist model (Algeria, for instance) and others have inclined toward Washington (Morocco). The case of Morocco is exceptional since it has never been a part of the Ottoman Empire and its external affairs were in most parts against the stream that was prevalent in the Arab countries especially after 'independence'. This created different types of social vectors within the Islamic World, and each society saw that it had its own mechanism whereby a national civil society could cement. After the collapse of most monarchies in the Middle East and their replacement with military/republican regimes, the idea of civil society took revolutionary overtones in most Arab-Islamic countries. In Morocco, the case was different. The late king Hassan II tamed all the possible alternative options, including the media, and exploited the religious sphere to his own ends.

It follows from this that the articulation of the civil society in the West took a different trajectory from that which characterized the articulation of 'civil society' in the Arab-Middle Eastern locales. While the Western countries developed civil society on purely economic and capitalist measures, which were fed by political and social upheavals, the Arab-Islamic countries still struggle with the definition of civil society. The main challenge there is to make civil society compatible with the spiritual ideals of the *Ummah* (community). In other words, while the West has built civil society on economic exchange and on separating the state from the church, the Arab-Islamic region still searches for the cultural tense. Mowlana

(1990:225) argues that : 'When men are this dependent on one another and reciprocally related to one another in their work and the satisfaction of their needs, subjective self-seeking turns into a contribution to the satisfaction of the needs of everyone else'.

This analysis of the nature of civil society in the West seems to take other tones when transplanted in the Arab soil. The idea of *Ummah* with its idealism precludes any clear understanding of the real bonds that relate one member of society with the other, the reason being that the notion of the *Ummah* is an abstraction of a unity that has never existed in practical terms ever since the death of the prophet in 632. This may be explained by the successive assassinations of the successors of the Prophet (Omar, Othman and Ali) and since then, the Islamic '*Ummah'* could not find a unifying factor for the countries it claims to comprise in one Whole. With the quick proliferation of media and telecommunication systems, the task of the states has been made even more complicated, for the state in the Arab world experiences changes from below and above. The IMF, the World Bank and the Club of Rome have their own agenda, while the people living in the Arab countries see that their political agenda is completely different from the reforms that are pushed willy-nilly in their homes, the family code for example in Morocco.

The articulation of technological transfer in the Arab-Islamic context(s)

> A technology implies an institutional structure to support the administration, continued maintenance, and marketing of that technology. When a technology is imported, it is inevitable that at least some of the supporting social structure will also be introduced. The importation of communication media is a classic example of how the whole institutional complex and administrative organization were brought in along with the supposedly 'value free' technology. (Hamelink 1983:17)

This means that transfer of technology to the periphery is preconditioned by the transfer of the social relations that produced those technological gadgets in the first place. What Hamelink (1983) tries to draw our attention to is that the peripheries that receive computers without having the necessary infrastructure end up in perpetual dependence on the 'West'. In other words, the real administration of technology remains beyond the postcolonial state, i.e. the agency remains in the capitalist contexts of production. This is called '*usines clés en mains'* type of neocolonial relationships that still persist in the French former colonies. Other risks that surround the issues of technology transfer are found in Samir Amin's reflection on the international system, and in his conviction that the nature of the global capitalism lies in the fact that the centers of that system pay little attention to the regional development of the peripheries. For a healthy and equal global development, the centers have to adjust to the periphery and vice-versa. There could be no democratic development when the center produces economic models and the countries at the margins apply them, regardless of the compatibility or the non-

incompatibility of those small-scale economies with the logic of the already industrialized center. Amin (1980: 253) suggests that the 'periphery' may offer hope for change given the inaptitude of the 'center' to bring about a radical 'revolution'. He explains:

> The introduction of new relations of production seems easier in the periphery than in the center of the system. In the Roman Empire, feudal relations took hold rapidly in Gaul and Germany, but only slowly in Italy and the East. It is Rome which invented colonialism, which replaced slavery. But feudal authority developed elsewhere and feudal relations never fully developed in Italy itself. Today the feeling of latent revolt against capitalist relations is very strong in the center, but it is powerless. People want to 'change their lives' but cannot even change the government. Thus, progress occurs in the area of social life more than in the organization of production and the state. The silent evolution in lifestyle, the break up of the family, and the collapse of the bourgeois values demonstrate this contradictory aspect of the process.

Technology as an epitome of social change can only be seen as part of the global economy. Scott Lash's notion of 'technological neutrality' is an illusion since technology and the new media have not only shaped the everyday life of many people in the world, but also dictated the conduct of individuals in the daily life. The man–machine mode of being has become an inescapable form of existence. No one can do without computers in societies where information technology is wide spread on a large scale. Man and machine have blended to unleash new ways of being and new values of exchange. Thus, the analysis of the meaning of technology and its implications for the peripheral areas is useful. One just has to question the nature of work relationships that have brought technological forms of life to existence. Significantly enough, the West has gone through different phases before Daniel Bell's alarming signal that Western societies are at the verge of a new age and a new phase where services will take the place of handwork, where the notion of time will be transformed from snail time to real-time. Technological transfer is not a matter of hardware import and export. That seemingly 'innocent' action entails many legitimate questions. Amin (1990:172) clusters them as follows:

> It is in this context that the problems of the transfer of technology must be placed. Transfer of what? Transfer to whom? If it is a question of modern technologies, we will have to bear in mind that these are capitalist technologies, and that they are controlled by the monopolies. Hence, we will be transferring, at the same time with technology, the underlying capitalist relations of production. Moreover, by this transfer we will not be escaping the domination of imperialist capitalism. On the contrary, we will be extending its scope by integrating the periphery more firmly into the imperialist system.

The Arab countries, as technology consumers, are facing the same dilemma. The main challenges facing the Arab regimes have to do not with machine, but with the democratic process that allows the machine values to be fixed in their countries. Nearly all Arab countries show the will to accept the aids to reduce the gap of the so-called 'digital divide'. Both Geneva and Tunis phases of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) have focused on the financial aspect of transfer and

paid little or no attention to the internal economic structures of the target countries that do not meet the values outlined by WSIS process. Tunisia is one example, where the second summit on information society was held. Tunisian human rights situation is not so bright; but, at the surface, the system shows that they are ready for the incorporation of new technologies in the national development. The same situation applies to the rest of the North African countries. The postcolonial states show readiness to accept new technologies. Yet, when they discuss civil liberties with local NGO's, the tone changes, and activists are even suspected to be collaborators with transnational organisms. This explains why civil society was precluded from the meetings in the first phase of information society. Thus, while Samir Amin (1980) rightly questions the dangerous implications of the one-way transfer of technology, I stipulate that the question needs to be asked from both sides. The North and the South have to move towards each other so that both sides reap the benefits of information society. Amin (1980: 177) has mentioned two pertinent examples of such success. These are the Japanese and Chinese models of adjustment:

> China imports machinery. But the 'modern' machinery is taken to pieces in front of all the workers, who are thus invited not only to learn in a practical way how it functions, but also to reassemble the machinery in their own way and to organize their work as they like…..Japan and Russia also imported machines, and also dismantled them, but only for the benefit of skilled engineers who were required to reproduce the machinery and if possible to improve it according to their own logic.

Thus, the idea of XO-1, previously known as the $100 Laptop, is not the actual solution to the structural problems that face the receiving countries, mainly those of the periphery. The core the economic inequity is the real issue that should be addressed. When Nicolas Negroponte and Kofi Annan endorsed the slogan 'one laptop per child', many applauded this idea with no heed to the underlying values that such initiative involves. Not much attention was paid to the nature of this relationship. Nothing is said about the process that has allowed one group of countries to be productive while the dispossessed majority remains at the end of consumption line. Samir Amin (1980: 173) has articulated this idea very clearly:

> This technology is excessively costly; not only because of its capita-intensive nature, but also because of the wasteful consumption patterns it brings with it, the excessive exploitation of natural resources that it implies, etc. In other words, this technology presupposes imperialism, i.e., and the excessive exploitation of labor in the periphery. Thus, it can only reproduce the relations of unequal development within the imperialist system. If this transfer is not desirable, can we envisage another type that of less advanced technologies? The debate about 'intermediate technologies 'suggests such a course….it is therefore no solution to borrow the technologies of the nineteenth -century Europe, apart from the fact that they too brought with them capitalist relations of production.

Amin's thesis on the negative aspect of technology transfer seems to be too deterministic. It is true that technology transfer entails the deepening of the relations of dependence of the less developed countries on the economic production of the

full-fledged industrialized centers. Yet, not all transfer is necessarily negative. The history of humanity has always been one of borrowing and exchange. The question that remains is how to lay the structure of parallel adjustment both within the capitalist centers and in the less advanced societies. We also have to be cautious with this bifurcation of the world as 'center' and 'periphery' that Samir Amin purports. Globalization has brought an erosion of such categorical concepts that have become 'empty signifiers' as Laclau (2005: 70-1) argues:

> In 'Why Do Empty Signifiers Matter to Politics?' I present an argument structured around the following steps. First, if we have a purely differential ensemble, its totality has to be present in each individual act of signification. Consequently grasping that totality is the condition of signification as such. Secondly, however, to grasp that totality conceptually, we have to grasp its limits – that is to say; we have to differentiate it from something other than itself. This other, however, can only be another difference, and since we are dealing with a totality that embraces all differences, this other difference – which provides the outside that allows to constitute the totality – would be internal, not external, to the latter – that is to say, it would be unfit for the totalizing job.

Therefore, taking the 'center' or 'periphery' as safe totalities from which to generate solid conclusions seems to me like an off-the-mark strategy. As Laclau argues, it is difference which is the resultant category that one should adopt. The capitalist center does not sit up there in the 'Panopticon' and bring about economic effects without the tacit involvement of the peripheral elements, or at least some of them, that I sketched earlier in this chapter when dealing with the inefficient policies adopted by the political 'elites' of neocolonial countries. Loading the developing nations with 100 dollars laptops will not solve the structural problems of social relationships and values that were created by Taylorism and Fordism, for instance. The agrarian societies did not have wage-based jobs where the division of labor was clear. The opposite took place in the nineteenth century Western Europe, where the conditions were very appropriate for the technological take off to happen. Thus, the question of technology transfer is not the problem of African, Asian or Middle Eastern countries alone. A structural problem has to do with the world system as a whole. And any solution to that problem is to be sought globally too.

Reflections on the Moroccan strategy of 'adjusting' to 'information society'

In his statement of the Moroccan policy concerning telecommunication, Nasser Haji (Secretary of State in charge of Post, Telecommunication and Information Technologies) has presented the immediate objectives of the Moroccan project of e-Maroc as follows:

> This process has started with the implementation of the parliamentary Act in 1998 with the objective of complete liberalization at the end of 2002. The first step in liberalizing telecommunications has been taken by introducing in 2000 a second

player, Méditelecom, (Telephonic, Portugal Telecom and a Moroccan Banking Group) in mobile telephony. This has resulted in an outstanding expansion. The number of subscribers of mobile telephone went from less than 250,000 at end of 1999 to about 5 million in February 2002 with 78% share for IAM (the main telecommunication company in Morocco) and 22% share for Méditelecom Company. This reflects for the year 2001 and for both companies an increase by 15 times of the mobile subscribers.

The immediate objectives are as follows:

- Generalizing technologies of information and communication,
- Rapid deployment of technologies of information,
- Accelerating liberalization and competitiveness,
- Redefining the role of the State,
- Opting for the means for "E-Maroc" strategy. (Online sources in bibliography)

The main challenges that face the Moroccan policy in the incorporation of the aims of information society are multiple. While the statement pronounced by Nasser Hajji seems very optimistic, the obstacles that stand in the way are still not easy to surmount. Morocco targets the full integration of its market in the global market by 2010, but when one looks at the realities on the ground and the statements made by state officials, the cleavage between the two is astonishingly wide. A good integration of an agrarian economy in the industrial based economy requires the revision of not only the nature of the work relationships that shape the current state in Morocco, but the willingness of the state to revise its policies with respect to the educational system, freedom of expression and healthy liberalization. Morocco has signed a free trade agreement with the USA in April 2002. The comments of the representatives of both countries seem to paint a beautiful picture of this bilateral move:

> "A free trade agreement bolsters Morocco's courageous economic reforms, creates economic opportunities for both of our peoples and solidifies our strong *relationship with a key partner."*
>
> – Robert B. Zoellick, U.S. Trade Representative
>
> I regard a free trade agreement as a significant encouragement to the economic and political reforms initiated by the Kingdom, and a powerful tool in the development of bilateral relations."
>
> – Taïb Fassi Fihri, Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, Kingdom of Morocco. (online sources in bibliography)

As to the economic opportunities that Morocco offers, the Moroccan/USA FTA (Free Trade Agreement) website describes Morocco as a dynamic market with the following potentials:

> Morocco, an emerging market at the crossroads of Europe, Africa and the Middle East, forms an $11 billion import market. U.S. Exports to Morocco average $475 million annually, with leading exports including aircraft, corn and *machinery.* Exports of products such as fabrics and pharmaceuticals grew 435 percent and 122 percent, respectively, in 2001.

The Moroccan case offers a good case study since the FTA accords between Morocco and the USA are a good match of two economic systems that outspokenly share the same targets when it comes to the capitalist aims, but they obviously differ in the structure of their markets. The FTA declares that the objectives are to liberalize the Moroccan economy and to offer great opportunities for both systems to flourish. Yet, the question that remains unanswered is, how is it possible to ensure the steady growth of Moroccan economy while it relies on bringing capitalist machinery into the agrarian-based economy? Another question that is linked to the previous is, how is it possible to ensure that the transported values in machine transfer could fit the cultural logic of the dynastic state?

Pierre Bourdieu (2005:23) offers a good analysis of the main challenges that encounter countries where the logic of the king still reigns:

> The initial accumulation of capital is performed according to the logic characteristic of the house (maison), an entirely original economic and social structure, particularly on account of the system of strategies of reproduction through which it ensures its perpetuation. The king, acting as 'head of the house' makes use of the properties of the house (in particular, nobility as symbolic capital accumulated by a domestic group through a range of strategies, of which the most important is marriage) to construct a state, as administration and as territory, that gradually escapes from the logic the 'house'.

Morocco provides a good case where the dynastic state produces and reproduces a heredity-based mode of production. The vectors that govern capital accumulation are not merely decided by the market, as is the case in the Western capitalist centers. Rather, the economic structure spins around the royal family that owns most of the economic resources of the country, and small assets are left for the 'independent' bourgeoisie which in large parts forms a coalition with the house of the monarch (in Bourdieu's terms) so as to maintain the status quo. Bourdieu argues that the logic of the house of the king does not match the logic of the state where democratic process should be the only sacred bond that links the ruler to the ruled. In the house of the king, heredity and blood relationships are more important than the individuals' genius or will to change. The birthright in the house of the king decides who should own what and how property should be distributed. One simple example is that the King of Morocco is the supreme boss of ONA, the largest economic group in the country. Bourdieu (2005:41) maintains that:

> The state is a profitable enterprise, first for the king himself and for those to whom he extends the benefit of his largesse. The struggle to make the state thus becomes increasingly in dissociable from a struggle to appropriate the profits associated with the state (a struggle that will extend over more widely with the advent of the welfare state.)

Bourdieu provides a good sample of analysis of many of the houses that rule over the Arab world. Be it in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Jordan or Morocco, the logic of the house seems to prevail in all those systems. The Al Sabah in Kuwait, the Al Saud in Saudi Arabia and the shirifians in Morocco all share, more or else, the same

underlying logic: ensuring the hereditary aspect of the resources, and the struggle over power at the detriment of the other classes that comprise the societies they rule over. The head of the house nourishes the knowledge of living while he seeks for the knowledge of power. Bassam Tibi (2005:14) has explained that the former type of knowledge hinges upon the foregrounding of the religious and moral values, while the second type of knowledge hinges upon the will and desire to control over material objects, individuals and societies:

> The logic of the 'state' in the Arab countries is definitely guided and decided by the logic of the head of the house. Agency, as a site of power, is the main purpose of the head of the house. Machines, landed economy and telecommunication resources are all under the control of the king who regulates the economic sphere through strict bureaucratic and administrative institutions. The progressive dissociation of dynastic authority (the King's brothers) and bureaucratic authority was concretely affected through the differentiation of power and, more precisely, through the lengthening of the chains of authority and agency.

Now the relevant question is how to link up this power structure to the possibility of adjusting the incumbent status of economies of the Arab World to the global economic system. The idea of democratizing the house of the king is a necessity. How is it possible that the logic of the 'kings' house' unleashes other powers in the civil society whose loyalty to his majesty is not guaranteed? This is the dilemma of the Arab house. Nasser Hajji's insatiable aim to generalize information technology to the peripheral parts of the country and the optimal goal to make Morocco a real active cog in the world economic system by 2010 is all music to ears. Nonetheless, the reality on the ground is sordid and unveils that the digital divide is not a matter of technological division between the North and the South. Rather, the digital divide exists within each country of the Arab World. It is only a continuation of other economic, educational, and social divides left by the colonial moment.

A note on delinking

Samir Amin (1990) sketches the main problems that beset the African economies and 'third world' economies in general. His rigorous analysis has touched up some of the main structural reasons that have made the African economies dependent on the continuous aid programs that up to now have proved to be nothing but 'fixing measures' despite their immediate seemingly positive effects. For a long-term perspective, aid programs instill and reinforce the economic dependency of the African states on the major developed centers. Amin (1990) analyzed the nature of international relationships that are mainly controlled by the capitalist tendency to broaden and enlarge the space of economic 'play' through imposing a set of rules and regulations that weaken the African states even further, and thus, produce a state of inequality. As an alternative to this economic quagmire, Amin (1990) suggests that the notion of delinking is a response to global economy's imperialist agenda. I will present Amin's theory of 'delinking' and after that present my own

intake on the limits of this notion, and finally, I will suggest the alternative possibilities. Amin (1990:70) writes:

> The response to the challenge of our age that we propose is called 'delinking'. The concept is to some extent half of an equation 'adjustment or delinking'. We shall not expand here on the theory of delinking but, to avoid any misunderstanding, say merely that delinking is not synonymous with autarky but only subjection of external relations to the logic of internal development (whereas adjustment means binding internal development to the possibilities afforded by the world system). In more precise terms, delinking is the refusal to submit to the demands of the worldwide law of value, or the supposed 'rationality' of the system of world prices that embody the demands of reproduction of worldwide capital. It, therefore, presupposes the society's capacity to define for itself an alternative range of criteria of rationality of internal economic options, in short a 'law of value of national application'.

The idea of delinking from the world economic system is very ambitious. In his politico-economic analysis of the economic ills that beset the African and Arab countries, Amin (1990:66) calls for a 'subjugation of the external relations of foreign technology to the *logic of an internal development* that is *independent* of them'. The loose point in Amin's argument is that there is no such thing as fixed internal logic of 'national' development, nor is there a stable grasping, at least at the conceptual level, of what he calls 'external relations'— within a global world contingency is *the only* game in town, so to speak. Amin takes the skeptical view to the extremes when he says that the world system is moving towards the global domination of one set of values over the rest and these values are American. The idea of adjustment entails that the peripheral countries submit to the centers of power through their moving towards the adoption of the values of the 'free market' and opening of their economic doors to the multi-nationals. Delinking does not accept the move towards the center. It is a call to create an alternative social and economic process that would produce other modes of production that are anti-imperialist and anti-globalization and which are at their complacent agency positions, so much so that they can 'subject external relations to the logic of local development'(in Amin's words). However, this ambitious idea is too idealistic to be concretized. The legacy of colonialism has left no basis for such possibility to take over. The withdrawal of the colonial power and its replacement with the neo-colonial agents has maintained the power relations that were highly repressive in the colonial times.

The only relevant consideration is what faces the option of national and popular delinking in contemporary Africa, for good or ill. Amin (1990: 24) argues that, "the absolutely first requirement in material action is the development of the forces of production and the rising of living standards of the mass society through a dual agricultural and industrial revolution – for which colonization has done no groundwork."

Can we then speak of technological delinking? My argument is that the notion of delinking does not serve the realities of the Arab and African countries. Emerging

economies do not need delinking, because the nature of global economy in the age of information society and the failure of agrarian and industrial revolutions in North African countries (Algeria for instance) have left little hope for these postcolonial countries to catch up with the highly automated economies of the Western centers. The emerging economies would be better off if they opt for an *interstitial* relationship with the technopoles and emerging models of information society. Warren Senders (2007) defines the concept of interstitiality as follows:

> The word interstitial means "between spaces," and is commonly used to denote "in-between-ness" in several different cultural contexts. Architects refer to the leftover gaps between building walls as "interstitial space," being neither inside any room nor outside the building. Medical doctors have used the term for hundreds of years to refer to a space within the human body that lies in between blood vessels and organs, or in between individual cells. Television station programmers refer to any short piece of content that is neither a show nor a commercial, but is sandwiched between them, as "an interstitial."

The notion of in-between-ness is a useful idea, for it offers the possibility to remain in a symbiotic relationship with the global changes, while at the same time it offers the right to maintain the specificity of the local cultural and social processes. Interstitiality differs from delinking in the sense that the former necessitates an active resistance to the global system and at the same time requires the local economies to provide models that are anti-imperialist, a dream that was rebuffed by the colonial encounter in all the countries that fall in the peripheral or semi-peripheral areas. Interstitiality also differs from the idea of adjustment that hints to the one-way move of the underprivileged economies towards the most powerful economic centers. In other words, interstitiality allows developing economies to empower themselves at their own pace without having to leapfrog to the informational mode of production overnight. In all that, interstitiality stands as a middle ground notion. It offers the possibility of linking the national economy to the global and opens up space for a kind of 'third space', to use Homi K. Bhabha's phrase.

The notion of interstitiality is mainly deployed in the realm of art, yet its implications can fit well in our reading of the political economy of information. Heinz Insu Fenkl (2004:1) provides a very useful definition of the concept:

> I will try to illustrate why the logic of categorizing, which is based on the underlying notion of dichotomy (which itself is a general reflection of the way people think in western cultures), is inadequate for dealing with an entire class of works, which I term the "Interstitial." I will also attempt to show how interstitial works are in a constant state of coming-into-being at the threshold of the readers' consciousness and yet also in a state of potential self-negation once their nature has been identified (also how it causes transformations in the reader at a large scale).

This idea is reminiscent of Homi Bhabha's (1990) thesis that nations are like narrations. As the symbolic unity of nations gets it full realization in the mind's eye, it consumes and exploits all the assets at its hand(mainly economic and social) to

produce a 'idealized' unity that has been the source of political thought and literary language that have shaped the Western conception of progress.

Similarly, national economies should not be a in complete antagonistic relationship with the global economy. They rather feed on that global economy through their internal dynamisms and continuous value-exchange with the surrounding 'borders'. The idea of 'the interstice' offers this possibility of continuous coming into being in the process of unfolding the evolutionary potential that each nation has. The real concern should not be whether to delink from global economy, or, as Samir Amin advances in his political analysis, to adjust to global maldevelopment or what he calls 'the anatomy of global failure'. In effect, the real challenge of Arab and postcolonial economies is how to adopt the middle ground position and move at their pace not necessarily to the centre, but towards a 'third horizon' that may launch a new perception of the global economic system. In my analysis of the idea of technology transfer, I referred to the Russian, Chinese and Japanese experiences that have conceived what Andrew Feenberg (2000) calls the 'technical code'. China offers a useful case for close study, because by appropriating the machinery into the Chinese market, China has managed to tame, to some extent, the underlying social relationships that come as one package with the technical aspect of the machine. One can say that China has managed to live in the interstice because of its ability to exploit the large market potential that it possesses, and because it has been able to sell its 'made in china' products to a global system that hails free market economy and free trade agreements. Thus, keeping one's difference is not a matter of linking or delinking. On the face of it, difference is only preserved in the unfolding of the national ideals within the global and vice-versa. Homi K. Bhabha (2001:2) has articulated this idea as follows:

> It is in the emergence of the interstices – the overlap and displacement of domains of difference-that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated. ... Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation.

These historical transformations are important in the consideration of the meaning of communication in the Arab World. Articulation is concerned with this specificity of the historical formation that characterizes every society. In the next chapter, I will be sketching some of the founding constructs that formed the understanding of communication within the Arab World, with a view to anticipate the importance of having the cultural difference in mind while engaging in a cultural negotiation, and even more importantly, in the technological connection of necessarily different locales.

Chapter summary

This chapter was a continuation of the previous chapter's call for the need of a radical contextualization of the discourse of information society. I started this chapter with the relevance of cultural studies to the examination and explication of the continuous enmeshing of various networks that connect different local cultures regardless of the necessary distinctiveness of each culture. I alluded to the necessity of understanding cultural studies in the plural, a view that is supported by Graeme Turner's call for an Australian version of cultural studies and the American call for a home made American keywords. Technology, being the discourse of the day, has connected through the Internet, for example, different cultural keywords with no regard to the implications of such connection. This is why I have referred to the Hegelian example of the conception of the state and civil society as different from the prevalent conceptions in the Arabic or Islamic World. For instance, I have presented the conception of many Arab countries to technology through their selective choices (for instance, the Open Net initiative in many Arab countries). This chapter has also highlighted that the information discourse faces not a technological problem; rather, the main problem resides in the inherent economic imbalances between different nodes of the global economic system (for instance, North-South information flow imbalances). This is why I have ended this chapter with the revision of the notion of technology transfer, or to use a Slack's (2005) precise expression, 'technological culture' transfer. Slack's expression encapsulates the main challenges of the informational economy. These are of cultural nature, because the connection of different locales is technically possible, but the challenge remains in the cultural connection. This concern led me to call for a grounding of alternative cultural studies that accounts for the local, and at the same time, is aware of the global dynamics. Such alternative cultural studies can enhance further alternative methods (such as articulation) to avoid the exuberant hailing of informational discourse. This chapter has also revised Samir Amin's call for delinking with the global economic system. Using the method of articulation, I have attempted an alternative view to that notion, through endorsing the concept of 'interstitiality' that allows the lubrication of the sharp economic differences between the 'emerging economies' without necessarily breaking up with the world economic system.

Chapter Five

Re-articulating the Arab-Islamic cultural paradigm

In this chapter, I will address how articulation, as a method of radical contextualization, serves to situating technology within the Arab-Islamic world. I try to shed some light on the cultural roots of technological progress in the Arab-Islamic context. Then, I will focus on how politics, religion, science and culture intermingled to produce a civilization that saw its heydays from the ninth to the fourteenth centuries. Therefore, this chapter is an attempt to articulate the historical formation that shaped the 'Arab informational society', and which contributed to the emerging of a more advanced informational progress that started mainly in the 19th century in Europe – a transition that was to be transformed into what we know today as information society or the informational mode of production. This is so because informational discourse is but a continuation of the early economic and cultural development that took place in the 'West'. This historical shift helps to understand the specificity of contextual elements that should be considered in the implementation of information society discourse in the Arab World. More specifically, the re-articulation or contextualization of informational discourses can help the healthy and realistic implantation of informational plans of action. These plans should take into account the necessary difference of cultural elements that are often called to participate in the ongoing information society debates (the role of civil society is a case in point).

Discussing the crisis within the dominant paradigm, Stuart Hall (1989: 43) argues that:

> In my view, communication is not a self-sustaining discipline. It is a regional theory; it is inextricably bound up with the success, the theoretical effectivity or ineffectivity of the general social theories of the social formation as a whole, because it is within this context that it has to theorize the place of communication in the modern social world. Further, this attempt to constitute itself as an autonomous 'discipline' has been a particular weakness, in my view, as the field of communication has developed historically (…). This is why I made the point earlier that the theoretical crisis is precipitated not only from inside, by its own epistemological weakness, but from the outside, by what we used to call 'real history'.

It is in this framework that I would like to address the informational crises within the Arab-Islamic context. My call for a radical contextualization is an attempt to take the issues of information discourse seriously because it is not only an issue of few computers connected here and there. Rather, the shift of communication models and discourses from the so-called dominant paradigm, mainly constructed within the Western context, to the Arab context needs to take into account the necessary specificity of the historical conjuncture that the Arab region is experiencing. I agree

with Hall (1989) when he replaces the word paradigm with *problematic* because the word informational paradigm may denote a complacent order of social structures of thought, while the fact is that those structures are not 'out there': they are *constructed.*

My concern in this chapter is a deconstruction of those structures of thought within the Arab World, together with the recall of the historical formations that have created what one may call 'the Arab informational order'. By this, I mean the constellation of events, discourses, and choices that have shaped the Arab context, and by extension, the general theory of Arab communication. Hall (1989) adds that the attempt to deconstruct the epistemological complacencies of the dominant paradigm does not strip communication of its specificity as a field; it just articulates its place within the big picture of the social theory. In this respect, Hall (1989:42-43) argues that:

> I do not want to be misunderstood on this point – this is not in any way to deny the specificity of the field of communication, which requires conceptualization, theorization, and empirical work on its concrete forms and effects. But there is, in my view, all the difference in the world between the autonomy of a so called independent discipline of study – to which the dominant paradigm in its highly professionalized form has aspired– and the development of theory within what I would call a ' regional' field – that is, the study of the real effects and the internal structuration of a concrete domain of practices where, nevertheless, the nature of its articulations with other practices in the ensemble of social formation as a whole cannot be taken for granted.

Likewise, the articulation of the information society discourse within the Arab World requires a questioning of the dominant paradigm that has produced what we now call the information society. This is what I have been trying to untangle in this work, and this chapter sheds light on the reasons why we should take the issues of information society in the Arab World as a possible 'competitive' model that has not yet coagulated. As Hall (1989:46) argues in the same essay:

> […] dominant paradigms do not disappear because they are intellectually or theoretically weak or even because their weakness is exposed. What we need is a transition to a polysemic constellation of competing paradigms, because the nature of meaning is inherently polysemic.

From an Arab perspective, neither the positivist nor the critical theories have done much to approach the roots of informational and epistemological crisis of communication within the Arab World. The critical tradition has proposed alternative models, but still within the wider picture of the Western dominant paradigm. In this chapter, I try to dig out some aspects that could provide another reading of information discourse from within the legacy of the Arab context. The endeavor will continue in the next chapter that will be devoted to the postcolonial question. For now, I will attempt to sketch the major traits of the Arab cultural understanding of knowledge and its relevance to science.

Contextualizing communication in the Arab context(s)

Any ample understanding of the nature of communication in the Arabic-Islamic contexts (I am using the Arabic-Islamic notion as a starting point of analysis, not as a 'homogeneous region') should start with the cultural references that feed the production, understanding and dissemination of informational codes. Within the Arab-Islamic context, the first starting point is the significant presence of the sacred in the cultural matrix of communicative events. Letter writing, for example, was in the early Islamic period, and even today, is marked by the presence of the sacred as in the expression 'in the name of Allah the merciful…' This does not mean that the Islamic sacred text prohibits the rational scientific enquiry. In fact, the *Qur'an* has many passages that encourage and even command the believers to seek all sorts of knowledge:

> "Are those who have knowledge and those who have no knowledge alike? Only the men of understanding are mindful. "(Quran, 39:9)
>
> "And who so brings the truth and believes therein such are the dutiful." (Quran, 39:33)

Therefore, the sense of the sacred has always been present in the understanding and the practice of information acquisition. C. A. Qadir (1988: 5) has captured the nature of Islamic knowledge in the following:

> The sense of the Sacred that has disappeared from the Western conception of knowledge is the central point in the Islamic theory of knowledge. Indeed, what distinguishes the Islamic way of thinking from the Western is the unshakable conviction of the former in the suzerainty of Allah. Since the source of knowledge is no other than the realization of the sacred.

The Qur'an tells us that Allah taught Adam the names of things. Adam stands as a symbol for humankind, while the names of things signify the elements of knowledge, both worldly and non-worldly. This explains the reason why throughout the history of Arabic-Islamic philosophy of science, two major camps are significant: the first tries to subjugate all forms of knowledge to secure 'a proper' understanding of God, while the second camp tries to strike a balance between the divine and the secular. The intellectual difference between al-Ghazālī (1111) and Averroes (1126) stands as a shining example of that rift between Islamic scholasticism exemplified by al-Ghazālī, and the rational school championed by Averroes. The latter earned the title of 'the commentator' for his tremendous comments and translations of the works of Aristotle and Plato. Mohammed Abed Al-Jabri (1999) describes the period of Averroes as a period of 'missed opportunities' for the Arabic World to develop a consistent theory and practice of knowledge that could have led to some form of "alternative industrial revolution."

The legacy

To understand the re-articulation of the information discourse in the Arab World, it is crucial to re-examine the social and cultural formations that have constituted the

nature of information in the Arab countries. Since the dawn of Islam, the nature of what is information and what is not has undergone a major semantic transformation. Before Islam (the period of Jahilia, 'ignorance'), all forms of communicative acts and themes were viable and free from any theocratic guidelines. One example is poetry that was the main tool to speak on behalf of the Arab tribe. The themes were mainly singing secularist topics like honor, wine, courage, power, etc. When Islam appeared in the Arabian Peninsula, the difference between what constituted 'useful' information from non-useful 'information' was demarcated. Divinity as it is revealed in the Quran has set rules of the communicative ethics as well as other concerns of the human affairs. As far as communication is concerned, the word '*Ilm*' or 'knowledge' primarily designates knowledge of the legislative rules revealed in the Quran and in the hadith that is concerned second in importance after the Quran. Since then, informational validity was tested against the backdrop of the revelation. The result of this approach has led to the sacralisation of both communicative events and the contexts of communication as well. However, after the death of the prophet (d.632), the Islamic World entered an era of bourgeoning cultural and scientific period, but that was not without problems. One of the main concerns was the question of interpretation. For the sake of exemplification, I will take the example of *Jabrites* (Fatalists) and the *Qadariyyah* (indeterminists):

The Jabrites (Fatalists)

Immediately after the death of the prophet Mohammed, there was a huge diversion of opinions on who should govern the Muslim community. At that time, communication was predominantly imbued with religious dogmas, and whoever made the strongest communicative case won the argument. The best example of this was during the nomination of the first Caliph (ruler). The first political choice was not a matter of popular choice. The religious symbolic power took precedence and was determinant in the choice of the first caliph. With regard to the aftermath of the death of the prophet, as noted before, there was sedition among the companions that led to the fragmentation of interpretation and therefore the communicative basis of each argument drew from the same source, but each party had its own logic to prove their case. Qadir (1988: 44) has captured this question as follows:

> A question therefore arose, during the reign of the Caliph Mu'awiya and his immediate successors, as to how it had all happened, who had been responsible for this bloodshed and who should in fact be blamed, for there were very revered companions of the Prophet on both sides. For instance, in one case already mentioned, there was Hazrat Ali on one side and Hazrat Ayesha, the widow of the Prophet, on the other.

The incident known in Islamic history as the 'battle of the camel' between the companions of the prophet was not merely a political crisis; I would argue it was a communicative crisis over interpretation of the religious legacy of Islam. The Fatalists, in their reading of the 'battle of the camel' event, believed that God is the creator of the world, omnipresent, omniscient. Therefore, the ultimate authority

rested in him. Jahm Ibn Safivin (d.745) who tried to prove that human beings are helpless and they have no free will to choose headed this school. The dangerous consequence of this trend was that many unjust rulers in the history of Islam have used this exit to justify the atrocities committed against their people including the abolition of the freedom of communication (I will come to this point later in this chapter when discussing the current situation of communication in the Arab World).

Qadiriyyah (the indeterminists)

The second school asserted the doctrine of free will. Human beings have the freedom to choose what they like and their reward or punishment is based upon their choices. Therefore, a person who justifies his/her choices as a mere consequence of the divine plan was considered as culprit. This school was much disliked by the early rulers of Islam in Arabian contexts, especially the Umayyads (661-749). Hajjaj Ibn Yusuf, the ruler of Iraq, assassinated Mabad al-Juhani (d.743), when he claimed that those who killed Imam Hussein and his followers in the battle of Karbala were guilty. These debates between the free willists and the determinists are not yet over, as even in the current political systems in the Arab World, communication is geared and controlled by the religious establishment that has a strong presence in the media.

Why is re-articulation needed in the Arab context?

Thinking of communication is not only a process of examining the different models that constitute the network of relationships within a specific context. In fact, communication, as an offshoot of a social paradigm, cannot exist outside the other elements that constitute the social fabric of a society. The moment of using a computer is not just a routine action; it is a confirmation of the cultural process that produced the computer, for instance. The modern technological innovations took place in the West; they started in the midst of a thriving techno-political environment that allowed free cooperation between the political components and the creative work of scientists. It is a kind of Latourean (1987) ANT combination of technology represented by technical scientists and the political will, which lead ultimately to creativity. It is the whole system working together that helped producing a Western agency that could be labeled informational capitalism, which is but a mere continuation of a long process that started with a similar struggle in Europe between science and religion in the seventeenth, eighteenth and especially nineteenth centuries. I will just note the tremendous impact of scientists like Karl Vogt, Moleschott and Bűchner who were, as Owen Chadwick (1990:165) notes:

> Men of laboratory, and especially of the medical laboratory. They were much more like anatomists who dissect the human body and say that they find no soul therein and therefore there is no soul. But they were not simple anatomists. Usually they were trained as physiologists or zoologists.

It was especially Karl Vogt in the nineteenth century who revolutionized the scientific community in Europe through his pamphlets on religion and science. The Arab- Islamic context still needs a re-articulation of the domains of each of these struggling categories. This explains why solutions to the materialist problems are still sought in the spiritual realm, and this goes against the creativity needed to produce technological products in the Arab World. This is only one of the setbacks that led to the decline of the early Arab strong scientific legacy prior to the fourteenth century. By way of comparison, Chadwick relates the moments when Europe set religion and science apart. He (1990: 170) argues that:

> The years 1863, 1864, 1865, 1866, 1867 – these were the years when the discussion of Science and Religion changed its character. This was because of Darwin; paradoxically, for we have seen from the case of Draper that because of Darwin men who wrote on conflict between Science and Religion did not feel a need to alter what they wrote. Draper changed hardly a word because of Darwin. Vogt was famous in the materialist controversy of the 1860s–but with a wider public, with a revolution of his ideas on the relation between science and religion. Darwin was not so much cause as occasion. He coincided with the years when the full implications of new knowledge, in crude form and apprehended simply, reached the middle classes of Western Europe and America.

If Karl Vogt and others have demarcated the lines between science and religion within the Western paradigm, the Arab world has had a different cultural route that makes articulating the nature of the past with the present a necessary step in the Arab cultural contexts.

The formative trajectory that marked the European consciousness is not the same as the one that fed the Arab or Middle Eastern one. Though the processes are similar, the Arab context still wades through the grip of theocratic systems. There was no Darwinism in the Arab context, and the materialist ideology is rejected altogether, so to speak. In fact, within the Arab-Islamic communicative critical paradigm, one can distinguish between the two main trends that have marked the history of the epistemological formation. Therefore, I take the communicative theory within the Arab World as a regional field that constitutes the general picture of social formation. Communication has always been tamed by the political establishment that has ruled over the Arab context. I will give two main examples that clarify the struggle of the Arab critical paradigm to voice out its presence within the Arab social formation. These are the examples of al-Ghazālī and Averroes. I will take each in turn and explicitly point out their relevance to the re-articulating process that I have been trying to endorse in this work.

Al-Ghāzalī

Abū Hāmid, Muhammad b. Muhammed al-Ghazālī al-Tūsī, best known as al-Ghazālī, was born in Tūs, near modern Meshhed in northeast of Persia (1058). Al-Ghazālī studied different branches of science under the famous jurist theologian, Imām al-Haramayn al-Juwaynī. When al-Ghazālī became an accomplished

philosopher and jurist, he moved to Baghdad to join Nizām al-Mulk, the Seljuk Vizier, as one of his prominent members of the court. He lectured there and headed the 'madrassa' (school) for four years. Al-Ghazālī excelled in both philosophy and theology. At the beginning of his career, he adopted an acetic life and devoted much of his efforts to understanding the laws of nature. He wrote influential books like *Ihyā 'Ulūm al-Dīn,* and *Al-Munqid minā Dālāl* (*Deliverance from Error*). However, his most controversial work which I deem important to my endeavor to re-articulate the social formation in the Arab World is his attack on the rationalists in his series of books *Tahāfut al-Falāsifah* (*The Incoherence of Philosophers*), *Faysal al-Tafriqah bayn al-Islām wa 'l- Zandaqah* and *al- Mustasfa min 'Ilm al-Usul*. Iysa A. Bello (1989:9) qualifies the legacy of al-Ghazālī as follows:

> In his book, Ghazālī enumerates and refutes twenty questions upon which he holds that the philosophers, especially their first teacher, Aristotle and two most authoritative and trustworthy Muslim expositors of his philosophy, al-Farābi and Ibn Sina, have formulated erroneous theories against which the Muslim masses should be warned.

Al-Ghazālī confesses in *Deliverance from Error* that he entered the realm of philosophical enquiry with the intention to dismantle it from within. After he had learnt the main postulations of the philosophers of his time (mainly Al-Farabi and Ibn Sina) he rejected their rational attempts. Therefore, his scholastic work did not intend the encouragement of rational inquiry in matters of revelation; and given the fact that communication in the Arab-Islamic context is but an offshoot of *Ilm* (knowledge), communication had to follow the fate of the selective knowledge that al-Ghazālī endorsed. For Al-Kindi and Avicenna, Aristotle's philosophical categories were an addition to their Islamic background and they mainly thrived in medicine, mathematics and geometry in addition to their deep knowledge of the religious teachings. To retake Stuart Hall's (1989) discussion of the intrinsic relationship between ideology and the dominant paradigm, one can describe al-Ghazālī's project as a preferred paradigm that has fed the Arabic-Islamic social formation for so long. Roughly speaking, from the death of al-Ghazālī in (1111) to the appearance of a fresh reading of the Islamic legacy in 1174, when Ibn Rushd re-articulated some of al-Ghazālī's arguments in his well-received book *Tahāfut al-Tahāfut* (*The Incoherence of Incoherence*). An important note here is that communication in the Arab World should not be seen outside of the social formation that has shaped it since the rise of Islam. This is explicitly explained in Sardar's (1993:43) surmise that:

> Communication in Islam is intrinsically related to the fundamental Qur'anic concept of *ilm.* Often translated as 'knowledge,' *ilm* is one of the most frequently occurring terms in the Qur' an. As a defining concept of the worldview of Islam, its influence permeates all aspects of Muslim individual and societal behavior. This is why the pursuit of *ilm* is a religious obligation for all Muslims. For the Muslims of the classical period, Islam was synonymous with *ilm;* without it, an Islamic civilization was unimaginable. For a civilization of the future, it is even more so.

Ibn Rushd (Averroes)

Abs al-Wald Muhammad b. Ahmad b. Muhammad Bin Rushed, known in the West as Averroes was the grandson of a famous family of distinguished scholar-jurists. He was born in Cordoba (1126) (Fifteen years after the death of Al-Ghazālī). Ibn Rushd was both well grounded in Islamic jurisprudence and scholastic theology. He was well acquainted with the works of Juwayni Imam al- Haramayn, the teacher of al-Ghazālī. He was also well informed about the works of al-Ghazālī himself. However, the real enthusiasm of Ibn Rushd was for philosophy and other scientific fields like medicine, for which he dedicated his path-breaking book, *Al- Kulliyat fi 'l- Tibb* (*General Medicine*) which he wrote around 1169. Ibn Rushd's times were dictated by the struggle over interpretation of revelation and the insatiable desire of philosophers to prove the worthiness of reason in such process.

This struggle has taken many shapes and forms, but the substance remained the same. One may call it a struggle over the signification process and the delimitation of the meaning of Islamic theory of knowledge *(Ilm*). In his conclusions that he collected in *Deliverance from Error*, Al-Ghazālī confesses that his early interest in Greek philosophy as it was practiced by Al Farābi and Avicenna was mainly due to his desire to disprove the arguments of those philosophers. For Averroes, the interest in philosophy was not prejudiced by an intention to disprove the value of the philosophical categories of Plato and Aristotle. His interest in philosophy was an attempt to reconcile the fundamental teachings of Islam with the early Greek works and thought. Ibn Rushd belonged to the Western Islamic philosophy that flourished in Spain, and which produced high caliber philosophers like Ibn Tufayl and Ibn Hāzm. However, the work of Ibn Rushd stands as the most serious attempt to bridge the gap between theology and reason in the history of Islam, an attempt that was not sustained after Ibn Rushd. The logical result was the decline of Islamic philosophy in general, especially in the centuries that followed the death of Ibn Rushd (I will come to the main reasons for such downfall later in this section).

Ibn Rushd wrote many books, but the most frequently cited one and relevant to this work is *Tahafut al-Tahafut* (*The Incoherence of Incoherence*) which he wrote to rectify some of the mistakes that Al-Ghazālī made in his book *Tahafut al- Falasifah* (*The Incoherence of Philosophers*). In 1153, Ibn Rushd moved to Marrakesh, where he was later introduced to Abu Ya 'qub Yusuf, the Almohad ruler between 1168 and 1169. It was Ibn Tufayl, an accomplished physician and philosopher himself, who introduced Ibn Rushd to the prince. I will quote this introduction in full, for the lessons that it contains to understand the role of the politics and communication within the Arabic context. Bello (1989:11) retakes Ibn Rushd's report on his first encounter with the Sultan:

> When I entered into the presence of the Prince of the Believers, Abu Ya' qub, I found him with Abu Baker Ibn Tufayl alone. Abu Bakr began praising me, mentioning my family and ancestors and generously including in the recital things beyond my real merits. The first thing that the Prince of the Believers said to me, after asking me my name, my father's name and my genealogy: 'What is their opinion about heavens?'–

> Referring to the philosophers – 'Are they eternal or created?' Confusion and fear took hold of me, and I began making excuses and denying that I had ever concerned myself with philosophic learning; for I did not know what Ibn Tufayl had told him on the subject. But the Prince of the Believers understood my fear and confusion, and turning to Ibn Tufayl began talking about the question of which he had asked me, mentioning what Aristotle, Plato and all the philosophers had said, and bringing in besides the objections of the Muslim thinkers against them; and I perceived in him such a copious memory as I did not think could be found [even] in any one of those who concerned themselves full time with this subject. Thus, he continued to set me at ease until I spoke, and he learned what my competence in that subject was; and when I withdrew, he ordered for me a donation in money, a magnificent robe of honor and a steed.

This quote tells us that the prince of the believers was very much interested in promoting science, for he had a philosopher (Ibn Tufayl) on his side. Ibn Tufyal had a tremendous impact on Western philosophy, especially naturalism. This shows that both the philosopher and the politician were close to each other. Ibn Rushd's encounter with the political authority also tells that his hesitation to speak on the subject was due to his fear of the prince's persecution. That tells us about the danger that philosophers risked if they attempted the clustering of Greek philosophy and Islamic teachings within the Arab context. This fear was dissipated when Ibn Rushed learnt the deep interest of al-Mohad ruler.

It is important to note that to understand the nature of communication in the Arab-Islamic contexts, one has to refer to the general framework that generates the conceptual reference for the Arab society. Before Islam, the communicative model was shaped by a wide range of themes which Muhammad I. Ayish (1995) describes as secular themes (honor, genealogy, eloquence, and paternalism). After the advent of Islam, poetry, which was the main communicative tool, shifted gear and the constellation of secular themes were replaced by religious categories like imān, (belief), tawhid (oneness), 'ibadah (worship), Umma (community of believers), and 'Ilm (knowledge). Therefore, one can understand that the communicative concepts underwent a transformation within the Arab-Islamic society. These concepts defined the paradigm that still governs many of the Arab cultural conceptual constructs.

Ibn Rushd's hesitation to speak about alien (Greek) categories in the presence of the prince of the believers just explains how communicative acts are dictated by the communicative norm in the Arab societies. It is these *norms* that information discourse should take into account when talking about the Arab World, though today one can speak of the image as the main visual unit that always finds trouble once incorporated in the Arab contexts. This explains the attempts by many Arab countries to filter the content of the incoming informational streams (I have discussed this issue in chapter four).

The events that were to happen later in the life of Ibn Rushd tell us how the narrow-mindedness of the political systems can suffocate the alternative models. During the

reign of Ya'qub al- Mansur, son and successor of Abu Ya 'qub, Ibn Rushd fell in disgrace and he was convicted by a tribunal of the notables of Cordoba, for upholding heretical doctrines. Ibn Rushd's books were burnt and he was put in prison because of his attempt to use Greek categories to explain the religious teaching in the Arab context. This shows that paradigms are significant to the people that think these paradigms. Social meaning is created in the interaction between the people that think the paradigm and the paradigm itself that encompasses the polysemic nature of society.

Ibn Rushd, as I mentioned before, was the first to seriously attempt an inside re-articulation of the Arab theory of knowledge, and he had to pay the price for his attempt. His legacy shows that the Arab context has its own cultural keywords that still see the freedom of scientific enquiry as a threat to the dominant theocratic paradigm. The halting of scientific enquiry was one of the causes that did not allow the sustenance of the Arab intellectual enterprise which Ibn Rushd started, and which benefited many European philosophers after him. Therefore, informational discourse needs a radical re-articulation because the contextual starting points in the Western countries and the Arab World were not the same. Technology, being one facet of the scientific progress in the advanced countries, is an example of the results of the secularization of the European context. Secularization within the Arab context still meets trouble to be actualized because of the nature of the political and cultural formation in the Arab region. Let us consider Seighworth and Gardiner's (2004) retake of Pessoa's (1998:115) description of his daily observation during his cross commuting through Lisbon, which might help explain the need for a re-assessment or dis-articulation of the ongoing informational discourse:

> I am in a trolley, and as in my habit, I am slowly taking notice of the people sitting around me. For me details are things, words, and sentences. I take apart the dress worn by the girl in front of me: I turn it into the fabric that makes it up, the work that went into making it – but I still see it as dress not cloth – And the light embroidery and the work involved in it. And immediately, as in a primer on political economy, the factories and the labor unfold before me– the factory where the twist of silk, darker in tone than the dress, was made, which went into making the twisted little things in the border now in their place next to the neck; and I see the components of factories, the machines, the workers, the seamstresses, my eyes turned inward penetrate into the offices; I see the managers trying to be calm, I follow in the books, the accounts involved in it all; but it isn't only that: I see, beyond that, the domestic lives of those who live their social lives in those factories and those offices… All of them pass before my eyes merely because I have before me, below a dark neck, which on its other side has I don't know what sort of face, a common, irregular green edge on a light green dress.

Pessoa's description is, in fact, a practical dis-articulation of the different relationships that contributed to the making of that little green dress. Nonetheless, the process that contributed to its production is very complex. Similarly observing the ubiquity of computers in our information-imbued society refers to the infusion of the different factors that have led to the production of the computers on our

desks, surveillance machines, telecommunication systems etc. In other words, observing the high rates of illiteracy in the Arab World and the slow technological production, or the malfunctioning educational systems, throws us back to the historical factors that produced this situation. My earlier reference to the struggle between religion and science in the Arab World is but a re-articulation attempt to trace where matters went wrong. Using Pessoa's metaphor, one can say that observing the low rate of computers in Africa and the Arab World, the slow services, the bureaucratic nature of administration, the low production of universities, the dependence of the economies, and the absence of the freedom of expression are all but an expression of a long process of failures that marked the Arab society since the big decline which started from the fall of Muslim Spain in 1492. Any attempt to deal with the information society that does not take into consideration this historical gap and the contextual specificity runs the risk of oversimplifying the consequences of transforming informational technologies into the Arab context. This does not imply impossibility of bridging what is called the 'digital divide'. What I am suggesting is that the digital divide is only a result of more fundamental divides, mainly economic divides, and any solution to the informational divide should start with solving the economic imbalances.

Consequences of a legacy

C.A Qadir (1988) asserts that the decline of the Arabic-Islamic model started very much earlier than the eighteenth century. More specifically, it started in the thirteenth century with the sack of Baghdad when Changiz Khan (1217-65) destroyed the intellectual resources of the Islamic World. That was an almost unprecedented havoc in the history of cities. Scholars were assassinated and even children were killed. Qadir (1988: 123) argues that:

> In the same strain, Allama Muhammad Iqbal, the poet philosopher of Pakistan says: 'the destruction of Baghdad – the centre of intellectual life – in the middle of the thirteenth century was indeed a great blow, and all the contemporary historians of the invasion of Tartars describe the havoc of Baghdad with half suppressed pessimism about the future of Islam.

The sack of Baghdad ushered in an era of intellectual lethargy and conservatism. This led to a setback in the prime intellectual engine within the Arab-Islamic World, i.e. *Ijtihad* (intellectual exertion). Men of knowledge could not go beyond the textual reading of the *Qur'an* and the Sunnah (the collection of sayings of Prophet Muhammad). The example of Al-Ghazālī, mentioned above, stands as an example of this trend. The second setback that caused the regression of the Arab-Islamic thought was the extinction of scientific enquiry and the dynamic role that religious rituals used to play in the life of the community of believers. This left the Arabs with empty and meaningless prayers. They were stuck with the categories of Plato; they could not go beyond them. This, in turn, led to a sterile intellectual activity devoid of any creativity that could answer the here and now of the mundane reality. As Qadir (1988: 125) puts it: 'the spirit of scientific enquiry languished; and

instead of looking at facts, the Muslim became the gazers of the heaven.' A third element that was a natural result of the continuous downfall was the adoption of the destructive methods adopted by the schools of Fiqh (Jurisprudence). Qadir (1988: 128) argues that:

> There is another reason for the loss of inductive spirit and reversion to the old deductive method. Fiqh (Jurisprudence) was the first science developed by Muslims…. The rules were not to be questioned; what was needed was their correct application.

This led to the uncritical application of the dictates of Fiqh and the immature obedience to the laws of the different schools of Jurisprudence. I want to stress the symbolic importance of the movement from immaturity to maturity in any political social paradigm. This notion was succinctly explained in the famous 1784 lecture of Kant entitled '*An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment'* ('*Beantwortung der frag: Was ist Aufklärung?*') In this lecture, Kant described the Enlightenment as follows:

> *Enlightenment is mankind's exit from its self-incurred immaturity. Immaturity* is the inability to make use of one's own understanding without the guidance of another. *Self-incurred* is this inability if its cause lies not in the lack of understanding but rather in the lack of the resolution and the courage to use it without the guidance of another. *Sapere aude*! Have the courage to use your *own* understanding! is thus the motto of enlightenment.

The absence of critical and self-reliant approach to practical matters was the main immaturity that has beset the practice of intellectual activity within the Islamic community. Another trait of Arab-Muslim decline is the diminishing role of *Ijtihad* (scientific exertion) which was considered as the main drive within the Muslim community. *Ijitihad*, which at first freed the individual from any authority, now became chained with many rules and conditions that were impossible to be summoned in one person. Qadir (1988: 130) lists them as follows:

1. He has to possess the knowledge of the Quran and all that is related to it, that is to say, a complete knowledge of Arabic literature, a profound acquaintance with the orders of the Quran and all their sub-divisions, their relationship to each other and their connection with the orders of the *Sunnah.* He should be able to make clear the meaning of the obscure passages (*mutashabih),* to discriminate the literal and the allegorical, the universal and the particular.
2. He must know the Quran by heart with all the traditions and explanations.
3. He must have perfect knowledge of the traditions, or at least three thousand of them.
4. He should be pious and live an austere life.
5. He should have a profound knowledge of all the sciences of the law.
6. He should have a complete knowledge of four schools of jurisprudence.

The limitations set on the practice of *Ijtihad* have created a situation that has marked the history of political theory in Islamic contexts. I especially refer here to the transition of power that has always been an act of 'rebellion' rather than a

smooth transition of power. Suffice it to mention that the first sedition that happened in the history of Arab-Islamic context was about political representation. The 'Battle of Jamal (camel)' that took place in 656 between Ali (the cousin and son in law of the prophet Muhammad) and Aisha (Widow of Muhammad) who wanted justice on those who assassinated the previous caliph Uthman. The murder of Ali in 661 had led Mu'awiya to power and that had established the clan based form of rule in the Arab region. Mu'waya was the governor of Syria and made his family 'Banu Umayya' hold all the branches of power. The Karbala disaster in 668 had caused an ever-lasting schism in the Muslims community, with the rise of Shi'ism. By 762, the Abbasid were in conflict with Hejaz. The great grandson of Muhammad's great son Al Hassan (Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah, al-Nafs al-Zakiyya ("the Pure Soul") accused the Abbasid that they had stolen a position that belonged to a descendant of the Prophet. The later eighth and ninth centuries changed the social and demographic structure of the Muslim society as many new converts from different backgrounds had brought their conception of ruling into the Islamic tradition. The effects were both positive and negative. The positive side was that the Abbasid period knew the flourishing of literature, sciences and architecture. Jonathan Berkey (2002:120) surmises that:

> In fact, the late eighth and ninth centuries were, at least in the heartland of the Islamic empire in Iraq and eastern Iran, a period of considerable urban growth. Baghdad, and later Samarra, the new capital founded by the caliph al-Mutawakkil north of Baghdad, were 'Abbasid creations, and both became (and Baghdad long remained) major urban centers, the population of Baghdad dwarfing by a factor of ten or more the nearby Sasanian capital of Ctesiphon. The vitality of these cities is critical to an understanding of the religious history of this period, as they provided the crucible for the development of Islamic values and institutions.

The period between 750-1000 marks the consolidating of Islam and the establishment of religious authority as the sole reference of cultural and social interpretation. This has, however, led to the fragmentation of the readings of the religious text. The creation of the schools of hadith has created division among the community of Muslims. These schools are led by four eminent scholars: Imam Abu Hanifah (d.767), Imam Malik (d.855), Imam al-Shafi'i (d.820) and Imam Hanbal (d.855). The introduction of mysticism and asceticism altered the early understanding of Islam that focused on work and practical action. The Medieval period of Islam (1000 to 1500) witnessed the accession to power by Turkish or Mongul Military elites. That period marks the full establishment of the Islamic schools of law and jurisprudence (Sha ria') that extended west to cover the Maghreb and Muslim Spain. The work of the Spanish scholar Ibn Hāzm (d.1065) testifies to that period. However, the success that Islam cherished in Spain did not continue because the sciences that were accumulated were not explained to pupils. The links between the teachers and their disciples were lost. The case of Zahiri School is exemplary in this respect. Ibn Khaldun in Al-Muqaddima (1967: 3-6) writes that:

> The Zahiri School has become extinct today as the result of the extinction of their religious leaders and disapproval of their adherents by the great mass of Muslims. It

> has survived only in books, which have eternal life. Worthless persons occasionally feel obliged to follow this school and study these books in the desire to learn the (Zahiri) system of jurisprudence from them, but they get nowhere and encounter the opposition and disapproval of the great mass of Muslims. In doing so, they often are considered innovators, as they accept knowledge from books for which no key is provided by teachers.

The failure to pass knowledge to the subsequent generations and the internal struggle over power continued until 1492, a year that saw the expulsion of the Arabs from Spain. Jonathan Berkey (2002:261) notes that:

> The beginning of the sixteenth century had epochal significance for Muslims in the Near East, since it saw two transforming events: first, the conquest of Iran by the Safavids (from 1501– 2) and the eventual conversion of its people to Twelver Shi'ism; and second, the Ottomans' defeat of the Mamluks (1516– 17), the subsequent absorption into their empire of Syria, Egypt, and the Hejaz, and their emergence as the pre-eminent Sunni state in the region.

The Establishment of the Othman empire was the last link that connected the classical period of Islam (in terms of its preservation of the *khilaf*a). Conversely, the Othman empire (1798-1939) witnessed the first seeds of the liberal thought in the Islamic intellectual history. Albert Hourani (1983) distinguishes between three generations. The first generation epitomized in Tahtawi, Khay AL –Din, and Bustani. The second generation is represented in Jamal Din Afghani and Mohamed Abduh. The third generation articulated in the ideas of Arab nationalism, especially in the works of Taha Husayn and Moussa Salama (cf. chapter 6). This latter group still wrestles with the traditional backdrop of the Arab-Muslim societies, especially when it comes to the practice of governance. The masses have not yet been listened to and the media organs are in most cases controlled by state agents.

The current situation of the Arab-Islamic World still carries some of the traces of the past that I have roughly sketched out. The question of regulation is the main concern of the Arab governments. Naomi Sakr (2007) has worked out some of those signs of media setbacks in different Arab countries from Morocco to Jordan. This quote explains the nature of the relationship that still holds between governments and media platforms. Sakr (2007:18) argues that:

> Broadcasters cannot be relied upon to act as a watchdog on government if the way they are regulated makes them subject to government control. Outwardly, the spectrum of arrangements adopted in Arab countries ranges from a system of regulation by royal or ministerial decree to one where a council or commission is specially created for the purpose, as in Lebanon, Jordan and Morocco.

In the case of Morocco, for instance, Sakr (2007:20) states that:

> Three weeks before elections due for September 2002, Mohamed VI created the Haute Autorité de la Communication Audiovisuelle (HACA), comprising on the one hand a Conseil Supérieur de la Communication Audiovisuelle (CSCA, comparable to the CSA in France) and, on the other, a Direction Générale de la Communication Audiovisuelle to provide administrative and technical services. The HACA was

> instituted by a royal decree based on Article 19 of the Moroccan Constitution, whereby the king is the country's prime legislator. Strewn with verbs like 'advise', 'suggest' and 'monitor', the decree left no doubt that the HACA exists to advise the king and the king holds its purse strings.

The question of the economic independence of media organs is a pressing issue for most Arab countries. The media find themselves in a difficult situation. They have to please the public that expects them to play the watchdog role. At the same time, the nature of the political and cultural paradigm within which they exist just obliges them to play down their criticism towards the governments. These limitations apply not only to the traditional media (newspapers, radios, and TV stations), but also to the Internet. In Morocco, 2008 has been a dire year for net users. The cases of Mohamed Errajji (a blogger) and Fouad Mourtada (a Facebook member) show that governments in the South have not yet understood the nature of information society. This explains why the reception of informational discourse is contextually different in countries (such as the Arab World) where authoritarianism still controls the media. Therefore, any discursive analysis of the meaning of information society in the Arab World needs to take into consideration the cultural and the historical junctures that the media professionals are experiencing there, mainly the old-fashioned nature of the political systems that has been always in total contradiction with the public aspirations for more freedom of expression.

Chapter summary

This chapter has been an attempt to review some of the roots that have led to an imbalanced world communication order. My contention is that communication, as a regional field of research, should be seen within the political and cultural paradigms that have produced the Arabic general theory of knowledge. I surveyed some of the historical traits that have shaped the discourse of religious traditionalists (Al Ghāzali, for instance) and the rationalists (epitomized by Averroes) and which are important in the understanding of the affective connotations of communication studies within the Arab contexts in the sense that both Al Ghāzali's and Averroes' intellectual discourses are still alive even today. In other words, the Arab-Islamic locales have not yet demarcated the border between religion and reason. I have also touched upon some of the problems that still beset the Arabic-Islamic cultural contexts. These issues have to do mainly with the interpretative potential of religion and the nature of the political systems that hold the strings of the media sector in the Arab World. Qadir (1988) has enumerated some of those methodological problems that have made the practice of intellectual exertion (Ijtihad) faint. As a result, the media have become adjuncts to the governments and, at times, the official mouthpiece of its agents. Articulating the cultural history of the Arabic theory of knowledge is a necessary step to place communication studies in the Arab World within its general framework that will allow any researcher or practitioner of the media in the Arab World to understand the necessary contextual and cultural limitations of the Arab media scene.

Chapter Six

WSIS process and the Arab condition

This chapter is an assessment of the process of the information society agenda. I deal with the main meetings that have marked the process of information society. I refer to the Geneva and Tunis phases, together with a study of samples of the documents that have been agreed upon concerning different informational issues. This chapter is also a reminder that it is necessary to study *the wording* of the documents in a deconstructive manner, since the objectives and the follow up papers that result from the declarations are generally written in a technical language that requires a close deconstructive reading. The chapter will also review the role of the civil society, since it is one of the elements that constitute the 'informational triangle' (state, private sector, and civil society). The potential role that civil society activists can play in the future of the Internet needs an understanding of the nature of the civil society at the age of the net. I also analyze the category of civil society, stressing the importance of understanding its mechanisms and its role in re-articulating the cultural paradigms within which the information discourse operates.

The world summit on information society: the agenda and the challenges

> Is it not commonplace nowadays to say that the forces of man have already entered into a relation with the forces of information technology and their third-generation machines which together create something other than man, indivisible 'man-machine' systems? Is this a union with silicon instead of carbon? (From Gilles Deleuze; *Foucault*)

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) was held in two phases. The first phase was in Geneva (10-12 December 2003), and the second summit was held in Tunis (16-18 November 2005). In the following endeavor, I will address the process of these two summits and the major documents that were on the agenda. Ultimately, I will try to evaluate how these summits could provide a 'blueprint' for the opening of new vistas for the developing world to surmount the economic, social and political hurdles that are still impeding its development. I will especially evaluate the role of the Internet in triggering social changes that could bring about new definitions of belonging and participation in the global world.

The first phase: Geneva (2003)

Over 10,000 delegates from all over the globe convened in Geneva for three days. Delegates coming from all walks of social, political, and economic life were there to battle out the terms of plans of action, the drafting of the documents and the implementation of the results. At the outset, one may question the relevance of the WSIS (World Summit on Information Society) to communication research. One answer to the question of relevance is that the summit provides a forum where all the players in the making of the next communication age gather to decide, at least theoretically, what is their vision for the future of the human lot in the field of communication. I share with Claudia Padovani (2004) her concern about the significance of such meetings when she asks 'is WSIS relevant to communication studies?' The outcome of the summit and the drafting of papers may not match the reality on the ground level, but they provide an agora where the conception of possible scenarios is sketched not at the national level, but at the global level... This global aspect gives information society its crucial importance. Why do all governments, social players and economic stakeholders crowd to attend this planetary meeting? The WSIS has also witnessed the coming together of key players in technology and politics. This may tell us about the inevitable interlocking relationship between technology and politics. Padovani (2004) describes the WSIS as a 'communicative event' for the reason that it provided the plane where alliances could be built and interests could be made 'explicit'. I see the WSIS not just as a communicative event; it is also 'a political event' and more straightforwardly an 'ideological event', since the meetings were all cautious about the wordings of the drafts. The main aim was to find out ways to reconcile the conflicting interests of the main components in the Summit, i.e. the private sector, the civil societies, and the states. In what follows, I reread the WSIS documents hermeneutically to unveil the unsaid discourse that hovers over the two phases. This will help us understand the ultimate objectives of such summits and their impacts on the human development.

Mark Poster (1990) writes, 'Television made me what I am'. One is inclined to ask, will the Internet make new subjects? Why are so many governments present to have their say in this summit? The governments' focus on Internet Governance issues is mainly driven by the fast proliferation of the Internet facilities and the increasing connectivity rates in most parts of the world. The first phase of information society tried to introduce the concept of 'multi-stakeholder approach', yet this concept is not easily adopted when it comes to the intergovernmental relations. Information society is seen from different angles according to the priorities of different governments. The cultural differences, the political agendas and the struggle over defining the terms of governance are some of the main battlegrounds of the first phase. Of special interest is the declaration of civil society that expressed its concerns about the objectives of the WSIS. In the first paragraph of the declaration, one reads:

> We, women and men from different continents, cultural backgrounds, perspectives, experiences and expertise, acting as members of different constituencies of an emerging global civil society, considering civil society participation as fundamental to the first ever held UN Summit on Information and Communication issues, the World Summit on the Information Society, have been working for two years inside the process, devoting our efforts to shaping people-centered inclusive and equitable concept of information and communication studies. Working together both online- and off-line as civil society entities, practicing an inclusive and participatory use of information and communication technologies, has allowed us to share views and shape common positions, and to collectively develop a vision of information and communication societies. (WSIS documents, Tunis phase. p. 322)

The wording of the declaration is carefully worked out to show that the concerns of civil society are far from the governance-centered objective of the states and the profit-centered aims of the private sector. The civil society declaration is like a new declaration of human rights in the information society age. The themes that were chosen as constituents of the declaration stand witness to this evaluation. Central to this aim is the human being per se. The declaration stipulates that 'at the heart of our vision of information and communications societies is the human being. The dignity and rights of all peoples and each person must be promoted, respected, protected and affirmed' (ibid.). This is a call for the preservation of communication systems as subservient to human well being. Some of the major themes drafted by the declaration comprise the flowing concerns:

- Social justice and people-centered sustainable development.
- Poverty eradication
- Global citizenship
- Gender justice
- The importance of youth
- Access to information and means of communication
- Access to health information
- Basic literacy
- Development of sustainable and community-based ICT solutions
- Conflict situations (decreasing public subsidy for military communications technology)

In the cultural, knowledge and public domains, the declaration touched upon the following demands:

- Cultural and linguistic diversity
- Capacity building and education
- Language plurality
- International law and regulation
- The role of the media (reiterating the article 19 of the Universal declaration of
- Enabling environment
- Democratic and accountable governance
- Enhancing the ethical dimension.
- Infrastructure and access
- Financing and infrastructure
- Human development- education and training

- Information generation and knowledge development
- Global governance of ICT and communications

The common denominator of this web of concerns is the human being. Whether all these goals will be met is the challenge of all stakeholders. The first phase did not show any signs of agreements among the contenders. Some of them did not even attend the speeches of what they saw as their 'opponents'.

The civil society representatives' demands have left many state officials grudging, especially when they have focused on issues like reducing subsidies for the military communication and proposed instead spending money on directly developing 'peaceful communication tools and applications'. The military expenditure worldwide is on the increase (see appendix), which goes hand in hand with the poverty indicators (see appendix). This shows the huge rift existing between the concerns of the civil society's representatives and the world governments.

The main objectives of the summit

In his reply to a question by Claudia Padovani concerning the role that media scholars and communication activists should take to contribute to the critical study of communication processes, Kaarle Nordenstreng (2005: 271) writes:

> My first answer is simply to address the general call for all stakeholders made above to the specific target group of researchers and educators of the field. We all should get acquainted with the WSIS documents, including the 'Civil Society Declaration', and take at least preliminary positions about them. No teacher, student or researcher should pass the WSIS by as something just for politicians and diplomats; every respected communication scholar should know its main substance and make at least passing reference to it in his/her writings at this time. Naturally, I don't mean just affirmative praise but solid scholarship, which by its nature should always be critical.

The objective of the following section is to read the language inscribed in the WSIS documents. Discourse analysis may tell us about the sub-text message of the WSIS and, of course, this will allow us to be careful about the statements that are made by all the stakeholders in their future declarations. The study of the WSIS documents cannot be done without a discursive reading of the language used to talk about information society and the objectives that are set in the plans of action. Let us proceed with the analysis of an excerpt from the WSIS commitment document:

WSIS Commitment

Prospects for achieving goal by 2015

a) *To connect* scientific and research centers with ICTs.
b) *To connect* universities, colleges, secondary schools and primary schools with ICTs.
c) *To connect* scientific and research centers with ICTs.

The recurrent word in this document is 'connection'. This shows how the world information order is concerned about making connections among the remotest villages on the planet, but little consideration is given to the nature of this connection and its consequences. For the sake of exemplification, one may take the aim of 'connecting villages with ICTs and establishing community access points'. While one may argue that the goal is benign, meaning the spread of the right to know to the largest number of people around the world, the nature of the choices made and the nature of the content remain a site of struggle among societies that have different cultural backgrounds.

What is seen by some as liberalization is interpreted by others as electronic re-colonization. Take this comment made by the conservative cleric Ayatollah Mohammad Taqi Mesbah Yazid who suggests that only clerics and learned people need 'instruments such as the Internet' and that its use by ordinary people and youths is 'a dangerous path' (quoted in Marcus Franda, 2002). This shows to what extent the 'debate' over the practice of defining 'information society objectives' is fraught with political as well as cultural divergences. Annabelle Sreberny (2004:193-201) suggests that the World Summit on Information Society has been an attempt to forge a hegemonic discourse at the international level. Sreberny (2004: 194) reiterates Gramsci's warning that hegemony is a struggle 'to articulate and re-articulate common sense out of an ensemble of interests, beliefs and principles to create ideology'. This is also reminiscent of Laclau's understanding of the workings of hegemony, as a process of normalizing the antagonistic forces by incorporating them within the production chain of power. Robert Cox states that the working of hegemony in the international relations, of which the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) is a major example, takes an ideological form. In this respect, he writes (2002:15):

> Hegemony at the international level is thus not merely an order among states. It is an order within a world economy with a dominant mode of production that penetrates into all countries and links into other subordinate modes of production. It is also a complex of international social relationships which *connect* social classes of the different countries. World hegemony is describable as a social structure, an economic, and a political structure; and it cannot be simply one of these things but must be all three.

The format of the first summit and its objectives seem to match some of these structures. The global economic structure has to be similar to world economies, for this makes the business and money flow in a global context. The real sites of struggle remain the political and social ones, since not all societies see the phenomenon of information society through the same lenses. This has been the source of major criticisms leveled at the concept of postindustrial society. One of the major criticisms has been articulated in the work of Mark Poster (1990), who wrote about the tantalization tendency of Daniel Bell's concept. In his revision of the concept, Poster (1990:15) argues that:

> Regardless of the validity of the argument for the concept of post industrialism, its totalizing character introduces a rhetorical gesture that elicits an equally totalizing response. Daniel Bell, whose work is most closely associated with the theory of postindustrial society, commits the error of tantalization in the strongest sense. He defines postindustrial society in opposition to all previous social formations, encompassing the entire history of humanity in schemata that distinguishes the new from the old.

Poster also maintains that Bell (1973) has overlooked the limits of the phenomenon he is describing. For Poster (1990:24), Bell has backgrounded a tantalization (industrial period) and foregrounded another tantalization without paying much attention to the social and economic variables that characterize the contingent move of history:

> Bell makes little effort to limit the scope of his analysis and therefore to avoid the impression that he is presenting a new tantalization. The statistical analyses he uses are at the macro-logical level and his assertions about the character of postindustrial society are flat statements of general fact. For example, he presents a tripartite history of social 'infrastructures' wherein there is a progression from transportation systems, to energy systems, to mass communication systems. The change to postindustrial society occurs during the third stage when there occurs a merger of the mass media with the computer. Accordingly, general processes that have no clear limits transform the social world. What is regrettable in all of this is that while Bell would eschew 'technological determinism' he attributes the cause of postindustrial society to a technical innovation (the computer + mass media = postindustrial society), thus contradicting himself.

The wording of drafts reveals how 'values' are presented without a cultural inventory. Information discourse will wrestle with the application of the promised commitments across the necessary discrete dynamics of each country and at the global level. The council of Europe presented its vision in following statement:

> *We, the member states of the Council of Europe*, are committed to building societies based on the values of human rights, democracy, rule of law, social cohesion, respect for cultural diversity and trust between individuals and between peoples. We believe that the World Summit on the Information Society holds great promise to secure these values in the newborn information society and reach the Millennium Development Goals (see WSIS's documentation section).

As to UN, their document reads:

> The United Nations University recognizes the real and pressing need to improve the current state of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) use in an educational context in the developing world. Established in 1973 by the UN General Assembly, the UNU functions as a global network university serving an international community of scholars and is composed of a headquarter unit in Tokyo (Japan) and thirteen research and training centers across the globe. (SeeWSIS's documentation section)

This stress on the wording is not a mere note on the linguistic format. It shows an international tendency toward a uniform culture that is similar to the structure of the

computer itself. The section entitled "Proposed Format for the Geneva Phase of WSIS" shows how keen the organizers were to produce a uniform format that would produce a standardized informational discourse that does not account for the necessary contextual dynamisms both in the South and in the North. The proposed format reads like this:

> *We, the representatives of the peoples* of the world, assembled in Geneva from 10-12 December 2003 for the first phase of the World Summit on the Information Society,
>
> *Our challenge…*
>
> *We reaffirm…*
>
> *We further reaffirm…*
>
> *We recognize* that science has a central role in the development of the Information Society…
>
> *We recognize* that education, knowledge, information and communication are at the core of human progress…
>
> *We are aware* that ICTs should be regarded as tools and not as an end in themselves.
>
> *We are also fully aware* that the benefits of the information technology revolution are today unevenly distributed between the developed and developing countries and within societies.
>
> *We are committed* to realizing our common vision of the Information Society for ourselves and for future generations. We recognize that young people are the future workforce and leading creators and earliest adopters of ICTs. They must therefore be empowered as learners, developers, contributors, entrepreneurs and decision-makers.
>
> *We affirm that* development of ICTs provides enormous opportunities for women, who should be an integral part of, and key actors, in the Information Society.
>
> *We are resolute* to empower the poor, particularly those living in remote, rural and marginalized urban areas, to access information and to use ICTs as a tool to support their efforts to lift themselves out of poverty. (ibid.)

The list of proposed phrases run like a contrition act that makes all stake holders, despite the essentially conflicting interests of their agenda, to make commitments that may not serve the people concerned with the 'connection act'. The civil society has especially raised key issues that any government would frown upon. Having adopted a people-centered approach in their declaration, the interests of civil societies shattered the hegemonic role of the states. This was the reason behind many of the obstacles that characterized the first phase of the WSIS. The plan of action has trusted too much on the governments to take the initiative to develop confidence and trust. Section C5 of the WSIS documents (http://www.itu.int/wsis/docs/geneva/official/dop.html) deals with building confidence and security in the use of ICTs, the plan of action reads:

> Governments, in cooperation with the private sector, should prevent, detect and respond to cyber-crime and misuse of ICTs: developing guidelines that take into account ongoing efforts in these areas. Considering legislation that allows for effective investigation and prosecution of misuse; promoting effective mutual assistance efforts; strengthening institutional support at the international level for

> preventing, detecting and recovering from such incidents; and encouraging education and raising awareness. (p.310)

The action plan seems to have no mention of the civil society that is directly concerned with the effects of the misuse of the ICTs. It makes the task of securing the use of ICTs the domain of the state alone. This contradicts the declaration of the civil society that sees that the people should have the right to access public affairs, especially those that are linked with access to the information about health and security. In any case, the plan of action has entrusted the governments with many duties that fall beyond their capacity. However, its vision has many positive blueprints that can evolve into more engagement of all the national partners within each state. The acknowledgment of the necessity of involving the civil society is a good start that may prepare the ground for direct discussions between the governments and the terrain where their decisions take place, the everyday life of world population.

In the information age, it has become necessary that end-users are involved in all chains of decision-making. The most sensitive decision-making problem is the issue of Internet Governance. Kleinwächter (2004: 233) discusses the concept of 'Internet Governance', and the related effects that Internet Governance has on the nation state. The question of sovereignty and control of core resources was one of the main concerns of many countries around the world. Countries of the developing world have expressed their fear of the perpetuation of 'digital divide'. This was clear from the WSIS regional conference that ITU had in Marrakech, Morocco on October 2002. Kleinwächter (2002:241) writes that:

> During the Marrakech conference, a bitterly controversial debate about the private sector leadership and the future role of ITU in Internet Governance (IG) took place. In Marrakech, EU governments, and US supported by Private ITU sector members, expressed their satisfaction with the ICANN reform process and argued in favor of a continuation of the leading role of ICANN in internet governance. On the other hand, a growing number of third world countries discovered the management of domain names and IP addresses as an issue related to their sovereignty and economic development.

Internet Governance is among the thorny issues that the stakeholders had to discuss. The first phase of the WSIS was a platform that prepared the ground for more serious discussions on this issue. Not much was reached, but the action plan has specified the process and put the issue on the agenda of a group under a mandate of the then secretary general of UN Kofi Annan. The group had to find an acceptable definition of the concept of 'Internet Governance' to lay the ground for more consideration of its implementation in the second phase of WSIS that was to take place in 2005.

The second phase: 16-18 Nov. Tunis 2005

The second phase of the WSIS that took place in Tunis was a continuation of the first phase. The commitment of the summit endorsed the Geneva declaration. It also renewed the commitment of all stakeholders to build a people-centered approach to information society. The commitment reads:

> We reaffirm our desire and commitment to build a people-centered, inclusive and development-oriented Information Society, premised on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, international law and multilateralism, and respecting fully and upholding the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, so that people everywhere can create, access, utilize and share information and knowledge, to achieve their full potential and to attain the internationally agreed development goals and objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals. (WSIS documents)

The main issue that was at the core of the second phase was the question of the Internet Governance. The results came as a *deus ex machina.* The US got its four principles, the EU got the new cooperation model, China secured its sovereignty, the G20 had the same seats on the table, the private sector escaped the governmental surveillance, and civil society got full inclusion into the policy development.

The second phase also reiterated its commitment to capacity building and the maintenance of digital solidarity fund agenda. However, the new issues that were raised in the Tunis commitment are articulated in the article thirty-six that endorses the use of ICT for peace. This is explained further in the following statement:

> We value the potential of ICTs to promote peace and to prevent conflict which, *inter alias,* negatively affects achieving development goals. Its can be used for identifying conflict situations through early-warning systems preventing conflicts, promoting their peaceful resolution, supporting humanitarian action, including protection of civilians in armed conflicts, facilitating peacekeeping missions, and assisting post conflict peace-building and reconstruction.' (ibid.)

The Tunis agenda was a meeting where the leftovers of the Geneva phase were to be discussed. The most acute of these debates was the question of financing, where no agreement was reached on 'Digital Solidarity Fund', plus the question of Internet governance, that many countries contested because it concerns the core resources of the Internet infrastructure. The question of 'Solidarity Fund' is of special importance to many countries in the developing world that considered that the voluntary nature of the 'Digital Solidarity Fund' is a mere trick to avoid the direct commitment to share the benefits of the information age. In the Tunis phase, the phrase 'digital divide' was replaced by 'digital opportunity'. Again, the summit emphasized the search for voluntary sources of 'solidarity' finance. The financing issue in the developing world has shifted the task of promoting the financing of the ICT infrastructure from a purely public duty to the private sector. The private sector

was encouraged to participate in the promotion of public actions where the policies have worked on bridging the digital divide.

As to the issue of Internet Governance, the second phase proposed a definition that would satisfy all the stakeholders. The wording of the definition made it possible for all the contenders (governments, private sector and, civil society) to see their wishes realized. The commitments were as follows:

- To build confidence and security in the use of ICTs
- To prosecute cybercrime, including cyber crimes committed in one jurisdiction, but having effects in another.
- To deal effectively with the problem posed by spam
- The freedom to seek, receive, impart and use information
- To take appropriate actions and preventive measures, as determined by law, against abusive uses of ICTs
- To counter terrorism in all its forms and manifestations on the Internet, while respecting human rights. (WSIS documents)

The issue at stake was how to convene the priorities of the governments, the private sector and the civil society. The civil society was mentioned in the second phase seven times, while in the Geneva phase it was mentioned only twice. While this may be telling numerically, this does not yet meet the goals of the declaration by the representatives of the civil society who wanted not only a seat, but also a 'say' on the policies which are defined by private corporations (ICANN for instance). It is true that the phase ensured the security and stability of the Internet, but the role of the governments was not made explicit. The wording of the final report remains ambiguous and couched in many cursory statements. For example, on the issue of Internet Governance, the declaration states that:

> We recognize that all governments should have an equal role and responsibility for international Internet governance and for ensuring the stability, security and continuity of the Internet. We also recognize the need for development of public policy by governments in consultation with all stakeholders. (WSIS documents)

While the wording of this document has acknowledges the necessity of cooperation, it does not state the limits of the decisions taken by each government. It also eclipses the reality that is more dismal than the wording represents. How can all governments have the same role and responsibility in the 'Internet Governance' when some have more power in influencing the core resources? How can a Californian Corporation decide for the distribution of core resources without the effective participation of the end users globally? The ICANN board may be international, but still it is far from being representative.

The phase has not yet defined the role and the obligations of governments concerning the civil society. It just ambiguously referred to consultation with 'all stakeholders'. While this seems to be a fair allusion to the duties of the government, the reality is far more complex. Not to go too far, Tunis, where the summit was organized, proves a case that governments are not to be given free hands in deciding about the policies without an international monitoring process. At the very moment

when the WSIS was underway in Tunis, many Tunisian journalists were on strike and many Internet users were in Tunisian jails. The media coverage of the summit on the Arabic web site *Aljazeera* shifted from the coverage of the agenda of WSIS to the coverage of the concrete facts and the authoritarian nature of the Tunisian regime. The global summit of information society turned out to be a summit about the human rights violation in Tunis. Instead of focusing on finding solutions to informational imbalances, the question of the freedom of expression in the country that hosted the global debate on the future of communication took much ink during the days of WSIS.

This case shows the complexity of the relationships between the government circles that are entrusted for the promotion of their version of WSIS and the demands of public as it is represented in the civil society. This complexity gets even more salient when debating the intergovernmental interests. The share given to the issue of Internet Governance in the second phase of information evidences this. The control of core resources means the control over defining the policies of implantation. This leads us back to the Gramscian reading of international relations:

> Do international relations precede or follow (logically) fundamental social relations? There can be no doubt that they follow. Any organic innovation in the social structure, through its technical-military expressions, modifies organically absolute and relative relations in the international field too. (21)[39]

The term 'organic' denotes that which is long term, structural and relatively permanent. It does not refer to that which is transient, or conjunctural. Gramsci did not underestimate the role of governments and the state; rather he considered the state as the site where hegemonic struggle takes place. His concern was the social changes that shape the changes at the international level. Civil societies in the information age should also be concerned with these very social changes, not only in the 'real life', but also in the virtual world of the Internet. In the information society, the great powers manage to keep their agenda intact, because the so called 'solidarity fund' has kept its 'voluntary' character and more powers are given to the state. This by no means meets the demands of the civil societies in the developing world, who see that the digital divide is merely an addition to the already existing divides (mainly economic and political divides). The significant part is that the world governments have entered the debate on Internet control with no equal bases. The USA and other Western countries have mobilized all their information age diplomacy to secure the status quo. This has exacerbated the state of dependency in the developing world.

This state of dependency has been thoroughly researched by Albert Memmi (1979) who distinguishes between the words domination, subjection and dependency. The first mainly refers to the 'the totality of the constraints imposed by those who dominate on those who are dominated'. For Memmi (1979: 181), domination refers to an *activity* performed by those who dominate and whose results are to be endured

[39] In Martin James (2002).

by the dominated. For subjection, he (1979:185) suggests that it is "the totality of the ways, both active and passive, in which those who are dominated can respond to the aggressive behavior of those who are dominating them." As to dependency, it refers to 'a relationship with a real ideal being, object, group, or institution that involves more or less accepted *compulsion* and that is connected with the satisfaction of *a need.* '

Accordingly, describing the intergovernmental relationships, one can notice that the WSIS provided a meeting of strong accomplished nations and 'dependent' ones. The 'solidarity fund' remains a mere fixing and non-effective measure. This does not mean that it is not an important initiative, but it does not solve the problems of the 'dependent' nations, which are composed in the large part of postcolonial countries in Africa and Latin America. The 'benign' attempt by Nicholas Negroponte to distribute millions of green machines to the children of the world does not solve the problems of dependency. It is a short term measure that does not fix a long term challenge- to enable the developing countries develop their own business models and to reduce their economic dependence on financial institutions like WB, IMF, Paris Club etc.

Nonetheless, the Second phase of WSIS provided a forum to discuss the issues of concern to all the countries (economically rich and economically poor). The Tunis phase also culminated in the UN Secretary Generals' recommendation to convene a meeting to promote the multi-stakeholder dialogue. It was called the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) where issues of crime, spam, and capacity building can be discussed; a follow up to the summit can be provided and the spirit of 'enhanced cooperation' can be developed. Kaarle Nordenstreng (2005:119-124) reminds us, however, that this was not the first platform of its kind. It was a mere continuation to the eighty years of media debate:

> WSIS represents the highest platform of global negotiations on communication ever to take place. Surely the ITU, the oldest specialized UN agency, has handled the international regulation of telecommunication and radio spectrum for over a century; UNESCO has contributed to the development of mass media and other information systems since its founding sixty years ago; and as early as the 1948 the UN itself held a historical Conference on Information, which among other things drafted the Article 19 of the 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights'. However, none of these other platforms has achieved the profile and prestige of WSIS…On the other hand; WSIS has not yet produced more than good intentions: a declaration and a plan of action. Actually, the roots of WSIS go back to Geneva in 1925 as much as to San Francisco or London 1945.

The WSIS has indeed promised 'good initiatives', but the real world needs more than just promises. The civil rights declaration has clearly stated that governments should provide the right of information for sensitive sectors like health and the military sectors. The governments do not seem to have Milton's (1644) spirit of the areopagitica (which stands for the freedom of expression) or Rousseau's (1762, II.3) maxim of '*General Will'* where he argues that war or preparing for it is always

at the expense of other humane-oriented sectors, such as health sector or education for example. The daily information seems to be more concerned about armament. The governments seem to be engaged on a systematic and mediated war of words.

The Internet has also become the battlefield not just among the governments, but also among the constituencies of the civil societies themselves. The concept of civil society means different things to different people. In the Arab world, for example, there is no consensus on the meaning of civil society. Some claim that it is a borrowed term that is not congenial to the Middle East soil, other think that it is a good idea to implement some organisms that defend the individual against the encroachment of the state. Even the Western discourse, when commenting on the Arab civil society, remains oscillating. Should we describe Islamic groups who want to overthrow 'friendly' regimes as civil? Is it part of the civic virtues to allow despotic governments torture civilians? These are just examples of how complex are the challenges that await the translation of the 'good intentions' that both the first phase and the second phase of information society aim at. It is true that Internet control has become virtually the 'be all and end all' of the summit, but the concepts of information society is more comprehensive. It does not refer to technical aspects of information age. It is intertwined with the political reality where each government operates.

This complexity has driven the media historian John Durham Peter (2004: 65) to comment on the work of James R. Beniger (1986:17) *The Control of Information* in the following words:

> The notion of the Information Society clearly gets a lot of mileage out of its capacity to make people forget its status as a metaphor. It does not take too much cynicism to see how that concept adds a noble air to the potentially disturbing picture of the increasing bureaucracy via the computer. It is a decidedly less ugly way to characterize a society than such unpleasant words as capitalist, imperialist, bureaucratic. It has the air of democracy and free access to all, conjuring such images as science, education, and knowledge. Moreover, it taps into the venerable American dream of redemption via technology. Professor Beniger (1987) does not succumb to the boosterism of many who use this concept; in fact, his analysis could easily support an argument that the concept of Information Society is illegitimate.

Certainly, Beniger represents the skeptics who see in the process of Information society a continuation of the already existing divides. This view remains valid in respect to the huge difference between the information rich and the information poor. This rift finds its validity in the historical reality that followed the post World War II order. The information rich countries were amply represented in the League of Nations and were endowed with the power to influence the policymaking in many subjugated countries. Most of them are still struggling with colonial legacy that has left a huge gap between the educated elite and the illiterate majority. This justifies the need for a sustainable capacity building strategy that targets the information-blind majority in many of the postcolonial countries. Unless much

effort is put at the grassroots level, the concept of information society will become a 'state's information'.

The issue is that decolonization has left the political elite in the Arab World, whose legitimacy is shakable, indifferent to the rest of the society. This political elite resorts more often than not to the repressive power of its armies and its Western allies than to the hearts and souls of its own citizens. This has created fissures in the political stability and, of course, as the means of communication are supposedly the mouthpiece of the general will, the educated few have 'hijacked' the national media to nourish their own assets while leaving the rest of society in the limbo. This is a challenge that information society politics has to tackle. For information technology has always been enmeshed with politics, if it is not the highest expression of the political will to impose a managerial form. Manuel Castells (1985:30) seems to share this view when he writes:

> High technology plays a major role in this process of internationalization on different levels. First, it allows communication and decentralized unified management between spatially scattered units, through the new telecommunication technologies. Second, high technology manufacturing epitomizes the new spatial division of labor, with the locationally distinct hierarchy between research and design and assembly-line operations, therefore spearheading the new space of global production, facilitated by the weight of many electronic components, whose value is mainly due to the informational content. Third, the process of automation […] makes possible a large-scale standardization of the components of most manufacturing activities […]. Finally, we should remember that high technology is, above all, a new process of production and management.

The WSIS forum offers the possibility to debate information age related issues, but it does not guarantee the results. This is what I have called '*information society without guarantees'*.

Accordingly, until the structural and political ills of the developing countries are tackled, one cannot talk about an egalitarian information society, for the only epithet that would suit it would be dependency with a global face, for the informational order does not seek to impart information society to the rest of the world without a price. This is what Albert Memmi (1984:14) means when he argues:

> But there is always a price to pay. Every dependence costs something because every advantage has to be paid for in one way or another: A dependent expects help and favors from her provider; and she knows very well that she owes something in return, even if the idea does revolt her, even if she does try to get out of it and regardless of any dodges, alibis, or poses she might employ. Even an animal intuitively understands this.

The meaning of civil society in the age of the net

The aim of this section is to bracket the meaning of civil society in the age of the net especially in the context of the developing world. This necessitates a study of the historical roots of the formation of civil society, its origins and development. The historical formation of the concept of 'civil society' in the Western culture should not be mapped onto the historical trajectory that is taking place in the postcolonial Arab country, so to speak. So, what is the place of civil society in the contemporary debates on information society? And how does that role relate to the growing globalization of the world community through the continuous flow of mass communication systems, and especially the Internet? And how does such change influence our everyday life?

The origins of the concept of civil society: historical context and current uses

The concept of 'civil society' finds its origins in the early attempts to separate the civil society from politics after the breakdown of feudalism. This was expressed in the eighteenth century debates concerning the negotiation of the relationship between civic virtue in the context of newly emerging forms of private and commercial life. Seligman (1992, 1993) discusses the separation of civil society from political society as an early symptom of the creation of schism between two fields that have different interests; yet, they have to share the same public space. In the work of the writers of the Scottish Enlightenment, namely Hutcheson, Ferguson, Hume, and Smith, 'Civil Society' was a solution to the problem of resolving the tension between the legal and moral values of a society on the one hand, and the tacit principles upon which a society agrees upon on the other hand. Civil society in this sense became an ethical space and arena where the interaction between the market values and the ethical values takes place. The meaning of civil society in the eighteenth-century, as it was understood in the writings of the Scottish writers, meant the interaction between wealth and virtue, between the material advance and the moral progress of society. Most of them were influenced, however, by the ideas of Montesquieu, namely, his views on the possibility of having a political freedom that can lead to economic progress.

Broadly speaking, contemporary evaluations of 'civil society' fall into two camps. The first group of writers understands civil society as a part of individualism and the economic relations, which developed within the Enlightenment. This first approach highlights the original themes that brought about the idea of civil society. One of these themes is the care about the wellbeing of the individual, as Adam Seligman (1992:60) argues:

> One of those themes was the perduring need to articulate some vision of the individual that would both uphold his (and ever so much later, her) autonomy and

> agentic nature and at the same time present a vision of a 'public' – that is, a group of individuals sharing core ideas, ideals, and values. An important point, one that must be kept in mind, is that the ties binding this public, uniting these autonomous individuals, were not conceived as solely instrumental ties of market relations and commercial exchange. Rather, as we have seen again and again, it was a common set of moral sources, of sentiments and sympathy that the eighteenth century writer invoked to express his mutuality.

The second approach to the construction of civil society separates civil society from economic relations and from the family, using civil society to refer to the non-market and non-state sphere of 'social life'. This second definition pervades the recent approaches to civil society. Jürgen Habermas (1992:453-4) has linked the meaning of civil society to the public sphere, the locus of social and economic interactions. For Habermas, civil society provides the platform that is capable of generating resistance to forms of uncountable expert authority and administrative power. Keane (1988) and Cohen and Arato (1992) adopt the same approach. Habermas (1992:45) comments on the rediscovery of civil society in the following terms:

> The current meaning of the term 'civil society' …no longer includes a sphere of an economy regulated by labor, capital and commodity markets and thus differs from the modern translation, common since Hegel and Marx, of 'societas civilis' as 'bourgeois society'. Unfortunately, a search for clear definitions in the relevant publications is in vain. However, the institutional core of civil society is constituted by voluntary unions outside the realm of the state and the economy; and ranging from churches, cultural associations, and academies to independent media, sport and leisure clubs, debating societies, groups of concerned citizens, and grass-roots petitioning drives all the way to occupational associations, political parties, labor unions an 'alternative institutions'

The work of Habermas is very pertinent to the analysis of the formation of civil society, because he provides a complex analysis of the development and dynamics of modern state-society relations. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (1989) traces the emergence of the bourgeois public sphere in the eighteenth-century European society. Habermas stresses that the emergence of the modern public sphere is intertwined with the emergence of the print media, especially the press and the coffee houses where public discussions took place. Habermas characterizes the eighteenth century civil society as 'the genuine domain of private autonomy that stood opposed to the state.' (1989: 12). For Habermas (1989:27), this bourgeois public space allowed the birth of a rational public debate:

> The bourgeois public sphere may be conceived above all as the sphere of private people coming together as a public; they soon claimed the public sphere regulated from above against the public authorities themselves, to engage them in a debate over the general rules governing relations in the basically privatized but publicly relevant sphere of commodity exchange and social labor. The medium of this political confrontation was peculiar and without historical precedent: people's public use of their reason.

Foucault, Gramsci and the formation of civil society

Michel Foucault (1977) provides a succinct account of the contemporary social relations. He is concerned with the 'governmentalisation' of bodies within the social arena. Bodies are created and watched. Foucault (1977; 1979a) approaches the complex relation between the European 'civil society' and the 'welfare state problem'. In *Discipline and Punish* and *the History of Sexuality,* Foucault develops the theme of government's treatment of bodies, and the emergence of liberal political rationalities. Foucault expresses his worry that the welfare state will be established at the expense of the individual liberties, which means that the regulation of 'species' will be the price that individuals will have to pay in return for modern civil liberties. Foucault (1977) focuses on the use of technological supervision not only in the production of a certain social conduct, but he stresses the reproduction of the same behavior in the public space through the panoptic tower system that makes bodies maintain their docility. The notion of 'governmentality' is crucial to his argument, because it is organically linked with the institutions that make governmentality possible, i.e. the public institutions, apparatuses of knowledge that constitute and regulate the production and the practice of political life. Foucault, aware of his place within the genealogy of the civic formation, notes the shift from the sixteenth century *raison d 'être* to modern mechanisms of government, and argues that a new art of government has formed around the demographic question. The question then for any new 'rediscovery' of the conception of civil society is how to strike a balance between the governmental necessities of the new state and the legal rights that saw light with the modern notions of citizenship. In this sense, the management of populations is fully linked with the discourses of sovereignty that remain as their justification. From this specification of the relationship between sovereignty, discipline and government, Foucault (1979b:19) concludes that:

> We must …see things not in terms of the substitution for a society of sovereignty of a disciplinary society and the subsequent replacement of a disciplinary society by a governmental one; in reality, we have a triangle: sovereignty-discipline-government, which has as its primary target the population and as its essential mechanism apparatuses of security.

Indeed, this makes it clear that the creation and maintenance of a balanced society cannot be achieved without maintaining a balanced relationship between the three main branches that make up the body of modern society. Sovereignty of society should not be at the expense of disciplinary practices, or at the expense of governmentality. The triangular relationship should be maintained so that the society can function in a more participatory way. In fact, the survival of a democratic state depends on the maintenance of a balanced relationship between the state and the public good. This means a continuous negotiation of the public and the private, achieved through the deployment of forms of normalizing knowledge and expertise. Foucault (1979b:21) explains:

> It is the tactics of government which make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not, the public versus the private, and so on; thus, the state can only be understood in its survival and its limits on the basis of the general tactics of govern-mentality.

This way, the relationships that conceptualize the 'civil society' are neither an attempt to create an ideological construct nor a move to an 'aboriginal reality'. In fact, the 'civil society' is created by the interaction of the above-mentioned triad components of the modern society. Thus, society becomes the product of the very act of interaction of what I call a 'fateful triangle' that results from inequality between the state and the public space, and which might ultimately create an aura of dissention, or what Antonio Gramsci calls an '*imbalance between agitation and propaganda*.' For Gramsci, civil society is a superstructural level that needs to be fixed with the elements that brought it about. Here he (1975: 9) describes the process:

> What we can do, for the moment, is to fix two major superstructural 'levels': the one that can be called 'civil society', that is, the ensemble of organisms commonly called 'private', and that of 'political society' or 'the state'. These two levels correspond on the one hand to the functions of 'hegemony' which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of 'direct domination' or command exercised through the state and 'juridical' government.

The main concern of Gramsci in his formulation of the practice of civil society is the explanation of the symbolic importance of this superstructural level in the construction and maintenance of hegemony that is produced in the interaction between the high levels of state political discourse and the 'tacit' acceptance of that discourse by the 'common man'. Gramsci believes that civil society is the field wherein the masses have to regroup and organize themselves to create a distinct powerful mass that may counter balance the might of the state. Yet, he is very aware that such process is not easy, since it requires organic intellectuals that have to be beyond reproach within that space. This approach gives Gramsci's view of civil society an incongruous form, and yet, his theory remains compact because hegemony can take effect only *through the contact* of the ideological apparatuses of the state with the potential subversive elements of the civil society. Gramsci, contrary to Foucault, sees the civil society as a crucial step in the formation of the mass that will stand up to the hegemonic process that comes as a result of failing to maintain the balance between the private space, the public space and the controlling apparatuses epitomized in the state.

Having described the formation of civil society from the historical perspective, especially through the writings of three main figures (Foucault, Habermas, and Gramsci), I move on to consider the concept of civil society in the Arab World, which has a different contextual history, and which necessitates a different articulation.

The concept of civil society in the Arab World

The concept of 'civil society' is used today to indicate how clubs, organizations, and groups act as a buffer zone between state power and the citizen's life. Thus, in the absence of such associations, the state dominates socioeconomic and private affairs, intensifying the state's authoritarian tendencies. Modern states have become more efficient in using persuasive and coercive means to achieve their goals. In the Middle East, oil revenues, expanded militaries, and the growing group of state bureaucrats, technocrats and professionals have increased the state's capabilities. But declining oil revenues in the 1980s and the 1990s have forced states in the Middle East to make structural adjustments, through limited privatization (e.g., Jordan, Syria), reduction in government subsidies (e.g., Iran, Iraq), and increased borrowing or aid from abroad (e.g., Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Iran). Nonetheless, in the Middle East, state's financial and coercive power remains strong and far superior to the resources available to their social, economic, and political opposition. The challenges to the states by the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, or the National Salvation Front (FIS) in Algeria, for example, have failed to change the state's domestic and foreign policies.

The expectations for the emergence of the civil society and democracy in the Middle East – intensified in the post-Cold War era – must be viewed with caution. The Iranian revolution, the rise of Islamist movements in the 1980s, and the declining oil prices are underscored as reasons for optimism about the rise of the civil society in the region. This has led to growing interest in state-society relationships and the prospects for civil society's emergence. Today, most scholars confidently affirm that both intermediate powers and autonomous social groups exist in the Middle East.

However, the civil society debate in the Middle East has focused on the changes in formal governance procedures rather than the substantive change in state-society relations. The emergence of state-regulated quasi-pluralism in countries like Egypt or Jordan is seen as a shift from one-party rule to pluralism, involving the rise of numerous political parties and associations.

Islam is seen as a force that can be compatible with a modernization process and with democracy. Nevertheless, the augmentation of political parties in the area may be more a result of the state's adjusting to the pressure from Islamic groups and their allies than a genuine, broader political opening. The Middle East political parties remain largely ineffective, playing mostly a ceremonial role serving to legitimate state policies. In addition, despite the existence of embryonic associations, they are poorly organized, and they remain dependent on the state. As Carrie Rosefsky Wickham (1994:507-509) put it when discussing Egypt, "The emergence of independent sites of social and political expressions within an authoritarian setting is not the same as the emergence of civil society, at least not in its liberal conception."

Therefore, despite the new optimism, serious questions on the status of civil society in the Middle East remain unanswered. How autonomous are the socioeconomic and the political groups in the region and how do we measure the degree of their autonomy? Does autonomy necessarily imply the presence of well-organized, institutionalized groups and associations capable of counterbalancing the state's power? How weak or strong are the states, given the decline in their financial bargaining power in the 1980s and 1990s? What role do external forces play in the formation of civil society and democracy? A serious shortcoming in the studies on civil society in general is the absence of empirical studies that systematically measure and establish the correlation between the civil society and democracy.

The major obstacles to inaugurating democracy are the presence of strong states and weak societies, where not only are there no effective groups and associations to limit the state's power but, also the majority of people remain poor and uneducated, due to uneven and rapid modernization. The rise of the civil society and democracy necessitates a certain level of socioeconomic development but, more importantly, it requires a balanced development. This latter depends on the state's role and policies vis-à-vis the social forms that constitute the social fabric of the developing countries.

Indeed, it is quite possible for societal preconditions for democracy to exist and yet authoritarian rule to persist where the state refuses to give in to pressures from society for popular participation. The dominant position of the state has meant the rule of politics by powerful families, elites, military and bureaucratic sub-classes. The emergence and growth of independent groups and associations, in contrast, has been slow. Primary agents of civil society, such as labor unions and NGOs, are either non-existent or are repressed by the state. Additionally, some well-meaning factions of the elites usually face a weak, divided society, making political reform a dangerous enterprise.

In other words, the inauguration and stability of democracy requires not only that its social prerequisites are present, but also that the state-society relationships are balanced. The restoration of this power balance will surely take time but, the process has already started. Historically speaking, during the 1970s, the Arab World started using the concept of ‘civil society’ when referring to the non-governmental organisms that wanted to take the role of watching over the practices of the state. When the Arab-Islamic countries got independence in more or less the same period (Libya 1951, Morocco & Tunisia 1956, Mauritania, 1960 Algeria 1962), they expressed their need for a central national and powerful state. The distinct space for the contestation of power was not accepted, and it is still not negotiated in many countries today. The president, the king, or the Emir (the prince) was the locus of all powers. The people are not seen as citizens but as *subjects* in the old sense of the concept. Their right and duty is to endorse the leader as the ultimate representative of the new state. Any attempt to negotiate the power of the state or to put its hegemony into question was quelled with no remorse. For example, Morocco of the early seventies saw the birth of a communist party that tried to contest the power of

the king and questioned his power. The communist party tried to claim its right to share the power by attempting to counter-balance the system through the creation of a new form of political configuration that was at the time influenced with the Marxist-Leninist leanings. The Central power response was to play different oppositional forces against each other to remain in power. Such political atmosphere slowed down the creation of a robust civil society. Therefore, the concept of civil society could not be really seen in same as in the 'West', because the period between the development of the concept of 'civil society' in the Western discourse and its exportation to the newly independent societies is so huge.

One cannot envisage having the type of civil society that is formulated in the works of Hegel, Habermas or John Locke. The Islamic understanding of community or the *medina* (city) is not separable from the religious interpretation of civic practices in the daily life. Even translators find it hard to find the same equivalent rendition of civil society in Arabic. Therefore, the development of civil community in the Western locales has certainly taken a different course. That justifies the uneasiness of many Arab-Islamic leaders who find themselves discussing terms they do not grasp conceptually. In Arabic-Islamic communities, the belief in the *Umma* (community) is more strident and graspable to them than the 'alien' concept of civil society that conjures up images of individual freedom which has only a secondary place in the Islamic cosmos.

The notion of civil society is deeply linked to the ambiance of life in the city. The city is a new concept in most Arab and Islamic countries. Mardin Serif (1995:286-7) retakes an account of the historian Makrizi that depicts the urban history of Morocco:

> Before 1912 there were no municipalities, no one municipal life in Morocco in the sense those words have had in European countries since the Middle Ages, a sense inherited from Roman tradition. The towns had no finances of their own, the expense of public service was met in large measure by the revenue of religious foundations …and buildings or improvements were dependent on the good will of the prince.

The postcolonial society was not yet ready to accept that partition of power. The political elites could not allow power sharing because their main aim was to unite and guarantee the fixation of power within the hands of the monarch or the president. The situation in Algeria is a clear example of the turbulences that beset the country when members within the potential civil society tried to share power.

The result was a series of political assassinations and human losses, including the president Boudiaf himself who was assassinated in 1992. The same scene took place in Morocco: a first attempt in 1971 and another attempt in 1972, the king narrowly escaping death in both of them. After the failed coups, freedom of expression shrank, and any negotiation of the established political power was strongly quashed. Thus, the formation of civil society in the Arab world is still a nascent phenomenon.

Another factor that makes the construction of a civil society within the Islamic World of a different character is the crucial role of religion within the practice of the civic life. Freedom of the individual as it is understood in the Western World is not valid within the Arab-Islamic World. The state cannot let religion out of its control because of the highly sensitive role that it plays in the mobilization of people. Gramsci taught that the role of the intellectuals should be the agitation and leadership of the masses in civil society. In Arab countries, that role is trusted to the state not to the intellectuals, which means that the state controls the reins of social stability as it sees fit.

This does not mean that there are no symptoms of change within the Arab civil society. On the contrary, the events on the ground show that the authoritarian state produces a counter effect to what it tries to marginalize. More and more small constellations of non-governmental organizations get involved within the public space, the real site of civic struggle. Their aim is to alter the society from the grassroots, and only the future will tell how that change will take place.

Articulating the concept of 'civil society' in the Arab-Islamic context(s)

The concept of civil society means different things to different people. It is necessary to contextualize the uses of the concept, for the social formation that the concept of civil society has undergone in different moments of contestation and redefinition within the Arab-Islamic World will help us understand the nature of challenges that civil society activists have to meet. It is important to note that the development of the notion of civil society did not take the same course even within the Arab-Islamic context, given the necessary inter-state variations. However, there are structural similarities that are pertinent to the postcolonial states. Therefore, I will limit myself to the meanings of the notion of civil society within the Arab-Islamic World, with a view to measure the possibilities that the ongoing information society might bring to building up an alternative conception and role of the civic action in contemporary 'Islamic countries'. Naomi Sakr (2001:170) suggested that cyberspace might provide a "potential for relatively unfettered communication among individuals and groups" and that "same thing cannot be said of transnational television". This possibility requires a re-articulation of the major players in the 'net civil society'. The actualization of the cyber dream depends on the balance of power between the representatives of the cyber community that the WSIS refered to as the stakeholders (government, private sector, and civil society). I would like to stress that the notion of civil society online is slightly different from the classical notion of 'territorial civil society' that is bound by geographical and national limitations. The notion of civil society is itself undergoing a redefinition, as there is a shift from ITU to ICAAN and a shift from the territorial audiences to cyber audiences. However, the dream to attain a consolidated cyber civic community on

the planetary level is still a new idea, and it is likely to face the same challenges as the territorial and classical notion of civil society, which has not yet, managed to build a transnational or 'global civil society'. As Sakr (2001: 189) concludes:

> The rhetoric of the 'global public sphere' therefore needs to be used as cautiously as that of 'global civil society'. Substituting the word 'transnational' for 'global' may give a more accurate description of cross-border links among civil society actors that exist in some cases, in some parts of the world. But this chapter has shown how even the simple term 'civil society' can be problematic if questions about the media representation of counter-hegemonic groups are ignored.

To explore the possibilities of the presence of counter-hegemonic groups in the Arab context, one has to study the social formation that shapes social activism in different Arab locales. The notion of civil society is undoubtedly a very controversial one especially in the countries that have experienced the effects of imbalanced flow of international communication, which MacBride report tried to balance in the 1980s. There are different local problems that groups like NGOs are faced with when trying to counterbalance the traditional structure of 'sultanian' or 'clanic regimes'. Therefore, it is imperative that one surveys the cultural cartography of the concept in the Arab context before exploring the possibilities of transforming it into the transnational, or even more challenging, the cyber terrains.

Hasan Hanafi (2002:56) distinguishes between three different understandings of the concept of civil society in the Arab World:

> First, there are some who reject the very idea of civil society as alien to Islam, a concept coming from the West: antireligious, and aiming at westernizing Muslim societies. This is radical fundamentalist position. Second, there are some who affirm that the concept of civil society as a universal concept, a global idea – a global idea. This is the secular, Westernized alternative. Third, there are some who argue that similarities can be maintained and differences can be bridged. This final position is the reformist or modernist alternative.

It is very important to distinguish between the different views on civil society that are articulated within the national borders of each country, as well as the structural differences that mark the civic activism across the Arab World. For example, in Egypt the counter corruption civil movements called '*Kifaya*' (Enough) has its corresponding movement in Morocco: '*Baraka*' (Enough). These civil groupings target breaking the silence on issues like corruption and the freedom of expression. Moreover, the Arab world has similarities that shape the intellectual conception of civil society. The most prominent shared elements are language and religion. This makes the task of any discourse on civil society in the Arab world a practice of coming to terms with a progressive interpretation of religion that keeps the social fabric intact and ensures the full unleashing of the individual's potential. Mohammed Arkoun (2002) has highlighted the contextual realities that the middle class has to encounter so that it can challenge the hegemonic practices of the state. For Arkoun (2002:36), the very nature of the Arab regimes slows down the process of bringing different factions of civil society aboard in the process of decision-

making in "authoritarian and unaccountable state institutions that negate the very idea of civil society."

Civil society in the Arab-Islamic world has inherited a long history of authoritarianism that has slowed the process of building a functional civil society. Some of the major hindrances have to do with the situation of women and the freedom of expression. It is true that the colonial presence has weakened the collective awareness of the colonized people, and the colonial presence has also left its own problems. One of these problems is the creation of alienated elites that had to encounter the locals' adamant clinging to the traditional mode of economic and cultural production. One of the aspects of this rift in the postcolonial society is articulated in the intellectual clash between the elite, mainly educated in the West, and the local tribal authorities that kept their customs and micro laws intact. The fragile new states had to change the mechanisms of their local cultures to harness the ideals of nationalism. The introduction of the notion of the nation/state necessitated the redefinition of the relationship between the state and the people.

The paradox of the postcolonial state lies in its desire to implement cultural concepts that are strongly resisted by the cultural traditions of the pre-modern locales. For example, the notion of civil society notoriously known for its 'fuzziness' and 'elusiveness' is highly contested in the contemporary Arab context. In Morocco, the implementation of the family code in 2004 caused a heated debate on the adaptability of the new reform to the authentic religious interpretations of Shari'a (Islamic law). The code (known as *Mudawana)* allowed women for the first time in the history of Morocco to choose their partner *without* the necessary consent of her father. In addition, the article 98 of the *Mudawana* guaranteed the wife the right to petition for divorce. The case of the family code in Morocco represents an instance where the secular educated elite clashes with the traditional clerics. The men of religion are suspicious of the political elite and consider them collaborators with postcolonial institutions such as IMF and the World Bank. Therefore, Islamic movements like *Jamaat 'adl wa Ihssan* (Justice and Benevolence) mobilized people to march in the streets to invoke the God-given constitution as an alternative to any external definition of the civil rights in the land of Islam. Here, it is important to highlight that for the religious factions, the state and religion are inseparable. This is clear from the mantra they use in the three ds (*din, dawla, dounya*) rendered as religion, state, and life. For the religious interpreters of civil society, all solutions to the problems of the state and society relationships should be sought within the pre-defined religious paradigm. Abdou Filali-Ansary (2003) retakes Inga Brandell's differentiation between communal or clanic society *(mujtama' ahli*) and civil society. She (1997: 102-8) uses the term *mujtama' ahli* to refer to the family based society rather than to the communal society:

> [I]n pre-colonial society there existed what is termed al-mujtama'al-ahli, family society, to be contrasted with the modern concept al-mujtama'al-madani (ahl=family, madina=city). This 'family society' constituted a public sphere linked to the state but which also had a certain autonomy, and was divided into several parts: the group of

> religiously and legally learned men, the ulama (the religion 'doctors'), the merchants, the religious Sufi orders, the professional corporations, and perhaps the peasants and the tribes. Economic functions and social services formed an essential part of this 'family society', although the state controlled certain services. The ulama in turn, through their legitimacy as the interpreters of the law, put limits on the power of the state and could – and did – represent the rest of the 'family society'. Other authors add to the preceding groups al Ashraf, notables with religious legitimacy stemming from their descent from the Prophet. Suffice here to point to the use of the concepts, and the following problematization of the equivalence instituted in modern civil society discussion between the family and the private sphere. Here, quite evidently, we have to do with a different concept of the family, in fact one that does not at all coincide with the private one of the family in modern Western understanding. There was, no doubt, a private sphere in those societies, but it was not 'the family'. The regional debate has not pursued this line of reasoning ….

Brandell highlights that the social structure in the pre-colonial society had its definitions of the private and the family spheres and that the postcolonial notion of civil society should be taken for granted as an easy package ready made to be implemented in the traditional Arab social structure. (I am referring to Arab countries in their similarities, not in the necessary singular internal dynamism that each Arab country has developed after the colonial era). Ansary (2003:303) reminds us that in the Maghreb, for instance, the throne of the sultan has been on the back of his horse, and that the quarter of the king was referred to as *Mahalla* (military camp). Even today, the state appellation in Morocco, for instance, is called *makhzen* (fortified depot or storage of grain designed to withstand long sieges). Additionally, the history of power transition has never been a smooth one in the Arab world. In Morocco, the religious duty to commanding good and forbidding evil (*Al amr bi ma'arouf wa nahyo 'ani Mounkar*) was an instrumental slogan in toppling many long established dynasties like that of Almoravid (1040-1147). Many Islamist movements from *Salafia Jihadia* of Algeria to *Lasker Jihad* in Indonesia use this mantra to bring change within the society and ultimately within the political system. The religious discourse, in its definition of civil society, tries to tame the modern concepts sustained by the secular forces within the contemporary Arab countries. Rashid Ghanoushi who was one of the founding Islamists of the Tunisian renaissance party (*hizb al nahdah*) can speak of the Tunisian society using modern concepts of civil society, but he will tame that concept using religious framework that specifies and delimits the notion to the land of Islam. Rashid Ghanoushi (in Tunis) Abassi Madani (in Algeria) Abdsalam Yassin (in Morocco) Al ikhwan Muslimin (in Egypt) all have their own conception of the Islamic civil society. For example, Abdesalam Yassin in his book *Debate with Democrats* (*Hiwar ma' Al foudala Dimokratyoun*) tries to convince the secularists that there is no other solution to the ills of society than the return to the basic teachings of Islam, and that any conception of society outside of the religious text is deemed to fail. He summarizes his own solution to build a healthy society in three words: educating, organizing and marching (*tarbiat, tandim, zahf*). For Yassin, those three categories are necessary to build a robust civil society. This call has of course caused him to

enter in a diabolic clash with the state. The last of these confrontations was the ban of the main websites of AlJamaa'a <www.Mouminate.net>, <www.nadiayassine.net/>, <www.yassine.net/www.aljamaa.com/ >

The Moroccan thinker Mohamed Abed Jabri (2003:307) describes the mixture of religion and politics as a practice of "making politics within religion". This state of affairs has led to an ambivalent understanding of civic activism in Arab countries. Al Ansary (2003:307) argues that:

1. On the international scene, nationalist and voluntarist notions of the state were replaced by the minimal, regulatory state, before expectations relating to economic and cultural services to the population had been satisfied, or even received the beginnings of satisfaction.
2. Within almost all societies of Muslims, a new cycle of intense polarization between the self and the 'Other' began, gained momentum and gave unexpected strength to seemingly pre-modern views and attitudes.

This has led to a weak state whose form is *sultanian* and whose constituency is fearful and waits for the contingent juncture so that it can direct the social change. From the movement of *Kifaya* and *Ikhwan al Muslim* in Egypt to the movement of *Baraka* (enough) and the justice and spirituality movement in Morocco, the conceptions of civil society are contested between the secular and the religious forces. The religious forces undermine any mention of the cultural trajectory of civil action in the Western context, while the secular forces attempt to combine the local realities with the Western cultural borrowings. When a secularist mentions names like Voltaire, Diderot, Spinoza, and Descartes, he/she is liable to be blamed of treason, for in the clerics' consciousness, the God-given constitution contains all that is necessary for the everyday life of the believer from the date of birth until the day of burial and 'beyond'.

Since one cannot conceive of a civil society outside the ruling institutions, one can mention that in the early days of Islam, the mosque was the agora where matters of individual or communal concern were debated. After the death of the Prophet Mohammed, the mosque changed its function and started to lose its civic role. Ever since the Umayyad Dynasty (661–750 ad.), the role of the mosque was reduced to a repetition of the official state orders. Therefore, the ambivalence of the notion of civil society has become more acute. The religious clerics (*'ulama)* wish to roll back the misconduct of the unjust rulers and return to the early 'authentic' beginnings of civil practice, while the secularists have tried in the postcolonial period to implement nationalism as a solution to the weak political structure. Al Ansary (2003:308) argues that:

> Since the modern state was born during what we regard now as the 'nationalist' era, it was opposed to all forms of spontaneous, free, autonomous social organization, be they political, cultural or otherwise. Nationalism and its ideology made their way to Maghreb societies, although they rested on ambiguous foundations. The national identity was viewed in altogether ethnic, religious and regional terms and its content varied in time and context. Yet the idea of the nation-state was effective, and

> legitimized newly born entities with modern expectations. The state atomized society in the sense given to this word by Gellner and did everything to prevent the birth or development of effective civil society organizations. When the reversal began, many associations and organizations were born.

This paradoxical development of the civil society discourse in the Arab-Islamic context brings to the fore the necessity of rethinking the tools of analysis when approaching the notion of civil society in the Arab locales. The internal and external problems that beset the postcolonial Arab state testify that our methods of conducting social research should also be flexible and explanatory. The theories of dependency that were used since the 1950s are less concerned of the internal failures of the Arab world to come to terms with the changing economic and epistemological realities. Dependency theory and most versions of postcolonial theories throw the blame on 'them', the Occident. Such approach fails to account for the complexity of the internal dynamics that led to the ambivalence I referred to above concerning the anticipated role of the civil society. The religious forces that believe that solutions of the present are to be found in the past are undoubtedly in clash with progressist forces that prefer to accommodate the Western civic experience while preserving the 'timber' of national culture intact. The central aim in this work is to advance the applications of the concept of articulation as an analytical category that helps to explain the connections with the external cultural modes of production. Also, 'articulation' accounts for the internal mishaps that were the result of a tense disarticulation between the authoritarian regimes and their social constituency. Articulation allows also an account of the nature of the relationships between the religious and the secular in the making of the contemporary civic ambivalence in the Arab context(s).

Mohammed Arkoun (2003: 35-6) in "Locating Civil Society in Islamic Contexts" highlights that concepts do not exist in the void. They are the product that is constituted by and constituting the Arab history:

> But the concepts will remain abstract, cut off from their existential, cultural, historical and intellectual contexts of emergence, genesis and metamorphosis, as long as the process of conceptualization is not rooted in or initiated by the historical experience that shapes the collective memory of each social group. There is a need also that this collective memory be expressed in the original language used throughout the historical experience of the group...

The plight of the concept of civil society in the Arab context is that it has no Descartes, Diderot or Voltaire. Its rational ancestors that could have started a probably different type of social system had to face prison (e.g. Averroes, cf. chapter five). Moreover, the articulation of the religious discourse of *Umma* and that of the state has produced a polyphony of discourses on society in the Arab World. Arkoun (2002: 37) has nicely captured these discursive orientations as follows:

> Instead, discussions about religion, secularization, culture, governance, democracy and economy are either conducted within the traditional system of belief about the

> imagined, never concretely actualized Community (umma) and its purported 'authentic' ahistorical Islam, or within the vocabulary, definitions and forms of reasoning borrowed from European thought and arbitrarily projected on this idealised, imagined, unrealistic Islam defended as the alternative 'model' to the Western universalized paradigm. The reference to so-called 'classical Islam' (700–1400) or the Golden Age of Islamic civilization is a rhetorical claim that overlooks, for example, the decline of the institution of the caliphate in that time.

The fragmentation of the pre-modern discourse on civil society has been the latent trait since the first decades of the twentieth century. Modernists like Salama Moussa, Taha Hussein and Malek Bennabi tried to explain the reasons for the internal failure within the Arab countries. One can even assume that they were using the method of articulation, albeit with no reference to the concept as such. For instance, Salama Moussa (1887-1958), who was known for his interest in the intersection of culture and science, championed the emulation of the Western dressing style. Rizk (2001) writes, "Salama Moussa, clearly a champion of the Western-style hat"[40] . Salama Moussa was one of those who called for the necessity of an articulation (making a necessary linkage) with the West to benefit from the different forms of knowledge that were developed outside the East, mainly science. For Taha Hussein was a writer whose notorious book *On Pre-Islamic Poetry* (*Fil-Shi ir al-Jāhilī*) doubted the authenticity of the traditional Arabic poetry and was banned. Later, the title was changed to *On Pre-Islamic Literature (Fil-Adab al-Jāhilī*). Noureddine Afaya (1997:29) describes Taha Hussein as rationalist who tried to bridge the gap by articulating with Europe:

> Il n' est pas question, ici de suivre les différntes étapes que T. Hussein a parcouru pour formuler son rationalisme d' autant plus qu'il est clair que tout propos sur le rationalisme, chez cet intellectuel, est conçu à partire du savoir que l' Europe lui a offert. C' est à ce titre que le regard qu'il porte sur la situation culturelle égyptienne ou arabe est, logiquement, un regard composé et multidimensionnel.
>
> There is no doubt that T. Hussein went through different steps to formulate his rationalism. Therefore, it is clear that any statement on rationalism, for this intellectual, is inspired by the knowledge that Europe has offered him. It is for this reason that his stand on the Egyptian or Arab cultural scene is, logically, composed and multidimensional (my Trans.)

Malek Bennabi (1905–1973) was a skilled articulator of the nature of the weak social systems that were ready to receive colonization. In "The Question of Culture" (1954), he argues that the system of ideas that govern a nation is the founding element that may lead to the stagnation or deterioration of that society. For Malek Bennani, the Arab countries were ripe for colonization not because of the necessary 'diabolic' nature of the 'Other' but also because of the already weak economic and political structure that governs the colonized countries.

Therefore, two cultural axes struggle to define the civic terrain in the Arab World. First, the religious zealots who see that the religious exegeses provide them with the

[40] *Al Ahram.* <http://weekly.ahram.org.eg/2001/525/chrncls.htm>

necessary cultural framework to tackle any social controversy, and the solutions to civil rights are to be found in the books of Tabari, Bukhari, and Adahabi[41], not in the Western philosophy. The second trend is composed of the bureaucrats and the politicians who seek a 'delinking' with the old forms of governance and try to criticize the nostalgic collective memories of the Arab countries. This second category is found in all levels of cultural and social representation, from politics or military to men and women of literature (Naguib Mahfouz and Assia Djabar for example).

The fragmentation of intellectual authorities on the notion of civil society has led Mohamed Arkoun (2003:40) to discuss the place of 'Just Governance' in the assessment of state and society within the Arab world:

> If we need to search for Just Governance, the *sine qua non* for the capacity to build an enabling civil society, we must also pay attention to violence as a structural force at work in each society. When modern societies speak of violence as integral to religious traditions, they overlook the anthropology of violence in all types of societies, not least the most modernized and wealthy Western societies. Violence cannot be linked exclusively with others – perceived, described, condemned as the barbarians, uncivilized and uneducated, ignorant of the true teachings provided solely by the religion, philosophy and objective history taught in the public schools of modern laïc states.

The notion of violence is one of the yardsticks that are used to describe the level of civism in modern societies. As Mohamed Arkoun argues, the level of violence (against women, for instance) could be one of the testing parameters of civism in the Arab World, but it should not be taken as the only one. There are different parameters that can also test the notion of civism. Those are to be found in the realm of the articulation of the political paradigm as a whole. The nature of the theories (like dependency theory) used in the description of the political discourse should be the object of analysis, for taking those theories for granted disguises many other factors that could be central to the absence of a strong civil society in the Arab World and that escape our analysis.

Naomi Sakr (2004:171-2) argues that local activism, like Women's associations connection with the local state, are not fully examined, while the ready made diabolizing of external forces and the internal social constituency are easily considered the main problem. She concludes that:

> Evidence in this article suggests that criticisms of NGOs for reinforcing dependency and diverting attention away from structural inequalities themselves may be a diversionary tactic. The NGO activism examined here, by focusing on women and the media in Egypt, could succeed only if conducted by means of direct collaboration with the chief player in Egyptian Media, namely the state… If NGOs were infiltrated by interest groups with questionable agendas, it seems more likely on the evidence

[41] These are considered the main authentic books of hadith (the sayings and practices of the prophet Muhamed: the most trusted books after the *Quran*.

> presented here that they were infiltrated by State Security informants than by neo-imperialists from the West.

This is a very relevant instance of articulation that avoids the limitations of the dependency model. The real causes that hinder the accomplishment of full-fledged civil activism in the Arab world need a more open tool of analysis. I reiterate that my central aim in this work is advancing the method of articulation that accounts for the shortcomings of the 'cultural imperialism' model tools. The latter have disguised the failings of the local (national) state to account for the needs of different civil groupings that are under its auspices. Articulation allows a distribution of responsibility on the state, but simultaneously, it is not blind to the global dynamics of interests, which makes the external forces also an object of analysis. The example of the women's struggle in the Arab World is a good example that shows that NGOs representing women in the media or in politics are more interested in finding answers to their immediate problems locally and in direct negotiations with the state. Nevertheless, what happens is that these local bodies (let us say Women NGOs) have more trouble with the national state than with the funding bodies (external forces). Articulation allows the connection of those NGOs with the local state, but it also allows an exit (a disbanding of the articulation) in case the authoritarian or sultanian state does not allow the full practice of the civil causes. In other words, the articulation of the local NGOs with the external funding bodies permits them to bring the global civic community to exert pressure on the national state and that has worked in many instances (the case of Mohamed Erraji (in Morocco), who was unjustly imprisoned and then released after external pressure, is a case in point). The nature of the postcolonial state is that it receives pressure from below and above which makes the dependency theory short of comprehensiveness. Only articulation allows a more explanatory tactic to push forward the building of a sound civil society in the Arab World. Mabika Kalanda (1967: 9-10) seems to share this approach when he re-articulates some factions of the postcolonial discourse:

> We have fallen into the habit of accusing the imperialists and the communists [of our every failing]. Is this purely a harmless self-serving propaganda? Should we not recognize and affirm the portion of responsibility that falls on the politicians and the [African] people?

To find answers to the ailing situation of civil activism in the Arab and postcolonial contexts, one needs to examine the ruling ideas that have been contesting the terrain of agency in the Arab World. Within contemporary Arab countries, there are many attempts to counter the authoritarian regimes, and most of the outspoken voices (for instance, Dr. Saad Eddin Ibrahim in Egypt and the Iranian Hamid Dabashi) try to articulate the relationship with the West without losing sight of the specificity of the national context. This is what Sabry (2007) points out when he expresses his concern about the conflation of the 'past' cultural tense with the 'present'. This conflation has been a major hurdle in the intellectual practice of the Arab world. Dr. Saad Eddin Ibrahim (2006) argues that one has to take into consideration the brief

history of the Human rights movements in the Arab world that started only in 1983. However, the real work of modernizing the civic activism in the Arab world started theoretically earlier than that, and one can refer roughly to the time of the first encounter with the colonizer. Since then many writers, have tried to pin down the nature of the relationship with the occident. I will survey the legacy of two distinguished figures that I deem relevant to the concept of articulation within the Arab World.

Malek Bennabi (1905–1973, Algerian engineer)

Bennani's (1953) *Vocation de l' Islam* articulates the inner failings that led to the colonization of Algeria. For Bennabi, the period that followed Almohad dynasty made it predictable that North African countries would fall under the colonial yoke. His notion, even after more than 50 years of its publication, remains prophetic. For Bennabi, the blame of inner failure should not always be thrown on the 'Other'. He was more concerned with the causes that led to what he called the '*colonisabilité'* (*qabiliat Al isti'maar*). Jacques Warrensburg (2002: 141) seems to share this approach when he argues that:

> The author welcomes the reformist and modernist movements in the second half of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, seeing in them a renaissance expressed in Islamic terms. When describing post-World War One history and the colonial impact of France on North Africa and of the West on the Muslim world at large, Bennabi analyzes critically the internal and external factors of what he calls chaos. Not only the modern Muslim world, but also the modern Western world that enjoys the semblance of power finds itself in a moral chaos, for colonialism "kills the colonized materially and the colonizer morally".

This double approach is what is actually missing in many discourses that try to reform the civil society in the Arab World.

Abdullah Laroui (B. 1933)

Laroui (1997) tries to deconstruct the Arab condition from a comparative historical perspective. His analysis of the concepts of 'Islamism', 'Modernism' and 'Liberalism' is an attempt to rearticulate the functional potential of concepts when they are applied to the Arab condition. Laroui, in his survey of the recent history of intellectual work within the Arab World, distinguishes between three characters without explicitly naming them, because for him these characters represent different people and institutions alike, and these are the cleric, the politician, and the technocrat.

– The Cleric

This character is fixed on the religious text. He does not need to consult the Western paradigm because for him the 'infidel' is the enemy; he is nothing but the means of evil. The cleric forgets the inner failings within the history of his creed. He rarely remembers or rethinks the persecution of the *Mu'tazilites* by the Caliph

Mutawakkil[42]. The Cleric also tries to silence any mention of early Muslim philosophers like Farābi (d.950) and Rāzi (d.1209) because they tried to read the religious text through the lenses of Greek categories. The cleric is still present in today's institutions in the Arab world like in school and the media agenda setting. The films that he sees try to alter the dogma; he immediately reacts to them and tries to ban them. The row about the film *Marock* is a case in point. The first reactions were from the 'guardians' of religion, because their conception of the 'Other' is formed by a conservative heritage that they try to fix in the public sphere.

– The Politician

This character tries to keep the dominion of interpretation to a selected few. He reads the authors of the Enlightenment to discredit them (a Sartrean bad faith approach to reading the 'Other'). The politician replaced the cleric by wearing the cloak of the modern man, but still sees that Islam is in danger – once it became Turkish, it lost its glamour. Therefore, for him, the interpretation of Islam should remain the dominion of those who first started it in the Arabian Peninsula. The politician reads the history of the fall of Rome and the mishaps of Athens and tries to save Islam from the same fate, claiming the right to understand the secrets of the venerated religious texts.

– The Technocrat

This character cares less about returning to 'an authentic' source. He does not quibble about the meaning of 'our decadence'. For the technocrat, only the present matters. As long as he is there in the West, speaks their language and knows how to embrace the techno-cultural change, he feels at home. This trend can be found in the works of Salam Moussa whose love for science and culture was unbounded. He cared less for what dress he should put on. Is it the Western style hat or the turban? What matters for him is filling the gap that was caused by both the cleric and the politician. The technocrat in the Arab world is found in the narrow alleys of old cities, in the small shops, in the small plots that yield small crops. All what he sees is that the material force that drives the West has made a visible gap between 'them' and 'us'. He mocks the ideas of the liberal politician and the dreams of the cleric. His conviction is that practical science is the drive, not the polemics over historical righteousness. Yet, this voice is suppressed in the Arab world and the objective of civic activism is to make this category of social fabric represented on an equal footing with the clerics and the politicians who have dominated the terrain of representation and, more dangerously, the means of representation, i.e. the media.

Warrensburg Jacques (2002: 141) summarizes the re-articulatory work of Laroui as follows:

[42] Caliph Mutawakkil in the ninth century stamped out the somewhat rationalist theological school of the Mu'tazilites.

> At the end of his criticism, Laroui proposes four domains in the study of Islam that ought to be approached successively: (1) Islam as history, including power with all its local and temporal specificities; (2) Islam as culture (with a process of continuous traditionalization); (3) Islam as morality, with a basic "Muslim personality" and a characteristic lifestyle and behavior; and (4) Islam as a faith. In Laroui's view, the domain of faith has hardly been elucidated in Islamic studies until now and does not simply coincide with the study of fiqh, kalām, and akhlāq (ethics). Faith has to be studied as the fourth and highest level of society, determined by the three underlying levels of history, culture, and morality. Laroui is apparently thinking, for instance, of an inquiry into the logical foundations of the Sunna, a present-day reinterpretation of the various catechisms ('aqīdas) written in Islamic history, and an in-depth study of the concept of Islamic faith with its characteristic resistance to all that is not Islamic. In Laroui's scheme, the level of faith cannot influence the first level, that of power; the infrastructural situation precedes faith and conditions any realization and historical articulation of it.

A comprehensive understanding of the meaning of information society within the Arab world needs considering all those three characters when sketching the dynamics that control social change. Articulation, by virtue of its ability to account for the intrastate dynamics, describes the nature of the relationship that holds not only among the local cultural, economic and political players, but also among different global social networks. The Arab world, despite its internal differences, struggles with reforming old modes of social integration that have been mainly articulated in religious overtones, rather than in secular civic or globally shared values. The nature of the processes that link those three characters that Abdullah Laroui suggested will be crucial for the future of civil society in the Arab world, and it is instrumental to use the analytic tool of articulation to avoid the reductionist approaches that have slowed the constructive reformation of civic consciousness in the Arab-Islamic contexts.

Information society as a new form of public space

One of the most intriguing developments of our contemporary world politics has been the creation and diffusion of what I call 'civil networks'. The huge inter-connectedness that has become characteristic of our global interaction made it possible to create alternative spaces of interaction, other than the public space as we knew it in the definitions by Habermas. The Internet has undoubtedly provided a possibility to go beyond the conventional space and time dimension. It has made communication with others a matter of cable, a modem, and a server. Many non-governmental groups have found a new haven in the net wherein and through which they can make their voices heard outside of the nation-state. Ronald Deibert (2003: 14) rightly points out the central role that the Internet plays in this new reconfiguration of human interaction:

> Although the reasons for the rise of these groups around the world is a complex story, their interaction with each other , and indeed the promise of a truly global civil

> society, depends on their ability to communicate across vast distances. In particular, the internet has become for civil society networks an infrastructure of immense importance. The strategic communication of information, the organization of protests and campaigns, the electronic pressuring of politicians and elites, and the publication and dissemination of their views all now vitally depend on this amorphous, chaotic planetary network of computers, phone lines, cables, satellites, frequency spectrums, and fiber optics, as well as the complex regulatory and institutional supports that go along with it.

The diffusion of the Internet and the increasing number of inter-connected nodes makes it possible for NGOs to reach other locales that could not be reached before. This poses many challenging questions to the central state. The negotiation of power that used to dominate the public space as we know it has intensified. Taking the case of the developing world, the one or two channels that used to serve the state propaganda can now be easily neglected. People have found new sources of information that give them a different view of the society where they live in, and at the same time, provide them with the possibility to interact with other civil societies. The Internet has brought about a new layer to the industrial society by making the contemporary global citizen belong to a global civil society, so to speak. Now let me trace briefly some instances of NGOs activism that have used the net; and which could show the way for a new articulation of civic forces in the informational age.

The origins of the civil society use of the Internet can be traced back to the early 1980s, when social groups started using the facilities provided by the technological innovations. These early networks relied on individuals who offered their computing skills to the NGOs to which they belonged. By late 1980s, more stable and formal networks were created: in England, (GreenNet), the United States (PeaceNet, and EcoNet), Sweden (NordNet), Canada (Web), Brazil (IBASE), Nicaragua (Nicarao), and Australia (Pegasus). In 1990, these networks created the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) as a global umbrella that still hosts NGOs worldwide. The main purpose of APC is articulated on their homepage, (< http://www.apc.org/>):

> The Association for Progressive Communications (APC) is a global network of civil society organizations whose mission is to empower and support organizations, social movements and individuals in and through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs).

The use of the Internet by civil society networks was further enhanced in the case of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) that started in 1992, involving 1,000 NGOs in both developed and developing countries. Since 1995, ICBL started to use computers effectively in the dissemination and forming of strategies in more than 70 countries. The networks were very useful in lowering the organizational costs, especially for less developed countries. The Internet has also made it possible for the participants to work together in real time in the formulation of day-to-day strategies of the ICBL.

This example shows clearly that the Internet has made it possible for many bodies, belonging to different civil societies, to exchange experiences and combine efforts to resolve any contingent problems. The NGO-Net initiative that Arnaud Ventura launched in 1997 is a success story that has allowed a quick mobilization of different local and global teams to help organize, fund and empower Kenyan NGOs. The methodology section of NGO-Net shows some of the benefits that local NGOs get from accessing the online community, these are listed as follows <http://www.ngo-net.org/main/index-us.html>:

- Free HomePage
- Sectorial and Regional Information Forums access
- Possibility to publish on-line (research document, studies etc.)
- Possibility to present project proposals on-line
- Online Job Center Access
- Later an Online Donation Module Access

The NGO-Net objectives were limited to Kenya, but thanks to the quick mobilization that the Internet provided, more areas were covered in West Africa and later the whole of Africa and even local NGOs in Latina America were included. The transparent structural organization and the management of budgets have allowed local NGOs to build a social network of donors and active members. The Internet has also allowed many NGOs in South Africa to get their websites in the portal of charities like 'For the Cause', 'GivenGain', 'The Trust', 'ISISA' and 'What I Want'. These portals allow the insertion of a 'donor' button on their websites and list NGOs so that they ease their access. However, there are limitations that have to do with the access to the internet and the informational infrastructure.

Now how does all this influence the everyday life mobilization of the individuals? The Internet has created a new interstitial space where individuals can create their own space or 'home page' where they can talk to their friends across the cultural barriers. Every morning, online communities can check the work of each other and send messages, although they have never shared the same collective memory or what Benedict Anderson (1983) refers to as the 'imagined community' that is nurtured by the everyday consumption of symbolic acts. In the informational mode of being, everyday life is not only shaped by the nation-state borders; the virtual everyday life of online communities is being increasingly influenced by the external factors as well. The structure of the net has not been established in a vertical way where the codes of conduct are dictated by a higher authority, as Castells (1999) has well articulated. The online subject is free when allowing an open access to his or her own 'home' page. He/she is both sender and recipient of codes, both agent and object of agency. This explains why many young people are opting for open software that adopts the culture of sharing as its philosophy (e.g. Linux, GNU philosophy etc.)

Implications for the Arab-World

The concept of civil society in the Arab World is undergoing a redefinition and even restructuring. The role of new technologies and new media is increasingly paramount. More people are online from different gender backgrounds, and more are having access to civil societies, though virtually. This has changed completely many of the previously held views regarding the state and the meaning of civil life. There is still a controversy as to the nature of this e-connected civil society and the limits of its evolution, but one thing is agreed upon: the centrality of power in the Arab media is challenged. Many people prefer to be connected in chat rooms rather than zap to watch national news. The net has created a new space, a kind of 'Hyde Park Corner' for the people who could not find a slot in the daily news or who were forbidden to talk about certain topics deemed inappropriate by the state. Thus, both NGO's and individuals in the Arab World can make more connections with other networks.

According to Habermas, the civil society provides a public sphere wherein critical voices can counter the state's hegemonic inclinations. In the case of the Arab World, the net provides a platform from which that critical stand is formulated. Many people in developing countries and elsewhere have had different perceptions of their societies thanks to their interaction with others online. In fact, the Internet has made it possible to move beyond the contested space towards an unlimited one. Some women in the Arab world have found the space provided by the Internet an occasion to voice out their concerns. Deborah L. Wheeler (2004:144) has surveyed some of the uses and abuses of the Internet in the Arab region (she covered the cases of Egypt, Kuwait, Bahrain, Morocco, and Saudi Arabia). In the case of Egypt, she stipulates that: "Writing about women and the Internet in Egypt is a daunting task. Contrasts between information-rich and information-poor within the country make simple descriptions and explanations challenging to sustain". She also reports that within the national borders of the Arab countries there are contradictions that concern both gender (as the Internet is 'predominantly a male domain' (ibid.)) and the economic and social factors that split the society into the information rich and the information poor.

This supports the view that the work of articulation is not only instrumental in describing the cross border economic and social linkages, but also it may serve to dissect the dynamics of marginalization that are generally overlooked in the cultural imperialist models.

The articulation of the social relationships that link different social groups with the Arab world can help find alternatives for the sections of society that were for long marginalized in traditional media. Victoria F. Fontan (2004:179) expresses her concern about the parallelism between 'power' on the one hand and civil society and television on the other hand in the Lebanese context:

> Civil society and television in Lebanon can be seen to evolve in a one-way relationship with the realm of 'power'. The most they can do is to promote the existing social order in post-war Lebanon that is marked by polarization, retribution and a hierarchy in which success for groups and individuals is achieved at the expense of one's 'Other'.

This entails that local NGOs have to re-articulate the nature of relationship that holds them with the pre-established status quo. Without finding other alternatives of civic activism that the global informational 'order' opens up, there is a risk that NGOs like the ones Fontan (2004:179) describes end up in a 'false pretences of a monological mode'.

The concept of civil society is certainly an evolving one. I have examined this concept from different perspectives and different contexts to trace its historical development and shown how the ongoing technological development may help for good or for bad in the reformulation of this concept. This concept should not be seen as static or insignificant to social change. On the face of it, civil society is very sensitive to the social changes that shape our times. The Internet and new technologies, albeit still a luxury in many parts of the world, will certainly reshape our understanding of belonging and our conception of the power itself. More nodes are added to the network; power relations expand more and more, and get added meanings. The case of global NGOs is only an example among many.

The Arab World will undergo a restructuring of civil society and the first symptoms are already at hand. More and more people are getting online and the notion of TV as a central medium in the house is no longer tenable. Deborah L. Wheeler (2004:148) confirms this orientation:

> As early as 1996, Morocco already had 20 Internet Service Providers (ISPs), some 50 cybercafés, an estimated 10,000 Internet subscribers, some 50 websites, 1.4 million fixed telephone lines and an estimated 100,000 mobile phones. The average cost of an Internet subscription was US $50/month. Access has more than doubled each year since then.

Chapter summary

In my study of the processes of the World Summits on Information Society, I focused on the study of the documents that unveil the intentional agency of the contesting powers within the discourse of information society. Kaarle Nordenstreng (2005) has also highlighted the importance of the study of these documents, since they are the building blocks that provide a view to create the character of the emerging informational discourse. In my study of these documents, I adopted a discursive analysis of the wording of the documents. The main word that is reiterated throughout these documents is 'connection'. This very concept demonstrates the necessity for an articulatory approach, since articulation serves as the most appropriate method that works through the joints and breaks that connects one node with another. In this chapter, I have also overviewed the notion of hegemony and its relevance to the informational discursive fabric. I have especially

alluded to the nature of hegemony that works only through recognizing difference and its continuous insatiable search for consent. The study of hegemony in this chapter focused on the meaning of the civil society in the age of the net. Therefore, I introduced the work of Antonio Gramsci, with a view to examine its application in the virtual civil society. I also studied the nature of 'civil society' in the Arab and Islamic World, where the vocabulary that refers to the community has other overtones that are hardly cared for in the wording of the WSIS (World Summit on the Information Society) documents. This chapter stressed the importance of the contextual stance in the study of information discourse(s), and the necessity of applying a contextual method, i.e. articulation.

Chapter Seven

Information society: articulating the postcolonial condition

This chapter is a re-articulation of the informational discourse from the standpoint of the postcolonial locale. It is an attempt to bring to the fore another issue that information society discourse faces. The economic and cultural situation of many African and postcolonial countries needs an informational discourse that will not deepen the economic cleavage between the industrial North and the agrarian South. This chapter is a reminder that the constructive discourse of 'orientalism' might have just moved from constructing the 'Other' discursively to another form of informational cultural configuration that uses technology to perpetuate the dependency of post-colonial countries on their ex-colonial powers. Therefore, I present mainly the works of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha, which show that more connections should be made between the postcolonial theory, and the informational discourse. In this chapter, I suggest that the themes of colonial and postcolonial literature are relevant to our understanding of the current ongoing global flow of communication. Thus, this chapter addresses the implications of the conversation on translation by Stuart Hall and Sarat Maharaj (2001). I will be providing a reading of their conversation in the light of its narrative about technology and culture. Therefore, this chapter first presents the theoretical framework for the process of undoing the informational discourse (by referring to the history of 'orientalism'), and then assesses the possibility of translatability of technology into the postcolonial contexts.

Reflections on colonial discourse and postcolonial theory

> Postcolonial studies are both a challenge to, and a continuation of, the project implicit in the discipline of communication studies. The various pieces gathered here just begin to give one a sense of the ways postcolonial studies overlaps and extends in the theoretical, analytic, and empirical questions, practices, and insights of research in the discipline of communication studies. A careful reading of these contributions, as well of many classic and influential works in postcolonial studies, should quickly convince any reader that there is, already, a dialogue of sorts between communication studies and postcolonial studies; although it seems that the former discipline is largely unaware of the existence of the latter. (Grossberg 2002:367)

Analyzing discourses requires the specification of the concepts used in the study. The same applies to the concept 'postcolonialism'. From the outset, the task of naming within the postcolonial field is both influential and strategic. This is clearly manifested in the debate raised among some critics as to whether the term

'postcolonialism' should be used with a hyphen or without. This may seem a simple quibbling over the term, but it has its limitative implications with respect to reference. However, what interests me here are the political and economic implications of the postcolonial conjuncture and what this means for the present conditions in the postcolonial locales. The advocates of the 'post-' with a hyphen see this phenomenon as a historical phase, since 'post-' means a temporal change from one stage or state to another. In other words, 'post-'denotes a rupture or discontinuity, it connotes a temporal transition from one 'decadent' historical stage to a new 'emerging' era. One of the advocates of this notion is the Moroccan economist El Mehdi El Mandjra[43]. For him, 'post-colonialism' is an emerging historical stage that has a definite beginning. El Mandjra (1990) explains that:

> August 1990 will go down into history as the date of birth of the era of 'post-colonialism'. This is due to the fact that the population of the South has become fully aware of the deceitful process of 'decolonization'…

This is an interesting approach to 'post-colonialism' that sees the 'post' in the post-colonial moment as a new beginning. Nonetheless, it is inadequate and reductionist. The condition that followed formal colonialism has left its trace in wealthy pockets that articulate the postcolonial contradictions within the postcolonial state. Additionally, 'post-colonialism' is a phenomenon that should not be given a fixed birth date, since not all countries managed to get their 'political independence' at the same time. Put differently, the post-colonial era for one nation may be colonial era for another. For instance, Angola's 'independence' is not the same as Algeria's. Similarly, Morocco's 'independence' is not the same as Tunisia's. The term independence is put into quotes since until now I have take 'post-colonialism' as a temporal dislocation from one phase to another, which is the first approach to this concept. Thus, one should take 'post-colonialism' with diligence, since post-whatever for one nation can be pre-whatever for another. Similarly, the post-industrial age that took place in Britain and Western Europe is not to be copied and pasted in other locales that have not experienced the full industrial conditions. Thus, the circulation of buzzwords that try to escape the evolutionary process of modernity seems to evade the real problems of the postcolonial nation-state. Amin Al Hassan (2004: 97) has well articulated this risk:

> In the same form of operation, leapfrogging and digital divide, the latest mythic buzzwords in development thinking have become the new axis around which the development planning practices of the postcolonial state are articulated. What makes for a lot to worry about is the emphasis that the current version of "take-off" puts so much focus on the newest technologies.

El Mandjra traces the outcome of the colonial moment on both colonized and ex-colonial contexts. Al Mandjra argues that the preventive measures (censorship, repressive apparatuses, and the implied consent of the North) are results of the

43 Founder of the "North-South Cultural Communication Prize"

colonial moment. In <http://www.elmandjra.org/livre1/a9.htm>, El Mandjra contends that:

> Ce lui ci est le produit d'une fausse décolonization dont les populations du Sud sont aujourd'hui pleinement conscientes d'une part et de la peur du Nord qui craint les transformations radicales qu'une telle prise de conscience ne manquera pas d'apporter, d'autre part la peur de la « déstabilisation » explique le renforcement de l'alliance enter les faux décolonisés et les faux décolonisateurs, et justifie des actions 'préventives' a visage découvert.
>
> This is the product of a false decolonization whose populations in the South are now fully aware that the North fears that such a radical awareness will lead to "destabilizing" the ex-colonizer's interests in the ex-colonial locales. This fear explains the strengthening of the alliance between the pseudo decolonized state and the former colonizer, and justifies overt ' preventive ' actions. (My trans.)

This status shows the huge economic discrepancies between the North or the West in general and the 'third world' countries. This very fact induced a reactionary stance from these countries that started the call for a 'new world order' that would guarantee a fair distribution of properties and, most importantly guarantee the access to the means of mass communication. Those claims featured in the Mac Bride Report (1980) and the efforts made by the advanced economies to undervalue this report bear witness to such conflicts. The debate over the information society in the postcolonial context is, however, a different type of research. First, it is aware of the damage done by the colonial moment, and the strenuous installment of the notion of 'the state' in a context whose history is alien to this notion, at least in its occidental sense.

The second corner stone of the post-colonial phenomenon that further problematizes its definition is marked by the situation of the 'third world' nations after the withdrawal of the colonial presence. When the territorial decolonization took place, especially during the 1960s, there came the phase of bequeathing power from the official colonizer to its representatives in the newly 'independent' nations. Thus, the ex-colonizer chose indigenous agents to be his 'shadows' and mediators of wealth between the colonized and the fast growing markets of the industrial center. Thus, we end up with three main categories: the ex-colonizer, the new representatives of exploitation (the neocolonial agents), and the people or the masses. This transition is generally termed 'neo-colonialism'. It further problematizes concepts like the nation and identity that are explored in the classical work of Edward Said and Homi Bhabha. Before addressing their views, I stress that the absence/presence dichotomy of the ex-colonizer is still hovering over the political, the economic, and, more dangerously, the cultural arenas. This presence is visibly articulated in the centralization of power in the North which possesses 80% of the world's wealth, though it has only 20% of the world's population. Therefore, the imbalance between the North and the South is found in all domains, including the media sector. In her article "The Angel of progress: Pitfalls of the Term Post-colonialism", Ann McClintock (1994:60) gives a corollary of the influence exerted by the North over the South in the domain of media ownership. She argues that:

> Africa was spending only 0, 3% of the world's 207 billions allocated to scientific research and development. In 1975, the entire continent had only 180 daily newspapers, compared with 1.900 for the US, out of a world total of 7.970. By 1984, the number of African dailies dropped to 150, then staggered back to 180 in 1987…In 1980, the annual production of films in the continent was 70. In contrast, the production of long films in Asia was 2.300 in 1965 and 2.100 in 1987.

There is a non-equal access to the informational commodity, which has become the currency of economic, cultural and technological progress. However, this unequal distribution of 'knowledge' and thus 'power' (following Foucault's equation between the two) finds its source in the historical period when the British, the French, and the Spanish dominated the seas. During the 18th century, one of the main pillars of the European nationalism was the occupation of other locales. I stress that the concept of 'European nationalism' is different from the concept of 'nationalism' in the pre-independence 'third world' countries. The Europeans started their expeditions and travels in the search of more knowledge about the Other's traditions and manners, and every single detail that would lay the ground for the physical occupation. The best example in this respect is Napoleon's occupation of Egypt (Alexandria) in seventy-four hours. The same thing applies, with slight variations, to India, African countries and the *Maghreb***.** This leads me to say that any approach to inter-cultural questions requires a study of the colonial discourse, which itself requires a cross-reference to history, politics, sociology, etc. The classical thesis of colonial discourse suggests that the Cartesian 'I' strives to subsume the 'Other'. This thesis is mainly articulated in Said's (1978) *Orientalism.* This approach, however, evades the internal articulations that were at work in the pre-colonial period, and which I have surveyed in chapter six (mainly the work of Malek Bennabi). In this section, I will present some of the works that defined the colonial discourse and attempt an articulation of the colonial discourse's implications for information society.

Edward Said

European colonialism was not only motivated by the greedy need to find new markets and to spread Christianity. Rather, its sources are intertwined and cannot be reduced to one or two elements. Among these sources is the sexual lust; the west always saw the Orient as an arena of sexual satisfaction and copulation. Patrick William (1994:2) argues that:

> Historians of empire have to come to terms with sex if only because it is there…the expansion of Europe was not only a matter of 'Christianity and commerce' it was also a matter of copulation and concubinage. Sexual opportunities were often seized with imperious confidence.

Edward Said's path breaking book *Orientalism* sets up the main features of the colonial discourse. In this respect, the writers of the colonial discourse and post-colonial theory (1994) consider Said's book as a means whereby the 'West' writes out the 'Orient'. This is because Said (1978) describes how the Western

imagination produces codified knowledge about the non-metropolitan areas and cultures, especially those under the colonial control. However, many works addressed the effects of the colonial period even before the publication of *Orientalism*. The accounts in Achebe's "The Novelist as Teacher" (1965) and the more radical work of Ngugi Wa Thiongo (1972) "On the Abolishment of the English Department" are cases in point that provide an even sharper re-reading of the colonial presence in the peripheries. They were both aware of the ways how the West tries to domesticate and subdue the non-Western cultures. For Wa Thiongo (one of Africa's best-known novelists), the English language is one of the crucial tools in the colonial project, which made him argue for the use of the indigenous language and culture. Additionally, Wilson Haris' (1975) "Reflections and Vision", Chinueizu's (1975), "The West and the Rest of Us" (1975), and Fanon's (1952) *Black Skin, White Masks,* fall in the same vein.

However, Said's *Orientalism* remains a source of inspiration for all the subsequent studies of colonial discourse theory. Said (1978) is interested in theorizing the discursive formation of the orientalist discourse. He tries to flesh out the stock of cultural representations that the West fabricated around the Orient. He sees the relationship between the two blocks as one of tension and domination. In *Orientalism* (1978:5), he argues, "the relationship between Occident and Orient is a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony". For Said, there is a close and intricate relationship between discourse as a practice and the politics of representation. This justifies why he opts for Foucault's notion of the *in* and *out* rather than the Derridean 'il n'y a pas d'hors texte'. He is more interested in the political intentions implied in the colonial discourse, because he does not want to be subsumed by the limitations of textuality. Said (1978: 160) argues that:

> Whereas Derrida's theory of textuality brings criticism to bear upon a signifier free from any obligation to transcendental signified, Foucault's theories move criticism from a consideration of the signifier to a description of the signifier's place, a place rarely innocent, dimensionless, or without the affinitive authority of discourse discipline**.**

Thus, Said's option for a Foucauldean reading is both a political and a strategic choice because, for him, one cannot disassociate the acquisition of knowledge of other places and the *will* to dominate and subordinate these 'Others'. Thus, he follows Foucault's emphasis that more knowledge requires more power and more power requires more knowledge. This amounts to saying that the Western imagination tries to *re*shape and *re*write the history of the Oriental culture(s), histories and subjectivities.

Nonetheless, Said's inclination to use Foucault's method is not blind-driven, for the difference between the two lies in their conception of conscious intention. For Said, the 'East' is represented in a discourse that refracts the individual's colonial *intention* of the Western agent. In contrast, Foucault undermines the will of the individual. For him, the power of representation is limited to the state's institutions.

This may explain in part his interest in public institutions such as hospitals, prisons, schools, etc. For Foucault, only these institutions can maintain the panoptic gaze over the individual who is powerless, deprived, and docile. For Said's *Orientalism*, the major concern is with the 'civil society' and the possible spaces that make it participate in normalizing the Western discourse. Such a comparison makes Said's reasoning in *Orientalism* closer to the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci's definition of hegemony. Said (1978:37) puts it eloquently in the following: 'It is hegemony or rather the result of cultural hegemony at work that gives Orientalism the durability and the strength I have been speaking of so far.'

However, Said's project inscribed in *Orientalism* is not free from contradictions and even inconsistencies that lay at the bottom of his approach to the colonial discourse. The first criticisms that were pointed at the theoretical chapters of *Orientalism* started from the 1980s onwards. What is more serious is that the main problems of *Orientalism* do not only threaten the interpretative level, but the whole theoretical premise upon which Said builds his project. He himself conceded that his vision of colonial discourse as presented in 1978 should be revisited. Some of these shortcomings are mentioned in '*Orientalism Reconsidered' (1985)*. Said's pitfalls in *Orientalism* are due to his insatiable longing for the adoption of the methodological strategies provided by different, if not contradictory, ideological stances. To illustrate this, I refer to his attempt to adopt Foucault's apprehension of textuality that essentializes the cogwheel relationship between discourse and power, together with a Marxist materialist conception of cultural theory as a repressive instrument that enhances and seeks material gains. Similarly, Said tries to adopt the Gramscian notion of hegemony with its implications of normalization that is carried out within 'the civil society' as an indispensable trajectory to fulfil the colonial project. This shows that Said's adoption of different theoretical stances with different political agendas gives his work an inconsistent aspect.

Another shortcoming of *Orientalism*'s project is that Said presents himself as a humanist who derives his inspiration from what Bart Moore-Gilbert calls 'traditional humanism'. This strategic choice is motivated by his strong attempt to distanciate himself from the phenomenon he is tackling. This means that Said tries to abstain from being subsumed by the aura of the Orientalist stream, since he was writing from within the Western academia, so to speak. The reason (held by a considerable number of Oriental critics) is that any discourse provided from within the center of propagation is liable to be an acceptance or even a contribution to the colonial discourse's project. This is because for some thinkers of the Islamic World, writing from the center (to use Samir Amin's categorization) is to write from within sedition (*fitna*) itself. In this respect, the Moroccan historian Abdullah Laaroui (1997:172) argues that:

> Qui est offensant, en définitive, chez Rushdie, c'est qui'il n'est Voltaire ni Dostoïevski. Il arrive souvent, Derrière la faiblesse morale il y a un défaut esthétique. Rushdie utilise une forme sans le fond qui lui convient**.**

> Rushdie‘s offensive stance stems from the fact that he is neither Dostoevsky nor Voltaire. Often, behind the moral weakness, there is a lack of aesthetics. Rushdie uses a form without substance that suits him. (My trans.)

Therefore, Said tries to prove that *Orientalism* feeds from humanism, but not *humanism* as defined within the Western consciousness, i.e. the universal values devised by Westerner that all the ‘rest’ of the world *has* to comply with. Additionally, Said distinguishes between ‘latent’ and ‘manifest’ Orientalism(s). Hence, *Orientalism*’s project is double-fold. This situation is clarified in, as noted in Gilbert’s (1997: 43):

> What interests me most as a scholar is not the gross political verity, but the detail, as indeed what interests us in someone like Lane or Flaubert or Renan is not the (to him) indisputable truth that Occidentals are superior to Orientals, but the profoundly worked over and modulated evidence of his detailed work within the very wide scope opened up by that truth.

First, the Orientalist has an ‘indisputable’ conviction that the ‘Orient’ is inferior. Second, the task of the ‘Orient’ is to write back through unveiling the type of ‘details’ that Western travelogues seek ‘out there’ in the Orient, this will expose the colonialist’s interests. However, the doubling reading that Said (1978) offers has received considerable criticisms. The most famous criticisms were those of Aijaz Ahmad (1992) and John Mackenzie (1996).

In the same vein, I agree with Khalid Bekkaoui’s interesting comparison between Said’s reading of the colonial novel and his convictions of the similarity of such a reading to the colonial project. More specifically, Said associates realism with the tacit intentions of imperialism, for realism enhances stability and order, but negates destabilization. Khalid Bekkaoui (1998:38) in *Signs of Spectacular Resistance* cites Said’s correction that the purpose of the realistic tendency is “not to raise more questions, not to disturb or otherwise preoccupy attention, but to keep the empire more or less in place.” This is an interesting remark since it is valid throughout Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim* (1901) which considers imperialism as a fate that Indians’ should go through. This *imposed* destiny falsely denies the presence of any conflict between the British rulers and the Indian subjects. In *Culture and Imperialism* (1993:176), Said explains that:

> The conflict between Kim’s colonial service and loyalty to his Indian companions is unresolved not because Kipling could not face it, but because for Kipling there was no conflict; one purpose of the novel is in fact to show the absence of conflict …that there might have been a conflict had Kipling considered India as unhappily subservient to imperialism…but he did not: for him it was India’s best destiny to be ruled by England.

This denial of conflict between the colonized and the colonizer is a political move since it aims at silencing the subversive elements that go in opposition to the oppressive practices of the imperial forces. Now, let us assess Homi Bhabha’s input into the analysis of the colonizer and the colonized and the entailing discursive practices that entail from that contact.

Homi Bhabha

In *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha gives a new impetus to the postcolonial theory and the debates that surround cultural exchange and, more precisely, the impacts of the colonial contacts on the contemporary era. Being an Indian himself, his interest was focused on the colonial practices of the British rule in India. Bart Moore-Gilbert (1997) divides Bhabha's work into two major phases: the first extends from 1980 to 1988. During this time, Bhabha was interested in colonial discourse analysis. The second phase marked his focus on the complex relationship between the postcolonial discourse and postmodernism. Nonetheless, the two stages are not separable, for he considers the two stages as continuous and combined symbolically. What interests me in Bhabha's work is his avoidance of the essentialist and one-dimensional relationship between the colonized and the colonizer. While Said's book sets the two poles of tension apart and maintains a clear-cut division between the imperialist and the colonized, Bhabha focuses on the *third space*, or what Derrida calls *the 'entre'* space between the colonizer, who possesses the will and the intention to subdue the 'Other', and the 'ignorant colonized'. His tools in this approach are based on Freudian psychoanalysis, but most importantly on Lacanian methodology. In his conception of dialectics, Bhabha goes beyond the black/white, 'Self'/'Other' dichotomy. Bart Moore Gilbert (1997:117) explains this proclivity:

> Bhabha interprets the regime of stereotype as evidence not of the stability of the disciplinary gaze of the colonizer, or security in his own conception of himself, but of the degree to which the colonizer's identity(and authority) is in fact fractured and destabilized by contradictory psychic responses to the colonized Other.

Thus, in his analysis of the colonial discourse, Bhabha traces hermeneutically those lapses of the Cartesian mind and the process of constructing both his 'I' and his 'Other(s)'. Put differently, he tries to lay bare the contradictory and hesitant behavior of the colonizer while trying to seize the 'Other'. A term that Bhabha uses to describe this 'timid' situation is 'ambivalence'. Accordingly, the imperialist sees the colonized 'Other', Gilbert (1997:118) argues, as:

> Both savage (cannibal) and the most obedient and dignified of servants (the bearer of food); he is the embodiment of rampant sexuality and yet innocent as a child; he is mystical, primitive, simple-minded and yet the most worldly accomplished liar, and manipulator of soul force.

This contradictory situation aggravates the colonizer's psychological vacillation, especially when exposed to a different semiotic signifying system. Bill Ashcroft (1989) provides the best example. He alludes to the radiating dimensions of the referential difference between English users and the '*e*nglish' (with small *e*) used by the colonized. In other words, while the colonizer established mediators between him and the wealth of the colonized nations, these speak not the same *English* of the center, but an appropriated and domesticated '*e*nglish'. Accordingly, the colonizer feels frustrated because of his awareness of the failure to efface the Other's specificity. The concept of 'ambivalence' makes us reflect upon other key terms in

Bhabha's critical model, i.e. 'sameness and difference'. This point is organically linked to the previous example. Here, the Western imperialist gets conscious of his difference from the 'Other' which traumatizes him, for his difference means specificity. Therefore, the colonizer sees the 'Other' similar to his 'self' in so far as he speaks the same language, but he/she is different since he/she is 'dark','primitive','uncivilized', or simply because he/she is out *there*.

It is in this spirit of argumentation that I advance the acute and subtle remarks of Bhabha. His approach is particularly interesting because he probes within the psychological fissures of the colonizer as a way to dismantle the colonial project from within.

Bhabha's approach is intellectually abundant since it does not yield to oppositional thinking. In this way, he abstains from the spirit of Said's *Orientalism*. This is perspicuously stated in Bhabha's critique of Said's homogenizing attitude to the source of power, and his polarizing of power relationships. Bhabha (1997:200) denies Said's conception that the colonial power 'is possessed entirely by the colonizer….' For him, this is 'a historical and theoretical simplification'. At the sub-textual level, Bhabha seems to share the Buddha's conception of East/West polarization. This conception is cited by Bart Moore-Gilbert (1997:14) who writes, "in the sky there is no east or west. We make these distinctions in the mind, and then we believe them to be true". Accordingly, the crux of Bhabha's work is not the conflict between the crescent and the cross; the 'Self' and the 'Other'. It is rather the Otherness of the 'Self'. To put it plainly, I refer to his key concept of mimicry, i.e. the colonizer sees himself torn between the repressive desire of the colonial project which makes him see his displacement as natural and carrying a 'civilizing mission'; and his self-conscious alienation that makes him aware of his difference. This cognizance makes the colonizer see the indigenous mediators in a shaky fashion. They are seen as Bhabha (1994:87) puts it: they are "a class of interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern. A class of persons, Indians in blood and color, but English in interests, in opinions, in morals and intellect."

Thus, the colonizer is kept in a dwindling position, which allows spaces of resistance in the colonial discourse from within its normalizing project and identity-effacement. In "Signs Taken for Wonders", Bhabha gives useful examples which show that the imperialist suffers from frailty, vulnerability, and a fractured psyche. For instance, he gives the example of the Annund Messeh's encounter with a group of Indians who were reading the Gospel translated into Hindoostanee tongue. What interests me in this encounter is the reply of the old man who says 'It is THEIR book; and they printed it in our language, for our use', (ibid. 20). Similarly, when Annund suggested:

> You ought to be BAPTIZED, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Come to Meerut: there is a Christian Father there; and he will show you what you ought to do …they answered, we are willing to be baptized, but we will never take the Sacrament…, because the Europeans eat cow's flesh, and this will never do for us. (ibid. pp.30-1)

This is significant enough to show that the colonial 'Self' refuses alterity or self-articulation – a fact which Said's *Orientalism* has captured when he presented the colonial relations as 'fixed' and necessarily labeled as 'Orient' or 'Occident'. However, Bhabha's conception of 'ambivalence' and 'mimicry' makes him vulnerable to the same pitfall as Said's homogenizing proclivity for the exclusive trajectory of power, i.e. understanding power as a one way process from the colonizer to the colonized, so to speak. This is true, because Bhabha's approach to ambivalence as a colonial psychological trauma means that the colonizer is not aware of such 'void spaces' in the colonial project. By implication, all attempts of alterity and resistance are played down. Thus, the concepts of 'mimicry', 'ambivalence' and double-self which Bhabha's project builds on are devoid of any effect. Logically enough, these concepts will be contained within the textual game and become a mere cluster of signifiers that play on the page with no concrete effects on the subjugated consciousness. Ultimately, Bhabha and Said's approaches turn out to be two facets of the same coin. First, Said is concerned with the uni-directionality of the colonial discourse, which denies him any 'signs of spectacular resistance' (to use Bhabha's phrase). In the same fashion, Bhabha, despite his illuminating critique of the colonist's psyche, reduces this activity to a mere textual game. Thus, he shatters the ultimate project of resistance that a postcolonial critic is supposed to be liable to endorse.

The ultimate corollary of this analysis legitimizes a 'redefinition' of the critical role of the critic. In the same vein, Ashcroft (1995:71) retakes the words of Bhabha who contends that 'the task of the critic is to detect native struggle behind the lines'. This requires that the critic should not see ambivalence as a mere psychological or 'Deleuzean delirium', but s/he should perceive the possibility that ambivalence can instigate political awareness on the part of the subjugated consciousness. So, while Bhabha deprives the colonized of political resistance in favor of the psychological dislocation of the colonizer, he gives, implicitly, suggestions for resistance not in the textual sense as dictated by the colonial discourse encoder, but also on the part of the colonized(decoder). This is close to his definition of resistance as stated in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* (1995:33):

> Resistance is not necessarily an oppositional act of political intention, nor is it the simple negation or exclusion of 'content' of another culture, as a difference once perceived. It is the effect of an ambivalence produced within the rules of recognition of dominating discourses as they articulate the signs of cultural difference and reimplicate them within the deferential relations of colonial power- hierarchy, normalization, marginalization, and so forth**.**

It follows from this that the verbal arsenal used by the colonial discourse cannot be dissected from within, unless the colonized critic learns how to evade the colonialist's claim for a seeming normality and homogeneity. This can be achieved through seeking the different signs of native resistance within the colonist text itself. And, above all, through adopting a flexible stance both towards the indigenous culture and the global currents. Articulation is instrumental in this

respect since it is the only thing that guarantees that there are no lasting connections. They all need to be redefined and shifted as they move on. After having surveyed some major moments in the postcolonial discourse, I now turn to the articulation of this discourse with the thrust of the information society postulations.

One is surprised by the remarkable parallelism that exists between the colonial discourse as sketched above and the discourse of information society. The political debate that has characterized non-aligned symposia in the 1970s on the theme of free flow of information seems to be just another terrain where the colonial heritage and its subsequent discourses continue. The documents of the World Summits on Information Society (WSIS) seem to have the same tone of powerful/powerless dichotomy as the classical version of Said's *Orientalism* (1978). A reading of the plenary meetings of the Tunis phase shows that the African countries are still worried about the colonial moment, which has been created by the unequal development between the North/West and South/East. Here we have Thabo Mbeki (president of South Africa) expressing his concerns:

> Indeed, the creation of an inclusive and development-oriented Information Society is in the best interests of the majority of humanity. Most of the peoples of the world, especially from the developing countries, are confronted by the challenge of exclusion in the context of the global economy, in whose development modern information and communication technologies play a vital role. (Plenary section, WSIS web site: <http://www.itu.int/wsis/index.html>)

Let us now consider the speech of the representative of Vivendi Universal, Mr. Jean-Bernard Levy:

> Vivendi Universal is a communications group, *a global* leader in two sectors: media and telecommunications. Our businesses range from music, television, motion pictures, interactive games, to telephony-fixed and mobile: all businesses that bring people together and facilitate access to information, and we develop them internationally. (ibid.)

A mere discourse analysis of the presentations of the different stakeholders shows that the colonial/postcolonial dichotomy is still being nourished by the logic of capitalism. Even the state has felt the change of the conjuncture; this explains why most speeches focused on the issues of Internet Governance and the stability of the Internet. Kaarle Nordenstreng (2005) explains the nature of the debates that have marked the worldwide concern about the flow of information and the objectives of that flow. Nordenstreng (2005) calls for a middle-ground approach to the study of the discourse of information society. It is true that many studies since the publication of Daniel Bell's *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (1973) either have focused on the political aspect of the issue, or they have been beguiled by the technological aspect of the informational phenomenon. The latter readings are mostly by ICT specialists who see information society discourse as a mere technology-driven type of research. In this respect, Nordenstreng (2005:268) writes:

> Indeed, WSIS is predominantly built on an information technology approach, and this is naturally too narrow and shallow for any serious analysis. NWICO (New World Information and Communication Order) was quite the opposite, with predominantly a political approach.

Any serious analysis to information society discourse should not be limited neither to the political register nor to the technological one. Neither the state nor the civil society has a magic stick to solve the complex nature of the world communication order. It is in this spirit that I approach both the political and technological aspects of information society (IS) phenomenon throughout this work.

Information society and the postcolonial state

In his reflection on the international system, Samir Amin (1997:23) writes:

> Never more than today has humanity shared the feeling that the Earth is one and indivisible and that all peoples of the planet belong to a sole system, notwithstanding the extremely divergent positions they occupy within it: an integrated natural system, as illustrated by ecological interdependence; an integrated economic system to the extent that the Eastern bloc countries have abandoned their tradition of relative autarky; even an integrated cultural system following the extraordinary intensification of communications which has resulted in the most advanced forms of western technology being transferred to the most remote villages on the planet.

Edward Said (1978) has delineated the nature of the relationship that has been constructed in the Western imagination about the Orient. The Orient was seen as a distant and different locale. For Said, the mediated images we have about the Orient are *not necessarily* the reality of things as they *really* stand. The fact that most images are mediated through complex systems of communication necessitates that one scrutinizes the very process or processes that have created images that can be canonized when talking about the Orient. Such images find their best representation in literary work, news stories we hear on our radios, the movies we watch, or the blogs and sites we surf on a daily basis. Said underlines that any serious study of those cultures has to be carried out in the light of the internal configurations that make up the social, economic or political systems that shape the 'identity' of each nation. Said is concerned of those moments when images we create ourselves are instilled in the collective memory of the Occident, and become clichés that go unchecked in the public discussions and, most importantly, on the mass media screens.

Similarly, the study of the politics of information society as a discourse should be seen in this respect. Information society, as I argued in the introduction, is not an accident. It is deeply rooted in the Western societal project toward the post-industrial age, the grand informational narrative that Daniel Bell (1973) described and which foreshadowed a shift not only in the praxis of 'doing economics', but also in the real of the cultural sphere. The values (of modernity, for instance)

associated with technology and speed are hailed so much that they abrogate the previous values that were cemented in the early years of the industrial revolution. The post-industrial age is not a mere practice of the capitalist means of production in a more effective manner, it is rather about disseminating values that are inherent in the system that produced what Baudrillard (1993:14) calls the 'hyperreality of our times'.

Very few studies have been dedicated to the repercussions of the informational mode of production on the global system of values. The battles over values are part of the technological advancement. One just has to look at the speed of the mushrooming alternative radios and TV stations around the world. These communication 'work stations' target, in most cases, places where alternative choices are deprived of a free media space. Actually, most of those alternative radios and TVs try to confront state-centered traditional type of media whose main aim is to keep the status quo. The case of radio *Sawa* is a good example that shows that the Orient, as it is described in the symbolic world of *Orientalism* is being targeted with the same rules of the 'cultural game' that has been the latent mark in describing the lives of 'Other people' in 'Other places'. This explains the skeptical response of many Arab regimes to the radio stations, websites and TVs that are transmitting from locales beyond the dominion of the infamous regimes of the Arab World. Rugh (2005:3), in his study of the Arab responses to Radio *Sawa* and *Al Hurra* television came to the following conclusions:

> First, like Radio *Sawa*, *al Hurra* was assumed to be a U.S. Government broadcaster. The "firewall" was not recognized. This assumption was confirmed by Arab viewers in several ways. The content and style of the news gave the impression that it was not an Arab channel but American. Subjects that were chosen, and the time devoted to them in newscasts, seemed determined from an American point of view rather than an Arab perspective.

The battles over values have been the omni-present theme that has characterized East/West relations since the dawn of the colonial conquests that were to shape the future of the balance of planetary relations forever. The study of radio *Sawa* and *Al Hurra TV* are but indexes of an old/new endeavor to capture the other in a taxonomy of fixed images. These could be used to mobilize the masses towards political ends that are often made and prepared by bureaucratic policy makers. Edward Said (1978:3) tells us in *Orientalism* that the roots of this silent struggle over values finds its roots in the cumulative work done by the West Scholarship to brand the East with a cluster of vocabulary, images and signs that would ease the practice of exploiting the power of representation.

My contention is that without examining *Orientalism* as a discourse, one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which European culture was able to mange – and even produce – the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period. That very practice of representation has been carried out under different forms: media representation is the most salient one, most notable in

the arts, literature and political reports. One has just to mention Rudyard Kipling to conjure up all the images that he documented in his descriptions of the Indian colonized subject. The works of Joseph Conrad and especially his classic *Heart of darkness* is a case in point where the colonial subject finds itself in first hand contact with the 'Other', and tries whatever means to subjugate and tame it. Said captures this intention eloquently when he writes that *Orientalism* 'tries to show that Enlightenment culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self.'

The colonial attempt has always been to underplay the 'Other' culture through a collection of images and repetitive themes whose common base is to elevate the values of the representing self and to background the represented 'Other'. The practice is not a new phenomenon. It has been the tradition since the eighteenth century groundwork that prepared the stage for the conquest of Africa and other parts of the world that fall beyond the Hegelian imaginative geography, as I have articulated before in this work. A very illuminating example could be seen in the explicit language used by Alexis de Tocqueville (2004:143) in his "Second Letter on Algeria" to describe his vision of how the French colonial agents should understand the 'province of Algeria':

> We have let the national aristocracy of the Arabs be reborn; it is only left to us to use it. To the west of the province of Algiers, near the frontiers of the empire of Morocco, was living since long ago a family of very famous marabouts…. We can only say in a few words that we should have at first simply settled there, and as much as our civilization would permit it, in the place of the conquered; that, far from wanting from the beginning to substitute our administrative procedures for their own, we should have for awhile adapted our own, maintained political limitations, taken control of the agents of the defunct government, included its traditions and continued to use its procedures.

Colonial discourse has always been imbued with the 'civilizing tone' towards other 'indigenous' cultures that resist the appropriation of the European centric worldview. With the ongoing massive proliferation of the means of communication, especially the huge potential provided by the Internet, one is inclined to scrutinize the unsaid meanings and values that are at stake. Is it a mere continuation of the 'old colonial discourse' that has been articulated in the arts, literature and other forms of expression? Is the Internet just another means to access the former colonized subject's homes, using other means? How is it possible to translate the Anglo-Saxon media content that is presented to the surfers around the globe? Does the Internet offer a digital balance? Peter Golding (1998:60) states that the new media are but another 'myth' that promises change from within an old structure of monopoly:

> The arrival of new communication and information technologies has offered the promise of more egalitarian, participator, and progressive structures. Yet, in practice, the reality has been of their rapid incorporation into familiar structures of inequity and commercial exploitation. The internet repeats this picture only too clearly. By

> 1994, not a single Less Developed Country had a computer network directly connected to the Internet. Packet switched date existed in only five LDCs…

One is also inclined to ask whether it is possible to transfer technology from the producing center to the consuming periphery. The attempt of Stuart Hall and Sarat Maharaj (2001) to touch upon the nature of the moment of translation, which like the moment of transfer, is of much help in this regard. Let me first present their theses about the notion of translation and then test the limits of applicability of such notion when it comes to the realm of the technological forms of life.

Is technology translatable?

Modernity and Difference (2001) is an instrumental sketch of the meanings and imaginative maps that we create when we talk about translation. Sarat Maharaj (2001:30) writes:

> Translation, as Derrida therefore puts it, is quite unlike buying, selling, swapping- however much it has been conventionally pictured in those terms. It is not a matter of shipping over juicy chunks of meaning from one side of the language barrier to the other-as with fast-food packs at an over-the-counter, take away outfit. Meaning is not a readymade portable thing that can be 'carried over' the divide. The translator is *obliged to construct meaning in the source language and then to figure and fashion it a second time round in the materials of the language into which he or she is rendering it*. (my emphasis)

Thus, the act of translation is not a mechanical act of changing words on the page from the source language into the target language. A translator encounters other systems of signification that make his work a strenuous one. The semantic charge of each language is the main challenge that lurks around any act of translation. As Maharaj (2001:30-1) puts it, 'the translator's loyalties to the syntax, feel and structure of the source language and faithfulness to those of the language of translation engender a clash and collision of loyalties and a lack of fit between the constructions.'

The act of translation is not an act of faithful code switching. In all translations, one is interested in what is omitted. These omissions may get more meaning than the material strategically *chosen* by the translator. The magnitude of those omissions gains its value when one is moving back and forth within two structurally opposed or at least different cultures. The translator is caught in divides and fissures that separate the 'source' language, wherein the meaning was initially created, and the target language that is obliged to open spaces for 'strange' images and senses that are not an integral part of its historical formation. In other words, the importance of translation gains its currency in the realm of *cultural difference*. Maharaj (2001:32-3) explains this critical role of non-translatability of certain semantic maps as follows:

> But to focus on untranslatability is not only to acknowledge from the start the impossibilities and limits of translation. It is to highlight the dimension of what gets listed in translation, what happens to be left over. Since what is gained in the translation tussle – elements of hybridity and difference – is so impressive, it is easy to slip into thinking of it as an outright overcoming of the untranslatable.

Maharaj (2001) insists that translation is not only a linguistic act. The moments of selection and omission are moments of decision making. They are political moments where the translation *opts for* a lexical item at the expense of others, if they exist at all in the target language. Put differently, the act of translation is a purely political action that uses language as a harbinger of images that are made to accommodate the interstice that divides the two symbolic systems, and more importantly, the realm of culture represented by both the source language and target one. Confirming Maharaj's point, Stuart Hall (2001:46) pursues the point:

> I think we ought to go straight on, as Maharaj has done, and take these ideas into the political arena. There is a great deal of turbulence today when two cultures, two identities, two texts meet in some space. The greater the turbulence that is created, the more likely it is that managerialism steps in, because everybody expects to define how two incommensurable texts should become more like one another, or at any rate occupy discrete spaces which can be identified, regulated and organized.

The mass media and especially the Internet have provided an ideal space for such encounters. The internet as a linear system that connects nodes to other nodes provides a context where all cultures are present, but where each one tries to defend the space that it occupies. As Stuart Hall stated above, when the context is contested, the question of management is the main pivot around which the competing cultures revolve. In the realm of Internet studies, the technical term (e-governance) is used to describe the moment when these cultures try to manage and regulate the content that is circulated within each domain name. I alluded to the case of the Arab World where states are anxious because the alternative sites cross the cultural borders and step to the carefully constructed imaginary that each state maintains through the traditional media and other channels that are affiliated with the governments. The notion of management has been the pivotal site of struggle in the two phases of the World Summit on Information Society.

Stuart Hall (2001) maintains that the non-translatability of certain items is a symbol of resisting to give in to the power of the source language. The notion at stake here is to be found in the realm of values and politics rather than in the realm of linguistics. Hall (2001:45) explains:

> In the more political sense, I understand the untranslatable to mean that which resists translation – in the sense that it refuses the state's ability to translate and slot a person into a set category of difference. When a government attempts to fix a person into a difference-box and then treats him/her according to a policy or program of diversity, I call this pigeonholing multicultural managerialism. In the light of my concern about that managerialism and fixing of difference, I have tried to explore beyond the linguistic model to understand the untranslatable not simply as a place of resistance

> or turbulence or perturbation, but as one of elusive liquidity-in Duchamp's and Bergson's lingo, as a matter of 'passages' rather than 'stop-pages'

I have also referred to the usefulness of the concept of translation in investigating the possibility of transferring the capitalist structure from the context where it was born to the peripheries that did not have the same historical passage. While the technological development has spread in the capitalist mode of production, the semi-industrial countries attempt to leapfrog into the informational mode of production. However, this is not an easy move, for the economic, social and political base of those countries roughly referred to as 'emerging countries' is not ready to translate the models that took centuries to evolve (see e.g. Daniel Bell, 1973). The configuration of the post-industrial society is the object of many studies that have approached the issues from different angles. Robins and Webster (1988) have delineated that the study of communications, one of the most booming manifestations of capitalist societies, falls into different paradigms, the most important being political economy that Nicolas Garnham's (1990) represents. Therefore, Robins and Webster (1988:44) argue that:

> Thus Nicolas Garnham, approaching from a perspective of political economy, raised many important points about the historical transformation and the growth of new media/ information markets. Emphasizing the strategies of transnational corporations, the current crisis and recession as the contexts within which the new media technologies are being born, the industrialization of culture, and the colonization of leisure, Garnham's approach is conceptually familiar (…) To Garnham , the economic factor is primary, and it is evidently shaping and indeed intruding deep into the culture and polity.

Different critics have tried to flesh out the economic reductionism of Granham's approach (Ian Connell, 1983; Carl Gardner, 1984). Robins and Webster (1988) tried to reconcile the economic approach with the ideological/textual approach. They have provided an alternative approach for our study of political economy and its constituents, mainly 'information revolution'. Their attempt is also a move beyond the schism that has divided research into, first, purely economic accounts of society and communication technologies; and, second, ideological accounts that do not take into consideration the social forces that shape the production chain. While the economic stance focuses on the moment of production, the ideological/textual stance underlines the world of interpretation and struggle around meaning (Gardner, 1984: 45). Having said this, one has to seek the nature of the capitalist contribution to the exploitation of other peripheries, in what I refer to as the 'direct colonial moment' since former colonies are not completely purged of the colonial legacy. On the contrary, most of the economic, cultural and social stumbling that hamper the former colonies are largely due to the unequal structures imposed on the ex-colonial provinces.

Therefore, any serious analysis of the economic structure of the emerging areas has to take into consideration the historical and geopolitical contexts where meanings are *articulated*. In other words, the translation of the capitalist mode of production

cannot be delivered without the dissection of the contextual cleavage that separates developing countries from the capitalist locales. Webster and Robins' (1988) have tried to open up apertures for the analysis of political economy. I share this opinion, for it allows the possibility of contingency (which avoids economistic interpretations of information society that has cultural, social and psychological ramifications, rather than just economic interpretations)[44]. In his analysis of British colonialism, Raymond Williams (1958) offers an overt analysis of the political economy, and more importantly, of the issue of cultural exchange of values. Williams (1958:200) quotes Engels:

> According to the materialist conception of history, the determining element in history is ultimately the production and reproduction in real life. More than this, neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. If therefore, somebody twists this into the statement that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms it into a meaningless, abstract and absurd phrase…There is an interaction of all these elements (political, legal, and philosophical theories, religious ideas, etc.), in which, amid all the endless host of accidents (i.e. Of things and events whose inner connection is so remote or so impossible to prove that we regard it as absent and can neglect it), the economic element finally asserts itself as necessary. Otherwise, the application of the theory to any period of history one chose would be easier than the solution of a simple question.

As Williams suggests in this passage, the role of cultural criticism is to accept all the vectors of ways of being or 'ways of life' without singling out the economic elements in the analysis of the capitalist condition. Thus, any serious study of the deep structure of the information society and the meaning(s) of technological proliferation has to be contextualized in the appropriate field of its representation, and all the factors should be taken into account. I would agree with Frank Webster and Kevin Robins that the political economy formula is a beguiling one; yet as they have suggested in their study of the cybernetics in the age of capitalism, there are other sites of study that need more scrutiny as well, i.e. the socially, contextually, and ideologically based analyses. In his study of the nature of the mass communication research, Raymond Williams highlights the importance of taking into accounts the 'practices and the relations between practices'. The field of cultural studies offers the possibility to study both the processes and the outcomes of linkages, and articulation method is very instrumental in this respect. As a method, it deals with the economic, cultural and social processes that produce a contextual understanding of information and communicative acts in general. In this regard, Williams (1958: 320) refers to the contextual and social elements that shape the identity of a communicative event:

> The techniques, in my view, are at worse neutral. The only substantial objection that is made to them is that they are relatively impersonal by comparison with other techniques serving the same ends. Where the theatre presented actors, the cinema

[44] For an interesting debate on this issue, I refer you to the special issue of *Critical Studies in Mass Communication,* March 1995, Vol. 12, Issue 1, p72-81, 10, and especially the reply of Nicholas Garnham to both Lawrence Grossberg and James Carey.

> presents the photograph of actors. Where the meeting presented a man speaking, the wireless presents a voice or television a voice and a photograph. Points of this kind are relevant, but need to be carefully made. It is not relevant to contrast an evening spent watching television with an evening spent in conversation, although it is often done.

Those underlying contextual and social communicative events necessitate further research, because contexts are like narratives; they have their own logic that links each meaning to a specific lexicon. Each context requires the setting of the stage before filling it with ready-made models of development. I refer here to the idea of the untranslatability of technological coagulations across contexts.

Earlier in this work, I referred to the notion of technology transfer as Samir Amin presented it, and suggested that technology is only a harbinger of values that are inherent in the machine. A gadget does not exist beyond the social, economic and political context that produces it. It essentially gains its meaning only within the conditions that led to its production in the first place, and by the expressive codes that culture instills in machines. By way of exemplification, the conditions that made USA develop the atomic bomb are not the same as those that existed in other parts of the world. Since the early decades of the 20th century, the axis of power shifted from the old continent to the New World. USA was prepared historically and economically to take the lead in the realm of military power, for instance. The question of technological 'lag' (if we take the bypassed notion of lag loosely, according to which there is a generally 'assumed center' which is the 'West' and a passive recipient at the 'periphery') that marks other locales has its own historical, political and economic underpinnings. In the case of the Arab/Islamic World, many attempts have been made to understand the reason why no major technological achievement was attained in the Middle East, even with the discovery of oil. The task of exploiting it was handed to ARAMCO Company, and the Arab regimes were just to facilitate the bureaucratic procedures for the Western companies that had the necessary technology. This technological slow down was baffling to many thinkers in the Islamic World. They saw it as a part of general ontological crisis that has caused the abrupt halt of the Arab-Islamic development since the fall of Granada in 1492.

Bernard Lewis (2002) tries to sketch the problematic that has befallen the Arab-Islamic world, and which led ultimately to the absence of the conditions that could have given a parallel 'industrial revolution' in the Arab World. Long before Bernard Lewis' (2002), there was Jamal Al-Din Afghani (1838-1897), who was one of the early Islamic thinkers that felt the widening gap between the practice of modernity in the West and its absence in the Islamic and Middle Eastern discourse. He tried to debunk the religious text to make it compatible with foundations of modernity. Afghani (1968b:114) argues that:

> The Arabs realized that they could not develop further without the help of other nations. Therefore, notwithstanding the splendor and greatness of Islam and Muslims, in order to exact and elevate knowledge, the Arabs showed humility before

> the lowest of their subjects, i.e. the Christians, Jews, and Persians, until with their help; they translated the philosophical sciences from Persian, Syriac, and Greek into Arabic.' Hence, it became clear that their Precious Book was the first teacher of philosophy to the Muslims

The structural differences that have marked the evolution the 'Western mode of production' (with all its values of freedom etc.), and the Arab ' or the semi-industrial system' that questions whether modernity is a threat to its values, lead us to the necessary examination of the contextual specificities of cultural science and progress in different cultural contexts. In an illuminating essay titled *Critical Theory and the Islamic Encounter with Modernity*, Farzin Vahdat (2003) attempts to trace the possibility of applying a critical theory strategy to deconstruct the political, economic, and even psychological factors that differentiate and alienate the Islamic locales from the conditions of industrial production that continues to impart its 'dubious innovations' worldwide. Vahdat focuses on subjectivity as the main site of struggle and meaning production. To read this category in the light of the social conditions that produced Garnham's political economy does not mean that his notions of the market can be translated mechanically into an Arab or Islamic locale. The untranslatability is due to the space of difference that cuts between the understanding of subjectivity in the Western context and in the Middle East.

The formation of subjectivity in the 'West' and the 'Rest'

In his courses of 1984, Foucault talked about caring about one self (*le souci de soi*), and this marks the linchpin of the Western understanding of the 'Self'. Foucault (1984: 43-4) explains this notion of the care of the self as follows:

> This "cultivation of the self" can be briefly characterized by the fact that in this case the art of existence – *the technē tou biou [Sic.]* in its different forms – is dominated by the principle that says one must "take care of oneself". It is this principle of the care of the self that establishes its necessity, presides over its development, and organizes its practices. But one has to be precise here; the idea that one ought to attend to oneself, care for oneself (heautou *epimeleisthai*), was actually a very ancient theme in the Greek culture. It appeared very early as a wide spread imperative.

Foucault's focus on the self is in fact a focus on the building of the mind that is to reside in the city which has its political and psychological imperatives. Thus, for the healthy combination of the political and the ethical, Foucault tries to excavate the meanings and possibilities surrounding the notion of the self. He is in fact drafting a blueprint for the political economy of the self, for the management of what Foucault (1980:50) calls the 'household' of the ruler. Foucault understands this notion of the care of the self as applicable to the ruler whose task is to 'look after his 'subjects', 'the sick', and the 'wounded patient'.

The understanding of the 'Self' in the Western paradigm is both an engagement with civil society (through the participation in the practice of politics) and an instance of the importance given to the individual rights and the *will* to be oneself. This paradigm does not match with the one presented by the Islamic thought so far. The individual in the Islamic cosmos seeks salvation and places emphasis on the notion of submission to a *metaphysical will*. God's will or his vicegerent who rules by the Devine right replaces human subjectivity, in this sense. The individual cannot conceptualize the creator (*khaliq*) because human individual is a *makhlouq* (creature), whose will is guided through divinely inspired vicegerent. The vicegerent expects total obedience from his subjects. Bernard Lewis (1987: 99-100) clarifies further this notion:

> If, in the meantime, some deficiency affects our kings, so that they suffer a setback, or some incident occurs of a kind often seen in this world, the wise man must observe them with the eyes of wisdom and not involve himself in error, for God's decree is inscribed on the hidden tablet and cannot be changed, and there is no rebellion against His decision. Truth must always be known as truth, and falsehood as falsehood, for as it said, "Truth is truth though men do not know it, and the day is the day though the blind do not see it." I asked God to safeguard us and all the Muslims from sin and stumbling by His patience, His generosity, and the vastness of His mercy.

Another dimension that helps to understand the Islamic conception of the binds that link the self to the creator and to the community is apparent in the mystical branch of Islam that serves as a good example of the tight relationship between the creature and the creator. This notion is recurrent in the discourse of Ali Shariati[45], Ayatoallah Khomeini[46], and Ayatollah Motahhari[47]. Advocating the notion of 'mediated subjectivity' is the byword that binds those figures. Here is a reading of 'mediated subjectivity' in the Islamic discourse as articulated by Vahdat (2003:127):

> The notion of human subjectivity is projected onto the attributes of a monotheistic deity – such as omnipotence, omniscience, and volition – and then partially re-appropriated by humans. In this scheme, human subjectivity is contingent on God's subjectivity. Thus while human subjectivity is not denied, it is never independent of God's subjectivity and in this sense it is 'mediated'

In the Hegelian realm of thought, subjectivity is not mediated. It is experienced at first hand. In Hegelian thought, subjectivity is considered the ontological foundation of the right-bearing individual. As a pillar of modernity, subjectivity in this sense can be viewed as property, characterizing the autonomous, self-willing, self-defining and self-conscious individual agent (Habermas 1990: 338). Subjectivity, very much rooted in the humanist tradition, tends to view the

[45] Iranian Muslim sociologist and thinker, murdered in 1977.
[46] senior Shi'a Muslim cleric, Islamic philosopher (religious authority), and the political leader of the 1979 Iranian Revolution
[47] Among the important ideologues of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

individual as the determinant of her or his own life processes, and is closely related to notions such as human freedom, volition, consciousness, reason, individuality, etc.; but it is not reducible to any single one of these. The Cartesian cogito, as the modern detached subject, is the source of liberation (e.g. the philosophical foundations of the rights of citizenship). It is also responsible for the objectification of nature, the 'Other', such as the colonized, or women, because the formation of the 'I' in the 'West' was predominantly constructed by a white, male subjectivity.

It follows that the nature of subjectivity in the Western paradigm is not the same as in the Islamic contexts where the 'I' finds its salvation only in its unity with the creator. The microcosms of the subject in the Islamic World are to be in constant contact with the will of God interpreted by the *'alim* (the scholar of religion). While the Kantian and Hegelian propositions moved beyond the metaphysical understanding of the self, Islamic locales have failed to clear up the nature of subjectivity (which is the source of all individual freedoms) and also failed to delineate the uses of self independently from the omnipresence of an extra transcendental signifier, i.e. Divine guidance.

Civil activism is a case in point: most of the civil movements in the Arab-contexts have taken the shape of groupings *(Al ikhwan muslimoun* (The Muslim brotherhood in Egypt), *Jamaat adl wa Ihssan* (movement of Justice and Benovelence), *Hizb Al nahda (Parti de la Renaissance)* in Tunis, and FIS, Front Islamique de Salut (Islamic Salvation Front). All these counter-hegemonic groupings consider that the role of the individual is important as far as it serves the community of believers. This brings challenges for the postcolonial Arab-Islamic state that competes with different theocratic groups to define the cultural components of the local. This explains the high scores of censorship that mark the Arab Media scene. In Morocco, the closure of websites of the movement of *Benevolence and Justice* is a common practice. Reporters Sans Frontiers reports (2006) that the situation is even more serious in Tunis, Egypt and Syria. These countries are listed in the top list of 'Internet black holes'.

The cultural matrix of the Arab-Islamic world needs to be reconstructed; and, above all, *re-articulated* in different order(s) so that new narrative(s) could emerge. This target can be reached if more spaces of freedom of expression are opened. This is, especially important at a time of global objectives, as they are endorsed in the documents and reports of the WSIS (World Summit on Information Society). However, technological skepticism remains one the obstacles, as Akbar S. Ahmed (1992: 15) explains in *Postmodernism and Islam*:

> Nothing in history has threatened Muslims like the Western media; neither gunpowder in the Middle Ages, which Muslims like Babar used with skill on the fields of Panipat thus winning India for his Mughal dynasty, nor trains and the telephone, which helped colonize them in the last century, nor even planes which they mastered for their national airlines earlier this century. The Western media are ever present and ubiquitous; never resting and never allowing respite. They probe and attack ceaselessly, showing no mercy for weakness or frailty.

Jeremy Valentine (2000: 21-43) expresses his concern with the changing nature of subjectivity. He captures Derrida's (1996:17) comment on the change brought about as a result of the daily use of e-mails: "Electronic mail today, even more than the fax, is on the way to transforming the entire public and private space of humanity…at an unprecedented rhythm, in quasi-instantaneous fashion''.

Valentine expresses his concern about the mounting practice of the so-called 'desk-bound subjectivity'. The subtext here is that while technology offers the luxury of communicating with other subjectivities with ease, it does impose its own values and especially the notion of seclusion and solitude. The individual is trapped within the confined space of desks and he/she is no longer immune of the global flow of images that pops up on his/her screen. In fact, technology stands as self–sufficient institution that enters in competition with other social institutions (family, political institutions, schools, etc.). Therefore, to talk about technological effects, one has to take into account the social conditions that have laid the ground for such effects to take place. Andrew Feenberg (1992: Chap. 1), through his constructivist approach to technology, alerts us to the importance of social and contextual factors that are enmeshed with the technological boom. In "Subversive Rationalization: Technology, Power, and Democracy''[48] Feenberg provides an update of the Frankfurt School approach. He argues that technology should be seen in the light of the new constructivist sociology of rationality. For Feenberg, technology is determined in its meaning and normative content by the social world in which it is embedded. The shift of subjectivity in a technologically laden society is the concern of Habermas when he studies the negative sides of Omni-presence of the new technological gadgets. Habermas (2001) has been interested in bypassing the centrality of subjectivity and self-world that are associated with the technological matrix. Farzin Vahdat (2003:5) explains this further:

> The latest and most comprehensive effort at the synthesis between subjectivity and universality is elaborated in the works of Jurgen Habermas and his attempt at shifting the ontological foundation of modernity from mere subjectivity to that of intersubjectivity in his theory of communicative action. Habermas, following Hegel, is aware of the problems associated with 'unchecked' subjectivity of the modern age and the associated problems of domination. Like Hegel, he sees the diremptions resulting from the expansion of the principle of modern subjectivity.

The World Summit on Information Discourse (WSIS) can be instrumental for change if there is a balanced representation of the stakeholders, including the civil society representatives that have to negotiate the cultural differences that I have addressed in the section of civil society (chapter six). The fact that NGO's and civil society activists were invited to the WSIS is one major positive change in that direction. The discourse of WSIS should halt the politics of dependency (technology transfer, for example) that are besetting 'the right to know' process. Rather there should be more focus on durable solutions through empowerment and

[48] First published in *Inquiry,* 35: 3 / 4, 1992. This paper appears as Chapter 1 of *Technology and the Politics of Knowledge.*

capacity building. The invitation of the civil society component is a good sign in that direction, but it is very important to be cautious about the specific role that civil society can play within a context very much concerned with ICTs and governance.

The process of social change in the Arab context(s) requires a re-articulation of the positions of power that exist between the different layers of society. The space of freedom allocated to the individual is still very limited. The shockwaves brought about by satellite TVs in the early 1990s provide evidence that the social change in the area is challenged not only from within the national borders, but also from the global context. This has strategic bearings on the methods that one has to adopt in analyzing information discourse in the Arab context(s). The concern of Sreberny (2008) is also justified when she argues that 'the cultural imperialist paradigm' does not capture the emerging complexities of international communication. As the media scene changes, our methods and tools of analysis will have to change as well. Articulation, by virtue of its structural origins, is instrumental in accounting for the interlocking of political economy and social theory (as Sreberny (2008) suggests in the section titled "Oil vs. Islam in the Middle East"). Articulation as analytical tool can also help to shift focus from dependency and its entailing consequences (technology transfer) that have marked international communication for decades, and to search for alternative approaches to assess the media scene in the Middle East and elsewhere.

Chapter summary

This chapter presented another clue in unriddling the research of the informational economy in this thesis. The reference to the postcolonial condition is one of the important clues that help to demystify the high formalism of many information society discourses. The postcolonial condition unveils that the mechanical translatability of technological forms is but another means to reaffirm the grip of 'monopoly capitalism' on the supposedly freed lands. The interesting input of Maharaj and Hall (2001) has been very instrumental in the study of the meaning of translating the form without paying attention to the *necessarily different* structure of the target object of translation. Hall (2001) highlights that the resistance to translatability is itself a sign of the incommensurability of certain postcolonial cultural elements with the imported technological culture that is transmitted via the new communication systems. I raised the question of translatability to examine the hazards of an informational discourse that glosses over the discrete aspect of each culture and each mode of production. In this chapter, I presented a counter discursive practice that sees in the promulgation of the information society an attempt to re-colonize the former colonial locales through other means. Therefore, confirming the need for the adoption of an *interstitial* stance, instead of opting for either the cultural imperialist models epitomized in concepts like 'delinking'. In addition, this chapter highlighted the need for flexible approaches and methods in the study of technology, because the cultural formation in different locales remains

present in the interpretation of the role of technology and its entailing informational discourses.

Conclusion

The method is the message

The concept of information society has been the by-word that brought sociologists, engineers, cultural theorists, economists, politicians etc. together. This is a sign that social change, though its directions are not accurately specified, is underway. In what follows, I round up the main concerns that have accompanied me throughout this research project.

The concept of information society is both cunning and challenging. It is cunning because its connotative field is so polysemic. It may mean news, agency, event, and the list may be stretched. Information is challenging because it is easy to prove that it has changed many aspects of contemporary life. However, the claim that we inhabit an information society should be taken cautiously. There has never been a consensus on the definition of society, let alone the more mutable notion of information. Among the reasons for this oscillation, Frank Webster (2000: 14) enumerates the following:

1 Inconsistencies and lack of clarity as regards criteria used to distinguish an information society
2 Imprecise use of the term information
3 The supposition of information society theorists that quantitative increases in information lead to quantitative social changes.

Since the publication of Daniel Bell's *The Coming of the Post-Industrial Age* (1973), the concept of information has permeated many sectors of economic and cultural activity. This explains the 'push and pull' moments that characterized the 1970s with regard to the utility of information and the importance of its dissemination in a more equitable way. Information had summoned politicians, economists, technicians and many others from all occupations. Their main concern was to ensure a fair flow of information. The decisive role of information was felt in the countries of the South/East. Information had come to replace the gun. This explains the successive events that bedeck the recent history of communication. One of those signposts was the Non-Aligned Symposium on Information that took place in Tunis, March 1976.

The South felt that the information flow was reshaping their immediate locality. Therefore, they called both the UN and UNESCO to organize debates over NWICO (New World Information and Communication Order). Therefore, the nature of the informational flow became a central theme in the corridors of international meetings. Kaarle Nordenstreng (2005:268) reminds us of the political nature of those debates:

Indeed, WSIS is predominantly built on an information technology approach, and this is naturally too narrow and shallow for any serious analysis. NWICO was quite the opposite, with predominantly a political approach. However, this political approach does not qualify as a model for replacing a one-sided technological approach. The debate of the 1970s was mostly over-politicized; political consideration dominated so much that little room was left for cool analytical reflection...

One has to be cautious when talking about information, for as Webster (2000:15) reminds us, 'the closer one looks at what is meant by 'information', the more awkward does it seem to find a precise an unambiguous definition. Norman Stevens (1986) alerts us that 'so diverse are the definitions of information today…that it is impossible to reconcile them….there is little consistency in the way in which the term information is used. Resulting in an assumption, probably incorrect, that there is a broad underlying definition of information that encompasses all uses of the term in all fields that is commonly and directly understood'

Thus, information is a category that resists fixing, not only because it resists consistency, but also because it is subject to the how and the where of talking about it. What is information for a New Yorker is disinformation for someone living in Jakarta, or vice-versa. If information as a concept has a fixed mantra, I would think of two principles: the principle of contingency and the principle of flexibility. Information is contingent; while driving a car, one is immersed in a symbolic system of information that is both moving and informatively rich. This leads to say that information is both context-bound and context-free at the same time. It is context-bound when the decoding of a set of rituals needs contextual codes that are nurtured through social institutions (the school, the family, the political party etc). It is context free, because though one decodes information successfully, nothing guarantees that the information at hand is of lasting value. Information could degenerate, it can be outdated, and it can be deleted. In short, information needs to network with other pieces of information so that it can sustain its presence.

Debates over information in the 1970s took a political nature. After the fall of the Berlin wall and the disintegration of the Eastern Block, the political nature of debates over information was underplayed. Now, with the last two phases of WSIS (Geneva (2003) and Tunis (2005)), information took the technological cloak as the main distinctive feature of present day interpretations of the concept. Webster (2000) has highlighted that this very change in the nature of information brings about questions about the methodology of attempting to measure a model of information society. The issue of qualitative versus quantitative is of primordial importance here. Saying that the mere increase in technological gadgets, service jobs, number of books, magazines, CD's, floppy disks, USBs etc. constitutes a 'new age' seems to get off on the wrong foot. The increasing diversity of technologies, which get more and more sophisticated, has brought the global into the local. I refer here to the 'radical' stand of Postman (1995:15) when he comments on modern technologies:

> I believe I know something about what technologies do to culture, and I know even more about what technologies undo in a culture. In fact, I might say, at the start, that what a technology undoes is a subject that computer experts apparently know very little about. I have heard many experts in computer technology speak about the advantages that computers will bring. With one exception - namely, Joseph Weizenbaum - I have never heard anyone speak seriously and comprehensively about the disadvantages of computer technology, which strikes me as odd, and makes me wonder if the profession is hiding something important. That is to say, what seems to be lacking among computer experts is a sense of technological modesty.

For Postman (1995), information society is totally counter-productive because "The schools teach their children to operate computerized systems instead of teaching things that are more valuable to children." (ibid.)

Thus, one has to talk about the utility or the non-utility of information society while keeping the concepts in a middle ground stand as much as possible so as not to find oneself in a cul-de-sac position. Concerning the quantity/quality factors, I take the example of ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers) as an example where the qualitative criterion seems to define the global internet follow. It is not the quantitative. ICANN and its associate IANA (Internet Assigned Numbers Authority) can generate unlimited number of top-level domains (such as .fi .uk .it .ca etc.) for any region of the world. This means that the top-level domains of the world and their fate is in the hands of a small body of mostly technically oriented professionals. This explains why the last two phases of the WSIS process focused on the issue of the stability of the Internet and Internet Governance. Each nation state feels that its identity in the cyberspace needs to be secured. The irony here is that a small faction of technicians who may want to define informational priorities, for example, social security, can end the TLD (Top Level Domain) that links one country to the global network. This problematizes further the notion of information society as it links the local or regional society with a global operator (ICANN), without accounting for the risks that such one sided control of the Internet resources may entail in the future of any model of information society around the world. The zealous about a 'new wave' or a 'new way of living' need to be reminded that information society is not determined by quantitative factors only. Rather, one has to consider the qualitative part of the discourse of information society. This is what Webster (2000: 11) explains to us when he writes:

> Bluntly, quantitative measures – simply more information – cannot of themselves identify a break with previous systems, while it is at least theoretically possible regard small but decisive qualitative changes as marking a system break.

ICANN, which is situated in California and rules over the rest of the world's models of 'information societies', is a concrete manifestation of this qualitative trend that seems to be given less analysis in the study of the criteria that one can use to measure 'information society'. In addition, the cultural component of information is another category that needs ample analysis. The cultural 'understanding' of information in the Western mega-cities differs from that of cultural information in

UAE, Saudi Arabia or Iran, for instance. While the notion of culture in advanced countries may mean the set of practices that one experiences everyday, the meaning of culture in the Arab-Islamic context differs both in the understanding of information and in the uses of that information, i.e. the cultural practice of the consumers within a specific context. The Arab conceptualization of culture is transmitted in the form of symbolic in-built grids that are deeply rooted in the geographical and historical environment of the speaking subject. In the Islamic context, the imams (town chief or clan dignitary) are the credible source of information because of the deeply rooted culture of paternalism. The notion of ilm (knowledge) in the Arabic cosmos is intrinsically linked with the religious component. Thus, the value of information is heightened only when the Qur'an or a 'widely venerated authority' backs it up. Mohammad I. Ayish (1995:26) gives us an insight into this:

> Another characteristic relates to the use of mass media to foster Islamic (spiritual and temporal) values and themes. Religious programs devoted to explaining certain aspects of life as comprehensively conceived in Islam occupy a considerable portion of print media space and broadcast time. They include Qur' anic and Hadith interpretations, interviews and discussions, and even drama work dealing exclusively with outstanding events and issues in Arab-Islamic history.

Therefore, the nature of information within a specific context is constructed and construed according to the established symbolic order that acts like a paradigm which gives meaning to the lives of the people within it. Dealing with culturally laden information is a serious matter when two culturally different individuals or societies talk about the same issue (like freedom of the press, for instance) using different conceptual frameworks. Hamid Mowlana (1984: 428) provides the following evaluation:

> Concepts, in a subtle way, help shape the boundaries within which we examine a given object or phenomenon. In the communications field conceptualization has become important in contemporary global society, not only by creating the image we hold of communications technology, but also by influencing the context within which we view the world, and form ideas and policies.

Being aware of the complexity and highly mutable nature of the concept and the discourse of information society, I have tried throughout this work to fix this claim to this context, that discourse to that place. In other words, articulation of meanings is the first prerequisite for understanding the different processes, social configurations and political agendas that cement together to formulate a seemingly unified and unifying communicative act.

In the first chapter, I raised the issue of beginnings with a view to alert the reader that asking the right questions from the outset may lead to different avenues that are leitmotif in the discourse of information society. The discourse of information society benefits from both those who hail the break away from the 'past' to embrace a technologically embedded society and those who denounce information society. This does not warrant a heedless use of the concept, nor does it deny its merits. The

concept of information society is made in the interstices of disciplines, and it is better dealt with as being an interdisciplinary type of research. This makes it suitable for a cultural analysis that draws from the cultural studies, another discipline that grew from the contact between literature studies with sociology. Thus, beginnings are very important for the effective study of any social or cultural problematic.

In the second chapter, I tried to present the method of articulation. I synthesized the work of Grossberg (1992, 2006, 2007), Mikko Lehtonen (2000), and Stuart Hall (1997). They all seem to agree that while talking about the context, one should know his onions, so to speak. Mikko Lehtonen's study of texts has shed light on the importance of referentiality and its subsequent effects on the field of semantics. This is akin to what Chomsky calls a theta theory type of linkage. Articulation is the bond that ties together a set of postulations within a specific conjunctural moment. In the age of mass circulation of information, the message is not only what one delivers to the recipients, the form in which it is presented is itself the message. The rhizome has displaced the tree-like system of hierarchical relationships.

This takeover is of immense cultural consequences, the symptoms of which are unfolding slowly but steadily. The Arab and many of the African countries seem to be slow to realize that economic reforms are the savior from the political lagoons that they still wade in. Barakat (1985) argues that paternalism, being a top-down political structure in both the Maghreb and the Mashreq, needs to be replaced by a rhizomic type of relationship. The new technology, with its GNU open software philosophy and the horizontal structure of the Internet, has shown that top-down structures, regardless of whatever 'work station' we are dealing with (e.g. politics, economics, social change etc.) should not see the world in terms of clearly cut and defined categories. Discussing the notion of class, for instance, Urry (2004), states that the industrial revolution has brought occupational change and thus caused a fracture in the 'assumed intact social class order'. The age of mass information dissemination deepens this possibility even further; the fact that many people can travel around cheaper and easier than before, has opened up the horizon for what Grossberg calls 'the surprising aspect' of cultural life.

In the second chapter, I highlighted the importance of the method of articulation in probing within the seemingly complacent discourses. The importance of this method lies in the fact that it offers the occasion for making conjunctures, but it does not give a "chèque en blanc". It does not offer guarantees to any political or economic undertaking. Articulation is the synergism of many political, economic, and cultural factors that have to co-exist under specific contextual conditions. It offers, at the same time, the possibility of disjuncture when the conditions are ripe for that. This is exactly what developing countries need to adopt in the postcolonial moment. Therefore, neither the notion of adjustment, which means a one-way move to the center, works, nor does the complete cut from the center, because economies are integrated.

In the third chapter, I rounded up the existential and psychological roots that laid ground for the industrial revolution in the West. Capitalism has been the ideology that fueled the epistemic break from the world of agrarian society to that of the industrial society. The building of cities, the abstraction of the manual work into mechanical cogs and the automation of daily life in the early 19th century Britain led to the fusion of the masses that needed a close control of the newly created public spaces, i.e. the city. The behavior of capitalism, as a system of control, was the substance of this chapter. Sartrean notions of good and bad faith were instrumental to question the double patterns of the capitalist system, so to speak. Additionally, the free flow of information that capitalism propounds is not value-free. Yes, there is a free flow, but power is a constituent element of that flow. Thus, the negotiation of this flow is not a choice. It is a necessity. In this framework, one can consider that the commitment of the WSIS and the numerous meetings of the stakeholders are part of that negotiation of power (the issue of Internet governance, for instance). Talking about information society is also talking about development. Thus, I tried to gauge the status of the Internet in Africa with comparison to the most advanced centers of the global informational system. The results are clear: Africa and the developing world still score low rates of computer penetration, low numbers of Internet users and a poor infrastructure. There is, however, a tendency, slow as it may be, towards the establishment of local networks. The issue that remains is whether those local networks can compete with stronger ones. In this regard, articulation intervenes to limit any exuberant discourse that does not take into account the necessary contextual determinations. The infusion of networks on a global level has made the Internet economy net-based. In addition, the politics that concern Internet users and the service providers are to be debated on the global level.

This net system allows the contact between regional internet registries. These are: AfriNic (African regional internet registry), APNIC (Asian Internet Registry), LACNIC (Latin American Internet Registry), RIPE NCC (European Internet Registry), ARIN (North American Regional Internet Registry), ICANN (Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers). This circular system obliges these regional spots of power to interact. However, this free flow of information between the regional registries is not free from the rules of power. ICANN as an administrative body remains the strong spot within this seemingly equitable interaction. Thus, talking about the information society even from the point of view of its technological practices such as assigning names and numbers involves a talk about power and administration. This is the leitmotif of the informational mode of production. While information society allows the polysemic format of global system, it cannot be purged out of the power that requires continuous negotiation. The process of WSIS is a mere reflection of this global search for an informational order that started with Mac Bride Report (1980).

The fourth chapter is a cultural call for what I term ‘regional cultural keywords’. The global tendency has been actively concerned with the aggregation of different

modes of production, regardless of their different pace of development. My contention is that without the creation of regional micro information societies that take into consideration the cultural specificity of the regions in question, the discourse of information society will remain an ephemeral chimera. The change, however, should not only come from below. I argued that the cultural formative nature of the state in the Arab world and its paternalism do not allow, as yet, a decentralized power structure that information society discourse targets to realize. Thus, The Arab countries need to review the bureaucratic structure that characterizes their internal dynamics. This said, one can deduce that Samir Amin's notion of delinking needs some revision, because within a circular form of global economic and political system, developing countries cannot delink from the global system, regardless of its current deficiencies. I argued for an alternative concept, that of interstitiality. This concept provides the free play of being in and out of the unbalanced world flow of information. Interstitiality means that an emerging nation can make use of the current body of informational research that the information-rich countries have attained, and, at the same time, it can ensure the cultural ambience that paints the local context. Morocco's 'model of information society' is a fairly good attempt in that direction, although the dream of an e-Maroc still needs tremendous efforts both from the state and the private sector.

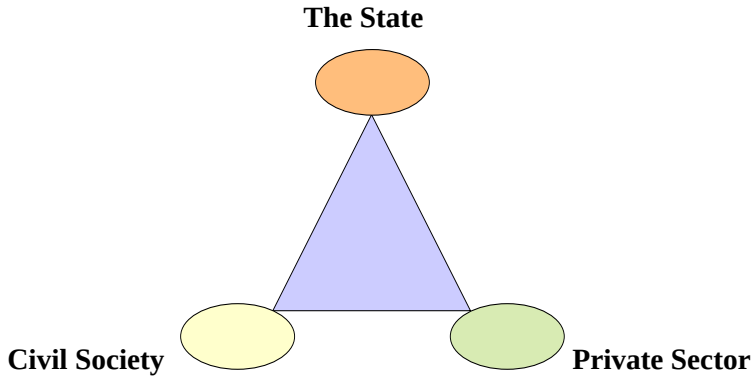
In the fifth chapter, I have highlighted the intrinsic link between communication and the ideological paradigm. As Stuart Hall (1988a:40) argues, "paradigms think people as much as people think paradigms". Communication, being a regional field within the sociological paradigm, does not evade this rule. The Arab-Islamic World went through different cultural keywords that do differ from the cultural keywords of the Western context. This chapter has been about the unveiling of the political and cultural conditions that have led to the decline of an alternative Arab mode of communication, but without obliterating the possibility of an alternative reading of the informational discourse.

Sakr (2007) has sketched some of the reasons for the continuous intrinsic relationship between communication and politics in the Arab-Islamic World. The media scene in the Arab World reflects a continuation of the cultural paradigm that has marked the 'cultural keywords' in the Arab World. Issues of censorship, regulation, and the minimal space of the freedom of expression has produced a different conception of 'information' and of 'knowledge'. It is in this respect that articulation must be the means to deconstruct the Arab condition, because of the contextual specificities of the Arab-Islamic World. In this chapter, I have juxtaposed the two cultural paradigms within the Arab cultural discourse that should be seen as hallmarks in the understanding of communication in the Arab World. The examples of Al-Ghāzali and Ibn Rushd represent the continuous struggle within the Arab discourse to define knowledge and its basic unit, information.

I have also tried to bypass the subject/object dichotomy between the Arab World and the more advanced countries, because Latour (1999) convinces me that, as with

technology, the connection between different contextual locales should be seen as interacting discursive 'actants' that need to cooperate but not copy this experience onto that context. Articulation remains the means to understand communicative events across contexts. The Arab-Islamic World does not escape that rule. Just as its history differs from the Western locales, its understanding of informational discourse differs too. Therefore, I articulate that contextualization is necessary to understand the workings of the information society in the Arab-Islamic World.

The sixth chapter was a study of the discursive nature of the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS). I attempted to decompose the hammered words of the WSIS commitment document. This was done in the spirit that language is not only a means whereby we inscribe our intentions. It is also the practice of concretizing the intentional objectives of the summit. Kaarle Nordenstreng (2005) has reminded us of the necessity to study documents, because they provide a yardstick whereby to trace the different conjunctures of the optimal target of the WSIS, i.e. the establishment of a complete informational economy by the year 2015. The discourse analysis shows that WSIS report agents hammer words so that they create what Wolfgang Kleinwächter called a consensus or a 'Deus Ex Machina report'. These reports are interesting as they delineate the different efforts of the major constituents of the triangle:



In the last section of this chapter, I surveyed the meaning of information society from a decentralized perspective. The issue of civil society has been very intriguing, because the addition of this component in the negotiation of power within the WSIS procedures means that information society requires an active participation from not only the traditional sites of power (i.e. the state and the private sector) but also, civil society will play a role either of a checking power or, in the most dismal cases, a contributor to the non-equitable distribution of informational goods, where information remains the prime currency. It is too early to evaluate the nature of the role played by the information society in the age of the net. This could be the objective of a separate research project. But I have tried to pin down the dynamics

that shape the formation of civil society within the Arab context, bearing in mind that each country has its own logic of maintaining the power balance within the national borders. However, I have tried to develop the analytic method of articulation to serve the specificities and the distinctiveness of the Middle Eastern media scene. Such concern is present also in the latest work of Annabelle Serberny (2008) and Sabry (2007).

The seventh chapter is a reading of the articulation possibilities of the information society discourse in the postcolonial context. I made a reference to the utility of the colonial discourse and postcolonial theory to provide the world view that the postcolonial subject experiences when an added layer (information society) surfaces in a moment when the postcolonial locales are still battling against the leftovers of colonialism (the national territorial integrity, for example). Articulation serves as a good method to trace the limits of the information society discourse. Benign as it may seem, the discourse of informationalism still needs a radical contextualization of the commitments. This means that postcolonial countries need to fix an inventory of the immediate goals before they can "leapfrog" into the informational age. Leapfrogging has become a by-word in the writings of many commentators on information society (e.g. Charron et al.1999, Vasile Baltac (2003)). Yet, given the postcolonial moment that Africa and the Arab World experience, it would be a chimera to bypass the industrial revolution moment. My argument is that the postcolonial nations are going through different conjunctures where they are not playing the agency role. Their dependence on the advanced countries to provide the know-how and technology does not solve a crumb of the current problems that colonialism left for these countries, be it in the social, economic, cultural or political realms. Therefore, a hasty rupture with the previous modes of production does not guarantee the concretization of the commitments contained in the WSIS documents.

This is not, however, a call for pessimism. Rather, my stance is that postcolonial countries need to negotiate an interstitial space, or let us name it 'a hybrid space' (to use Homi Bhabha's appellation). This strategy allows informational progress to take place, but with a continuous check of the realities of the conjuncture that postcolonial countries undergo. This is because the outcome of the continuous fusion of technology and culture is still unfolding and the Internet's impacts are not easily predictable.

The informal modes of production that occupy the peripheries of the capitalist mode of production pose many challenges to the studies of media environment in the pre-modern modes of production. The discourse of information society as an instance of the media studies environment encounters similar but more complex challenges as those that face the context of its production, especially the capitalist mode. The continuous persistence of capital to open new markets in an increasingly globalised world makes it necessary to re-think, analyze and examine the nature of the linkages that the informal modes of production (pre-capitalist modes of production) adopt through their implementation of new technologies such as the Internet. The

ultimate goal of WSIS to put half of Earth's population online by 2015 highlights the urgency of studying the cultural, social, economic and political aspects of the Internet and new media, not only in the advanced capitalist economies, but also in the 'pre-modern' and postcolonial economies.

The postcolonial state has two main challenges: the first has to do with the cultural and structural social formation that has constituted the postcolonial state. Second, the pressures have to do with the continuous links between the dominant capital and its 'collaborators' within the postcolonial state. Given this two-fold problematics, the media as a regional sector within the national economy finds itself in similar problems as those that characterize the postcolonial state. Annabelle Sreberny (2008:10) has highlighted the crucial role of the analytical methods used in media studies in the Middle East. She maintains that: "the favored paradigm of 'cultural imperialism' suggested an active 'West' (usually singular) and a receiving – if not receptive – 'non-West' (equally and bizarrely singular). There was little recognition of the pre-existing forms of cross-cultural contact, mostly through processes of imperialism and colonialism that had profoundly marked most of the non-West and imprinted its own traces in the West".

This call for the recognition of previous contacts is another reason that makes it legitimate to study new media in the light of more comprehensive analytical methods. Sreberny (2008) calls for a decentralized '*critique'* that accounts for the new conjuncture that the media scene experiences, mainly the shift from the era of satellite to the era of cybernetics. Additionally, Naomi Sakr (2006), in her study of the complex challenges that face NGOs has implicitly suggested that the reliance on the dependency theory to account for the intrastate postcolonial problems is another reason to search for new models of media analysis in the Middle East. The local civil society players, for instance, can now link with their partners beyond the national borders of the state. Therefore, my overall objective in this work has been the contribution to the working out of the potential analytic uses of the concept of 'articulation' that the field of cultural studies has advanced, albeit sparsely in the work of Hall (1989), Jennifer D. Slack (1996, 2005), Grossberg (1991) and Lehtonen (2000). The dearth of primary resources working on the concept of articulation in the Arab and African sides has encouraged me to dedicate a large portion of this endeavor to contextualize articulation 'radically' in the 'non-Western' contexts. The Middle East intellectual output has been largely consumed by the cultural-imperialist model and its ensuing analytic methods, like the dependency theory and more specifically the concept of 'delinking' that was fully explored in the work of Amin (1985).

The concept of de-linking ('la déconnexion') from the global economy can no longer account for the shrinking economic space. Therefore, the analytical potential of concepts like delinking fall short of accounting for the mounting effects of what Sreberny (2008:10) calls the current tendency to 'globalization theorizing'. This proclivity has uprooted any attempts to evade the global flow of information,

money, people, images etc. Therefore, my interest in the concept of articulation stems from its potential as Berman (1984) notes:

> Insofar as it focuses our attention on the particular modalities of the processes of accumulation and class formation, the forces and relations of production, and class struggle in the confrontation of capitalist and pre-capitalist social structures in Africa, it represents an important step beyond dependency/ underdevelopment theory. Articulation must be understood, however, not as a self producing condition 'serving the interests of capital' but a complex, conflict-ridden, and unstable process through which pre-capitalist indigenous societies were, with considerable difficulty, penetrated and dominated in varying degrees by forces of capitalist imperialism […]

My adoption of the cultural studies approach stems from the possibilities it allows for the regional clusters of countries that 'felt to share certain common features' (ibid.p.10). Areas like the Arab-Islamic countries need counter-hegemonic analytical tools to re-articulate the practice of media studies. This is not to suggest that those common features mean the sameness of internal dynamics that obviously each Arab country possesses, whether in the media or political configurations (for instance Internet penetration stats, cf Appendix). As a matter of fact, the credentials of articulation allow not only the horizontal examination of those clusters of countries that seem to share common features like the Arab-Islamic world, but also the concept of articulation accounts for the vertical North/South linkages in the sense that it allows contingent alliances that are transient and without guarantees.

The nature of global economy has made it possible to articulate different contexts through technology; and it is high time that our analytic methods followed suit. The application of articulation in each context (either defined as a national context, or as an area like the Middle East) promises to be an interesting endeavor as a future project to compare the 'articulation' of different national or regional political economies.

Therefore, my overall conclusion is that the method of articulation answers some of the concerns of media specialists in the postcolonial context. The problems inherited by the postcolonial state made it necessary to negotiate power within the global market, and at the same time to preserve the congruity of the nation at the local level. Based on the evidence from the documents of the World Summit on Information Society, and the distinctiveness of civic activism in alternative locales, such as the Arab World, it is logical to say that the cultural imperialism tools of analysis are unable to account for the increasing complexity of transnational media scene. Some of the hindrances that the local activists meets (the case of NGOs for instance) are, in fact, caused by the postcolonial state whose legitimacy is not confirmed by democratic means.

Therefore, to study the complex mechanisms that characterize the media praxis in the postcolonial locale, I suggest that articulation, as a method of conjunctural analysis, has an explanatory value to examine not only the processes that are at work within the borders of the national state, but also the transnational linkages. The merits of this method lie in the fact that it acknowledges the local specificities,

but it does not limit the plane of analysis to the local. Thanks to its focus on the processes, rather than the effects, articulation checks cultural, economic and social conditions that are responsible for unequal configurations at the global level.

Articulation is also seen as a tool for questioning different agencies of power. These agencies can be states, individuals or modes of production. In this study, I delineated the cultural, economic, and political transformations that have produced the discourse of information society in the 'West'. Additionally, I traced the connections between power and science (chapter 5) in the Arab-Islamic cultural context, to account for the reasons that led to the conflation of what Tariq Sabry (2007) calls the 'the cultural tense'. The void that Sabry (2007) detected in the formation of Arab cultural studies makes it necessary to search for innovative methods that will rethink the nature of cultural analysis. Intellectuals within the Arab world and other alternative locales need new methods to explain the challenges of the local in an increasingly globalised world.

The conjunctural explanatory value of articulation accommodates both the fears of the conservatives within the Arab world and the hopes of the progressivists. It does not deny the possibility of finding inspiration in the past, but it does not guarantee finding solutions in a conjectural alternative that seeks a 'return' to some 'authentic' source. Stuart Hall (1987) adopts the same method in his revision of the practice of the New Left when he discusses the relevance of Gramsci to the present condition of leftist struggles.

Articulation, by virtue of its power to select and make connections both with the past and the present, serves as an explanatory tool to fulfill the void between the past and the present. Within the Arab world, articulation allows both a return to the cultural elements that formed the Arab experience, but at the same time, it makes linkages with the global market and its values. Thus, I conclude, contrary to Amin's notion of delinking, that the nature of the colonial state as an institution has linked it, for better or for worse, with the transnational market. Hence, the answers to that linkage necessitates a comprehensive method, such as articulation, that plays down the option of delinking, and works rather on the nature of the connections that are at work, both locally and globally.

Articulation must be understood not as an aligned method that serves either the capitalist or the pre-capitalist modes of production. The explanatory value of this method is its ability to question the 'when' (the temporal dimension) and the 'where' (the spatial dimension), without committing the error of fixing the analysis to either temporal or spatial references. Articulation makes connections between different agencies of power, regardless of their temporal and spatial distinctiveness. The nature of those connections depends on the connected parties and their own interests in a specific time and place. While the cultural imperialist tools of analysis are stuck in the binary oppositions of 'Us' and 'Them', articulation favors a flexible approach to examine the different arrangements that link the local with the global. Sakr (2005) provides a cogent analysis of the ambivalence of the Gulf media. While

the Arab media are anxious to preserve the cultural specificity of their region, they end up bringing, as Sakr (2005: 51) puts it, 'Disney in'. Even *Aljazeera* channel, hailed for its fight for the Arab region, cannot escape negotiating power with the Western political agencies and other transnational media players. Sakr (2006) provides three theses that account for the complexity of linkages in the information age. She provides the controversial case of *Aljazeera*, that some see as serving the West, others think it counters the West, while a third group regard it as an Arab force in Arab politics. The proviso from these type of cases is that the analysis of transnational media (such as satellite TV), and of course the Internet, needs new methods that may account for the different agencies involved in the making of the informational discourse.

I argued in this study that the concept of interstitiality helps to make up for the failings of the dependency and cultural imperialism models that see the local as a mere passive recipient of the global power. These outdated models gloss over the local dynamics that are, more often than not, collaborators with transnational agendas. I do not underestimate the politics of transnational hegemony (exercised through financial means); my contention is that relying only on the cultural imperialist tools of analysis eclipses other factors that are constitutive in the formation of the information discourse.

Admittedly, this study has been deeply concerned with the conceptual formation of the method of articulation for two main reasons: first, there is a void within the practice of cultural studies in the Arab world dealing with the question of the method. Sabry (2007) has noted this void when he discussed the 'road ahead' for the Arab cultural studies project. Therefore, there is an urgent need to explore innovative methods that would account for the media scene in countries that are under the grip of authoritarian regimes. Second, the project of cultural studies allows inroads into political economy, postcolonial theory, and cultural history to account for the increasingly globalised media that Appadurai's 1990 model of global cultural flow suggests. The need for methodological innovative thinking in the Middle East is an urgent enterprise that informs my dedicating a great deal of focus to the possibilities that the concept of articulation may offer to the practitioners of media analysis in the alternative locales. Articulation, by virtue of its reliance on the contingency of connections and its liability to account for the linkages that form cultural, economic and political formation, matches the nature of the network society we now live in. Everyone is an agent and everyone is liable to make connections that are contingent, and yet transient. This is how articulation proves its commensurability with the network society.

To sum up, one may ask, what is articulated. By whom? And with what effect? In the Arab cultural context, the object of articulation is the social configuration that is handed down from different cultural conjunctures of the Arab history. The case of civil society in the Arab world is a case in point. The civic action in the Arab world is seen differently depending on the articulating subject. If it is a religious authority, it will sacralize the past that feeds the cultural formation in the Arab-Islamic

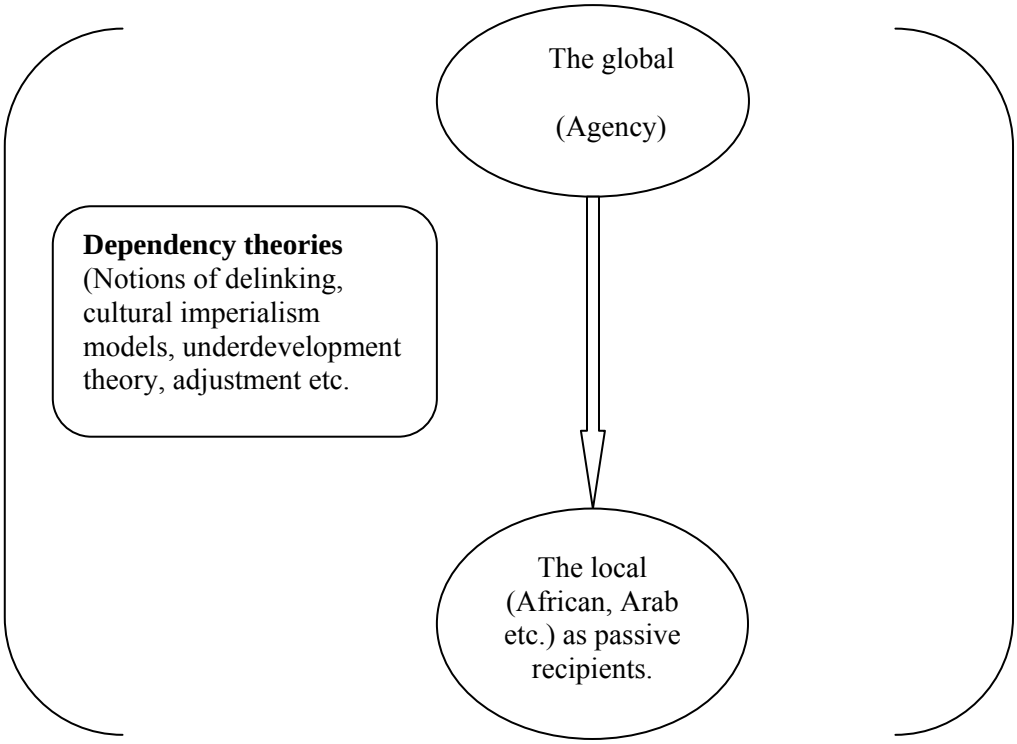
context. Therefore, articulating the meaning of civil society necessarily requires questioning the articulating subject, which was discussed in the study of notion of 'Self' and 'Other' in chapter three. The object of articulation can also be the different modes of production that exist because of another set of arrangements between the ex-colonizer and the newly created postcolonial states. It is important to note here (As Amin al Hassan (2004) argues) that the postcolonial state is not the same as the postcolonial nation. The state apparatus has connections with the transnational power arrangements that do not always get the blessings of the postcolonial nation. (I presented the case of family code in Morocco as a case in point).

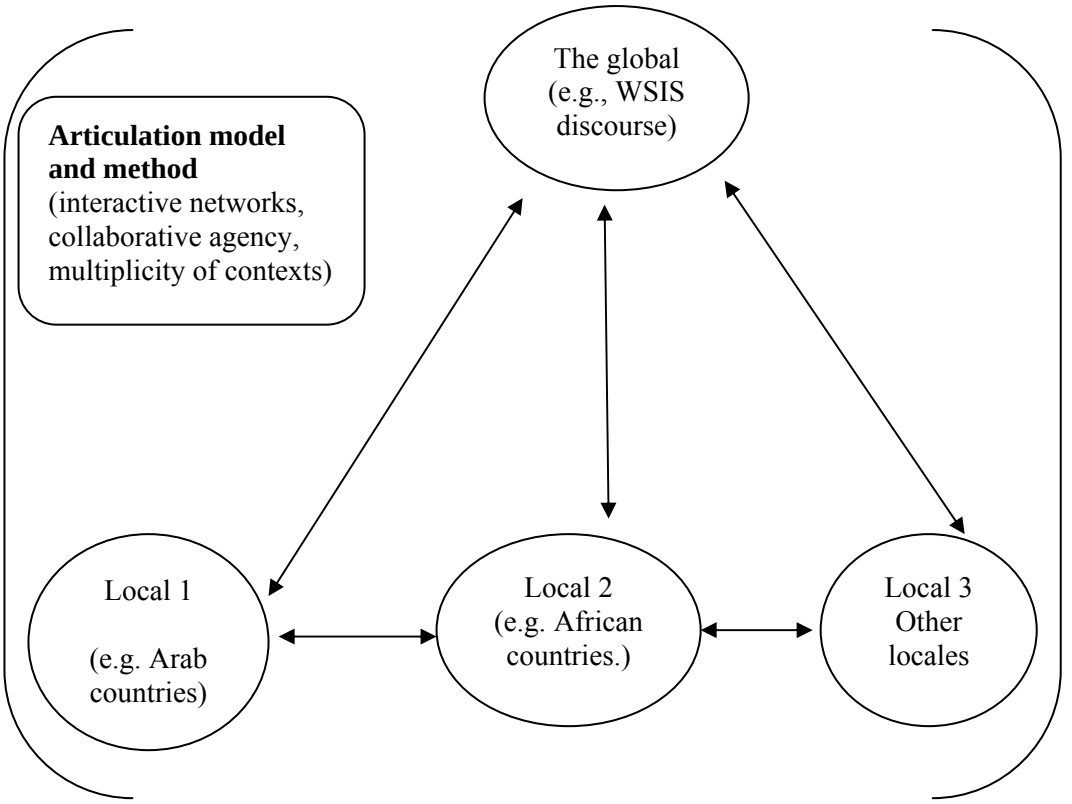
As to the articulating agency, it is important to note that in an increasingly deterritorialized global context (as I argued when I referred to the Deleuzian notion of rhizome in chapter two), the articulating agencies can be everywhere in real time. The challenges for the articulating agency or subjectivity is where it can accept the self-critique and self-examination. Stuart Hall (1995:67-8) has succinctly put it that, "when it is we who are re-articulated, we don't like it very much". In a network society and an increasingly shrinking world, agencies can be individuals as well as institutions. The case of Gulf media is very pertinent. While they claim their right to maintain cultural specificity, they find it necessary to negotiate linkages with other articulators so that they can avoid financial crises. In a time that is fraught with uncertainty and contingency, articulation has the potential to describe in an explanatory manner the connections between different articulators. In the case of the informational discourse that the World Summit on Information Society propounds, articulation serves to examine the stakeholders (states, private sector, and civil society) that are involved in the shaping of the informational age. Amin Alhassan (2004) used some aspects of articulation to examine the validity of concepts like 'leapfrogging'.

In this study, I attempted to ground the possibilities that the method of articulation provides for checking the exacerbation of informational discourses. The effects of articulation are notable not only at the micro level, but also at the macro level. At the micro level, the mechanism of articulation allows ample analysis of the different forces of production within the national borders. With regard to the postcolonial state, articulation explains the tensions within the national state and accounts for the linkages that connect the constellation of states (such as the Arab countries in all their distinctive dynamics) with the 'West' (macro level). More interestingly, articulation serves as a tool to account for the internal processes within the Western locales themselves. The claims of alternative locales to cultural specificity within the Western paradigm (such as the claim of Nordic or Australian locales to decentralize the field of cultural studies) are cases in point. Articulation does not spare any agency from the exercise of examination. The primary theoretical contribution of the concept of articulation is in helping us to understand adequately the nature of social formations (such as the Arab cultural studies project), and it provides us with the tools to check the nature of conjunctions both within the local

and the global contexts. Articulation does not ally itself with the recipients of discourse, because it considers them contributors to what Foucault called a 'regime of truth'. The analytical value of articulation finds expression in its claim to analyze the modalities of processes in the encounter between the capitalist and pre-capitalist modes of production.

It is also important to note that the contradictory stance of the postcolonial state has made it necessary to use a method that is both flexible and comprehensive. Within the national borders of the postcolonial state, articulation can make a distinction between the wealthy neocolonial pockets and the rest of the nation. This possibility was lacking in the cultural imperialism tools, because they homogenized and conflated the postcolonial state with the postcolonial nation. The reliance of articulation on examining the nature of linkages and connections makes it compatible with the format of the network society where everyone and every institution is both articulator and object of articulation. The following visualization compares the innovative potential of articulation with the dependency/ underdevelopment theory tools of analysis:





The model suggested above answers not only the local's need to harness the global alternatives (especially within the locales dominated by authoritarian regimes), but it also accounts for the shortcomings of dependency models that generated concepts like adjustment, delinking, unequal development etc. The 'imperialism analytical tools' are no longer tenable in an increasingly globalized world. My contention in this study is that the interventionist method of articulation possesses the structural adequacy to account for the irreversible interlocked relationships that globalization unleashed, especially since the early 1990s. There are numerous works on theorizing globalization, but there is a lack of research on analytical methods, especially those dealing with contextualization. This study was mainly concerned with the concept of articulation from different theoretical and political aspects. This justifies my reference to the postcolonial theory, the Arab contextual specificity and the discourse of the World Summit on Information Society. The study of WSIS documents convinced me that the methodological concerns of Annabelle Sreberny (2008), Sabry (2007) and Slack (2005) are justifiable. These concerns are also expressed by ESRC (The Economic and Social Research Council) that called for finding innovative methods that can account for the praxis of media analysis within

the alternative locales. The dearth of the works dealing with the method of articulation convinced me to rely mostly on the works that sketchily tried to ground it, especially the works of Hall (1989), Laclau (1996) and Slack(1996, 2005). While I have been occupied with the theoretical grounding of the method of articulation, it is certain that applying the conjunctural analysis within different locales (whether country based cases, or area studies) promises an interesting enterprise for future research. Articulation, for instance, can be instrumental for media content analysis, especially that which is concerned with peace and conflict resolution. Articulation's focus on the internal and external dynamics allows a more comprehensive approach to the complex relationships engendered by the global flow of information, people, commodities and discourses. Local actors, such as NGOs, that are hampered by dysfunctional regimes may find the explanatory value of articulation useful to account for their transnational connections. Another finding is that articulation bypasses the counter- productive analyses that conflate the 'past' with the 'present', as Sabry (2007) rightly pointed out. The inadequacy of tools used by intellectuals in the Middle East has halted the proper understanding of the significance of contemporary culture and dynamics, especially in the Arab context. Both cultural globalization and cultural imperialism are contained in the explanatory value of articulation. Its awareness of the claims of the local, and at the same time of the external and global dynamics, makes its grid of analysis comprehensive. This method is applicable not only within the context of the Middle East, but also in areas or countries that are regarded as 'postcolonial locales'. The application of articulation within the national borders of each country fell beyond the scope of this study. But it promises to be a productive endeavor for future projects.

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Appendix

Table 1.1: Conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa					
Location	**Period**	**Type**	**Side A**	**Side B**	**Disp. ter.**
Angola	**1960-65,** ***1966-74***	Decol.	Portugal	MPLA, FNLA, UNITA, Cuba, South Africa, Zaire	Angola
	1975-89	Ext. inv.	Angola, Cuba	UNITA , South Africa, FNLA, Zaire	-
	1990-94, ***1995***, 1998-99	Intra	Angola	UNITA	-
	1992, 1994, ***1996-97***	Intra	Angola	FLEC	Cabinda
	2000-01	Ext. inv.	Angola, Namibia	UNITA	-
Burkina Faso	**1987**	Intra	Burkina Faso	Popular Front	-
Burkina Faso – Mali	**1985**	Internat.	Burkina Faso	Mali	Agacher Strip
Burundi	**1965** **1990-92, 1995-96,** ***1997,*** 1998**,** ***1999,*** 2000-01	Intra Intra	Burundi Burundi	Military faction Ubumwé, Palipehutu, CNDD, Frolina, CNDD-FDD	- -
Camero.	**1957-60** **1984**	Decol. Intra	France Cameroon	UPC Military faction	Cameroon -
Camer. – Nigeria	**1996**	Internat.	Cameroon	Nigeria	Bakassi
Central Afr. R.	**2001**	Ext. inv.	Central African Republic, Libya	Military faction	-
Chad	1965-88	Ext. inv.	Chad	Various groups, Libya	-
	1989, 1990	Ext. inv.	Chad	Military faction , MOSNAT, Islamic Legion, Libya	-
	1991-94, 1997-01	Intra	Chad	MDD (-FANT), CSNPD, CNR, FNT, FARF, MDJT	-
Chad – Libya	1987	Internat.	Chad	Libya	Aozou strip

Chad - Nigeria	**1983**	Internat.	Chad	Nigeria	Lake Chad
Comoros	**1997**	Intra	Comoros	MPA	Anjouan
Congo/ Zaire	**1960-62** **1960-62** 1964-65 **1967** **1977, *1978*** **1996,** 1997 1998-99**,** 2000**, *2001***	Intra Intra Intra Intra Intra Ext. inv. Ext. inv.	Congo/Zaire Congo/Zaire Congo/Zaire Congo/Zaire Congo/Zaire Congo/Zaire Congo/Zaire, Zimbabwe, Angola, Namibia, Chad	Katanga Independent Mining State of South Kasai CNL Opposition militias FLNC AFDL, Rwanda, Angola RCD, RCD faction, MLC, Rwanda, Uganda	Katanga South Kasai - - - - -
Congo-Brazza-ville	1997 1998-99	Ext. inv. Ext. inv.	Congo-Brazzaville Congo-Brazzaville, Angola	FDU, Angola Opposition militias	- -
Djibouti	**1991-94**	Intra	Djibouti	FRUD	
Eq. Guin.	**1979**	Intra	Equatorial Guinea	Military faction	-
Eritrea - Ethiopia	1998-00	Internat.	Eritrea	Ethiopia	Badme
Ethiopia	**1960** **1962-67,** ***1968-73,*** 1974-91 **1975-76,** 1977-78**,** ***1979-83*** 1976-91 **1989-91** **1996, 1998-01** **1996** **1996-97, 1999** **1999-01**	Intra Intra Ext. inv. Intra Intra Intra Intra Intra Intra	Ethiopia Ethiopia Ethiopia, Cuba Ethiopia Ethiopia Ethiopia Ethiopia Ethiopia Ethiopia	Military faction ELF , ELF factions, EPLF WSLF EPRP, TPLF , EPDM, OLF ALF ONLF ARDUF al-Itahad al-Islami OLF	- Eritrea Ogaden - Afar Ogaden Afar Somali Oromiya
Ethiopia - Somalia	**1960, 1964, 1973, 1983, 1987**	Internat.	Ethiopia	Somalia	Ogaden
Gabon	**1964**	Ext. inv.	Gabon, France	Military faction	-
Gambia	**1981**	Intra	Gambia	SRLP	-

Ghana	**1966, 1981, 1983**	Intra	Ghana	Military faction	-
Guinea	**1970, 2000-01**	Intra	Guinea	Military faction	-
Guinea-Bissau	**1963-64,** ***1965-73***	Decol.	Portugal	PAIGC	Guinea-Bissau
	1998**,** ***1999***	Ext. inv.	Guina-Bissau, Senegal, Guinea	Military faction	-
Kenya	**1952,** 1953-56	Decol.	United Kingdom	Mau Mau	Kenya
	1982	Intra	Kenya	Military faction	-
Lesotho	**1998**	Intra	Lesotho	Military faction	-
Liberia	**1980**	Intra	Liberia	Military faction	-
	1989, 1992**,** ***1993-95***	Intra	Liberia	NPFL, INPFL	-
	1990**,** ***1991***	Ext. inv.	Liberia	NPFL, Burkina Faso, INPFL	-
	1996	Intra	Liberia	Ulimo-J	-
	2000-01	Intra	Liberia	LURD	-
Madagas-car	**1971**	Intra	Madagascar	Monima National Independence Movement	-
Mali	**1990**	Intra	Mali	MPA	Air and Azawad
	1994	Intra	Mali	FIAA	Air and Azawad
Mauri-tania	**1957-58**	Decol.	France, Spain	National Liberation Army	Morocco/ Mauritania
Maurit-nia. Senegal	**1989-90**	Internat.	Mauritania	Senegal	Common border
Mozam-bique	**1964-65,** ***1966-71,*** 1972-73**,** ***1974***	Decol.	Portugal	Frelimo	Mozamb.
	1976-80, 1981-92	Intra	Mozambique	Renamo	-
Niger	**1990-92**	Intra	Niger	FLAA	Air and Azawad
	1994	Intra	Niger	CRA	Air and Azawad
	1996	Intra	Niger	FDR	Toubou
	1997	Intra	Niger	UFRA	Air and Azawad
	1997	Intra	Niger	FARS	Toubou
Nigeria	**1966**	Intra	Nigeria	Military faction	-
	1967-70	Intra	Nigeria	Republic of Biafra	Biafra
Rhodesia	**1972-75,** 1976-79	Intra	Rhodesia	ZANU , ZAPU	-

Rwanda	**1990,** 1991-92**,** ***1993-94*** 1998**,** ***1999-00,*** 2001	Intra Intra	Rwanda Rwanda	FPR Opposition alliance	- -
Senegal	**1990,** **1992-93,** **1995,** ***1997-01***	Intra	Senegal	MFDC	Casamance
Sierra Leone	**1991-93,** ***1994-97,*** 1998-99 ***2000***	Intra Ext. inv.	Sierra Leone Sierra Leone, United Kingdom	RUF, AFRC, ECOMOG, Kamajors RUF, AFRC, ECOMOG, Kamajors	- -
Somalia	**1978** **1981-86,** ***1987-88*** 1989-92**,** ***1993-96***	Intra Intra Intra	Somalia Somalia Somalia	Military faction SSDF , SNM, SPM SNM , Military faction , SSDF , USC, USC faction	- - -
South Africa	**1966-78,** ***1979,*** 1980-83, ***1984-85***, 1986-88 **1981-88,** 1989-93	Intra Intra	South Africa South Africa	SWAPO ANC, PAC, Azapo	Namibia -
Sudan	1963-72 **1970** **1976** 1983-92 **1993-94,** 1995-2001	Intra Intra Intra Intra Intra	Sudan Sudan Sudan Sudan Sudan	Anya Nya Sudanese Communist Party Islamic Charter Front SPLM SPLM, Faction of SPLM, NDA	Southern Sudan - - Southerrn Sudan Southern Sudan
Togo	**1986** **1991**	Intra Intra	Togo Togo	MTD Military faction	- -
Trinidad	**1990**	Intra	Trinidad and Tobago	Jamaat al-Muslimeen	-
Uganda	**1971, 1977** **1972** **1978,** 1979 **1981-88**	Intra Intra Ext. inv. Intra	Uganda Uganda Uganda, Libya Uganda	Military faction UPA UNLA , Tanzania NRA, UFM, UPM, UNRF, UFDM, UPF, UPDA, UPC, UNLA, FOBA, HSM	- - - -

	1989**,** ***1990,*** 1991	Intra	Uganda	Faction of UPDA, UPA, HSM, UDCM, UPDCA	-
	1994-95, ***1996-2001***	Intra	Uganda	LRA, WNBF, ADF	-

Legend:
(In column for period) Normal: Minor conflit, i.e. more than 25 battle-related deaths per year for every year in the period; *Italics:* Intermediate conflict, i.e. more than 25 battle-related deaths per year and a total conflict history of more than 1000 battle-related deaths; Boldface: War, i.e. more than 1000 battle-related deaths per year for every year in the period *(In column for type)* Decol.: Decolonisation conflict, in the dataset labelled "Extra-state", i.e. "conflicts over a territory between a government and one or more opposition groups, where the territory is a colony of the government."; Internat. : International conflict, in the dateset labelled "Interstate", i.e. "conflicts between two or more countries and governments"; Intra: Intra-state conflict, in the dataset labelled "Internal", i.e. "conflicts within a country between a government and one or more opposition groups, with no interference from other countries"; Ext. Inv.: External involvement in intra-state conflict, in the dateset labelled "Internatized internal", i.e. "similar to internal conflict, but where the government, the opposition or both sides receive support from other governments"; Disp. ter.: Territory in dispute

Acronymes:
ADF: Alliance of Democratic Forces; **AFDL:** *Alliance des forces démocratiques pour la libération du Congo-Kinshasa***; AFRC:** Armed Forces Revolutionary Council**; ALF:** Afar Liberation Front**; ANC:** African National Congress; **ARDUF:** Afar Revolutionary Democratic Unity Front**; CNDD:** *Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie***; CNDD-FDD:** *Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie***; CNL:** *Conseil national de libération*; **CNR:** *Comité national de redressement*; **CRA:** Coordination of the Armed Resistance; **CSNPD:** *Conseil de salut national pour la paix et la démocratie;* **ECOMOG**: Economic Organization of West African States Monitoring Group; **ELF:** Eritrean Liberation Front; **EPDM:** Ethiopian People's Democratic Movement**; EPLF:** Eritrean People's Liberation Front; **EPRP:** Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Party**; FARF:** *Forces armées pour la République fédérale*; **FARS:** *Forces révolutionnaires du Sahara;* **FDR:** *Front démocratique pour le renouveau***; FDU:** *Forces démocratiques unies*; **FIAA:** *Front islamique arabe de l'Azaouad;* **FLAA:** *Front de libération de l'Aïr et l'Azaouad;* **FLEC:** *Frente da libertação do enclave de Cabinda***; FLNC:** *Front de libération nationale congolais*; **FNLA:** *Frente nacional da libertação de Angola;* **FNT:** *Front national tchadien*; **FOBA:** Force Obote Back Again; **FPR:** *Front patriotique rwandais;* **FRELIMO:** *Frente de libertação de Moçambique;* **FROLINA:** *Front pour la libération nationale;* **FRUD:** *Front de restauration de l'unité et de la démocratie;* **HSM:** Holy Spirit Movement; **INPFL:** Independent National Patriotic Forces of Liberia;**LRA:** Lord's Resistance Army; **LURD:** Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy)**; MDD (-FANT):** *Mouvement pour la dé-mocratie et le dévelopment: Forces ar-mées nationales du Tchad***; MDJT:** *Movement pour la démocratie et la justice au Tchad*; **MFDC:** *Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance*; **MLC:** *Mouvement de libération congolais*; **MOSANAT:** *Mouvement pour la salvation nationale tchadienne*; **MPA:** Mouvement populaire de l'Azaouad**; MPLA:**

Movimento popular de libertação de Angola; **MTD:** *Mouvement togolaise pour la démocratie;* **NDA:** National Democratic Alliance; **NPFL:** National Patriotic Forces of Liberia; **NRA:** National Resistance Army; **OLF:** Oromo Liberation Front; **ONLF:** Ogaden National Liberation Front; **PAC:** Pan Africanist Congress; **PAIGC:** *Partido africano da independência da Guiné e do Cabo Verde*; **RCD:** *Rassemblement congolaises pour la démocratie*; **RENAMO:** *Resistência nacional moçambicana*; **RUF:** Revolutionary United Front; **SNM:** Somali National Movement; **SPLM:** Sudanese People's Liberation Movement; **SPM:** Somali Patriotic Movement; **SRLP:** Socialist and Revolutionary Labour Party; **SSDF:** Somali Salvation Democratic Front;**SWAPO:** South West Africa People's Organization; **TPLF:** Tigrean People's Liberation Front; **UDCM:** United Democratic Christian Movement; **UFDM:** Ugandan Federal Democratic Movement; **UFM:** Uganda Freedom Movement; **UFRA:** *Union des forces de la résistance armée*; **ULIMO-J:** United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia; **UNITA:** *União nacional para a independência total de Angola*; **UNLA:** Uganda National Liberation Army; **UNRF:** Uganda National Rescue Front; **UPA:** Uganda People's Army; **UPC:** Uganda People's Congress; **UPC:** *Union des Populations Camerounaises;* **UPDA:** Ugandan People's Democratic Army; **UPDCA:** Uganda People's Christian Democratic Army); **UPF:** Uganda People's Front; **UPM:** Ugandan Patriotic Movement; **USC:** United Somali Congress; **WNBF:** West Nile Bank Front; **WSLF:** Western Somali Liberation Front; **ZANU:** Zimbabwe African National Union; **ZAPU:** Zimbabwe African People's Union.

Table 1.2: International wars in Africa	
1983	Chad/Nigeria
1977-78	Ethiopia/Somalia
1985	Burkina Faso/Mali
1987)	Chad/Libya
1989-90	Mauritania/Senegal
1996	Cameroun/Nigeria
1998-2000	Ethiopia/Eritrea

Legend:
Data from *Africa at a Glance* (*op. cit.*, note 161), pp. 72-85. Alex Thomson provides a slightly different categorisation in *op. cit.* (note 12), pp. 124-125, in most cases counting intra-military struggles as military coups. His listing is indicated in italics.

Table 1.3: Decolonisation in Africa					
Present name	**Indepen-dence**	**Temporary adm.**	**Present Name**	**Indepen-dence**	**Temporary adm.**
German Colonies			**Italian Colonies**		
Burundi	1962	Belgium	**Eritrea**[e]	1993	Ethiopia
Cameroon	1960	UK/France	**Libya**	1951	
Namibia	1990	South Africa	**Somalia**[f]	1960	
Rwanda	1962	UK/Belgium	**Belgian Colonies**		
Tanzania[a]	1961/63	UK	**DR of Congo**	1960	n.a.
Togo[b]	1960	UK/France	**French Colonies**		
British Colonies			**Algeria**	1962	n.a
Botswana	1966	n.a.	**Benin**	1960	n.a.
Egypt	1922	n.a.	**Burkina Faso**	1960	n.a.
The Gambia	1965	n.a.	**Central Afr. Rep.**	1960	n.a.
Ghana	1957	n.a.	**Chad**	1960	n.a.
Kenya	1963	n.a.	**Comoros**	1975	n.a.
Lesotho	1966	n.a.	**Congo, Rep. Of**	1960	n.a.
Malawi	1964	n.a.	**Cote d'Ivoire**	1960	n.a.
Mauritius	1968	n.a.	**Djibouti**	1977	n.a.
Nigeria	1960	n.a.	**Gabon**	1960	n.a.
Seychelles	1976	n.a.	**Guinea**	1958	n.a.
Sierra Leone	1961	n.a.	**Madagascar**	1960	n.a.
South Africa[c]	1910/94	n.a.	**Mali**	1960	n.a.
Swaziland	1968	n.a.	**Mauritania**	1960	n.a.
Sudan[d]	1956	Egypt	**Morocco**	1956	n.a.
Uganda	1962	n.a.	**Niger**	1960	n.a.
Zambia	1964	n.a.	**Senegal**	1960	n.a.
Zimbabwe[c]	1965/80	n.a.	**Tunisia**	1956	n.a.
Portuguese Colonies			**Spanish Colonies**		
Angola	1975	n.a.	**Eq. Guinea**	1968	n.a.
Cape Verde	1975	n.a.	**Sarawi**[g]	n.a.	Morocco
Guinea-Bissau	1974	n.a.	**Independent throughout**		
Mozambique	1975	n.a.	**Ethiopia**[h]	1941/55	n.a.
Sao Tome/Pr.	1975	n.a.	**Liberia**	1847	n.a.

Legend:
a) Independence of Tanganyika (former mandate territory) and Zanzibar (former colony), respectively; b) French mandate territory, British part ceded to Ghana; c) Independence/ transition to majority rule; d) Anglo-Egyptian condominium; e) Federated with Ethiopia in 1952, annexed in 1962; f) Merger of Italian and British Somalia; g) The former Spanish West Sahara has been recognised by most African countries under the name Sarawi, but not by Morocco; h) Formally an Italian colony from 1936 until it was liberated by the UK in 1941, but only formally recognised as a state in 1955.


Burkina Faso
Mauritania
Mali
Niger
Chad
Sudan
Rep. of Yemen
Senegal
Guinea Bissau
Guinea
Sierra Leone
Liberia
Benin
Togo
Cameroon
Cen. Afr. Rep.
Ethiopia
Somalia
Côte d'Ivoire
Ghana
Congo
Uganda
Kenya
Rwanda
Burundi
Dem. Rep. of Congo
Tanzania
Malawi
São Tomé & Principe
Angola
Comoros
Zambia
Mozambique
Madagascar
THE HEAVILY INDEBTED POOR COUNTRIES (HIPC)
HIPC Countries
This map was produced by the Map Design Unit of The World Bank. The boundaries, colors, denominations and any other information shown on this map do not imply, on the part of The World Bank Group, any judgment on the legal status of any territory, or any endorsement or acceptance of such boundaries.
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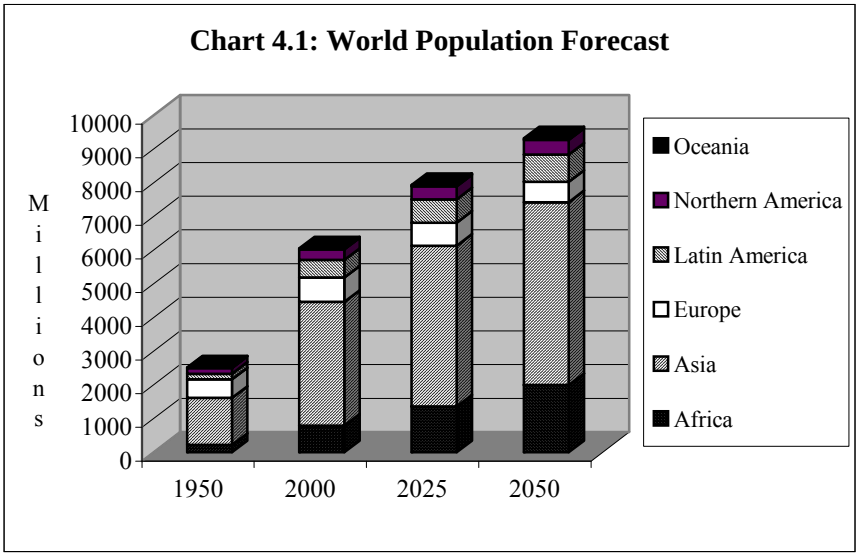
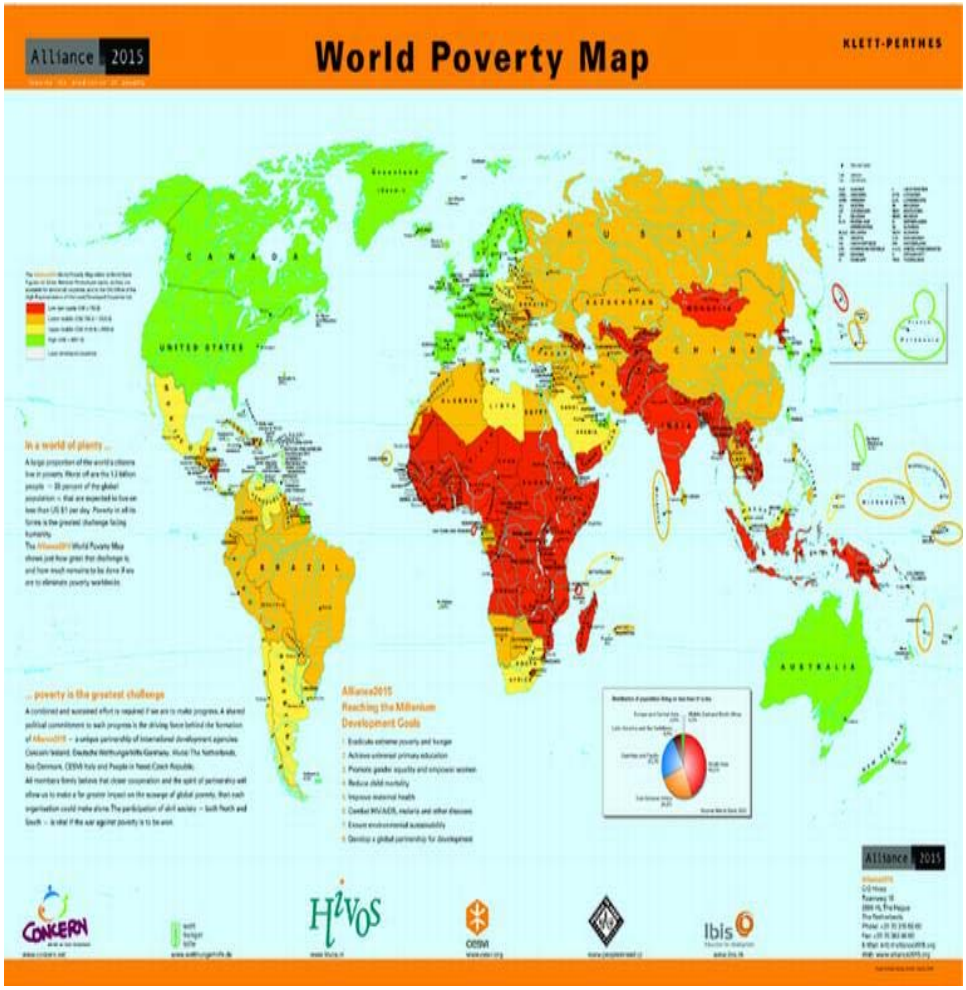
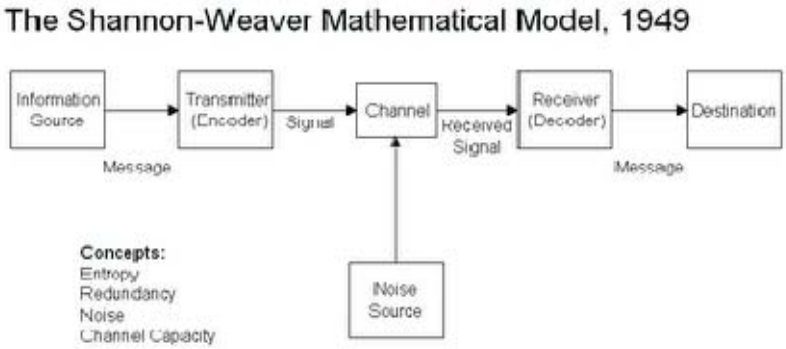


Chart 4.1: World Population Forecast
Millions
10000
9000
8000
7000
6000
5000
4000
3000
2000
1000
0
1950
2000
2025
2050
Oceania
Northern America
Latin America
Europe
Asia
Africa



Source: Alliance Facts & Figures©



NORTH AMERICA INTERNET USERS AND POPULATION STATS						
NORTHERN AMERICA	**Population (2006 Est.)**	**% Pop. of World**	**Internet Users, Latest Data**	**% Population (Penetration)**	**% Usage of World**	**Use Growth (2000-2005)**
North America Only	331,473,276	5.1 %	**225,801,428**	68.1 %	23.0 %	108.9 %
Rest of the World	6,168,223,784	94.9 %	**792,255,961**	12.3 %	77.0 %	213.3 %
WORLD TOTAL	6,499,697,060	100.0 %	**1,018,057,389**	15.7 %	100.0 %	182.0 %

NOTES: (1) Internet Usage and Population Statistics for North America were updated for December 31, 2005. (2) Population numbers are based on data contained in world gazetteer. (3) The most recent usage comes mainly from data published by Nielsen//NetRatings , by ITU , and other local sources. (4) Data on this site may be cited, giving due credit and establishing an active link back to Internet World Stats

Military Coups in Africa