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# Development Communication Policy
# and Economic Fundamentalism
# in Ghana

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ACADEMIC DISSERTATION
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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

# Introduction

> 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 transitionary 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, Undeveloped 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. GWF Hegel *The Philosophy of History* (1899, 99)

Africa has the unenviable record of suffering from several man-made burdens including intellectual and economic ones. Any serious scholarship on the continent often has the unstated task of working against this backdrop of a despondent picture of hopelessness; a picture of hopelessness that is often unfaithful to the realities on the continent, yet holds firmly on the imagination of its beholders. Hegel did not bother to write much about Africa, given the fact that he dismissed the continent in only 12 pages as irrelevant to world history. In the meantime, before giving the continent this unbefitting epitaph, he geographically redefined the continent, a division that has stuck with us until this day. But that is not all that can be spoken of the Hegelian influence on Africa. Hegel, by the stroke of his pen, successfully inaugurated a particular form of intellectual gaze on the continent that has a predilection for feasting on what the continent lacks than celebrating what is has. Whether in development thinking or in news coverage, it is this fabricated picture of despondency that is often given accent. It is against this backdrop of a shadow of Hegelian thought that the field of Development Communication as an intellectual project of intervention can be properly interrogated.

Hegel, in particular, apart from denying sub-Sahara Africa of agency and development, will later write that "the frost which grips the inhabitants of Lapland and the fiery heat of Africa are forces too powerful a nature for man to resist, or for the spirit to achieve free movement and to reach the degree of richness which is the precondition and source of a fully developed

mastery of reality" (Hegel 1986, 155). Therefore, from a Hegelian point of view, the task of modernization is to change the "Undeveloped Spirit" of Africa and usher it into history, first through a process of colonization and decolonization for nation building during which the spirit of progress will be injected. Such a Hegelian formulation provided the intellectual framework, for better or for worse, for the inauguration of international development, that resonated with both the developed Northern countries in their moments of benevolence, and the developing countries in their pursuit of a dream to modernize.

Thus it is significant to note that the recent wave of change towards establishing democratic forms of government in much of Africa comes at a time when there is renewed interest in the potential of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the modernization of sub-Sahara African countries. This contrasts with the situation in the 1960s when attempts at democratization on the continent were shadowed by cold war big power politics, and skewed rhetoric on national development programs that assumed total government control of all media of communication as a requirement for national progress. The level of diffusion of technologies of mediation, especially, radio and television as well as newspapers were considered to be the yardstick for measuring development and modernization (Daniel Lerner 1958; Wilbur Schramm 1964).

The renewed interest in ICTs in the sub-region is part of the global euphoria on what these technologies can deliver (ATAS 1995; Ricardo Gomez et al 1999; Claude-Yves Charron et al. 1999). What is significant is that this renewed interest comes at a particularly unique conjuncture. In the first place the establishment of liberal forms of government has become the dominant practice in a post-cold war age. With this new global attitude are a faith in free market economy and a market-regulated media of communication. In addition, the new technologies of communication, starting from the 1970s facilities for transborder data flow to the present sophistication of Internet systems make them less and less amenable to government control. In development theory and practice the dominant view is that many developed countries have assumed much of the characteristics of an information society and that the less developed countries must take advantage of it or risk further marginalization (ATAS 1995; Shamika Sirimanne 1996; Michael Noll 1997; Robin Mansell and Uta Wehn 1998; Charron et al. 1999). Leapfrogging is the popular vocabulary used to describe the idea of fast-track development into the informational economy of digital capitalism from the current pre-industrialized level. The last two governments in Ghana also share this conventional, mechanistic, and admittedly naïve view, and worse still, with an exaggerated optimism (COMPOL'98 1998, 1; Ghana Government 2003). It is against this backdrop that this study undertakes to investigate the way certain key categories are articulated around the subject of national communication policy in Ghana.

ICTs are part of a wider category of technologies of mediation, here understood as having a structuring effect on social discourse. While my understanding of structures here is accented towards physical existential embodiments of technologies, it is by no means limited to that. This study focuses on these technologies with the premise that they collectively provide the public and social space for the constant process of national imagination and nation formation against a backdrop of more potent primordial and particularistic identities. Stated

differently, they constitute the fabric upon which the imagined political community can be defined.

After more than one hundred years of British colonialism, Ghana became independent in 1957. The first nation-state in Black Africa, Ghana had four daily newspapers, and a rudimentary infrastructure that served as a radio broadcasting station at independence. Its first news agency (wire service) was one of the first national organizations to be set up just after independence. The first cinema production organization started in 1946 and in 1965 television broadcasting was inaugurated. The country officially launched an IMF and World Bank supported Economic Recovery Program (ERP) in 1983. The ERP, which included a World Bank supervised Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), had a wide-ranging implication for the country. It involved a reduction in public and social sector expenditure, the divesting of the state from businesses and the promotion of the private sector as the kingpin of economic growth. State-owned enterprises were privatized, merged, turned into joint ventures or liquidated (Alexander Sarris and Hadi Shams 1991, 7; Lynne Brydon and Karen Legge 1996; Hadjimichael et al. 1996).

At independence in 1957, and immediately after, Ghana was held up as a model African nation-state, a paragon of Black Nationalism and for that matter, what Africans were capable of achieving when left alone. But by the 1970s and 80s, the country experienced unprecedented economic decline leading to the launching of ERP as a solution. And after about a decade of faithfully implementing SAP, Ghana was once again cited as a model in the 1990s. This time, though, not a model of a black nation under self-rule, but a model of a developing country that had successfully adjusted its economy to become a "significant cog in the wheel of globalization" (Brydon and Legge 1996, 1).

While the ERP/SAP was launched in 1983, it took the Provisional National Defence Council (PNDC) government almost a decade to venture into the delicate affair of selling state-owned enterprises to the private sector. As Laakso and Olukoshi (1996, 21) will later remark about IMF/World Bank prescribed sale of state-owned enterprises, "the feeling among many that their country has been put up for sale to the highest bidder (usually non-nationals) has deepened the sense of alienation felt in many of the adjusting countries." It was in 1992 that the government took the bold decision to start its privatization scheme under SAP (Hadjimichael et. al 1996, 41). The gold mines, hotels and factories were the first to go. It took another two years for the communication sector to come under divestiture. The reluctance was probably an indication that the government was politically uncomfortable to let go its monopoly over the telecom and broadcasting industries.

A critical overview of the communication policy process in Ghana shows a rather disjointed and inconsistent attitude by the state, resulting in a murky scene. Before SAP was introduced, the state's attitude was directly informed by the discredited development communication paradigm of communication by and for the state in the service of national development. Dissent was considered detrimental to the development process. Development was vulgarized as physical and material modernization without the cultural content of communicative rights and other civil liberties. More or less, the unstated maxim that guided communication policy was: Development in progress, keep silent! With the wind of change

that resulted in the re-institutionalization of multi-party democracy, and market-based approach to communication, the sector has witnessed a series of well intended but poorly thought out initiatives that are not carried to their logical conclusion, mostly due to a change of ministers or government. Where they are carried out to their logical conclusion, the results have been mixed. In the main, policy actors have expressed conscientious belief in the power of free market to deliver that illusive goal called development.

The first explicit initiative towards a national communication policy under the new regime of market-based approach was in January 1998, when the then Ministry of Communication started a series of conferences to collate views from stakeholders. The first of such conferences was organized under the theme "Communications – Managing the Future." About 75 media experts, legislators, policymakers and stakeholders from the private sector brainstormed for three consecutive days on the new directions for national policy. It was an ambitious enterprise that found support from the World Bank and the IMF, Ghana's so-called development partners. The first meeting, often referred to as the Sogakope Retreat, had the objective of putting in place "a national communications and information strategy for the promotion, adoption and use of information and communication technologies by all sectors of the economy so as to turn Ghana into an information society" (COMPOL'98 page 2).

Such a dream of transforming an agro-based economy into an information society must either be the result of a flight of fantasy or a thinking hardly informed by the industrial economic background of developed economies that are on transition to informational economies. For an economy with about half of its adult population engaged in the food production sector, and about 70 percent of its development budget sourced from donor support, any talk of transition into an information society sounds like a far-fetched dream. Yet, such was the premise on which the National Democratic Congress (NDC) government (1992 to 2000) thought about national policy direction. The architects of the policy direction based the justification of their thinking on the argument that "technologies do facilitate efficiency, are cost-effective in the use of resources and create new industries. Most countries are using them and Ghana must use them too if it is to be part of the global economic system."[1] Such a simplistic articulation of technology is troubling. I will be discussing in detail on this and other forms of articulating technology later in chapter four.

What is, however, worth noting is that the Sogakope Retreat was the first time in the history of the young nation that communication policy was conceptualized as encompassing telecom, postal services, broadcasting, print media and audio-visual sectors under one policy framework. The defining feature was the dominant but problematic consensus that digital capitalism holds the key to the qualitative transformation of all these sectors. It was also the first time that a government put all these under one ministry. Under the old paradigm, the print and electronic media were under the Ministry of Information while telecom and postal services were considered under the Transport and Telecommunications Ministry.

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[1]   Statement issued by the Ministry of Communication at the second national communication policy (Oct 7th to 9th, 1998).

Following the Sogakope conference, a second one was held in Accra from October 7 to 9, 1998 under the theme "A Communication Policy for Ghana into the Next Millenium." The Accra conference built on the earlier positions from Sogakope, mainly around the fetish of technology, and the myth of leapfrogging under the hegemony of digital capitalism. However, an important feature of the conference was that participants recommended the setting up of a National Policy Development and Implementation Unit at the Ministry of Communication. The recommendations from these two conferences were brought together and harmonized into one composite whole. Among the key recommendations were:

- That a communications policy should be formulated for the orderly and sustainable development, management and application of communications technologies by all sectors of the national economy.
- That public sector stakeholders in the communication sector should be encouraged to commercialize some of their activities to generate revenue to support government's budgetary provisions.
- That conscious efforts should be made to use both the print and electronic media to promote the culture of the country both internally and externally for national cohesion.
- That as a matter of urgency, a national communications database be established for research and planning purposes.
- That the communications sector should collaborate with the Ministries of Health, Education, Agriculture, Environment, Science and Technology, CSIR (Council for Scientific and Industrial Research), and other sectors with the view to promote telemedicine, distance education, agro-development, science and technology.
- That the Office of the President and Parliament should take the lead in promoting the use of new communication technologies, especially the Internet, to ensure effective national leadership for communications and the setting of suitably high national priorities for the sector. …(Ministry of Communication Conference Report 1998).

These recommendations were reached after elaborate procedures and well patronized conferences. One would therefore expect that the Ministry of Communication would take them seriously. But my visits to the Ministry from April to June 2002 to find out more about the recommendations and conferences drew a blank. No one was ready to speak in his or her official capacity. And worse still, the very Ministry, which organized the conference, did not have a single hard copy of the conference proceeding and recommendation in its archives, library or offices. This was not because the Ministry was transformed to a paperless e-bureaucracy. After persistent appeals to the staff of the ministry, I finally got a secretary, who worked on the conference proceedings as a word processor, to agree to give me a print out of the document from a disused computer. She told me no one bothers about the document anymore and all that the Sogakope and Accra conferences produced. The irony is that these conferences were organized and sponsored by the same Ministry only to be abandoned.

It did not take me long for find out why. A change of government after the 2000 general elections meant that all the key officials associated with the previous government's policy process were either posted out of the Ministry or dis-empowered by rescheduling. When I asked the new government's Coordinator on IT policy, Dr. Somuah as to the state of the

previous government's initiatives on communication policy, he denied such a thing ever existed when his government took office. But a Director at the Ministry, who insists on anonymity, later privately contradicted Dr. Somuah's denial, and accused the government's policy coordinator of trying to re-invent the wheel.

When the New Patriotic Party (NPP) government, which Dr. Somuah works for, took office in January 2001, it restructured the bureaucratic apparatus of communication governance by creating a Ministry of Information and Presidential Affairs to have responsibility over government propaganda and print and electronic media. Telecom and National Communication Authority (NCA), which licenses telecom and electronic mass media came under a restructured Ministry of Communication and Technology. That is, the Ministry of Communication was now restructured as Ministry of Communication and Technology. From a naïve and problematic conception of "technology," the fetish got transformed into a more powerful structure in the enterprise of governmentalization. It is interesting to note that the initial idea of a "technology" at the ministerial nomenclature was applicable to the general area of natural science and research under the former Ministry of Environment, Science and Technology. The shift from emphasizing natural science and its applicability to national development to communication technology and the exploration of its digital potential is an important transformation that tells more about digital colonization of the postcolonial state policy in a global era of digital hegemony, than any well-intended attempt at mobilizing science and technology for socio-economic development.

If the new government of NPP jettisoned the labored efforts of the previous government, what sort of program did it put in place? After splitting the governance of communication between two ministries, the government caused further division by creating a special office at the Office of the President in charge of advising the government on IT policy. Such a divisive environment does not augur well for a good atmosphere for evolving a sound communication policy. In my encounter with each of these units, the two ministries and the President's IT policy advisor, I gathered the claims of each overlapped with the others.

The Ministry of Information and Presidential Affairs (MIPA), which was purposely set up as the propaganda arm of the NPP government, was initially not expected to have national communication policy mandate. But my contacts intimated that the ministry was trying to refashion its mandate to include a formulation of "national development communication policy initiative," a senior bureaucrat at the ministry would hint me on condition of anonymity. After several contacts, the Chief Director of the Ministry, Kofi Sekyiamah would later admit to me that his ministry was discussing with the World Bank new strategies to "retool and re-engineer the ministry to mobilize the advantages of information technology for the development of the country." A draft document later made available to me elaborated on this. The document clearly stated that the mission of a new policy initiative, with the support of the World Bank, was to

> empower citizens and promote national identity and cohesion through a two-way information flow between government and its various publics, to facilitate access to public sector information, to strengthen district-level involvement in the decision-

making process and to mainstream development communication process in all Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), among others (MIPA 2002).

This is a high sounding, well-articulated statement of objective. And a new series of stakeholder conferences were being lined up to discuss it, – an attempt to reinvent the wheel that was already fashioned by the previous government. What is even worse, the MIPA policy objectives are almost the same objectives that the Ministry of Communications and Technology states when it articulates "Specific Poverty Reduction Strategy Under HIPC Initiative" in its three year strategic plan that outlines the ministry's administrative commitment.[2] When one talks to the Special Advisor to the President on IT Policy, he presents the objectives of his office in the same terms except that he prefers to talk of IT instead of communication technologies. Out of this murky cocktail of overlapped responsibilities, one walks away with an impression of a confused policy scene of a comedy of déjà vu. Yet, every now and then action is being taken on matters of communication policy in Ghana without the benefit of a policy blueprint. The governance of the national communication sector is every now and then articulated against the yardstick of free market economics. Liberalization has been extensively carried out and continues to be pursued. Against this background, how does one undertake a communication policy study of Ghana?

All is not so murky however. In 2003, the NPP government, in its last quarter of a four-year term of office, produced a 95-page comprehensive policy document entitled "The Ghana ICT for Accelerated Development [ICT4AD] Policy." Commencing in 2003, the policy program envisions a four times four-year rolling plan ending in 2014 that will systematically transform Ghana into an informational economy. A feasibility assessment of this policy program is beyond the scope of this book. However, some aspects of the plan will come under scrutiny with particular attention on the rhetoric and articulation of ICTs, development, and nation building.

## The Problem

The history of Ghana as a postcolonial nation-state, like many other African countries, first started as an economic enterprise (a colon and later, a colony) and subsequently developed as a political community with imposed structures of civil society. Thus from a colony (Gold Coast) and a collection of protectorates (Ashanti, Northern Territories and Trans-Volta Togoland), it evolved into a postcolonial nation-state (Kimble, 1963). Consequently, the identification of Ghana as a modern nation-state can be read as one that is in the process of *becoming* since it is a developing nation-state. The theoretical rigor and facility that this way of thinking of the postcolonial nation-state allows, far out weights the condescending tone that

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[2]   Strategic Plan of Ministry of Communications and Technology (undated document) issued in Accra. HIPC means Highly Indebted Poor Country Initiative.

it suggests. Thinking of the developing country as in the process of coming into being allows us to interrogate the constitutive function of the state and to always place on the agenda the question of its distributive task. Implicit in the concept of *developing* is the sense of a transition to a more participant society.

However, Mowlana and Wilson (1990, 13) have strongly argued that *developing* is a euphemism for describing backward countries that need to modernize their economies along the line of the European experience. While such an argument is not in conflict with my conception here, it is significant to point out that this is exactly the dominant position in much of institutional discourse on development, even if policy actors are often shy from stating it in these terms. Thus *development*, *modernization* and *progress*, despite their philosophical and ideological implications, zoom in to one and the same thing within policy circles.

Ghana, like any complex community, exists within the networks of relationships that link members of the nation (citizens) together. Precisely, it is the processes involved in wiring the community, the discourses that shape the processes of the wired or unwired community that is the central problematic of this book. The nation is described as an "imagined community" (Anderson 1991) more particularly because of the webs and networks of flow that allow the possibility of imagination beyond language groups; hence, the centrality of the technological infrastructure in theorizing the postcolonial nation-state.

For a collection of ethnic communities that only recently learned to imagine itself as a larger collective,[3] one of the central concerns of policy, I presume, will be the promotion of a collective national imagination that will subsume (potent) primordial imaginations of identities and loyalties. Thus in analyzing communication policies, a key focus will be on how far they aim to, and indeed, do accomplish increased access across the country. In effect, I am interested in the level at which communication infrastructure is democratized to facilitate the mediation of the collective process of imagining the national community. For instance, in recent years as earlier indicated, especially from 1996 onwards, there have been active governmental actions in the area of communication policies. I will investigate the forms of economic ideas, interests and institutions that impact on these governmental actions. I will also look at the implications of the policies and governmental as well as private sector actions on the political project of facilitating an imagined community.

Aside of this normative understanding of the nation as an imagined community, I also read the postcolonial state as an avatar of international capital. I take into consideration the problematic relationship between the state and the nation and will thus look at the relationship between these two realms in colonial and postcolonial social formation. The possibility of a social formation, based on an active civil society is to a large extent contingent on the availability of structures for the mediation of social discourse (communication networks), the provision of which, since independence, has been considered the primary responsibility of the state. Thus, through the instrument of policymaking and implementation on

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[3]    Ghana is only about five decades old and some of the ethnic communities that were collapsed into forming it had existed for over 300 years as political communities, e.g. Ashanti in the south and Dagbon in the north.

communication technologies, the state plays a key role in the provision of the structures that bind the nation. I am here already suggesting that the state and nation cannot be separated, even if the former was conceptualized by external agency and mandated to form the nation by any means necessary including the use of force.

The definition of the postcolonial state as an avatar of international capital allows us, then, to discuss the role of external agency (mainly institutional) not only in constituting the postcolonial nation, but also in shaping contemporary governmental practice of policymaking and implementation. It also allows us to interrogate the postcolonial nation-state as a product of the circulation of commodities (Williams 1983, 180-187). That is, the nation-state is as much a civic/political project (Anderson 1991) as it is an economic enterprise (Williams 1983). By external institutional agency, I am here referring to organizations such as the World Bank and the IMF and to some extent, WTO. The first two have moved from being perceived as "imperialist institutions" in the 1970s and early 1980s to "Ghana's development partners" in the last two decades.

The postcolonial state claims its legitimacy from its proffered aim of building a nation. But what path does current policy initiatives portend, now that for the first time, (within the last decade) the communication sector has been deregulated, liberalized and even privatized at some points, thanks to the tutelage of international capital embodied institutionally as the IMF and the World Bank? Specifically, I will be limiting myself to policy initiatives from 1990 to 2003.

In focusing on the policy implications for a regime of democratized infrastructure of communication technologies, the following three questions constitute the anchor and cornerstone of this project:

- With the new economic attitude of liberalization on the one hand, and the responsibility of government to promote access for all, including economically vulnerable and marginalized groups, how does policy respond to this challenge?
- What are the implications of regulatory mechanisms and competition policies for both the public and commercial operators of communication services as well as the overall national objective of fostering an imagined community of citizens?
- What are the implications of the intellectual dominance of the IMF and World Bank in the communication policy process in Ghana?

More often than not, the introduction of new technologies in developing countries have exclusionary tendencies that reward those already in privileged and advantageous positions and serve as disincentive for vulnerable groups (Cooper et al. 1995, 152). This study, will examine the implications of technologies of mediation in facilitating the development of Ghana as a networked community or otherwise. How are the unique circumstances of vulnerable groups (defined by economic class, location, gender and ethnicity) addressed through policy initiatives to empower them to take advantage of ICTs?

While communication policy objectives in Africa are often framed in the rhetoric of nation building, socioeconomic and political development, the outcome is often the reverse. In his review of the history of communication technology use in sub-Saharan Africa, Boafo

(1991, 109) aptly describes the African experience as one of dependent development. Communication technologies in the region are characterized by a high "urban orientation and poor adaptation to what is predominantly rural and oral society." And this is partly due to the region's dependency on foreign sources and transnational corporations for both hardware and software (ibid. 121).

Ekwelie (1985, 28) on his part has argued that, as a result of the centralization of communication infrastructure in the cities, what we have is a situation where the elite use it for a "collective monologue, ignoring the villages and farmers and, by implication, an overwhelming majority of the population." The distribution of the news media is probably the most obvious indication of this rural-urban divide (Alhassan 1998). What is even more disturbing is the ad hoc nature of communication policy practices. Handicapped by inadequate economic power to import technologies of their choosing, and also crippled by a lack of local expertise to produce the requisite technologies, many African countries including Ghana depend on foreign aid to modernize their communication infrastructure.

For instance, it took Ghana a Japanese government grant of 2.8 million US dollars in 1985 to upgrade its then only radio and television broadcast service. Another Japanese grant the following year enabled Ghana to switch to color television broadcasting (Boafo 1991, 112). What is problematic about foreign assistance in developing a national communication infrastructure is less about the fact of external aid than that these foreign offers come with conditions. Oftentimes, the granting nations decide the type of equipment to buy and the source of expertise, irrespective of the actual needs of the recipient nation. A case in point is the story of Ghana's first satellite earth station, put up to improve the country's telecommunications.

> Spar Aerospace of Canada, which won the contract in 1977, supplied an international telephone switch that was obsolete, ill designed, and incompatible with the specifications of the satellite earth station. The television transmission chain that Aerospace provided became defective soon after the station was commissioned in August 1981 (Boafo 1991, 113).

The balanced sheet of this comedy of errors was that after Ghana had spent 14 million US dollars including a Canadian loan of 5.7 million US dollars for this project, the anticipated socioeconomic benefit never materialized. The project became a magnificent spectacle with all the outward trappings of a modern telecom apparatus except functional. It took new negotiated credit from Japan and France with expertise from their respective national companies to make the earth station deliver (Rogers-Akpatah 1986). This is just one example of a communication policy gone awry. It also illustrates the labyrinth that is called communication policy process. There are other examples that celebrate remarkable achievements as in the area of FM radio technology. But this is not an occasion for technological assessment or policy assessment and criticism. The above instance is cited to indicate the vicissitudes of policy practices. There seems to be a tendency in many developing countries to fall to the temptation of acquiring the latest forms of technology only to examine

the need and consequences of such an acquisition as an afterthought. Such may characterize the current hype about leapfrogging onto the information age.

The Ghanaian UNESCO expert on communication and development, Kwame Boafo (1991), has suggested that decentralization, de-urbanization and democratization be the framework and basis for communication policies in Africa. He also enjoins policy makers to incorporate the localization of software and content production as part of an overall policy objective. While such a focus sounds ideal, the dominance of free market thinking and rhetoric on the corridors of power in Ghana and the instrumentality of the World Bank and the IMF advisors on the policy scene may not augur well for such a recommendation.

## Defining Policy

So far I have referred to *policy* with a common sense assumption as to what it means. But some critical clarification on my working definition of the concept and what it attempts to name will be very much in order. But before engaging in this exercise in definition, I want to make an overview of the development communication policy scholarship that serves as a backdrop to this study.

Arguably the subject of communication policy has consistently attracted attention in development communication partly due to the fact that governmental authority has been instrumental in the formation of development communication scholarship. Thus one finds some of the most sustained discussion on communication policy and planning published with the postcolonial state as the target audience. Communication policy in development communication is distinct from general communication policy discussions that the mainstream literature contains. The mainstream, informed by the experience of developed countries, is focused on public service broadcasting, increased competition, and how to make national IT companies competitive in the global digital economy (Collins and Murrono, 1996, McQuail and Siune 1998, Calabrese and Burgelman 1999). While some of these aspects of communication policy are increasingly being found on the menu of policy concerns in developing countries, the field of development communication policy is defined by more mundane questions about increasing basic access to media and communication facilities, communication freedoms, as well as applying communication to augment the so-called development process. Thus whereas the concern in developed countries is about securing the century-old democratic gains against the irresistible power and seduction of commerce, the concern of policy in the developing countries, normatively speaking, is motivated by democratization. Whether the goal of democratization has been achieved after some five decades of postcolonial policymaking is another story. It is a story, which will be broached in this book.

In the 1960s and 1970s, or what may be described as the first generation of postcolonial policy planning, one of the sources of motivation was the quest to keep local cultures "safe" from external domination or "cultural imperialism" (Schramm 1964, Schiller 1976). Hardly is cultural imperialism a justifiable reason anymore, or at least, not in Ghana, where

previously labeled "imperialist institutions" such as BBC and VOA are either easily licensed to run local FM radio stations or have their services re-broadcast on locally owned networks. The current situation of embracing what was previously labeled imperialism sharply contrasts with the argument for cultural uncoupling that Cees Hamelink (1983), for instance, called for. Hamelink's project then, was to recommend a blueprint for developing countries communication planning. "Without cultural dissociation, all proposals for cultural emancipation are bound to remain new wine in old vessels," Hamelink (1983, 97) asserted. He made his recommendation within the then topical New World Information and Communication Order debate. The recommendation for cultural uncoupling was not a call for cultural autarchy. Rather, the emphasis was on letting local needs determine the parameters of both content and conduit. The process of establishing national information policy required that every developing country defined explicitly the function of the information system, take an inventory of available resources, design the structure of the overall national information system and finally outline the mechanism by which the internal and external functioning of the system can be controlled (Hamelink 1983, 101). Such a policy recommendation is apparently not feasible now after three decades of creeping economic fundamentalism via neoliberal economic ideology. When we put the recommendations into historical context, we can understand why it was the wisdom of the 1980s to encourage the postcolonial nation-state to take direct control of the process of communication within the nation. The political challenges of turning subjects into citizens, or turning multiples of ethnic communities into single composite civic communities were considered so daunting to warrant what may appear to us today as too an authoritarian recommendation. Hamelink (1983, 104) was not investing power on the state, but rather on the nation-state or "government" as the legitimate authority to police the cultural autonomy of the nation even if in practice the postcolonial state in most of Africa, assumed the singular responsibility of defining institutional control. And even then, it was not an unchecked license: "the basic criterion of control is the national autonomy as well as respect for the culture of minorities and the right of the individual to be informed and to inform" (Hamelink 1983, 116). The postcolonial state, after having defined its mandate as engaging in development more than building a democracy, turned out to be interested in grabbing control to monopolize all the communication rights and to deny them to its citizens. The expected role of civil society in defining the needs of the cultural community, built into Hamelink's recommendation, unfortunately fizzled out in practice.

In retrospect, we can argue that international political discourse in the 1960s and 1970s had infantilized the political communities of developing countries as experiencing teething problems. As in the case of the developmental child, the child-like nations of developing countries needed the authoritarian benevolence of the postcolonial state. The state turned out to have developed a predilection for abuse than parenting the nation. The story of the postcolonial state's abuse of communication freedoms in Africa has been extensively documented (Ansah 1991, Kasoma 1992 and 2000, Traber 1989 Merrill 1983, Karikari 1990). Consequently African scholarship on communication policy has primarily focused on

how to recover the resources of communication from the abuse of the state and how to democratize access.

It is against this background of insulating the media from state control and helping to promote media access within a predominantly neoliberal economic paradigm that one can look at UNESCO's contribution to the African media scene in recent years. In various ways, this UN body has been instrumental in supporting the budding media institutions of the continent after the seismic shift in international diplomatic rhetoric from the quest for democratizing international media flow characterized by the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) debates. One of UNESCO's remarkable contributions to Africa's media development is in the organization of the 1991 conference in Namibia, and its subsequent support for the realization of the ideals of what became known as the Windhoek Declaration. The African conference was held in May 1991 in which media practitioners, media experts and politicians were brought together to discuss the state of the media on the continent. The Windhoek Declaration stated, "consistent with article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the establishment, maintenance and fostering of an independent, pluralistic and free press is essential to the development and maintenance of democracy in a nation, and for economic development" (cited in Alabi 2001, 3). What is noteworthy about the 1991 conference is that it served as platform for the crystallization of the emerging wisdom in development communication that a market-regulated press was necessary for democratization and development, including economic progress. It was a major shift away from the 1970s and 1980s thinking that downplayed the role of the market in the predominantly un-commodified communities of Africa.

A year after the Windhoek Declaration, Ghana inaugurated its Fourth Republican Constitutional system to establish a multiparty democratic system with an emphasis on the private sector as the kingpin of economic and democratic development. A comprehensive press freedom regime was entrenched in the constitution and even state-owned media were given arms-length insulation from the whim of governmental authority. It will be too early to offer a comprehensive assessment of the consequences of such an ideological turn to the private sector in the economy including the media sector. However, this study will try to tease out some anecdotal evidence to demonstrate some of the emerging disastrous consequence, especially in the area of telecom.

A decade after the Windhoek Declaration, Namibia yet again served as the venue of an assessment and evaluation conference on the Windhoek Declaration, with the support of UNESCO and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA). Most of the background papers to the 2001 conference offered mixed results of progress (Lingo and Lobe 2001, Odhiambo 2001, Alabi 2001, Peters 2001). The picture of the prospects for improvement were however promising. For obvious reasons the fortunes of the media are always often tied to the political trajectory of the country. Thus the expansion of the new political culture of multiparty electoral democracy on the continent seem to suggest that research in media in Africa will have to be focused on the promise of the private sector instead of the perils of government control. Some African countries still have to battle with the obnoxious problem of direct state

control, but the trend seem to suggest that such cases are the vestiges of an eroding paradigm than an African paragon. The emerging new order, at least if we take Ghana and South Africa as leading examples, is one of legally guaranteed and functional press freedoms, and a field day for the private sector. Thus this study, using Ghana as an example, will not focus on the age-old problem of press freedoms and the perils of authoritarian government control. To a large extent, that belongs to history, if even it is a very recent history.

A careful scrutiny of the "report cards" presented at the 2001 Windhoek appraisal conference reveals a hint as to what might be of research interest when the problem of direct governmental control is eventually resolved across the continent. Alabi (2001, 3) hints that the emerging challenge to the media is economic. Now that the economies of many African countries have been effectively re-structured into the global economy through structural adjustment programs, the volatility of the local currencies against the euro, the US dollar and the British pound makes investment in media industries a rather risky venture. "One striking phenomenon is the predominance of commercial ownership even though the private entrepreneurs in the sector are unanimous in their view that investment in the media industry is quite risky" (Alabi 2001, 10). Against this backdrop, I want to argue that the African media scene is going through a transition from an era of authoritarian political control to the hammer and anvil that is the violence of economics. At the heart of this study, for that matter, is an interest in the violence of economics on community through communication policy. Power is still the research problematic, as in the numerous studies on African media. But this time the focus is not on power though politics but on how power operates through the structures of economics that are underwritten by political agency.

Against this backdrop of ferment in the field of development communication policy, how would one carve out a working definition of development communication policy? As far back in the 1970s, when UNESCO increasingly became the hotbed of international debates on democratizing communication, its working defining of communication policy was put thus: "sets of principles and norms established to guide the behavior of communication systems" (UNESCO 1972). This definition goes further to elaborate that these principles and norms emanate from the political ideology, the economic and social condition of a given country. But such a definition turns to be rather too abstract. More especially given the revolutionary changes in the sector in recent times, such a definition is obviously dated.

Mowlana and Wilson (1990, 107) have also taken a good aim at defining communication policy. For them, it is the "systematic institutionalized principles, norms and behavior that are designed through legal and regulatory procedures and/or perceived through historical understanding to guide formation, distribution, and control of communication in both its human and technological dimensions." While this attempt is arguably comprehensive, it lacks a critical perspective. It has the wide scope that may be functional for institutional needs and also delineates the area of communication policy without ambiguities.

I favor this definition as a starting point. For one thing, it makes a distinction between the human and technological dimension of communication, as well as pointing out the historical situated-ness of policy practices. However, such a definition needs to be expanded beyond the understanding that policy refers only to the path or option pursued. What I am trying to say

is that a policy analysis should include the options not taken, the paths not pursued and the sectors where there are no institutionalized norms and procedures, yet fall within the purview of communication. Thus when policy is silent on an aspect of communication, the silence should be viewed as a policy option; otherwise the area of communication policy analysis simply becomes limited to explicit acts on *regulation*. Re-stated, communication policy analysis should include both institutional action and inaction in the communication sector of the country. In this sense, we can have an unarticulated communication policy as well as an articulated one. We can also account for the dis-articulated elements in the formation of policy.

## Articulating a Method: Articulation as Method

As a project that focuses on contemporary policy practices I will employ a political economic form of analysis that is linked to a cultural studies methodological perspective. In communication studies, the tension between political economy and cultural studies has resulted in several debates at academic conferences and within the pages of academic journals. Probably the most notable occasion is the 1995 special issue of *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* Volume 12 No. 1 where some leading scholars either tried to make a case against cultural studies (Garnham 1995a and 1995b) or argue against the basis of the critiques against cultural studies (Grossberg 1995). Some took a more centrist position (Murdock, 1995 and Carey 1995) At the heart of the debate are epistemological and methodological preferences. Scholars of the political economic persuasion tend to demand a sort of privileged ontologies from which to approach the object of study. For instance social class, defined by ones location in the mode of production and ones relations to the means of production is considered more or less as a first principle, and for that matter a fundamental grid from which to pursue social analysis. Then again, the primary place of the economy is also considered virtually nonnegotiable. Social and cultural elements are considered avatars of the economy and thus the economy, in varied ways, is always and often retained as the last instance of determination. Restated, political economic perspectives, as argued by Garnham, tend to work with an implicit or explicit form of determinist logic within a structural framework. The individual or social groups other than economic ones such as social classes are capable of tinkering with the process in a social formation and alter the processes of causality but only within the circumscribed space that the economy can tolerate. In that case, race and ethnicity are legitimate analytical categories only in so far as it is understood that social class is paramount. This is precisely how Garnham positions his arguments in the colloquy.

Scholars within the cultural studies perspective have resisted such a reification and over privileging of the economy. While the fundamental character of the economy is acknowledge, cultural studies scholars have insisted that every analysis can only be reflexive and responsive if the context of the analysis is foregrounded (Grossberg 1995, Morris 1997, During 2000). Cultural studies is therefore often defined as theorizing in context. Grounding context then

means that there are no privileged categories. Social class is important, but its significance depends on the context of the analysis. At some point ethnicity or race can have more political and epistemological relevance than social class in the enactment of agency. Consequently, the determinist epistemology of political economy is abandoned in favor of overdetermination in the process of causality (Williams 1977). People make history, sometimes within the conditions of their choosing, so to speak. It is not every time that the economic structure has that force of determination. It is this cultural studies evacuation of the Marxist classist framework (given cultural studies indebtedness to Marxism) that political economists are apprehensive about privileging context in theory. Robertson (1994, 4) unwraps the citadel of economics by arguing, "we have come increasingly to recognize that while economic matters are of tremendous importance in relations between societies and in various forms of transnational relations, these matters are considerably subject to cultural coding."

Meehan (1999), in a critical review of the colloquy has described, and rightly so, the exchanges between Garnham and Grossberg as one of an exercise in exchanging stereotypes than actually engaging in theoretical debates. Citing Schlesinger and Murdock (1983), Carol Stabile (1995) and other scholars of who fruitfully engage with both cultural studies and political economy, Meehan, a scholar of political economic orientation, calls for dialogues and not debates between the two critical traditions. Putting the debates into perspectives, Meehan draws parallels with the 1970s debates in communication studies between administrative research and critical research and makes the point that the so-called debates between cultural studies and political economy have become ritualized. On this score, I very much agree with Meehan's observation. For when debates become ritualized enactments the intellectual content evaporates, turning the exchanges into one of trading in stereotypes.

The schism between political economy and cultural studies is sometimes characterized as a conflict between theorizing production in the former and theorizing consumption in the latter (Babe 2003). But such a characterization is misleading for the fact that the conceptual resources of cultural studies do not prevent one from doing cultural studies of production. Nor does the structural bias of political economy preclude the possibility of theorizing consumption. Dallas Smythe's (1981) work, especially the chapter "On Audience Commodity and its Work" is an excellent demonstration of the potential of political economy in theorizing consumption and production simultaneously when we break away from the traditional fixed gaze on ownership and "media industries" perspectives. Grossberg (1997) makes it clear that cultural studies is about a materialist theory of culture, while Meaghan Morris (1997) makes the significant point that cultural studies is about the production of theories and not the application of existing theories. Obviously this is where it departs from political economy in character. For in political economy the issue of applying existing theoretical frameworks is central to the research endeavor. I want to argue then that the source of conflict between the two approaches is not in their ways of engaging with their common object of research (that is the relations between people and power), but in their differing strategies. While cultural studies is a question-driven project, political economy is a doctrine or answer-driven practice. Thus instead of having two opposing approaches, we should think of the two as complementary with a common heritage of a critical tradition and emancipatory ethos.

I presume that it is against this background, and seeking for synergies than division that Vincent Mosco (1996) makes a strong recommendation that political economic perspectives on communication break away from thinking in structures and institutions and incorporate the celebration of agency from cultural studies and a more fluid understanding of structures from Anthony Giddens. He therefore suggests three analytical entry points that characterize processes rather than name institutions. These analytical categories are *commodification*, *spatialization* and *structuration* (Mosco 1996, 133ff). To these categories, I will add *articulation* (Jennifer Daryl Slack 1996; Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe 1985; Stuart Hall 1986 and 1991; Lawrence Grossberg 1997).

## Structuration and Articulation

When dealing with structures on the one hand and agency on the other, there is always a tendency to slip towards one, especially when this project intends to foreground structures (technologies as existential embodiments or the state as a site for policy initiative). Giddens' theory of structuration tries to forestall this tendency by its idea of duality of structure. According to his theory, structures or structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize (Giddens 1984, 25). Or as Mosco (1996, 212) will put it, structuration "describes a process by which structures are constituted out of human agency, even as they provide the very 'medium' of that constitution."

Human agency, when enacted, carries with it the dual effect of intended and unintended consequences. The unintended consequences may form the condition of subsequent action. This perspective of structuration theory has a methodological purchase because it goes beyond the cause-and-effect approaches of the dominant paradigm in development communication. For instance, if the British Empire introduced radio in the Gold Coast (Ghana) as part of its World War II mobilization effort, the unintended consequence was that it turned out to be the convenient medium for different ethnolinguistic groups to invent a hitherto non-existent political community called Ghana, to dis-articulate the Empire's economic project of colonialism. I still cannot imagine the coming into being of Ghana without radio. Radio then was a key element that helped to secure the conditions of coming into being of the Ghanaian polity.

Mosco (1996, 214-215) criticizes Giddens for his accentuation of agency as against structure. This seem to be the standard criticism (ritualized practice) political economists launch against cultural studies as one will find for instance in Nicholas Garnham (2001), but nonetheless Mosco adds that the emphasis on agency helps us understand how power operates at the constitutive (social), interactive or micro-level (individuating). And so one might think of society as the ensemble of structuring actions that agents initiate to mutually shape class, race and social movement relations. If I am to extend this to my object of study, I will say, the nation exist apparently as a sutured, seamless whole, but when interrogated, the webs of ethnicity, class and gender that mutually constitute identifiable social relations (including shaping policy) which in turn re-order the structures (including technologies)

become evident. And so when policy initiative prioritizes the private sector, or adopts neo-liberal vocabulary such as cost effective, cost recovery, free market, deregulation etc., one may as well extend the analysis to include class, gender and ethnicity of policy actors. The privileged vocabulary of neoliberal economics such as cost effective, cost recovery, consumers instead of citizens, free market, etc, become recursive structuring elements that individuals and institutions use to discursively reconstitute the postcolony.

Giddens recommends that the concepts used in the exposition of structuration theory should not be seen as a distinctive research program as such. And I do not intend to use it as, for instance, one will use any of the schools of discourse analysis to approach a text. Rather, and as already hinted above, I regard the concept, re-conceptualized as articulation, as "sensitizing device to be used in a selective way in thinking about (my) research questions or interpreting (my) findings" (Giddens 1991, 203). Thus some of the key concepts that may be relevant to my investigation of the implications of certain policy approaches in Ghana include the fact of "duality of structures" and the understanding that all forms of agency are enacted under conditions of "mixed intentionality" (Giddens 1989, 61-62). For instance policy initiatives come with intended and unintended consequences, both of which may equally be important. In this way, an analysis of policy should include contemplation on not just the stated intentions of governmental agents, but the unintended consequences of the initiatives. While methodologically structuration seems to hold a lot of promise in analyzing policy practices, when one tries to operationalize it, it tends to be problematic. It is in view of this that I find articulation as a more flexible and sophisticated method.

In cultural studies articulation is conceptualized both as theory and method that maps out the operation of human and institutional agency. This sounds very much like structuration. As a theory and method, articulation has been described as one of the most generative concepts that can be used to characterize a social formation without falling into reductionism or essentialism (Slack 1996, 112). As I understand it, the primary relevance of articulation, as a methodological approach is that it helps us overcome the problem of determination in social theory.


## Defining Articulation


Articulation originates from the linguistic practice "to articulate" which means speaking well or the facility and clarity in speech. This meaning is transferred as a metaphor to describe a huge truck with a long trailer designed to be easily severed and reconnected to say a tanker or a container-trailer (Hall 1986). Thus we have "the articulator truck." The truck's ability to articulate with various trailer designs gives it the quality of being an articulator. It is this aspect of joining and disjoining, rejoining and conjoining as and when and where it is convenient that captures the essence of the usage of the concept of articulation transferred to cultural studies. Literally, to articulate is therefore an act of speech in which words are brought together as a social act of making meaning. This speech-as-discourse becomes social practice-as-discourse in the cultural studies sense. In effect, articulation is positioned in

cultural studies as a discourse theory and method. Slack (1996, 114) will therefore define articulation as a "process of creating connections."

As already stated, articulation, as both theory and method, was transferred into the domain of cultural studies to assist in overcoming the problem of determination. The limited and vulgar Marxist interpretation of socio-economic formation privileges the economy, as the base, from which other aspects of society are determined. Thus, culture as superstructural element is determined by the type of economic foundation a society has. In an attempt to overcome this reductionism, Louis Althusser puts forward his concept of a complex totality and theory of ideological autonomy. In a complex totality, relationships correspond and contradict at various levels. And this way of theorizing helps us to break away from economic determinism for a while, until Althusser insists that there is a last instance of determination, which is the economy.

By arguing that instead of an economic base, what we have is a conjuncture of a relationship of the economy, ideology, the political and the cultural in a totality with effectivity as one of overdetermination; and that there is an ongoing inter-structural relationship between these categories, Althusser lays the foundation for the use of articulation as a way of understanding the social domain but may not have used articulation per se to explain this conjuncture. Hall (1986; 1989; and 1991) employs the concept in his reading of Marx, Antonio Gramci and Althusser while Laclau and Mouffe (1985) before Hall critiqued the Althusserian insistence of determination in the last instance from a Gramscian perspective and replaced it with articulation. From Science Studies, Bruno Latour (1999) also appreciates the analytical and methodological power of articulation in explaining the production of scientific knowledge. What is obvious in all these works is the idea that conjunctures are historically specific moments of articulation.

In trying to theorize the multivariate nature of culture, articulation (together with re-articulation, double-articulation and dis-articulation) is more responsive in explaining the dynamics of social formations, without privileging any sector. Thus, articulation allows us to escape "the twin traps of reductionism and essentialism" (Slack 1996, 112). Let's take the example of identity and how it is formed through articulation. In constructing identities through the process of articulation, people use building blocks from biology, geography, history and collective memory, religion, personal fantasies and power structure. The task is not to ascertain before hand how much of these building blocks will be used in constructing an identity. It depends on the conjuncture. This aspect of conjuncture makes the whole practice of articulation a matter of contingency. To say that articulation depends on a particular context or better still, a particular conjuncture is to stress the element of contingency in the practice of articulation. It is this element of contingency that makes the problem of determination an unfixable and unpredictable one.

There is a joke that became popular on the Internet after September 11, 2001. It goes that a man was in New York's Central Park when a dog went amuck and attacked a young boy. The man was able to restrain the dog, pulled it off the boy and in the process accidentally strangled it to death. A reporter for the *New York Times* came to interview him, on his act of heroism. He suggested the headline: "New Yorker Saves the Life of a Young Boy!" But the man told him:

"I am not from New York." OK, then how about "American Hero Saves the Day"? But the man insisted, "I am not American." Then the reporter asked the man where he was from. "I am from Pakistan," he finally revealed. The next morning, the headline blasted out: *Muslim fundamentalist strangles dog in Central Park; FBI investigating possible links to al Qaeda*. This joke, in the first instance reminds us that the practice of journalism is the art of articulation. Or more generally the practice of writing is an art of articulation. The accented element in the choice of headline is the collective experience of the 911. That is the conjuncture that is defined by 911. At least while such a headline could still have been thinkable before September 11, 2001 its chances of being brought to being would have been minimal. But the contemporary conjuncture of 911 secures the conditions of existence of such a story. Within the context of the joke, the assumption is that the story is a possibility that can make sense to the paranoid community that the United States became following the savage and dastardly act of 911.

The above illustration enables us to argue that at the micro level (textual level) there are no guarantees or predictable patterns outside the conjuncture. The text is overdetermined by the context. Thus articulation allows us to escape the mechanistic conceptions of communication as a transmission model (Grossberg 1993, 4; Slack 1996, 112). The idea that messages are transmitted from a source through a channel to a consumer is simply insufficient in explaining the complexity of the consumption process, of contextuality, of identity and difference, of the polysemous nature of the sign and above all the constitution of the social. Thus the possibility of a particular articulation depends on the conjuncture. It "requires a particular condition of existence to appear" Hall (1991, 112 [footnote]), and can be overthrown or re-shaped. That is to say linkages can be broken (dis-articulated) and new ones forged (re-articulated). Nothing is given as a constant. Stuart Hall (1986, 53) elaborates:

> 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 a discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be re-articulated in different ways because they have no necessary 'belongingness'.

One of the places we can find in the literature on the concept of articulation that attempts a nuanced operationalization of the method is the work of Laclau and Mouffe (1985). These two give a further theoretical push to Gramsci's concept of hegemony. For them, hegemony, in its functioning, presupposes that the theoretical field is dominated by the category of articulation (1985, 93). Hegemony is an effect of articulation. They redefine the political subject as not a necessarily stable subject of enunciation and build on the understanding that there are no guarantees on the topography of the social because identities and subjectivities are not fixed. Individuals and institutions can be interpellated in different subject positionalities. The Marxist and labor inspired African nationalist president of yesteryear becomes the bourgeois, billion-dollar Swiss account holder of today. The nationalist politician who demanded civil liberties from the European colonist will turn around and deny the same rights

to his own people after independence. Specific identities are nothing but specific and momentary results of specific articulations that conjoin parts whose relations are arbitrary. Social class from this perspective, at least within the African experience, is not that calcified position or identity but work in conjunction with other articulable elements such as ethnicity, location, and race to cohere into temporary positionalities. To wit, a social class exists not necessarily because of its members' relations to the means of production, but more precisely because certain social subjects have articulated certain social characteristics and brought the class into being by their very practice of articulation. In effect, *social categories* such as classes, modes of production, productive forces and a whole host of other categories do not exist *a priori*. They are brought into through the practice of articulation (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 102). Their conditions of existence become secured only after an articulation.

To say that social categories do not have an *a priori* existence is not to say that *conceptual categories* do not exist. Thus what the duo are insisting on is a sort of discourse defined as a "relational totality', the non-discursively articulated part defined as "element" while the differential positions resulting from the previous discourses defined as "moments" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 105). Having said that, they insist that every element then is already a moment in the pre-discursive stage. This then allows them to account for contingency: "If we accept… that a discursive totality never exists in the form of a simple *given and delimited* positivity, the relational logic will be incomplete and pierced by contingency. The transition from the 'elements' to the 'moments' is never entirely fulfilled. A no man's-land thus emerges, making the articulatory practice possible. In this case, there is no social identity fully protected from a discursive exterior that deforms it and prevents it becoming fully sutured. Both the identities and the relations lose their necessary character" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 110-111).

Laclau and Mouffe's take on articulation takes the discussion to a higher level, to a level where they are virtually pushing the envelope to its limits. The risk of consigning everything to articulation is that we experience an ontological implosion of certainty. To say that classes exist only because certain concrete discourses and institutional practices designate their being is to evacuate materiality and leave everything to discourse. Stuart Hall (1986, 57) has been rather uncomfortable with such position and has criticized Laclau and Mouffe for introducing an inverse reductionism into articulation; reducing everything social to discourse, so to speak. I personally do not agree with such a criticism. What I do concede is that Laclau and Mouffe send us to the limits, indeed to the point of disconcertion that often characterizes new conceptual grounds. Putting the disconcerting effect that their argument creates in us aside, we can appreciate them. The conceptual leap that they take with articulation is that once we agree to the idea that social categories have no automatic configurations and structures, (and that is very true) we can unpack them, and for political purposes, reconstitute them. There is this Marxian formulation that when an idea grips a people, it acquires a material existence. Materialism and idealism then are not two exclusive domains, but are positionalities, or moments that are temporary closures. That is why class cannot be that permanent fixed identity but an articulation, just like other categories such as ethnicity and race. After all, didn't Marx admit in a letter to Engels in 1882 "You know very well where we found our idea

of class struggle; we found it in the work of the French historians who talked about the race struggle" (quoted in Foucault 2003, 79).

Laclau and Mouffe started their discussion with a critique of the Althusserian concept of totality, where Althusser makes the point that social relations are totalities governed in the last instance by the economy. Instead of thinking of social ensembles as totalities with a final determinate law in the form of the economy, Laclau and Mouffe suggest that we shift to talking of "totalizing effects": "a certain notion of totality could be reintroduced with the difference that it would no longer involve an underlying principle that would unify 'society' but an ensemble of totalizing effects in an open relational complex" (Laclau and Mouffe 1985, 103). After rejecting the ontology of categories, totalizing effects as put forward by Laclau and Mouffe, seem to be the chock that stops us from descending into a receding mirage of search for a phantom irreducible categories. Determination and overdetermination are then read as totalizing effects that objects and subjects produce as part of their effectivity and agency in a relational totality.

If articulation helps us avoid determinism and also foregrounds the absence of a guaranteed social effect, then there may be a problem here. One normally uses a method of research to arrive at a conclusion of certainty that can be of "use". For instance, survey research, ethnography and content analysis all offer a sort of solace of closure where one can draw a summary of definite theoretical results or theoretical positions. But articulation in this sense lacks a predictive value. Nothing is guarantable. The quest for theoretical certainty is abandoned for temporary and working theoretical positions as temporary closure for subsequent re-theorization (Slack 1996). This is not the moment of the methodological weakness of articulation. Rather, it marks its quality as a method of rigor. The task in employing articulation is not to arrive at a conclusion or closure but rather, an aid to unpack, interrogate and tease out what has already been presented to use as "facts," reified positions and objects as well as what appears to us already as common sense in the Gamscian sense. Gramsci said "common sense" comes to us without an inventory of its parts. If so then, articulation as a method becomes the forensic tool to be used to unpack how a certain 'sense' achieved commonality. We can use articulation to recover that lost inventory to unpack hegemony, and offer relief to Gramsci's problem. Instead of a solace of closure, then articulation offers us a solace of disclosure.

Raymond Williams did not discuss articulation in the way he gave attention to certain key concepts in his handy and articulate book *Marxism and Literature*, but he was virtually laying the foundation for the forensic quality of articulation when he said: "the most interesting and difficult part of any cultural analysis, in complex societies, is that which seeks to grasp the hegemonic in its active and formative but also in its transformative processes" (1977, 113). Williams made this comment while explicating on the concept of hegemony. Following Williams, Hall (1986, 53) pointed out 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."

When various objects come to us already constituted, securely sutured as manifest truths, (e.g. Nation, technology, free market, globalization, and development) we will be well placed to interrogate these articulated moments and see how their hegemonies operate; that is how their existence was secured into being. From this perspective, the contemporary hype about communication revolution and information age should be seen as an articulation much in the same way that policy practices are by themselves articulations. Discourses of nationalism and nation-state are also specific articulations in the same way that "developing countries" are. Thus in trying to interrogate the different conceptions of the nation-state and shifting paradigms in policy practices, the concept of articulation can be used in a generative way to look at how dissimilar features are re-articulated into an expressive homology, which in turn gives it the aura of truth, facticity and validity. For instance, how is it that contemporary discourses on national development which implicate national economies as effective cogs in the global anti-national economy, are able to accommodate previous concept of nationalism that prioritized collective use-value over exchange-value? Here the concept of articulation allows us to, in a selective way, to locate moments of articulation, dis-articulation and re-articulation in official government discourses about development, national interest, progress etc. And as I go through the labyrinth of the politics of communication policy, I will demonstrate how specific practices secure the existence or actuality of specific outcomes that present a certain metaphysics of presence, occluding to us that sediments of history of their articulation.

For me, the working categories of *element* and *moment* that Laclau and Mouffe identify in the process and operation of totalizing effects are helpful in the interrogation of policy practices within the context of nation formation. What elements and moments are mobilized into articulating particular positions? Who (subject positions) are those engaged in the articulation? What are the previous trajectories of the articulable moments and elements, given that every element is by itself a previous articulation? What elements are dis-articulated? Interrogating policy discourse and practices within this model questions will help us identify what Hall (1986, 53–54) calls "lines of tangential force" or "magnetic lines of tendency" in policy discourses and practices. It is only then we can find out why a particular policy is brought into being and that moment of disclosure then becomes our harvest.

## Articulating the National

One particular articulation that literally confronts this project is the concept and conception of Ghana as a nation-state. The securing of Ghana's existence as a nation-state was not something that was guaranteed. It was a particular articulation within a particular conjuncture that brought it into being. African historian Basil Davidson reminds us that the path from colony to nation-state was not a fait accompli. The path that was not taken on the eve of colonial closure was the path of returning to pre-colonial political configurations of chiefdoms and kingdoms.

When the Gold Coast Colony and the Protectorate eventually became independent Ghana in 1957, the celebrations were both vivid and popular. But the king of Asante was not present at them. He refused to attend the great festivities of Independence Day. For him, as for others of his kind, this independence could only be a perverse denial of the old independence, and the new nationalists no more than usurpers of the legacy of Africa's own development (Davidson 1992, 73).

What this quote reveals is that the struggle to establish Ghana was not just a binary struggle between the Empire and its subjects, but a struggle to articulate a modernist political community on the lines of the European experience on the one hand, and a return to pre-colonial political legacy of kingdoms. In this struggle it was the modern nation-state model that won. Behind this formation of Ghana then, we can identify certain elements and moments that helped to secure the existence of Ghana and not as disparate collection of ethnic kingdoms and polities. Some of these elements include the mood of the international comity of nations at the time, the legacy of colonialism, British political culture of Westminster democracy and especially capitalism. The process of constructing Ghanaian nationhood, and for that matter most of the individual African countries included an articulation of lack of cultural difference between the various communities that came together to constitute the new nation. This articulation was a blatant disregard for the fact of multiple ethnicities in these countries (Rønning 1996, 43). Thus at another level, I argue in view of my discussion on articulation that, the formation of Ghana, as a postcolonial nation-state was a consequence of contingency not necessarily the outcome of a certain structural logic.

Students of African politics are familiar with the political articulation of cultural unanimism of "one people one culture" political community despite the fact that such a conception of African nations was contra the composite character of these countries. A sort of pseudo consensus was arrived at in many African one party states where the fact of their specific country's multiethnic composition and multiculturalism were blatantly denied or disarticulated. Rather multi-party democracy was articulated as an anathema to African culture. Helge Rønning makes the case that "on the surface there appears no problem in upholding African traditional values as part of promoting African identities, whether ethnic or otherwise. The problem, however, emerges when presumed African values are used as they have been by the ZANU (PF) to restrict the political space of the individual by giving cultural legitimacy to monopoly politics under the cover of 'national unity'" (Rønning 1996, 43-44). Paulin Hountondji (1983) has also described the political articulation of a common national culture as a "unanimist illusion." Today we can look back and map out why such a fraudulent articulation of African countries as single cultural communities successfully held sway as the truths of the moment from the 1960s to the 1980s.

I have already pointed out the fact that this period was characterized by international community's infantilization of the postcolonial nations in Africa. Thus an authoritarian father figure in the form of the postcolonial state was needed to do the parenting. Using the methodological resources of articulation we can point out this moment of the international community's attitude to Africa as a conjuncture. It was a conjuncture in which the UN, Western European democracies, the United States and Canada were ready to do business with ruthless

dictatorships on the unique continent of Hegel's Africa. Thus the conjuncture structured dictatorships as a 'truth' of the moment because African countries were considered not yet matured enough to benefit from a democratic culture. Elements within the conjuncture included international class alliances, the imperial requirements of Western countries and the guilt from the colonial past. Contextualizing these elements within the conjuncture we can account for the formation of Ghana, for instance, as a nation-state, first as a dictatorship under various military and civilian types and later as a democracy.

Writing about the English experience, Raymond Williams (1983, 180) observes that many forms of "nationality" in the world are artificial. But what is important is not their artificiality but the fact that they are functional. "Nation" he points out is radically connected with "native" but the idea of a modern nation-state is entirely artificial. Williams (1983, 185) explains that in the case of building nations out of local communities, the main driving force has been the capitalist mode of production. The quest for markets, raw materials, labor and new investment opportunities operated against the self-sustaining logic of small communities. Through mining, plantation farming and secondary level production (factories etc.) labor is moved about and abandoned at short notice, without respect for existing boundaries of communities of memories. Small community industries are knocked out of operation through competition and local labor is forced to migrate. The introduction of money facilitates this process of de-localization of people, which in turn alters their frame of imagination to go beyond the simple ethno-linguistic boundaries. "Through these large and prolonged dislocations and relocations, which are still in progress in every part of the world, older traditional forms of identity and community were dislocated and relocated, within enforced mobilities and necessary settlements" (Williams 1983, 185). Thus much in the same way like communication technologies, "money" and indeed, the capitalist mode of production all operated to mediate the new wider forms of communities of memories that were to give birth to the postcolonial nation-state. Better still, the postcolonial state is partly constituted by the imperial requirements of capital.

Such a political economic perspective resonates with the Ghanaian experience of nation building. The fact that the Gold Coast was an economic outpost of the British Empire is obvious. Yet the rhetoric of self-determination and independence, articulated on cultural and communal terms, adopted the very system of modernization and commodity production that was the basis of colonialism. Those who champion the rhetoric of nationalism and see no contradiction with the commodification of the nation are, so to speak, reproducing the conditions of colonialism. Given the dominance of neo-liberal economic perspectives in contemporary institutional thinking, this emphasis by Raymond Williams that the nation is a product of the circulation of capital can be rewarding in unearthing the economic logic of nation formation. For Williams (1983, 186-187) a very contradictory nature of the capitalist project of nation formation is its ability to appropriate the very vocabulary of "natural communities" and yet work against the very foundation of these communities to build a new community that serves the requirement of international capital.

In view of this umbilical cord between the postcolonial nation-state and international capital, Williams (1983, 203) is very cautious about the leadership in developing countries.

He cautions that when elite from developing countries speak about development, we have to ask to what extent they are speaking and acting in the general interest of their people, including the poorest parts of their nation-states? "Development", he reminds us, is inherently an ideological term that tends to account for isolated specific processes of production "while leaving all other effects to a 'social' margin beyond its terms". Thus what is of importance is the origin and motive of any particular development process (ibid. 206). Williams' articulation of the nation is such a cogent one as it looks at the issue through the lens of political economy. This approach provides the subtext for my analysis though, as a project in communication studies, the assumption that I build on is that the nation as a political community is a communication problematic.

## Structure of the Study

This book is structured into nine chapters including this introductory and methodological one. Chapter two is an extensive literature review of certain key theoretical assumptions that have endured in development communication. The state, the nation and modernization are the axis around which I probe into existing literature. I argue that the postcolonial state in development communication theory has been under theorized. And this has been due to a number of factors including the ideological commitments of cultural and media imperialism theorists who presumed the postcolonial state to be irrelevant in the face of global capitalism. For the neoliberalist, the state has been slighted by default and the attention has been on social and psychographic factors. I point out this flimsy approach to the postcolonial state as the theoretical blindspot in development communication, and pursue an attempt to recover the postcolonial state. The rest of the chapter makes an attempt to link up development communication literature with cultural studies perspectives on the nation-state as a communicative problematic.

The initiated attempt in chapter two to recover the postcolonial state serves as the main subject of chapter three. I trace the trajectory of the state in development, from its colonial form to the contemporary postcolonial version. This mainly historical analysis unearths certain interesting features of the state in development. For instance, I show that the colonial state in the Gold Coast (Ghana) invented the rhetoric of development as a *dispositif* (device or apparatus) in the art of colonial governance. The postcolonial state took over from where the colonial state left off in the re-invention of development, this time round articulated around a more power myths of self-rule and development planning.

Chapter four concentrates on contemporary conceptual issues in development communication that inform or shape the articulation of policy around new information and communication technologies. Concepts such as leapfrogging, digital divide, participation, civil society and technology come under sustained analysis. The mythical purchase of these concepts is interrogated to tease out how they are articulated into policy. The way they are mobilized into policy discourse is reviewed against a backdrop of political theories of participation and social inclusion within the context of modernization. This discussion leads

to chapter five where the searchlight is directed on Ghana's experience in colonial and postcolonial communication policy articulation. Archival material sources on colonial administration's broadcasting policy and recent policy documents are combined with interviews of policy actors in this chapter. The analysis leads to a conclusion that a new paradigm in communication policymaking was not ushered in by the political changes from colonial to postcolonial governance, but by the launching of economic structural adjustment policies two decades ago that redefined the role of the state in development. The colonial and early postcolonial states had similar attitude towards broadcasting. And this was basically defined more by humanism than by the attractions of market regulations. Structural adjustment policies inaugurated a new era of governance that increasingly privileges market over state instrumentality in allocation of resources. For the communication sector, this has had enormous implications, one of which is the redefinition of communication as information. Information now becomes a resource that the state needs to become a fortressed institution while the earlier conception of communication in development terms has been abandoned.

The approach to broadcasting policy articulation is extended to telecom policy in chapter six. And the main sources are World Bank and Ghana government policy documents. The World Bank has been the dominant player in the articulation of Ghana's telecom policy within the structural adjustment framework. The bank's redefinition of "universal access" in telephony is problematized and the push to commodification of communication critiqued. From this analysis of policy articulation, the discussion dovetails into telecom policy implementation in chapter seven. The activities leading to the formation of Ghana's communication regulatory agency to police the sector is reviewed. Three recent cases of telecom governance in Ghana are introduced and interrogated to demonstrate the challenges posed by big business to the postcolonial state and its institutions such as the National Communication Authority.

Chapter eight makes a transition from critiquing policy within the framework of commodification to an appreciation of consumption and private sector participation in digital communication services within the urban limits of the city of Accra. Here, interviews with users of telecenters and mobile telephony in Accra provide the platform for discussion on digital consumption. The last chapter concludes this book with a highlighting of some of the pertinent arguments raised.

# Modernization and Development Communication: Questioning the Assumptions

This chapter explores the theoretical and conceptual terrain of development communication. It problematizes categories such as the state, the nation, and modernization and puts their treatment in the mainstream literature into perspective. This then leads to the argument that the state as an actor in development practice and communication policy has often been slighted in the development communication literature. A recovery of the postcolonial state and an admission of its circumscribed institutional agency are called for. The chapter then frames the state and nation as communicative problematic.

Over the past four decades a great deal of literature has been produced under the rubric of development communication or international communication starting from such pioneering works as Daniel Lerner's *The Passing of Traditional Society* (1958) through Wilbur Schramm's *Mass Media and National Development* (1964) to the very recent *Communication for Development* by Jan Servaes (1999). Servaes (1999, 19) rightly notes that *development* is one of the oldest and most powerful ideas to emerge from the West. It can be traced through the works of Hegel as indicated in the opening quote in the previous chapter. The main idea behind its usage has been the assumption that growth, or more precisely economic growth, and the concept of progress are the main indicators of development. "Development is thus conceived as organic, immanent, direct, cumulative, irreversible and goal oriented" (Servaes 1999, 19). Thus, modernization has been synonymous with development.

Timothy Luke (1990) interrogates the conceptual usage of *modernization* and *development* and points out that these concepts are the latest sophistication in imperialist idiom to describe the post-War social formation. He points out that colonialism, westernization, Christianization and civilizing mission were European coinages that described and justified the imperialist intervention in African, Asian and Latin American economies. In the post-World War II conjuncture and the ascendancy of the United States, a new set of vocabulary, including modernization and development had to be produced to replace the discredited equivalents.

Elements of modernization and modernity can be readily detected in any nation and do not need to be associated with any single cultural or political region in order to have

meaning; hence they are more difficult to rebel against or to reject as 'foreign.' By the same token, the modernizationists can appear to be far more progressive and respectful of cultural traditions by advocating *modernization* rather than the *Westernization* of the developing world (Luke 1990, 222).

Charles Taylor's (1999, 236) discussion of this subject of re-articulating and renaming also reminds us that what used to be called backward societies were re-named "underdeveloped," and later considering this, too, as indelicate, shifted to the now common usage, "developing" countries. Thus, when queried, the discursive grids of these concepts reveal the nature of power shifts in the international arena more than they explain local conditions in African countries. Of course modernization has to do with the transfer of Euro-American experience of progress to the materially less developed parts of the world. So the Hegelian notion of undeveloped and unhistorical Africa, discussed in the previous chapter, serves as the unwitting premise for such an exercise.

While the old European understanding of development is of importance in understanding the project of modernization, it is probably the late colonial and post World War II re-invention of the concept that captures the ideological lineage of the term. But it is appropriate to acknowledge that the "ghost of Hegel", as African philosopher, Olufemi Taiwo (1998) may prefer to put it, still stalks development thinking in the theory mills of the West. Aside from this ideological fallout of the concept, there are two central elements driving much of the institutional and intellectual investment in development communication research since its institutionalization in the 1960s. The first one is the promise of *technology* in general and communication technology in particular. This will come under discussion in subsequent chapters as I interrogate how development policy is articulated. The second factor for the interest in development communication is the emergence of the *postcolonial nation-state* in what is generally referred to as the Third World. Unfortunately, the framework of the postcolonial nation-state is often abandoned in analyses in preference for a focus on the international dimension of development communication. It will be appropriate to state in parenthesis that the fact that *Development Communication* is nowadays fashionably called *International Communication* is an indication of this internationalist turn. It is mainly the Diffusionist School that is typically interested in the national framework or more precisely the local because its scholars are interested in measuring effects. But the *state* and the *nation* are fundamental categories in any attempt at understanding processes of development communication in the developing world. In the first place, despite the fact that the state may be hooked to the vicissitudes of international capital, it still has the local power, responsibility and mandate of policymaking.

The nation being referred to here by definition has less to do with ethno-cultural constituents, even though the postcolonial nation often strives to define itself in cultural terms derived from diversity. The postcolonial nation refers to what the postcolonial state has actively constituted as the "imagined community" on the aftermath of the classical colonial project. Thus, Ghana with more than 50 ethno-cultural groups and Nigeria with more than 100 ethno-cultural groups are each defined as nations. The late postcolonial nation is also

often referred to as a developing nation because it is in the process of *becoming* through the project of modernization.

Conceptually while *postcolonial* is quite popular in Third World scholarship concerned with issues of identity and culture on a global level, I appropriate it to discuss mundane issues that confront recently colonized societies with a particular interest on Ghana. I am particularly influenced by Ella Shohat's (1992, 101) perceptive analysis and definition of postcoloniality as "a designation for critical discourses which thematize issues emerging from colonial relations and their aftermath, covering a long historical span (including the present)." Such a definition already resolves the superficial understanding of postcolonial to mean a period after colonialism. I am also enthused by the work of Achille Mbembe (2001) who more or less reminds us that African postcoloniality should first and foremost be about continental Africa. Its avatars conceptualized as diasporan communities can follow. Conceptually, postcoloniality is concerned with the social transformations that resulted from the colonial encounter and that is today manifested as the postcolonial nation-state. Introducing this concept into development communication will help us overcome the tendency to treat the modernization process as a post-independence phenomenon. Treating the postcolonial as a social formation (and as a conjuncture) is fruitful because we are able to interrogate the onset of modernization as pre-dating the development planning practices of the nation-state in Africa.

To be more specific, I use "postcolonial" to refer to lately colonized societies who *re*gained their political independence in the last five decades. This qualification is important, as categories such as *Third World*, *developing countries*, tend to box the Latin American and Asian experience with that of Africa. To be fair to the African experience, and for the purposes of epistemological rigor, we need to particularize our discussion on communication and modernization. Particularizing discussions on "the postcolonial" will call for abandoning the general categories such as *developing countries, Third World,* and allow us to look at the differing encounters with colonialism that Asia, Latin America and Africa each encountered. The postcolonial may be applicable to countries from these three continents, but doesn't the late colonialism of Africa call for specifically focused analysis? Asians for example were privileged over Africans in the racially based multi-layered hierarchies of power in the colonial project in Africa. By the time the British came to Africa, the Asian colonial project had already produced a crop of semi-privileged non-European group in the Empire while the British perfected their mode of colonial engagement (Mamdani 1996). It is from this angle that we can look at the populist practice of Asian expulsions that African leaders such as Iddi Amin of Uganda were to engage in as a cover-up of their inability to offer solutions to the national problem. Bell Hooks (1992, 93) got it right when she pointed out that the "current popularity of postcolonial discourse that implicates solely the West often obscures the colonizing relationship of the East in relation to Africa and other parts of the Third World."[1]

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[1]  Biko Agozino (2000) has eloquently showed how Indian Postcolonial theorist, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's book *A Critique of Post-colonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present* "contains a generous dose of contempt for Africa that borders on what he calls 'epistemic violence'."

For the sake of convenience, I sometimes refer to the postcolonial nation-state as *the postcolony* (Mbembe 1992) and by this usage, I do not mean to suggest that the society under discussion is not measuring up to the designation *nation-state*. I also use the category "developing countries" for descriptive purposes.

## Development Communication: The Trajectory of a Theory

So much water has passed under the bridge of development communication since it became established as a legitimate area of theorization. In the following part of this project, I want to undertake an overview of the terrain. Development efforts during and immediately after the advent of colonialism were perceived through the lens of what became known as the dominant paradigm. This paradigm is mainly concerned with economic growth as measured by the rate of growth output. Thus development was seen as the acceleration of economic growth. A very influential text in this thinking was the work of W.W Rostow (1960). Influenced by western experience of development and industrialization, Rostow in his Non-Communist Manifesto, posited the five stages of growth to be i) the traditional society, ii) the precondition for take-off, iii) the take-off, iv) the drive to maturity, and v) the age of high mass consumption. African societies from the standpoint of this theory of economic growth were perceived to be at the primary stage, that is traditional society. Rostow (1960, 18-19) goes on to say that "a society predominantly agricultural – with in fact, usually 75% or more of its working force in agriculture – must shift to a predominance for industry, communication, trade and services."

One characteristic of the traditional society is that its activities, especially economic, are limited to a small domestic area and an important part of the conditions for its economic take-off is to get involved in international trade. Rostow therefore puts across a rather ethnocentric view of colonialism: "Colonies were often established initially not to execute a major objective of national policy, nor even to exclude a rival economic power, but to fill a vacuum: that is to organise a traditional society incapable of self-organisation (or unwilling to organise itself) for modern export activity including production for export" (Rostow 1960, 109). Put in another way, the development of traditional African society was the burden of the then industrialized North. This is effectively saying that Africa's incorporation into the world capitalist system started with the formal colonization of the continent and not earlier during the era the enslavement of its people. From this perspective, slavery and colonization were executed not for the selfish imperialist interest of European powers but as a humanitarian gesture. Such a Hegelian view of Africa's development characterized modernization thinking.

For the modernizationists, industrialization was considered the main route to impressive economic growth. The experience of North America and Western Europe in the late 19th century was used to justify this view of development in Africa. More so, progress was measured in concrete terms by quantitative indicators, which include Gross National Product, Gross Domestic Product and per capita incomes. These indicators were considered rather more objective and quantifiable when compared to such concepts as freedom and justice (Melkote 1991, 58). In addition, modernization was expected to assist people to understand and accept

the idea of "nation-ness," a new form of spatial organization. Modernization would help the individual of the traditional society, whose sense of the universe was long bound by the world of the village and the ethnic unit, in picturing him/herself as a member of a nation, which in turn belongs to a wider comity of modern nations. Essentially, people were supposed to expand their spatial horizons beyond what was perceived to be traditional world of kinship ties and village life towards an awareness of national and international dynamics. Such an orientation towards the nation was said to be crucial for building stable political institutions necessary for what Rostow described as economic "take-off."

Daniel Lerner's classic, *The Passing of Traditional Society* sees the modernization of the Middle East in the early 1950s as the infusion of rationalist and positivist ideas that were vital for the development of the area. One of the main theses of his book is that before the traditional Middle Eastern societies could modernize to become more participant societies, the people must have a high sense of empathy, which, Lerner defined as the "capacity to see oneself in the other fellow's situation" (Lerner 1958, 50). Empathy has to do with psychic mobility. Increase in psychic mobility begins with physical travel that is rudimentary communication. Later the increase in physical experience through transportation is multiplied by the spread of mediated experience through mass communication. Thus communication had a vital place under the modernization paradigm. Lerner quotes an Iranian bureaucrat as confessing: "The movies are like a teacher to us who tells us what to do and what not" (1958, 54).

Lerner assumes that communication systems are both indicators and agents of social change. The change always takes place in one direction, namely from oral to mediated communications system. The oral system is adequate for the traditional, and the mediated system to modern society. Modernization is thus seen as primarily a communication process. Lerner, like other authors, also sees local and national cultures as obstacles that have to be surmounted on the way to a modern society. Situating modernization as primarily a communication process is probably one of the most significant contribution that Lerner has made to the subject of development communication. But at the same time, such a mechanistic conception comes with an Achilles' spot. The transmission model of communication upon which such a conception of modernization is based tended to play down the significance of conjuncture, local agency and an unexamined thinking that modernization can be replicated by transfers. But such an articulation of modernization as transfers powerfully resonated with the policy actors in both the giving North and the receiving South that it was the mantra of the day in the 1960s.

In trying to operationalize his theory, Lerner found the psychological variable of empathy a very key element in a successful transfer process. His method of determining the level of empathy among his research subjects is of interest here. A set of nine "projective questions" was put across. The questions included:

1. If you were made editor of a newspaper, what kind of paper would you run?
2. If for some reason you could not live in (your) country, what other country would you choose?

3.  Suppose that you were made head of government. What are some of the things you would do? (Lerner 1958, 415-433).

These questions were intended to make the respondents demonstrate their ability for role-play, their ability to empathize, to wit, their ability to copy or emulate. Lerner's concept of empathy as the foundation for a traditional society to modernize is aimed at making the man or woman in the traditional society a good imitator of the modernized society. Once the task was conceptualized as one of transfer, the project became one of how to change minds and hearts. The product is consumer-ready and the work of development is a matter of marketing, so to speak. The cultural specificity of the product was not an issue, or rather the cultural universality of the product called modernity was the attraction. This is the problem with empathy and modernization.

Another critique of the dominant paradigm was that the role of the media seemed to have been conceived when the hypodermic or bullet theory of media effect was in vogue. The Iranian bureaucrat might have been justified in admitting how the media is a kind of a teacher, but more justified is the fact that the products churned out by the media are not consumed wholesale and uncritically by all, and the teacher imagery may not apply in all circumstances. Media theories of active reception were later to emerge to discredit such a perspective (Ravault 1996 and also 1985).

The use of projective questions to measure empathy has been criticized by Kunczik (1984, 114-115) and Awa (1979, 268).[2] Lerner himself admits that his projective questions were considered by his interviewees in the Middle East simply as "baffling" or even "impious." Awa (1989) for instance, considers question number nine of Lerner's questionnaire: "Suppose that you were made head of government, what are some of the things you would do?" as inappropriate within the circumstances of a person from the Third World. He argues that the man on the street, even in his wildest fantasies, cannot imagine such a situation and thus is not able to answer such a question. Lack of empathy may not just be the characteristics of a person from the traditional society that is not yet on the threshold of modernization. Peter Golding (1974, 47) concludes that lack of empathy could as well be the result of frustrated experience and not the cause of fatalism.

The turn to social psychology was a logical outcome of the positioning of modernization as one of marketing. Thus the contribution of McClelland (1984) to the sociology of development was highly appreciated then. He was interested in identifying and measuring the variable that might be responsible for the impulse to modernize (McClelland 1984, 452-454). What was the impulse that produced economic growth and modernization and where did it originate? In his analysis, he separated a "mental virus" (I guess he would not speak of it on

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[2]  Probably, the sharpest criticism of Lerner comes from Samarajiwa who did not limit his attacks on Lerner's choice of methodology, but went further to criticize him on ethical grounds. Samarajiva (1987, 11-15) brings out the fact that Lerner's project in the Middle East was indeed sponsored by the Voice of America and his findings were meant to be of help to American intelligence in its cold war with the then Soviet Union. Lerner failed to make this known to his research assistants in the field and the respondents to the questionnaire.

viral terms these days) that made people behave in a particularly energetic way. He called this virus "n-ach" or "need for achievement". The n-ach was identified as the part of a person's thought which had to do with "doing something better" than it had been done before. That is doing things more efficiently and faster with less labor (McClelland 1984, 216-220). According to McClelland, n-ach by itself is not enough to lay the foundation for modernization. Another equally important input for modernization is social consciousness, which has to do with working for the common good. In sum, the impulse to modernize consists of a personal variable, n-ach and a social virtue, which is concern over the welfare of others.

The strength of this psychographic variable in the theory lies in the assumption that ideas are in fact more important in shaping history than purely materialistic arrangements. What really counts is human resources especially the extent of drive to achieve. So according to McClelland, the main task is to "infect" individuals systematically with the virus of motivation to achieve. Thus what matters is not the alteration of traditional social structures but the formation of persons. In doing this, the first step is the recognition that traditional norms must be replaced by new ones, if we want to obtain the advantages of the new progressive material culture. When the necessity of a change of orientation is once accepted, then the means can be found to implement the change.

The first prerequisite for the transition from theory to practice is intensified communication. This means providing roads, affordable public transport and electricity, as well as radio, telephone, newspapers and other accessible forms of media. There is only one way, as McClelland sees it, to overcome a possible massive resistance to this change: carrying out an ideological campaign similar to those that were carried out by former communist regimes or earlier by the church. The means of communication, particularly, radio, publicly delivered speeches and the press must be used to prepare the transformation. The leaders of developing countries such as Ghana listened attentively and followed the letter and spirit of the recommendations.

McClelland emphasizes the significance of ideological movements, for according to him, they represent a haven of emotional security and a new authority for the people who have become rootless and unhappy because of the breakdown of traditional structures. So his recommendations include three specific methods of fostering the way into modernity and an intensification of the motive to achieve. For example one of his methods calls for the creation of an informed public opinion as typified by a society with a free press. Unfortunately, the central problem of his thesis, which is, how an ideological movement can guarantee a free press, is left unanswered. A free press and an ideological movement are not bedfellows. Another lingering question is whether a motivation to achieve that is proliferated by the mass media can actually break through the cyclical development that is assumed by McClelland. It appears he is only speculating. It is not automatic that alteration of attitude is automatically accompanied by a corresponding alteration of behavior.

The concept of development under the old paradigm was framed as industrialization as the main route to economic growth and development, the employment of capital intensive technology mainly imported from the more developed nations, and the understanding that underdevelopment was caused by only internal factors. Exogenous factors like the international

economic order were irrelevant while the task of development planning was the preserve of economists and bankers under the paradigm. Everett Rogers argues that the drive for the quantification of development, an outgrowth and extension of North American social science empiricism, helped define what development was and was not. Material well being could be measured. "Such values as dignity, justice and freedom did not fit on a dollars-and-cents yardstick and so the meaning of development began to have a somewhat dehumanized nature. Political stability and unity were thought to be necessary for continued economic growth, and authoritarian leadership increasingly emerged, often in the form of military dictatorships. And in the push for government stability, individual freedoms often were trampled" (Rogers 1976, 125).

What was quantified about development was usually only growth, measured in aggregate or on a per capita basis. Development policies of the 1950s and 1960s paid little attention to the equality of development benefits. The concept of trickle-down was offered to explain how benefits would eventually spread out to the lagging sectors. This never happened though. If anything at all did happen, it was that the benefits trickled upwards to widen the already existing poverty gap. As mentioned earlier, underdevelopment was attributed to internal factors. These included a biased social structure, which suffered from a top-heavy land tenure system and an inefficient and slow government machinery, as well as traditional attitudes among the people, especially the peasantry. These attitudes were said to have hindered the modernization process.

In a study of peasants in three developing countries, namely India, Nigeria and Colombia, Rogers identified ten elements of what he described as peasant sub-culture that impeded their modernization. These were:

i)   Mutual distrust in interpersonal relations: In general peasants were suspicious, evasive and distrustful of others in the community and non-cooperative in interpersonal relations with peers.
ii)  Perceived limited good: Peasants believed that all good things in life are available in limited quantities. Thus, one could improve one's position only at somebody else's expense.
iii) Dependence and hostility toward government authority: Peasants had an ambivalent attitude toward government officials. On the one hand, they depended on them to solve many of their problems. However there was a general distrust of government officials.
iv)  Familism: The family played an important role in the life of the peasant. Peasants were prepared to subordinate their personal goals to those of the family.
v)   Lack of innovativeness: Peasants were reluctant to adopt modernising innovations, had a negative attitude towards change, and their behaviour was not fully oriented towards rational economic considerations.
vi)  Fatalism: Peasants believed that their well-being was controlled by a supernatural fate. This had a dysfunctional consequence on directed social change.
vii) Limited aspirations: Peasants exhibited low aspiration for advancement. Also, they had low levels of achievement motivation and a tendency towards inconspicuous consumption.
viii) Lack of deferred gratification: Peasants lacked the ability to postpone the satisfaction of immediate needs in anticipation of better future rewards.

ix) Limited view of the world: First they are not time conscious and secondly, they are oriented within their communities and have very little knowledge about the world beyond their immediate environs. Consequently, they have very limited geographic mobility.

x) Low empathy: Peasants exhibited mental ineptness. They could not imagine themselves in new situations or places. (Cited in Melkote 1991, 58-59).

The above ten characteristics of the so-called peasant sub-culture as found out by Rogers, cover the psychographic concepts of Lerner and McClelland. Thus these, in a way, represent the stereotypes of the modernization theorists' perception about underdevelopment and the traditional society.

Another way of understanding the earliest theoretical models used to study communication and development is a review of the term mass society, a description of modern western societies in the early 19th century. Lowery and DeFleur (1983, 3-11) contended that there was indeed a close relation between the concept of western countries as mass societies and mass communication effects. Industrialization, modernization and urbanization had transformed 18th Century European and North American social relationships, norms, values as well as material culture.

For instance, work place, work ethics and relationships led to a factory system, migration into urban areas and introduction of large-scale bureaucracy. Urbanization led to a profound change in the social order, new institutions and values led to further stratification of people through adoption of innovation and greater consumption of material goods. The strong interpersonal bonds between people and loyalties that characterized the pre-industrial communities broke down and were replaced by impersonal and tedious life in the newly industrialized societies. Sociologists and other scholars described this transformation of society from a *Gemeinschaft* to a *Gesellschaft* as the emergence of a mass society. McQuail and Windahl (1981, 42) described the mass society as "consisting of an aggregate of relatively atomized individuals acting according to their personal interest and little constrained by social ties and constraints." Thus, in this kind of society, the mass media were perceived to have immense power because their impact would not be constrained by other competing and psychological influences on individuals. In short, people in mass society were more susceptible to the powerful influences of the mass media.

But post World War II research into mass communication failed to replicate the conceived power of the media. The findings of continued research invalidated the bullet theory of the media. The role of the opinion leader in enhancing the spread of information was however discovered. Hence the Two Step Flow theory of information (Katz and Lazersfeld 1955, 32), which showed that some people in society, were more exposed to information from the media than others. This more informed category, through personal and social relationships, in turn became the source of information for those not much affected by the media, or they were contacted by the less informed for the confirmation of the little information they had.

Another chapter in researching into the effects of mass communication opened with the work of Hovland et al (in Lowery and DeFleur 1983, 113-147), which studied the impact of war propaganda films. The findings showed that social categories like level of education, and individual differences were more predictive of certain effects than the mass media. People's

attitude to media messages could be categorized as selective exposure, selective perception, and selective retention. Klapper (1961, 15-16) argued that the mass media rather than being considered as causal agents of behavioral or attitudinal changes in individuals, were more agents of reinforcement.

Despite the post World War II research revelations, which showed the minimal effect of the media, the media was still considered as a viable agent of social change. Probably the developing countries were considered to have different circumstances in comparison to the Euro-American societies where these studies were conducted. This conception was possibly the reason why development scientists and policy makers transferred this role of the media to the Third World countries in the 1960s to aid in the modernization process. The orientation of communication as transmission of information and persuasion was transferred to such diverse fields as agricultural extension, health education and public relations. The emphasis was on communication effects, creating awareness of new ideas and practices and generally bringing about attitudinal and behavioral changes in individuals.

Consequently, studies of diffusion of innovations in developing countries were conducted since the adoption of innovations from the western industrialized countries was seen as the goal of development. The research established the importance of communication in the modernization process at the local level. In this dominant paradigm, communication was visualized as the important link through which exogenous ideas entered the local communities, which were thought to be suffering from inertia.

The relationship between communication and modernization was well established among scholars and researchers. Virtually all those involved in development thinking came to the conclusion that the mass media were both agents of change and indices of development. This led UNESCO to its historic recommendation that every nation should at the minimum, aim to provide for every 1000 of its inhabitants, 100 copies of daily newspapers, 50 radio receivers, 20 TV sets and 20 cinema seats (UNESCO 1961, 16). This minimum was supposed to demonstrate a country's maturity on its way to modernization. But as Tehranian (1990b, 160) rightly argues, many of the developing countries in recent times have achieved or even surpassed this UNESCO minimum standard yet there is no automatic corresponding increase in living standards of economic and cultural development, improved social communication or greater democracy. More so, the UNESCO recommendation did not take into consideration the realities of predominantly oral societies that did not have a literacy tradition of their own.

This theological conception of media in society had its heady days in the 1960s and 1970s before a more informed theory started to emerge to paint a more nuanced scenario of media in the developing country (for instance, Martin-Barbero 1993). But even before that, there was an interlude of an ideological battleground of American liberalism and Marxist inspired critique that is sometimes conveniently called the Dependency School.

The genesis of dependency theory can be traced to the works of André Gunder Frank, Paul Baran, Samir Amin and not the least, Immanuel Wallerstein with his world systems theory. Samir Amin (1976, 133-138) offers a comprehensive critique of the Ricardian theory of comparative advantage that was the main reason for the justification of the international division of labor, which appropriated for most Third World economies the virtual exclusive

role of producers of raw materials. He proved that instead of being advantageous to all parties, international division of labor led to a constantly more pronounced inequality. Amin showed how the development of capitalism leads to increased capital flight from the periphery to the metropolis through the exchange of commodities which, have unequal levels of labor power expended in their production.

In the same vein, Paul Baran (cited in Kunczik 1984, 184) argued that the persistent underdevelopment of countries of the Third World is not a result of traditional behavior patterns or social structures, of population explosion or of an inadequate rate of savings as the modernizationist would want us to believe. Rather, it is the consequence of international capitalistic exploitation. The surplus product earned in developing countries is either taken away to the metropolis by the big time capitalists in the metropolis or is squandered on non-productive consumption of luxury goods by the comprador bourgeoisie locally.

The former direct colonial control has been replaced by indirect neo-colonial mechanisms, which operate through so-called development aid and loans (Frank 1969, 150-151). Probably, Arghiri Emmanuel's thesis on the exploitation of the periphery by the center through the wage structure is one of the comprehensive explanations of how effective and complicated the exploitative link is. Emmanuel (cited in Amin [1976, 138-145]) contended that exploitation takes place through the wage structures contained in the prices for which goods are exchanged between industrialized and developing countries. That is, whereas it may take about five hours to produce a commodity in the periphery, it may take about one-fifth the time to produce the same commodity or another commodity of the same value in the core. Thus, through the prices there occurs a transfer of values, and in the exchange process, there occurs an exchange of unequal values. Ernest Mandel (1978, 53) puts it succinctly: "it is an exchange of less against more labor, which inevitably led to a drain, an outward flow of capital...to the advantage of Western Europe."

Another point advanced by the *Dependistas* is the theory of structural distortion of the peripheral economic sphere. A feature characteristic of all neo-colonial economies is that the economic infrastructure and foreign investments are all export-oriented. That is the export of raw materials and the importation of comparatively more expensive manufactured products from the metropolis. Virtually all good roads and rail lines are primarily connecting raw material producing centers to the ports. This hinders the establishment of an integrated economy. Even at the sub-regional level, for instance in West Africa, almost all the various national economies are individually umbilically linked to the distant metropolis than are relevant to each other.

It is against this trend that Ghanaian writer, Kofi Awoonor (1995, 24-27) contends that it is a shame that even though the West Africa sub-region has vast iron deposits, a large petroleum reserve, ample hydroelectricity, enormous mineral reserves including cobalt (69 percent), manganese (37 percent), chromites (32 percent), phosphate rock (32 percent), copper (24 percent), tin (15 percent), bauxite, gem diamonds, and a population of over 150 million people, it cannot find the will to organize its economy as an integrated self-reliant and independent one. Trade among the countries of the region is still below 10 percent, with trade between Ghana and Nigeria at this percentage.

Immanuel Wallerstein, who propounded the world systems theory, enriched the Dependency School by establishing that there is a dialectical relationship between the development of the northern hemisphere and the underdevelopment of the South. He argued that differences between the core economies and those of the periphery were initially slight. But later the development of new transport technologies, along with the military superiority of the center, facilitated the exploitation of the developing countries. Thus the gap between the two unequal global economic blocs tended to widen. "The ongoing process of world economy tends to expand the economic and social gaps among its varying areas in the very process of its development" (Wallerstein 1974, 350).

The analysis of the *Dependistas* implies that the lack of development in most Third World countries is exclusively due to their wholesale incorporation into the global capitalist economy. "Dependent countries are those which lack the capacity for autonomous growth and they lack this because their structures are dependent ones" (O'Brien 1975, 24). Portes (1976, 78) also thinks "the elimination of the imperialist influence will automatically bring about national welfare and a higher standard of living for the masses." Such free flowing and high-sounding thinking characterized the dependency theorists.

One of the major criticisms against the *Dependistas* is the position that the development problems of the developing countries are solely attributable to exogenous factors. And this discussion was linked to the Cultural Imperialism thesis (Schiller 1976, 6), which invariably introduced the logic of capitalist expansion into the discussion of international communication. Horkheimer and Adorno (1972) had contributed to thinking of the media as a cultural industry. Herbert Schiller then discussed the role of the American media in the country's domination of the world. He said even though the imperialist power of America has an economic origin, the cultural informational outputs from the American media have a significant place in the scheme of things. Arguing from the basis of Wallerstein's world systems theory, he writes: "The cultural-communication sector of the world system necessarily develops in accordance with and facilitates the aims and objectives of the general system. A large one-directional flow of information from the core to periphery represents the reality of power" (Schiller 1979, 6). According to Schiller, the definition of communication should not be limited to the messages and the circuit through which they flow. Communication defines social reality and as a result influences the organization of work, the character of technology as well as the character of both formal and informal education and the use of leisure. In view of this scenario, time and space are characterized by a growing cultural struggle between those who seek to end domination and those who want to maintain it. Such a way of looking at media and international development help to situate subsequent discussion of media in society with more rigor and vim, away from the simplifying liberalism of the dominant paradigm.

But whereas the radicalism of the dependency school inspired a lot of intellectual work on communication and development theory, its purchase on policy circles was minimal if not totally null. This was partly because fundamentally absent in the dependency theory were feasible guidelines for practical policy on the way forward apart from the "over kill" recommendation to de-link or uncouple from the global capitalist economy as a basis for

development (Kunczik 1984, 193). Thus the relevance of dependency theory to the area of communication and development may be limited to only providing what I may describe as an intellectual inspiration to evolve other theories and paradigms, notably the up and coming multiplicity paradigm.

## Theory of the State: Blindspot in Development Communication

The postcolonial state projects itself as a developmentalist one because of the distributive task in the making of a nation out of different groups. It uses the task of development planning to identify itself as the developmentalist state, and thereby deriving its legitimacy. Its adoption of the modernizing technologies of communication has been geared at this objective (Martin-Barbero 1993, 165). This is the basis of much of the postcolonial state's interest in communication and development activities. A development communication study such as this project that intends to interrogate this articulation should be able to build on a theory of the state from contemporary literature of this area of study. But do we have any? A look at the existing literature on development communication reveals a stunning absence of a sustained analysis by way of theory of the state.

The first generation of scholarship reviewed earlier, led by Lerner (1958), Schramm (1964) through the dependency theorist and latter-day multiplicity paradigm theorist such as Servaes (1999) have all discussed the subject as if the state, as a constitutive agent, does not matter. When they make reference to the constitutive action of the state, it is mentioned by default and not explicitly. Take for instance Schramm's (1964) comprehensive discussion on the role of communication in the development of postcolonial nation-state. One gets the feeling that he is discussing the development of acephalous societies and not nation-states. When he discusses the "development process," he focuses on the liberal economic theories of economic development and economic planning. The nature of the planners is not mentioned (Schramm 1964, 20 ff). It is the "developer" or phrases such as "Mobilizing human resources requires…" (p. 33) that takes the place of admitting that there is a political institution that directs development. Schramm prefers to give more attention to technocrats, such as when he build on David McClleland's theory of "need achievement" or relies on anthropologist such as Margaret Mead to elaborate on how the development process must be executed. When Schramm (1964, 246-271) finally offers his 15-point recommendations he would start them with "a developing country should…" yet, the apex of local power that must carry out his recommendation is left out.

Lerner's (1958) *the Passing of Traditional Society* was not about Africa but the subject of development of former colonies that became nation-states was the main focus. To be precise, it was about modernizing the Middle East into the Western divide of what became known as the bi-polar world of Washington and Moscow. The book established its place in the classics of development communication because of its pioneering effort in looking at how to modernize what were considered "traditional" societies. Thus a search for a theory of state in modernization and development through communication may as well start from this book.

Apart from this justification for expecting a theory of state from Lerner, Samarajiwa's (1987) revelation that the 10-year research project that culminated into the book actually benefited from state largess warrants us to put a higher premium on our expectation. In addition, Lerner's project actually had a case by case study of various Middle East countries.

Unlike Schramm's work that was later to follow, Lerner does bother with the subject of local state's agency in the constitution of modernization. But he reads this in a troubling way. That is as the personal feats of individual leaders and not the state as a machinery of power with distributive ability that responds to the various social forces that it represents. Imagine for instance when he writes:

> We begin with Turkey as the area's most impressive example of modernization – impressive in that it has steadily evolved, along the lines laid down by a revolutionary dictatorship over three decades ago. Ataturk's genius as a social planner was to see "economic development" within a comprehensive behavioral matrix. To raise industrial production, Ataturk began by simplifying the national language separating religion, installing schools, building roads, creating cities (Lerner 1958 105).

The story goes on to personalize the gamut of innovations that the state of Turkey carried out. We have to grant Lerner the credit for the details he provides to show the constitutive action of the state in modernization. Researching an area that was just at the heels of decolonization he provides us with perceptive commentary that is suggestive of the anatomy of the postcolonial state. "The very concept of a Syrian elite requires qualification," Lerner writes, "The native elite did not exercise sustained authoritative power" (1958, 270), or when he says, "The French played the classic game of divisiveness. Every internal minority – linguistic, ethnic, regional, religious or nomadic – was encouraged to develop in its own case" (1958, 271). Beyond this descriptive enterprise, however, Lerner offers us no theory of the state in communication and development of postcolonial societies. It was against this background that Ito Youichi (1997, 42) questions the general tendency to read modernization in non-Western societies from the perspective of Western experience. "Modernization in the non-West has been explained in terms of parochial and peculiaristic reasons, factors such as good or bad policies, far-sighted or near-sighted leaders, fortunate or unfortunate histories etc."

Both pioneers of communication and development are not particularly interested in the local dynamics of developmental state but do not hesitate to credit UNESCO as bearer of development. Such an attitude to the state can be understood from the political orientation of their work. They have a liberal view of development that tends to think of the state in a very limited sense or when it comes to the state in the developing countries, they see it as dictatorships, undemocratic or just plain weak states. The history of the state, its colonial parentage and how power is reproduced within the postcolonial context as the embodiment of the state apparatus is simply unappealing to them. The development enterprise, for them, can be understood in terms of economic and psychological theories of change within the logic of the market. But what we are sure of is that such a comprehensive program of development through the transfer of technology that Schramm and Lerner suggest cannot be carried out

by market forces or a limited state. Probably actors in international development including the USAID and UNESCO can achieve it. Even then, the international agencies have local collaborators, the primary one being the local state.

If the defining texts such as Schramm's and Lerner's neglected the state dimension in the nexus of development, social change and technological transfer, they set the pace and paradigm for later generations of communication researchers. Not even their ideological opponents, whose writings are visibly influenced by the leftist radicalism of Marxism, neo-Marxism and the Dependency School as well as the realism of living in the postcolony, would bother about a theory of the state. By this, I am referring to anthologies such as *Rethinking Development Communication* edited by Jayaweera and Amunugama (1987) *Communication in Development* edited by Casmir (1991) and the monograph by Melkote (1991) *Communication for Development in the Third World*. These are books no undergraduate or graduate student in a standard development communication program will be allowed to miss. And most of the contributions in these books are discussing the development of former colonies, and/or the programs of postcolonial states. In Casmir's volume for instance, more than half of the contributors are discussing national policy programs and outcomes. Yet, the state is often assumed to be unproblematic. International communication literature that fall under this omission of the state include such founding text of the cultural imperialism theses including Nordenstreng and Schiller (1979), Nordenstreng and Schiller (1993) and Schiller (1976).

Another key source of both intellectual and international diplomatic activity on communication and development was the MacBride Report (UNESCO 1980) produced by an international commission set up by UNESCO to study communication problems. The MacBride report was not silent on the state, but its discussion was framed on the global level. That is the state in general. It recognized the main prerogative of the state in providing for "conditions for communication" within the nation state. Also the state sometimes takes part in the business of dissemination, which could however lead to an anti-democratic trend (UNESCO 1980, 120). The report was a good example of a delicate international diplomatic act of balancing contending views (East, West and the Non-Aligned countries). Thus it was shallow in its analysis of the crucial issue of democratization that warranted the formation of the commission in the first place. Consequently its treatment of the role of the state within the circumstances of developing countries was vague. It did admit, "In many developing counties, the choice is not between privately-owned and publicly-owned media, but between publicly-owned media or no media at all". But it highlighted more on the dangers of state involvement in the business of message distribution than the primary task of ensuring the condition of communication in the first place (UNESCO 1980, 120-121). These two are distinct because an active state involvement in the distribution of infrastructure to all constitutive groups of the nation does not necessarily mean state involvement in production and dissemination. Didn't active state regulation ensure the universalization of phone access in the United States of all places? Take away state involvement in early broadcasting in Europe and Canada in the form of Public Service, and radio and TV would remain an urban affair. So why hesitate about the postcolonial state involvement in the burgeoning nations?

After these four decades of oversight, one would expect a change of attitude. But recent additions to the literature tend to be on the same paradigm of neglect of the postcolonial state, while ironically discussing the very business of that state. Two books are worth noting at this stage, *Communication for Development: One World Multiple Cultures* (1999) by Jan Servaes and *Theoretical Approaches to Participatory Communication* (1999) edited by Jacobson and Servaes. The former one concentrates on policy and development and yet the anatomy of the key institutional actor is neglected. Jan Servaes is one communication scholar who has insisted on the revision of the previous two schools of thought. He makes the argument that paradigms, as used in communication and development studies, "as frames of meaning" do not necessarily come and go. Rather, new paradigms are generated out of previous ones as new additions. In this light, the dependency approach should be seen as enriching the previous dominant paradigm through its criticism (Servaes 1999, 5-7). Elsewhere he states that "Most scholars agree that communication and development as a distinct discipline emerged after World War II, and they usually point out two paradigms: modernization and growth versus dependency and underdevelopment. I perceive a new perspective in terms of a new paradigm. This new paradigm, which can be broadly described as multiplicity in one world, is gradually emerging but still in the process of formation" (Servaes 1991, 52). This quote from Servaes, a pioneer of the multiplicity paradigm, sort of summarizes the circumstances surrounding the emergence of the paradigm. It can be said that it was due to the disappointing results from decades of development efforts guided by modernization theory and the lack of a comprehensive policy guidelines from the Dependency School that led to the rethinking of a more participatory, open-minded and all-embracing paradigm.

A guidepost for this evolving paradigm is that of empowerment of the people at the grassroots by involving them at all stages of any project. This implies that any communication system must be dialogic, interactive and be sustained (Servaes 1991, 32-35). The communication system must be participatory so that local perceptions, attitudes, values and knowledge are fully taken into consideration in designing any development project. The involvement of the people must be substantive and at all levels. Such a Freirean formulation is quite attractive and seems to offer a normative solution to the high-rise posture of the previous paradigms by insisting on the local. Servaes (1999, 140) therefore calls for the adoption of the *right to communicate* as the ideals of any policy practice that is based on the multiplicity paradigm. Who will carry out this policy prescription? It is a question he does not answer. By default, the assumption is that the state, as the main policy maker within the nation-state is listening. But you have to wait until you read his take on the State: "Fundamental here is the other vision of the role of the authorities in the processes of social change. Unlike the confidence in and respect for the role of the state, which characterized the modernization and dependency paradigms, the multiplicity paradigm has a rather reserved attitude towards the authorities. Policies therefore should be built on the more selective participation strategies of dissociation and association."

We have to read Servaes here in perspective. First he rightly pointed out the limitation of the previous paradigms, and how the elite of developing countries have a contradictory

posture of disinterest in democratization at home but demand democratization internationally. Thus he damns these previous paradigms and the complicity of the state (1999, 119-143). And drawing from the radical pedagogy of the Brazilian scholar, Paulo Freire, he calls for a more participatory approach. Here lies the strength of his formulation. But even then Freire himself did not have this dissociative attitude towards authority. For Freire (1974, 21), the process of liberation is not aimed at bracketing out the oppressor, but to transform the relation between the oppressed and the oppressor. The state is considered an oppressive and elitist instrument. No matter how participatory a development enterprise is intended, it will be strategically naive to disengage from the state. Freire (1974, 30) points out that the implementation of his dialogical pedagogy "requires political power and the oppressed have none…" Thus Freire's dialogic setup acknowledges the relevance of the state as an unavoidable institution.[3] The state is the most well organized institution, with the legitimate authority of making comprehensive national policy. It also has the monopoly of conferring legitimacy on all other institutions and the use of national economic resources. In addition, it has the legitimacy and monopoly over the use of violence. With all these resources, why will we shun the state? Strategically it is defeatist. What we need is not a damnation of the state but an analytical focus on the state.

In a very recent synthesis of theoretical approaches in development communication, Robert White (2004) successfully mapped out the currents that define development communication that disregard the postcolonial state as a principal actor. White did not explicitly admit to the absence of the state as a central problematic. Rather he surveys most foundational writings in the field in recent times. Reading through his review, one gets the impression that he is rather mapping out what may be described as the Social Movements current in development communication theory, and by default, the anti-state current in the field. Thus one may think of the brand of development communication theory that avoids the state as Social Movement current. Nonetheless, the avoidance of the state is problematic is such scholarship.

I am raising these apparent limitations on the standard literature to point out that there seemed to be, what I will call, a blindspot of a theory of the state in development communication. And this is where I am making an intervention. Obviously there is an explanation for this oversight. The very apparent one is the Marxist influence with its disinterest for the "nation-state" as a legitimate object of analysis. In the Dependency School for example, which is predominantly neo- Marxist in orientation, the tendency has been to think of local problems of poverty and underdevelopment within the global political economic framework of imperialism. Such a posture has led to this theoretical blindspot. The influence it has had on previous attempts at understanding policy practices in development such as some of the references stated above is that they fail to take seriously "the constitutive role of the state" (Mosco 1996, 250).

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[3]    Freire suffered unlawfully in the hands of the Brazilian state in 1964 when he was imprisoned for 70 days and later forced into exile (see Richard Shaull's "foreword" in Freire 1974). Thus his personal experience would lead him not to slight the state as Servaes does.

Indeed, recently Nordenstreng (2001) has offered an appealing justification for the neglect of the dimension of the state in international communication, especially in the cultural imperialism school. His justification places the blindspot into context. He admitted that, the nation-state, contrary to the rhetoric of the globalization cheerleaders, "continue to matter both in global reality and in studies about it, while at the same time the state as a concept remains shamefully under analyzed; and, hence there is a burning need to rethink the field" (Nordenstreng 2001, 155). Such an admission coming from someone who has been at the forefront of the cultural imperialism thesis in communication studies should be taken seriously. For how could such an omission be tolerated for three decades of discourse on cultural imperialism? Some of the defining texts such as the Nordenstreng and Schiller (1979) and (1993) edited volumes on national sovereignty and international communication were blind on conceptual clarifications on the nation-state, democracy, citizenship and sovereignty. Nordenstreng offers an explanation for this limitations that is worth quoting at length:

> The idea of media imperialism, with the notion of information sovereignty as an integral part of it, was a paradigm that was badly needed at that stage of understanding the world of communications. Seen from the angle of history of ideas, one may even say that it was a necessary step in the continuous intellectual project of understanding the world. Like all paradigms that convert sensitive social realities into scientific and/or political narratives, media imperialism and its cousin, the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO), were turned into mantras serving political agitation rather than scientific analysis (Nordenstreng 2001, 155).

After this self-criticism, he underlines the relevance of the state in national development in developing countries and criticizes the tendency of the day to argue for market solutions to what is undoubtedly a state responsibility. Here again I want to quote him in full:

> Moreover, the state remains crucial for development in the Third World. 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 so 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 (Nordenstreng 2001, 160).

Such a rethinking of the state in modernization injects fresh directions to the field. It is a rethinking that calls for caution against over reliance on NGOs and a religious believe in market-led development.

It is due to the neglect of the power dynamics that shape the constitutive role of the state that has probably resulted into what appears to be policymakers' consistent neglect of research findings. Cees Hamelink captured the spirit of this attitude well: "the problem seem to lie in the relationship between research and policy making. Over the past 20 – 30 years

insufficient attention has been paid to research result by policymakers. All the studies that have been done so far on the relationship between social research and actual policy making show that in the majority of cases, policy makers on various levels totally neglect research. They do not want to be bothered by it or even read it" (IPDC Report 1985, 26). Hamelink was contributing to a round table discussion of policy makers and experts convened by the University of Tampere on behalf of UNESCO on communication and development activities. My argument is that the problem is not that actors within the communication policy circles deliberately snub the results of hardworking researchers. Conversely, it is that the researchers have been, by default, snubbing the various pressures that impact on the state in its constitutive role in development. Re-stated, communication research seem not to accord due regard to the developmental state's subjectivity as constituted by its trajectory from being a colonial apparatus and later reinvented as an agent in development. We may have to ask whose ideas shape policy direction? Is policy responding to the demand for leadership in development from the people or is it busily living up to the expectation of certain powerful interest groups whose interest is anything but the development the researchers have been working to illuminate? These questions suggest that instead of taking the developmental state for its word (that its main business is nation-building through development), or think of it as some superstructure in the hands of some all powerful ruling class, we interrogate the very practices of policy actors as human agents who make choices. These questions also call for a recovery of the past to trace the itinerary of the formation of the state. It is only then that we will know what institution we are dealing with and how we can work to make sure that the findings of development communication research resonate with the needs of a developmental state.

Traditionally, Marxist political economy and structuralism, or more precisely what Lerner (1980, 138) has dubbed "the New Left on communication policy," have had tremendous influence on development communication theory. Thus when Horkheimer and Adorno (1972, 154) declared that "In the culture industry, the individual is an illusion, not merely because of the standardization of means of production. He is tolerated only so long as his complete identification with the general is unquestioned" it was religiously taken as a guidepost for research. If this Frankfurt School view provided the justification for the neglect of individual agency, other theorist from mainstream political economy were instrumental in the neglect of institutional agency of the state. Nicholas Garnham (1986) is one political economist who has consistently defended the Marxist perspective. Marxist analysis of communication is placed within the overall theoretical framework of historical materialism. This theory, in its rudimentary form, argues that at any given time in any social formation, the economic productive forces and productive relations, which together constitute a mode of production, has a corresponding base/superstructure setup. That is to say, the economic base has a corresponding ephemeral superstructure upon which issues like the culture and communication can be located. Not only are they located in the corresponding superstructure, their characteristics are determined by the nature of the base. But this privileging of the economics over politics, philosophy and culture was questioned by Althusser (1971) by

arguing that instead of an economic base, what we really have is a conjuncture of relationship of the economics, ideology the political and the cultural in one totality. This Althusserian interpretation constitutes the second variant of Marxist thought on culture.

Relying on the original works of Marx and Engels, Garnham (1986) resists the Althusserian interpretation and insist on the relevance of base/superstructure framework to understand the materialist nature of culture. But that should be done in a more nuanced reading of Marx and Engels and not a crude reduction of their historical materialism to simple dichotomy of economic base and a superstructure, Garnham insists. Cast in another way, the issue of base/superstructure is the issue of the relationship between matter and ideas, between the concrete and the abstract. Garnham points out that the abstract can assume the form of the concrete and vice versa. For instance, he says, "exchange relations has a concrete material reality in the form of money, bills of exchange, credit cards, banks etc" (1986, 22) but the mode of operation depends on its abstraction. Nevertheless, he insists on the fundamental position of culture as a superstructure and economy as base, for it remains primary to a historical materialist understanding of the overall social formation.

It is this nuanced analysis that seem to elude Horkheimer and Adorno when they argue that the deterministic iron logic of economic production is transferred to the area of culture when monopoly capitalism transforms that sector into an industry or industrializes it. For these Frankfurt scholars, anything cultural under capitalism is "part of an economic mechanism of selection" which shapes the look and structure of cultural products (Horkheimer and Adorno 1972, 120). Garnham has criticized this tendency of interpreting the Marxian postulate that those who control the means of economic production also control the means of mental production by pointing out that the original Marxist formulation was not meant to be a frozen concept. It is historically applicable and therefore a shifting analytical concept. But in most of the development communication literature, especially those belonging to the Cultural Imperialism school, what we see is a fixed, almost frozen, gaze on those who control the means of economic production as the source of understanding the ongoing mental production. But then Garnham himself, whom we must credit for his intricate analysis, is incurably structuralist. "While accepting that the mass media can be politically and ideologically overdetermined at many conjunctures, political economy, as I understand it, rests upon ultimate determination by the economic" (Garnham 1986, 30).

According to Garnham's interpretation of Marx, investment into non-economic production like transport and culture come from the excess of circulating capital from the base economic activity. Because capital from the base must constantly be in circulation, when (wo)man's basic needs are met through supply of economic goods into the market, the excess capital emanating from the circulation has to be used elsewhere. It is then that what Marx described as "socially posited needs" is given attention. This includes public investment in developing transportation infrastructure as well as public service media. Garnham (1986, 48) points out that (and this is crucial) state intervention is either totally funding this culture sector or prevailing on private investors to contribute towards that. He cites early state subsidies in printing industries to sustain that sector as an example. Newspapers also benefited from the

need for capital to continuously be in circulation. The involvement of the state in subsidizing the media sector is based on a "socially posited need." But the onset of advertising and increased investment and re-investment in the media sector no longer waits for excess capital to be transferred to fund socially posited needs, since it is an industry by itself and consequently it has its own economy. The economic, so to speak, is now also superstructural!

What is the relevance of this explication of the occidental experience to the postcolony? The logic of the mode of production as a distributive mechanism was not enough. Thus (welfare) state intervention was necessary to ensure the social distribution of communicative resources until the logic of the mode of production made strong state presence unnecessary. The lesson for the developing nation is obvious. But obvious is also the fact that given the different conjuncture of capitalism, state intervention will not be the exact replica of the European welfare state. More so, such a fixed understanding of the superstructural character of the state does not reflect the late postcolonial experience of a rather comparatively sophisticated state over an undeveloped economy and political community. Of course, if the postcolonial social formation is read as part of the international global capitalism, the superstructural function of the postcolonial state becomes clear as an offshoot of the base (global economy). But this is exactly what I am resisting. To contextualize the base/superstructural thesis within the postcolony, we will be subverting the logic of economic determination, for here we have a sophisticated state sitting over an undeveloped economy called the nation.

## Recovering the Postcolonial State

In our effort to make up for this blindspot, we have to avoid generalization. Often times the term "developing countries" is used as a blanket concept to refer to the disparate nation-states. If we are used to bundling all former colonized societies of Asia, Latin America and Africa under one rubric, Mamdani's (1996) analysis of Africa's experience of state formation suggests that we rethink this practice. Because in the process of colonizing Africa as the latest and last imperialist venture of actually annexing territory, the British in particular, were to bring their vast experience from Asia to implement a qualitatively different form of colonialism. Thus late postcoloniality has its particularities, especially when we come to the legacy it bequeaths to the contemporary state that claims development as its main mandate. Probably, our biggest challenge in the study of the state in Africa is to avoid what Mamdani (1996, 9) calls "history by analogy." That is the tendency to analyze the African experience of state formation within the prism of the occidental experience. The fact is the prism easily becomes a conceptual prison in which if contemporary African experience of the evolution of state does not fit the existing theories of state (mainly Marxist and Liberal derived from the western experience) then we damn it or discuss it on pathological terms.

An example of this tendency is the anthology edited by William Zartman (1995) titled *Collapsed States: the Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*. First of all,

the authors define the African state to be what it is really not and then point out how it collapsed because it failed to carry out the standard functions of the state. In his definitive framework for the book, Zartman (1995) defines the state as "the authoritative political institution that is sovereign over a recognized territory" and points out the three dimensions of the state as: 1) the ability to exercise sovereign authority; 2) the state as an institution; and 3) the state as a security guarantor for the people. Based on this, he argues that collapse means "the basic functions of the state are no longer performed" (1995, 5). Well the truth is that the classical definition of the state applies to all but the postcolonial one. That definition has never materialized in any of the 11 case studies/countries of the sub-Sahara Africa that makeup the book. This is a statement that is difficult to make at the political level because of its condescending tone. But at the conceptual level, we are better off with our analysis if we admit to the facts of history and experience. The state in Africa is in the process of *becoming*.

For instance in Ghana, the state has never been able to meet all the three requirements listed as state functions. There are still vast portions of the territory of Ghana that the Police service cannot access to maintain law and order. The Police simply lack the material resources to accomplish its assigned job. It is common to report a case to the Police, especially up in the North of Ghana only to be told that they lack the resources to make a follow up investigation. In February 1992 I had my personal taste of the reality of state incapacity when I traveled with the Wa District Chief Executive[4] as a correspondent of the Ghana News Agency. Following the IMF/World Bank recommended Structural Adjustment Program, which included state downsizing, a reduction in public expenditure and maximization of internal revenue, District Assemblies were asked to widen the tax net. The District Chief Executive was out to educate members of his jurisdiction to pay their taxes. Thus our trip to Chakala, a small village in the Upper West Region was part of his civic education campaign. The trip to the village took us some two hours through some un-motorable terrain. At Chakala, Na Seidu Braimah, the District Chief Executive, addressed the people for some 40 minutes on their civic responsibility to the state. An elderly member of the community took the floor to tell us how some five years earlier, the whole village was washed away by floods and no one came to their aid. Lives were lost, property damaged and those who survived re-built their lives from scratch. The man then asked the District Chief Executive that now that the state (government, as he preferred to call it) is in need, why does he think they the people of Chakala owe it a helping hand? This was a very embarrassing moment for this senior government official. How come that four decades after the constitution of Ghana, some sections of the nation are untouched by the state's allocative role?

I have narrated this story not to support the theory of state decay or collapse in Africa. To use this as an instance of decay will be nothing but journalese. This vignette is to point out that the postcolonial state in its relation to the nation has always suffered from a crisis of incapacity. To speak of collapse means that there was a glorious past or better times before. The African state is yet to be in its capacity as state for-the-nation (Hyden 1983). It is only when

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[4]    Administratively, Ghana has 110 districts and each is headed by a District Chief Executive, who serves as a mayor.

we can point to a fully developed state that there can be a possibility of collapse. It is true that most African states including Ghana exhibit all the outward trappings of modern states. They have diplomatic representations abroad, including at the UN. They have administrative authorities, police, and army units as well as universities. That is sophistication. But behind this facade lurks the crisis of incapacity. But maintaining a simulation of state as real has its advantages as Claude Ake (1997, 2) points out: "these states contrive determinedly to turn nominal claim to statehood into a substantive claim. For it is clearly in the interest of those who control them to do so given the prestige, material resources and political leverage which come from international recognition."

When Richard Sandbrook (1982), a well-known political economist with a considerable experience in researching development issues within the framework of *Basic Needs Approach* discusses the African state in combating urban poverty, he explicates on this weakness quite well. Sandbrook (1982, 77) dismisses the liberal assumptions of the state as a neutral and benevolent arbiter in the process of promoting economic growth and social welfare. He prefers to factor in social class, regional location, and ethnicity as part of the power dynamics impacting on the state. Such an approach is commendable as it takes into consideration the particularities of the postcolonial conjuncture, and Africa countries notoriety for very high levels of multi-ethnicity. Sandbrook prefers the Marxist conception of the state but points out that the Leninist conception of the argument that the state is a tool for the dominant economic ruling class is rather mechanistic.

> In this model structural reforms represents not victories won by ordinary citizens, but clever manipulations by far-sighted ruling class to forestall discontent. To be sure, reform *may* constitute manipulation....Nevertheless, the conception of the state should not be so rigid as to beg the question whether, short of a socialist revolution, poor and oppressed people can hope to better their position through political action (Sandbrook 1982, 78).

In this political economy of development, Sandbrook rightly insists that while there is a relationship between the dominant economic class and the state, the relationship is not axiomatic, but rather a *contingent* one. That is to say, while there is a tendency for the state, under capitalism, to act in the interest of capitalist and allied classes, this is not always an inevitable process. Here I agree with Sandbrook because in the absence of well defined capitalism and class relations, ethnicity and religion, for instance become mobilizable resources that can command the enduring power that capital generates. Thus capital, ethnicity, location, religion (and a whole host of others) are elements within the conjuncture defined by the postcolony. Reforms carried out by the state, then are better thought of as particular articulations.

The tendency to indulge in history by analogy is also evident in much of the literature on modernization and development. It is a weakness one finds in various kinds of structuralism from Marxism, *Dependista* and liberal theory of economic growth. The dependency school points out that underdevelopment is a historical product of development of the north, downplaying local subjectivity. Liberals and Marxists agree on the trajectory waiting what they call traditional, feudal, pre-modern, pre-capitalist society. The question Mamdani (1996, 9)

puts across is that if pre-modern means not yet modern and pre-capitalist means not yet at the capitalist stage, does it mean that a student is one who is not yet a teacher? Underlying such an apparently naive question are complex questions of the specificity of various conjunctures, the dynamics of agency and subjectivity as well as the unavoidable fact of contingency. "The endeavor to restore historicity, agency, to the subject has been at the cutting edge of a variety of critiques of structuralism. But if structuralism tended to straitjacket agency within the iron laws of history, a strong tendency in poststructuralism is to diminish the significance of historical constraint in the name of salvaging agency" Mamdani 1996, 10).

Because of the vicissitudes of these elements, we have to admit that modernization may never lead to modernity, but to a sort of a new social formation that should not be judged or assessed by the yardstick of the Euro-American modern. How do we explain the fact that the modernizing developing world today is an admixture of features of 13th Century pre-modern Europe, 20th Century modernity and 21st Century late/post modernity all within one conjuncture? How do you describe a nation-state that has the Internet and modern supersonic jets yet relies on 13th century technology and indentured labor for the bulk of its food production? The modernity we are trying to ape did not experience this chaotic plurality. Why then do we work to replicate the occident's historical experience? I am not suggesting that modernization is a fruitless enterprise. Rather, I want to point out that if modernization is taken to mean *becoming* modern, then we better rethink our goal. Development communication theory and practice will be better off if we abandon modernist yardstick as measurement of the success or otherwise of contemporary social formations in the developing world. The type of conceptual sophistication that I am pushing for here is evident in the work of Martin-Barbero (1993) who brings out the dynamics of the intersection between the local and global in the Latin American context. Methodologically, he dismisses the common tendency to approach developing countries with a binary logic or wooden framework that tends to fix what is in practice a process. He is also one communication scholar who takes serious the nation-state as an analytical framework. He points out that in the Latin American experience, the state was central in the mobilization of the masses into nation. For, as he put it, "it was impossible to conceive of national unity without strengthening the 'centre,' that is organizing the administration of the country around a central point of decision making" (Martin-Barbero 1993, 154).

James Ferguson (1998) has a more anthropological view of the state and calls us to abandon thoughts of the "state" as distinct from "society." The idea that each is real and an enframed entity, composed of reified and disembodied structures is an illusion, according to Ferguson. "States are viewed not in opposition to something called 'society' but as themselves composed of bundles of social practices, every bit as 'local' in their social situatedness and materiality as any other" (1998, 55). Such a way of conceptualizing the state, much as it has a hallow of sophistication, comes with a risk. And the risk is a political one. It will lead to a slighting of its constitutive role in society, its codified power as the only institution that confers legitimacy on all other institutions and its monopoly over the use of force and the allocation of communal resources.

We have to summarize the issues raised so far about the postcolonial state. A mainstreaming of the postcolonial state's institutional agency will enrich research into communication and development policy. In our attempt to do so, we have to avoid the seductive argument of those who focus on the doomsday scenario of collapsed states. We also have to overcome the iron logic determinism of traditional political economy and focus on what Mosco (1996) describes as the constitutive role of the state. This clearing of space allows us adopt a conjunctural analytical approach to an interrogation of the state as an actor. What is required is an identification of the elements and moments in the policy process and tease out the lines of tangential force that lead to certain particular policy choices and not others.

## The State and the Nation as Communicative Problematic

In this section, I intend to problematize the *state* and *nation* within the literature on communication and development. What is the relationship between these two concepts to issues about communication? Why is the state so interested in Communication issues? According to Samir Amin (1990a, 48; 1990b, 84), an interrogation of what he calls actual history will lead us to challenge the ideology of the nation both in its bourgeois version – the nation is a pre-existing reality – or in its vulgar Marxist version which says the nation is simply a product of capitalism. "Actual history suggests rather that the state is that active subject that sometimes creates the nation, sometimes 'regenerate' it…" If the state is the active historical subject that constructs the nation, (and so the nation-state) through a process of modernization, it will be more rewarding to refocus development communication research from the perspective of the nation-state.

By the very nature of its foundation in the postcolony, the state precedes the nation. And for this reason, the state is therefore entrusted with the fundamental task of organizing a regime of production as part of the formation of the nation; hence, the birth of the *developmental state* in postcolonial Africa out of the colonial project. In his discussion of the Indian experience, Chatterjee makes the point that the postcolonial state acquired its representativeness, and for that matter, its legitimacy by pursuing a developmental ideology. "A developmental ideology then was a constituent part of the self-definition of the postcolonial state. The state was connected to the people not simply through the procedural forms of representative government; it also acquired its representativeness by directing a program of economic development on behalf of the nation" (Chatterjee 1993, 203). Goran Hyden also captures this phenomenon well when he says that the postcolonial state re-articulated certain key concepts to imply progress. For instance, the class society of yesterday that was characterized by privileges based on race became the classless or revolutionary paradise to be achieved, "law and order type of administration became development administration…" (1983, 19).

The postcolonial state acquired its structures – the military, the police, the civil service the judiciary – from the colonial system. The colonial system was attacked as alien,

exploitative and unrepresentative of the people. Thus the postcolonial state acquires its legitimacy and justification by setting up a development administration. "It was in the administration of development that the bureaucracy of the postcolonial state was to assert itself as the universal class, satisfying in the service of the state its private interests by working for the universal goals of the nation" (Chatterjee 1993, 205). Other neo-Marxist perspectives tend to argue along these lines except that the emphasis is on the requirements of capital. They argue that as a result of the absence of a strong local bourgeois class, the postcolonial state attempts to fill this void by going into various production activities. This economic role of the state allows those who occupy political and top bureaucratic office to accumulate capital à la Marx' "primitive accumulation" necessary for the emergence of a local bourgeoisie.

In his discussion of the formation of the nation-state as the universally accepted political form of organization, Giddens (1985, 269) presents four types of nation-states based on the nature of state formation. His first two are the classical nation-state – principally defined by the dominant European experience of nation corresponding to state; and the colonized nation-state with USA, Canada, Australia and Israel being the immediate examples. The post-colonial and the modernizing nation-states are the third and fourth types that Giddens offers. While he tries to argue that these last two are different, he does not elaborate except making the point that these two differ from the first two because they are often characterized by linguistic pluralism and ex-colonies that have successfully transformed or are transforming themselves into modern nation-states. What is not quite clear is the distinction between the post-colonial and the modernizing state. Following Chatterjee's analysis my understanding is that the two are often the same. The postcolonial nation-state is by definition a modernizing one. With the state preceding the nation, the postcolonial state undertakes the task of attaining the standards set by the pioneering European and North American ones. And that is why most postcolonial nation-states embrace the modernization rhetoric of development, having accepted the Hegelian definition as being undeveloped.

When Benedict Anderson (1991) discusses the history of nationalism and how the concept has evolved, he propounds the thesis that the nation is more than just a mere geographical expression. More than that, it is one that grows out of a subtle process of imagination through which members of the nation as a community are defined. He defines the nation as "an imagined political community" and adds that it "is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (1991, 6).

What is interesting is that Anderson finds in the nationalist novel and the newspaper, technologies of representation that "provide the technical means for 're-presenting' the *kind* of imagined community that is the nation" (ibid. 25). These technologies of communication and representation including the railway system and the telegraph helped to co-ordinate a deep sense of horizontal comradeship across time and space. The daily/periodical appearance of the newspaper, the structure of the content, distinguishing, among other things, between home and foreign news may be central in the process of defining a collective identity and common imagination that find geographical expression on the map. The first generation of

elite in colonial and postcolonial communities often found the novel an ideal avenue to express their "nationalist imaginations." For certain, the novel was a public medium that they could express their nationalism. Commenting on this practice in former British colonies, John McLeod (2000) contended that the emergence of a local literature in the commonwealth countries has historically been linked to the nurturing and development of a truly nationalist sentiment.

Eighteenth century "print capitalism" (to use Anderson's phrase), for that matter, was very instrumental in the shaping of the imagination of the people towards modern political communities in present-day developed democracies. Print technology brought about a revolution in publication in the then vernacular languages (English, French, German etc.) bringing an end to the monopoly of Latin as the truth-language. The Martin Luther phenomenon in 1517 where he wrote his thesis in German and not Latin was a landmark in this development (Anderson 1991, 39). The printed language brought together diverse dialects of the same languages together to form the "embryo of the nationally imagined community" (ibid. 44).

Anderson's arguments seem to have some affinity with Max Weber's idea of the nation as a community of memories. Or more accurately, we can say that Anderson is here a Weberian who recognizes the ideology of nation-state emanating from its mobilization of passion and intimacy as well as the rhetoric of redemptive sacrifice. Max Weber had earlier argued that nationalism has an incredibly rich purchase on people's imagination through its rhetoric of glorious sacrifice. He points out that the "community of political destiny, i.e. above all, of common political struggle of life and death, has given rise to groups with joint memories which often have had deeper impact than the ties of merely cultural, linguistic, or ethnic community. It is this 'community of memories' which ... constitutes the ultimate decisive element of 'national consciousness'" (Weber 1978, 903). The fact of a "community of memories" turns out to be more supportive than the potent fact of common language and ethnicities, in the modern project of political communities in the case of postcolonial Africa. But this assertion is not to belittle the other side of contemporary Africa where the cementing ties of ethnicity appear more resilient than the nation. In fact, it is my argument that where ethnicity triumphs over nation in Africa, it is because of an un-democratized national communication infrastructure. And those existing unbalanced communication networks tend to be skewed in favor of promoting ethnic imaginings as against national imaginings.

While Anderson has come under various criticisms, his central argument that *print capitalism* was instrumental in the process of imagining a postcolonial political community has been generally praised as a significant contribution (Chatterjee 1993, 4; Balakrishnan 1995). Indeed, Partha Chatterjee criticizes Anderson for reading colonial histories as the shadow of the European experience. Yet he admits to the validity of Anderson's thesis by observing that in the Indian experience, an "entire institutional network of printing presses, publishing houses, newspapers, magazines, and literary societies is created around this time *outside* the purview of the state and the European missionaries, through which the new language, modern and standardized, is given shape" (1993, 7). Basil Davidson (1992, 150) has also pointed out that nationalism and national literacy have always followed each other in the Africa experience of anti-colonial struggle. In Ghana, the history of nationalism and

nationalist activists is inextricably linked to the development of journalism in that country. It is often said, and justifiably so, that the anti-colonial press was the most important resource in the regaining of independence in 1957. But even then Ansah (1985) will encourage us to also appreciate the role of radio broadcasting than print journalism in the development of an imagined community out of the Gold Coast colony that grew to become Ghana. Ironically, it was partly for the same reason of "creating a unity of thought and unity of purpose" that encouraged the British colonists to introduce broadcasting technology for the first time in the Gold Coast colony. Colonial Governor Hodson in 1940 made the argument before the Gold Coast Legislative Assembly to justify investment in the then new media.[5]

Examining Anderson and Ansah critically, one is tempted to describe their argument as technologically determinist. In fact, Gopal Balakrishnan (1995, 62) reads Anderson with a McLuhanite flavor: "Anderson argues that in a sense, the medium was the message. Literate civil societies were shaped and more sharply differentiated from one another, as the mass production techniques of early modern 'print capitalism' standardized the norms and increased the density of social intercourse within particular vernacular languages." While there is a sense of technological determinism in his thesis, we should not jump onto the other side and come out with all the traditional criticisms against technodeterminism. If technology is an embodiment of specific cultural practices that have been reconstituted, we cannot deny that in a sense, technology has an ontological existence and has agency. And one of the arguments that McLuhan (1964) put out in "medium is the message" thesis is the fact that technologies are extensions of human subjectivity hence have agency. The problem comes when we privilege technological agency as the driving force of history and become blind to the historical conjunctures in which technological agency is evident. Thus it may be fruitful to see technology here not as the central causal force but in the Williamsian sense of setting limits or "exerting pressures" (Williams, 1977, 87; Mosco 1996, 5). Then technology becomes one element or agency that work in concert with other agencies at specific conjunctures to constitute the imagined political community of citizens. In effect, the fact of causality is appropriately credited to the conjuncture and not one particular agency. This will be discussed in detail subsequently when I relate it to the articulation of communication policy for Ghana.

What is instructive about the history of nationalism is that the immigrant societies in North America were the pioneers of the construction of the political communities, as we understand them today. According to Anderson the imagined communities of North America were facilitated more by the work of the "provincial Creole printman" than the ideas generated by the Enlightenment and Liberalism. The newspapers were locally produced and dealt with local issues primarily (Anderson 1991, 62-65). This 18th century American pioneering experience of nation building was determined significantly by communication and transportation difficulties. General technological primitiveness, more than imperialist ambition was central in shaping the geographies of these nations (ibid. 114).

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5    Gold Coast Legislative Council Debates, March 12, 1940, p.15.

In the Latin American context, Martin-Barbero's critical analysis underscores the role of mediation in the process of nation formation. Martin-Barbero (1993, 141) points out that "the decisive role of the mass media was their ability to convey the summons of populism, turning the masses into the people and the people into the nation." He adds that it was the cinema and radio in particular that gave the differing peoples from diverse regions their first taste of nationhood. In this case, Martin-Barbero and Paul Ansah have much in common in recognizing audio-visual technologies as primal agents of late postcolonial nationalism.

A much earlier work that has communication as its central problematic in the study of nationalism is Karl Deutsch's *Nationalism and Social Communication* (1966). For Deutsch, society or cultural groups do not constitute community until the elements of social communication or channels of culture are present (1966, 89). What makes Deutsch interesting is his focus on the multi-ethnic state, with Switzerland as an example. He argues:

> what counts is not the presence or absence of any single factor, but merely the presence of sufficient communication facilities with enough complementarity to produce the overall result. The Swiss may speak four different languages and still act as one people, for each of them has enough learned habits, preferences, symbols, memories, patterns of land holding and social stratification, events in history and personal associations, all of which together permit him to communicate more effectively with other Swiss than with speakers of his own language who belong to other peoples (Deutsch 1966, 97).

But the social mobilization model that Deutsch proposes appears to be dated today for the primary reason that it is premised on traditional society versus modern society dualism. Some of the logic of his model however still resonates with the experience of developing nation-states. Thus, for Deutsch, as for Anderson and Ansah, the communicative fabric of the nation does not necessarily privilege linguistic commonality, but rather other technologies and common circumstances that facilitate social discourse.

Michael Warner (1990) has also discussed the centrality of print in the development of a bourgeois public sphere in colonial America as part of the process of nation building. He argues that the meaning of the printed object created "an awareness of the potentially limitless others who may also be reading. For that reason, it becomes possible to imagine oneself, in the act of reading, becoming part of an arena of the national people that cannot be realized except through such mediating imaginings" (Warner 1990, xiii). Not only was print intimately related to nation, writers and printers were quick to evoke the rhetoric of nationalism to define their trade (Warner 1990, 118-119).

This American instance is similar to the 20th century post-colonial experience in Africa, though in the African case, the spatial boundaries were determined more by imperialist interests (external institutional agency) than by the existing communication technologies (including languages). It was later to rely on the availability of space conquering technologies of communication, especially radio, to constitute the postcolonial imagined community as a nation-state (Ansah 1986).

In his discussion of this American experience of nation building and technologies of communication from the perspectives of Harold Innis, James Carey points out that "high

communication policy" has always been part of the history of the US. He argues out "as the United States pursued an almost exclusive policy of improving communication over long distance, as it saw communication as a form of power and transmission, the effective unit of culture and social organization underwent major changes... Finally, the growth of long distance communication cultivated new structures in which thought occurred - national class and professions - new things thought about - speed, space, movement, mobility - and new things to think with - increasingly abstract, analytic, and manipulative symbols" (Carey 1981, 84). A national community of politics and commerce in America was possible thanks to the railroad and telegraph networks that were put in place (Carey 1998, 29). In this more recent analysis of this subject, Carey focuses his attention on the implications of the global communication system (Internet) on the old American national project and offers illuminating perspectives on what he calls "post-nationalism." Inferring from his discussions from the perspectives of the developing nations experience, one gets a worrying picture for the project of nation building. But that should not stop us from interrogating the formation of the postcolonial nation-state.

First of all, Carey explains that the era of the telegraph, the rail network and subsequently the print and electronic media that he calls "the new communication technologies of the 1890s" organized at the national level, ensured a collective national "clock of awareness" in the United States (Carey 1998, 31-32). But since the 1970s, he continues, the US has "been undergoing a similar communication revolution but one whose scalar dynamics is at the global rather than the national level, a revolution producing in the words of a former Chairman of Citicorp, 'the twilight of sovereignty'" (Carey, 1998, 33). Carey explains that the communication revolution of the 1890s caused a social disruption and re-organization of society into urban and mass society as well as helping to redefine American societies into a new imaginary community.

The next communication revolution which, he argues, started in the 1970s and culminated into the internet has inaugurated a new kind of social disruption, a "crisis or a cultural melt-down in which established conceptual schemes no longer make adequate sense of the world." It has also triggered a frenzied attempt to provide new conceptual schemes. These include the deconstruction of the meta-narrative of the modern, the celebration of multiple and fluid identities and the reconstruction of the dimensions of space and time through the agency of new communication technologies (Carey 1998, 33). What Carey has forcefully argued out is that the Internet, as the first truly global communication system is displacing the old national communication system. Given the euphoria surrounding the adoption of the Internet in late postcolonial nation-states such as Ghana which have hardly developed what can be called a national communication system, what becomes of the national project expected to come into being? If the postcolonial nation-state was founded with the facility of the national radio and television, what becomes of the nation-state if the regimes of national discourses are shifted to globalized Internet? While we do not have definite answers to these questions, the scenario of a globalization of the national seems troubling. The fact is that while developed and industrialized nation-states go global with more economically durable and politically stable entities, the late postcolonial (that is yet to establish a nation-state) may not accomplish its

task in the new global dispensation. I am not arguing that the postcolonial nation-states will collapse due to globalization. Rather, the idea of getting to a stage where the mission of building a nation-state would have been accomplished may have to be revised.[6]

But there is another scenario that is more plausible. If the Internet is producing the end of the nation-state in North America, it is not just because of the availability of the technology per se, though its availability is paramount. Robert Reich, (1992) expands the debate to include the rise of the multi-national corporation and the new class of workers, which I will discuss shortly. To ascribe the globalization of the national in the occident to the power of communication technologies smacks of a determinist argument that is blind to other factors present within the conjuncture. Let us take the United States for instance. As Carey admits, the frenzied attempts to produce new conceptual schemes to account for disruptions of the settled life of the modern were preceded by a new migration and the international expansion of capitalism. While big business is influencing national policy to re-define the national interest to include their investment interest in the Third World, migrant communities are also struggling to re-construct the focus of national policy to include communities, which are geographically and legally non-members of the American nation-state. These two factors, together with ICTs, are some of the multiple factors that overdetermine the new outlook of the globalized nation-state in the occident. The cocktail of factors in the developing nation-states such as Ghana have different constituents. The scenario has not yet played out so we are left to conjecture. But our guess will be well informed if we focus on the development planning practices of the Ghanaian state, currently under the tutelage of the World Bank and the IMF. Or better still, if we interrogate the development blueprints that these multilateral institutions offer the Ghanaian state.

The type of nationalism that informs the writing of these communication theorists and Anderson is a rather humanizing version that draws from the Weberian idea of quest for community. Thus communication infrastructure is easily thought out as the wire that binds, or as the platform for the constitution of the nation. But there is another version of the nation, not as a product of a humanist quest for community, but as an economic enterprise, good for big business. This is the main theme of Robert Reich's book, *The Work of Nations* (1992). To be more precise, the book is about the American experience, but it has lessons that can be drawn into making sense of the African experience. Reich's argument is that the American nation is no longer the imagined community of fellows, but a bifurcated economy of disconnected communities, thanks to the rise of new class of service and network related workers.

A major theme that runs through Robert Reich's (1992) book is the idea that the concept of nation, what constitutes collective national interest in the sense of private big business corporations representing, or synonymous with national interest is no longer applicable due to the global nature of economic and business transaction and the rise of what he calls

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[6]   The global scale of the Internet within the urban sphere of the postcolony will come under discussion when I look at digital consumption in Accra and its effects on the national imagination in Chapter Eight.

"symbolic analyst". If the collective national interest in the big corporation was based on the idea that it provided jobs, profits for its citizens who have invested in the company, and enhanced the national image by the symbolic dominance of its products in other countries, this no longer makes sense. Reich explains this transition through his two concepts of high-volume as against high-value production. The old order where the national interest was well represented by the big corporation was characterized by high-volume production. But the growing emphasis on information-based production and production process has shifted the big corporation towards a predominance of high-value production.

The growing irrelevance of the big corporation to the spatially based and restricted concept of national interest also affects conceptual and functional classification of jobs by the state bureaucracy. Classifications such as managerial and professional specialty, technical and administrative, are increasingly becoming helpless tools in our understanding of the economy. This set of classifications made sense when the economy was focused on high-volume standardized production, in which almost every job fit into, or around, the core American corporation, and when status and income depended on one's ranking in the standard bureaucracy. But these categories have little bearing upon the competitive positions of Americans worldwide, now that America's core corporations are transforming into finely spun global webs (Reich 1992, 174).

Reich argues for a new concept to offer a better understanding of the global economy, and the shifting structure of incomes and power in the production process. Instead of categorizing jobs into white-collar and blue-collar, technical, administrative, professional and service occupations, Reich suggests three functional categories: routine production service, in-person service and symbolic analytic services. Routine production services refer to jobs that have to do with repetitive tasks usually located in high volume enterprises. Their products are similar looking commodities that are traded in world commerce. "Although often thought of as traditional blue collar jobs, they also include routine supervisory jobs performed by low- and mid-level managers - foremen, line managers, clerical supervisors, and section chiefs ... " (Reich 1992, 174). According to Reich, the fortunes of routine producers are declining in the new global economy.

In-person services, like routine production services, also involves repetitive task. It does not demand high education and normally these are low-income earners, such as sales workers, waiters, hotel workers, janitors, cashiers, hospital attendants and orderlies, nursing-home aides, child care workers, cleaners, taxi drivers, security guards, etc. According to Reich, this category of workers is growing in size. For instance, in 1990 "Beverly Enterprise, a single nursing home chain operating throughout the United States, employed about the same number of Americans as the entire Chrysler Corporation..."(1992,177). But I guess Reich will be the first to admit that the differences does not lie in the number of jobs but the size of each company's pay vouchers.

The last and very significant category of workers, according to Reich, is the class of those engaged in the symbolic analytic services. These are "problem-solving, problem-identifying and strategic-brokering" workers (ibid). Unlike the other two functional categories, symbolic analytic services require high education, and the services are not sold "as standardized

things." Rather, their services are sold as manipulated symbols - data, words, oral and visual representations. Their marketability transcends national borders. This category include research scientists, university teachers, engineers, PR and advertising executives, film producers and directors, investment bankers, lawyers, etc. What is common with all these is that they are involved in symbol manipulation. Their work is information-centered and what they produce today may not be similar to what they produce tomorrow. They work in the high-value (as against high-volume) industries. Ranking within the business unit may not necessarily be linear and hierarchically structured as in the high-volume business unit. "Symbolic analysts often have partners and associates rather than bosses or supervisors" (1992, 178).

By the nature of his/her work, the symbolic analyst is able to network with colleagues who may be located abroad. His or her income may be predominantly foreign sourced. So may be his/her clients. The high incomes earned by symbolic analysts and the tendency for it to rise, inversely corresponds to the declining market for the labor of routine service workers in particular, the declining income levels of both the routine service and in-person service workers.

Because the job market for the symbolic analysts and also the market for his or her products are located in the global arena (and not limited within the nation-state), Reich argues strongly that the symbolic analyst is no longer in the same boat with the same fate with his/her fellow national citizens who are in the other two functional categories (the routine service and the in-person service workers). This is an ironic historical turn. For most of the large corporations, both private and public, benefited immensely in the early part of this century from the protection of the nation-state, which spent public money to protect them from foreign competition with the excuse that they represented "national interest". If today some of these corporations no longer see their fate tied to that of the nation-state, then they have in reality seized to represent the national interest.

Reich's perspectives are quite illuminating. His conceptual tools of functional categories of jobs are quite helpful in making sense of the current rapid global changes, especially in the communication sector. But from a non-postmodernist perspective, or rather precisely, from a postcolonial perspective, one can also understand the growing irrelevance of the nation-state to the international business unit without privileging the symbolic analyst.

The capitalist company that started off from the metropolis depended on the imperialistic tendency of its mother-nation to expand and grow in size by venturing into the periphery to monopolize trade and investment. Then it made sense to talk about center-periphery relationship. But under postmodern and postcolonial circumstance, the capitalist company, now a giant multinational does not need the protection of the motherland. Indeed, as Slavoj Zizek has argued "a capitalist company as it were cuts its umbilical cord with its mother-nation and treat its country of origin as simply another territory to be colonized" (Zizek 1997, 43). The new global company now has the same attitude towards the citizens of the other countries (mostly ex-colonies and Third World) as it now has towards those of its mother-nation. That is why some features that were previously the exclusive experience of "Banana Republics" are now the lot of developed countries too. I am talking about the paradox of poor

schools system existing side by side with good well equipped ones; poor and deprived health system existing side by side with private well equipped ones, poor crime ridden neighborhoods existing alongside rich neighborhoods with special private police with guaranteed security, all located in the same so-called imagined community of citizens called the nation. This reality of economic apartheid (I hope that is not too strong a word) used to be the exclusive lot of many poor and Third World countries. This is no longer so.

This alternative interpretation of the historical development called globalization does not in anyway reduce the validity of Reich's seminal analysis. But it does bring in Third World perspectives into our understanding of globalization of the business unit, with its concomitant growing irrelevance of the nation and the eruption of "Third World" conditions in the developed countries; an alternative analysis that does not necessarily privilege the birth of the symbolic analyst.

Ernest Gellner (1983, 18) makes the argument that the extension of the market and growth oriented industrial economics all are major contributory factors that create common platforms for intercommunication among otherwise diverse network identities linked to family, clan or ethnicity. Whichever is the case, whether economy or instruments of communication, the idea of nationalism, which Karl Popper (1963, 49) rightly defines as appealing to our tribal instincts, to our passions and our prejudices as well as our nostalgic desire of community needs an enabling environment to nurture these metaphysical yearnings into material existence. This is precisely what I have been trying to point out in the discussion so far.

In a nutshell, the material fabric that serves as the sphere for public imaginings of 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 the technologies of mediation to serve as the avenues for flows. While new and globalized technologies such as the Internet poses 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 the technology and the general question of development within the framework of nation formation. In particular the state has had an unpredictable trajectory from its colonial origins in the business of development. To the subject of state in development, we now turn to in the next chapter.

# Development and the Anthropology of Modernity

In the contemporary literature on development, Arturo Escobar's (1995) work is remarkable for its sustained unpacking of the concept of development in practice. We owe a lot to the work of Escobar in unraveling the discursive practice that led to the invention of development as something that certain parts of the world need and such that it now appears virtually an impossible task to conceptualize social reality in other terms. Following the end of World War II and the conception of the Truman Doctrine[1] , development was seen as an end in itself that had to be achieved. The countries that attained a comparatively high level of material progress and wealth took it upon themselves to modernize the characteristically non-industrialized countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. All sides conventionally accepted the idea that development was needed in some parts of the world through the agency of the developed countries. "Development had achieved the status of certainty in the social imaginary" (1995, 5). If the ghost of Hegel still stalks the modernization theory mills, it materializes in the invention of development and it takes the spirit of Foucault in the form of Escobar's analysis to unwrap it.

A central issue that Escobar raises is that development, as a concept and as practice, was constructed through discourse to attain the status of reality. "Reality…had been colonized by the development discourse" (1995, 5). According to Escobar, development as a discourse, started as a form of representing the "Other." Thus the term "underdeveloped" is a referential term representing the other who needs to be brought up. Development discourse succeeded in creating knowledge about the Third World and this knowledge is the source of power with which to control the very Third World. Thus Escobar (1995, 10) sees development as "a historically singular experience" in which a certain domain of thought and action has been

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[1]    In an address to the US Congress on March 12, 1947, President Truman advocated for the provision of economic and military aid to Greece and Turkey, and by extension, to any country threatened by communism or any totalitarian ideology.

invented. This domain of thought creates knowledge that acts as an instrument of power, whose hegemonizing influence results in some people seeing themselves as developed and want to help others. The hegemonic influence of this knowledge also results in the people from the Third World seeing themselves as underdeveloped and need to be "un-underdeveloped." The foundation on which Escobar builds his argument is that there are "regimes of discourse and representation" that act as sites for the construction of knowledge that shapes identities, symbols and power. To understand this complex social construction, he uses a Foucauldian brand of discourse analysis as a method of studying the discursive activity called development. He employs historical anthropology by digging into the histories of the encounter between the Third World and the West. This act of deconstructing development is necessary because the entire epistemology, as he argues, has been Western centered. Decentering this knowledge is fundamental to the task of investigating alternative existing local but hybridized forms of knowledge at concrete local settings.

Part of the emergence of development as a discursive act was the problematization of poverty in the Third World, the onset of the cold war and the attempt by the West to "rescue" Third Word countries from communism; and the assumption based on Malthusian theory that there was a population problem to be resolved before the magic wand called economic growth could be achieved. According to Escobar, other subjects around which the language of development evolved were the belief that the solution of the problem of lack of development rested on the transfer of technology and an infusion of capital from the developed countries to the Third World. Constructs like monetary and fiscal policies, industrialization and agricultural development emerged as uncontested truths that had to be achieved. He argues that the development discourse is not necessarily the discussions on these issues but rather the set of relations that were established "among these elements, institutions and practices and the systematization of these relations to form of whole" (Escobar 1995, 40). What is important are the sets of relations between these elements and institutions and how they in turn define the rules of the game: "who can speak, from what point of view, with what authority, and according to what criteria of expertise" (ibid.).

Through this regime of discourse, the power of naming who is "illiterate", "malnourished", "small farmer" etc. is present. A consequence of this discursive practice is the professionalization of development, which Escobar (1995, 45) defines as the process by which Third World countries are brought into the politics of expert knowledge and Western science. Instead of relying on local knowledge, the development expert came down with prefabricated models to tinker local conditions to fit in their march to modernity. And this is the illusion of transition to modernity that I alluded to earlier as the unachievable goal. The local peoples' response to modernization is not a docile acceptance of the belief in an imminent modernity, but a process of mixtures that can be characterized as hybridity or *miestizajes* (Martin-Barbero 1993, 188; Escobar1995, 97), or a total rejection of the modernization project as an act of resistance and or insistence. Hybridization is a recurrent theme in Latin American scholarship on development. Escobar explains it as a concept that describes the "conversation" that has been going on between the local and the introduced

concepts and practices through the development discourse. The local peasants and masses have not just been acting as receptacles and receiving ends for the development project. They mount resistance in the form of hybridization of the local and global power, popular knowledge and scientific knowledge.

Hybridity is such a useful concept because it helps us overcome the binary logic or Manichean view of thinking about changes in the postcolony where "traditional society" is analyzed against "modernity." What has happened to the postcolony after these several decades of copulation with modernity is not a modernized traditional society, but a hybrid. Thus hybridity is useful in accounting for the traditional-modernity interface. We are able to go beyond the theological concept of power (that is an omnipotent and omnipresent concept of power) to understand that the impact of modernization on the societies of the Third World should not just be read as one of successful change or resistance; submission or opposition; but also significantly, complicity. That is a mixture of submission, appropriation, re-elaboration and opposition. We neither have the expected modernity nor the traditional past. What else could we be left with but a hybrid? The answer will be affirmative though with some reservation. To celebrate hybridity as the end product of modernization risks banalizing the constitutive process that results from the engagement with the occident. Martin Allor (1997, 48) has criticized the conceptual purchase of hybridity as deferring questions of difference, which happen to be the fact of life. It therefore neutralizes or hides power relations between the main and the appropriated parts that join to constitute the hybrid. Allor prefers Foucault's concept of heterotopia defined as having "a curious property of being in relations with other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralise or invert the set of relations that they happen to designate, mirror or reflect" (Foucault, quoted in Allor 1997, 50). *Mutatis mutandis*, the occident still retains some dominance over the outcome of the intercourse with the postcolony, as I will show later with the discussion on development policy planning process in Ghana in chapter five, although the postcolony is neither modern nor its old self after the inauguration of the development and modernization project. To think of the outcome as just a hybrid risk of occluding the inherent power relations.

Escobar proposes that in order to understand the phenomenon called development and chart a new course, we have to investigate "how external forces - capital and modernity, generally speaking - are processed, expressed and refashioned by local communities" (1995, 98). This is necessary because the persistence of local and hybrid models of the economy means there are, as he put it, "cultural contestations that take place as capital attempts to transform the life of communities" (1995, 99). Martin-Barbero puts this dynamics more evenly when he writes: "Latin American countries wanted to be nations in order at least to define their identities, but the achievement of that identity implied the translation of these identities into the modernizing discourse of the hegemonic countries, for only in terms of that discourse could the efforts and achievements of nationhood be evaluated and validated" (1993, 154). This aspect of this local dynamics escapes Escobar because he tends to privilege external forces in the guise of capital and modernity as the defining categories. The local quest for nationhood is equally as determining as the power of capital and modernity. Local agency

is not just limited to resistance. The logic of the developmentalist ideology that Escobar interrogates could not have been different from how it played out because "the fundamental orientations were already contained in the modernizing nationalisms of the 1930s – the prior and indispensable state of later development" (Martin-Barbero 1993, 154). This historical understanding of the forces that would later shape the discourse of modernization and development is important in understanding the post World War II conjuncture when the international development blossomed into a big industry. To re-state Martin-Barbero within the conceptual vocabulary of articulation, the modernizing nationalisms of the 1930s had already established the lines of tangential force for the post-war articulation of *development* into becoming *national development*. Escobar traces the history of world economics, especially, the inter-war period (1914-1945) and how Keynesianism and growth economics were revitalized during the depression years of 1930s. When the Third World economies became strategically important to the industrialized West, the experience of the depression years provided the "building blocks of a theory of economic development" (Escobar 1995, 67). Development, which previously referred to a certain natural process of change, now became a deliberate act of government planning and intervention to bring about change. Escobar dates the turning point of meaning of the term development to the 1929 British Colonial Development Act.

The language of those who propounded theories of economic development betrays their work as cultural construct but with scientific pretensions. For instance, Escobar cites Arthur Lewis, who theorized the need to operate dual economic systems in the Third World, the *modern* and the *traditional*, with a plan that will allow the modern sector to eventually push out or transform the *traditional* sector (Escobar 1995, 78). The assumption belying Arthur Lewis theory is that the *traditional* is backward, unproductive and has nothing to offer.[2] This way of using language precludes the possibility of exploring the good sides of the traditional economy.

Another illustrative example Escobar relates is the relative low impact that Schumpeter's "Theory of Economic Development (1934) had on the Development Economists who were preoccupied with Third World salvation. "Schumpeter's emphasis on the role of the private entrepreneur seem to rule out its application to poor countries, where entrepreneurship was thought to be nonexistent ... " (1995, 77). Escobar also shows that while Marxist and neo-Marxists operated within different discursive practice, with some new vocabulary, and constituted a new discursive strategy, they still fell within the general framework of political economic discourse. Thus they could not challenge the power-laden discourse that defined others as needing salvation.

Through the use of institutional ethnography, Escobar undertakes a penetrating analysis of the work of development-related institutions. He unravels the very practices of these institutions, which have often been taken for granted as rational actions. For instance, he

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[2]    It is important to note that Arthur Lewis once served as an economic advisor to the first President of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, whose belief in national development planning was remarkable.

argues that prior to development workers engagement with the peasants, they already "socially construct" the peasants. That is to say " that the relation between client and agent is structured by bureaucratic and textual mechanism that are anterior to their interaction" (1995, 107). To illustrate his claim, he discusses how nutrition in Latin America, especially in Colombia in the 1970s, was defined as a problem. The planners whose idea of nutrition problem was defined along the lines of *supply, demand,* and *biological utilization of food* had assumed that their positivistic practice of linear planning was a true description of reality (1995, 121). Escobar therefore calls for a deconstruction of this positivistic practice, which focuses blame on the inadequacies of planning or executive institutions. He suggests that we should look at the ideas that went into policy formulation, and method of data interpretations. Such a call is timely if we are to understand the postcolonial state as an unavoidable actor in development.

As a way forward, Escobar recommends that a new epistemological foundation for conceiving development knowledge be evolved. He sees the task of changing the existing order of discourse as "a political question that entails the collective practice of social actors and the restructuring of existing political economies of truth" (1995, 216). This means an abandonment of Western modes of knowing in order to allow for new types of knowledge and experience. This is a prerequisite for the unmaking of development, a central concern of Escobar. The unmaking of development demands new strategies that will establish significant contacts with those who are supposed to be the target of development. This project calls for ethnographic oriented research methodologies across disciplines so that we will be able to understand the hybrid reconstruction of the modern and the traditional order so as to enable us to refigure the Third World.

For Escobar, the understanding of development as it has been theorized and practiced over the past 40 years demands that we cast our attention not to the institutional and overall framework of development act, theories and practice, but to the discourse through which development is constructed as an idea, as an executable action and the criteria through which it is evaluated. This implies focusing on the very language through which the subject is discussed, the act of labeling the other, the one who has power to name issues and objects that constitute development. By doing this dissecting of language and discourse in development we will understand why certain paths were taken and certain options were abandoned or could not have been taken. This will lead us to the "inauguration of discontinuities of discursive practice of the last forty years" (1995, 217) so that through ethnography we can reconstruct a new understanding of the people of the Third World's response to the development discourse, start a new basis of constructing knowledge that reflects the truth from the perspectives of the people of the Third World.

On the whole, Escobar's review and treatment of the discourse on development in the Third World has been very sophisticated and theoretically rigorous. He has undertaken a comprehensive anthropological analysis of the discourse on development a thorough ethnographic study of development institutions and practices. But the first problem I have with Escobar is his call for an inauguration of discontinuities of the discursive practice over the last forty years so as to start new forms of knowledge. He does discuss the issue of

hybridization to show how local people have been responding to their encounter with modernization and the traditional order. But he seems to suggest that the "hybridized modern" can be thrown out so that we can have some hybridized forms of order that can be unrelated to the modern. My argument is that the four decades of discourse and practice on development has acquired a certain material life of its own and even with the exit of the bureaucrats of the development apparatus (Escobar calls on us to make their life span short), demand for development or modernization will still come from the grassroots. The peasant and urban poor in Ghana and the President of the United States may be watching the same television or movie. The idea that modernization has lots of good things to offer may have been externally introduced through the development discourse, but the rural and urban poor in Africa, Asia and Latin America have internalized these "truths", and that even if we throw out the development apparatus with its agents, the development discourse that Escobar has deconstructed will still go on. Looking at Escobar's recommendation from the perspective of articulation then, we can argue that in the first place there are no pre-discursive truths out there. The newly invented truths of underdevelopment may have to be dis-articulated. But then in such a discursive project, "underdevelopment," "poverty," and the whole core of development vocabulary already come to us as elements that have defined the conjuncture in ways that it will be suicidal to evacuate. We cannot just argue that the so-called poor countries are not poor after all.

Escobar sounds autarchic and uncompromisingly revolutionary in his recommendation. Do we still have unpolluted and pure peasants and urban poor out there to discover? When you visit any poor neighborhood in Africa, be it rural or urban, and ask them their priorities, they are most likely to demand the modernization of their socio-economic infrastructure because, as Escobar himself admits, development has achieved the status of certainty in the social imaginary. To reverse this will simply be a visitation of violence (at least at the epistemic level) on the very people one stakes a claim to liberate.

My other comment is that Escobar assumes a certain ontological position as to what the people of the Third World really want; that there are truths out there to discover after deconstructing the current development discourse. We may end up with truths the people have no idea about. The ethnographic search that he recommends should not rule out the possibility of finding hybridized form of order with emphasis on modernity than what we may call the local. Escobar says development has achieved the status of certainty in the social imaginary. Well, it is precisely for this reason that the question is no longer the deconstruction of development, or to develop or not to develop along this constructed social imaginary, but one of *how* to develop, how to re-articulate development.

What we do not find in such a Foucauldian dissection of power and how it has constructed development is the place of the postcolonial state in the developing country. The state as an institution with reflexive actors is subsumed under the wider framework of global power. Is it that glossing over micrologies of power has become the common critique of using the Foucauldian discourse analysis as a method in deconstruction? Spivak (1988, 276ff) mounts a similar criticism against Foucault and Deleuze for neglecting the micrologies of power in deconstruction.

## The State in Development

There is no doubt that the approach that Escobar uses in his analysis of the invention of development as an idea and practice is illuminating in the wider macrological power dynamics that underlie the experience of postcolonial societies. But what we miss by this approach is the internal micro level dynamics that operate at various conjunctures in this history that spans the transition from colony to postcolony. One interesting place to start from is the British Colonial Development and Welfare programs starting from the 1929, which Escobar notes as marking a turning point in the discourse on development. The first Colonial Development Act was passed in 1929. A more comprehensive one, called the Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 was later passed. Subsequent revision of the Act occurred in 1945, 1949 and 1950 (Lee 1967).

While this project is not an exercise in colonial history, it will be helpful to have a brief look at how British colonial authorities expanded the role of the colonial state from just maintaining law and order to facilitate colonial exploitation to include "development planning". J.M. Lee's book, *Colonial Development and Good Government* takes up an ambitious task of investigating development policy and planning in the colonies of the British Empire. It is important to point out that Escobar may have over credited the American influence in the invention of development. He cites former American president, Harry Truman for the spelling out what later became known as international development cooperation in his inaugural address: "What we envisage is a program of development based on the concept of fair dealing…Greater production is the key to prosperity and peace. And the key to greater production is a wider and more vigorous application of scientific and technical knowledge" (quoted in Escobar 1995, 3). There is no doubt that Truman did make an impact with this statement in the Western invention of international development. But the colonial state in much of Africa had already taken up such a mandate though on very limited terms and had started courting the growing native middle class with the idea that it was engaging in development through the scientific application of knowledge to local social problems. Poverty had already been problematized and the idea of "development officers" had already been born in the colonies and the rhetoric of "improving standards of living" in the colonies was already a subject of administrative phraseology and attention in the 1940s (Lee 1967, 78).

Thus the later Colonial Development and Welfare Act of 1940 inaugurated in colonies such as Gold Coast (Ghana) the idea of social reform, transformation of society through the provision of welfare services including education and modern health facilities.

> Good government meant that official classes accepted full responsibility for development schemes, neither more nor less…The remarkable consistency of doctrine about colonial development seem to be partly a product of the war. The loss of Singapore to the Japanese in February 1942 did a great deal to concentrate the mind of the official class upon the part played by indigenous people in the development of their countries (Lee 1967, 13-14).

The anti-colonial movement within the British Labor Party, the activism of British families that had investments in the colonies all contributed to the revision of colonial policy with the idea that the colonies needed development. Stephen Constantine (1984, 4) adds that the British Empire's reception of the idea of developing the colonies might have been shaped by the changing relationship between the center and the colonies, including the concessions made under the Government of India Act of 1919 and Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. Lee (1967, 6) explains that the 1940 act "established the principle that the British tax payer had a duty to make direct contribution towards the development of the colonial peoples." The empire had succeeded in convincing the British taxpayer to fund the modernization of the colonies so that the British class of colonial investors would continue to milk the resources of the colonies. Here is a double-edge sword: using public resources from the metropolis to enhance the process of imperialist accumulation. But that is not what interests us now, and even then Barbara Ingham (1987, 249) makes a strong argument that it was the policy of the Empire that the colonies take care of their own budgets and no money was to be given out to them for development. What matters is that this period marks the beginning of a development ideology that uses public resource under the pretext of pursuing humanist goals (development) but in reality, aimed at facilitating private business interest. Let us note that development here acquired a new meaning. That is a rhetorical gesture of conditioning certain social forces.

Constantine (1984, 4) traces the idea of colonial development to before 1914. The idea that annexing territory was not enough and that colonies had to have development infrastructure to increase colonial productivity was already part of the agenda of lobbyist groups in England before the outbreak of the First World War. Business groups and stakeholders in the colonial economy were already lobbying for railways, roads and harbors as well as social infrastructure to be built. Joseph Chamberlain, a noted sympathetic Secretary of State from 1893 to 1903, would argue: "I consider many of our colonies as being in the condition of underdeveloped estates, and estates which never can be developed without imperial assistance" (quoted in Constantine 1984, 11). Thus, colonial infrastructural investment for the good of colonial exploitation was already thought of as "assistance." But then, as Ingham (1987, 248) points out, the brains behind policy direction on colonial development made their case against a theory that developing the colonies would help the inter-war social problems in England.

What is important here by both Lee and Constantine's account is that incidents such as the loss of Singapore, the activism of the Left in Britain, colonial investors, proto-nationalist activities in the colonies as well as, the pressure from the United States on the empire for political modernization of the colonies, all had a reflexive impact on colonial relations and the reshaping of the colonial state. What I am pointing out here is that at the micro level, various events at every conjuncture help to overdetermine the final outcome of colonialist intentions. Thus a project to hold the locals in check by instituting a brutal coercive force called the colonialist state or what Mbembe (2001) will call the *commandement* had to be revised to accommodate new demands, such as the questioning of the legitimacy of the expatriate community's status as an occupying force.

In the particular experience of Ghana, then called the Gold Coast, 1919 to 1927 marked an important period in the generation of development discourse. It was the first time that the

colonial administration, under Governor Gordon Guggisberg, (a Canadian in the service of the Crown) that a Ten Year Development Program with a budget of about 24 million pounds was implemented to provide transport and communications, water supply, drainage, electricity agricultural extension and education. But as Ingham (1987, 250) explains, such a generous interest in colonial welfare was later to cost Guggisberg his job in colonial service when his term came to an end in 1927. Most likely, Guggisberg's own colonial experience in Canada might have influenced his generosity to Gold Coasters, but such a disposition was uncharacteristic of colonial administration While colonial development was an accepted idea, Guggisberg was considered too liberal in interpreting it. Little wonder he is the most nostalgically remembered colonial governor. Thus in the experience Ghana, Guggisberg went down in history as the father of the *developmentalist state*. Ghana's first teaching hospital and first highest center of learning, now the University of Ghana, stand to his credit.

Between 1940 and 1955, the belief that modern technology held the answers to the development needs of the colonies was the conventional wisdom in Britain. The extension of modern medicine, mechanized methods of food production, modern means of communication including telecommunication were already considered important requirements for the colonies (Lee 1967, 32). So that, the recognition that the colonies were underdeveloped by British standards was already the accepted norm among colonial administrators and their work therefore included helping out to raise living standards. Thus on the first sitting of independent Ghana's parliament where the Act of Independence was presented, the First Speaker, Kwame Nkrumah will accept the offer of freedom with the following statement: "Fifty years ago there were no harbours, scarcely any roads and life was primitive as in almost any part of the world. To-day we enter our independence with all the machinery of a modern state."[3]  What Nkrumah was admitting to was the fact that the postcolonial state acquired the full machinery of modern state from the colonial system; a heritage that he was very grateful and proud of.

In the area of mass communication, the developmental role of broadcasting for the colonies was appreciated by the colonial administration. The development of broadcasting in the colony was already tied to the very socio-economic development of the colonies itself. Thus after the World War II, the Colonial Office in London, was already discussing how to develop radio broadcasting. "There can be no doubt of the great potential value of an effective broadcasting service in every country" a Colonial Office Confidential Circular to the colonies will remark, adding "Recent events in the Gold Coast, for example, have underlined its value as a means of spreading widely and speedily authentic information and ideas, and of correcting false impressions and rumors in times of civil disturbances. The development in Malaya of broadcasting for schools in English and vernacular languages illustrates the wider possibilities of broadcasting as an instrument of education and training in citizenship and of cultural advancement."[4]

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[3]  Parliamentary Report – 6th March 1957. Government Printing Dept., Accra.
[4]  Colonial Office Confidential Circular No. 96840/48 (dated 14th May 1948) "Broadcasting in the Colonies" From National Archives in Accra.

In view of these sentiments, the Colonial Office authorized all colonial governments to examine their local broadcasting capacities and see if it could be improved upon. Those without such facilities were also asked to look into the feasibility of starting radio broadcasting services. Who should fund it? The Circular repeated a British policy of full government funding of broadcasting services, and regretted that certain colonial governments were already shedding that responsibility to the private sector.

> I regret that many Colonial Governments have found themselves compelled to deviate from it (state funding) owing to the difficult which they have experienced in finding the necessary finance to develop broadcasting as a public service, and owing to the willingness of commercial companies to develop broadcasting or rediffusion services on seemingly attractive terms. I refer below to the problem of finance, but I would here reiterate the view that even though commercial broadcasting may be subject to strict government control and may be operated with restraint and understanding by its sponsors, its operations are necessarily governed by the desire to earn a profit from the community, and it must largely waste the educational and administrative opportunities which broadcasting offers. Moreover, if commercial concerns are allowed to acquire vested interests in providing services for the more profitable areas, the extension of broadcasting to the less profitable areas may be seriously prejudiced. I am firmly of opinion, therefore, that commercial companies should not be encouraged to undertake broadcasting or rediffusion services in the Colonies. Such an expedient should be considered only as a last resort if it has been clearly established first, that there is a definite need for setting up a broadcasting service.[5]

Thus from its colonial beginnings the demands of public service as against the attractions of private broadcasting and profit were issues to contend with. This is probably the genesis of the state versus market debate in communication policy in Ghana.

The process of inventing development on the colonial scene was even more complex than just the external declaration of intent to improve the living standards of those living in the "estate." M.P Cowen and R.W. Shenton (1996, 309) in their encyclopedic study of the "doctrine of development" have pointed out that in colonial Kenya, the official policy of land grabbing was justified on the colonial state's intention to promote community development. Official colonial policy in 1949 enunciated by the British Labor government on community development, Cowen and Shenton explain, was also referred to as "social development" or "mass education." For the colonial authorities, this meant "a movement designed to promote better living for the whole community, with active participation and, if possible, on the initiative of the community but if this initiative is not forthcoming, by the use of techniques for arousing and stimulating it in order to secure the active and enthusiastic response to the movement" (quoted in Cowen and Shenton 1996, 310-311). Thus if the postcolonial state became receptive to a new American initiative of diffusion of innovation campaigns under the

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[5]  Ibid

rubric of development communication in the 1960s and 70s, it was because this was already a standard policy practice in development planning inherited from the colonial state. Cowen and Shenton argue that the policy of building a community through development was not rooted in the postcolonial project of constructing an imagined community, but rather in the very colonial doctrine of community development. Such a reading of colonial history of development is contestable for the fact that the colonial project of development was not a political-cum-economic project of community (nation) building but one of facilitating economic activity for the benefit of the imperium. The colonial doctrine of community development was therefore a strategy of containment. And this is where the postcolonial state differs from its colonial ancestor. The postcolonial state's mandate was the building of an imagined community of citizens through development. That is the nation-state in the process of becoming. Whereas the colonial state was interested in subjugation through a process of dual mandate of the world of the citizen (small expatriate community) and the world of the subject ruled by the colony through local chiefs without civil rights and obligation. But the conceptual appeal of development, as an instrument was almost the same for both the colonial state and its postcolonial version.

Mamdani's (1996) penetrating analysis of the obstacles to democratization in contemporary postcolonial Africa probably offers us the most comprehensive and articulate new reading of the legacy of colonialism and the state in Africa. One of his central questions focuses on the level to which the structure of power in contemporary Africa embodied in the state is shaped by its colonial ancestry rather than the anticolonial revolt that ostensibly brought it into being. (Mamdani 1996, 7) Answering such a question will surely help us understand the contemporary nature of the state and its relations to the nation as a key agent in its constitution in much of Africa. Or to quote from Olakunle George's (2000) rendition, Mamdani tells us where, in Africa "the rain began to beat us, and why it might do so for some time longer."

When conventional historiography says the British ruled their colonies in Africa through the practice of "Indirect Rule" while the French through "Association," Mamdani (1996, 37) unmasked these terms and points out that what really took place was a well thought out policy of a state form better described as *decentralized despotism*. In brief, this was a bifurcated power apparatus between the two worlds of the *citizen* in the colony and the *subject* in the protectorate. At the top was the colonial state that oversaw the two types of communities. The first one was a civil society type of arrangement that had a burgeoning modern system of public administration, law and order with the various civil liberties. This first community had as its members, the expatriate staff of colonial administration and businesses and in some cases a young crop of native western educated elite. The other community, often larger in terms of population was the world of the subject under traditional administration. This was the protectorate. It was, so to speak, a case of subletting out to local African chiefs large chunks of the colonial area of control. Where there were no previous centralized systems of administration, new chiefs were invented to do the job. These local chiefs were accountable to the colonial state as its junior partners but were not accountable to their subjects. Here, there was no rule of law or any of the known privileges and rights of civil society. On this note,

Mamdani dismisses the tendency to see the apartheid state as an aberrant colonial state. After unmasking the brutal colonial state apparatus in its operations in the protectorates, he points out that the apartheid state was indeed a generic form of the colonial state (1996, 8)

Cameroonian scholar, Mbembe captures so well the anatomy of the colonial state with his analysis of the *commandement* as its very essence. Mbembe (2001) resurrects a colonial term, *commandement* to aptly describe the nature of the relationship between the postcolonial state and the people it rules. He suggests that we give up binary understanding of power relations as one of resistance/passivity, subjection/autonomy, hegemony/counter hegemony etc. The *commandement* as an apparatus of violence was a colonial invention to ensure the colony's "forced loyalty" to the empire. Thus it did not derive legitimacy from the people it ruled. This brutally constructed machinery of government is the exact replica of the postcolonial government. The *commandement* in the postcolony seeks to legitimatize itself in the form of a fetish. And like the mystery that characterizes fetishes, the power relations between the *commandement* and the ruled cannot be understood by a simple binary logic of domination but as a complicitous one. As Mbembe puts it "the postcolonial relationship is not primarily a relationship of resistance or of collaboration, but is rather best characterized as a promiscuous relationship; a convivial tension between the *commandement* and its 'target'" which "resulted in the mutual 'zombification' of the dominant and those whom they apparently dominate. This 'zombification' means that each robbed the other of their vitality and has left them both impotent [*impouvoir*]" (Mbembe 1992, 5).

Mamdani's (1996, 23) elaboration of the appointed chief (similar to the *commandement*) when he discusses its role in mediating the two worlds of the colony and the protectorate is worth quoting in full:

> The authority of the chief thus fused in a single person all moments of power: judicial, legislative, executive and administrative. This authority was like a clenched fist, necessary because the chief stood at the intersection of the market economy and the nonmarket one. The administrative justice and the administrative coercion that were the sum and substance of his authority lay behind a regime of extra-economic coercion, a regime that breathed life into a whole range of compulsions: forced labor, forced crops, forced sales, forced contribution and forced removals.

From the onset, the colonist created the colonial *commandement* a zombie in order to make it effective tool. But Mbembe turns to exaggerate this colonial heritage when he insists that the postcolonial state is not that different. It is true that vestiges of this dispensation are sometimes evident in its postcolonial formation. We will be overstating the relevance of history if we argue as Mbembe does that the state has seen no transformation. Political independence meant a collapsing of the *colony* and the *protectorate* into the postcolonial nation-state as well as an inauguration of a de-racialized[6] (Africanized) but not democratized

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[6]    What Mamdani wants to say is the de-Europeanization of the state, or more precisely, the Africanization of the state. Obviously, the process of Africanization was not a process of de-racialization in the sense of banishing race from the state. I want to acknowledge Prof. Lorna Roth of Concordia University for bringing this to my attention.

state (Mamdani 1996, 8). Africanization was a sort of affirmative action in which native blacks took over jobs with their accompanying privileges that were hitherto reserved for Europeans. That is why the postcolonial state sometimes acts like the zombified *commandement* to mediate what is being called a common belonging of an imagined community of nation. Thus, the nation-state in Africa can be seen as a discursive product. A discourse in which the emerging black elite took advantage of their commonality of skin color and in some cases ethnicity with the native masses, to continue a job that was earlier performed by Europeans. In this discursive project, the symbolizing codes of blackness, and ethnicity were relied upon in domesticating difference between what use to be the *citizen* and the *subject*. For as it were, in the process of nation-formation through anti-colonialism, power reproduced itself by exaggerating racial difference and denied the existence of an oppressed majority defined by ethnicity, class and location.

In making an intervention into the development problems of former colonized societies, communication researchers, from this perspective, are in a better position to understand various local actors and how they respond to development initiatives. Is the citizen/subject divide still evident in these new nation-states? How is it reflected in the policy preferences that the local state initiate in the name of development? These are question that should be part of the problematic of communication researchers because four decades is too short for the state to evolve and metamorphose into a totally new institution unlike its ancestry.

Probably the first opportunity to interrogate the postcolonial state was at the height of the debates on the New World Information and Communication Order in the 1970s and 80s at UNESCO. Following the spread of new communication technologies, especially the first generation of trans-border data flow technologies, the near monopoly situation in global news gathering by only five news agencies, the increasing domination of American films worldwide, and the corresponding decline in the reach of developing country-owned media, developing countries under the banner of Non-Aligned Movement launched a campaign to demand a more democratic communication order (Nordenstreng 1984). What was ironic about the demands of the developing countries was their disinterest in democratization of communication at the national level, while expecting the West, the United States in particular, to yield to their demand for global democratization (Servaes 1999, 138). How do we make sense of this paradox in communication policy? The answer lies not necessarily in the illegitimacy of the American dominance, but in the heritage of the postcolonial state. The elite of the developing countries had acquired an institution that was only Africanized but not democratized, and acquired legitimacy through the rhetoric of development and not democracy. The idea that democracy was a luxury that could wait for the serious business of development to be accomplished seem to have been the creed of all black African leaders who led their countries to independence. This thinking went unchallenged even at the international levels until the 1980s as if the two ideals, democracy and development can be separated. This self-serving abuse of development communication practice, however, did find opposition in radical development journalism advocates (Domatob and Hall 1983; Shah 1994, Shah 1999).

So far we have seen how the colonial state re-articulated development as a way of accommodating various pressures. It tried to change its face so as to ensure continuous

colonial relationship. But by doing that, it redefined the constitutive role of the state and sowed the seed of what today is championed by the postcolonial state called development planning. Colonialism was no doubt an economic project of accumulation by the British Empire, and thus other humanist projects such as development were not the main concern. But there were possibilities of individual and group pressures that resulted in the restructuring of the economic project to include the political project of a developmentalist state. It is in view of this unique historical development that conventional theories of the state's relation to the nation are insufficient in understanding the late postcolonial state. The subject of the peculiarity of this developmentalist state has become pertinent in view of the current liberal impatience with the state in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The push for the privatization of many aspects of the developing economies including their telecom sector contained in Structural Adjustment Programs backed by the World Bank and the IMF portends the death of the developmentalist state, so to speak. The task of development is now more or less being jettisoned resulting in the upsurge of NGOs as a replacement for the developmentalist state.

The task of postcolonial progressive scholarship should be directed at recovering the developmentalist state. To do this we have to investigate why the recent upsurge of NGOs coincides with the dismantling of the developmental state. But this is beyond the reach of this project. If it is the Liberal thinking that NGOs are reserved the task of development while the postcolonial state aped the practice of the post-Welfare state (eg. In Europe and Canada), then we should remember that it took the welfare state several years of a program of democratizing resources before it started going into retreat. Indeed, Nordenstreng points out that the European welfare program was "a way to materialise democracy" (2000, 29). After providing the needed baseline infrastructure including well established transport, telecom and media infrastructure and fair tariffs for telecom, well endowed educational infrastructure for the industrial production of the needed human resources, the welfare state may well be ripe enough to retreat and allow market forces to keep the balance in civil society-state relations (and even then, that is debatable[7]). But when after only four decades, the developmentalist state is being dismantled without achieving the promises it made to the people to entice them to join in the formation of the imagined community of *nation-state*, there is much to worry about. Without the democratization of national resources (which was not achieved via free market even in the Welfare state, may I emphasize), any talk of leapfrogging into the information society sounds ridiculous enough. And premising the dream on the distributive power of the market is unacceptable and disingenuous at best. As Jill Hills (1998, 459) rightly points out, "Markets are not made in heaven as some economists might have us believe. They are social and political constructs." If the market is such a just engine of progress why was the welfare state created to redistribute wealth? Castells (1999, 4) warns that while ICTs have

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[7] In our discussions over this point, Prof. Risto Kunelius of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication of the University of Tampere has argued rather strongly against the idea of overdone state in the welfare economies of Europe.

a great potential for social development, left only to market forces, the consequence will be a polarized social structure.

By making the comparison between the welfare and the postcolonial state, I am not oblivious to the fact of different conjunctures involved in the evolution of the two types of states. Samir Amin (1997, 94) has pointed out that class relations under the welfare state were "significantly more favorable to the working class than ever before in the entire history of capitalism" and for that matter, it was "an historic compromise between capital and labor." Thus we will be unrealistic to expect similar capital-labor relations in the contemporary conjuncture. However, the comparison is being made to first point out the naivete of the liberal impatience with the record of the developmental state. Secondly to highlight the unreasonable expectations of developing by leapfrogging through an unfettered market policies as well as to emphasize the need for a recovery of the developmental state to help labor achieve the needed redistribution of resources as a condition for development.

## Questioning the Post-Colonial State in Development

In post-independent thought on development, one of the important contributors has been the Swedish theorist, Goran Hyden. His most influential book, *No Shortcuts to Progress: African Development Management in Perspective* (1983) is sustained argument that the idea of leapfrogging into a developed state by bypassing capitalism is a mirage. Pitching his research against a background of Marxist political economy of base-superstructure, he argues that what African countries need is more capitalism and market-led development planning in order to strengthen the state as a rationalized institution. This will help end what he calls an "economy of affection" and inaugurate a more dispassionate administrative setup similar to the Weberian ideal type bureaucratic institution.

Hyden's work requires a closer reading in order to appreciate the relevance of his work to thinking about the development planning practices of the contemporary postcolonial state. True to his Marxist orientation, Hyden grounds his critique of policy practice in Africa on economic determinism. He points out that the independence struggle was framed as fighting capitalism because it was believed that the African dominated condition called colonialism was as a result of that economic system. As a result, many African countries adopted socialist planning methods that tended to privilege the political allocation of resources over the economic allocative function of the market. With such a policy direction, the state developed faster and more sophisticated than the economy in most of sub-Sahara Africa. Hyden suggests that this does not augur well for development of these countries. "The determining element in history is ultimately the production and reproduction in real life" (Hyden 1983, 4). African countries turned this fundamental logic of history over its head, Hyden argues, by introducing welfare systems and other forms of social engineering. The result of this is what he calls "lopsided conceptions of development" accompanied by economic decline and a continued incapacity of the governments to control economic policy tools. What this has done is that the "supply side economists" will have an upper hand in prescribing solutions and interventions

that may lead no where. By supply side economists, he is referring to the international financial institutions. "The international monetary institutions have at present the upper hand in their relations with many African governments and they will continue to dictate their demands as long as African economies show no sign of strength and self reliance" (Hyden 1983, 3).

Incidentally, Hyden was writing at a time that Ghana had just put an end to welfare economic planning and opted for IMF and World Bank supervised SAP. This shift was a revolutionary and significant conjuncture because it marks Ghana's inauguration into supply side economic planning and an end to the welfare planning policy that Nkrumah started alongside with the founding of the new nation. While Hyden is right in observing that many African nations subverted the historical materialist logic of the economy setting the parameters of the state, the choice made by the first generation of African governments was the logical outcome of the requirements of nation building. Nkrumah captured the spirit of the time when he summed up basis of his policy choices:

> My first objective is to abolish from Ghana poverty, ignorance and disease. We shall measure our progress by the improvement in the health of our people; by the number of children in school and by the quality of their education; by the availability of water and electricity in our towns and villages; and by the happiness, which our people take in being able to manage their own affairs. The welfare of our people is our chief pride, and it is by this that my government, will be asked to be judged (quoted in Rooney 1988, 83).

In view of this developmentalist task, the Ghanaian state combined the role of producer, employer, regulator, tax collector and provider of social services and infrastructure all in one. The humanist aspects of citizenship were privileged over the economic imperative because it was the former that resonated with the ideals of bringing the imagined community into being (see Rooney 1988). If such is the case, then Hyden's argument suggests that the 1980s mark the moment of paying the terrible price of subverting the historical materialist logic of determination.

Hyden inputs that given the under-developed, predominantly agrarian economy of Africa, we should examine the social and economic realities of the continent through the prism of what he calls "peasant mode of production" (1983, 6). Under such an economic system, little or no surplus is produced. Class divisions are limited and the economy is characterized by lack of structural interdependence because of low level of production relations. The peasant mode of production therefore has a rather diminished superstructure compared to capitalist formation. It therefore cannot sustain an elaborate regime structures such as pertain under capitalism. It is this rural peasant mode of production that came under assault under colonialism, but "one cannot argue that the destruction of the pre-colonial mode of production in Africa automatically meant the disappearance of everything pre-capitalist" (Hyden 1983, 7). The peasant mode of production is an admixture of both capitalist and pre-capitalist.

With such an analytical framework, Hyden dissects the relationship between the postcolonial state and the economy. With little or no surplus value, with weak production

relations, and consequently with each producer tending to be not structurally integrated into the economy, the postcolonial state lacks an organic relation with the economy. The state in the classical political economic sense is a product of the economy. But here the state is a transplanted apparatus, over an economy characterized by structural autonomy of production units. This limits the state's ability to extract tax from the virtually independent peasant production units that constitute the economy. Hyden therefore points out that the relations between the state and the economy is tributary one, more that one of production relations. In view of this, Hyden makes a rather provocative statement to the effect that "African countries are societies without a state. The latter sits suspended in 'mid-air' over society and is not an integral mechanism of the day-to-day production activities of society" (1983, 7). Obviously this is an exaggeration and a qualified one at that. If we contextualize Hyden's argument within the political economic framework that he prosecutes his critique, we can come to terms with him. For what he is trying to say is that the postcolonial state is structurally superfluous to the structurally autonomous producer. Thus the peasant perceives policy initiatives as "foreign" interventions.

There are pros and cons to such a line of argument. The weakness in such an argument is the blatant disregard for the African experience, like all other social formations, as being unique and not a replica of other or earlier social formations. His argument is built on a fallacy of history by analogy that Mamdani (1996) criticizes in his book *Citizen and Subject*. He also fails to take seriously what Bayart (1993) has described as "the true historicity of African societies" where Africa is studied in its own right and not as a reflection of other societies. However, Mbembe (2001, 5-18) rightly cautions that such an undertaking would imply fundamentally different methodological and conceptual route. But Hyden has a historical model, derived directly from the iron logic of historical materialism under which the European modernist history is what awaits African to experience. Africa's future is Europe's past, so to speak. And it is only when Africa's economic development dutifully follows the European example that we can classify it as being on the right path. Such a reading of Africa through a construct specific to an earlier social formation is troubling because it denies the specificities of the postcolonial conjuncture. If African countries are nations without a state just because they do not fit into the classical capitalist state, does that mean that the societies of pre-capitalist Europe had no state? Obviously the European peasantry was structurally independent of the monarchies.

Despite this criticism, Hyden's argument has a certain purchase on the African experience that we cannot just dismiss. The fact of an alienated state, trying to establish legitimacy over different ethnic and linguistic communities is something we cannot account for if we abandon Hyden's thesis altogether. Davidson's account of the Ghanaian experience of nationhood and the transformation of a colonial state into an instrument of self-rule attests to this case of a phantom postcolonial state (Davidson 1989; see also Rooney 1988). But this is not even the purpose for which Hyden denies the postcolonial state. His thesis of phantom postcolonial state forms the basis upon which he elaborates on his theory of "economy of affection."

## Economy of Affection and the State

While the peasant mode of production is expected to give way to a more integrated mode of production, the aftermath of direct colonial rule has been characterized by widespread signs of the prevalence of affective networks that have the capability to circumscribe policy initiatives that the postcolonial state may try to implement. These affective ties are what Hyden labels as economy of affection. It refers to "a network of support, communications and interaction among structurally defined groups, connected by blood, kin, community or other affinities, for example religion" (1983, 8). Such a definition brings under one rubric common daily practices of nepotism, and ethnic-based favoritism that characterized institutions and persons within the postcolonial body politic. According to Hyden, this type of economy serves as the link between discrete economic and social units without which they would operate as autonomous units. It allows the peasant producers to escape the demands of any given macro-economic system that policy may seek to institute. It came into being due to an absence of a state in the first place, and its prevalence threatens attempts by the postcolonial state to establish organic linkages with the community it oversees. The networks of affection operate not outside the market or against it, but as a collaborative system. What Hyden is trying to offer is a neo-patrimonial theory of the state, with neo-patrimony here being understood as a system of resource distribution that ties both the patrons and the clients into a personalized networks of loyalty rather than on rational, legal bureaucratic rules, in the distribution of state resources.

What is meant by economy of affection has been variously described as the traditional society, informal sector, or rural economy. None of these captures the phenomenon better than Hyden's economy of affection. For what actually goes on is a constant imbrication of both formal and informal relations, modern and traditional connections in an inextricable relationship, which is best, observed as one of affectivity. Such effective networks have no need for a systemic superstructure in the form of a state, to keep the society together.

It is true that as modernization is intensified by the state, these networks come under review and are rearticulated in new forms or abandoned for the more rationalized production system. But any perceptive visitor to the postcolony cannot miss the enduring networks of affective ties that characterize the economy. For instance, one may acquire a property, let's say a car, through one's personal savings. But neighbors and members of one's ethnic group, who are not necessary blood relations, may expect to benefit from its services without contributing to the maintenance of the car. An uncle may ask for start-up capital for his small business, without necessarily requesting it as a loan; he expects the money to be given gratis. This particular form of economic relations surfaced in my interviews with operators of phone shops and consumers of telecenter services in Accra.[8] In other forms of affective networks, one may travel to the city and expect to be accommodated by a non-blood relation who only

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8    I will discuss more of this in Chapter Eight when I look at issues about liberalized telecom sector and democratization of access.

happens to have come from the same village or ethnicity. It does not matter if the relative has enough space for unexpected guest. During disaster and emergency periods, Hyden (1983, 12) notes that the number of people who are often assisted by others through affective ties are sometimes higher than those that the state and international relief organizations are able to reach out to. But at the same time, the consequence of economy of affection is that it inevitably diverts resources away from the prescribed organizational goals that are set out as policy. To be more specific, these types of relations are not specific or unique to Africa. Pre-industrial Europe for instance went through that. Indeed, Ferdinand Tönnies (1955) concept of *Gemmeinschaft* partly explains this phenomenon. But what Hyden wants to point out is that in the process of getting modernized, the rate and quality of development will be largely determined by how affective networks dissolve and new more rational relations, in the economic sense, emerge.

How do we achieve that? More market, less state, more non-governmental organizations to augment the state; at least that is how Hyden sees it. More market will help to disentangle the economy of affection from the formal economy, so that the public realm will be relieved of the pressures that mount on the state due to affective networks. More market means allowing foreign capital through the agency of multinational corporations to penetrate the postcolonial economy even against nationalist protest. According to Hyden multinational corporations are "a necessary evil that Africa has to accept in the absence of any advanced economic structures of its own" (1983, 20). In his view, for all its shortcomings, capitalism, with its emphasis on the reduction of the person to a factor of production, contrary to dominant views of human ties founded on affectivity, is all that Africa needs in order to guarantee economic growth which will ultimately lead to the development that has been so illusive to Africa. Any attempt to shorten this process will lead to a disaster. It will lead to a ballooned state, not relevant to un-capitalist mode of production yet overburdened with the demands of the economy of affection. It will also lead to a state that relies on compulsion to enforce participation in the economy. These are Hyden's prescriptions.

A marketized economy will enable the gradual proletarianization of the peasantry in a way that will not be possible for them to withdraw. It will enable the local entrepreneur to grow after being exposed to international competition and it will ensure that workers participate in the economy not through force, but by the lure of incentives. It is only a functioning of market that local capitalism will flourish. "While in the African context, it inevitably means that local capitalists will grow up in the shadow of international capital there is no *a priori* reason to assume that local owners of capital will sell out to foreigners (Hyden 1983 26)." By intensifying capitalism in Africa, the productive forces will develop, class contradictions sharpen, resource planning and allocation to the various sectors based on market rules will be effectively executed. It is only then that the state will be able to resonate with the needs of the nation in the development effort. "The emergence of class as opposed to ethnic conflict in politics would be a great step forward as the former is potentially easier to manage than the latter and it costs society far less" (Hyden 1983, 54). Economy of affection breeds ethnic-based conflict while class conflict flourishes under capitalist economy. In effect, more capitalism is good for the state, as it will redefine it as an institution that is organically linked

to the nation while the local capitalist will be the pacesetter in development. More so, the various constituents will no longer see policy initiatives as foreign intrusion, since they would have identified with the state. This will help solve the legitimation crisis that the postcolonial state faces.

Hyden is being too Marxist here. He has very little regard for the exigencies and vicissitudes of conjuncture. I have already indicated that part of the weakness of his argument is due to his historical materialist methodology, which forecloses the possibility of reading Africa's social formation on Africa's own terms. Even then, his dogmatic reading of Marx is problematic because he seems to lose sight of the fact that in the era of digital capitalism, *financescapes* (Appadurai 1996) have changed the rules for local capitalism. It sounds anachronistic to recommend more capitalism, and simultaneous state downsizing as part of the rule-of-the-thumb process of getting developed. While it is historically true that when local capitalism blossoms, the entrepreneur ploughs back his surplus into the economy, provide more jobs and expand businesses, contemporary capitalism, with its ability to collapse space and time, and render locality irrelevant at the same time that it uses locality as a site of operation, has changed the rules. It is common knowledge that Africans tend to stash away their investments and money in the developed countries for the mere fact of security. When their European counterparts were at their level in pre-industrialized Europe they did not have the option of investing abroad when the home economy needed such investment. It was only after the domestic economy was optimally invested that new markets were sought abroad. The contemporary African experience seem to turn this European experience on its head by investing first in the developed metropolis when the postcolony is in dire need of such investments.

In addition, Hyden's claim that local entrepreneurs will not be a sell-out to international capital is not endorsed by contemporary Ghanaian experience. When the World Bank and the IMF recommended the sale of state businesses under SAP, what we saw, as evidenced by recent revelations, is outright and criminal collusion with foreigners to rob the nation of its assets worth millions of dollars. Most of the improprieties relating to the sale of state-owned enterprises surfaced after a change in government following the December 2000 general elections. One of such high profile collusion between state officials and foreign business involves an American business that ended in courts in both the US and in Ghana. While the Ghana Fast Track court in Accra was still trying five former top government officials including the former ministers of Finance and Agriculture for causing financial loss to the state, a court in Atlanta, USA sentenced the head of the American business, to 15 years in federal prison. Ms Juliet Cotton, the convict, was also ordered to pay about 22 million dollars as restitution, 20 million dollars of which should be paid to the government of Ghana[9]. Ms Cotton was found guilty of 35 charges including bank fraud, money laundering and false statement. The Ghanaian court on its part charged the former ministers and three other former government officials of failing to do due diligence, causing financial loss to the state. In a similar

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[9]  *The Ledger-Enquirer* saved at www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/printnews.php?ID=28699

corruption trial, the former head of the Divestiture Implementation Committee, and other senior former government officials were tried for colluding with foreign companies in corrupt practices during the privatization of state-owned enterprises. The privatization of the Ghana Telecom and the Ghana Publishing Corporation were all riddled with lack of transparency that suggested some possible malpractices involving state officials and foreign buyers.[10]

There is remarkable coincidence between Hyden's recommendations of more market, less state and more NGOs on the one hand, and World Bank/IMF recommendations. They both have the same attitude to the postcolonial state although Hyden claims a Marxist affinity while the IMF and World Bank are evidently neoliberal. Hyden (1983, 25) calls for an end to monopoly of State marketing boards of commodities such as cocoa in order to inject discipline and competition into the sector. This happens to be a requirement of SAP.[11] When Hyden (1983, 120) proposes more support for NGOs to help cover-up for the downsized state, it turns out that that is exactly what has been recommended under SAP (World Bank 2000a).

Contrary to what Hyden offers in the spirit of mode of production analysis, Francis Nyamnjoh (1997), like Mamdani and Mbembe, would want us to evacuate a literal application of Marxist analysis and look at Africa on its own terms and experience. Instead of blaming the socio-cultural practices of the peasant and other economically marginalized sectors of the postcolony as the fifth column in the development of nation-state, he frames them as the most short-changed in the grand project of modernization and nation-building. Nyamnjoh (1997, 206) suggests that the African social formation is composed of a pyramid of three distinct classes with the peasantry at the very bottom, the most exploited and the most distant from the state. Out of the three, the members of this class are economically most vulnerable because of their distance from the state. According to Nyamnjoh, because of their location, they have no opportunity to "steal from the state." But, they have been idealized as the custodians of nation's "traditional culture," a phenomenon which has been reduced to folklore arts and related spectacles for display only on special occasions such as national celebration or when foreign heads of state and directors of World Bank and IMF visit. Because this class is in a position of weakness, it is always at the mercy of the other two, which are closer to the state apparatus. The Peasantry is really not interested in being the custodians of the traditional culture that the other classes want them to be. Rather, in seeking its own economic interest, it plays this assigned role as part of its efforts to get a share of the promises of modernity.

The second class, which is in the middle of the pyramid, is composed of the civil servants, literate and semi-literate urban dwellers. Nyamnjoh (1997, 207) points out that this parasitic class' ability to "steal from the state" is hindered by the surveillance of political office holders, who are the class at the top of the pyramid. They tend to live off the peasantry through their unjustified consumption habits. "They are midway between the abject poverty and hardship

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[10]  *Ghanaian Chronicle* newspaper 24 October 2002
[11]  Ghana Government Letter of Intent to the Managing Director of the IMF dated November 3, 1999 and signed by Kwame Peprah, then Minister of Finance. As at May 2003, he was sentenced to a two-year jail term by an Accra court for impropriety and corruption related charges in handling foreign investors.

of the village, and the filthy riches and sumptuous plenty of the self-elected few who form the higher rungs of the urban community. Because of the uncertainties of their stealing opportunities, they are forced to have one foot in the city and one in the village." If this is true, then they constitute the conduit that mediates Hyden's economy of affection, in which the urban and rural sectors engage in a network of relations that put undue pressure on the state. At the apex of the pyramid is the class of petty bourgeoisie. This class has the exclusive opportunity to steal from the state. The petty bourgeoisie always preach to the peasant the sanctity of rural life even though they would hardly ever want to relocate there themselves. Rather, they look up to living the life of the elite in the developed countries while located in the postcolony. They achieve this by buying houses in the European and North American capitals, sending their kids and wives to school and shop there. The petty bourgeoisie only visit the rural areas of their countries when they go to consult the soothsayers on their political future or when they go to seek re-election. As the watchdog of the national cake, architects of "national development" this class, according to Nyamnjoh, mediates between the nation and the outside world.

What is instructive about Nyamnjoh's exposition is that he defines each of these three groups on the basis of how they relate to the state, arguably the most strategic institution in the postcolony. This contrasts with Hyden's exposition, which defines social groups in relation to the economy. In addition, Nyamnjoh's analysis reads African-for-itself and not as a replica of earlier experiences of other social formations. Such an approach is laudable and in synch with the appeals that Mamdani (1996) and Mbembe (2001) continue to make in relation to how we theorize issues about the continent. Most important of all, by following Nyamnjoh's typology we are able to understand the language that policy speaks when it articulates communication policy on the pretext of national development. For instance, if the thrust of national communication policy in Ghana tend to be digital focused, urban bias while basic communication infrastructure such as rural telephony, radio, and television are still not available to the rural population of not less than 40 percent of the nation population, we can understand this as part of the apex class' predisposition. That is a predisposition, which frames its role as one of the mediation of the postcolony and the outside world.

This same predisposition makes every politician in Africa want to own a house in the capitals of Europe and North America and send their families there. If he has to live in the postcolony because of his daily responsibility of manning the state, then some sections of the capitals of the postcolony should rather look like developed suburbs in the metropolis than the adjacent neighborhoods of absolute neglect, social exclusion and decadence.

# Technologized Development

In the previous chapters, I tried to point out the neglect of theorizing the state in the development process, combining both historical and contemporary perspectives. I demonstrated how the colonial state related to the development enterprise in various ways and how its avatar, the postcolonial state plays out in a new conjuncture where the rhetoric of nation building is articulated as the mandate of the state. That conjuncture also happens to be characterized by an increasing role of international multilateral institutions in determining the role of the state in development, including a rather minimal stance on development communication in contrast to the expanded role it played in the 1960s. In the following pages, I want to discuss certain conceptual issues that I consider dominant in the development discourse implicating communication. These include the concepts of leapfrogging, digital divide, technology, civil society and participation. I combine academic and institutional articulations of these concepts on the assumption that these two sources provide the frame for policy thinking and policy making on development. The discussion here is built around these key concepts with particular reference to the Ghanaian experience.

## Leapfrogging into Modernity

At a high profile conference on Communication in the 21$^{st}$ century called "Connecting Knowledge in Communications" that brought together both academics and international institutional actors to Montreal in April 1999, one of the catchwords that seemed to fall off from the lips of Third World scholars, World Bank and other multilateral agency officials was "leapfrogging" (Charron et al. 1999).[1] Isaac Cohen (1999, 103) probably summarized well

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[1]    ORBICOM, the international network of UNESCO chairs in communications organized the three-day conference with
       participants from 55 countries. I am grateful to ORBICOM International Secretariat for sponsoring my participation.

the basis for this interest in the word when he said "One of the basic questions raised by these profound transformations taking place in the leading economy, is how they will be transmitted to the rest of the world economy, particularly to the developing economies and to all those countries that are not adequately endowed to create these changes" (1999, 103). For the UNDP Director for Information Technologies for Development Program, Hans D'Orville (1999, 223) developing countries are experiencing a new kind of poverty, "information poverty" and the way forward is to accelerate the spread of new ICTs to enhance the development process. Mark Malloch Brown, a Vice President for External and UN Affairs at the World Bank reported:

> Jim Wolfensohn, the World Bank President was recently in Cote d'Ivoire, where cocoa and coffee represents 45 percent of exports and 17 percent of the GDP. We've been worried that the farmers there are squeezed by intermediaries. He was given a tour of the village cooperative. There was a computer run by a young Ivorian to keep accounts of the coffee and cocoa which came in. Useful. But in another room was another computer linked to the Internet to a service which the Bank provided, which allows the Ivorians to get prices from Chicago, London, Paris instantly. They then use their cellular phones to get this information out to the fields. Revolutionary (Brown 1999, 115).

Anecdotes are good for one thing: generalizing from tokenism. They are exhibitionistic and have a seductive logic that is often hard to resist. It is this rhetorical function of vignettes and anecdotes that make their use popular in speeches such as the one just quoted. They are good in telling success stories of pilot programs. And when the main program fails, it is easy to point fingers at the "corrupt Third World state" or the "lazy people with backward cultures." This observation is however an aside. Let's get back to the substance of this discussion. The story is that development is a straightforward one according to this liberal thinking. Third World countries have a new kind of poverty that can only be solved by leapfrogging into the information highway. What is interesting is the fact that the idea of leapfrogging has become so popular that it is quite common to hear government ministers in countries such as Ghana recite the litany of reasons why their economies must leapfrog into the information highway or risk being left behind like they did when they missed the industrial revolution. And from all indications judging by the current discourses on Third World countries and the new communication technologies, the term leapfrogging will be around for a while. Already in the 1980s, Olsen (1986, 22-24) and later in the 1990s, Majid Tehranian (1990a, 54) had been sympathetic to the idea of "technological leapfrogging." But what is even amazing is that the term leapfrogging is only a re-wording of a phenomenon that has been central in the five decades of discourse on modernization: that is "economic growth" and increase in productivity through modernization by both liberal and Marxist. The liberal perspectives focus on the internal dynamics of modernization; the Marxist or Marxist-inspired perspectives privilege the international linkages of development. Both however share the view that material accumulation is the mark of development. This idea of developing in stages or leapfrogging some of the stages is principally derived from an 18th century "Idea of Progress" (Tehranian 1990a, 176). And didn't Marx write in his magnum opus, *Capital*

that "The country that is more developed industrially only shows the less developed, the image of its own future" (quoted in Kunczik 1984, 51)? And the founder of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah would have been re-echoing Marx when he told his budding nation that: "By their very existence the developed countries present to the developing countries an image of what the future might be for them" Nkrumah (1966, 4). The problem is that the future never seems to arrive for developing countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. In the previous chapter, I pointed out the fallacy of thinking that the developing countries will be able to replicate modernity. It does appear that, for these countries, tomorrow never arrives indeed.

The invention of development (as discussed already) partly resulted from the conviction that the less developed could be assisted to overcome its deficiency through the application of modern technologies. Thus modernization as a development program is premised on the technologization of the process of social formation. Information and communication technologies have tended to feature prominently in this program arguably for two reasons. The first reason is their function as transmitters. The technologization of the less developed countries have been based on a "transfer" mentality. The developed world has already invented the wheel and all that the less developed need to do is to have it transferred, or as Kwame Gyekye (1997) will prefer to put it, to *appropriate* it. As early as the 1960s, UNESCO (1961) had already established a yardstick for measuring the level of development of a country based on the level of penetration of modern media. UNESCO had established these standards to mark off developing countries as being underdeveloped in media infrastructure so needed to be assisted since these infrastructures were fundamental to the modernization process. The world body never admitted that existing non-imported local structures that facilitated social discourse mattered in its reckoning of the level of development.

The second reason for the assumed role of ICTs was that these technologies are by themselves a manifestation of "developed status." By having these technologies present in a country, the people of that country are considered to enjoy a certain amount of development. Thus Schramm (1964, 95) notes that the UNESCO standards corresponds "very closely with the United Nations designation of countries which are generally underdeveloped." These two reasons account for the optimism for the role of ICTs in the modernization of developing countries.

Majid Tehranian is one theorist who has maintained a consistent posture about the promise of communication technology in development. He argues that most of the current developed countries achieved their current status after long periods of various forms of primitive economic accumulation and political repression. And the clue for the developing countries to by-pass this ugly phase of transition lies in the potential of ICTs (Tehranian 1990a, 13-17). Here is another support for leapfrogging, though I must admit that Tehranian's proposal is more nuanced. His point is that technologies per se are not inherently evil, as the Luddites will want us to believe, or good as the technophiles think. Communication technologies can serve the purpose of democracy and development if they are made interactive, universally accessible and allow for participation at both individual and institutional level.

Tehranian criticizes the UNESCO minimum recommendations on per capita media as neglecting the role of "small media" in the social transformation process. "Communication

indicators that are thus insensitive to small media cannot capture, let alone monitor, communication and social change" (Tehranian 1990a, 179). At the same time the posture of UNESCO in measuring social mediation through imported communication infrastructure betrays the mindset of such an organization. What happened to local indigenous infrastructure in the process of social transformation? While local non-imported media technologies do not appear to attract the attention of development communication researchers, there have been some sporadic attempts at pointing the role that local technologies play in social communication (Ugbuojah 1985, Mowlana 1988, Tehranian 1990a, Alhassan 1999, Uche 2001). It does seem there is a curious coincidence between what technology is recommended for development in Africa at a particular time and what technology receives heavy investment in the developed countries. That is to say, a relationship between international capital and organizations serving international development has found expression in policy recommendations. Development means not just imported technology only, but the latest one as well. When radio and TV were considered the most sophisticated instruments, development was measured in terms of radio/TV sets per head. Now that computers and cellular phones are the hottest commodities in the metropolis, the World Bank is happy to note how many of them it has helped to deploy in La Cote d' Ivoire. It is from this perspective that we can understand why *Ghana-Vision 2020,* Ghana's official development plan, and the World Bank are all stressing the need for computers when access to radio broadcasts still remain a luxury for some segments of the national community.

The 1960s' had its share of confidence in leapfrogging into modernity. Rostow's *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto* provided the intellectual foundation for such a confidence. African societies from the standpoint of this theory of economic growth were perceived to be at the primary stage, that is traditional society. Rostow (1960, 18-19) goes on to say that "a society predominantly agricultural - with in fact, usually 75% or more of its working force in agriculture - must shift to a predominance for industry, communication, trade and services." Why not! A year later UNESCO came out with its recommendations. Just like now, with UNDP, UNESCO, the World Bank and the IMF, backed by well-intentioned intellectuals of Rostow's persuasion, the focus then was on how to help developing countries reach the level of "economic take-off." A quotation Tehranian (1990b, 174) attributes to a Brazilian president captures the letter and spirit of the results: "Brazil has taken off, leaving the people behind." Are we going to follow the leapfrog rhetoric only to realize later that the developing economy has actually leaped into the information society, but has left the people behind? In Ghana, a resident of Accra for instance who already has access to fixed phones, multiple TV stations, a menu of some nine FM radio stations to sample and a series of newspaper titles to choose from, now has the internet and mobile phones added. Her rural counterpart with the same income level will be lucky to have access to TV and one radio station to tune into. Probably the urban areas of Accra will take-off and leave the rest behind, as my discussion in chapter eight will show.

Re-stated, "leapfrogging" as a concept in the development arsenal, is deployed as part of the process of articulating recent basis for perpetrating the modernization project based on new digital technologies. The articulation of modernization based on old, analogue mass

communication thinking is dead, so to speak. And we now have leapfrogging as the basis of much of policy on communication, which works out de facto as telecommunications and computers. As J.P. Singh makes it clearer, the telecommunication literature deploys "leapfrogging" as in the same Rostowian way of skipping some of the stages of growth. It also uses the concept as also "skipping over the technological frontier or product cycle" (Singh 1999, 5).

Shortly after being sworn into office in January 2001 as the newly elected president of Ghana, Mr. John Kufour set up a special office at the presidency in charge of IT. This unit, was tasked with leading the way for Ghana's inauguration into the world of IT. In drafting a new policy proposal for the country, the President's IT policy group did not mince words where the answers for the nation's development can be found:

> The Government of Ghana recognizes the need for improving the quality of life of Ghanaians through a dynamic information and knowledge economy where the production and distribution of goods and services will be principally the business of the private sector. The new administration of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) also recognizes the high priority of expanding and deepening both Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) as a principal avenue to greater national productivity and global competitiveness, wealth creation and as a tool for entering to a new Golden Age for the private sector. (President's IT Policy Group, 2002, 6)

Conceptually speaking, the idea of leapfrogging through digital technology helps to galvanize action among policy actors in the process of modernization as development. Rostow's Stages of Growth theory had clearly spelt out the road to development for developing economies based on the experience of industrialized countries. The book quickly became a source of ideas on how to undertake the task of development. The task of developing countries was to prepare their economies for Economic Take-Off into an era of Sustained Growth. Thus import substitution industrialization for rather agro-based economies became a central idea guiding policy in many developing countries, which bought into Rostow's recommendations. The possibility of skipping into industrialization without necessarily going through the same processes of industrial revolution that the pioneer industrial economies had gone through was too attractive an offer to be missed.

Now it is obvious that line of development produced only a phantom modernity. Rostow himself will personally admit to the need to revise the theory in the 1990 third edition of his book where he recounts his encounter with an African agricultural technician at a seminar in India:

> The plight of these aspiring but frustrated peoples was made vivid by a question put to me by an African agricultural technician attending an international development center in India where I spoke in 1983. He said in effect: "many African countries became independent twenty years ago but have not entered take-off. What is wrong with your theory?" When the laughter subsided, I discussed the wide range of mainly non-economic forces that have historically determined the length of precondition for take-off: short for Japan (32 years from Commodore Perry's arrival, Only 17 from the Meiji Restoration);

long for China (110 year from the Opium wars); even longer for Mexico (120 years from independence). Eventually, no uniform time-period could be defined for developing precondition for take-off. … The African heritage – including strong tribal attachments and arbitrary boundaries derived from colonial history – was likely to make the interval between independence and take-off protracted but, probably, shorter than for China or Mexico (Rostow 1990, xxii).

In the heydays of the idea of skipping some of the stages of growth, non-economic factors were not accorded the level of power of determination that Rostow would now admit to. As an instrument of articulating modernization as development the stages of growth idea, like its contemporary equivalent, leapfrogging, was so powerfully vested with causality that non-economic factors could not challenge the mythological power it commandeered. 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. In the 1960s the emphasis was on sending radio and TV transmitters, cinema projectors and newspaper printing systems to Africa. Most of Africa still lacks these facilities now that these technologies are very cheap in monetary terms. But then the talk has shifted to computers and cellular phones. Not even is the focus on video technology anymore.

During my research in Ghana, this issue continued to crop up as I engaged people in policy circles on this subject. Why are we not talking about how to get more FM radio stations for the rural areas where many go without access to broadcast signals? The National Communication Authority (NCA) is the national agency with the responsibility of regulating radio frequencies in the country as well as advising government on communication policy issues. Discussions with senior officials showed how the NCA is ill prepared for the task. An official who preferred to be anonymous told me in government circles, communication policy means "computers and internet"[2] In the first place, while the rural broadcasting market remains unattractive to the private sector, it takes the same bureaucratic red-tape and cost to register a frequency in both the urban and rural areas.

There are no special provisions to encourage rural broadcasting, and NGOs with well-intended programs to help rural areas overcome this communication gap have often met official insensitivity[3]. The national radio spectrum for broadcasting is lying unused in the rural areas while the cities are choked to capacity. When I brought this issue up to the NCA official, his response was that if his outfit makes it easier to register rural frequencies, urban based entrepreneur will take undue advantage by broadcasting to the cities from the rural base. For that reason, he will not recommend making rural frequencies cheaper. What

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[2]   The interview with this official with a rank of a Director was on 10th April 2002.
[3]   Officials of the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) at Dalon in the Northern Region of Ghana told me it took then several years of red tape to get permission to set up a rural FM service. In the end, they had to settle for producing rural content for the state-owned regional FM station, Radio Savanah in Tamale.

happened to the discussion on the democratic potential of radio and television? I have already alluded to the link between international capital and international development. What should be pointed out is that this phenomenon has its genesis in the very constitution of the colonial state and later the postcolonial state. The NCA as a postcolonial regulatory institution is no different. To re-state Nyamnjoh's argument within the context of communication policy, the peasantry, who stand to benefit from rural broadcasting are left out in the policy scheme of things. The rural constituents of the nation have developed a non-correspondence with the policy apparatus while the city and the information societies of the developed country have developed a correspondence in the global digital hub.

The state of affairs within this conjuncture of ICTs and digital capitalism in which the rural is dis-articulated and fragmented out of the city within the postcolony has a historical parallel, with different elements at play. When the process of forming the nation-state was inaugurated at the close of European colonialism, the postcolonial state articulated a new political community of common culture and a denial of multiculturalism and ethnicity as a legitimate political category. In a rather strange articulation multiparty democracy was considered incompatible to Africa's cultural heritage (Houtondji 1983, 163; Rønning 1996). Within the early post-independence conjuncture, such an articulation found resonance even with the democratic cultures of the Western countries. My argument is that a new conjuncture of digital capitalism in which various local communities across the globe are easily disconnected from their less infrastructurally endowed neighbors, has ushered in a new era of development illusion. Hountondji (1983) called the previous conjuncture of denial of cultural difference a unanimist illusion. 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. Thus a new articulation of the national has been inaugurated with the ICT discourse and will most probably produce a new postcolony of the city and its rural discontents. And once again, such an articulation finds resonance with the informational economies of the developed democracies.


## From Digital Rhetoric to Social Inclusion


At a plush air-conditioned lecture of hall of Busy Internet in Accra on April 4th 2002 stake holders in the ICT sector gathered to listen to the Dr. Sam Somuah, Special Assistant to the President on IT Initiatives, deliver a lecture on "Where is the IT Policy? What is the Role of Government?" He was originally billed to share the podium with the Minister of Communications and Technology, Mr. F. Owusu Adjepong, but he could not make it. The hall was filled with young and upcoming computer geeks, a few entrepreneurs and academics as well as journalists. Apart from giving us the time scale of the policy process that his office was working on, Dr. Somuah presented the vision of his government in terms of helping Ghana leapfrog into the information society and the digital economy that is "booming" in the developed world. Ghana, he said could not afford to miss the opportunity of the digital train. "We need to invest in the production of core technical personnel, who will lead us into the

information age," he will stress to me later in an interview after his presentation. He was optimistic that India is the country to look at and the government is liaising with the Indian government to set up technology centers in the country. If one needed an opportunity to see the NPP government's policy attitude to ICT, this was it. It was clear that the government's attitude was not different from the previous NDC government, nor a host of other African governments who have bought into the idea of leapfrogging into the information society and bridging the digital divide.

The World Bank and international key actors in the policy scene in Ghana also tend to problematize the digital divide on similar terms. A World Bank study on increasing phone access in developing countries puts the issue in the following terms: that the digital divide operates at two levels; at the national level and at the international level. Between countries, while in 1997 the number of Internet hosts per 1000 people in OECD countries was roughly 50 times larger than in sub-Sahara Africa, by 1999 this ratio had risen to 70. And within countries, city dwellers are likely to have 100 times more likely than their rural counterparts to have access to a telephone. Not only is the problem defined by physical availability, it is also worsened by disparity in income levels of rural and urban resident (Navas-Sabater et.al. 20002, 3).

Within Ghana itself, the rhetorical power of ICT as a new development vocabulary cannot be missed if one randomly picks on statements made by policy makers. At a launching of a new book on Ghanaian technology in April 1999, then Deputy Minister of Environment, Dr. Farouk Braimah will charge: "We are in an information age, where no one can doubt its (information) potency as a resource in the development of the individual, organization or nation."[4] Earlier in February of the same year, Ghana's Deputy Minister of Communications will argue that as "the country modernizes, the impact of communication would continue to oil the wheels of the economy to enhance national development" and that Ghana has to embrace IT if it want to be competitive in the emerging global information society.[5]

What is interesting is the way the concept of digital divide is evoked and articulated at the policy level. On the surface, one can see a digital divide as evidenced by the inequality of access to networked computers. But we need to interrogate the mythic purchase of the concept of digital divide and how it shapes policy thinking and direction. First of all, the focus has been on the digital hardware and software. That is physical availability of computers. Secondly, the human and social dimensions, which include literacy levels, poverty levels, the question of relevant content as well as the institutional structures that underwrite social exclusion, are blotted out. The concept of digital divide tends to simplify the issue to information "haves" and "have nots." In this way, it reduces the problem of access to a binary problematic. But what we actually have on the ground is a media access problem that is better described as a media access continuum. At one extreme end is the heavy concentration of media (print and electronic including phone) in the city, and at the opposite end is a phone-

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[4]  www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/printnews.php?ID=6794
[5]  www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/printnews.php?ID=3498

less, newspaper-less communities of the rural areas. If we rethink the digital divide as one of a "gradation based on different degrees of access to information technology" (Warschauer 2002) we will avoid falling into the trap of being the cheerleaders of digital capitalism.

There is a patronizing dimension to the rhetoric of digital divide which, Henry Jenkins has aptly summed up: "The rhetoric of the digital divide holds open this division between civilized tool-users and civilized nonusers …As well-meaning as it is as a policy initiative, it can be marginalizing and patronizing in its own terms" (quoted in Young 2001). Another problem with the concept of digital divide is that it has the potential of naturalizing and simplifying the complex problem of media access, and lead to policy initiatives that tend to prescribe the acquisition of computers as the solution. Why not? Digital problems demand digital solutions. I am not here under-rating the potential of digital technologies for development. Rather, what I am trying to point out is that when digital solutions are offered without considering the overall complex network of problems that have institutionalized social exclusion, we will not arrive at digital inclusion as development, but a widened gap. As already discussed, when the analogue technologies of radio, TV and newspapers were what developing countries were told they needed, an increase in these new technologies of the day did not result in a corresponding decrease in poverty levels. In the same line of argument, an increase in computers in Ghana that is not linked to complementary factors such as literacy and education, health and other social resources will simply repeat the disastrous implications of the 1960s UNESCO recommendations. Ghana is already on this path given the exclusive computer-focus of the *Ghana-Vision 2020* and the government of the NPP.

The conception of development in terms of digital access also tends to occlude the fact that before the digital technologies surfaced, there were previous forms of "divides" the most important of which was and continue to be the literacy divide. For as I will show in my review of Ong (1997) and his brand of technological determinists, literacy, more than anything else is the fundamental resource that needs to be incorporated into the modernization train of development.

The faith in digital solutions in countries such as Ghana is fundamentally flawed. ICTs are not magic wands for leapfrogging into the information society or the digital economy. As Mansell has cautioned, ICTs are only powerful tools in complementing existing social resources. ICTs aid the learning and acquisition of knowledge process and do not replace them. That means that a learning process must precede the application of ICTs (in Patterson and Wilson 2000, 78). What is occurring in Ghana appears to be a blind aping of the developed democracies. In the developed democracies, the widespread adoption and use of ICTs was preceded by several years of comprehensive universal basic education and mass post-secondary level education. With such a heavily invested resource of social inclusion, the diffusion of ICT and the subsequent emergence of information society and a digital economy logically followed. But when access to primary education is heavily determined by class and location, with college education far from being affordable, any talk of leapfrogging sounds like "give them cake if they cannot have bread." And offering digital solutions to the current problem of social exclusion framed as digital divide is to be oblivious to the lessons of history from the 1960s.

It is therefore only when we problematize what has been described as the digital divide as an issue of social exclusion that we will understand why the digital gap between developing and developed countries have jumped from 50 to 70 times higher. It wasn't just computers that caused the difference. Investment in education and other social inclusionary mechanism over several decades before computers became mass consumer product explains why the developed countries continue to double the gap.

One theorist who has problematized the digital divide beyond the conduit accessibility is Oscar Gandy (2002). He frames the discourse as "real digital divide" between *citizens* and *consumers*. Yes, there is a digital divide, but it is not necessarily between locations, but one between marketization and public service and civic programs. Such an approach to the issue foregrounds the argument of "lack of" as one not based on technology per se, but a material and economic one in which technology only contributes to it, but not a sole determinant. It then highlights some of the core issues that have been the subject matter of this project: That is the commodification of information and its social consequences on citizenship. Gandy draws his discussion from earlier works by Mosco (1989) on the emergence of pay-per view society, Caroline Pauwels' (1999) discussion of the paradigm shift in European audio-visual policy from a focus on citizenship to the consumer, and Michael Tracey's (1998) argument that the shift from citizenship to consumption within policy circles is an ideological articulation. Tracey in particular, in a focused analysis of the decline of public service broadcasting placed the shift in a historical perspective:

> Once these intellectual constructs had taken hold, sanctified by the election of numerous right-wing governments, then, on the political dais could be placed the individual-as-consumer and the needs and interests of "the corporation." And buried beneath the rubble of the old order were such concepts as public good, public interest, community, public culture, citizenship, governance, and, increasingly, the nation-state (Tracey 1998, 52)

However, Gandy makes the case that the divide is not necessarily a product of an autonomous shift in political philosophy, but rather a product of a complex interaction in which technology plays a prominent role. The roots of the digital divide can be traced to the new production relations, transformation in technology, and changes between the market and the state. It is by examining the complex relationship between these systems, Gandy (2002, 450) asserts, that we can understand the "powerful epistemological wedge between the domains of citizens and consumers."

Gandy traces these changes to the emerging trend of privatized media consumption, and the increasing transformation of media of communication to instruments of entertainment. Such a transformation is evident in the rise of television as source of news over the newspaper's in-depth report for instance. Privatized consumption of media laid the foundation for a shift from thinking of media as civic institutions to media as markets. Policy makers then got caught in the peculiar problem of how to evaluate performance of the media: Is it through increased effective demand for the media as commodities or through public interest perspective? Caught in such a dilemma, marketization easily won because it could easily be

defended on an argument premised on the demand and supply dynamics of the market. In the mean time, public interest advocates spend the time defining what constitutes public interest (see McQuail 1992).

In the process, the market becomes the arbiter of what constitutes public interest. The consequence of this is the digital divide, not just of technology diffusion, of content as well. While Gandy has not explicitly made this argument, I see his contribution to the debate on digital divide as one that rescues us from an exclusive focus on conduit to comprehensive outlook on both conduit and content in a marketized environment.


## Technology in Civil Society

The confidence in ICTs as instruments of democracy and development is a global one. And this was particularly evident at the 1994 ITU conference in Buenos Aires, where the then US Vice President, Al Gore inaugurated the American idea of Global Information Infrastructure (GII) as the amalgam of various National Information Infrastructures (NII). "The GII will not only be a metaphor for a functioning democracy", he enthused, "it will in fact promote the functioning of democracy by greatly enhancing the participation of citizens in decision-making. And it will greatly promote the ability of nations to cooperate with each other. I see a new Athenian Age of democracy forged in the fora the GII will create" (Gore 1994). I guess it will be in order to remark in passing that in the old Athenian democracy slaves and women were disenfranchised. And by a remarkable coincidence, it is its postmodern version, the illiteracy of blacks in Florida and outdated ballot punching machines that worked in concert to deny him the presidency in the 2000 elections in a country that is leader of ICTs. But this is not why I introduced his speech. The statement by Al Gore represents the conventional understanding and confidence that policy makers invoke to justify the promise of technology. All the key words – sustainable development and participatory democracy – were alluded to in this landmark speech. The ITU conference itself was important because it was the first ever "World Telecommunication Development" conference since the world body was set up in 1865.

While governments all over the world tend to glorify the potential of ICTs for the twin dreams of democracy and development, they expect the private sector to lead in the provision of the infrastructure. And Hamelink (1995, 16) is justifiably cautious when he asks: "can the undemocratic sort of capitalism that will finance the GII in fact produce a genuine participatory democratic arrangement?" Nordic Africanist, Ullamaija Kivikuru, on her part has cautioned that while new ICTs have a great potential for the democratization of communication, the experience so far in Africa is not encouraging. Arguing from her research experience on the continent, she points out that those who tend to acquire new information technologies are those who are privileged by the existing imbalance (Kivikuru 2000, 34). In the face of this development, policy direction tends to be generously oriented towards free market in the hope of leapfrogging or through economic growth. But this quest for leapfrogging through economic growth and accumulation that in turn leads to exclusion of larger portions of the

political community needs to be questioned. We have to revisit the mandate of the state, which it claims to be nation building, and point out the centrality of access and participation as the key foundations of the modernization project. Otherwise, if modernization leads to exclusion, we may end up with a subversion of the postcolonial nation-state as a political community, and ultimately a legitimation crisis for the state.

It is pertinent to make a categorical statement on the stand of this project on technology and development. The democratic potential of technologies of communication, especially their ability to facilitate participation, their space-binding power and the virtual undisputable function as the fabric upon which a civil society can operate require that we acknowledge the central place they should be accorded in modernization. But that should not preclude an interrogation of the political allocative practice of deploying the technologies nor should we acquiesce with any analogical understanding of civil society. What I mean by an analogical conception of civil society is a reading of the occidental understanding and experience of civil society within the African context, for instance.

Depending on when and which society is under discussion, civil society, as a concept seems to have acquired different meanings and interpretations. For ancient Greeks civil society was the arena of the politically active citizens and carried with it the idea of being civilized. It was the 18<sup>th</sup> Century thinkers such as John Locke, Tom Paine, Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson who discussed civil society as distinct from the state. Krishan Kumar (1993; 1996, 86) points out that the contemporary understanding of civil society as the sphere of life between the family and the state is Hegelian. "Hegel sees the content of civil society as largely determined by the free play of economic forces and individual self-seeking." Kumar then argues that the civic and social institutions that regulate economic life should also be thought of as being part of civil society. "So the particularity of civil society passes over into the universality of the state" (Kumar 1996, 86). Such a shift Kumar points out is derived from Gramsci who developed the Hegelian conception. For Gramsci civil society is not conceptually limited to the economy but to the realm of cultural politics. The institutions of civil society therefore include the church, schools, trade unions and other organizations that facilitate the ruling class' ability to exercise hegemony. Ankie Hoogvelt (1997, 233) reports that in Latin America, influenced by the Hegelian definition of civil society as everything "beyond the family but short of the state," terms such as NGOs, popular movements, voluntary organizations and grassroots organizations are used interchangeably with civil society. But the trouble is some of these organizations astride beyond the postcolonial state because they have international sources of funding and they are neither accountable to their beneficiaries nor can they be regulated by the state.[6] DANIDA is an example. Its funding is provided by the Danish State through the Danish Parliament yet it is positioned in Ghana as an NGO.

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[6] For instance, there are about 1,300 local and international NGO operating in Ghana and the Department of Social Welfare in Accra, responsible for regulating NGOs says it lack the resources to monitor their activities to ensure they operate within the law ("No Efficient monitoring of NGOs" www.ghanaweb.com News archives 20 March 2001).

The concept of civil society is appealing because it maps out the arena in which citizens can actively participate in the affairs of the polity, for the idea of civil society automatically positions the individual as a rights bearing member of the society (citizenship). As Yusuf Bangura (1999) points out, the popularity of the concept in Africa was because of its promise for empowerment, democratization and participation for members of social groups who were previously excluded from policymaking process. Both the theory and practice of civil society has acquired its manifestation from societies that have experienced modernity. While we can talk of a possibility of civil society in non-modern societies, the contemporary understanding that civil society is incompatible with despotism and absolutism suggest that we limit the discussion to modern and modernizing societies. As John Hall (1995, 18) points out, any attempt to universalize the occidental experience of civil society should be resisted. Civil society in Europe for instance is founded on a certain level of economic prosperity the absence of which would have made civil society, as we know it today unthinkable.

Thus what infrastructural prerequisites are needed to allow one to talk of the possibility of civil society? Can we talk of a developing civil society in a country where the very institutions that define civil society exist but are inaccessible to the rights bearing citizens not because of dictatorship or despotism, but because of lack of technical means? Discussions on civil society in Africa that give conceptual attention to *democratization*, such as Mamdani (1996), Ake (1997), Bangura (1999), tend to focus on the political concerns of participation in decision making. Such a focus is important. But what we hardly see is a discussion on the communicative infrastructure that would allow participation in the first place. I am here referring to the fabric upon which modern societies are built upon (Deutsch 1966, Carey 1981, Warner 1990). This question is crucial one for nation-states that are in the process of becoming. This is also the reason why civil society is only thinkable under conditions of modernity, for the project of modernity in the occident was a type of social mobilization and inclusion to redefine the relationship between citizens and the national center. The discussion on civil society in Africa has led to the demand for restructuring of the state to make it more responsive to civil society. But the problem of the state is not just about opening it up to actors in civil society, but more importantly, it has more fundamental issues at stake. These include its three major crises, which Bangura lists as "a crisis of capacity; a crisis of governance; and a crisis of security" (1999, 4). I consider the crisis of capacity to be one that is critical to the realization of the others because it is foundational to the state's ability to operate. This includes the lack of a communicative fabric upon which nations are defined.

Thus what are the implications of this short overview of civil society for contemporary Africa and Ghana in particular? First of all, it requires that we define civil society contextually as one that is coming into being in late postcolonial societies. Given the theoretical insights offered by Mamdani we have to define the project of modernization as one of a process of extending civil society to include people who hitherto had no access to that privilege though were members of the common imagined community called the nation. Currently, developing countries have at best, weak or emerging civil society. But the tendency to read civil society as having emerged in the last decade or so is misleading. The struggle for civil society in Africa dates back to the precolonial nationalist struggle, which could only materialize after the

initiation of material and infrastructural modernization of the colony. For those struggles in the 1940s and 50s were demands for the extension of the rights of residents of the small civil societies reserved for expatriates. And the struggle assumed a new dimension with departure of the white colonialist. The emerging civil society then is one of facilitating and enabling access and participation. That is why the material foundations such as communication technologies are thought of are very crucial to the process. Policy actors therefore think of these communication technologies, as just some needed material resources for the dream of modernization. That is why research in communication studies that tend to highlight the cultural dimensions of borrowing technology are often slighted by policy actors.

As already discussed, the developmental state thinks of the nation-state as in a process of *becoming*. Thus the issue of mediation is of paramount importance in its modernization project. As former Tanzanian leader, Julius Nyerere is reported to have said that while the developed world is trying to reach the inner depths of space, we are trying to reach the next village (Kivikuru 1994). This is a humbling admission of what the developmental state is all about. Thus the state and nation nexus is more about how both relate in a burgeoning civic community. The democratization of the communicative fabric of the nation is not only central to the mediation of a commonly shared imagination of a political community. It is also fundamental to the possibility of interpenetrated and articulated publics. When Jurgen Habermas discusses a discourse theory and the public sphere, he stresses the communicative aspects of civil society:

> The social substratum for the realization of the system of rights consists neither in spontaneous market forces nor in the deliberate measure of the welfare state but in the currents of communication and public opinion that, emerging from civil society and the public sphere are converted into communicative power through democratic procedures. The fostering of autonomous public spheres, an expanded citizen participation, curbs on the power of the media and the mediating function of political parties are not simply elements of the state are of central significance for this (Habermas 1996, 217).

Writing about developed democracies, there is an inherent taken for granted-ness about the "currents of communication and public opinion." In discussing modernizing or burgeoning democracies, this aspect of flows cannot be assumed to happen automatically if some of the publics are cut out by the mere fact of access, hence the technological imperative. But the discussion on the causal relationship between technology and society is not that straight and simple. There are several levels of discourses on the relationship between technology and society in general and the specific relationship between communication technologies and society.

## Technology and Society: The Problem of Causality

The discussion on the causal relationship between technology and society is one that has received a great deal of attention and has polarized into different schools of thought. Probably the most notable among these is that of the Toronto School with its outstanding figures such as Harold Innis (1950) Marshall McLuhan (1964) and Walter Ong (1997). These theorists often labeled as technological determinist tend to privilege the existential embodiment of technology as the defining causative agent in a social formation. Innis pointed out the relationship between a social formation (empire) and the time and space character of specific technologies. Empires can either exist for a longer period or encompass wider space depending on the dominant technologies of mediation in use. McLuhan will go further and argue that the type of technology used had a determining effect on the content. So real causal agency lies more with the technology than with the humans who invented and deploy it in the first place. Ong, on his part has traced how the "technologizing of the word" from oral society to literacy has had tremendous effect on the psychological outlook of the people who deploy the technology.

Paralleling McLuhan, Ong interprets technology as the driving force in a social formation. His discussion of what he calls 'the psychodynamics of orality' is quite instructive. Ong makes a distinction between an oral culture or a society with a high residue of orality and a chirographic (writing) culture. Writing re-structures thought and societies that do not have the facility have to store acquired knowledge in fixed formulaic pattern like cliché and proverbs so that they can be repeated often and easily (Ong 1997, 24). This is to prevent the knowledge from being lost. Some of the knowledge (information), which was stored in media such as sculpture and other modeled images centuries ago and have been unearthed by present day archaeologists may become too difficult a text to be decoded by our generation. Contrary to the practice in oral cultures where there is widespread use of mnemonic formulas in the storage and communication of knowledge, people in literate cultures, free from the mental load of mnemonic gymnastics are more capable of abstract and original thought.

Speech in mnemonic based culture, according to Ong, is characterized by redundancy. In reading, we can re-view the text to facilitate understanding. In oral discourse redundancy or copiousness affords the listener the opportunity to re-view while at the same time the speaker is afforded the opportunity to fish out her ideas. Since writing as a technology to conserve knowledge is not available, people in oral societies must of necessity "invest great energy in saying over and over again what has been learned arduously over the ages. This need establishes a conservative set of mind that with good reason, inhibit intellectual experimentation" (1997, 41). This conservatism can be seen in the veneration of the aged in orally dominated societies compared to literate cultures. Indeed, there is an African proverb that "what an elderly person can see while sitting, a young person can never see even if s/he climbs a tree". With this thinking innovative action is discouraged and society must crawl at the pace dictated by the silver-haired.

Ong (1997, 41) explains that writing by itself is conservative in the sense that it freezes the knowledge or information. By taking this 'conservative' function, writing frees the mind of the conservation task and enables it to turn to new speculation. For instance the task of chronicling history in oral culture is arduous and time consuming. In Dagbon of Northern Ghana, Oppong (1973, 54) reports that a drummer graduates by learning the songs, genealogies, narratives and political history of the kingdom. Such an enormous mnemonic task may not be the concern of a student of history or journalism in literate culture because she has the technology of writing. The herbalist in oral societies often has to commit to memory all kinds of useful herbs, their potential, and dosage. His counterpart in the literate culture, a pharmacist, may do some amount of memorizing but a pharmacopoeia can always be referred to. This cultural heritage of oral literacy has been described as *oramedia* (Ugbuojah 1985). Oramedia encompasses more than just memorization. Oramedia, "are grounded on indigenous culture, produced and consumed by members of a group. They reinforce the values of the group. They are visible cultural features, often strictly conventional, by which social relationships and worldview are maintained. They take on many forms and are rich in symbolism" (Ogbuojah 1985, 166). In trying to illustrate the nature of oramedia, Ogbuojah relates the story of a British colonial governor who wanted to communicate to the people of Ashanti his authority as the representative of the Queen of England. He chose to sit on the stool of the king of Ashanti to symbolize his power. He was wrong. The people got angered because the British governor had abused the object that symbolized the soul of the whole kingdom and they prepared for war. Such is how oramedia can be used or misused. Oramedia, no doubt, has its limitations and these even become more evident when we compare it to the modern and big media. But in the absence of the sophisticated big media, in the rural environs of Africa, oramedia is the dominant system. It is what makes social life tick at the rural areas. It is the instruments that provide the channels of "public information", the oxygen of the rural public sphere. Unfortunately it is a subject that has not attracted the desired attention of researchers on communication in Africa, apart from a few rhetorical references to it. Admittedly, part of the reason for the neglect has been because mass communication in the context of the more complex society of the nation-state demanded something more complex than the primordial conduits of oramedia. Thus contemporary policy on communication and development has been silent about its potential.

The lack of writing also makes oral societies to be homeostatic (Ong 1997, 46) As a result the norm is empathetic and participatory rather than exclusivity and objectively distanced. In the acquisition of knowledge, preference is given to knowledge that is close to the human life world. In discourse, what matters is the values of the present rather than "idle curiosity of the past". Communal harmony is always the priority and individual rights are of secondary importance to those of the community. New ideas that tend to offset the balance of norms and mores are often shunned. Thus understood, Ong and his school of techno-determinism appear to want us believe in the structuralist contention that, if language is thought of as technology, (technologized language), then language speaks us more than the other way round. In a way language does speak us. That sounds a bit strange though given the banal fact that we speak language. In trying to explain that language speaks us, Ong seem to have

precluded the mundane fact that it is we, humans, who speak language in the first place. To avoid jumping from one end to the other, the question should be shifted from "who speaks what?" to a realization of the complementary nature of effectivity in each social formation.

There is no doubt that every piece of technology (that is an existentially and materially embodied) can exert some form of pressure on the people who use them to such an extent that we can recognize how it does appear to determine social trajectory. That is why the arguments of the determinist school do have some analytical purchase. But the problem here is one of the over privileging of technological agency at the expense of other forms of agencies, including individual human, institutional and the contextual impact of conjuncture. When do these agencies overdetermine the power of technology in a social formation? One is sure not to find a answer to this question from the determinist school. Thus, in the spirit of Althusser, we will argue that the technology – human interface is better explained as one that has a social totality with various possibilities of overdertermination at various conjunctures. Gerald Sussman (1997, 25) rightly notes that technological determinists anthropomorphize technology in the form of machines and by that process they ascribe power to the machines as having the ability to bring about change driven by their own momentum. "The grammar of technological determinism hides the human agents precisely to disguise the political, economic and repressive aspects and identities of empowered institutions and interests acting through their technocratic instruments" (Sussman 1997, 27).

When Tehranian (1990a) discusses this subject of the power of communication technology, he groups the contending perspectives into four: The *technophiles,* the *technophobes* the *technoneutrals* and the *technostructuralist*. The technophiles argue in the spirit of the determinist school and bank their hopes on technology to solve the basic problems of democratization and development across the world. The technophobes on the other hand are the pessimists who acknowledge the power of technology but focus their analytical attention on the ability of technology to cause structural unemployment, threaten individual freedom and cultural autonomy in the periphery. Scholars who may be categorized under this persuasion include Herbert Schiller, Vincent Mosco, Jacques Ellul, and Cees Hamelink. However it should be noted that recent writings of Mosco (1996), Hamelink (1999) suggest a more cautious shift away from this emphasis on the perils of technology. The third category, the technoneutrals tend to be ahistorical in outlook and not interested in deeper theoretical analysis. In terms of effects of technology, they often assume a neutral position (Tehranian 1990a, 5). They also tend to be pragmatic and argue that the effect of technology, whether positive or negative, depends on the use to which it is put. The technoneutrals then can be contrasted to the technodeterminists since for the former technology per se is not powerful until it is employed into a causative act.

The technostructuralist, according to Tehranian (1990a, 6), take a distance from all three and insist that technology is neither good nor bad and is also not neutral. "This is because they are developed out of institutional needs (in the case of information technologies, primarily for military and business needs) and their impact is always mediated through the institutional arrangements and social forces of which they are an integral part." This position of the technostructuralist is more nuanced than the other three. The technophiles have a good

basis for their optimism because ICTs, for instance, have helped to facilitate ease of communication and in most cases making its primitive form, transportation, unnecessary. But equally true is the use of these technologies for undemocratic, practices that tend to divide rather than bridge social gaps. I will prefer to talk of technophilic tendencies than just plain technophiles by Tehranian's typification. This tendency is evident in the discourses of technological enthusiasts such as in the case of the officials of the multilateral agencies and former US Vice President cited above. Their claims are oftentimes evidently true, but what is often troubling about such discourses is their gloss over the other side of technology. This includes the full social impact they visit on society, due to both the very nature of the decisions taken and the structurally embedded limitations that come with technology. And this gives the technophobes effective ammunition to fire their criticism.

Thus the technophobes have a well-grounded position in their argument. Theorists such as Herbert Schiller (1976) and Cees Hamelink (1995) have abundantly pointed out the hazards of market-driven expansion in technologies. It is important to point out that these scholars have not been entirely against new technologies. What they have done is to place technologies within the wider political economy of the contemporary social formation and pointing out its anti-democratic anti-participatory and anti-development tendencies. But in focusing on the macro-level power dynamics they overlook the activities at the micro-level. For instance, when Schiller (1976) assumes that American domination of international communication through film and other mass media implies cultural domination of the periphery, it becomes problematic. He fails to look at the context within which the periphery engages with the cultural products from the United States. As Appadurai (1996, 31) rightly puts it, the metropolis "is no longer the puppeteer of a world system of images but is only one node of a complex transnational construction of imaginary landscapes." Appadurai introduces this cultural studies perspective to de-privilege the tendency in cultural imperialism thesis to think of the receivers as receptacles that hardly have any remarkable ability of their own for aberrant decoding of text. The center, so to speak, has lost its cultural centripetal force. This reminds me of the Irish poet, W.B. Yeats' beautiful lines in his "The Second Coming"

> *Turning and turning in the widening gyre*
> *The falcon cannot hear the falconer;*
> *Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;*
> *Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,*
> *The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere*
> *The ceremony of innocence is drowned* (Yeats 1983, 187).

The metaphor of a de-decentered world of anarchy (in interpretations of symbols) is too striking to be resisted or missed. Now that the ceremony of innocence is drowned and the blood-dimmed tide is loosened, old analytical concepts such as *center* and *periphery* are no longer adequate and relevant to our understanding of the world. It is from this perspective that Appadurai's *ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, finance scapes* and *ideoscapes* are analytically useful. He explains: "The suffix –scapes allows us to point to the fluid,

irregular shapes of these landscapes, shapes that characterize international capital as deeply as they do in international clothing. These terms… also indicate that these are not objectively given relations that look the same from every angle of vision, but that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic and political situatedness of different sorts of actors: nation-states, multinational, diasporic communities, as well as subnational groups… families" (Appadurai 1996, 33).

To illustrate, the world may have been *coca-colonized* by the US, but the Kenyan youth in Nairobi who would not go to lunch without his bottle of coke does not necessarily become Americanized because he refuses to buy local brands. The symbolic relationship (ideoscape) between him and the coke is not necessarily American and may have nothing to do with Yankee culture. Indeed, he may even think coca-cola is Kenyan or African because it is bottled in his country. But the political economic perspective of cultural imperialism scholarship will point out that the patronage of coke in Africa means that American capital will benefit. That will be an anachronistic response because now that capital is de-nationalized and liquidified (Barber 1995, 23; Reich 1992, 243), that capital will end up creating jobs and investment in Indonesia or Malaysia and not necessarily in the US. And shareholders may be Japanese, Arabs or some African politician who is hiding his loot in an offshore bank[7] . That is why it is more meaningful to view capital not only within the old logic of accumulation at the center, but also as financescape. To plagiarize Yeats, the capital-falcon cannot hear the American falconer and so may fly up to Asia. God knows why it never seems to stop in Africa!

In the world of scapes, nothing is certain. Technology that was created for military purposes, the Internet, has been appropriated by the individual and is now an icon of freedom beyond the imagination of the nation-state. The nation-state, as it were, has lost control of the technological falcon. The fluid nature of technology is thus more effectively conceptualized as technoscapes. Benjamin Barber gives us a good illustration when he says "Iranian zealots keep one ear tuned to the mullahs urging holy war and the other cocked to Rupert Murdoch's Star Television beaming in *Dynasty, Donahue,* and *The Simpsons* from hovering satellites…Serbian assassins wear Adidas sneakers and listen to Madonna on walkman headphones as they aim through their gunscopes at scurrying Sarajevo civilians looking to fill their family watercans" (Barber 1995, 5). What a contradiction! If there is one enduring message in *The Simpsons* it is peace and tolerance. Nor is the seductive sounds of Madonna meant to be in accompaniment to gunscopes. This is how slippery the causal relationship between the social and the technological can be. Probably, it is only the individual that is certain and fixed in this complex network of scapes. It is "the individual actor" Appadurai (1996, 33) wants us to believe, that is "the last locus of this perspectival set of landscapes."

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[7] Gen. Saani Abacha, military ruler of Nigeria from Nov. 1993 to June 1998 when he died, looted an estimated 4 billion US dollars, 1.3 billion of which were stashed in British Banks. The British Financial Services Authority said on March 8, 2001 that 23 western banks were involved in this money laundering (see *New African* No. 395 April 2001, pp.14-15). Most of Mobutu of Zaire's 6 billion dollars loot were in western banks (see New African No. 354 July/August, 1997, p. 12).

But even then we are still left without accounting for the structuration processes (Giddens 1984) that recursively shape the individual's agency.

Technostructuralism tends to be the favorite of theorists who criticize the technophiles, the technophobes and the technoneutralists. Thus after discussing these other three approaches, Tehranian (1990a) opts for technostructuralism as the framework of this book *Technologies of Power*. On her part, Jennifer Daryl Slack (1984) after an in-depth criticism of approaches such as technology assessment (similar to Tehranian's description of the technoneutralist), alternative technology, Luddism and expressive causality, calls for a structuralist perspective. First of all, I want to point out that both Tehranian and Slack are calling for different types of structuralisms, but nevertheless, they both have a common structuralist epistemology. Tehranian draws his structuralism from Johan Galtung who argues that every technology comes with an associated structure embedded in it apart from the "mental framework, a social cosmology, serving as a fertile soil in which the seeds of certain type of knowledge may be planted. And in order to use the tools, a certain behavioral structure is needed" (quoted in Tehranian 1990a, 6). Given the embeddedness of technologies, Tehranian suggests that we introduce contextualism as an analytical category to qualify the implications of the structuration that technologies engender. This will mean a form of "symbolic structuralism", which "presupposes an interdependency between the material structures (technologies and the economic forms of ownership and control) and the symbolic formations (intellectual and artistic content and programs). The structure is the message, but at the long run the message also determines the structuration process" (Tehranian 1990a, 50).

Manuel Castells who has also treated these issues with commendable subtlety and a humanist touch, laments the tendency to reduce discussion on the transformative power of technology to a debate between techno-elites and neo-Luddites, and points out that the real issues are not in between but elsewhere. "Social development today is determined by the ability to establish a synergistic interaction between technological innovation and human values, leading to a new set of organizations and institutions that create positive feedback loops between productivity, flexibility, solidarity, safety, participation and accountability, in a new model of development that could be socially and environmentally sustainable" (Castells 1999, 1). He argues that while information technology, for instance, offers us a fruitful entry point to discuss the relation between the new socio-economic system and generation of inequality and social exclusion, it is not the lone trigger of this process. Information technology interacts with other factors in a complex set of actions and reactions in a social transformation. "Information technology is not the cause of the changes we are living through. But without new information and communication technologies none of what is changing our lives would be possible, Castells (1999, 2) declares. He seems to be cautious because he wants to avoid the questionable optimism of technological determinists, yet be able to admit to the revolutionary potential of technology. For Castells, ICTs are the functional equivalent of electricity in the industrial era. But its availability per se does not guarantee development, or the leapfrogging of the stages of economic development. ICTs, he insists, must be placed within the wider framework of appropriate organizational environment.

Economic leapfrogging, he rightly points out, is tied to factors such as comprehensive education. "This starts with the educational system, from the bottom up, from the primary school to the university. And it relates, as well to the overall process of cultural development, including the level of functional literacy, the content of the media, and the diffusion of information with the population as a whole" (Castells 1999, 3). This is a guarded optimism in leapfrogging and should not be confused with the hype on leapfrogging discussed earlier. The discourse on leapfrogging in Africa that I brand as a hype is skewed towards the technological determinist view with undisguised pointers towards issues such as e-commerce and economic accumulation at the same time a drastic reduction in social spending including spending on education. Social development is abandoned and no longer seen as modernization and expansion of education, health and the overall task of wealth distribution. In this new trend, it is possible for developing countries to have sections of their population left out of the promise of information technology. Castells (1999, 4) cites India as an example of a country that combines the fact of being on the leading edge of information technology while majority of the citizens languish in poverty. While Castells' discussion is on ICTs and global perspectives on social development, his arguments are very much applicable at the national scale. For instance, he points out that investment in education and for that matter the realization of human capital in the information age is fundamental to the increase in productivity and social development in the information age. Otherwise, the growth in ICTs application to social development will be accompanied by a continued expansion of social exclusion best characterized as a Fourth World. For Castells (1999, 14) "a massive technological upgrading of countries, firms, and households around the world" should be the business of governments, international lending organization, universities and all those who have a stake in social development. The lesson we learn from here is that technology in the development and modernization process has both perils and promise (Tehranian 1990a), but the course or direction is not determined by technology, but by society.

This battle to find a location between the extremism of determinist thinking on the one hand and the celebration of context and conjunctural exigencies on the other is not limited to Tehranian and Castells alone. Slack (1984) had struggled with the idea before and in her case she found support in Althusserian structuralism. After a penetrating analysis of technology assessment and alternative technology approaches as well as Luddism, Slack explores the limitation of expressive causality as explicated by Herbert Marcuse, George Luckacs, Luis Mumford and Jacque Ellul, and brands them "intellectual Luddites," calling their approach mechanistic. Granted that technologies embody the social structures and values of the milieu from which they emerge, Slack insists that we use an approach that can account for the origins of technologies. Expressive causality approach, she explains, points out the social determinants embedded, in technology, but does not offer us insight into the social forces that give rise to the invention in the first place. Effectivity is only conceptualized as an after the fact of invention of the technology and is also thought of as the manifestation of an essence. "By contrast, structural causality posits that cause do not exist apart from their effects and that structure, which exercises effectivity, consists of its effects" (1984, 81 – 82).

Slack explains that while technologies have relative autonomy, they can only be understood as being part of the social structure within which they have emerged and exercise effectivity. Society is conceptualized as a "complex structured whole" or a totality. She derives this perspective from Althusserian structuralism. Louis Althusser, working from, Marxist political economy of base/superstructure theory tried to go beyond the vulgar interpretation of Marx. He argued that instead of the binary approach to determination, the social should be seen as a totality constituting the economic, the political and the ideological (Althusser 1971, 134). The social unity, is a structured whole that has moments or levels that are distinct and relatively autonomous. These various moments co-exist within a "complex structural unity, articulated with one another according to specific determinations fixed in the last instance by the level or instance of the economy" (Althusser and Balibar 1977, 97). Determination is recurrent and occurs between the various levels in a social totality due to the inherent contradictions that they embody. In their relations, the various levels or moments of the totality exert pressures as a mark of their effectivity. But the level or moment that has the "determinant place" is said to be in a situation of "structure in dominance of the complex whole" (Althusser 1970, 209). But in this cycle of determinations, the level that is structured in dominance is said to *overdetermine* when its effectivity overrides the effectivity of the other levels or determinants.

The concept of *overdetermination* sounds rather monstrous at first contact. Indeed, Mosco (1996, 5) for instance, resists it and suggests "multiply determined" as an alternative, though one finds him continuously using overdetermination as a concept in his book. In applying this complex theory of effectivity/determination, Slack (1984, 88) writes:

> In sum, causality is structural in that effectivity is exercised in and through overdetermined contradictions. The primary contradiction is active in all the secondary contradictions, but, given the relative autonomy of the levels, it cannot be argued that the secondary contradictions are mere reflections of it. The particular configuration of the complex structured whole – as it is structured in dominance – will determine the locus and nature of these overdetermined contradictions. These contradictions will then affect the real conditions of existence, determining essentially the structure. Causality is, then, internal to the structure.

From the methodological perspective of articulation then, the technology-society relationship becomes one of different moments (technology and society being the moments) that are structured in dominance. At various points in this totality, each of the levels can acquire a status of overdetermination in its effectivity. Conceptualizing technology in structuralist terms does have its political and epistemological advantages. We are able to avoid an apparent crisis of ontology that would have pushed us to the point of celebrating technology as society made durable (Latour 1991). A crisis that could lead us to pointing out the fact that occidental technology is occidental culture objectified as machines. This could introduce a neo-cultural imperialism thesis that would point out a new cultural colonization inherent in importing technologies to the Third World. Politically, the existential embodiment of technology as

machines is recognized as an object of appropriation for the modernization project. Thus a structuralist approach to causality has a good purchase.

There is no doubt that Slack has led us to cover a lot of mileage. She has, so to speak, rescued us from the primitive approaches of Luddism, alternative technology and expressive causality, but only to deliver us to the altar of Althusserian structuralism. Structural causality, as she defines it, is a more realistic approach to the relationship between society and technology. We are able to account for the interconnectedness between machines and their social embodiment and location. The project of intervention is crucial to Slack's approach much as it is to mine. But while her quest for a point of intervention is about fixing up or tuning up the technology to social needs, my project of intervention is about appropriating the technology to a society that did not produce it in the first place. The commitment to structural causality as a theory of effectivity then will easily lead to an argument that since the technology to be appropriated is foreign to the new society, it will not work. Thus we should look onto indigenous technology as the place to intervene. I am drawing this inference from structural causality with a risk. And that is that it is a simplistic reading of the theory. Obviously, the "social" is not necessarily geographically defined. But within the understanding that there is an obvious distinction that is accidentally geographically defined, and that the project of modernization is an appropriation of modernity, we can argue that the "social" in the invention of television, for instance, is the *social of the modern* and not the *social in the postcolony* that is in the process of becoming modern. Thus a resistance to structural causality as a theory of effectivity is necessary and a preference for structuration as a theory of effectivity.

There is a relationship of similarity between structural causality and structuration theory as put forward by Giddens (1984). They both recognize the shifting nature of causality. But the difference even in this accounting of causality is quite significant. While structural causality focuses on the shifting moments of causality within "the loop" à la Althusser's structured whole, structuration theory focuses on the processes and shifting moments of effectivity that is based on a recurrent causal loop but not necessarily thought out as a totality and that human agents are knowledgeable and reflexive. But before we discuss the reasons for the preference for structuration theory, we still have the unresolved problem of overcoming the "structures" mentality that is evident in technostruturalism of both Tehranian and Slack's persuasion. Structuralist approaches have a problem of overcoming the effects of metaphysics of presence that machines conjure as icons. I am taking a Barthesean turn here (Barthes 1972).

The metaphysics of presence that machines command is a form of ideology. We are not able to unthink machines beyond their existential physical embodiment. And worse still, we accord them the same status as human agency. As Giddens (1984, 25-26) has rightly pointed out "The reification of social relations, or the discursive 'naturalization' of the historically contingent circumstances and products of human action, is one of the main dimensions of ideology in social life." And continues that "Even the crudest form of reified thought, however, leave untouch the fundamental significance of the knowledgeability of human actors. For

knowledgeability is founded less upon discursive than practical consciousness." While structural causality tend to recognize human agency as a relevant dimension of the social equation (technology + human), it denies it the special privileges of being knowledgeable, reflexive, and for that matter, having what Giddens calls practical consciousness. For structural causality, the economy has the last instance of determination. Giddens defines practical consciousness as "what actors know (believe) about social conditions, including especially the conditions of their own action, but cannot express discursively…" Practical consciousness, then, as I understand it, is akin to what Raymond Williams calls "structures of feelings."

Raymond Williams (1977, 129) cautioned that "it is the reduction of the social to fixed forms that remains the basic error" and brings our attention to the role of the ever-present experience (experience not as a past event) of immediate feelings, in the process of continuous restructuring of social being and consciousness. This helps us understand that slippery interface between what we already know and what we encounter in the immediate present. "There is frequent tension between the received interpretation and practical experience." The ever-present experience, according to Williams, "is a kind of feeling and thinking which is indeed social and material, but each is an embryonic phase" before it becomes articulated and gets embedded in a social formation (1977, 130-131).

A good example that enhances our understanding of structures of feelings as the embryonic stage of social formation is his reference to the history of language. No generation speak the same language as its predecessors despite the substantial efforts at conserving language through the institution of grammar and vocabulary. The point is that, that particular quality of social experience under discussion (call it practical consciousness) is unique for every occasion and is not necessarily repeated. Thus no two generations can have the same experience. Raymond Williams (1977, 132) resisted the phrase 'structures of experience' in favor of 'structures of feelings' because the former gives the impression of being the past. Structures of feelings celebrates human agency as reflexive and knowledgeable and is not limited to the dictates of some pre-structured logic of determination only. This is what is missing in structural causality: that immediacy of everyday life that humans encounter, those structures of feelings that enable one generation or society to use a piece of technology such as television differently from another. A piece of technology such as a computer may be encountered as a working tool in one society. In another, its fetishistic dimension may be accentuated over its utilitarian function and thus turned into a glorified typewriter. Such unpredictable character of the society/technology relationship makes the project of intervention rather hazardous.

Following Stuart Hall's (1986) elaboration of a theory of articulation, Slack (1989, 331) uses the concept of articulation in a later attempt to make a case of technology as "contingent" rather than determined. It is an attempt to overcome the residues of determination in her earlier formulation. She urges us to rethink technology as an articulation as "a nonnecessary connection of different element that, when connected in a particular way, form a specific unity." That means that a piece of "machine" as it stands, is constituted of various elements

such as the economics, the ideology, the politics, the policy, the gender, and what have you, that goes into its constitution. But at any particular conjuncture and context, its constitution is not necessarily the sum of the elements, but a particular connection, at that particular moment, a certain configuration of the elements. Nothing is guaranteed. Technology then, is contingent rather than determined, dispersed rather than discrete. What Slack succeeded in doing in her later argument on technology as articulation is that she reframed the relationship between technology and society as one of connections rather than constituted. Such a revised approach brings her closer to Bruno Latour and Michel Callon's network theory, which she lately discusses approvingly (Slack and Wise 2002). By situating technology as connections, agency becomes a property of the connections and not embodied in the constituted technology, which Slack rejects. But what we lose is that the question of causality is abandoned for the location of agency. For me this is a rather unrewarding end despite its analytic sophistication.

## Modernization as Context

My critique of these predominantly technocentric approaches to causality is particularly meant to rescue the resource that we call machines from the various determinism that is implicit in their discussions, notably, Ong and his colleagues at the Toronto School, Slack as well as, Tehranian. For the modernization agenda, technology is just a resource, like capital is for instance. The fact that capital, especially foreign capital, comes with some structural logic that may undermine the intent of development does not mean that the human actors who relate with it cannot subvert it. That goes for technology as well. So if the human-technology interface is more complex than has been presented by technological determinist and various forms of structuralism, how does that relate to policy practices? What is the implication of this complexity to our approach to policy initiative on ICTs as institutional practices of the state and policymaking as an exercise in structuration? What forms of pressures, individually and institutionally, come into play in the making of policy on wiring the nation as a community? The pressures here are understood as structures, which Giddens (1984, 377) defines as "Rule-resource sets, implicated in the institutional articulation of social systems. To study structures, including structural principles, is to study major aspects of the transformation/mediation relations which influence social and system integration." Structures in the particular instance of policy practices on ICTs in development will include ICTs as machines, the conventional understanding that ICTs are good for national development, the understanding that ICTs help in national integration, the idea that free market is the preferred approach, the assumption that development is a business of the state in its making of the nation, the idea that the modernization project demands a massive infusion of foreign capital, to mention but a few. These are some of the instances that map out modernization and nation building as a context for discussing communication technology. And grounding articulation theory as a method can be helpful in mapping out the terrain of development policy practice in Ghana.

## Access and Participation as Development

I take it that development and democratization are the two crucial themes that warrant policy practices in Ghana like in many developing countries. I have already shown how development came up to be the main business of the state in the constitution of the nation-state. By democratization, I mean the facilitation of citizens' participation in the public and private affairs of the nation-state irrespective of the part of the national community they are located. This definition is in keeping with that of the MacBride Commission (UNESCO 1980, 166) which defined democratization as "the process whereby (a) the individual becomes an active partner and not a mere object of communication; (b) the variety of messages exchanged increases; and (c) the extent and quality of social representation or participation in communication are augmented." Tehranian (1990a, 4), going along the grain of the MacBride report, defines democratization as a "process of increased political participation that allows for considerable autonomy, diversity, and freedom while providing a supportive environment for critical public discourse, consensus building, and democratic will formation." Participation here suggests being reserved the option to take part. Being a derivative of democracy, democratization calls for an attempt at reaching the ideals of democratic practice that all nation-states profess to try to construct. Obviously due the rhetorical and conceptual purchase of "participation" (or its adjectival form, "participatory") the concept has been used and abused by both intellectuals and politicians alike. Often it is used to give credit to attempts at showing how certain epistemologies are grounded from real life experiences. Example is Servaes and Arnst (1999, 108) claim, "Participatory research was conceived in reaction to elitist research bias. It is ideological by intent; it is the research by involvement. It is not only research with people – it is people's research. As such it largely rejects both the development policies of states and the 'objectivity' and 'universal validity claims' of many methodologies in the social sciences." Aside of its show of nihilism by disregarding the developmentalist state, all the reasons they have mustered to prove the uniqueness of *participatory* research is not exclusive to their methodology. Ethnographers have been doing most of that. And which research or epistemological exercise is not ideological by the way? In addition, most qualitative approaches like ethnography have long since abandoned universal validity claims. So that Servaes and Arnst here cited is an example of a deployment of the concept more for its rhetorical and political purchase than its conceptual value.

Participation is unarguably central to democratic theory. Carole Pateman (1989) is one theorist who has tried to resurrect the arguments of the classical theorists to discuss contemporary relevance of its application. Starting from Rousseau, Stuart Mill and G.D.H. Cole, Pateman reveals how the classical idea of maximum political participation in social organizations was subverted later with a concern for stability and the endorsement with the maxim that the elite must rule in a democracy. The participation of the rest should be limited to taking part periodically in electing leaders. Widening the realm of participation beyond voting would lead to mobocracy. The revision of participation from being a tenet of democracy to a specter of totalitarianism, she points out, was partly due to the European experience of the collapse of the "Weimer Republic with its high rates of mass participation, into fascism,

and the post-war establishment of totalitarian regimes based on mass participation" (Pateman 1989, 2). This backdrop, added to the instability of regimes based on mass mobilization in newly independent postcolonial regimes provided for a good reception of the Schumpeterian definition of democracy as one of institutional arrangements for making political decisions through a competitive struggle for people's vote. Participation then was restricted to voting and the freedom and right to contest for leadership. "The electoral mass is incapable of action other than a stampede" (Schumpeter quoted in Pateman 1989, 5). Thus when liberal democrats such as Al Gore talk of ICTs and political participation, they mean this limited version of participation. The discursive transformation of participation in democratic theory and practice should be seen as articulation in practice. That is articulation as a practice of making connections and disconnections. The elite dominance of the discourse of democracy and the elite wish to maintain a stable order secured the dominance of the discourse of anti-participation as the new truth with Schumpeter as a key ideologue. The meaning of participation both in theory and in practice depends on the conjuncture in which it is evoked and the character of the elements that constitute the moment.

Robert Dahl, another influential theorist of democracy who put forward the idea that a democratic political arrangement is a polyarchy, had argued along the lines of Schumpeter that opening up participation posed a threat to the democratic system. Dahl's theory of polyarchy principally says that democracy is a rule of multiple minorities and that the system strives towards increased participation. But he cautions that the lower groups of society which are in the majority are barred from benefiting from the equality of participation that democracy offers because they are generally inactive, have high authoritarian instincts and have limited wherewithal (Dahl 1956, 81). As Pateman (1989, 14) notes, in most cases of contemporary theories of democracy, participation is restricted to choice of decision makers and there is always the fear that increased participation beyond this level will result in chaos and authoritarianism. The classical theorists such as Rousseau, John Stuart Mill and Bentham, from whom these contemporary theorists draw never argued for the limitation of participation. "For Bentham and Mill, participation thus had a purely protective function, it ensured that the private interest of each citizen were protected (the universal interest being merely the sum of individual interests)" (Pateman 1989, 20). Thus, so to speak, the unfinished business of democracy is how to increase participation. If restricted participation helps to stabilize the polity, it stands to reason that participation is the engine of development and social transformation: development here being synonymous to change and progress.

It is this understanding of the participatory deficit of liberalism that led Benjamin Barber to argue that the anti-participatory posture of liberal democracy has resulted into a "thin democracy" that is at best a politics of self-interest, bargaining and exchange and never one of transformation, invention and creation. For Barber liberal democracy by being anti-participatory is also anti-community and this is because it has a zookeeping mentality of politics. "Like captured leopards, men are to be admired for their proud individuality and for their unshackled freedom, but they must be caged for their untrustworthiness and anti-social orneriness all the same" (1989, 21). He puts forward an ambitious program of revitalizing participation. Under strong democracy (the opposite of thin democracy), the possibility of

transforming conflict into cooperation, dependency into interdependency, need into love, bondage into citizenship "are all placed within a context of participation" (Barber 1989, 120). But his emphasis on community should not be mistaken for communitarian idealism. The basis of democracy is first and foremost community and it is in participation that we realize the community and not a zookeeping mentality of government. It is for this reason that Andrew Moemeka (1997, 174) makes interesting reading when he shows that within African philosophical thought, the Cartesian logic is subverted to "I am because we are." The primacy of the community is here emphasized and justified on the grounds of the provisions it affords the individual. But such a worldview has consistently come under attack since modernization was inaugurated. The community here was always a small one with members having personal relationships and similar to Tönnies' (1955) *Gemeinschaft*. Thus within the modernizing nation-state under discussion, such a community is simply impracticable. But it is the spirit of such a community, the part of access and participation that is sought for in the contemporary larger community of citizens.

In his contribution on the role of research in the movement for the democratization of communication, Robert White notes that much of the existing communication theory lack adequate explanation for the factors of social change that lead to democratization. However, it does argue for a need to go beyond the liberal social ideals to fashion a new public philosophy of communication. The existing critiques also point out the relevance of access channels that allow for not just an informed docile labor force for a stable democracy, but the recognition that access is a basic social right (White 1999, 233).

So far the discussion has been limited to the political sphere, more so because of the link between democratic governance and participation. Pateman's discussion of the concept was precisely to extend the debate to include other social organizations. That is to expand the political to include "spheres outside national government" (1989, 106). Focusing on case studies in the former Yugoslavia, she proves that contrary to the view that ordinary people are incapable of participation in complex structures, they actually learn to do so and improve upon their activeness. "The argument of the participatory theory of democracy is that participation in the alternative areas would enable the individual better to appreciate the connection between the public and the private spheres (Pateman 1989, 110). Pateman's critique is centered on the Anglo-American experience of and theory of democracy. One of the noted theories on the relation between participation and development from the perspectives of the experience of the developing countries is Paulo Freire (1974). The idea of participation should not just be limited to its political dimension. If participation means the ability to take part in the life of one's polity, then participation should be expanded to include economic participation. I am not just referring to the wherewithal to facilitate political participation. The economic and material foundation to allow for members of a specific geographic community (a region of the nation-state) to participate in national affairs should also be considered significant. I have read the history of the postcolonial nation-state as an imagined political community in the process of becoming which includes the extension of civil society of the colony to the world of traditional authority and subjects. This process of turning subjects into citizens demands that the state take responsibility for providing the foundations

(which are mainly economic and material) for the members of the hitherto protectorates to participate in the new political community that is replacing the previous community of chief and subject. This task is not the business of market forces.

Dieter Senghaas (1985, 6) who critiques development theory from the perspectives of the European experience has pointed out that the history of Western capitalism has very few examples of countries that have pursued free market policies from the scratch as a means to becoming developed. "While over the past two decades, the Third World has been constantly advised to integrate into an 'unrestricted world economy' on the basis of free trade, it has hardly ever been questioned whether, during the initial development stages in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Europe itself had developed in such a way." Senghaas points out that with the exception of Switzerland and Netherlands, none of the presently highly industrialized countries developed through free trade policy. In England, free trade gained ascendancy as a policy prescription because of her dominance of the total global industrial output (Senghaas 1985, 23).

The best example in defense of this thesis of uncompleted project of turning subjects into citizens is the recent revelations that coffee and cocoa plantations in West Africa are operated with slave labor. Actually, what goes on is a form of indentured labor and not slavery in the classical sense. But nonetheless, the global media blitz on the "slave ship" that allegedly carried some 250 children for work in plantations may have been embarrassing for these countries. The story made headlines for several days on the world media, including CNN and BBC World between April 13 and 17, 2001. If the story had appeared on April Fools day, some would have been tempted to dismiss it as a big joke. But that is if you are unfamiliar with the realities of deprivations going on in the hinterlands of these countries. The state, so to speak, has not yet penetrated some parts of its jurisdiction to invite residents in these areas to take part in the civil life that it has promised as part of the modernization project. So even if indentured labor is illegal and a prosecutable offence, the state is not able to enforce the law because it cannot access these places where they are practiced. But curiously, it is ready to export the produce that comes out of this illegal enterprise and expect the confectionery industry in the metropolis, which relies on this "slave economy" for its raw materials to help it stop the practice. This is a vindication of Mamdani's thesis that the postcolony is burdened with the legacy of the bifurcated world of citizen and subject that colonialism introduced. The postcolonial state still depends on uncivil economic production relations for its survival. This is also the reason why Hyden (1983, 8ff) argues that the state still needs these uncivil economic relations in what he describes as "economy of affection" as against a rationalized system of production and formalized structures.

As already stated, in accomplishing the task of building a nation out of the postcolony, modernization becomes the doctrine of the state in its claim to build a political community, which invariably allows for participation. Modernization is understood as an appropriation of modernity. An appropriation that take economic modernization to mean industrialization, political modernization as democratization, social modernization as individualism and cultural modernization as rationalization (Youichi 1997, 52). But is this appropriation of modernity unproblematic? In his critique of the modernization project, Habermas defines

modernization as a "bundle of processes that are communicative and mutually reinforcing"(1996, 338) and include the formation of capital, the mobilization of resources, the development of the forces of production, the increase in the productivity of labor; the establishment of centralized political power, the formation of national identities; the proliferation or rights of political participation, urbanization as well as the secularization of values and norms. He argues that the theory of modernization springs from Weber's problem of modernity, but then elaborates it with tools of social-scientific functionalism.

> The theory of modernization performs two abstractions on Weber's concept of modernity. It dissolves 'modernity' from its modern European origins and stylizes it into spatio-temporally neutral model for processes of social development in general. Furthermore, it breaks the internal connections between modernity and the historical context of Western rationalism, so that processes of modernization can no longer be conceived of as rationalization, as the historical objectification of rational structures (Habermas 1996, 338).

But incidentally, this is exactly the opposite of what those who are appropriating Weber's modernity are clamoring for; rationalization as the main agenda for modernization. If the postcolonial project of development through modernization is to find an accommodating theoretical home, it may well have to part company with Habermas and look at Charles Taylor. Habermas, the European, seem to be jealously restricting *modernity* away from its non-European variants, while Charles Taylor from postcolonial Quebec will welcome the appropriation of modernity and even talk of "alternative modernities." Charles Taylor argues that nationalism as a product of modernity and experienced differently at various places suggests that modernity is not a single wave that happened to only one particular region of the world. Some of the defining features of modernity, including the emergence of market-industrial economy and an established bureaucracy which combine to threaten traditional culture require that people re-articulate new forms of engagement to ensure successful transition:

> a successful transition involves a people finding resources in their traditional culture to take on the new practices. In this sense, modernity is not a single wave. It would be better to speak of alternative modernities, as the cultures that emerged in the world to carry the institutional changes turn out to differ in important ways from each other. Thus a Japanese modernity, an Indian modernity and various modulations of Islamic modernity will probably enter alongside the gamut of Western societies, which are also far from being totally uniform" (Taylor 1999, 233).

Thus Charles Taylor makes us comfortable to talk of the modernizing process as one of appropriation.

A universalist modernist discourse has been criticized by African scholars as an untenable articulation. The universalization of modernist discourse, which masquerades as development for Africa, according to Nyamnjoh (1997, 196) "entails self-denial, self-evacuation, or self-devaluation, and the glorification of everything western." Such an outlook

tends to mistake the globalization of capitalism for development. When such a discourse informs policy, it results in large chunk of the populace being circled out and marginalized leading to their disillusionment about the role of the state, the meaning of nation-building, and the illusive idea called development. Rather a more reflexive approach to modernity is what is required.

African Philosopher Kwame Gyekye (1997) puts it quite simply and rightly that postcoloniality is not a project aimed at abandoning the entire corpus of colonial heritage because some features and elements of the colonial heritage are, by the colonized own reckoning, worthwhile for their cultural and intellectual development. The postcolonial condition therefore allows the voluntary adoption or perpetration of some aspects of the colonial heritage, including the nation-state as a social formation. But the main point of his argument is for the adoption of rationalist epistemology and practice (technology) from the West. That is appropriating Weber's modernity. Gyekye (1997, 28) points out that while Africans were not without an empirically epistemic outlook (a pre-condition for modernism) their allegedly incurably religious nature soon became dominant. "Empirical causality, which asks what- and how- questions, too quickly gave way to agentive causation, which asks who- and why- questions." Obviously one gets hesitant and apprehensive about Gyekye's framing of Africans along colonial stereotypes. But the main thrust of his argument still makes sense in partly accounting for the justification for the adoption of rationalist epistemology.

If a child's blood is full of malaria parasites and records an abnormally high temperature and the mother decides to seek spiritual support and not medical/herbal remedies, then something must be wrong with the mother. The prevalence of this Ghanaian condition has been admitted in official development planning thinking where major constraints to the low level of technology in the country has been attributed to local culture. According to the national planners, inadequate and low patronage of the scientific and technological method (read rationality) is because "superstitious beliefs and practices abound in Ghana" (*Ghana-Vision 2020* 1997, 234). Gyekye (1997, 28) will therefore push forward his argument: "It is the lack of distinction between the purely material (natural) and the immaterial (supernatural, spiritual) that led to the postulation of agentive causation in all matters." Indigenous African culture did not have a commitment to empirical scientific knowledge, which is the basis for Western technology. Where they have local scientific inventions or discoveries, no attempts were made to investigate the scientific theories underpinning the technologies they developed. The arguments of Gyekye, a well-respected African philosopher, justify much of the work of the diffusion of innovation researchers that became popular in the 1960s to the 1980s in development communication. On a wider level, it justifies the ongoing practice of importing ICTs to wire African countries under the modernization project that the postcolonial nation-state undertakes. But for Gyekye (1997, 41), the issue is not *technological transfer* but rather the *appropriation of technology* which he views as "a perception or method, which features the active, adroit, and purposeful initiative and participation of the recipients in the pursuit and acquisition of a technology of foreign production."

What makes this approach of Gyekye interesting is the re-situation of the recipient of the technology with subjectivity. In much of the discussion about innovation diffusion, what we

see is emphasis on the *transfer* of technology and not the *appropriation* of technology by developing countries as if the borrowing process is equivalent to dumping. Some of the borrowing may be justifiably argued as dumping but how the people engage with the borrowed technology does not always go with the cultural logic of the source. For instance in some developing countries, including Ghana where tele-density is minimal, some communities try to use their FM radio stations to transmit personal messages between families located apart. Or the fact that radio and television in developing countries are considered instruments for national mobilization rather than just outlets for the operation of public spheres suggests that the borrowing community, despite the cultural baggage of the new technology, is able to transform it to serve its local needs. And a rather negative note, while computers are considered important tools at the workplace, in Ghana, for example, some offices seem to privilege the simulation of modernity that the presence of a computer appear to give to its surrounding. For instance, in 1996, after having read in the news that my former place of work GBC Radio Newsroom in Accra was computerized, I was rather surprised to realize on a visit that typewriters were still used to write out the news bulletins while the computers were sitting in the same room. No one could explain to me why. But a consultant working for GBC later told me the administration's idea of computers at the workplace was to be used in writing letters or as he chose to say it, "for them, computers are simply glorified typewriters."

# Communication Policy in Practice

This chapter brings together discussions on aspects on communication policy design and implementation in Ghana. It starts with broadcasting and subsequently dovetails into the recent developments in terms of policy shift towards communication and national development. It is argued that the practice of using radio to construct an expansive community was initiated by the colonial authorities and later continued by the early postcolonial governments. In formulating policy, even under the colonial regime, the humanist requirement of access and use was prioritized over the imperatives of the market. The introduction of structural adjustment program in 1983 brought about a shift of attitude towards the market as the driving force. This leads to what I describe as a new paradigm in communication policy in which national development is thought of without any significant role for the mass media. Such a development contrasts with the era of diffusion of innovation and the dominant paradigm in communication and development. However, the most recent policy instrument to be unveiled by the NPP government in 2003 suggests that such an evacuation of communication for development will be reversed to re-instate strong state role in promoting media access. But I argue that given the World Bank's position of anti-state involvement in media access, it remains to be seen if such a policy is implementable.

## Broadcasting Policy and Belonging

Communication policy during colonial and early colonial times seems to have been synonymous with broadcasting and press policy. Within the context of the dominant paradigm, the state considered radio and later television as the key media for national development after independence in many African countries. And there was a justification for such optimism in the potential of these media in the journey to modernity through the framework of the nation-state. In the following part of this study, I want to discuss how the state, until the inauguration of a new paradigm, used or sought to use radio and television in Ghana as part of the process

of national integration. Following the declaration of independence in 1957, the most daunting task facing the young nation-state was one of crisis of identity, for the simple fact that the state had to contend with multiple ethnolinguistic groups, each without a technology of writing. The nature of radio and television broadcasting and its ability to transcend the obstacle of non-literacy came in handy in this onerous task of national integration. It was to be the instrument for linking the rural and the urban, the elite and the masses as well as the meeting point for the various ethnolinguistic groups. But then, the quest to use radio to build a community, like the quest to claim a mandate of development was not only a postcolonial phenomenon, but also a project that the colonial state adopted earlier.

The humble beginnings of broadcasting in Ghana can be traced back to the colonial era. It was in 1935 that the then Governor of the Gold Coast (as Ghana was then called), Sir Arnold Hodson established the first wired radio distribution system in Accra as an extension of what was then called Empire Service from London. The Accra network, which was later named Station ZOY, started service on July 31st, 1935 to mark the silver jubilee of King George V of the British Empire (Ansah 1985, 1). Right from its inception the "magic" of sound broadcasting was envisaged as a tool for education by the colonial administration. In 1939, Governor Hodson wrote a letter to the colonial office in London asking for a transmitter to be installed in Accra to facilitate independent broadcasting to reach out to "members of the community in addition to teachers and school children whom it is intended to reach" (Hodson 1939). According to Ansah (1985, 3-5), program content was not educational in the narrow technical sense. It included news about the significance of the British Empire and government policies as well as "urgent propaganda." True to its intention of using the radio for educational purposes, the colonial administration by March 1939 had provided facilities for school children in 17 towns to listen to radio (Gold Coast Legislative Council Debates, March 1939, 9).

The start of the World War II in September 1939 triggered the expansion of radio for propaganda purposes. Initially rediffusion broadcast was targeted at the population within the Gold Coast. In order to increase its outreach beyond the colony to use radio for the cause of the Allies against Nazi Germany, a small 1.3 kW transmitter was installed in Accra. A new 5 kW transmitter was installed the following year and this enabled broadcast to reach out to neighboring German controlled Togoland as well as French West African territories (Head 1979, 45). Indeed, the war situation had a positive impact on the development of radio in the Gold Coast. British colonies were a very important source of soldiers and food supplies to assist in the prosecution of the war. It was during the war that the use of local languages was given attention in broadcasting (Ansah 1985, 6). The reception area of Station ZOY expanded to even East and South Africa as Governor Hodson had occasion to report to the Legislative Assembly in 1941:

> Broadcasting has had a most notable year and our service is actually of the greatest imperial and even international importance...Our transmissions are clearly received in our sister colonies of Nigeria and Sierra Leone, and a report of reception has even been made as far afield as Cape Town. In addition, we have had a report that our transmissions

have been heard by our soldiers in East Africa though a weak signal. (Legislative Council Debates Feb. 18, 1941, p.13).

Colony-wide radio broadcast experimentation started in 1952 as part of an out of school literacy project (Ansu-Kyeremeh 1992, 116). For until then, it was its reach of the African part of the British Empire that was of more significance to the colonial authorities. The technology for reaching out to the Gold Coast colony was a wired rediffusion system of broadcasting. The rediffusion system linked listeners through radio boxes that were rented out to subscribers. These boxes were connected by a wired system from regional and district relay stations. The subscriber could only listen to broadcats from the Gold Coast Radio and had no option of tuning in to other stations. This privilege of a captive audience was probably the very reason why successive governments, even self-rule ones, chose to maintain it despite the fact that it was a technological oddity that was too expensive to maintain. Head and Kugblenu quote the technical adviser to the colonial governor in 1943 as defending the rediffusion broadcast thus: "One of the greatest advantages of rediffusion is that the listener can receive only what is provided him by the rediffusion authorities and thus obnoxious propaganda is not available to him" (1978, 123). The rediffusion authority here was the colonial state and later after 1957, the postcolonial state. It was in the 1980s that this technology was phased out.

Between 1946 and 1953 station ZOY, as the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation was then called, was administered by the Pubic Relations Department of the colonial government. On the recommendation of a commission set up in 1953, the station was renamed Gold Coast Broadcasting Service (GCBS) and made a separate state department. In 1958, on the recommendation of yet another commission, appointed this time by the first self-rule government, to look into the development and growth of broadcasting, the GCBS was relocated to a new premises with improved infrastructure and a then state-of-the-art broadcasting equipment. The GCBS was also renamed the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation (GBC). From its introduction until 1967, the GBC was totally government funded (GBC at 60, 9). Subsequently it had to supplement government support with some commercialized operations. The introduction of commercialized operations was a rather gradual one, with the state retaining the monopoly over broadcasting.

Colonial broadcasting policies and that of postcolonial ones have common threads. The question of the role of the private sector was already a contentious one at a time when the objective of broadcasting was the building of Empire. For instance a Colonial Confidential Circular in 1948 was already making the case against privatization.

I regret that many Colonial Governments have found themselves compelled to deviate from it (state funding) owing to the difficult which they have experienced in finding the necessary finance to develop broadcasting as a public service, and owing to the willingness of commercial companies to develop broadcasting or rediffusion services on seemingly attractive terms. I refer below to the problem of finance, but I would here reiterate the view that even though commercial broadcasting may be subject to strict government control and may be operated with restraint and understanding by its sponsors, its operations are necessarily governed by the desire to earn a profit from the

community, and it must largely waste the educational and administrative opportunities which broadcasting offers.[1]

Going through the archives of this period, one comes across a long chain of correspondences between London and the colonies in 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 report, which was submitted in August 1949 by L. W. Turner of the BBC and F.A.W Byron of the Crown Agents for the Colonies recommended against the involvement of the private sector.

> We consider that wired broadcasting should remain a Government service in West Africa. The governments are not desirous, in the interests of the community, of such services being operated by private companies, nor would we recommend it. Extension of wired broadcasting services beyond the profitable densely populated pockets of the towns into the thinly populated, and consequently less profitable suburban areas or into the smaller towns, is less likely with private ownership than with a government service. We consider that any balance of revenue over expenditure should be ploughed back into broadcasting, which would not be the case under private ownership (Turner and Byron 1949, 18).

The report also recommended that the state should go beyond the provision of broadcasting facilities to the provision of reception opportunities. It called for the provision of community listening facilities arguing that:

> A large majority of these advanced people have incomes of not more than a shilling a day. Many who live in the bush are outside a currency area and where there is no money economy. Consequently there is little hope for this large section of the population buying cheap domestic receivers. But it is these people who can derive so much benefit from broadcasting and whom Governments are anxious to help (Turner and Byron 1949, 19).

The ideas and arguments of non-privatization and state-sponsored community listening were influenced largely by earlier experiments in India. The recommendations were largely accepted and circulars issued to the colonial governors in Gold Coast (Ghana), Nigeria, and Gambia for their implementation. What is significant here is the fact that the welfare of the people was raised as a matter for the Empire. Their integration into the older form of community (Empire) was the basis for the policy initiatives on broadcasting.

The international reach of the broadcasting infrastructure, developed by the colonialists for their imperialist expansion was later to come in handy for the first self-rule government after Ghana's political independence. The government of Kwame Nkrumah used the developed

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[1]   Colonial Office Confidential Circular No. 96840/48 "Broadcasting in the Colonies" dated 14th May 1948. National Archives of Ghana, Accra.

broadcasting infrastructure to wage an anti-colonial campaign to help liberate the remaining African countries under foreign domination. In 1961, the GBC network was expanded to include an External Service department purposely targeted at other African countries still under British, French and Portuguese domination. Thus French, Hausa, Swahili, Arabic as well as Portuguese were used in addition to English (Ansah 1985, 8).

The same question of avoiding the privatization of broadcasting that had dogged the colonial authorities was to be raised again by the first postcolonial state of Ghana. Thus when in 1965 President Nkrumah inaugurated Ghana Television, he would state, "Ghana's Television will be used to supplement our educational programme and foster a lively interest in the world around us. It will not cater for cheap entertainment nor commercialism. Its paramount object will be education in the broadest and purest sense." In that same speech, Nkrumah talked of the role of television in the nation-state project as one for "the education and edification, the enjoyment and entertainment of our people…" and that ensuring that television broadcasts reached every citizen was the responsibility of government (Nkrumah 1965).

Up until 1994 when private radio broadcasting was allowed in the country, the postcolonial state had always justified the monopoly of the airwaves on nationalist terms. The instruments of broadcasting were seen as part of the resources towards the realization of the nation-building project, and the reasons for the choice of broadcasting among the existing media, were not different from the reasons the Swiss used as already discussed when I made reference to Deutsch (1966) and his social mobilization theory. However, it should be added that the justification for the state monopoly was not wholly accurate since controlling the airwaves has always been part of basis of the legitimacy of the state. However, the linguistic flexibility of the technology was the source of attraction. Thus post-independent national communication policy in Ghana was to be synonymous with language and broadcasting policy (Ansah 1986).

Ghana has an estimated 44 language groups (Ansah 1986, 61). The MacBride Commission puts the number of languages at 56 (UNESCO 1980, 49), but some other sources put the figure at about 100[2]. Out of these only six were used on national radio until the introduction of FM broadcasting in the 1970s. These privileged six languages are Akan, Dagbani, Ewe, Ga, Nzema and Hausa. According to Ansah the total number of native speakers of all these six languages used on national radio accounts for about 75 percent of the national population (Ansah 1986, 49). The increasing use of FM radios in the country has contributed greatly towards a broader national coverage. For instance, before the establishment of the URA Radio at Bolgatanga in the then Upper Region (now divided into Upper East and Upper West regions), the people of this area, comprising some seven distinct ethnic groups were not represented on national radio. Now the URA Radio broadcasts to the two regions in English and six languages of the area.

Ansah (1985) has pointed out that Ghana's quest for symbols to mediate national consciousness among the various constituencies was solved with the creation of national

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[2]   http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/tribes/

institutions including for radio broadcasting. By its mere existence, GBC became a symbol by which the people could identity with. In addition, the state used the medium to mobilize the people for the task of development (1985, 21). The integrative function of broadcasting in Ghana is underscored by the fact that the institution has served as a tool for giving legitimacy to the state by facilitating familiarity with national institutions and policy objectives. Not too different from the colonial state's objectives as it also saw radio as an instrument to create a unity of thought among the people. Well, here it was for the Empire and not the Nation, though.

For instance, J.K Asare, whose job it was to coordinate policy at the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in the first postcolonial government would state the basis of policy thus:

> Broadcasting has a very real and important role to play in the reconstruction of nations that have in recent times gained their independence. These countries have to bridge the gap between them and the so-called developed countries in a matter of years rather than centuries or even decades. There is no time to be lost. The standard of living of the people has got to be raised through the adoption of better farming methods as well as the establishment of suitable industries. The advantages of adopting better farming and fishing methods should be planted firmly in the minds of the people and they should be persuaded to adopt the more scientific methods where these are found to be superior to traditional ones" (Asare 1964, 1).

If radio was considered such an instrument for national integration, Paul Ansah points out that from 1957 to 1985, at least, the medium was an instrument for inter-elite communication with the majority of the people whom it targeted being mere passive observers. Radio was "considered the exclusive preserve of the political elite who use(d) it to communicate with one another and to issue instructions to the lesser mortals in the community" (1985, 22).

Such a paternalistic posture of the elite has been reduced with the liberalization of the airwaves in Ghana, and the subsequent onset of private broadcasting. But if the early postcolonial era of broadcasting was characterized by elite to elite communication the current media scene in Ghana suggests that it is now an intra-urban affair with marginal participation from non-city dwellers. See Table 1 and Table 2 on pages 136 and 137 for the latest national distribution of radio and television. Much has not changed.

Another important differentiation between the early broadcasting and the current environment is that national integration was mistaken for "synchronization and homogenization of thought." Opposition views were easily branded as subversive and often attracted severe penalty. In pursuit of a homogenized nation, broadcasting was a virtual instrument of state. For instance the instrument of incorporation (L.I 472, 1965) that defined the administration of GBC gave the president the power to appoint and dismiss the governing board of the media organization. The president had the exclusive power to determine the length of time in office of the board and its chairman, while the legal instrument also empowered the Minister of Information to "give directions generally to the Corporation and the Corporation shall be bound to comply with such directions." The power invested on the president to dismiss the

governing body of GBC was premised on the idea that "if he is satisfied that it is in the national interest to do so."

Such an authoritarian conception of "national interest" and broadcasting was at the early days of the nation-state considered acceptable, albeit it was fundamentally flawed. It was acceptable and tolerable because the conception of the nation, and what it ought to be in the process of becoming was mistakenly presumed to be one of promoting a synchronization and homogenization of thought. Nkrumah's thinking was along these lines when he directed in 1965 that all the three radio networks across the country be "converted into a single network, and all our national transmitters will carry the same programmes" (Nkrumah 1965). Broadcasting policy in the early years of Ghana was always articulated around the idea of national unity, understood as lack of diversity of thought. Just two years after the birth of Ghana, the then Minister of Education and Information, Mr. Kofi Baako briefing parliament about recent acquisition of new transmitters would defend government policy against regional programming in the following terms:

> I wish to stress that these new transmitters will relay the national programmes and there is no intention whatever of initiating regional programmes…The radio is a great unifying agency in our country. Through it people all over Ghana can appreciate that we are all the same nation with the same ideas and aspirations…Ghana is a unity and in this small country there is no room for regional and tribal groups, each emphasizing their own differences from the rest of the country at the expense of national unity (quoted in Ansah 1985, 33).

This thinking about media and nation has been drastically revised in current policy practice with the national constitution categorically insulating the state media from state control and also guaranteeing the freedom of diversity of thought as well as thinking of Ghana as a mosaic rather than the one big village the national pioneers articulated Ghanaian nation-ness. But it comes at a price. Not only is the state supposed to evacuate the business of interfering in the administration of the state media, it has also abandoned the idea of helping to increase access to vulnerable groups who by no means a minority, within the body politic. Does that suggest that Ghana has come of age? The answer is both yes and no. Yes, because not only is regional programming no more proscribed by state policy, it is actually encouraged with the liberalization of the airwaves and the institutionalization of freedom of the press. Policy on national development is no longer articulated as what I would describe as compulsory inclusion into a monolithic national community. No, because policy has evacuated the responsibility of democratizing access to media and placed the responsibility on the free market. Such an early exit of the state is not on its own volition. As I will be arguing further, this new paradigm of state withdrawal coincides with a redefinition of the state as a supervisor of market operation in an economy where the project of transition from subject to citizen is hardly completed.

In a way, the Ghanaian experience is similar to that of early Canada, not just because of the two countries' common heritage of British imperialism, but also in the mode of bringing

their imagined communities into being. Marc Raboy points out that Canadian nationalism was dominated by "urban, English speaking central Canadians. French Canadians, rural Canadians, those in outlying regions, labour, women and farmers were at best marginal to its concerns, except insofar as their support was needed" (1990, 18). Against this backdrop, the Anglo elite sought to use radio as a unifying force through a public service system, with Quebec nationalist opposition and preference for broadcasting as a localized enterprise. Apart from using radio for the requirements of nation building in Canada, broadcasting was also articulated as an instrument for education. At the same time that the colonial administration was deploying radio in the Gold Coast to create a unity of thought and promote mass education, key figures in policy debates in Canada were pressing for the use of radio for public education against the demands of the private sector to allow unfettered commercial operations (Raboy 1990, 39). For instance, Graham Spry would argue "Broadcasting, primarily is an instrument of education in its widest significance, raging from play to learning, from recreation to cultivation of public opinion, and it concerns and influences not any single element in the community, but the community as a whole" (quoted in Raboy 1990, 36). Spry was making this statement in 1931. A year later, Prime Minister Bennet will re-state the place of radio in Canada as an instrument in nation building and as an instrument for education. For a country that was figuring out its identity as not British and not American, radio came in handy as the technology that was to teach and bind the community.

The debate in Canada, the struggle to keep the state's role in broadcasting in the form of public service is still going on even though, compared to Ghana, one can make a relative argument that the nation building project has been done. But the debate on Ghana as to the direction of broadcasting is almost done while the nation building project is by no means accomplished. This irony is worth noting as we reflect on the consequences of SAP policies in developing economies such as Ghana.

In view of the above historical record of colonial involvement in the application of communication technology for the development of the colonies, where do we situate the common assumption in the literature of development communication that tend to link the application of communication to development only in the postcolonial era? The colonial state was not building a nation-state in the postcolonial sense as such, but it articulated its policy in the same frame that the postcolonial state was to adopt. If we abandon the rhetorical garb of nationalism that the postcolonial state wears, are we going to unearth a development communication theory of colonial and postcolonial continuities?

My argument is that the postcolonial state was primarily in the business of establishing a certain regime of production. It turns out that that regime of production needed a certain political arrangement that would be suitable. And the idea of nation-state turned out to be appropriate. In the light of Mamdani's argument that the project was to transform subjects into citizens we can view the nation-state framework as a political promise. But if we think of the task of modernization as first an economic one, that was to incorporate the former colonial subjects into a certain regime of economic production, which is from subjects to consumers, we will hardly be able to make a difference between colonial and postcolonial

(dis)continuities. Another observation that we can pull out of this discussion so far is that the dream of building a nation through the instrumentality of communication technologies does not appear to be a feasible end for developing countries such as Ghana. When countries such as Canada, the US and other postcolonial communities that fashioned nation-states out of diverse groups with a high communication policy successfully achieved the feat at a conjuncture when the global environment was not predatorily against their humbly stated goals. The African experience is an amazing fast track development that went through all the "stages of life" but within a rather brief life span such that it can be said of the nation-state that it achieved old age without the benefit of adult life. Ayi Kwei Armah's novel *The Beautyful Ones Are Not Yet Born* celebrates this very trajectory of the Ghanaian nation-state.

To recap, from the colonial state to the early postcolonial state and the contemporary one, there has been a shift from state dominance and monopoly to partial commercialization of state operations of radio to predisposition for the dominance of the private sector. This shift has occurred within the period of four decades. This shift of the attitude of the state towards communication can be examined from the prism of the literature on development communication. The shifts coincide with the paradigm shifts in the development communication literature, which I reviewed earlier.


## The New Communication Policy Paradigm

In the postcolonial development history of Ghana, one of the most important policy initiatives was the setting up of the National Development Planning Commission (NDPC) in April 1990. It was set up to co-ordinate the new national planning effort and to advise the president on development planning policies and strategies. Ultimately, it was to prepare a comprehensive national development plan that would map out the country's strategic direction for the next 25 years starting from 1996. The national development plan was initially called National Development Policy Framework and later renamed: Ghana-Vision 2020. According to this vision, the main development goal was to transform Ghana from a poor underdeveloped low-income country that it is now, into a vibrant and prosperous middle-income country within a generation.

To make the work of the commission a tenured one, the NDPC was enshrined in the 1992 constitution as article 86 and given legal basis by parliament under the NDPC Act of 1999. The idea of national planning supported by both the constitution and an Act of Parliament in an era where market thinking dominated development policy is quite a curious development. As it is generally understood in the development literature, *national development planning* is a deliberate effort to identify the most appropriate means and measures for achieving specific development objectives. It is the conscious effort, often led by the state, to influence, direct and sometimes, control changes in the principal economic variables that determine economic development (Martinussen 1999). The arguments in favor of deliberate state intervention into the economy of developing countries dates back to the 1950s. Generally the argument has

been that market mechanisms are simply not capable of handling certain distributive tasks in the economy such as in the area of public goods like electricity, gas and water supply (as well as telephony, until recently).

The argument in favor of deliberate state intervention in the economy by way of planning can be stated thus:

1. That individual preferences and decisions regarding investment do not necessarily lead to an optimum allocation and development, promoting utilization of the scarce resources of society.
2. That the market mechanisms do not function properly in the less developed countries.
3. That where the market mechanisms function well, they do not lead to changes and development, but may simply reproduce equilibrium at a rather low level (Meier 1989; Roth 1987; Martinussen 1999).

In the recent Ghanaian case, the World Bank, probably the most significant policy actor in the national economy, initially saw the setting up of the NDPC as a strange development. According to Ghanaian political economist, Eboe Hutchful, the World Bank, which had supported Ghana in almost a decade of SAP was rather skeptical about the importance of the NDPC in the scheme of things. "…to the World Bank, a planning organ, given Ghana's history, raised nightmarish visions of inefficient bureaucratic intervention and controls even before free market mechanisms had had a chance to consolidate themselves" (Hutchful 2002, 112). The idea of setting up a national development planning agency in Ghana dates back to 1987 and its realization was closely associated with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) rather than the more intrusive World Bank and the IMF, which were gaining control over the economy and the policy process. Indeed the World Bank at one point saw the UNDP as a rival in an attempt to influence the course of direction of Ghana's development (Hutchful 2002). The setting up of the NDPC is an instance of institutional rivalry in influencing the articulation of national development policy in a postcolony. During interviews I conducted with some current and former staff of the NDPC as well as some officials from the Ministry of Finance, I found out that both the idea of national development planning and the resources to realize it in the form of institutional setup, were directly as a result of the UNDP's efforts.[3] Meanwhile, the World Bank, then with its doctrine of free market and anti-planning considered the UNDP's influence on the Ghanaian State an unhealthy one. Indeed, Hutchful (2002, 112) said the World Bank was jealous of what it may have considered a coup by the UNDP. The NDPC by its mere existence contradicted the World Bank's push for the downsizing of government. Yet the constitutionality of this development planning agency made it difficult for the bank to

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[3]   A regular feature of most of the people I interviewed during my research in Ghana was the request for anonymity. Past governments and the current one often dismiss bureaucrats without any justification. Consequently, bureaucrats are not comfortable with speaking in their official or personal capacities on issues that have political implications since that could spell their doom when it comes to job security. Thus, I had to contend with promising to keep their identities anonymous.

push the Ghanaian state to scrap it. So the Bank's next strategy was to co-opt the *Ghana-Vision 2020* and appropriate its language as speaking what the Bank has been doing all along. The NDPC had set the frame for discourse on national development. Its mere existence already suggested that the state had admitted to the relevance of development planning and not just the speeding up of privatization as development policy. But as I will show later, the NDPC's capacity as a state actor would be drastically reduced by the collective efforts of the Bretton Woods institutions to redefine the role of the state.

After a district and region wide consultation and contribution, the NDPC produced its 292 page national plan called *Ghana-Vision 2020: the First Step 1996 to 2000*. This first five-year plan was approved by parliament in November 1995 after the president made the presentation. The parliamentary floor debates were combined with parliamentary consultations with stakeholders in the economy. *Ghana-Vision 2020* is not the first development plan in postcolonial Ghanaian history. But it does have certain unique features. In the first place, its attempt to collate views and inputs nationwide was unprecedented. According to the *Ghana-Vision 2020* document, the national development plan was formulated following the co-ordination of sector plans from 20 Ministries, government departments and agencies. Ghana is divided in 110 administrative districts as local governments. Each of these districts links up to central government through 10 Regional Coordinating Councils (RCC). In the formulation of *Ghana-Vision 2020*, each of the 10 RCCs submitted harmonized reports of local government development plans from districts within their jurisdiction to the NDPC. These regionally coordinated plans were further harmonized and coordinated with the sector plans from the sector Ministries. The NDPC set up six Cross-Sectoral Planning Groups (CSPG) to handle the various issues raised from the local government level up to the sector ministerial level. These six CSPG were:

- Macro economics and financing
- Production and private sector development
- Human development
- Infrastructure and spatial development
- Rural and urban development
- Enabling Environment

The members of the C.S.P.Gs composed of public-sector policy makers, private consultants, academic dons, Science and technology researchers, business executives, officers from District Assemblies and R.C.Cs and representatives of farmers, fishermen and unionized workers organizations (*Ghana-Vision 2020*).

The second unique feature of the development plan was that it was the first of its kind in the history of Ghana to receive comprehensive input outside the confines of the government planning machinery. The plan was circulated among the donor community and "benefited from critical comments from distinguished Ghanaians and professionals working in Ghana and overseas" (*Ghana-Vision 2020* 1997, viii). In all some 174 experts drawn from the government institutions, universities and think tanks, politicians and consultants contributed to this plan.

## Development without Mass Media

Despite this impressive collection of expertise and stakeholders in national development, nowhere does the development plan mention the role of mass media in national development. No provisions are made for the extension of mass media facilities to rural areas that still have not such taken fore-granted facilities such as radio and television. Given the central place of mass media in discussions about development starting from the 1960s one would expect that *Ghana-Vision 2020* would make provisions for its use. Let us remember that it was the Gold Coast colonial administration that first articulated the need to use the mass media, radio broadcasting in particular, to reach out to the people and convey health, agricultural and political messages to improve their lives. In the postcolonial period, the very conditions that warranted the use of the media to extend the reach of the state have still not been resolved. The framers of the *Ghana-Vision 2020* acknowledge the prevalence of widespread poverty, illiteracy and lack of basic information that could change the lives of people especially the rural folk. Indeed, it is the very reasons they articulated as a foundation for the whole exercise in development planning. Thus, throughout the document, reference is regularly made to this fact.

For instance, basing its calculations on the research done by the Ghana Statistical Service published as *Ghana Living Standards Survey*, the *Ghana-Vision 2020* plan reports that as recent as 1992, about 31% of the total Ghanaian population had expenditures below the poverty line qualifying them as poor or very poor. World Bank classification of poverty define the "upper poverty line" as people earning a dollar or less a day and "extreme poverty line" as those earning 75 cents or less (World Bank 2000, 8). About 50% of females in the country lack formal education and of the other 50% that have experienced it, only 3% make it beyond secondary (high) school. Adult literacy among females is 42%. Males are better of with 64% literacy rate. With 81% of women not practicing any form of contraception fertility rate among women aged15 to 49 is 5.5 children per woman (*Ghana-Vision 2020* 1997, 79; World Bank 2000, 13). Malnutrition is prevalent with about 50% of women of childbearing age suffering from iron-deficiency anemia. And according *Ghana-Vision 2020,* "lack of knowledge regarding the food and nutritional needs of the household members" (1997, 85) is one of the causes.

While we may contest the way poverty is problematized with the above statistical categories, in the interim, it offers as a window into the backdrop against which the national development policy is being formulated. With such literacy levels for instance, why would a national development plan depart from the previous policy paradigm of deliberate proactive state participation in business of mass media, at least for rural mass communication? For the rural sectors of most of Africa, not excluding Ghana, the issue is not between private or public/state media, but between public/state media or no media at all (UNESCO 1980).

The two tables below give a quick view of the state of the electronic Media in Ghana. In compiling this table, I combined NCA sources, which were however not updated for a little over a year, with other official and unofficial sources. The population percentages are worked out from the 2000 population census report issued by the Ghana Statistical Services. Ghana

has ten administrative regions with Greater Accra being the region with the national capital Accra. Greater Accra has a small rural and a large urban population. Ashanti region is the second most urbanized region with Kumasi as its capital with Western being the next most urbanized region. Northern, Upper East and Upper West are the northernmost regions of the country with predominantly large rural settlements. The state-owned broadcasting corporation, GBC owns at least one FM station in each of the ten regions and uses these stations to network with its two short-wave radio broadcasting stations in Accra that has more than 90 percent coverage of the entire country. Apart from Accra, where GBC has two FM stations, Ebono FM and Uniiq FM, the other region that has a disproportionate number of GBC FM stations is Central Region. The region has three GBC FM stations with two university campus FM stations. Making it the region with the highest number of non-private stations in the country.

The process of becoming a nation-state under postcolonial circumstances is a project of extending civil society to the hitherto subject (Mamdani 1996). It is a project in the democratization of the material conditions for participation in the new form of (imagined) community that serves as the platform for attempting an entry into modernity. As already discussed, the communicative infrastructure has always been considered the site of this extension of a new environment for the nationalist imagination (Anderson 1991; Carey 1981; Martin-Barbero 1993). Whether in the early North American experience, the later Asian experience or the recent African attempts, the postcolonial experience has been that an active state constructs the national community through media extension, if it chooses to do it peacefully. Why then does recent policy initiatives in Ghana suggest a different scenario?

**Table 1.** The distribution of FM radio stations in Ghana as at June 2002. Population figures are that of 2000. The national population is 18,412,247.

| REGION | Population in Percentage of National | NUMBER OF FM STATIONS | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | FM Licenses Issued | On Air | Not On Air |
| Greater Accra | 15.8 | 17 | 14 | 3 |
| Ashanti | 17.3 | 12 | 9 | 3 |
| Western | 10.0 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Central | 8.6 | 6 | 6 | 0 |
| Eastern | 11.5 | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| Brong Ahafo | 9.9 | 8 | 8 | 0 |
| Upper West | 3.1 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| Upper East | 5.0 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| Volta | 8.8 | 3 | 3 | 0 |
| Northern | 10.1 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| NATIONAL TOTAL | 100 | 59 | 50 | 9 |

**Table 2.** The distribution of TV stations in the country. The national population is 18,412,247. Only three urban regions have TV stations. The remaining seven, being predominantly rural, do not have any so they are not listed.

| REGION | Population in % of National | NUMBER OF TV STATIONS | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | TV Licenses Issued | Operational | Non-Operational |
| Greater Accra | 15.8 | 10 | 6 | 4 |
| Ashanti | 17.3 | 5 | 4 | 1 |
| Western | 10.0 | 2 | 2 | 0 |
| NATIONAL TOTAL | 43.1 | 17 | 12 | 5 |

To put this neglect of the mass media dimension into perspective, it will be relevant to note that the particular conjuncture around which the idea of forming the NDPC and the subsequent formulation of a national development framework for 25 years and a national development plan for five years coincided with the period of ferment in national discourse on media freedom, liberalization and privatization in Ghana. State involvement and control of mass media in Ghana is often treated with apprehension, and justifiably so. From the colonial state to its postcolonial versions, at least up to the coming into force of the Fourth Republican Constitution in 1992, the mobilization of the media for development purposes was combined with various forms of abuse of civil liberties. Indeed, this abuse of development communication by dictatorial regimes in developing countries has earned it its negative connotation, making any sort of statist intervention in the production or distribution of content a suspicious venture.

It is against this background of distrust of the state that the 1992 Constitution was crafted. A whole chapter was devoted to "Freedom and Independence of the Media". Under this chapter, elaborate provisions were made first to insulate the right to publish and publication from state control. This was achieved by entrenched provisions proscribing the state from licensing speech and publication. Entrenched provisions in the constitution require approval at a national referendum of 75% votes before it can be amended. Thus, the freedom of the media (that is freedom from) is generally secured. The second set of provisions under this chapter of the constitution intended to insulate the state-owned media from the ruling government. This was achieved through the setting up of the National Media Commission (NMC). The 15-member NMC is so constituted to make it rather difficult for any government to have undue influence over its decisions. Ten of the members are nominated by civil society organizations including media professional associations. The parliament nominates three while the president nominates the remaining two. The 15 members choose their own chairman. The NMC has the power to appoint Chief Executive Officers of State-Owned media and their board of governing directors. The board of governing directors in turn appoints

Editors in consultation with the Public Services Commission (Ghana Constitution 1992, Chapter 12).

A careful study of the constitutional provisions on the media reveals that the framers of the constitution were influenced by the principles of "negative freedoms" more than by "positive freedoms". That is the freedom from as opposed to freedom to. Meanwhile the idea of positive freedom was not alien to the framers of the constitution. They were obviously influenced by the principles of positive freedom in the writing of chapter six of the constitution: "The Directive Principles of State Policy" in which article 36 explicitly enjoins the state to be proactive in the development of the private sector and free market economy (Constitution of Ghana 1992, Chapter 6).

While the constitution is not proactive in the issue of state involvement in the democratization of media access across the country, it does not prevent it from embarking on such a mission. One cannot therefore say that the non-problematization of media access in the Ghana-Vision 2020 was due to the elaborate constitutional provisions on the relation between the state and media. In my interactions with some staff of the NDPC, the mass media question was dismissed as not the responsibility of the state. The allusion was to the fact that there are constitutional provisions on how the state should handle the media. More so, reference was made to the fact that the ideas contained in the Ghana-Vision 2020 document as development needs of the country were as a result of a synthesizing of explicitly stated needs from the districts, through the RCCs to the sector ministries and ultimately to the NDPC.

The only two mass media organizations currently operating in the country with public service objectives are state owned. The first one is the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, which operates Ghana Television and, GBC Radio One and Radio Two and a network of FM stations across the country. The second one is the Ghana News Agency (GNA), which operates as a newsgathering establishment with media houses as its clientele. As part of the ongoing SAP, the World Bank has consistently pressurized the government to privatize these two organizations. The push to commercialize the operations of GBC and GNA has been considered the first step towards this state divestiture from the business of mass media. At a World Bank sponsored seminar on "the Re-invention of Government" on March 19, 1999 at Akosombo in the Eastern Region of Ghana, the then Minister of Communication, Mr. John Mahama was categorical in stating his government's commitment to the privatization of these two media organizations. According to the minister, government would do better without having to fund the operations of these media organizations.

But an academic, Dr. Cletus Doduonoo of the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration contested the minister and his government's position, and pointed out the government's arguments for divesting itself of the two media organizations are shallow. His argument was that the rush to privatize institutions without looking into their history and purpose for the nation-state was ill advised. "Are we saying money should overrule social services? And how will a citizen of Bawku[4] hear anything about his town if GNA is to focus on

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[4]    A remote town in the north-eastern part of Ghana

the search for money?...We are rushing into something we do not know yet."[5] Doduonoo's opinion represents the sentiments of the nationalists who have always tried to remind the postcolonial state of its reason for being. Iliasu Adam, a GNA journalist in the northern Ghanaian town of Tamale told me for the 13 years he has been reporting news from the northern Ghana, the priority has always been fostering national cohesion of what is otherwise a cocktail of cultural groups. His view was that when the operations of GNA and GBC are commercialized, some cultural communities are likely to be forgotten by the rest of the country because they will hardly ever attract any profit-oriented news organization.[6]

My discussions with Illiasu Adam reminds me of Tony Barnett's argument that, the nation-state is an uneasy balance of groups be it ethnic or class identities, and that the level of unease and the issues, which may serve to produce legitimation crisis, will depend on the specific history of the state. In Africa, as in the Middle East, Asia and Latin America, legitimacy is ultimately derived from the politics of development (Barnett 1997, 33). With a regime of extensive commodification of all aspects of the economy including media access with a population of 30% earning less than a dollar a day, will the postcolonial state face a crisis of legitimation? This is not a question that can easily be answered.

## Information for a Fortified State

*Ghana-Vision 2020* is not totally silent on the issue of information for national development. It avoids the subject of communication for development and rather makes provisions for "Security and Information for National Development" (*Ghana-Vision 2020*, 1997, 67). This shift from communication to information is not just about semantics. It is a deliberate re-articulation of the community in communication to information and is a familiar appropriation for digital capitalism. Under the sub-title "Development Thrust and Strategies for the Planned Period" *Ghana-Vision 2020* outlines five development themes under which the *Plan* will be carried out. The themes are human development, economic growth, rural development, urban development, with the last theme being an enabling environment. It is under the last theme that the subject of *information* is introduced as relevant to national development.

In outlining the place of information in development, the *Ghana-Vision 2020* document re-states the main agenda:

> Ghana's development agenda seeks to make the private sector the 'engine of economic growth' in the provision of most human needs (while the public sector or the government provides the enabling legal and administrative environment for private sector development) and to concentrate the entire national development effort on the individual Ghanaian. The development objectives of human-centred development and private-sector-led economic

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5    http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/printnews.php?ID=5653
6    Interview on June 14, 2002 at Tamale, northern Ghana.

growth, as envisioned in the *Plan*, have serious implications for information gathering and dissemination and security and peace (1997, 67).

Let us take a closer look at the way this development theme is presented. First no mention is made of *communication*. What we have is *information.* American communication theorist, James Carey (1997) does not hesitate to remind us that the shift from *communication* to *information* wrecks havoc on the bias of the concept of communication, which implies a communion or community. The reconceptualization of *communication* as *information* redefines the issue as one of transmission for the administrative purpose of control or economic purpose of commodification and not sharing and community. Once that shift occurs, the administrative and economic aspect resonates with neoliberal thinking. Information emphasizes individualism while communication reminds us of the fact of sharing in a community of symbols. Information resonates with privatization while communication emphasizes the fact of use-value. It is against this distinction that we should read the denial of communication and the preference of information as an ideological statement. It is therefore not surprising that the Plan implicates the state in development only in so far as it "provides the enabling legal and administrative environment for private-sector development". And then again, it is only the "individual" that is the focus of the national development effort.

The coupling of *security* with *information* in the articulation of national development already re-defines the role of communication in postcolonial national development as just an administrative and state security issue. Mobilize information for efficient administration and legal regime for the maintenance of peace for the private sector to deliver development, so to speak. This is a reductionist take on communication and national development. And when you define the role of communication as such in a development plan, it occludes the possibility of thinking of it in terms of democratizing access to communication as part of the enabling environment for development, which includes the fulfillment of the promise of citizenship and the nation.

Because of the way it reduces communication to information for administrative efficiency, when it discusses the national institutions to strengthen, the *Ghana-Vision 2020* does not mention any mass media. It lists, the Ghana Statistical Service, the NDPC, the Ministries of Health, Education, Interior and Finance as public institutions that must be supported to deliver information for the development needs of the country. The Plan claims that a new "information-flow regime" is expected in the country and there is therefore the need for fast processing of data by means of computers and other electronic media. Because of this, the Plan seeks to enhance both human and institutional capacity building. In view of this, it stipulates the following as medium-term information policy objectives:

I.   promoting the use of improved data storage and a retrieval management system;
II.  facilitating the availability and speedy provision of accurate information/data to public sector decision makers, private and public-sector researchers, print and electronic media houses, and the business community;
III. encourage the use of computers in all public institutions, schools, banks, libraries, research organizations and print shops;

IV.   creating proper and effective secured information registries/centres (including specialised libraries), manned by high calibre personnel;

V.   strengthening the human and institutional capacity of public-sector information/data institutions/departments/units at the national, regional and district levels.... (*Ghana Vision 2020* 1997, 69-70).

There would not have been any qualms if this list had included something to do with increasing access to media in the deprived communities. When I stated earlier that the choice of *information* over *communication* was an ideological statement, I meant it laid the foundation for a discourse on development that will shift from the need to increase TV, radio and other mass media access in deprived areas of the country, which characterized earlier development planning regimes to a preference for the digital technologies of computers. The NDPC, as it appears, has inaugurated a new development-planning regime that is premised on the rhetoric of digital capitalism.

The tendency to link information to national security is not unique with the Ghana-Vision 2020. As already stated, previous government had already initiated that process by articulating development as national security via information control. The military government of Kutu Acheampong (1972 to 1977) defined the control of information a national security issue. Even with its control of all mass media, Acheampong's Supreme Military Council government set up the National Frequency Registration and Control Board (NFRCB) as a national security apparatus with SMC Decree 71 in 1977. The feeling of the state as insecure under uncontrolled media environment had a justification. Ghana, like many other African countries, has experienced more change of government through the gun than through the ballot box. The national media infrastructure, especially radio, tends to be the most strategic institution to capture during the process of making a coup. Thus the Public Service Radio and TV network of GBC were always considered national security apparatus. The premises of GBC were heavily fortified with a 24-hour strong military presence. All workers of GBC were required to go through a security clearance before they were appointed.[7] While the 1992 constitution does not cast GBC as a security apparatus, it is still regarded by various governments as a security institution. The only difference is that, since 2000, there has been a change of guards from the military to the Police Service.

The NCA, which replaced the N.F.R.C.B. is also treated as a national security institution, though its premises are not heavily guarded as that of GBC. During the initial debates in parliament on the bill establishing the NCA, there were certain informed representations made to the legislature that advised that the National Media Commission be given responsibility for frequency regulation in view of article 162 and 163, which proscribes any form of licensing media. The NCA, it was argued would be acting unconstitutionally if allowed to have the last word on who is qualified to set-up a broadcasting station[8]. But once again the idea of public security was invoked to justify the NCA's regulatory empowerment. For in the same

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7   I had to go through the security screening system at the Police Headquarters before I was appointed a journalist at GBC in 1992.

8   Parliamentary Debates: Official Report Friday, 9th December 1994 col. 291

chapter of the constitution, it states in article 164: "The provisions of the article 162 and 163 of this Constitution are subject to laws that are reasonably required in the interest of national security, public order, public morality and for the purpose of protecting the reputations, rights and freedoms of other persons." All members who contributed in defending the security option during the four days of debate on the second reading of the bill quoted this portion of the constitution to justify their over conscious security mindset. None of them ventured to continue to the next article which clearly stated that: "For the avoidance of doubt, the provisions of this chapter shall not be taken to limit the enjoyment of any of the fundamental human rights guaranteed under Chapter 5 of this constitution" (*Constitution of Ghana* 1992, Chapter 12: 165)

My argument is that the framing of state-owned broadcasting as security institution for most of Ghana's post-independence life in turn influenced the designers of the Ghana-Vision 2020 to think of information within the parameters of national security and not communication access for development. It also reflects the fragile nature of the postcolonial state. The state's quest for legitimacy is not only guaranteed by the fact of victory at the ballot box, but by deliberate security arrangements including the national communication infrastructure positioned as part of the security of the state. Shortly after being declared president-elect in the December 2000 general elections, John Kufour told a *Financial Times* journalist in an interview that his main priority was "securing the state." When he was asked to elaborate, he said: "What I mean by securing the state is ensuring that the security agencies of state are firmly in place and are loyal to the new government and to the state as a whole, so there is no… upset in the state machinery."[9] For a country that has spent most of its 45 years under five different military regimes, such a caution is justified. But at the same time, it shows the concerns of the state as one of security more than development. Thus a coupling of information with security can be looked at from this perspective. But the long-term issue of legitimacy will be ultimately secured through the delivery of what the people consider to be development and not a fortified state apparatus.

## Redefining the Role of the State

The discussion so far suggests that there is an emerging new understanding about the role of communication in development. One of the motivations for this study was to look at the place of the state in the research on development communication. If the institutional agency of the state in development communication from the 1960s onwards was neglected by researchers, they may now have little opportunity to appreciate the instrumentality of the postcolonial state in the contemporary conjuncture. This is because there is something close to a paradigm shift from an active state to a diminished state, with the private sector assuming most of the developmental responsibilities of the state, development communication issues being inclusive.

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[9]   http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=12893

The denial of state responsibility for the democratization of media facilities in Ghana is part of a rather comprehensive attempt at redefining the role of the developmental state in the postcolony. At least this is a subject that has been specifically discussed at the board level of the World Bank (World Bank 2000b). A March 30, 2000 meeting of the board specifically framed its strategy around three themes one of which was changing the role of the state in Ghana. This implies both withdrawal from activities that the private sector can do better, as well as achieving sharp improvement in public service delivery (World Bank 2000b, 2). What is interesting is that the Bank articulates the rolling back of the state within a Ghana government plan to reduce poverty: "The overriding goal of the Government of Ghana's development Strategy for Poverty Reduction and the support of the World Bank group is to eliminate hard-core poverty. Within that broad goal, the proposed business strategy of the Bank Group would help the government to i) raise the growth rate of the economy; ii) redefine the role of the State; and iii) implement their strategy more effectively on the ground" (World Bank 2000b, 7).

A careful reading of the Bank's documents suggests that the Bank's agenda to roll back the state is often tangentially tied to Ghana government programs. For instance, articulating the rationale behind the rolling back of the state, it ties it to two Ghana government programs, The Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy and the *Ghana-Vision 2020*. The *Ghana-Vision 2020* does not explicitly state that the role of the state is being redefined. But the Bank puts it that its redefinition of the state to mean "less state" is premised on the *Ghana-Vision 2020*. It is a fraudulent articulation, which finds no resistance from the side of the Ghanaian State. And then goes on to say that: "it is the Bank staff's view that the main factor which has limited the disengagement of the state is lack of commitment by the top level of the Government to go very far" (World Bank 2000b, 12). The fact is that the idea of rolling back the state is a World Bank initiative, but it is presented as the postcolonial state's wish and initiative.

In the particular case of Ghana, the Bank pointed out that the state's involvement in the business of media and utilities is an indication of the "overextended" nature of public service. The bank defines the media and utilities as non-public goods and therefore conditions the future financial flows to the abandoning of these sectors (World Bank 2000b, 12). It argues that Ghana scores low marks on several indicators of the Bank because of what it terms as excessive state involvement in the economy. To reverse this trend, the Bank recommends, "commercializing Government operations." Who should replace the void? The private sector and Non-Governmental Organizations, the Bank recommends.

The labeling of media and utilities as non-public goods is a troubling re-articulation of the place of media in the nationalist project. This smacks of the worse form of economic fundamentalism. Even in most of the developed world where commodification of the economy is widespread and advanced, utilities such as water and some aspects of the media (very limited though) are still considered public goods with all the privileges of strong state regulation. According to the *Ghana-Vision 2020*, only about 56% of Ghanaians have access to reliable supplies of water. Only 39% of the rural segment of the population has access to safe drinking water. The development plan goes on to say:

The insufficient observance of hygienic practices in these areas as a result of an inadequate water supply contributes to the prevalence of water-borne diseases such as cholera in urban slums. In the rural areas, most communities rely on ponds and streams as their source of water, resulting in undue exposure to guinea-worm, bilharzias and other water-borne diseases. Poor access to water, in the both rural and urban areas, not only increase risk of morbidity and mortality, but also increases the drudgery of women and children, especially in poor households, since it is they who are assigned responsibility for the collection of water; hence the significance of water supply to the human development program (*Ghana-Vision 2020* 1997, 169).

Who should undertake the task of increasing access? The Ghanaian government says the state in collaboration with NGOs (*Ghana-Vision 2020*, p.171). The World Bank says private sector participation will improve access. Let us remember 30 % of the people cannot participate in a commodified environment because they earn less than a dollar a day. So the private sector will not border to increase water access to them. That is not important to the World Bank whose mission statement is to reduce poverty in the world. Whose idea wins in the water conflict in Ghana? One can confidently say it is the World Bank's. How? Well, it tied government commitment to privatize water as a condition for the disbursement of certain grants and loans (World Bank 2000). The Government of Ghana has given in despite protests from civil society organizations such as Integrated Social Development Center (ISODEC), which has been at the forefront of organizing the resistance movement called Coalition Against the Privatization of Water (CAP of Water). For Rudolph Amenga Etego, National Coordinator of CAP of Water, the issue is an ideological battle between international multilateral organizations including governmental agencies such as USAID on the on hand and civil society activists like ISODEC and CAP of Water. "They are ready to pump grants and loans to the private sector that they are preparing to take over public utilities such as water in Ghana. All they want to prove is that privatization works. But the very private companies they are preparing have clearly indicated that they are not interested in serving poor areas where there will be no profits."[10]

Currently there is no civil society movement campaigning against the gradual state divestiture from the media. Probably the most important lesson we can derive from the handling of the privatization of water supply in Ghana is that it is only a matter of time that state-owned GBC and GNA will be parceled out to the highest bidder, leaving cultural minorities who are also economically marginalized without a forum to be heard within the national imagined community. For the World Bank, selling the state holdings in the media will help commercialize government operations and make it more efficient. What is not answered is whether state efficiency will be determined by how well it reaches out to the people or how well it balances its books. But the ultimate determinant of state efficiency, as Barnett (1997) argued, will be how it buys legitimacy among the various constituents that make up the nation by democratizing material welfare.

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[10]   Interview in Accra on May 17th, 2002

# NPP Government ICT Policy Plan for 2003 - 2022

Before I conclude this discussion on policy documents I want to briefly touch on a rather recent development in the communication policy. It is too recent to be adequately covered by this study. Nonetheless I want to discuss the highlights of this new policy development. In the second half of 2003, the New Patriotic Party government published its official policy document on communication and national development. The 95-page document, entitled *The Ghana ICT for Accelerated Development [ICT4AD] Policy* states as its vision "to transform Ghana into information-rich knowledge-based society and economy through the development, deployment and exploitation of ICTs within the economy and society." The philosophical framework that structures the entire policy program is the belief that ICTs are critical for Ghana's development because they have the potential to help Ghana and other developing countries to "leap-frog the key stages of industrialization and transform their subsistence agriculture dominated economies into service-sector driven, high value-added information and knowledge economies that can successfully compete on the global market" (Ghana Government 2003, 2). The policy program assumes that Ghana is part of a milieu called information age, where the new emerging economic order positions information and knowledge products as fundamental wealth creating commodities. It does not define what information or knowledge products are except alluding to the fact that these products get to be produced when the infrastructure of computers and tele-networks are put in place to complement a well trained human resource. And when Ghana puts in place these fundamental requirements, the economy can take-off into the desired information society within two to three decades.

The *ICT4AD* program is therefore designed as a 25-year "road map" with five rolling plans to end in the year 2022. It has 14 key areas of intervention around which the program will be implemented. These 14 pillars or key areas are:

- Accelerated human resource development,
- Promoting ICTs in education – The deployment and exploitation of ICTs in education,
- Facilitating government administration and service delivery – Promoting electronic government and governance,
- Facilitating the development of the private sector,
- Developing an export-oriented ICT products and services industry,
- Modernization of agriculture and the development of an agro-business industry,
- Developing a globally competitive value-added service sector – a regional business service and ICT hub,
- Deployment and Spread of ICT in the community,
- Promotion of National Health,
- Rapid ICT and enabling physical infrastructure development,
- Research and Development (R&D), scientific and industrial research capacity development,
- Legal, regulatory, and institutional framework provisions,

- Promoting local and foreign direct investment drive in ICTs, and
- Facilitating national security and law and order. (Ghana Government 2003, 24).

Each of these 14 pillars is given extensive elaboration specifying the policy objectives, strategies for accomplishing the goals and the governmental agencies, public and private institution that are to be involved in the implementation process. Two of the pillars that are of interest are the modernization of agriculture and the development of an agro-business industry, and the deployment and spread of ICT within communities. The plan, under agricultural modernization has as part of its objectives, the extensive commercialization of the agricultural sector, export oriented, and the promotion of value-added services on produce. It also seeks to ensure Ghana's attainment of food sufficiency through the use of more efficient production methods. Some of the strategies that the program seeks to adopt include the establishment of "an agriculture information system to provide support for the planning, production, storage and distribution of crops, livestock, and fisheries products" (Ghana Government 2003, 55). According to the plan, an ICT awareness campaign will be embarked to reach farmers at all levels. In addition, rural technological infrastructure will be modernized. Biotechnology is singled out as a potentially rewarding facility that should be made available to farmers. Another area of interest is the strengthening of research-extension-farmer linkages to ensure effective adoption of innovations.

For the plan on the deployment and spread of ICTs in the community the program promises to start what it calls Village Information and Communication Infrastructure (VICI) within a wider National Information and Communication Infrastructure (NICI). The VICI project will target disadvantaged communities. Such a target suggests that it will involve mostly all the rural communities in the country since Ghana hardly has well resourced villages. While the *Ghana-Vision 2020* is conspicuously silent on a national media infrastructural development, the *ICT4AD* is quite forthcoming in its promise. It specifically outlines a clear approach to the development of media development. It stipulates that the government will commit itself under the plan "to implementing the provisions of the National Media Policy including promoting the development of the nation's public, commercial and community-based mass communication media: print and broadcasting (radio and TV), and film; as well as promotion of communication services." Additionally it will promote "local content development industry, emphasizing on the capture of indigenous knowledge and the promotion of Ghanaian languages and cultural heritage" (Ghana Government 2003, 60-61). The plan lacks an explicit reference to libraries as conduits for community information systems. Rather the emphasis in on the diffusion of computers into the fabric of the communities. It is not clear how it will be achieved realistically, but the program suggests that a mechanism will be put in place to make students' acquisition of computers affordable.

The plan to actively involve the state in the infrastructural development of the media is a rather curious development given the NPP government's predilection for the private sector and distrust for the public sector. It remains to be seen how this will be implemented. With most of the national development budget being financed from donor support with the World

Bank in the lead, it is highly unlikely that this aspect of the plan will be unproblematic. As already indicated in the discussion above, the World Bank in particular has categorically stated that the Ghanaian state should stay out of the business of media development because the media are non-public goods and the private sector is better poised to do the job.

Nonetheless, this policy program is probably the most ambitious and long ranging plan for ICT and national development ever unveiled in Ghana. What is commendable is its long-term view of the development process and for that matter the realization that the dream of leap-frogging should be a 25-year long project. It is a shift in policy attitude from both the early NPP government's attitude as well as the previous NDC government's response to ICT and national development. It is clear that in framing this current new policy program, the state of the country's communication infrastructure was substantially factored into the projections of the planners. Indeed, the plan was based on a nationwide consultation process that involved various stakeholders in the public and private sectors as well as member of civil society. In addition, the framers of the program are reported to have extensively consulted the overall national economic policy document, *Ghana-Vision 2020*, the World Bank supervised *Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy (GPRS) 2002–2004)* and the NPP government's own *Coordinated Program for Economic and Social Development of Ghana (2003 – 2012)*.

It is remarkable that the NPP government planners took into consideration inputs from the *Ghana-Vision 2020*, which was produced by the previous NDC government. Such a sense of continuity of development policy programming is extraordinary. Thus the NPP government, on this note, should be commended. However, it is also significant to observe that this new communication and development policy did not recognize the previous NDC government's labored efforts on the process of evolving a national policy and rather chose to re-start the entire process. It is rather difficult to fathom out the motive for such a process of selective attention to a previous government's policy programs. One can only conjecture that because the *Ghana-Vision 2020* was a complete program, produced and successfully ratified by parliament, it was a credible document to work with. However, the NDC government's ad hoc attitude to its communication and development policy, and the fact that the process was not complete and had not gone through parliament raised several questions on its merit. In coming into office, the NPP government denied the existence of any work in progress on communication and development policy initiated by its predecessor. This was a questionable claim because the process initiated by the NDC government involved NPP elements who were then in opposition and various stakeholders.

The 25-year long *ICT4AD* policy program projected to span several administrations (since the longest term a president can hold office is eight years) will face the test of time as a document that may or may not be used when a new government is elected. While we wait for time to vindicate the plan, I want to suggest that a major factor that does not augur well for the future of it is that the plan did not have the same process of parliamentary ratification, as was in the case of the *Ghana-Vision 2020*. The plan was outdoored as a manifest government policy before it was ratified by parliament. Thus the NPP government was the publisher of the plan. With the *Ghana-Vision 2020,* parliament published it after having thoroughly discussed it and ratified it. Thus a new government will have the political license

to extensively revise the *ICT4AD* plan or dump it all together and also initiate an expensive process of rethinking and re-inventing the wheel of communication and development policy planning. Evaluated on the merit of the rhetoric of the plan, the *ICT4AD* program is a well-thought out project in development planning. Besides being articulated within the euphoria of new communication technologies, the program, if allowed to run its course will most likely tremendously impact positively on the economic, social and political fortunes of Ghana. However, it is too early to celebrate in optimism because the process of implementation may turn out to be a whole different story.

## Making Sense of it All

I have sketched out various moments in the communication policymaking and implementation process in Ghana. In a bid to unpack these changes I want to situate them within three conceptual grids discussed in my literature review in chapter two. These are Development, Imperialism and Globalization, which signifies the three paradigm shifts in development communication. There is actually nothing new in saying that there have been three paradigms noted in the literature on development communication. The first one being concerned with a development blueprint that was to be implemented by the state, the second one being the thinking of the effect of communication in terms of imperialism whether cultural or media imperialism, and the third one being the discussion about globalization and its relations to international communications.

In the so-called dominant paradigm of communication where the replication of modernity was to be carried out in the developing countries with scientific precision, the state and development agents had a direct relationship with the populace, which was the target of the development initiative. The second paradigm of cultural and media imperialism, while equally concerned with the development of the periphery, was more interested in international relational dimensions. The third paradigm, which Sparks (2001, 359) calls the current dominant paradigm, is theoretically situated within the growing body of literature on globalization. From these already well known three categorizations, Sparks schematically presents the scenario as shown in table 3 on page 149.

The table 3 is a useful schematic representation of the trajectory of the theory and praxis of development communication gleaned from the literature. Sparks (2001, 361) uses this as a background to tease out the implications for policy under each paradigm. The *context* provided the basis for the discussion of the nature and desirability of communication policy for each of the three phases. The process of decolonization that dominated the period around 1950 and immediately after provided the framework for thinking about communication infrastructure. It was the decolonization project that inaugurated the nation-building one. But while it is largely true that the first phase was dominated by the project of decolonization, it is not totally accurate to subsume the entire pre-1960 period to one of activity of decolonization. As I tried to point out in my review of the colonial experience of development communication in Ghana, the colonial state, which was not on a decolonization mission, had a policy attitude

**Table 3.** A Comparison of Three Phases of Thinking about International Communication

| Key Element | Phase I<br>Development<br>Communication<br>1950s – 60s | Phase II<br>(Cultural Imperialism)<br>1970 – 80s | Phase III<br>(Globalization)<br>1990 - ? |
|---|---|---|---|
| Context | Decolonization | Imperialism | Post-modernity |
| Alignments | North + South | North vs. South | One World |
| Normal State | Modernity | Independence | Uncertainty |
| Central Concept | Development | Media Imperialism | Globalization |
| Main Objective | Raising Productivity | International Equity | Personal Pleasure |
| Key Media | Radio | News Agency | TV & Computer Mediated Communications |
| Content Focus | Information | News | Culture |
| Forum | UNESCO | UNESCO | WTO |
| Strategy | Transformative | Defensive | Accumulative |
| Subject | Social Scientists | Governments | TNCs |
| Objects | Peasants | Media | Audience |
| Change | Personal | Structural | Personal |

Source: Sparks (2001, 361)

similar to the postcolonial state in matters of development apart from the political project of nation building. Despite this exception, it can generally be granted that under phase I of the trajectory, decolonization provided the context in a North-South alignment where the key concept of *development* meant the replication of modernity. Radio became the main instrument of communication, as it was the state-of-the-art ICT. The state had the monopoly over truth and so the Minister of Information could go to parliament and announce how the broadcasting system was not to tolerate dissent or multiple perspectives.

In retrospect, we can argue that it was the very form of the articulation of development within the transfer model of modernization in the dominant paradigm that provided the intellectual basis of the communication policy of non-toleration of dissent. As discussed in chapter two, it was the media effects theory of the time, the bullet theory or hypodermic needle theory, which celebrated the media as the hammer and anvil of society. The Ghanaian State then, having defined development as one of a transfer of modernity, to turn the postcolony into a nation-state, was not going to tolerate any "noise" in the process of transmission. I use noise here as it is used in the Information Transmission Model of Sender to Receiver through a system and a Feedback with a perfection of the system by the elimination of noise. It is only when we situate the communication policy practice of the time that we can understand the basis of the articulation of such policy.

We can also deduce why freedom of the press during this time was totally absent. It was not just that the state had anti-free press policy as part of its dictatorial character. Rather, the thinking was that the state-of-the-art theory of the time had argued that once "noise" was eliminated in the transmission process, the dream of development and nation building would be realized. And Radio had the promise to deliver. The peasantry was targeted, justified under the social psychology theory of McClelland and Lerner, in order to incorporate it into the community of citizens.

In phase II, the central idea around which issues about communication and development were articulated was media imperialism with the objective of international equity. National Communication policies were therefore articulated around the idea of independent nation along a North versus South axis. Under such a framework, UNESCO provided the arena where differences between the North and South were discussed. The state-of-the-art media were technologies that facilitated trans-border data flows, with the news agencies being the known culprits. Phases I and II were conjunctures where the language of nationalism was strongest, where ideas about the state as the patron of development was most articulated and mass media technologies were seen as directly relevant to the achievement of nationalist development blueprints.

Phase three, according to Sparks (2001, 361) is the contemporary conjuncture. The context is post-modernity, with blurred boundaries of the old North-South conceptualizations. The quest for the replication of modernity in the first phase and the quest for independence in the second phase have all been abandoned. Instead, the uncertainty of development trajectories leads the developmental state to find the rhetoric of globalization appealing. These changes also coincide with a shift of interest from radio to TV and computer mediated communication technologies as objects of communication policy. The shift from old conception of independence, for countries such as Ghana meant that the state would develop new alliances with international multilateral organizations such as the World Banks and the IMF, and patronize the WTO with confidence that the organizations become the nation-state's new development partners. Both the NDC (1992-2000) and the NPP governments in Ghana actually call these organizations Ghana's development partners. Most of key policy decisions of the country are consequently taken by these organizations. Sparks' schematic presentation then serves as a map for us to be able to interrogate the communication policy practices of the developmental state with ease. It provides us with a sort of framework to use to explore the terrain, a murky one at that, of the vagaries of policy practices in a developing country such as Ghana.

Another theorist whose work illuminates the contemporary conjuncture in communication policy is Dwayne Winseck (2002). He argues that the new policy paradigm in the global communication scene emerged after the following developments:

1. The collapse of the New World Communication and Information Order debates at UNESCO, and UNESCO's subsequent embracing of the "free flow" position of the United States as part of efforts to lure it and the UK and Singapore back into its membership. We should remember these three countries boycotted UNESCO to protest its domination of Non-Aligned Countries argument for the democratization of global communications.

2. The American threat of ITU that coerced the organization to embrace competition and privatization as key policy goals as well as undergo drastic internal reforms or risk a boycott. ITU subsequently conceded to an enlarged policy remit that included WTO and the OECD as part of the global governance system of global telecom. ITU's World Telecom Day was celebrated under the theme "Electronic Commerce" in 1999.
3. WTO's increasing role in global communication. For instance it required all its members to permit the "unrestricted movement of information within and across borders" (WTO 1994 article 59:c:e).

These three key developments signaled the beginning of the new global policy regime. Winseck (2002, 26) notes that the emergence of WTO as the dominant player in global communication policy has seen a corresponding reduction in policy provisions allowing public interventions in the regulatory arena of the developing countries. Normative principles based on public interest such as privacy, freedom of expression, access and diversity are totally absent in the emerging policy regimes. This anti-democratic development is due to the role the WTO plays, by providing "high level officials with the opportunity to rely on its negotiations to dismantle domestic political opposition and move forward with new market strategies that would have otherwise been impossible to implement" (Winseck 2002, 26).

There is an interesting and instructive historical parallel, to which Winseck draws our attention. In the 1960s and 1970s communication policy environment in the US and Canada, both the FCC and the CRTC only allowed those with *material interest* to participate in regulatory proceedings until the courts forced these agencies to allow greater citizens participation. The anti-public service stand of the WTO and the ITU and its impact on global communications scene could be reversed if similar process of litigating to enforce public interest into policy could be carried out. This could be a step towards progressive global communications policy reform. It will be a global change that will ultimately address the imbalances that are growing within the business districts of the developing countries and their rural neighbors.

I will re-state the arguments that I have been trying to articulate in this chapter. During the colonial and early postcolonial period, being the state-of-the-art technology of the time, broadcasting was positioned as a technology of inclusiveness. The lure of the market was resisted in favor of the requirement of community building. It was also positioned against a backdrop of a vulgar understanding of development. This contrasts with contemporary understanding of development as part of democracy and multiplicity of inputs. But at the same time we also witness a policy attitude and thinking of communication as information, a logic that corresponds with the commodification of communication. This local shift is part of a larger global re-articulation of communication as information products that require a gradual transfer of issues about international governance of communication to the WTO, the World Bank and the IMF, and a corresponding decline of the influence of ITU and UNESCO. In the next chapter, I want to look at how the World Bank in particular has been instrumental in the re-articulation of Ghana's telecom reform policy within the last decade.

# The Articulation of Telecom Policy in Ghana

In 1998, at a meeting in Washington, senior officials of the World Bank, after reviewing his country's record of development, asked the late Tanzanian leader Nyerere: "Why have you failed?" Nyerere answered:

> The British Empire left us a country with 85 percent illiterates, two engineers and 12 doctors. When I left office, we had 9 percent illiterate and thousands of engineers and doctors. I left office 13 years ago. Then our income per capita was twice what it is today; now we have one-third less children in our schools and public health and social services are in ruins. During these 13 years, Tanzania has done everything that the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund has demanded.

Nyerere then passed the question back to the World Bank experts: "Why have you failed?"[1] It appears it never occurred to the Bank that its record of SAP in Africa was a failure.

This story marks a critical moment in two approaches to development issues in many African countries: Development as state driven and development as market driven. And such a sharp contrast could only have emerged at a meeting of the high priests of the two approaches: nation building and the humanist requirements of community versus the economic fundamentalism[2] of the World Bank. The World Bank's question about failure was based on market calculation while Nyerere's response and judgment were based on the requirements of nation building. Thus their contrasting approaches to the same question yet with diametrically opposite conclusions. Obviously the World Bank would not calculate the increased number of doctors and engineers, increased school enrolment figures as success, while Nyerere considered the 13 years efforts of Structural Adjustment Program implementation

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[1] This story was reported by former Zambian President, Kenneth Kaunda "Africa has paid its dues many times"(New Statesman Vol. 129 issue 4482 p.29 April 17, 2000)

[2] By economic fundamentalism, I mean the bank's tendency to see developing country problems virtually and uncompromisingly on market terms.

as a disaster because it has caused a sharp decline in social services. So why is the World Bank having so much faith in the market when the first results shows signs of underdevelopment? And despite the disastrous consequences of this trend, the market model has been transferred into the restructuring of the telecommunication and broadcasting sectors in Ghana and many other African countries under the World Bank's tutelage.

The following is a discussion of how telecom reforms in Ghana are articulated around the rhetoric of the market model. It is an attempt at unpacking the ideological structuring of the discourse on communication policy in Ghana. Using the two concepts of *articulation* and *commodification*, it interrogates how the developmentalist state is shifting from thinking of development as need-derived to development as demand-derived, a theme that I have pursued in the interrogation of broadcasting and national development in the previous chapter. Demand here is referring to the economic understanding of demand backed by ability to pay. This discussion is situated within the wider project of nation building in most of postcolonial Africa, where the nation state project is thought as in the process of *becoming*.

## New Directions in Telecom Reforms

From the perspectives of the above conceptual clarifications, I want to look at Ghana's telecom reforms, which were part of the comprehensive Structural Adjustment Program (SAP). The background to the new communication policy regime is the launching of an IMF and World Bank supported Economic Recovery Program (ERP) in 1983. The ERP, which included a World Bank supervised SAP, had a wide-ranging implication for the country. It involved a reduction in public and social sector expenditure, the divesting of the state from businesses and the promotion of the private sector as the kingpin of economic growth. State-owned enterprises were privatized, merged, turned into joint ventures or liquidated (Sarris and Shams 1991, 7; Brydon and Legge 1996; Hadjimichael et. al. 1996).

The sense of losing the nation symbolized by the sale of state-owned enterprises is a lament that one comes across each time Ghanaians discuss matters about their country. The following quotation from anonymous contributor to the Ghanaian internet discussion board, "Say It Loud" following an announcement by the Finance Minister that 11 state companies were to be sold, captures the spirit of this nationalist angst:

> The NPP will sell everything in Ghana before they leave power. Now that they have enlisted about 11 national assets for sale, the next move is to place Ghana on the market for sale. I thought the NDC was bad. This (sic) guys are vicious. Where is Ghana heading towards?[3]

An Accra daily[4] had reported the Finance Minister as having announced the sale while addressing the Ghana Stock Exchange.

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[3]    http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/sil2/r.php?thread=551123
[4]    *Accra Daily Mail of November 18, 2002*

In retrospect, SAP inaugurated a new policy regime of enhanced private sector participation in national governance, with the World Bank, IMF and other multilateral institutions playing a dominant role in the policy process in Ghana. This transformation for the telecom sector turned out to be one of an intellectual as well as financial dependence on the World Bank, especially for the articulation of national communication policy. The intellectual dependence in particular, according to the Ministry of Communications in Ghana is due to the lack of expertise within the government and within the country on matters pertaining to the new digital economy. All two last governments in the country have referred to this inability as part of their excuse for poor governance over the telecom sector. In the latest of such admission of lack of expertise, the NPP minister of communications, Felix Owusu Adjepong told the country that his ministry was relying on free consultations from Moroccan experts to take decisions on key telecom matters because it simply lacked the required human resources to handle complex policy matters.[5]

It is against this background that World Bank thinking is crucial. The bank's thinking can be gleaned from its commissioned study and recommendations for Ghana and other sub-Sahara African countries. The study (Mustafa et al. 1997) was mandated to look into the options available to Ghana and some other Sub-Sahara African countries in similar situations of undeveloped telecom sector. The World Bank study and recommendation and Ghana's Accelerated Development Programme (ADP) are the main source for this discussion. The Ghanaian program is an outline of governments plan (at least up to December 2000) for the reforms of the Telecom Sector. The World Bank commissioned study, written by a senior staff of the Bank and two consultants, focused on the restructuring of the telecom sector in Ghana, Benin, Mozambique, Uganda and Tanzania. These countries, before undertaking their telecom sector reforms had each chalked more than a decade of faithfully implementing IMF and World Bank directed Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP). So the institutional linkages between these powerful international multilateral financial institutions and the governments in these countries, thanks to SAP, were already firmly established before the process of telecom reforms began. Thus, in reading the World Bank's report and recommendations one gets the feeling that it provided the intellectual foundations for Ghana's ADP. Indeed, in the Bank's own words "the main purpose of the Bank in commissioning this study has been to consider how the Bank's global strategy for the telecommunications sector can be applied in SSA (sub-Sahara African) countries"[6].

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 the 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

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[5]  "Communications Ministry Lacks Experts – Adjepong" available at http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=21726

[6]  This is contained in the "Forward" to Mustafa et al. (1997) written by Richard Stern, Director of Industry and Energy Department, Finance and Private Sector Development Vice Presidency of the World Bank.

US dollars for the project implementation. But according the bank's own assessment, "the project failed to meet all 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" (World Bank 1995, 1). In 1988, when the wisdom of the time was beginning to be focused on the private sector and the market as well as a redefinition of the role of the state following the implementation of SAP, the World Bank approved another credit line to the tune of 13.8 million US dollars. It then helped Ghana to mobilize additional funding from Japan, France and the Netherlands for an additional 133 million dollars to undertake network expansion. This cluster of loans was used to fund what become known as the Second Telecommunications Project. The stated objectives were to:

1.  assist P&T with the implementation of its investment program for the period 1987 to 1992 through rehabilitation and expansion; and
2.  support a program of institutional and management improvement in the sector (World Bank 1995, 2).

According to the World Bank, it was the government of Ghana that approached it again in 1995, requesting the bank to assist Ghana to implement a new sector policy after it had passed new legislation to breakup the P&T into two separate Telecom Company and Posts Company. The government request was for both financial and technical expertise. This 1995 request, arguably, marks the moment when Ghana government handed over key telecom policy decisions to the bank.

If the first World Bank assisted rehabilitation of telecom in Ghana was to improve the institutional capacity of the P&T Corporation, while the idea of natural monopoly made sense to the bank, the 1995 request for assistance was aimed at increasing private sector participation in Ghana Telecom (GT). It was also aimed at promoting competition and the "establishment of an appropriate regulatory framework" (World Bank 1995, 2) under the bank's tutelage. As part of the assistance package, the bank was to help the government generate revenue through the sale of part of GT. The proposed new sector policy provided for government control of management of GT to be transferred to a minority shareholder who would buy a stake in GT. This minority shareholder called strategic investor was expected to bring in management expertise as well as providing more direct financial investment. In addition, a share was to be sold to a financing institution and another stake sold to local investors in Ghana. The bank was also to guide Ghana through the process of licensing a second main operator to compete with GT, thereby establishing a duopoly in the telecom market. Furthermore, a liberalized regime of licensing privately owned cellular, payphone and small local phone operators were to be incorporated into the new policy package that the bank was to supervise.

The entire project required 450 million US dollars over a period of 5 years ending in 1999 (World Bank 1995). The bank was reluctant to come forward with direct funding approval. Rather, it counseled that private sources both local and international be approached to support. Logically, it required that GT and its clientele, prospective and real, be re-packaged for the private sector to come in and do cherry picking. For the first time in Ghana's telecom

history, Rural Telecom emerged as a separate sector in contrast to the main fixed network. As a new industry, mobile telephony was also designed as a separate sector with different policy direction. It should be noted, however, that under the previous natural monopoly system, while rural telephony was not explicitly marked out, it nevertheless did not get any serious attention because telephony was an urban luxury reserved for the rich and well connected, comprising less than one percent of the country's population. The bank recommended that in order to attract private sector investors, an IDA support worth 50 million US dollars would be sought to improve GT's technical base (World Bank1995).

According to the bank, the study found out poor performance of state-owned network operators as the main obstacle to the expansion of the telecom facilities (Mustafa et al. 1997, 8). This is the traditional characterization of reasons for private sector intervention into the public sector economy in developing countries. It is always argued that the state-owned enterprises are poorly run and so private sector participation will introduce competition (Hoogvelt 1997). That is why telecom reforms in Ghana means privatization and the introduction of the market model into the sector. The bank argued that the main aim of reforms is to improve performance of the sector. Performance here is defined as "the availability, quality and price services provided to customers as well as the cost efficiency with which they are provided." And this can only be achieved by "increasing the role of market forces, separating day-to-day management of telecommunications operations from government and introducing increasingly explicit forms of regulatory control" (Mustafa et al. 1997, 13).

Ghana pursued just that. The country falls within the sub-Saharan African countries that had below 5% of the population having access to phone facilities in1994. Between 1980 and 1994, the Ghana Posts and Telecommunications Corporation could only increase teledensity by 1000 lines annually, far below demand, resulting in a fall in the national teledensity from 0.33 per 100 to 0.31 (ADP document 1994). The then totally state-owned entity P&T was considered as inefficient in meeting the telecom needs of the country. In the bank's own words, "… the gap between demand and supply has grown (estimates of the additional lines needed to the end of the decade are upwards of 300,000 compared to 50,000 connected lines at present), service quality remains poor and P&T's institutional capacity and financial position continue to be very weak" (World Bank 1995, 2). Thus the World Bank's recommendation to divest the telecom sector from the posts was carried out. The Bank's recommendation followed a trend in telecom-rich Europe where the restructuring had already taken place.

Under Ghana's ADP, an independent regulatory body, the National Communications Authority (NCA) was set up on the lines of United States' FCC. With the telecom division reconstituted as separate business organization while the Postal section continued its "public service" but with profit making obligation, the country got set for the privatization of telecom in 1996. The ADP outlines the most radical policy transformation in the communication sector in the short history of the country. Its main objectives can be summarized as:

1. to improve the sector to meet demand and increase the number of lines per 100 people to 2.5 through the agency of the private sector

2.  to improve public access by providing more pay phones in the urban areas to be determined by market forces. In the rural areas, it does not say how the services will be provided but it says long term objective is to make one payphone available to every village of 500 people. Individual phones are hardly ever available in the rural areas.
3.  Expand the use of mobile phones through the agency of the private sector.
4.  No restrictions will be placed on businesses to construct private networks
5.  Telecom tariffs should reflect cost of investment so that investors can recoup their cost. (ADP document 1994).
6.  generating revenue for Government from the sale of Ghana Telecom which will be created once the split of P&T has been completed. Government will sell its controlling shares (World Bank 1995, 2).

The economic rationalization of this World Bank-inspired reforms was premised on the democratization of telecom facilities. The state failed to make telecom facilities available to some 95% of the population between 1957 and 1994. What is interesting is that the bank believed that privatization would ensure that benefits will spread throughout the entire population and supporting this claim with social welfare gains that privatization has recorded in the developed economies, which pioneered the process of telecom liberalization (Mustafa et. al 1997, 8).

Now the market model is being tried as an alternative route to the solution of this development problem. At issue here is the way the postcolonial state has shifted into accepting commodification of telecom as a fundamental principle of policy. What does this mean for the idea of the postcolonial nation-state as one that is in the process of *becoming*? The promised imagined community is here shifting to a promise of a globalized market. This is because the spatial logic of commodification is economic globalization.

There is no doubt that the nation-state model was derived from the European and North American experience, including policy attitude towards national communicative structures. Telephone and broadcasting were considered public structures that underscored the democratic communicative fabric of the imagined community. Jan van Cuilenburg and Denis McQuail show the main trend of the European practice was to consider telephony along with postal service as public monopoly and effective branch of government, until the main infrastructure was put in place. "The electronic media were seen as engineering and infrastructure too strategically essential to the state and to industry to be left to the uncertainties of the free market"(Cuilenburg and McQuail 1998, 61). While the American approach differed fundamentally in terms of ownership and system of regulation, Cuilenburg and McQuail do point out that both models shared certain common features including: a) treating communications media as branches of industry with strategic importance; and b) subordinating communication to the imperatives of the national interest. The national interest is here understood as not conditioning access to the logic of the market, but using public funding to put in place the basic infrastructure that could not have been provided by private capital. The idea here is fundamentally related to the understanding that democratic life will suffer if the market were given a free hand to do the decision as to who gets connected.

But in recommending the privatization of telecom in Sub-Saharan Africa, where less than 5% of the population have access, the World Bank is basing its thinking on contemporary European experience.

This reflects in part the consensus view that the future of telecommunications lies with private commercial provision of services under relatively liberal regulatory arrangements. In part, it also reflects the specific common aims of the telecommunications policy of the European Union (EU). Formally, the EU has focused on the gradual liberalization of international services between member states and the standardisation of regulatory processes to eliminate barriers to entry at the national level. The responses by member states to this policy have tended to include plans to extend liberalization moves to domestic as well as international services and to privatize incumbent operators (Mustafa et al. 1997, 13-14)

It is true that the EU *formally* focuses on gradual liberalization, but it *formerly* did not. First of all, what we have here is a Europe that is now using the market model after successfully using the state to put in place the basic telecom infrastructure. The World Bank experts know this but prefer to insist that Ghana and other African countries use the market model to solve their basic infrastructure problem. The market has become the new magic wand for development and modernization. The history of shifting paradigms of communication regulation from heavy public service orientation to an increasing marketized sector in Europe is totally absent in the World Bank's understanding of the European experience. To go contrary to this will mean admitting that a strong state role is needed to fund basic infrastructure first before we adopt contemporary European practice of opening to the market.

The World Bank policy agenda says that the greatest economic gains for sub-Sahara African countries depend on the introduction of "competent commercial management" into the telecom sector. Its argument is that commercialization has become a priority in the industrialized countries and so developing countries should follow suit. It also points out that "profitability", "productivity" and the ability to meet "demand" should be the criteria for success (Mustafa et al.1997, 21). The idea of "demand" applied here is "effective demand" in economic terms, which means the ability to pay from the side of the consumer, determined by the demand and supply curve. It is different from demand for services as defined by social and political need from which life depends. The question of humanist gains (as opposed to economic gains) is lost in the vocabulary of the World Bank. It was the quest for a civic imagined community that warranted the end of colonialism and the emergence of the postcolonial nation-state in the first place. That is the legitimacy of the postcolonial state, which is premised on the promise of citizenship to the people is being lost now.

The shift to thinking of the aim of policy in economic terms therefore is worth noting as a moment of re-articulation of the mission of the postcolonial state. The shift is from a state that prioritizes value based on need to a postcolonial state that has adopted commodification as its new modus operandi in the global economy. Interestingly Murdock and Golding (1999,

127), in their study of British telecom policy have noted that references to citizens, and the interest of citizens, have been deleted in favor of references to the interest of consumers. Is it just a coincidence or is Ghana merely copying from its colonial master?

## Universal Service Redefined

One of the core points of the report is the attempt to re-define "universal service" for Sub-Sahara Africa. Universal service has been at the core of most developed countries' telecom policy from the dawn of the telephone technology.

Originally the idea of universal service referred to the universality of system or network. The term has a rather interesting trajectory and is closely related to the development of telephone networks under natural monopoly in the United States at the dawn of the 20th Century. AT&T, the then natural monopoly, which wanted to forestall competitors by pursuing a policy of system integration, invented the concept to justify their position. Thus Mueller (1993, 353) reports that AT&T introduced the concept as the company's primary corporate goal. For AT&T the concept strictly meant "the interconnection of all localities and telephone users into a single system" (Mueller 1993, 367). In effect, AT&T thinking was different from any expression of liberal egalitarianism. Rather, it was meant to buttress the idea of natural monopoly and anti-competition in order to prolong its privileged position of ruling a captive market.

The idea of universal service referring to the democratization of phone access is a latter-day political appropriation of a corporate concept. It is an appropriation that has been useful in directing public policy for democratic ends. And because of this trajectory of the concept, it has acquired two levels of meaning: an economistic articulation and a social democratic articulation. The economic articulation of universal service has its roots in the original AT&T corporate strategy and tends to refer to efficiency of networks and economic distribution of services. The second level of articulation, the social democratic perspective, refers to the idea of democratizing phone access whether under natural monopoly or under a competitive environment. Even though this social democratic understanding is an appropriation of a corporatist strategy, it has come to mean citizens right to access communication resources, similar to the idea of public service in broadcasting. Probably the only difference is that whereas public service is concerned with both content and conduit, universal service is limited to conduit matters.

Influenced by this double articulation of universal service, the concept has now a unanimous meaning which refers to access to all existing users, national network access for all potential users, standardization of services to all, and above all, the provision of services on affordable terms (Mueller 1993). It is also a regulatory practice where need is given priority over free market requirements. Sometimes referred to as universal access, it is a policy of enabling access to economically and geographically vulnerable and disadvantaged groups on the same terms as other users within a country. From this perspective, basic telecom (POTS) is considered a basic need just as in the case of water and health services (ITU

1999, 61). However, discussions in World Bank publications seem to suggest attempts at making a distinction between "universal service" as different from "universal access." According to one of such rather very recent publications of the bank, universal service refers to conditions in developed countries where the target of policy is to connect a phone to every home at a minimum, while universal access is applicable to developing countries where the target is to make public phones available to every community, village or neighborhood of a certain minimum population (Navas-Sabater et al. 2002, 10). This distinction between universal access and universal service rather tends to occlude more that it illuminates on the question of why should the market be introduced as an instrument of regulating and delivering universal access within the circumstances of a developing economy.

Historically, universal service has been pursued outside market valorization. How this is achieved varies from country to country with the common practice being the charging of same tariffs irrespective of differing cost of service delivery. That is cross-subsidizing high-cost subscribers with the profits earned from low cost ones. The arguments in favor of universal service are both humanist and economic. Universal service promotes national cohesion apart from the fact that uniform and affordable services are a form of income redistribution. Economically speaking, the more universal a network, the better for each user and the value of the network. The consequences of universal service policies in North America and Europe were that the phone network became democratized. And it was not due to the instrumentality of the market but a deliberate state action to protect the sector from it (Cuilenburg and McQuail 1998). The choice of perception whether to see universal service as a social/public good issue or an economic matter is at the heart of the debate whether information is a social/ public good or a commodity.

Meanwhile, the World Bank report recommends that the classical understanding of universal service obligation cannot be applied to Sub-Sahara Africa because the people are too poor: "In low income countries, universal service, as commonly understood, is impossible. The objective is too remote to be a practicable guide for network managers" (Mustafa et al. 1997, 32). The irony here is that universal service is not a policy to be liked by network managers, but a compulsion that the state must impose for national strategic reasons and not for the imperatives of the market.

But the World Bank report also argues against universal service in the following term: "Where, as in most SSA countries, there are severe constraints on financing expansion, a cross-subsidy policy can make it more difficult to meet demand, because demand is stipulated while the ability to self-finance investment may be reduced" (Mustafa et al. 1997, 32). What the Bank is saying is that when the classic universal service is enforced, services will be so affordable that demand may be higher than supply, and will result in unmet line request. So the solution is to abandon universal service obligations, allow investors the freedom in establishing their networks and recouping cost at the earliest possible time. They refuse to see demand here as an opportunity for investment in network expansion.

Restated, universal service obligation is anti-market rules and so it should be shelved and private capital allowed to operate in the manner of its choosing. Historically, this is a rare case in global telecom economics where the imperative of market is allowed to overrule the

fundamental requirements of universal telephone access. It is a road hardly taken by other regions and countries that have successfully democratized their phone infrastructure. The subtext of this recommendation is fetishization of the market as the ultimate solution, even against the North American and European lessons of actual historical experience of universal service as the basis for development of networks. Interestingly, the ITU thinks differently from this World Bank sponsored recommendation. It argues that Universal Service Obligations, which includes Universal Access, is one of the few areas where regulation may be required indefinitely, "even when competition has spread across market boundaries. This is because it aims to meet needs to basic telecommunications which are thought impossible to be met by purely commercial means" (ITU 1999, 61).

How do we contextualize this new role that the World Bank has assigned to the market now that the state is falling under its hegemony? Jill Hills (1993) reminds us that universal service is a social construct, and like all social constructs, its definition takes place in response to societal evolution and proposals to adapt it to contemporary needs. In the case of contemporary Ghana, it is the needs of capital, more than that of the nation that dominates the (re)articulation of universal service. The institutional power of the World Bank more than that of the ITU and the nation helps in this adaptation. And the postcolonial state, we should remember, is now in the service of the World Bank, more than the nation.

The fetishization of the market as the solution to the country's development problems has held sway in Ghana over the past two decades with successive governments taking no critical stance. The telecom sector is not the only basic service sector to come under the market. In the previous chapter, I showed how privatization was gradually introduced into the policy scene as if the market is a magic wand for development. One wonders what will soon be the role of postcolonial state! What makes the market tick as the panacea for development problems of late postcolonial nation-states?

## Unwrapping the Market

Discourses about privatization, liberalization and deregulation are wrapped around the magic term market, which means a sort of less state involvement in the operations of exchange of goods and services and where value is determined by the demand and supply curve. Price in this scheme acts as the regulator between demand and supply, and ultimately, value. Consumer sovereignty, it is claimed, is assured by his or her ability to "vote" with purchasing power. Demand is the schedule of preferences that consumers are willing to purchase at different prices during a given time period while supply is the schedule of goods and services offered for sale at different prices during a time period (Baber 1987, 48). This is a rather simplified representation of the conceptualization of the market that has its roots in the political economy of Adam Smith.

It is not my intention to go into the details of the price mechanism that operates under this demand and supply model. But since concepts such as demand, supply, market efficiency, cost effective operations, are beginning to replace non-exchange value based concepts in the

discourse of communication regulations, it is worth starting from this basic economics. More so, in a postcommunist global environment, the term market carries a significant political weight with enormous mobilizing power over alternatives such as planned market or state intervention or state valorization. Consequently, we speak of *consumers* instead of *citizens.* Thus the concept has attained a hegemonic status at both national and at the global level. For the postcolonial environment, such a development is troubling because the conditions under which the arguments to apply the market model to communication industries emerged in the informational economies up North do not exist in the developing nations down South and may not serve the developmentalist state's task of creating conditions for citizenship. Garnham (2000, 48) on his part has suggested that it is important to understand the basic outline and logic of the market "because it is the foundation upon which are based most common-sense assumptions about how markets in general and media and information markets in particular, work and thus debates about their desirability or otherwise and the need for their regulation or otherwise."

The market model is based on the idea of fully rational economic agents, in pursuit of utility maximization in an arena where no single agent is powerful enough to determine value (exchange value). At least this is the ideal situation. The consumer has a choice of substitutable utilities, while the producer of utilities (goods and services) passes on the cost of production proportionately to consumers. That is the price becomes the embodiment of proportional distributor of cost of production as well as a fair determinant of value. In the language of economists, "there are no externalities and there are no freeloaders" (Garnham 2000, 47). Theoretically, markets work well when the price of a good equals the society's cost of producing that good while the value of the good in question to the buyer is equal to the benefit of the good to the society. The prevalence of externalities does not allow the cost and benefits of the good to be fully reflected in market prices. Externalities then come in the form of state intervention, for instance, in the regulation of broadcasting as a public good (Begg et.al. 2000, 48). A free rider or free loader is someone who gets to consume a product without having to pay for it in market terms.

If that is so, then we hardly have free riders in a communication regime with advertising. Dallas Smythe's (1981) theory of audience as workers who produce value for media industries to package and sell is relevant here. For any assumption that, in the communication sector that has advertising revenue, there are free riders is simply untenable. For he argues that media industries that are funded through advertising are not in the business of information dissemination but in the business of producing audience for sale (Smythe 1981,22-50). Thus the viewer pays for the cost of consumption by his act of audiencing.

The tendency to articulate the market as operating effectively only when there are no externalities should not serve as a moment for celebrating the commodification of communication. On the contrary, it marks the very reason why the market model is unsuitable for regulating communication within the circumstance of nation building. If we understand communication, in the culturalist paradigm as the realm of community, commonality and meaning making and sharing, as against communication as the realm of transmission of information from one point through a medium to another point, then the coupling of

communication and the economics (market) raises some troubling developments (Carey 1997). The two realms, according to American Communications theorist, James Carey, are not historically compatible, because the market is premised on the rational individual guided by selfish interest while the communication is premised on the fact of community and commonality. "In our time, communications and economics can only be reconciled by an evacuation of the resources of meaning in the service of profit and power" (Carey 1997, 65). James Carey's perceptive analysis is done from the contributions that both John Dewey and Harold Innis have done towards theories of community and communication. Carey explains that it is only when communication is re-defined as "the extension of messages across geography for the purpose of control" (1997, 69) that economics and market model work effectively. Carey is here talking about the central differences between communication as transmission and communication as culture. That is in order to rationalize or normalize or governmentalize communication, *communication* has to be re-conceptualize as *information*, or more precisely information transmission. Such a transformation wrecks havoc on the bias of communication, which is community and commonality, and for that matter culture.

From this perspective, we need to problematize the economist conception of *externalities* as non-rationalist aspect of the market that cause market failure and has to be reduced or eliminated. This argument that externalities must be reduced is a moment of re-articulating communication as information. For it is the very fact of externalities that account of the commonality and community characteristics of communication. Carey puts it rightly: "But externalities are fundamentally a theory of market failure, and market failure is, as Mary Douglas notes 'an elaborately backhand way of studying the collective interest'" (Carey 1997, 71). Thus in the commodification of communication, the effect of reducing externalities or reducing them, let us emphasize, is the very act of re-inventing communications as an act of information transmission, taking out the element of collectivity and community from it, while at the same time making this whole articulation resonate with the dominant discourses about *information* society. Doesn't *communication society* sound odd enough for us, now that we are living under a hegemony that celebrate information as commodity?

It is against this background of re-articulating *communication* as *information* that the World Bank experts even against the thinking of ITU are willing to slight universal access obligation in favor of the wishes of network managers and profit. And what is amazing is that there is no challenge from the Ghanaian authorities against the World Bank recommendations. The previous NDC government and the current NPP government have all adopted and implemented the recommendation with alacrity.

According to the liberal economists the market mechanism, in theory, ensures that only goods that consumers want at prices they can afford are produced, while capital will only be committed to producing utilities that are in demand. Hence the proverbial invisible hand in the allocation of resources. "Market failure describes the circumstance in which distortions prevent the Invisible Hand from allocating resources efficiently" (Begg et.al 2000, 265).

The market is not inherently evil as such. It is a time-tested mechanism that has a lot of successes to show than its critics often want to admit. Especially in the area of physical goods, it has been successful in the equal distribution of costs and value. What is worrying is the

political logic of the market when it is applied to the communication industries within the circumstances of developing countries. Market rules are more about winners and losers than about equity and distribution. The idea of winners and losers may work well with apples and cars in the market. But when tools for civic life and citizenship such as communication are sent to the market especially in a developing nation-state, the all-important question of equity fizzles out and democratic life becomes the impoverished loser. In the postcolonial project of modernization and development, therefore, the fundamental question of distribution of civic infrastructure to facilitate the exercise of citizenship, we must emphasize, cannot be achieved through a Darwinian theatre. This is why the case of state valorization of communication services sounds reasonable than commercial valorization in the regulation continuum.

Andrew Gamble (2001) has discussed the ideological myth about the market commodity production. A pervasive myth is that commodity production is a system that primarily serves human needs, and that consumers are sovereign. "What drives capitalism is not what has value in use, but what has value in exchange. The two are by no means the same. The pursuit of exchange value obliges capital to accumulate for its own sake. Profitability becomes an end in itself" (Gamble 2001, 173). One can therefore understand the World Bank's discomfort with the application of universal service principles on telecom reforms in Ghana and other African countries. If universal service will give more phones to the people without necessarily increasing investment returns, then it is judged as being inapplicable to the circumstance of African countries. This same logic is behind the World Bank's inability to appreciate Nyerere's point of view on the increase in the number of doctors and engineers in his country cited at the beginning of this chapter.

The mythologization of the market as Gamble points out may account for the lack of resistance to World Bank thinking within government in Ghana. In the Ghanaian political spectrum, all seem to agree that the free market will deliver development, despite increasing overwhelming evidence to the contrary. If market has acquired a mythic status, then, we are in for trouble. Barthes points out that in language, the sign is always arbitrary within certain limitations and so provides room for a re-articulation. But when the sign, as in our case, the *market* acquires a mythical status, it becomes difficult to resist because myth is experienced as innocent speech not because its intentions are hidden, "but because they are naturalized." He goes on to point out that "what allows the reader to consume myth innocently is that he does not see it as a semiological system but as an inductive one… The signifier and the signified have, in his eyes, a natural relationship" (Barthes 1972, 131). *Market* has now acquired the status of a paragon of good. When it fails, something else must be wrong and should be rectified, and not the market itself.

In a rather systematic approach to the mythologization of "market" in public policy, Robert Babe points out that neoclassical economists make influential arguments by two methods: modeling and praxis. Modeling refers to the practice where an imaginary world of archetypical rational individuals and firms, all with perfect information are assumed to operate. This process of creating ideal theoretical conditions as explanatory device allows the neo-classical economists to escape the moral dimension and human cost of market functioning

in real life, where an un-moderated pursuit of self-interest is the ruling maxim. Praxis, on the other hand, refers to the operationalization of these theoretical models in the phenomenal world using the conclusions and justifications derived from the modeling. The market that was constructed out of a modeling of an imaginary world is now transferred to the real world to argue that the "market will allocate resources in the best of possible ways" (Babe 1995, 77). Thus the theory of "invisible hand" becomes the central instrument in the articulation of market as solution within policy discourse. Invisible hand remains the instrument that purchases legitimacy for market because of its promise of neutrality and objectivity in contrast to the subjective practices of state valorization. Invisibility is post-human and so commands the status of a near-Divine. Invisibility therefore appropriates the socially accepted power of Divinity and endows it to a human creation called market. The human construct called the market acquires a theological force, so to speak. Stated in Barthesean vocabulary, the market has been raised to a sacerdotal significance.

Garnham's (2000, 48) criticism of the application of the market model to communication industries looks at the issue from a different angle. First he argues that the assumption of rational, fully informed economic agents operating as buyers and sellers is unfounded. Because information about the informational product is not a cost-free good, the model does not account for getting the right information to make a decision. For instance, because British Telecom has information about customers and their telephone usage (due to its incumbency) new competitors in the sector will not be able to access this information in order to compete. Thus the promise that the consumer will be the winner in this competitive regime will not be delivered. The second problem with the model is that its assumption that investors can come and go as the market swings is not generally applicable to investment in communication infrastructure. The point is that "there is a path-dependent inertia in the system" (Garnham 2000, 49) which makes the exit option difficult if not impossible. So investors will not come in there in the first place. Such a critique is important for the situation of the developing countries under World Bank tutelage where they are expecting investors to come in sink their money into providing basic telecom infrastructure. Probably the most critical factor that faults the application of the market model to communication is the fact that when it comes to communication products, people get to know if they want to consume the product only after they have really consumed it. That is the irony of it all. And investors who come in to undertake heavy investment for infrastructure know that they are coming in for a long haul and the exit option is not easily available, hence, the reluctance to invest in the first place. This is exactly what happened in Ghana when it allowed private participation in Ghana Telecom, as I will show in the next chapter.

Proponents of market model often argue that state valorization affect the efficiency of the market and subsequently leads to inefficiency and breakdown on technological innovation, and favors pressure groups to the disadvantage of the consumer. But as David Hutchison (1999, 70) points out, Media Policy is part of a citizenship policy. It is from this understanding of the deregulation, privatization and the introduction of the market into the telecom sector that we need to locate the World Bank's recommendations to Sub-Saharan African communication policy makers.

Armand Mattelart has traced the roots of deregulation to American neoliberal economists and politicians who favor "less government" as against "big government." He points out that the "project of deregulation is in fact a proposal to rearrange public space. For this reason, it implies a redefinition of the notion of free speech: the free speech of the citizen enters into direct competition with 'commercial free speech'" (Mattelart 1991, 87). Market regulation therefore produces a structural dynamic between the consumer and the citizen. The empowerment of the citizen, so to speak, gives way to the empowerment of the consumer. This development raises red flags on the project of nation building and the provision of the conditions of citizenship. Market regulation and the privatization of communication amounts to the extension of the economic law of value to spheres of collective and individual life, which were previously foreclosed from commercial valorization. And we can now speak of market thinking as having colonized the social imaginary, foreclosing possible alternatives of development. And when that happens, as is the case in Ghana, those who are not qualified as consumers are the losers. During the colonial times, if I may recap, the losing class was the rural folks, which the colonial report on broadcasting described as:

> A large majority of these advanced people have incomes of not more than a shilling a day. Many who live in the bush are outside a currency area and where there is no money economy. Consequently there is little hope for this large section of the population buying cheap domestic receivers. But it is these people who can derive so much benefit from broadcasting and whom Governments are anxious to help (Turner and Byron 1949, 19).

In the postcolonial era of a new policy paradigm that celebrates free market, the losers are the 30 percent that the *Ghana Vision 2020* indicated live below the poverty line.

The North American experience set the pace and paradigm for the global push for competitive deregulation. And along the line of argument of Martellart, Wilson (2000) is more specific by pointing out in his historical study of the deregulation movement in United States and Canada that the deregulation movement was on the surface, the product of clash of interest between consumers and producers, between regulator and private corporations cum the US congress. But above all, the deregulation movement was a product of a clash of ideas. The economic idea of competition as the ultimate solution to all problems of distribution was championed by powerful policy think tanks such as the American Economic Institute and the Heritage Foundation. These organizations received substantial funding from the private sectors and their arguments won the hearts of the US legislators partly because the public mood (consumers) was against the natural monopolies (Wilson 2000).

Thus Kevin Wilson argued that despite the apparent pitfalls of state regulatory agencies in recent North American history, the success of the push to deregulate has an ideological basis. "The regulation of natural monopoly by the state is a potent symbol of the failure of markets, and by extension, of the failure of the field of economics. It is difficult to reconcile the discipline of economics and its doctrinaire commitment to competition and the power of the markets, with the presence of natural monopoly and the necessity of economic regulation" (Wilson 2000, 104).

## When the Postcolonial Meets the Postmodern

I pointed out earlier that the spatial logic of commodification is globalization. And in locating World Bank recommendations for telecom reforms in the postcolony, solutions coming out of the postmodern experience of the informational societies of the North are transferred wholesale to the South without regard to the specific problem of the incomplete project of nation building in the South. Postmodern solutions, as it were, are applied to postcolonial problems. How do we understand this illogical development? I want to suggest that we rethink this development as a specific conjuncture within the postcolonial social formation where market becomes a powerful rhetorical device that has acquired its mobilizing power in a postcommunist world because of three developments:

- The postcolonial state as an institution with its own dynamics on the one hand is organically different from its representative constituent, the postcolonial nation.
- The World Bank and the IMF as institutions of globalization have developed a correspondence and alliance with the postcolonial state (without the postcolonial nation).
- The transfer of "information society" discourse from the developed world to the Third World countries as a third epochal transformation that the Third World governments believe they cannot afford to miss.

The first point about the postcolonial state and postcolonial nation as non-corresponding constituents is an extension of Mahmood Mamdani's (1996) interesting arguments that the postcolonial state is an Africanized apparatus not a democratized one. Thus actors in the postcolonial state can easily develop a more resilient correspondence with the IMF and the World Bank as institutions of globalization.

From this perspective, we can understand the structure of contemporary communication policy in the postcolony as a particular form of articulation. Hall (1991, 112) has already pointed out that articulation should be thought of as a context where connections are made. And Grossberg (1997, 221) adds that it is an ongoing construction of relations between practices and structures. This approach seems to be a better way of grasping the hegemonization of market that masquerades as the development of the postcolonial nation-state. Hegemony is actualized through the ways in which different social institutions function in practice. The market or commodification has attained the status of hegemony not because of an inherent explanatory power for the solution of development problems, but because, at a particular contemporary conjuncture, it has acquired the ability to speak the same language to key institutions: the World Bank/IMF and the postcolonial state within the context of information society discourse. The element that is dis-articulated in this equation, the postcolonial nation, is the loser in this new articulation of commodification of information.

This articulation of a new communication regime is not just a World Bank/IMF and developing country affair. The World Bank/IMF group simply represents the forces of globalization that are reinventing the structures of the postcolonial nation-state. For Sussman

(1997, 244) the trend of market regulation being pushed on developing countries is aimed at showing the irrelevance of the postcolonial state. Not quite. It is aimed at showing the irrelevance of the nationalist project based on inclusion. Deregulation and privatization practices recommended for Third World countries operate at the level of a double articulation on the developmentalist state. First the World Bank/IMF claim to support the sovereignty of these states in order to let them take responsibility for the debt of the previously public sector organizations, then secondly, these organizations are sold out, as in the case of Ghana Telecom as a process of denationalizing the economy, by privatizing public space.

> Combining these two contradictory strategies was not, it has to be recognised, an easy task. At the ideological level it made the bailiffs walk a tight rope between, on the one hand re-affirming the notions of national sovereignty and national economy, while the same time, on the other hand confining development economics and any hint of Keynesian notions of national economic management to the dustbin of history. They had to uphold the state and destroy it at the same time! (Hoogvelt 1997, 169).

Or better still, they uphold the state in the service of globalization and destroy the nation as a community.

Another way of thinking about the consequences of this development is that, with the deregulation, liberalization and privatization of telecom facilities globally, the old thinking of First World versus Third World, developed as against developing countries no longer make sense as contrasting categories. It is the global networked digital capitalism that has occasioned this commodification of communication and as Winseck (2002, 28) observes, "networks are powerful technologies of discrimination, able to switch nodes on and off on the global grid with extraordinary precision." Consequently old thinking of international communication that fed the diplomatic mill of NWICO at UNESCO have to be abandoned. The debates were occasioned by flows and not digital hubs and connections.

The contemporary scene is characterized by "switched on" and "switched off" regions of the world. Thus in the new ecology of transnational communications, nodal points and tributary networks connect not only rich countries in the North, but scattered business districts in the South (Winseck 2002; Castells 1996; Sassen 1999). If this scenario is correct, then we can interpret the outcome of World Bank/IMF supervised SAP and telecom reforms in Ghana that tend to redefine the relationship between communication and the individual/community as part of the global attempt to connect and disconnect different parts of the nation. The rich business districts of Accra get connected while the hinterland, populated by people with no purchasing power, gets disconnected.

# Telecom Regulation, the Postcolonial State and Big Business in Ghana

This chapter interrogates contemporary telecommunication policy practices of the Ghanaian state. The rise of the global digital economy has transformed the hitherto uninteresting telecommunication sector in developing countries to a steamy and juicy pie that attracts the attention of big business, the expertise and finance of international capital, as well as local businesses. In its bid to increase phone access, the postcolonial state in Ghana, under the tutelage of the organizations such as the World Bank has embarked on setting in place a new regime of liberalized and privatized telecom to allow investors into the sector. A new regulatory agency, National Communication Authority has been put in place to independently oversee the sector. But can the state and its purportedly independent regulator face up to the challenges and the temptations of the new digital economy? What are the motives of the policy choices made? What are the forces that shape policy trajectory? These are some of the questions discussed in this chapter as it tells the story of the vagaries of policy action in the apparently indomitable new world of telecom politics in Ghana.

Total privatization of telecommunication does not always translate to increased access to telecom services because it is just matter of transfer of ownership (Winseck 2002, 26; Melody 1999, 14; Hamelink 2001, 400). Apart from this fact that has been confirmed by experience of earlier privatized telecom sectors in Latin America, the idea of national sovereignty has also been a determining factor in the reluctance of many African and Arab countries from total privatization of their networks. National telecom networks in developing countries have often been articulated as symbolizing the nation. And this is evident in the parliamentary debates in Ghana leading to the inauguration of deregulation and piecemeal privatization in Ghana. During the debates in 1994, an MP posed a caution to the house that Ghana Telecom "is a symbol of national sovereignty and that any communication policy should aim at protecting it."[1]

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[1]  MP for Ejura-Sekyedumasi, Peter Boakye-Ansah, Parliamentary Debates Official Reports for 12 December 1994 col. 1387.

This fear of alienating the people and making them to feel a sense of national loss may have accounted for why Ghana did not totally privatize, but rather opted for gradual private sector participation. As Winseck explains, this option of telecom restructuring testifies to the fact that the global dogma of deregulation in the 1980s and 1990s is being reversed. The emerging consensus is that "strong governance regimes are vital pillars of telecommunications policy reform" (2002, 26). But is the postcolonial state capable of setting up an effective regulatory mechanism? The following section will discuss the processes leading to the setting up of the national regulatory agency for communication. Then I will proceed to look at some of the sources of pressures on the state that make the quest for a strong telecom governance regime remain a phantom.

## The Genesis of the National Communication Authority

The National Communications Authority (NCA) was established by an Act of Parliament, The NCA Act 524, 1996 as part of the Ghana government's Telecom Sector Reform Policy implemented in 1996 to introduce privatization, liberalization and controlled competition into the telecommunications industry for its accelerated improvement and expansion. The setting up of NCA corresponds to a global push for separate national regulatory bodies different from the regular ministries or departments of state. In 1990, there were only 12 of such bodies in the world and by 1996 the NCA became one of 53 in the world. The figure rose to 101 by 2000 (ITU 2001). This development is graphically represented in the figure 1 below.
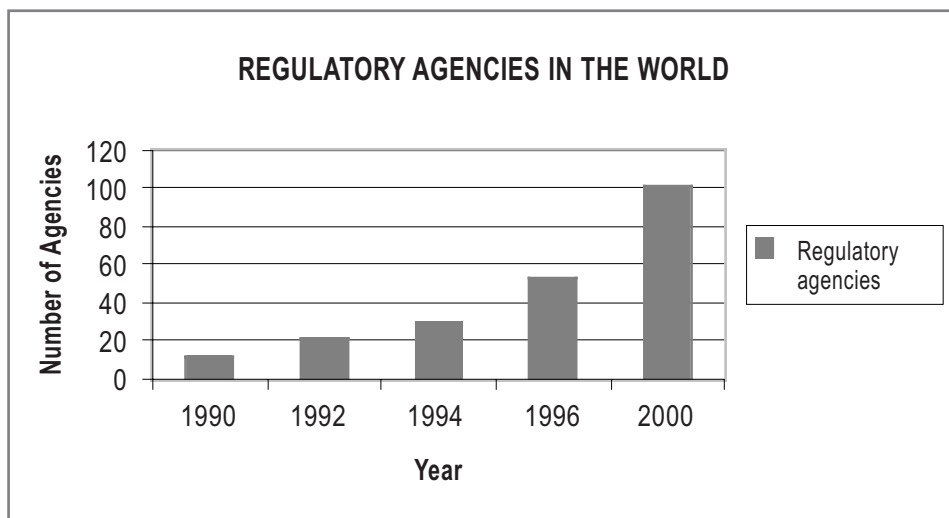


**Figure 1** Regulatory Agencies in the World.
Source: *Trends in Telecommunication Reform: Interconnection Regulation*, Geneva: ITU (2001)

Ghana's NCA has the regulatory responsibility of ensuring a level playing field in the industry and the attainment of public policy goals in communications. Specifically, its functions include the regulation of communications by wire, cable, radio, television, satellite and other related technologies in Ghana. According to Samarajiva (2001) national regulatory agencies such as NCA emerged as part of the global demand for the creation of independent, non-arbitrary and consistent decision-making agencies to guarantee stable environment for long-term investment in the telecom sector.

The NCA act defines the areas this regulatory body must work as:
i)   setting technical standards;
ii)  license service providers;
iii) provide guidelines on tariffs chargeable for services;
iv)  monitor the quality of service providers and initiate corrective action where necessary;
v)   set terms and guidelines for interconnection of the different networks;
vi)  consider complaints from telecom users and take corrective action where necessary;
vii) control the assignment and use of the radio frequency spectrum;
viii) resolve disputes between service providers and between service providers and customers;
ix)  control the national numbering plan;
x)   control the importation and use of types of communication equipment; and last but not the least;
xi)  advice the Minister of Communications on policy formulation and development strategies of the communications industry.[2]

Until the formation of the NCA with such a mandate, the National Frequency Registration and Control Board (NFRCB) administered the electro-magnetic spectrum. Telecom regulatory issues before the constituting of the NCA fell under the purview of the Ghana Posts and Telecommunications Corporation (P&T). The NFRCB was abolished to give way for the NCA while telecom service provision was separated from telecom regulation.

Administratively, the NCA has four directorates with a Director General as the overseer. These are Frequency Management, Regulation and Licensing, Legal, and Finance and Administration. In the absence of the Board of Directors for the NCA, the Director General is answerable to the Minister of Communication. In all respect, the NCA act has all the trappings of power that parliament found it fit to endow a sensitive organization such as the national communication regulator. In formulating the bill the government frequently made reference to the FCC in the USA, CRTC in Canada and Oftel of the UK as systems of regulation that it took inspiration from. A look at the trajectory of the bill in coming to law suggests that the parliamentary process was not an easy one. The bill made its first appearance in parliament on November 15, 1994,[3] and for the next two years, it made its way in and out of parliament, passed by the house but denied presidential assent because some sections of the bill needed amendment.

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2   The National Communications Authority Act 524 (1996), Accra: Assembly Press.
3   Parliamentary Debates: Official Report for Tuesday, 15th November 1994, col. 574.

A revised bill was re-introduced into parliament and then later passed into law two years after it was first drafted. A pending litigation at the Supreme Court on the constitutionality of a police action in shutting down a radio station that was broadcasting on an unregistered frequency contributed to a delay in the 1996 re-introduction of the bill in parliament. A legal lacuna had been created during the period immediately after the adoption of the 1992 constitution and before the passing of the NCA bill into law. The 1992 constitution had clearly entrenched media freedoms provisions in the following terms: "There shall be no impediments to the establishment of private press or media; and in particular, there shall be no law requiring any person to obtain a license as a prerequisite to the establishment or operation of a newspaper, journal or other media for mass communication or information" (Chapter 12 article162 Sect. 3). Armed with this particular article, some legal scholars argued that it served as a basis for setting up a radio without necessarily acquiring a license. A new private broadcasting station Radio Eye, run by Independent Media Corporation of Ghana (IMCG) took advantage of this period of legal limbo and started broadcasting without approval from government. The police traced the location of the transmitters and confiscated them. The IMCG then took the matter to the Supreme Court. Thus when the office of the president was ready to re-introduce the bill to parliament in 1996, it had to wait for the Supreme Court to dispense with the case before it put the bill before parliament. There was a theoretical possibility, at least, that the Supreme Court's interpretation of the constitution could render portions of the draft as being in conflict with the constitution. Fortunately for the government, the July 23 1996 ruling of the court upheld the government's right to police the radio spectrum as an act of ensuring sanity in the airwaves and not as an act of controlling speech or the media. The ruling was based on a qualifying article in the same chapter of the constitution that guaranteed media freedoms. That qualifying article limited the media freedoms in preference for "laws that are reasonably required in the interest of national security, public order, public morality and for the purpose of protecting the reputations, rights and freedoms of other persons" (Chapter 12 article 164).

A very notable feature of the NCA bill was the level of input from stakeholders outside government into the making of the bill. Inputs were solicited from the organizations that were going to be structurally affected by the passage of the bill. These included the Posts and Telecommunications Corporation, which was going to be split into two; the Ghana Broadcasting Corporation, which was going to lose its unchecked freedom over the choice of frequencies to broadcast; the National Frequency Registration and Control Board (NFRCB), which was going to be dissolved; and the National Media Commission, which had contemplated the idea of being the appropriate organization to regulate frequencies for broadcasting on the dissolution of the NFRCB. All these organizations made representations before the Parliamentary Committee on Transport and Communications to make submissions. Millicom Ghana Ltd, a local subsidiary of Millicom Cellular International (MCI), which was then the only provider of mobile telephone services in the country, also made a submission to the parliament committee.

On the side of civil society, the School of Communication Studies of the University of Ghana, the Ghana Journalists Association, Private Newspaper Publishers Associations, and

The Independent Media Corporation of Ghana (IMCG) all made representations to the parliamentary committee. The IMCG, which is now defunct, was then seen as a national advocate of free media following its testing of the limits of the law by taking the police to the Supreme Court. Two individuals, one Dr. BDK Henaku of the University of Leiden Institute of Law, and Mr. Ohene Ntow, a local journalist also made individual submissions. Arguably, such a spectrum of inputs from state and civil society organization can be considered comprehensive going by the country's previous experience. The solicitation for inputs somehow is an indication of the place that telecom, broadcasting and communication issues in general are central to the nationalist imagination.

When the bill made its second trip to the parliament, it was swiftly passed in 1996, but no Board of Directors was constituted until December 2000 when the NDC government was left with only a week to leave office following its defeat in the general elections. The outgoing Minister of Communications, John Mahama apparently appointed himself chairman of the board, and then swore into office the members of the board. An Accra newspaper described the action of the outgoing minister in the following terms:

> One of the most bizarre moves by the departing government of the NDC was the last minute appointment it made to the National Communication Authority (NCA). It was a highly suspicious move that was so audacious in its brazenness that, the NDC could only have taken such a decision to cover up some misdeeds"[4]

But more worrying was the fact that the NCA was made to operate for four years without a board of directors. And worse still with a director-general in acting capacity. It has been virtually impossible to find out to what extent the NCA's expected position as an independent regulator was compromised because of the lack of a transparent regime of operations. But given a scenario of an absent board of directors, which is expected to approve decisions of the director-general, and also the absence of a substantive director-general, it stands to reason that the NCA was more or less an extension of the Ministry of Communications. Thus making the Accra daily's allegation a probable one.

Once the new NPP government assumed office, one of the first policy decisions it took was to reverse the appointment and reconstitute the board. But then again, in a ridiculous turn of events, it appointed the new Minister of Communication as temporary board chairman, a temporary position that lasted for more than a year. Various actors in the telecom sector raised objections to the appointment of a government minister as board chairman of a regulatory agency that is expected to be independent. Samarajiva (2001, 2) has observed that in many developing countries, governments are wary of losing control of what they consider to be legitimate government business to newly formed independent regulatory agencies. He cites a similar story in Sri Lanka when the government between 1991 to 1996, was also reluctant to respect the independence of the regulatory agency even when well thought out legislation was put in place.

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[4]   "Messy, Messy, Messy, NCA!" by Haruna Attah *Accra Mail* Vol. 2 No. 113 February 15, 2001.

The NCA act clearly specifies that it is only when there is no board of directors that the director-general of NCA should be answerable to the minister. The only regular relationship between the ministry of communications and the NCA is an advisory one on matters about policy. No one has taken the step so far to go to court to question the legality of a minister of communications doubling as the NCA board chairman, but one consistent critic of the minister's appointment is a local IT specialist, Dr. Amos Anyimadu. In a newspaper interview, he dismissed the minister's explanation that it is a regular practice in countries such as Morocco that the sector minister presides over the board. "He should resign. It is doing a great damage. I have read his (Minister's) explanation very closely .... The big question they are going to ask is whether the regulatory organ is independent or not. If you have a Minister in the chair then it's going to be difficult to say that it's independent."[5]

Why was the previous government reluctant to set up a board of directors to augment the independence of the NCA and only had to do so when it was leaving office? Why is the new government reluctant to give the regulatory agency the independence it deserves by appointing a separate board chairman? By appointing the minister as the chair over the board of directors, the NPP government more or less renders the appointment of the board in the first place an exercise in futility, making it have control over who gets a license to broadcast, and who gets to take part in the telecom business. When the idea of setting up NCA was introduced to parliament for the first time in 1994, the then Minister of Transport and Communications of the former NDC government, Edward Salia premised the need for the setting up of the national regulator on the rhetoric of independence from the state. "Mr. Speaker," the minister would argue, "the National Communications Authority Bill has been designed that it will offer transparency in the regulations of telecommunication services as well as in the provision of mass communications. Contrary to popular but uninformed opinion, the National Communications Authority is not supposed to be at the beck and call of any Minister. It is an independent body and for the first time it will be able to administer telecommunications as well as the broadcast sector and give individuals the opportunity even to go to court when they are dissatisfied with the behaviour of the National Communications Authority."[6] If such were the founding ideas behind the setting up of the NCA, why would the state turn around and subvert the very dream of independent and strong regulator?

The lure of controlling broadcasting frequencies is a likely source of attraction to both of the two governments that the country has experienced so far. During the first round of debates of the NCA bill in parliament, some members called for a new bill that would spell out the modalities for the allocation of frequencies. But this was not the road taken. The politicization of NCA and the State's persistent failure to honor the independence of the regulator would probably have diminished if the process of frequency allocation were made transparent with a more comprehensive legislation as some MPs even from the side of the

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[5]   *Accra Mail* "Telenor Ok, But Minister Must Leave NCA Alone" 12 July 2002 available at:  http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=25592
[6]   Parliamentary Debates: Official Report for Friday, 9th December 1994, col. 1294 and for Friday 25th October, 1996, col. 484.

ruling government then suggested.[7] But above all, my argument is that because the telecom sector remains the most sensitive sector and arguably the richest sector of the economy, (now that the gold mines have been privatized) the state is reluctant to lose control of the NCA. The NCA is not an issue one can easily solicit opinion on at the Ministry of Communications and Technology in Accra, as my experience there showed. But a very senior public servant at the ministry will only informally tell me that the minister's appointment to the NCA board is to help strengthen the operations of the regulatory agency. If so, then should we be looking out for a strong NCA as the telecom policeman in Ghana?

## Weak Regulatory Regime: The Ghana Telecom Politics

From the legal point of view, the NCA is a government initiative, or more precisely, a state initiative. After all it was the executive branch of government that introduced the bill to parliament to bring it into being. But that would be a naive view given the fact that the entire project of telecom liberalization and privatization, is part of a comprehensive program of economic restructuring that the World Bank and IMF forced on the country to prevent the state from financial insolvency. But the very idea of telecom restructuring, as I have previously discussed, was a World Bank initiative, forced down on the throat of the postcolonial state, as one can gather from the SAP process and World Bank publications such as Mustafa et al. (1997) As it will turn out, after the state bared its chest out to display a semblance of legitimacy and observance of rule of law by sending a bill through the legislature and passing it into law, the World Bank will be the main driving force in the setting up of even the NCA. During my investigations at the NCA in Accra, I found out that even the location and the decision to acquire a rented building to house the NCA was largely taken by the office of the World Bank Country Representative in Accra.[8]

As part of the strategies for realizing the Telecom Sector Reform Policy objectives, the market model designed for the Ghana telecom sector was a duopoly with the privatized Ghana Telecom and WESTEL, an American telecom company with local partners being the two actors in the market. GT's strategic investor was G-Com Ltd., which outbid companies like AT&T and paid 38 million US dollars for a 30% share of the 127 million dollar GT. G-Com is a consortium of four companies, with Telekom Malaysia owning 85% shares. The other three are Sulana Electric, a local company 5%, NCS, a local company 5% and Giant International 5%. Such a composition made Telekom Malaysia to be synonymous with G-Com, especially in the Ghanaian media. As part of the contractual agreement between Ghana Government and G-Com, the latter was given management and technical consultancy responsibility over GT. Despite its dominant 70 percent ownership, Ghana government gave up the management of

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[7]   The NDC MP for Ejura Sekyedumasi, Hon. Peter Boakye-Ansah was particularly forceful on this. See Parliamentary Debates: Official Report for Monday 12th December 1994, col. 1390.

[8]   A senior executive official of the NCA and a board member both separately confirmed this to me in interviews. Each requested absolute anonymity.

GT to the Malaysians. It also had three while Telekom Malaysia through G-Com had four representations on the board of directors of GT. By the end of 2000, two of the three Ghanaians on the board resigned without publicly giving reasons. The NDC government strangely did not replace them, and as a result gave the Malaysians a blank cheque over GT; a decision that will later haunt it when it loses elections in December 2000.

When the NPP formed the new government in January 2001, it renegotiated the terms of the composition of the board of directors with the Malaysians and increased government representation to six to reflect its dominant share in GT. In February 2002 on the expiration of the original contract that the previous government signed with the Malaysians, the NPP government refused to renew the contract alleging that Telekom Malaysia had not lived up to its contractual requirement to install 400,000 additional lines by 2002 to the existing 80,000 in 1997. In actual fact, the company could not provide even half of what was required. It provided 160,000 instead of the 400,000 it had promised, falling short by 240,000[9]. Nonetheless the performance of Telekom Malaysia has been considered impressive by John Mahama[10], Minister of Communication (1996 – 2000). The following table shows the basis of his appreciation:

**Table 4**    showing the progress made in the provision of phones. The year 1997 marks the beginning of Telekom Malaysia's takeover of GT management for a contract period of 5 years.

| Year | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Fixed Phones | 50, 007 | 63, 067 | 77, 886 | 100, 932 | 133, 396 | 158,398 | 201, 148 | 242,122 |
| Percentage Growth | | | | 29.59 | 32.2 | 18.7 | 27 | 20.2 |
| Pay Phones | 26 | 30 | 453 | 500 | 1, 815 | 3, 044 | 3, 180 | 4, 321 |
| Percentage Growth | | | | 10.4 | 263 | 67.7 | 4.47 | 35.9 |
| Phone Per 100 | 0.3 | 0.37 | 0.44 | 0.57 | 0.72 | 0.81 | 1.09 | 1.31 |

(Source of data: Chief Marketing Officer of GT, Muinnudin Mohamed in Accra).

9    Chief Marketing Officer of GT, Muinnudin Mohamed in Accra, June 2002
10   Ghanaweb.com news Report "Minister lauds private telecom sector" (18th May 1999) available at http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=6560.

The statistics look impressive. But when plotted against the fact that the Malaysian management was supposed to lead GT to provide 400, 000 new lines in five years, instead of 160, 000, the picture of an abysmal failure of the much touted private sector led development becomes clearer. The graph makes the point:
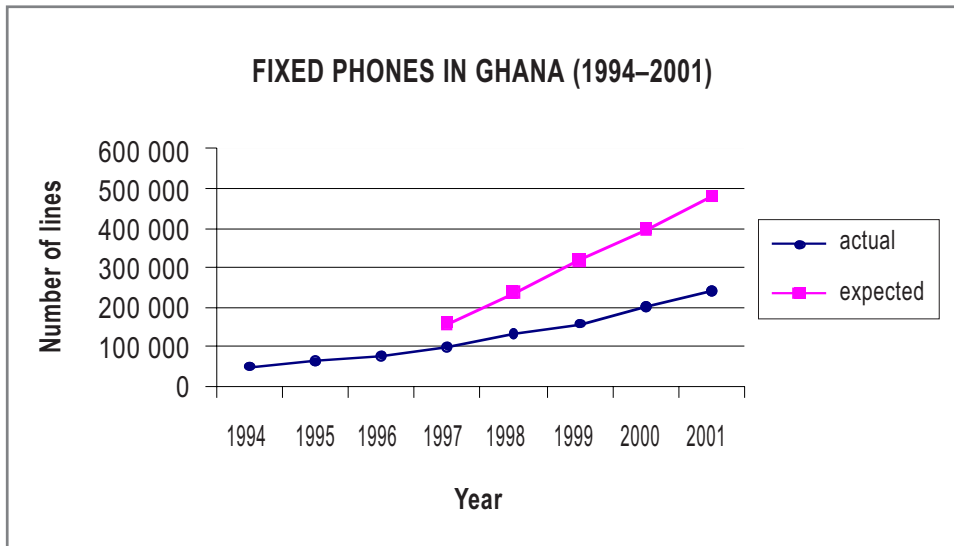
**FIXED PHONES IN GHANA (1994–2001)**



**Figure 2**   The Actual and Expected Growth in Fixed Phone Lines in Ghana 1994–2001.

Much of the intellectual foundations of Ghana's telecom reforms can be traced to the World Bank publication (Mustafa et al 1997) on telecom reforms in sub-Sahara Africa, which I discussed in the previous chapter. The main reasons the World Bank report gives for the separation of posts from telecom include that when telecom stands alone, it will be better placed to attract the private sector, capital and management. In the Ghanaian experience, Telekom Malaysia, which became the "strategic investor" in Ghana Telecom and took over its management, actually did not bring in the expected capital. The Malaysian Managing Director of Ghana Telecom, Dato Abdul Mallek Mohamed was very emphatic in a newspaper interview in Accra in October 2001 that G-Com, which fronts for Telekom Malaysia, was not required under the contractual agreement of Ghana government to invest in GT. "Our role was basically to help out in the development of the industry. Apart from what we paid in equity, no other condition on capital was stated."[11] Meanwhile four years earlier, when the government was

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[11]   "NDC Sold Ghana Telecom Without Capital Input" available at: http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=18568.

trumpeting the World Bank recommendations for separating telecom for privatization, it said the strategic investor would bring in needed cash to invest and expand the telecom infrastructure. "The reform policy seeks to strengthen *Ghana Telecom* through the engagement of a strategic investor to bring into the company finance, infrastructure and management expertise" the NDPC stated in its national development blueprint (*Ghana-Vision* 2020 1997, 176). The Ghana government document that announced the sale process also categorically indicated the attraction of foreign capital as the reason for the sale (*Telecommunications in Ghana* 1996). Who is speaking the truth: the Malaysians or the documents announcing the sale? One may not be able to tell. But what we do know is that the neither G-Com nor Telekom Malaysia brought in additional financial investment into the sector apart from the share prices they paid, which was received as government revenue and not financial investment for GT. And the NDC government never faulted the Malaysians on this score.

Much as the telecom sector has now become the hot cake for investors, what is clear is that investors would not easily go to Ghana to pump in their monies as both the World Bank recommendations and the *Ghana Vision 2020* plan sought to create as part of their arguments for privatization. Garnham's argument raised in the previous chapter is relevant here. He argues that the telecom sector has a "path dependent inertia in the system" (Garnham 2000, 49) making the exit option a rather difficult one. Thus foreign telecom investors are not willing to pump in their capital into the Ghanaian industry because it implies long-term commitment, which they may not be ready to settle for. This is a point the World Bank will not willingly point out in its pontification about privatization.

More so, the woefully inadequate performance of G-Com in meeting the 400,000 new lines target for which it was pampered and coddled with control over management and technical consultancy, testifies to the failure of the experiment with the private sector-led development in telecom industry in developing countries. In the World Bank recommendations, the private sector is touted as the magic wand for the telecom problems of developing countries. But as the Ghanaian experience with G-Com and WESTEL, which I will discuss shortly, show, when it comes to plain old telephones (POTS) the private sector is no better than the time tested public or natural monopoly arrangement that has now come under assault. When I discussed the World Bank recommendations in the previous chapter, I pointed out that the bank mixed up the experiences of two conjunctures, by applying the contemporary policy practices in Europe and North America to the basic needs requirements of sub-Sahara Africa. The former have comprehensive POTS penetration and are now regulating value-added services and internet, which are the key issues of digital capitalism. The latter are still battling with how to reach out to the majority of the population with just a basic phone line, a feat that was accomplished only under public or private natural monopolies in Europe and North America.

There are two issues that I want to raise here for discussion. In the first place when the telecom was to be privatized, the lure of attracting more foreign financial investors was used to defend the reason for selling out part of GT. Both the World Bank and the government invoked that justification for the sale. But in actual fact, that never materialized. It was even not a condition for the handing over of GT to the Malaysians, whose G-Com was only a minority

holder in GT. Why did the state put up such performance, which smacks of lack of due diligence and transparency?

The irony of the poor performance of G-Com is that it took over GT against a particularly rosy milieu. First, the increase in phone penetration starting from 1997 is attributable more to the specificity of the contemporary conjuncture than to the wizardry of the privatized telecom company. The conjuncture in question has certain characteristics that must be noted: Cheaper digital technology, with the increasing affordability of international communication, combined with an increasing number of Ghanaians abroad means that this period will witness a dramatic increase in international phone calls, never experienced in Ghana before. Accurate statistics on the number of Ghanaians abroad is not available. But an estimated two percent of the population currently lives abroad[12]. The number in New York alone is said to have increased by 220 percent from mid 1990 to late 1990s. In 1999, remittances from individual Ghanaians living abroad was said to be the second major source of direct hard currency flows into the Ghanaian economy, outstripping cocoa for the first time and being second only to gold exports. The government, according to Ghana's High Commissioner to London, Isaac Osei, expects that the remittances could reach one billion US dollars annually soon, with that of January to September 2002 alone standing at 530 million US dollars[13]. This development implies a dramatic growth in international telephony, which accounts for the major source of revenue for GT. While it was not possible to come by figures on the percentage of GT's revenue from international telephony, the fact that the figure was 68% in 1995 should give us an idea (*Telecommunications in Ghana* 1996, 2). In 1997, the World Bank reported that revenue per mainline in sub-Sahara Africa was far above the world average. For every mainline, the annual revenue is 1,225 US dollars compared to the international average of 735 US dollars (Mustafa et. al. 1997, 2). With such a juicy share of the market, GT, with WESTEL, monopolized the sector for the five-year period as part of the terms of the contract with the Ghana government. In view of these advantages, the tendency to credit the growth in telecom services to the private sector at the corporate level is an exaggeration.

The second factor that I want to point out is that before GT was packaged and sold out, its twin unit, Ghana Postal Service was considered a drain on the income that came from telecom. The postal unit was severed because it would not attract cherry picking private sector. In addition the state funded a massive rehabilitation exercise that was virtually ready to take-off and deliver unprecedented number of phone lines. And only then was the private sector called in to take over. Thus the 160,000 new phone lines is partly attributable to the state's initial involvement by way of pre-liberalization investment, than the efficiency of the private sector. In addition, the government allowed the liberalized GT to fix more realistic tariffs thereby allowing the new GT to be able to function in a privileged position that when it was coupled with Ghana Postal Service.

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[12]  http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/foreign_affairs/gh_abroad.php
[13]  "Government Appreciates Remittances of Ghanaians Abroad" sourced from the Ghana High Commissioner in London. Available at: http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=30765.

Estimates about the extent of state funding of the massive rehabilitation of GT before it was handed over to the private sector were not immediately available when I made contacts at both the Ministry of Communications and GT in Accra. But looking at the parliamentary proceedings leading to the liberalization of the sector, one gets the impression that MPs who were unenthusiastic about the delivery of GT to the private sector were frequently making reference to the state funded investment in modernizing GT. " Presently they have modernized the human resources being developed (sic) and they are reaching out to the rural areas and the district capitals so that any introduction of competitiveness in the name of liberalization will not augur well for all the investment we have put in it."[14]

When the NPP won the December 2000 elections to form a government, it made it clear that it did not appreciate the contractual arrangement between G-Com and Ghana government over the takeover of GT. Even while in opposition, the NPP always insisted that the arrangement was a sellout to foreigners, highlighting the nationalist rhetoric. You can always count on resonating with the feelings of the masses when you articulate a public issue, either as a policy maker or a policy watcher, along the binary of "us" against "them" logic of nationalist rhetoric. And the NPP did not have a problem getting supporters on this note. Part of the NPP argument was that it was highly unusual for a shareholder to take over management with only 30 percent ownership. Thus when the first five-year exclusivity period for fixed line and international telephony was due for renewal in February 2002, the NPP government declined and abrogated the original contract that gave G-COM management responsibility over GT.

A Deputy Director of Administration at the Ministry of Communications and Technology, who requests anonymity, told me the position of the new administration was that there were lots of obscure aspects of the original contract with the previous government that had to be made clear. And attempts to re-negotiate the terms of contract and the re-composition of the board of GT to reflect the ownership share and structure found an unco-operative G-Com. The re-negotiation would also have covered mechanism for measuring performance, capital injection and a review of the status of the two other shareholders of G-Com that owned the 30 percent stake in GT. The government had therefore decided to abrogate the contract entirely and look for a new strategic partner while G-Com still maintained its 30 percent ownership. But even before the government found a new strategic investor, Telekom Malaysia announced it would offload its 25.5 percent shares G-Com holding in GT[15]. As at November 2002, the other minority partners in G-Com that add up to make the 30 percent had not publicly stated their intentions.

The official discourse against the previous government contractual arrangements with G-Com and GT was often articulated at two levels. First is what I will call the *malaysianization* of GT, which was often tied to the idea of foreign domination. The second level was that of the level of "expert advise" that was against the idea of duopoly and the need to sell more government shares in GT. The first level of discourse was already the language of the

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[14]   Parliamentary Debates, Official Reports for 12 December 1994, col. 1388.
[15]   A Reuters business news report of 27th February, 2002.

opposition political parties and the NPP when it was in opposition. The argument of the opposition parties then was that when they come to power they would ensure that GT is returned to Ghanaians. The leader of United Ghana Movement (UGM), Charles Wereko-Brobby, would for instance tell Ghanaians: "We believe that Malaysian holding of GT is no good investment as they are still struggling to build their own economy, …. Moreover, Malaysians will not allow foreigners that advantage in their own country."[16] And he was not alone.

But such a *malaysianization* of discourse on national communication policy had a limitation. The understanding that telecom needed an intensity of capital input that could not be mobilized locally seem to have sunk in for those less passionate about nationalist rhetoric. And they appear to be in the majority. The idea of privatization of telecom, even if it meant with a nationalist touch, therefore seem to have always been a consensus between the main political parties, especially, the NDC and the NPP. The anti-privatization group that seemed to have been interested only in questioning the privatization process just because the Malaysians are on the scene, soon died out when the new NPP government in late 2001 announced that GT was part of 15 State-owned business to be privatized to raise 50 million US dollars to finance development projects.[17] This was in apparent reference to the government 70% share on GT.

The NPP government, apart from announcing its plans to sell government's 70 percent shares also invited bids for a new strategic investor into the sector. Telenor, the Norwegian national operator won and as at November 2002, the details of the arrangements were yet to be finalized and made public.

If the NPP honors it's word to sell the entire state holding on GT, it would have been the first sub-Saharan government to do so. For the idea of partial privatization seem to have been the standard practice following the experience that total privatization do not necessary lead to increased telecom access. What motivates the state in going ahead to sell the 70 percent share? According to the official argument, the offloading of the shares and the sale of other state-owned enterprises will help it generate money for development projects[18]. But is it? We have to look elsewhere to find out why?

A World Bank/IDA/IFC Country Assessment Strategy on Ghana for the year 2000 clearly states that as part of the project to redefine the role of the state in Ghana, the state has to give up its interests in non-public goods, including the media and telecom. "The main factor behind Ghana's relatively low marks on structural reforms, as measured by several indicators of the World Bank, in spite of its early adjustment program, is either excessive state involvement in the economy, or the consequences of that involvement," the Bank Group adds (World Bank 2000a, 12). It therefore appears that the pressure to sell the rest of GT is part

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[16] GNA report " We'll buy Ghana Telecom back – UGM" 24 October 2000.
[17] GNA report "Fifteen State Owned Enterprises To Be Divested" 12th September 2001 available at: http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=18037.
[18] Ibid.

of the pressure from the so-called Ghana's development partners on the state to disengage despite the clear poor performance of the private sector in the last five years.

The pressure to sell state holdings appears to be driven by ideological commitment to the market than by good example of successful market operations. The excuse to raise money for development projects is an excuse that the state offers to camouflage the pressures it gets from the World Bank and the IMF. The re-articulation of *development* as warranting the sale of state holdings in communication industries is a new practice that marks a departure from the colonial and early postcolonial articulations of development and nation building. What does this tell us about the State in development policy practice? What does this tell us about the pressures on the state?

## The WESTEL Saga: When Big Markets and Small States Collide

Another story that illustrates well the dicey new world of state in development is that of WESTEL, an American telecom company operating in Ghana. As part of the process of creating the duopoly in the telecom sector, the Ghana government in 1996 announced the offer for sale of a Second National Operator license (SNO license) for the provision of telecommunication services. As was the case with the GT license, the SNO would provide domestic and international telecom services. These included voice telephony, leased lines, public pay phones, telegraph and telex, data, mobile and value added services. Like the case of GT, the new SNO was to be given a 20-year initial period with the possibility of renewal at the end of the initial duration. But during the first five years these two were to have exclusivity over fixed line telecom services in the country. The SNO was to have the opportunity of providing services throughout the country (*Telecommunications in Ghana* 1996).

One of the signs of a weak and helpless regulatory regime in the telecom industry recently emerged when the president of Ghana, John Kufour, revealed that his government did not even know the names of the shareholders of WESTEL, the SNO.[19] WESTEL has two American shareholders who own 56 percent, one of them being Western Wireless. Meanwhile, the NCA had categorically stipulated the conditions under which a telecom company can be licensed to operate in Ghana. These include a mandatory dossier that contains company profile listing evidence of incorporation and certificate to commerce business, list of shareholders, technical and organizational capability and evidence of ability to perform such as agreement drawn up with principals and technical arrangements. Then again, when the Ministry of Communications announced the qualities of the prospective SNO in 1996, it added that due diligence will be done to ensure that the bidding process is transparent (*Telecommunications in Ghana* 1996). If what the president said is true and not a politically motivated statement to throw a jibe at the previous government under whose administration WESTEL was licensed

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[19] The President made the revelation when a deputy chief of mission at the US embassy in Accra called on him at his office on Wednesday 19th June 2002. *Daily Graphic* 20.June.2002 "Kufour to send protest letter to Bush."

to commerce business, then it means that WESTEL subverted the laws of Ghana on two instances, first at the office of the Register General, where WESTEL was supposed to have registered, and then at NCA. The Register General requires that all names of founding shareholders be made known before a certificate of incorporation can be issued. Assuming WESTEL produced a certificate, which no one at NCA was ready to confirm to me, then it got the license without following due process laid down by the state. And then again at the NCA, it displayed the same abuse of the rules and got away with it.

But the events leading to the president's admission of WESTEL's act of commission is even more damning on the ability of the state and the NCA to regulate the sector. It all started when WESTEL, failed to meet its contractual obligation of supplying 4,000 lines within five years. It could only deliver 2,000 lines and restricted itself to only the Accra and Tema Metropolitan areas where businesses are concentrated. The NCA responded by slapping a 70.5 million US dollar penalty on the company. In May 2002, at the celebration of the 34th World Telecommunications Day in Accra, the acting Director-General of NCA, J.R.K. Tannoh announced that his office will resort to a court action to compel WESTEL to pay, insisting that "We are mandated to instill discipline in the telecommunications sector to ensure that customers have value for money, and any operator who does not conform to the rules will have to be sanctioned."[20] These are strong words from a regulator not known for its ability to bite. WESTEL petitioned the Minister of Communication for moderation, but the minister insisted culpable WESTEL should dance to its own music.

While this drama was unfolding, I sampled opinion on some selected Ghanaians known locally as IT experts. I also talked to some journalists known for reporting on IT issues in the country. The impression I gathered was that the government wanted to use that penalty as an excuse and shut down WESTEL so that it will have the opportunity to advertise for a new SNO. "WESTEL is fronting for the NDC (former government) so the NPP want to disrupt it and then start all over with a new company" said Samuel Adjei, a computer programmer who is passionate about government legalization of VoIP. Apart from this conspiracy theory about the motive of NCA and the government in pursuing WESTEL with a penalty that would likely make the company file for bankruptcy, some sections of government had been calling for reverting to the old system of natural monopoly for the sector. That is asking WESTEL to pack and leave the sector to GT only. One person noted for this view was Senior Minister and Chairman of the Government Economic Management Team, Mr. J H. Mensah.

Mr. Mensah will publicly express his wish to see AT&T become the strategic investor in a GT with a natural monopoly. "I have a friend who worked with the American AT&T for many years, he is a very senior manager. On a visit I talked to him about inviting foreign partners into telecom here. He came here himself and decided that the Ghana market AT&T was not willing…from then on he talked to me, we have communicated and he is coming back to see me very soon because they have seen new potential in the market, so you know the companies are all making calculations."[21] The "new potential in the market" that the minister was

[20]   *Daily Graphic 13th May 2002 "National Communication Authority threatens to sue WESTEL."*
[21]   *Ghanaian Chronicle* 30th January 2002 "AT&T shows interest in Ghana Telecom."

talking of was the announcement that the government made to the effect that it would abrogate the GT agreement with G-Com (Telekom Malaysia).[22] G-Com had outbid AT&T in the initial privatization of GT five years earlier. What one quickly gathers from the disclosure from Mr. Mensah, the senior minister is that the business of telecom regulation is no longer the exclusive business of the NCA. Nor is it now the ministerial responsibility of the sector ministry. This shows how murky the telecom policy scene is in Ghana. But that is not all the story.

As the clouds were gathering on WESTEL and the sword of Damocles was hanging over the company's head, Ghanaians least expected that the US government will intervene in a rather hawkish manner to "discipline" the anti-global market stance of the Ghana government. At least this is how the Americans interpreted the legitimate penalty on WESTEL. The US Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Market Access and Compliance, William Henry Lash III visited the country ostensibly to meet with government official and private sector businesses on trade between his country and Ghana. But he committed the undiplomatic practice of going on an Accra local FM station to lambaste the NPP government for its allegedly unfriendly attitude to foreign investors. Referring to the penalty on WESTEL, he accused the government of acting irrationally. The passion with which he attacked the government on radio made a lot of observers to conclude that Mr. Lash was purposely sent to Ghana to do a damage control for WESTEL and chose to play the role of the *agent provocateur*.

Mr. Lash's tantrums shocked the government, making president Kufour to announce that he was sending a protest letter to president Bush.[23] "Obviously, Mr. Lash lost his balance in talking the way he did," president Kufour would grumble. He said it is very strange for the US government to acknowledge the efforts his government was making to rebuild the shattered economy, only for Mr. Lash "to come here and make very disparaging remarks about the government and people of Ghana," adding, "we will not allow anybody to dictate to us on how to run our economy." The president was speaking to a US diplomat when the latter called at his office.[24]

What is revealing about this whole telecom disciplinary measure turned a diplomatic row is that the government announced shortly after the Lash attack that the president had personally intervened to reduce the WESTEL penalty from 70.5 million US dollars to 28 million US dollars. Whether this presidential pardon was done before or after the Lash visit is something I could not verify. But then it does show the status of the postcolonial state in telecom regulations when it comes to policing big business backed by an imperializing state in the form of United States. In all this process, the World Bank, known for having opinion on every policy issue on the economy never commented on the issue. But the president's unilateral action to reduce the penalty attracted negative comments from the local Ghanaian opposition and certain sections of the media.

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[22]  Ghanaweb.com Business News of 4th December 2001 "Malaysian Management Contract of Ghana Telecom to End Next Year" available at: http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=20047.
[23]  *Daily Graphic 13th May 2002 "National Communication Authority threatens to sue WESTEL."*
[24]  Ibid.

The main opposition NDC party issued a statement in Accra and condemned the president's unilateral action to waive more than half of the penalty. The statement signed by the Minority Chief Whip in parliament, Doe Adjaho stated: "It will appear that a pattern of executive interference in independent and autonomous institutions is being established …The NCA has commenced the process of imposing the full penalty of 71 million US dollars and has held a hearing on the matter at which WESTEL presented its case. While the process is ongoing, it will appear that the President has unilaterally negotiated a 50 million-dollar (sic) reduction of the penalty against the public interest."[25] At a public lecture organized by the Socialist Forum, a small but committed group of Marxists, in Accra, the Editor of an Accra Weekly, *The Insight*, Kwesi Pratt condemned the action of the president. The forum was attended by some key opposition figures, including a former presidential candidate, academics and workers. What was visibly clear was a sort of collective angst against big business. And one should expect such an atmosphere at such a Marxist gathering. But also, some of the people I talked to suggested that there was most likely a kind of international diplomatic arm-twisting involving the president and forcing him to intervene and act on behalf of the NCA. But this is not an allegation that one can easily verify when no one in government would comment. The story of WESTEL's intransigence is a case to show how the postcolonial state is at the mercy of the big business. Not only was it a clash between the state and a multinational company, it was a clash between the postcolonial state and an imperializing state (the US) with Lash acting as the *agent provocateur.*

## Millicom's Subversive Behavior

Ghana has four mobile telephone service operators. These are Mobitel, operated by Millicom Ghana Limited, a subsidiary of Millicom Internationale Cellular (MIC), Spacefon, operated by Scancom Ghana Limited, Celtel Ghana Limited with the fourth one being GT. Of all these, Millicom was the first to be licensed. Initially, fixed line operators (GT and WESTEL) were barred from taking part in mobile sector. But eventually, they were allowed participation. GT, capitalizing on its incumbency, easily became the dominant mobile service provider with its "OneTouch" service. The second most successful operator is Scancom, which operates the "Spacefon" service. When the competition became tough for the pioneer mobile service provider, Millicom Ghana, as most of its client migrated from its rather slow system to the comparatively better offers from GT and Scancom, Millicom promised to introduce a GSM (Global System for Mobile Communications) network system. The GSM is a digital telephony system that facilitates services such as global roaming and SMS (short messaging service).

Millicom went ahead and imported the equipment without acquiring authorization from the NCA. By law the national regulator must first approve all telecom equipment to be

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[25] "NDC Accuses the Executive of Arbitrary Use of Power" A Ghana News Agency Report on 25th June 2002. The actual reduction was 42 million and not 50 million dollars as claimed by the opposition.

imported into the country. When the equipment arrived at the port in Ghana, the NCA confiscated it. According to *Myghananews.com* Millicom Ghana, after failing to secure a GSM license and authorization to import the equipment, Millicom attempted to outwit the NCA by importing it under the guise of "filters" for existing analogue system[26]. The company had authorization to import the "filters" for the upgrading of its existing network as part of the frequency rationalization program of the NCA and the Ministry of Communications. Millicom, being the oldest player in the mobile telephony business in Ghana, having started operations in 1993, was apparently confident that it could pull the wool over the NCA. The truth is that NCA has a serious problem of lack of required manpower. But this time round, the national regulator was able to uncover the deception and fraud of Millicom and impounded the illegally imported equipment.

When I made inquiries at the NCA about why Millicom was denied the license to deploy GSM equipment in the first place, I was told Millicom had accumulated a huge debt in regulatory and other fees since 1995. My source, which prefers to be anonymous, told me the debt was about three million dollars. No one will officially confirm it at the NCA, nor at Millicom. My source, who happen to be a senior official at the NCA, said Millicom after being denied the permit on legitimate grounds, had resorted to lobbying senior government officials to prevail on the NCA to rescind its decision and grant it the permit. The Deputy Minister of Communications and Technology, John Achuliwor confirmed the lobbying effort of Millicom in an interview, but he would not elaborate.

Millicom was denied license to import the GSM equipment in 2000 when the NDC was the ruling political party. The December 2000 general elections brought a new party, the NPP into power. Just then, a vigilant NCA found Millicom culpable and confiscated the GSM equipment. The new government, without publicly commenting on the problems between Millicom and the NCA, intervened. In February 2002, it emerged that the Minister of Communications had started negotiations with Mobitel to resolve the issue. The outcome was that by June 2002, Millicom's GSM equipment was de-confiscated. In addition, it received authorization and license to operate it, if it paid a penalty of half a million US dollars. Millicom was also "expected to make a room available on your premises for the National Communications Authority (NCA) and/or security agencies to monitor the use of the equipment as and when necessary."[27]

The whole process leading to the resolution lacked transparency. In the first place, the total amount of unpaid regulatory fees was never made know to the public. All that we know is that Millicom had not paid since 1995. But on 26th June 2002, the Minister of Communications announced that Millicom had paid regulatory fees for 2001 and 2002 totaling 1.3 billion cedis (8,300 cedis was equal to 1US dollar then). He also disclosed Millicom had paid the half a million-dollar penalty[28]. What is not known is whether Millicom had paid the regulatory fees for 1995 to 2000, which it owed the country before the NPP government came to power.

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[26]  "Mobitel in Trouble" available at: http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=21818.
[27]  Letter from Minister of Communications and Technology to Millicom Ghana Limited.
[28]  "Mobitel Pays $0.5m penalty" in *Ghanaian Times* of 26th June 2002.

Given the record of deception and fraud that Millicom had displayed over the importation of the equipment and subsequent default in paying regulatory fees, one would expect a healthy distance between the government and the company. But two events will show otherwise. The first one was in June 2002. When Millicom was to officially launch its GSM network after paying the penalty, it was the Minister of Communications who was to do the launching![29] The second event was in November 2002, when the President and CEO of the parent Millicom Internationale Cellular, Mare Beuls, led a four-man delegation to the country, the doors of the President of Ghana were opened for him to pay a "courtesy call."

An independent observer of the scene that I have been trying to paint with the above narrative would think that given Millicom's attempt at deception and fraud by importing the GSM equipment without authorization, the government would not be that close to it. But both the President of the country and his Communications Minister would tend to develop a relationship of near conviviality with it. Such are the twists and turns of the state in the business of development.

## Implications for the Regulator, the State and Civil Society

The irony of fraudulence rewarded with conviviality with the state should not be missed in the Millicom saga just described. The agent provocateur Henry Lash's role in the service of WESTEL should also be remembered. The fact that Transnational companies have access to the highest levels of government at the same time that they are expected to obey the rules of NCA suggests that they are easily capable of subverting the NCA.

From the above discussion, what we see is a rather weak and dependent NCA and a State that is apparently helpless when it confronts the more sophisticated transnational capital in a rather sophisticated environment such as the emerging digital economy. The ambivalent and shady relationship between the state and capital to the detriment of civil society in Ghana is not a peculiar one. When Galtung discusses his communicative theory of the state, capital and civil society, he makes an interesting observation about the relationship between capital and the state. Galtung points out that the state is occupied by individuals who are susceptible to the attractions and temptations of offers from capital: "Capital will always want something from the State such as permissions and contracts, and Capital will be willing to pay a 'tip' for the service ranging from 15% or more" (Galtung 1999, 15). What Galtung is trying to explain is the misuse of the public power that the state affords its actors, for individual private profit. This interaction between capital and the state is not a novel development that is characteristic of developing countries. "As the modern state emerged from feudal social formations in Europe, the vassals and lords who became functionaries were still paid from below with products produced by the serfs, rather than from above with salaries financed from taxes paid

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[29]  *Ghanaian Times* 26th June 2002.

by those who work for a living…State and Capital merged at the highest levels, setting a pattern for money flowing easily from one pocket to other" (Galtung 1999, 15).

What we can learn from Galtung's exposition is that abuse of public power through the state in collaboration with capital has always been part of modernity. And if developing countries are experiencing it, it is because they have embarked on the path of modernization, with similar state/capital arrangements that the modern had. My project was not to embark on a research on corruption, nor am I absolutely sure that I have unearthed corrupt practices in the telecom policy scene. Rather, what was obvious was lack of transparency in the conducting of state affairs in matters relating to telecom in Ghana. The lack of transparency in the policy process raises suspicion on the motivation for state actors choices in the entire process of privatizing GT, the licensing of operators and the service providers, the setting of penalties and the process of resolving conflicts. Galtung argues that in state/capital encounters such as we have in Ghana, civil society emerges as the loser when a key democratic requirement such as transparency is absent in decision-making. "Only with transparency can everybody concerned know what is going on and make their own inputs. Communication without transparency is also known as lobbying and is the most important channel used by capital to reach all three branches of the state: executive, legislature and, more rarely the judiciary" (Galtung 1999, 14). But when it comes to telecom issues, transparency and inclusive procedures, as it were, are luxuries that cannot be dispensed in the developing countries. Samarajiva (2001, 7) attributes this predilection to secretive and authoritarian administrative cultures inherited from the old natural monopoly regime of Post and Telecommunications authorities.

Civil society has had little input in Ghana's telecom liberalization and privatization beyond the parliamentary debates on legislation on the sector. Apparently the assumption has been that once the right laws are put in place, everything else will roll out just fine. But such a trust in the institutions to deliver within the framework of the laws is a misplaced conception that underrates the fact that individuals occupy institutions. And in the scheme of things, the limits of institutional agency in the face of individual agency has been demonstrated by the conduct of the two ministers of communications belonging to two different governments. For instance, they both subverted the legislative quest to setup NCA as an independent regulator by appointing themselves to the chair of the board of directors.

One of the issues that emerged as I talked to various civil society groups was the dearth of knowledge about the intricacies and implications of policies that the government had decided on. Even the press limited itself to routine reporting of developments in the sector without an in-depth analytical focus. For instance when it emerged that the management of GT was given out to G-Com, (Telekom Malaysia) which only had 30 percent it raised little concerns in the media. Not that the Ghanaian press was not appalled by such an apparently fraudulent arrangement, as an NCA board member told me privately. Rather "the press simply lacks the expertise and technical know-how on telecom regulatory issues and IT," he added.

What has also emerged from my discussion of regulative issues is the lack of distinction between the executive branch of government and the NCA. For the president to take a unilateral decision on an issue that is being resolved by the purportedly independent NCA does

not augur well for the development of the national regulator as a strong policing agency within the periphery of the global digital economy.

Writing from the experience of being a former head of Sri Lanka's Telecom Regulatory Commission, as well as being a veteran theorist in international communication, Rohan Samarajiva (2001) notes that the relationship between the state and regulatory agencies worldwide, with the probable exception of the Nordic countries, have not been without problems of interference. He notes that President Bush' replacement of William Kennard as FCC chairman shortly after coming into office as president in January 2001, demonstrates the fact that "independence has subtle nuances, even in the country that invented the concept" (Samarajiva 2001, 4). But an independent regulator is fundamental to the realization of the objectives for which the new regulators in developing countries were put in place. Samarajiva makes a distinction between regulatory agencies in developed and developing democracies. In countries such as UK, Oftel is able to perform creditably even though it is not different from ordinary government departments in terms of organizational arrangements and financing.

But in countries where good governance is yet to be developed as a culture of the state, the national regulator badly needs a distance and insulation from the vagarish conduct of the state. Samarajiva argues that "A firewall to keep out the virus of bad governance" is needed in such countries because bad governance has its own logic, which ultimately undermines the independence and legitimacy of the regulator. And one of the most important foundations upon which effective regulation is carried out is legitimacy. Not legality, for that is what the legislative instrument setting up the agency already guarantees. Legitimacy is achieved when various constituents of the telecom sector tend to accept the authority of the regulator in matters of arbitration and even opinion. When such legitimacy is lacking, telecom operators are likely to challenge the authority of regulators by appealing to the executive, as we saw in the WESTEL example, or appealing to the judiciary by litigating decisions of the regulator at the courts. The Ghanaian experience where transparency is lacking in the execution of policy on telecom does not augur well for the development of the regulator as an effective institution. This is so because legitimacy comes with transparent operations. When legitimacy is lacking, corruption finds its way in surreptitiously. For as Samarajiva (2001, 6) argues, "in most developing countries corruption is an omnipresent subtext, making the integrity of regulatory staff all the more important."

One of the consequences of a weak regulatory regime as we have in Ghana is that the well-intentioned programs along universal and public service line suffer. For example, the Ghana Investment Fund for Telecommunications (GIFTEL) program, initiated by the NCA has never actually materialized. Under the GIFTEL program, started in 1997, licensed service providers in the country were to contribute one percent of net revenue to a fund to be used in financing communication services to the un-served areas (NCA 2001). GIFTEL became a lost dream as none of the service providers, both local and foreign, had bothered to respect its provisions.

# Digital Consumption in Accra

When I problematized commodification within the global context of telecom privatization in chapters six and seven, I argued along the Marxist perspective that the process of extending the rules of exchange value to previously excluded arenas of the nation-state suggests an undoing of the project of building the imagined community. That argument was premised on the fact that rules of exchange value have a logic of exclusion, which is counter to the project of nation building. The discussion considered the national community against the possible articulation of a common national imagining. Both at the theoretical and the policy level, especially in the area of broadcasting policy, the thinking and practice have been framed within the old paradigm of universal accessibility for a wider national constituent as part of the construction of the civic community. Such a task positioned the state as the primary bearer of the mandate of nation building called development, making market articulations of development a contestable scenario.

But as I have demonstrated and argued out in my discussion of broadcasting and telecom policy practices in Ghana, the conjuncture that defines the process of nation formation in the postcolony gives us a picture that does not fit into the normative framework that informs most of the articulations in the literature on development communication. The conjuncture, to recap, is characterized by the following elements among others: a weak communication regulatory agency, a vulnerable state at the mercy of international capital and a burgeoning regime of unregulated NGO activity within the postcolony and above all, a global environment of market hegemony. All these elements work in concert to overdetermine the trajectory of the postcolony; a trajectory that does not seem to promise the normative nation-state. Far from concluding that the nation state project is an unachievable one, I want to argue that it is the old normative thinking of a state with an exclusive mandate of development that is untenable because of the contemporary developments in the postcolony. We have to shift our gaze from the state to the market. And I will be making my argument under this chapter by

switching from the critical perspectives of political economy to a cultural studies approach. I will do that by focusing on the practice of digital consumption within the limits of urban life in Accra.

By digital consumption I mean the newly found culture of Internet cafes and mobile telephony that has emerged in recent times with the liberalization and privatization of the telecom sector in Ghana. It is a rather recent development, for as already indicated, the liberalization of the telecom sector started in 1996. And between then and 2002, the change has been dramatic if not revolutionary. Small scale actors in the private sector, who have no humanist responsibility of the type the state claims, have been able to democratize access to telecom services beyond the imagination of the state, but only within the urban economy of the nation. These small scale investors with a few who have multinational leanings, have been able to open up phone and Internet access through their phone shops/telecenters and Internet cafes in the Ghanaian urban landscape, with Accra being the location of most of them.

Such a shift in the appreciation of the process of commodification requires a less antagonistic approach to market and the very process of commodification. It will allow us to look at market from a different perspective. Apart from the processes of alienation and exclusion that market does to the national community, are there alternative arenas where we can appreciate it? Does the unleashing of market forces in the domestic economy engender new avenues of participation in the nation beyond the civic engagements with the state, which the traditional public sphere allows? Re-stated, does the alien rationality that commodification introduces into the community of citizens, transposing them into pockets of consumers have some qualities to be appreciated? Answering these questions requires that we take a new look at consumption, the commodity form and its symbolizing codes and how these relate to participation within the nation-state, or as I will argue, within the urban spaces of the nation-state.

Conceptually, "consumption" comes with an extra baggage; that is if one refuses to be "liberal" in the political economy of communication. The one, who practices consumption, "the consumer" has not had an appreciable career in the literature of traditional political economy. He has either been demonized or slighted as theoretically irrelevant until rescued by cultural studies as a self-affirming practice of participation. The apprehension that is registered against the consumer and the practice of consumption in materialist writings is justified sometimes against the backdrop of discourses about the *consumer* instead of the *public*. For instance, mark the language in the following key portion of Ghana's NCA act, which spells out the primary responsibility of the national regulator:

The Objects of the Authority are as follows:
a). to ensure there are provided throughout Ghana as far as practicable such communications services as are reasonably necessary to satisfy demand for the services;
b). to ensure that communications systems achieve the highest level of efficiency in the provision of communications services and are responsive to customer and community needs;

c). to promote fair competition among persons engaged in the provision of communication services;

d). to protect operators and consumers from unfair conduct of other operators with regard to quality of communication services and payment of tariffs in respect of the service;

e). to protect the interest of the consumers;

f). to facilitate the availability of quality equipment to consumers and operators… (NCA Act of 1996, page 4).

Nowhere does the law mention public or public interest as something that the regulator should ensure is respected. The public does not exist in the letter of the law. Thus invariably the NCA has no responsibility to ensure the public interest, for here, the *public* is presumed to be the *consumer*. Where the NCA is tasked to ensure a nationwide coverage as in (a) above, it ties it to the market requirements of demand and not on public need terms. Consumer interest therefore becomes the primary concern of the NCA and not public interest. Such a re-conceptualization of national constituents in a country such as Ghana is troubling. For, here, the minority enjoys telecom or can afford to enjoy telecom facilities as *consumers*. The majority, who still lacks access, can by no means be classified as consumers. You have to be a consumer to have rights of consumption. That means being placed within the circuits of capital, and not bracketed out before one can qualify as a consumer. In an economy, where the cost of an hour long local phone call is higher than the hourly minimum wage, or the cost of an hour long session of Internet surfing is about ten times higher than the hourly minimum wage, a large chunk of the population is cut out of the circuit of capital. They are better still retained as the *publics*, whose members have rights and interests to be taken care of by *public* institutions such as the NCA. Thus, the public interest is not the same as consumer interest, especially in countries with low-teledensity (Samarajiva 2001, 8).

It is such troubling forms of articulating the consumer and consumption at the policy level as shown in the NCA law that make materialist grounded theorists wary of celebrating consumption as an act of self affirmation. For instance Nicholas Garnham (1990 and 2001, 132-136) has consistently resisted such a theoretical overindulgence in the consumer as an independent actor and the object of his consumption as emanating from outside the system of commodity production and consumption itself. But in taking this turn towards an appreciation of consumption, I do not suggest a rejection of the relevance of *public* over the *consumer* interest. But rather, within the confines of urban life in Accra, consumption or more precisely, digital consumption is the new crave and is exhibited as a major practice of everyday life. It is significant to point out that the residents of Accra have a disproportionately large share of the nation's facilities on offer. In view of this, I am inclined towards looking at the ways digital consumption empowers within the context of urban life. I will use observational evidence and information gathered from interviews conducted during my research visit to Ghana from March 27 to July 31, 2002 to discuss the practice of digital consumption in the city of Accra. Specifically, I will look at the private sector initiative of telecenters or communication center outlets, and the popularization of mobile phone use.

## The Telecenter Movement

One of the fundamental changes that are as a result of liberalization of telecommunication from state monopoly and the consequent commodification of information is the popularization of the telecenter movement in many developing countries. Originally, it was in the quest to democratize access to ICTs that the idea of communalization of ICT use was put to practice in the form of a community center to house these facilities for use (Whyte 2000). This was evident in the British colonial policy on broadcasting in the Gold Coast and also in the early postcolonial Ghanaian state's attitude to radio and television. Because the implementation of the idea of telecenters take on different forms in different geographic regions of the developing world, it is difficult to settle on a single universally acceptable definition of this community facility. However, certain common characteristics can be spelt out. These include the physical location of all or a combination of the following to serve a particular community; telephone, fax, email, Internet; telemedicine, distance education, news distribution, audio-visual equipment and telecommuting. Telecenters have been variously called phone shops, telekiosks, telehouses, telecottages, community tele-service centers, multi-purpose community information and communication centers or community multimedia centers. Where the stock of the center is comprehensive, it is sometimes called multi-purpose community telecenter (MCT). But in Ghana, they are commonly called communication and business centers, though some NGO initiated ones prefer to call them community information centers (Fontaine and Foote 2002). As an information hub of deprived communities, successful telecenters can sometimes expand their services to include distance education, basic IT training, job shops and related community programs that are offered by traditional libraries in more endowed communities.

In the developed countries, where the idea of telecenter has its roots, the contemporary focus is on more advanced services such as Internet services and video conferencing and telecommuting. But for the developing world, a couple of phone lines and skeletal office equipment can sometimes pass for a telecenter. Jensen and Esterhuysen (2001, 3) provide a typology of telecenters in Africa. For them, the mosaic of telecenters can be put into four classes going by the level of their resources. These are Micro, Mini, Basic and Multi-purpose Telecenters. Micro telecenters usually offer payphones with a smart-card reader and a receipt printer, a computer hooked to the Internet through dial-up. They are often housed in small kiosks. Mini telecenters offer single phone line, possibly, a GSM cellular, a three-in-one scanner/printer/copier, a fax machine and a computer, sometimes with Internet access. Basic telecenter offer all the services of the first two, but with multiple access points. With a call management system, they are able to schedule clients to receive calls. The most comprehensive is the multi-purpose center. Many phone and Internet access points are provided. Calls can be made and received, and the secretariat services include lamination, meeting rooms and a tele-diagnostic and video conferencing room. Still and video cameras, and overhead projectors are provided on rental basis.

Given the potential of the concept in helping to democratize ICT access, international organizations such as UNESCO, ITU and Canada's IDRC have been active in the setting up of

pilot telecenter projects in Africa in particular. The focus of this international assistance has been particularly on Benin, Mozambique, Uganda, Mali and Tanzania and to some extent South Africa (Jensen and Esterhuysen 2001). In recent times, NGOs have started to turn their attention on assisting communities to setup telecenters of their own. Thus in general ownership can be private, in which case it is a profit-making venture, or public, which can either be government supported or donor sponsored. Jensen and Esterhuysen (2001) however point out that in most of the donor or government supported initiatives, the long-term objectives have been to ensure that the facility is self-sustaining through cost recovery mechanisms. In an era of state downsizing, many African government are reluctant to directly engage in the provision of telecenters. However South Africa provides a good example of state initiated telecenters. As part of the country's 1996 Telecommunications Act, Universal Service Agency was set up to promote the goals of universal access to ICTs. By the end of 2000, the agency had set up 65 telecenters for deprived communities in nine provinces of South Africa (Peter Benjamin 2001). And while the project faced a crisis of sustainability with only 38 percent operating profitably at the end of 2000, it remains the largest government sponsored initiative in the area of telecenters in Africa.

Just four decades ago when communication researchers and policy actors were battling with the task of democratizing media access, the model of communal access on which telecenters function were not in use, though television and radio consumption, as any visitor to most rural communities would have realized was a communal affair. What is worth noting is that apart from the cinema, most of the modernist communication technologies have an in-built logic of exclusive use either for the individual or for the family use. The telecenter model provides an opportunity to subvert this bias of the technologies. My argument is that the subjection of these modernist technologies that come with their individual atomistic logic of consumption to a communal one is an instance of the appropriation of the modern in the modernization process. But such an appropriation seems to be possible with digital technologies and not the old analogue one. Appropriation is not a blind adoption, but the subjection of the object to the material requirements of the agent within the defining circumstances of the conjuncture.


## Telecenters in Accra


In Ghana, the government has so far shied away from an intervention in the provision of telecenters as in the case of South Africa, even though the rural communities continue to be deprived of the benefit of ICTs beyond owning radio sets and on rare instances, TV sets. In the capital city of Accra however, the story is different not just because of the fact that that is where almost all the newspapers are published, and where most of the radio and TV stations are located. Nor is it just because of the fact that mobile telephone coverage is expansive in the city. The story is different because of the entrepreneurial skills of small, and large scale investors in the communication sector who have filled the vacuum of supply for the passionate

consumption of these digital goods, making telecenters the fastest growing industry in Accra, apart from religion or more precisely, the emergence of new churches.

I dedicated the whole of June and July 2002 in Accra to study the way people patronize the Internet cafes and communication centers that are dotted across the city. I conducted intensive and unstructured interviews at 20 medium size Internet cafes and also spent at least a whole day at each of the cafes. My intention was to capture the everyday lives, the mundane and the usual at these telecenters. I used interviews of randomly sampled users. In total, I managed to talk to 65. While I was not attempting a full ethnographic study, I contented myself with active participation in the daily routines of using the services. My presentation below is therefore a narrative from that encounter.

The Internet was introduced into the country around 1990 as a pilot project by the Pan African Development Information System in collaboration with Canada's IDRC, and Fidonet's network to connect the Ghana National Scientific and Technological Information Network (GHASTINET). Other organizations that benefited were the Association of African Universities (AAU) and the Technology Transfer Center (TCC). The ISP was GreenNet in London, UK and the connection was through dial-up. As in the genesis of other earlier modernist ICTs like radio, and telephone, the colonial umbilical cord to London was the first point of external connection. When radio was introduced, it started as an extension of BBC in London. Likewise, when the telephone service was set up, the only way international calls could be made, even to neighboring African countries was through a phone exchange service in London. It is therefore not surprising that the first e-mail to be generated in Ghana had to go through a London-based ISP. In the particular case of the first Internet service in Ghana, the frequency of emails sent was limited to three times a week.

While early Internet activity in Ghana, like in most parts of the world, started as non-profit sector organizational network, fully commercialized Internet access started in January 1995 with the Network Computer Systems (NCA) as the pioneer. As at the end of 2001, about 50 ISPs were reportedly licensed by the NCA, but my inquiries at the NCA revealed a list of only 29, all of which were in the national capital, Accra with only 12 of them in active operations. The centralization of all ISPs in the national capital is not a matter that worries the NCA. At least this was the impression I gathered while talking to Mr. Forson, the Deputy Director-General of the NCA. He would not talk in his official capacity as the second in command of the organization. But when pressed to talk as an individual, he simply said, he personally had no problem with the concentration of ISPs in Accra. One of the serious problems facing any researcher in Ghana is the availability of accurate statistics. The NCA is the statutory agency that has exclusive power to license ISPs. It should therefore have the power to determine the exact number of ISPs, yet my inquiries at the office turned out contradictory statistics. Whichever statistic one may tend to believe does not alter the fact that all ISPs are located in Accra, making it more expensive to hook onto the Internet from outside the Accra area since most Internet users have to dial-up long distance to access. In order to reduce this problem of phone tariffs some ISPs such as Africaonline have established Point of Presence (POP) in some major cities outside Accra to attract more clients with a local dial-up facility. But then such POPs are few. As at June 2002, the NCS was also working to setup POPs outside Accra.

The majority of Internet users outside Accra has to still pay for long distance connection fees. What is more, in Ghana phone tariffs system are the same rates for both data and voice connection over a phone line. That means that dial-up to send an email from outside of Accra will cost the same as making a long distance call for the same duration of being on the Internet. But in more developed economies, the low bandwidth requirements of data transmission such as Internet attracts lower tariffs compared to voice telephony. Some of the telecenters use a wireless network, which includes V-sat link to the Internet to overcome the slow and unreliable dial-up system. The number of users who visit a telecenter per day depends on the size and sophistication of the facilities on offer. Telecenters with dial-up system often have between 20 to 200 visitors while large telecenters such as *Mega Internet* and *BusyInternet* who operate around the clock receive over one thousand visitors a day.

Despite teething problems for the budding digital sector in Ghana, the impression one gathers as one visits the telecenters, and judging by their rate of patronage is that the response to the new culture of Internet is an enthusiastic one. There are no official statistics available, but going by newspaper reports and the estimation of the Internet Society of Ghana, there are about 20, 000 to 30, 000 users in Accra who have direct connection to the Internet with an estimated one million users accessing through the 600 or so telecenters. One can therefore estimate that about a quarter of the population of Accra in one way or the other, uses the Internet. Most ISPs offer more than just dial-up services. They offer value-added services such as web hosting, web designing and content development. But in the main, most of the content that Ghanaians encounter on the Internet are externally produced.

It is not uncommon to find Ghanaians accessing externally hosted sites such as Ghanaweb.com for local news. Ghanaweb.com currently has the most comprehensive database of news archives about Ghana starting from 1995 with both the Webmaster and his deputy stationed in Europe. With a very formidable network with newsrooms in Accra, the webmaster simply culls content from local newspapers in Accra making the site a one-stop point for all Ghanaian headline news. A locally based ISP, Network Computer Systems (NSC) has also started to produce and archive news on regular basis at Newsinghana.com, but not as ambitious as Ghanaweb.com. Most of the local newspapers have websites where they provide some of their content. But the problem with all of them is that they are not updated regularly.

Several FM radio stations stream their audio content on their webpages and also provide alphanumeric content. While news via Internet, whether from newspapers or FM stations is mainly targeted at the extraordinarily large Ghanaian population in the diaspora, people in Accra, especially the 'digirati'[1] prefer to also get their news via the Internet. And sometimes it is more economical, as Kwabena Nketia[2], an engineer with a local construction firm told me. His explanation was that the cost of five or six newspapers is the equivalent of an hour of high-speed Internet surfing. And with the Internet, one can quickly email and also read the

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[1]   The new elite of digital literacy.
[2]   All names of respondents in the digital consumption interviews have been changed.

news. Whether his argument is sound or not is not the issue. The point is that digital consumption is fast becoming a dominant way of life in the city of Accra to a point where a mundane everyday practice of picking up the newspaper is now rated on a scale of preference against paying for Internet access.

In the following part of this chapter, I will report and analyze my interviews. By all account, Internet access is an elite enterprise. Of the 65 I interviewed in Accra, 35 were students, 10 were NGO workers, about five being business persons and the rest being foreigners (tourists and researchers) and other users. This categorization of users that I sampled is in no way a representative one. That was not my goal. My goal was just to talk to whoever became available. The category of NGO workers was rather conspicuous since they are often better remunerated than their counterparts in public service or private businesses. Most students in second and third cycle institutions normally patronize telecenters to meet their educational needs because schools in the country are generally not equipped with computers. There are some schools that are working themselves out of the culture of lack of facilities. But they are in the absolute minority. Thus there are times that the hallways of telecenters in Accra look like a college campus.

In my own estimation, about three out of every four students who surfed the web, explored avenues of leaving the country, including looking for admission to schools abroad. Leaving the country is a subject that most students are often enthusiastic to talk about. In my relating with the students, I got responses ranging from "you do not speak like you are from abroad" to "can you help me get to Europe or North America?" And it was quite obvious that their preoccupation with leaving the country reflected their practical knowledge about Ghana itself. Ask about the towns and villages in the northern part of the country and you will get an "I don't know" response. Ask then where is a certain village in the UK and you will be sure to get the right response. Generally my sense of the place the Internet had in their scheme of life was that it basically afforded them the opportunity to connect with the outside world only; and justifiably so because the rest of the country is not wired. Or rather, the city of Accra is well wired to the rest of the world, making it a welcome infrastructure for their preoccupation with leaving the country for greener pastures lying beyond the turbulent waters of the Atlantic.

Telecenters are not just places for Internet communications. Some of the users come to the centers to do word processing, or use other computer software or just watch a movie on a disk. Fuseina is a first year student at the University of Ghana. We met a couple of times at the cashiers desk where users go to pre-pay for the time they will use. After paying, an alphanumeric ID is issued to match the time purchased. Once the ID is keyed in with a password, the networked computer is activated. On this particular day after Fuseina was served, I invited her for an interview at a nearby restaurant after we both finished using our purchased time. She agreed. Two hours later, I started talking to her.

It turned out that she had a fiancé in the United States and it was through his prodding that she finally got interested in emailing and web surfing. "Now I am addicted. Hardly can a day pass without a visit to an Internet café." She told me she first went to the telecenter to email, but now she also visits the computer pools to do her academic work. "Everything is on the Internet. Every subject is there," she told me. The conversation with Fuseina was basically

about the mundane: facts that any regular user of the Internet can tell. Using emails to get in touch with distant loved ones to avoid prohibitive phone tariffs, going to chat rooms or just browsing human-interest sites. When I shifted the conversation to beyond the mundane, to problematize the social and politics of using the Internet, the conversation run into a gridlock. Fuseina thought I was sounding rather too difficult. Then on a hunch I asked her how will she feel if upon graduation she is sent out to up north of the country where there are no telecenters to work as national service. (By law, all university graduates in Ghana are to render two years of "national service" before seeking employment). She burst out: "What? No way, I will not go." Fuseina told me she plans to join her fiancé in the United States upon graduation so national service was out of the question. But when I urged her to explain why she will not want to even consider the theoretical possibility of working in the hinterland where she might not have Internet access, she was ready to elaborate. Her argument was that Accra is Ghana and if one lives outside Accra, you are simply cut out.

My own experience of travelling throughout the country recently and my personal experience of coming from the northern part of the country enabled me to not take her argument literally. What she wanted to say was that every thing that mattered to the nation by way of infrastructure was located in Accra. In order to actively participate in national life, one had to be in the city of Accra. But for Fuseina, it is the Internet that is making all the difference. When I asked her what local Ghanaian sites she visits on the Internet, she told me not even a single one of the sites she visits is locally hosted. Reflecting on the conversation with Fuseina later, I realized that for her, to participate in active national life is to go on the Internet and sample foreign content. Of course, the fact that all three major TV stations and majority of FM stations as well as the bulk of the country's 24,000 phone lines are in Accra, goes to support the point that Accra is the nation as the metonymy par excellence.

Given the fact that the cost of one hour of accessing the internet in Accra is equivalent to the Eight hours a day minimum wage, one would have least expected students and workers to afford the luxury of frequenting telecenters. On a visit on any day to the Internet cafés in Accra, one always finds a large number of youths busying themselves with web page browsing. Some of them have their middle and upper class parents bankrolling their Internet café lifestyles. But there are also some who are actually workers, not earning any thing much higher than the officially stipulated one US dollar a day minimum wage. After close of work, they visit telecenters to more or less spend between 0.50 to 2 US dollars on web surfing. Nkansah Williams works as a clerk at a small commercial printing press. While his employers have provided him with a computer to work with, it is not connected to the Internet. The cost of dial-up connection, the only means by which his employers could connect to the Internet, is prohibitive. So he often visits telecenters in Accra to check his mails and also surf the Internet. According to him, he also uses the telecenters to find out more about how to use new computer software on his workplace computer.

Twenty-five year-old Nkansah Williams is from a family of six sons and daughters. All three of his brothers are in Germany while the 2 female siblings are all married and living in Accra. So one of his main reasons for regularly visiting the telecenters is to keep in touch regularly with his brothers living abroad. Every now and then, he told me, his three brothers will wire

home some money through the Western Union money transfer system for the upkeep of their mother, whose monthly pension as a retired nurse is just about 23 US dollars. Nkansah Williams told me his mom needs about 150 to 170 US dollars a month to cater for her rent and other cost of subsistence. And the burden rests on his three siblings living abroad. His role is to coordinate the remittances. That is why the Internet is key. Once in a while, he will use it to remind the brothers "to do something for the old woman". Obviously such a task does not account for why Nkansah Williams will have to visit the telecenters almost everyday. "Oh no", as he retorted in response to my question, "I agree with you. But you know, Internet surfing is a habit-forming thing. I use it to keep a tab on the world. It is my connection to the world. I have pen friends and chat room friends that I share my time with."

Nkansah Williams is just an example of the several users I talked to whose digital lifestyle is subsidized by his relations living abroad. While he would not tell me how much he earned, it was obvious to me that but for his brothers in Germany, he would not be able to patronize telecenters. He does not particularly care about domestic politics or domestic news and told me all that the newspapers carry are stories of scandals and political bickering between government and opposition parties.

> Honestly, I do not care about politics, or the Ghanaian economy. We are in a hopeless situation. Nobody can live honestly on his income, yet nobody cares to find out where the personal financial deficit is financed from. You see, the whole idea of Ghana is a big joke.

After my initial contact with Nkansah Williams, I was struck by the passion with which he spoke about the fortunes of the nation, yet he had lost hope in the affairs of the country, as he was quick to point out to me. The next time I ran into him, he was siting at another telecenter called *Cyberia*. That was three days after my initial contact with him at *BusyInternet*. This time, he had finished his daily dose of Internet surfing and was quietly sitting at a corner reading *Time* magazine. During our initial contact he made it clear to me that he does not read the local news and his favorite news sites on the Internet were CNN and BBC. I interrupted him and invited him for coffee. He smiled approvingly and said "you again?" We discussed international politics including events in the Middle East, the United States' problems with terrorism and UK politics. When I switched the conversation to Ghanaian issues, he told me he was not interested. "All I am waiting for now is an opportunity to get out of this country, and the chance is coming soon," he assured me in a tone that is characterized by frustration than by hope. Like his male siblings, Nkansah Williams wants to migrate and also live a better life, or so he thinks.

When I asked Nkansah Williams to tell me in a nutshell what does the Internet and his mobile phone mean to him, he beamed a smile and said: "take away everything and just spare my phone and the Internet, and life will continue." Obviously he was exaggerating. However, I gathered from him that while life is frustrating, the best thing to have happened to him and empowered him are the twin digital objects of the networked computer and a mobile phone. He is not always able to "load" his mobile phone with units, but the fact that he can receive calls sometimes is enough to keep him happy and feel connected.

One particular group of users who would not bother to talk apparently were members of "419" syndicates. The term 419 is used to describe con artists or confidence tricksters who use the Internet to indulge in various activities that borders on criminality and fraud. Most common practices include using stolen credit cards to purchase merchandize on the Internet or to con unsuspecting businesses and private individuals in Europe and North America into an advance fee fraud scheme[3]. The figures "419" is in reference to the relevant section of the Nigerian Criminal Code that deals with fraud. The modus operandi of 419 artist goes like this: the target receives an unsolicited email, containing either a money laundering or other illegal proposal. After a couple of exchanges when a relationship of confidence is established, the victim is asked to pay up front an Advance Fee of some sort. Once the payment is done, the 419 artist breaks the communication link. While this practice of Internet fraud is conventionally understood to originate from Nigeria, lately, there is a growing number of Ghanaians who also practice it. Police told me most of those who engage in 419 activities in Accra are from Nigeria. They will not provide statistics to support their claim though.

Because many telecenter operators know that some of their active clients patronize the Internet for 419 scams on their premises, they put out a notice of disclaimer by each computer and also state that any user found to be using their facilities for such scams would be sent out by security. While I have always known about the operations of the 419 artists and how the Ghanaian authorities in collaboration with the American FBI and the CIA are on their trail, I never personally encountered them until my visit to the Accra telecenters.

A typical 419 artist will often walk in a telecenter, often holding more than one mobile phone receiver. Sometimes, a well-dressed lady accompanies him. My investigations turned out that these accompanying ladies often receive the phone calls pretending to be the personal secretary or assistant to the 419 con artist, who would often describe himself as a Chief Executive of a business establishment. Of course the business establishment is often a phantom one.

Knowing that law enforcement officials are often trailing them, they shy away from talking to anyone at the telecenter premises. They would normally have the composure of a serious and busy official with little time to talk. And they are right about being skeptical about any person previously unknown to them because, as I later found out, among the busy patrons of telecenters are busy undercover police officers trying to find out who is doing what.

The most privileged categories of workers in Ghana today appear to be government politicians and NGO workers. What makes their jobs privileged is the fact that they are probably the only category of workers whose income can be matched with their lifestyles. While the former were often not seen at the hallways of telecenters the NGO workers are regular users of telecenters. Mike is a project coordinator of an NGO specialized in poverty alleviation in the northern part of Ghana. Mike would not want to be identified beyond his first name, nor does he want the official name of his NGO mentioned. "We drill bore-holes to provide water to rural communities and also offer a small credit scheme to rural woman," he

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[3]   This type of fraud was previously done through the old regular postal mail system.

virtually recited to me in response to my question. His flashy new Toyota Land Cruiser four wheel-drive and his Internet ready DELL laptop betrayed his attempt to masquerade as just an ordinary worker. The first time I saw him, I was about to leave *Tin-Ifa* telecenter. I tried to secure an interview appointment and he told me he had only an hour to check his mails and leave for a meeting. So I gave up the effort. Two weeks later while I was travelling up north of the country, I met him again. We exchanged pleasantries and agreed to an interview date the following week in Accra when he would be visiting to attend a meeting.

We agreed to meet at *BusyInternet* (BI). Why at BI? He told me it is the only telecenter where one can plug in his own laptop and the surf the Internet. While his assertion was not entirely correct, his preference for BI was not surprising. It can be described as the mother of all telecenters with its one hundred flat screen computer units open to the public 24 hours a day. The facility of plugging in ones own internet-ready laptop is a novelty that has resonated with the digital dreams of Internet enthusiasts in Accra. One of the advantages is that one need not use floppy disks to download large files as they can be routed directed on the laptop hard drive.

All the people who benefit from Mike's services as a development worker have no access to the Internet. In fact most do not even have electricity, and are alphanumerically not literate. So using the Internet to contact them is out of the question. But he told me he uses it to relate with his principals in the UK. Mike's organization is funded by UK charities and the Internet serves as the cheapest but effective way to contact them. When I asked him what other category of people he uses the Internet to contact, he said in most cases, they are personal or work related. That is he follows the activities of other development NGOs, their publications and also participates in chat rooms and listserv discursions on development and poverty alleviation. Mike was the fifth NGO development worker to articulate his use of the Internet in these terms. Unlike the others, he was ready to engage in a more in-depth discussion on the urbanized nature of the Internet infrastructure in Ghana.

> Telecenters are basically an urban thing. There have been several arguments about rural telecenters. Most of rural telecenters have problems of sustainability. My experience as a development worker teaches me that the last infrastructure the people need is a Pentium computer connected to the Internet.

That was Mike, giving me a lecture on development communication. I was sympathetic to his views, giving him the benefit of his long-term field experience. He described Accra without telecenters as a "university without a library." "I need it as a reference point to cross check on my ideas," he added. The cost of Mike's visit to the Internet is picked up by his organization and he told me it is worth it. While I cannot confirm that all NGO workers who visit telecenters do so on the account of their organization, it is very likely that most have that privilege. This possibly explains their frequent visits to the telecenters.

Working at some 800 kilometers away from Accra means that Mike can only have fast speed Internet connection when he visits the national capital, as he often does every fortnight. At Tamale, where his operational office is located, there are a number of ill-equipped dial-up telecenters where services are so poor that sometimes it takes several hours to establish

a connection only to be cut off after some few minutes. So he prefers to stay away from such "crawling cafés" as he called them and hold on until a visit to Accra. He will rather say he will hold on until a visit to *Ghana*. His argument was that Accra is Ghana and all those who live outside it are not experiencing the nation. I did not argue on this with him for he was not the first to express his sentiments on these terms. The argument of Accra being Ghana is a familiar one.

A category of users, which is by no means in the majority, but a very critical group to the economy of telecenters, is made up of business persons. Mostly, they have private laptops that are Internet ready, and employ a couple of hands in their work. Most of them undertake government contract works. Sometimes they are based outside Accra and when they commute into the city, they buy space at well-developed telecenters and work form there. Alhaji Abukari Sulemana is one of such. He is a food supply contractor. This means that he supply food to mostly government institutions such as boarding schools, hospitals and the military. He lives in Kumasi, the second largest city in the country, located in the forest middle belt that lies between the sea and the savanna up north. The title "Alhaji" by his name suggests that he is a financially successful businessman who has been able to make the lifetime pilgrimage to Mecca that is required of rich Muslims.

Alhaji is an engineer by training with a degree from a UK university. He is rather flamboyant in his outlook with lots of jewelry and rather very expensive *agbada* a West African piece of fashion that is a very elaborate and smocked gown. His use of the Internet follows the general pattern of linking to the outside world. He described the Internet as an empowering facility. "If you ask me to choose between the Internet and our government, I will go for the Internet," he told me boldly. When I asked him how he felt about the fact that the rest of the country was not benefiting from the digital magic of the Internet, or connected to the Internet as disadvantaged users, he was outright in his response. "They should all move to Accra and enjoy the good life." Alhaji's manner of speaking matched his sartorial splendor.

His power of expression seems to have been propped up by the facility of reaching out to the outside world that the Internet allows its users. For while he was surfing and talking to me in his hourly based rented premises, power in Accra went out without ceremony. Power failures and blackouts are not uncommon in Accra, where every social infrastructure seems to be over-stretched. For the next 20 minutes, before power was restored via a standby diesel generator operated by the proprietor of the telecenter, Alhaji lost his power of speech. His countenance changed, and his jolly character vanished. He told me he had to submit some quotations to his client before the close of the day. And he needed power to generate and print the document. He told me under the old system without computers, he would have to hire a secretary to do secretarial services for him. He would have also needed to rent a fixed place on a long-term basis to set up an office.

Alhaji is not alone is taking advantage of the convenience that the digital economy offers. I later discovered that there are lots of "one-man" companies, as they call them, out there in the busy and bustling Accra metropolis, which use telecenters to effectively meet their secretarial needs. And these telecenters are equipped with fax, phone and photocopying machines. Somehow, telecenters in the city of Accra are like the local community convenience

store where one can run in and quick pick a couple of basic needs for the home, or for the business, in the case of this digital *depanneur*[4]. For the mobile businessperson then, this digital convenience shop comes in handy for the fast paced life of Accra where the line between profitability and insolvency is sometimes very thin. The precarious nature of private business life means that businessmen and women have to be ready to reinvent themselves at short notice. One can be a food supply contractor today and the next day shut the business down and register a new business as a stationery supply contractor. Telecenters easily provide the convenience for such transitions without much hustle. So I was not surprised when Alhaji told me he was previously a roads and building contractor.

The renting of office space on hourly basis and the provision of general secretarial services then fits in well with the new economic policy of promoting the private sector as the engine of national economic growth. The last two governments and the NPP, which won the December 2000 general elections, have all professed the private sector as the new magic wand of national development. Thus the proliferation of telecenters in Accra can partly be understood as demand-supply response to the requirements of startup businesses. One can undertake a multi-million cedi contract work without having to invest in office equipment, as was the case before the idea of telecenters was introduced.

Caucasian tourists, often backpackers, are a regular conspicuous feature of the telecenter scene in Accra. Taking advantage of the high purchasing power of their superior hard currencies over the cedi in an externally dependent neocolonial economy, the tourists often take a break from their eye-feasting adventure to take a peep at the cyber world and send couple of emails to friends and families at home. They, like the business men and women make a fine financially juicy clientele for the operators of the telecenters as the owner of *AbdulSallam* Café in his rather poorly ventilated outfit that passes for a telecenter, told me. Foreign tourists can easily afford to spend longer hours on the Internet than the local users. But this habit of tourist consumption is redefining the rather small retail economy of postcard and stationery dealers who setup kiosks at the post offices. Some of the retailers at the post offices I talked to in the Accra business district told the same stories of tourists now looking for the nearest telecenters and not buying postcards to send home. A couple of tourists I talked to actually admitted they were not interested in sending traditional postcards home. This re-direction of tourist consumption habits is actually a minor transformation that has not even attracted a commentary from the Ghanaian press.

However, the transformation that new telecenters have visited on the economy has been celebrated often times by the media and politicians alike. Economically speaking, the national consensus seems to be that the telecenter movement has tremendously improved the economy of Accra. Among the sterling examples of telecenters is that of *BusyInternet* (BI). It is probably the most resourced telecenter in Accra and has been variously described as the "largest technology incubator" in Africa, and "the biggest Internet café in Africa" by the media. The unit, located on the Ring Road Central near the Kwame Nkrumah Circle, is the

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[4]   A kiosk, convenience store, or corner shop.

initiative of a foreign dot-com millionaire, Mark Davies. He told me he mobilized a 1.7 million US dollars to start the telecenter, which now boast of a ground floor of 100 flat screen Pentium PCs, open 24 hours a day to the public. This is a sterling achievement going by the standards of the backwoods of global economy that is the postcolony. BI also has state-of-the-art conference facilities on the top floor of the two-story building. The facility gets about 1,500 visitors a day.

When one talks to Mark Davies or any of the telecenter entrepreneurs in Accra, they often sound like they were driven by a humanist imperative to provide service. But what is often very clear is that it requires a heavy financial commitment to takeoff and often demands a profit-oriented approach to sustain the venture. In contrast to the technological sophistication of units such as BI and *Tin-Ifa*, which rely on satellite communication to bypass the unreliable national telephone network to hook on the Internet, there are several dial-up telecenters in Accra initiated by individuals who lack the financial flair of dot-com millionaires. Some of them offer less than a-dollar-an-hour rates to attract users.

However one looks at the phenomenon of telecenters in Accra and their contribution to empowering the urban digital consumer, one thing is certain: the tremendous proliferation of Internet access, and the efficiency of their operations could not have been achieved by the public sector or the state. Democratizing access then has been achieved through the operations of the demand and supply logic of the market. Admittedly, there are still large portions of the population of Accra, about two-thirds, who can only dream and imagine how the Internet is like. Once in a while some of them walk into the air-conditioned computer halls of telecenters in Accra and the air of askance that mark their countenance gives them away as dreamers who can never afford the price of a dollar an hour cost of using the computer. But a large flat screen television screen constantly tuned unto CNN with soft leather sofas is often available for their free riding.

One can argue against the market for its tendency to serve only the taste of the rich. But at the same time, we have to remember that under the circumstance of urban life in Accra, digital consumption at the telecenter is an opportunity whose access is circumscribed by finance and alphanumerical literacy. And the last qualification is not in abundant supply in Accra in particular and Ghana as a whole. On about eleven occasions, I witnessed attempts by alphanumerically illiterate folks who can afford the financial demands of visiting the telecenter overcome their literacy barriers. They visit the telecenters accompanied by a literate person, who will have the responsibility of translating the message and typing it as an email. These determined digital consumers were often sending emails by proxy to their relations living abroad.

## Patterns of Mobile Phone Use

Most mobile phone users in Accra use their sets on a pre-paid basis. That is, they pay for the services before they use it. And in such a case, there are no monthly or periodic billings to pay. Paying ahead turns out to be the only practical way of leasing out phone lines in a country

where majority of the population do not have street addresses or fixed identities[5] by way of social security numbers or permanent codes for instance. This does not apply to the fixed line telephony, though. In the case of fixed line telephony the regular periodic billing system is used to account for services already consumed. But the fixed line service providers then have serious problems collecting payments especially for residential users.[6]

Officials at the Marketing Department of GT were not willing to disclose the exact figures of their mobile phone client (One-touch product) who use the pre-paid services. When I pressed them to give me estimation, they could only tell me it is between 90 to 95 percent. Millicom Ghana Limited, the other competitor in the mobile phone business in Ghana would not even listen to my "intrusive" request for their (Spacefone) client. But conservative estimation of the total number of mobile phone users in the country who patronize pre-paid services can be put at 90 percent. One peculiar feature of this service is that when on loads a card (that is to activate the phone) for say 200 units, that may last for about 45 minutes of talking time in a local call, the phone becomes active in the receiving mode for about two months even if the units are consumed on the first day of purchase. That is when all the units are consumed within a day or a week of purchase the phone can still be used to only receive calls until the two months expiration. Another feature of the pre-paid phone service is that users cannot make direct international dialing. This also applies to fixed phone lines, with an exception of phone lines to the offices and residencies of top government officials, multinational corporations, diplomats and some phoneshops. The denial of international direct dialing (IDD) to fixed phone and mobile phone users opens up an opportunity for phone shops to do brisk business in international calls. It also guarantees patronage for GT and Westel public phone booths, which are doted at strategic locations within the city. But above all, it is worth noting that about 90 percent of phones can only participate in international telephony only as receivers and not as originators of messages.

One of the apparently strange behaviors in Accra is the practice of walking with a dysfunctional mobile phone handset, often displayed as if in use. I came across several of such cases, especially in the run-down district of Nima. The area is one of the shantytowns of Accra where economic privation and destitution is prevalent. When the rock star and U2 lead singer Bono visited the place in May 2002 he remarked, "Nima is the real world. It's where the full force of the free market is being felt. I thought they should be throwing rocks at us."[7] Walking with a mobile phone is probably all that matters for these mostly male unemployed youth. Sule is one of such. When I asked him why he would bother to carry a junky that does not work, he immediately retorted: "no, it used to work. But now it is broken. I hope to get it fixed soon." How soon? He cannot be specific, but given his situation of earning on the average, less than

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[5] The government has initiated moves to set up a national identification system for all Ghanaians starting in 2003, according to a recent statement by the NPP government.

[6] The Chief Marketing Officer of Ghana Telecom, Muinnudin Mohamed told me in June 2002 that the biggest corporate-client problem was on collecting overdue payments. And sometimes they just have to write them off as bad debts as there is no way of locating the debtor after he or she relocates.

[7] Associated Press report of 21st May 2002 "Bono Visits Nima" available at: http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=24258

the officially daily minimum wage, and also having an erratic income, it may be months before he would be able to fix it. But it may also be a matter of days, should a miracle occurs. The miracle may come in the form of remittances from friends who live abroad; friends, like him, who use to also roam the streets of Nima, but managed to get themselves in the developed West, either legally or illegally and are now working.

Sule's mobile phone was once functional and it enabled him to receive calls from his friends living abroad. But there are others whose handsets have actually never functioned. While such a group was not considerably large as I soon found out, the fact that they exist was intriguing. Upon further investigation, I got to know the source of such dummy phones. North American handsets that are not GSM compatible cannot be used in Ghana. Sometimes, as part of acquiring a captive market for mobile telephony in North America, service providers offer their handsets for free or almost free. Ghanaians in this part of the world who come under regular pressure from friends and relatives at home to send them gifts of mobile handsets, often send these cheap sets to the nagging relatives. Some of these demanding relatives, after realizing that the handset cannot be used in Ghana, still go ahead to display it, often on their belt hooks or just conspicuously display it for others to see.

Walking with a dysfunctional mobile phone is an attempt to participate, if only by simulation, in the increasing practice of digital consumption in Accra. Such a form of relating to a communication technology as a practice of consumption is not peculiar to the mobile phone handset. It is reported that in rural fishing communities in Sri Lanka, the people who can afford would acquire TV sets for display in their rooms even though the absence of electricity in their communities precludes the possibility of using the sets (Roger Silverstone 1994, 78, R.L. Stirratt 1989, 107). But Alfred Gell (1986, 114) has pointed out that the spectacle of display in such cases is the reason why the villagers would spend a fortune in acquiring the sets and not for their traditional utilitarian function of serving as conduits for TV content. A displayed television then becomes an embodiment of their experience of modernity and their own achievement. Showing a sense of personal achievement then is a mark of status, which the technological good gives the consumer. Like the television set, the mobile phone handset has a mythic purchase of sophistication and modernity. It does not therefore matter whether it can be used to actually make a call.

Accra is fast becoming a city of mobile phones. And the trend is not surprising. It may take a year or two to have ones application for a fixed line installed. The problem of fixed phone lines is not just limited to getting connected for the first time. A heavy downpour in the city of Accra sometimes means dead fixed phone lines. Sometimes, the fixed phone line can be temporarily stolen and used by others with the connivance of technicians of the phone company. The billing system is often inaccurate and in most cases, they are cases of overcharging. Given all these problems of fixed phone lines, many prefer to use the mobile telephone, despite the higher cost involved. Accra therefore now has more mobile phones than fixed lines. The practice of everyday life include carrying a mobile handset, irrespective of ones social status. The tinier the richer, however is the practical way to judge social status by the type of phone people use. Using a bulky handset sometimes carries a social stigma. People who carry bulky handsets are teased as "battle commanders" in reference to military

fatigue. Thus users will pursue every means possible to change their handsets. And the passion with which they go about it will baffle any outside observer.

Adjoa is a lady in her prime, at least by local standards. She finished university and is now looking for a job in journalism or public relations. She has a mobile phone expecting to get calls for interview with prospective employers. So she would always pay attention for a possible ring. But when her phone does ring while she is in public, as I had an opportunity to observe her, she will dig through her handbag and pick the handset and move away from the public and more or less hide and speak. This contrasts with the dominant exhibitionist practice of speaking on the phone while walking proudly on the street. It is fashionable. But Adjoa will rather hide because she thinks her mobile phone is too bulky to purchase her any prestige in public.

Because the mobile phone market has more service providers than the doupolistic fixed phone market, there is a comparatively stiffer competition. Invariable, the consumer benefits in terms of quality of service. Changing a service provider is much easier since all that one needs is to change the chip. Thus it is fashionable in Accra for a phone user to switch smart chips with only one hand set, depending on what number to call. Some of the mobile phone operators provide discount rates for calls within their network clientele. For instance, 024 is the first three numbers of *Spacefon* client. A call from an 024 number to another 024 number is cheaper than a call from say *OneTouch*, whose numbers start from 020, to an 024 phone. To take advantage of these discount rates, consumers often subscribe to at least more than one operator so that they can switch smart chips to make calls depending on the number to be dialed.

Intelligent consumption made possible by the flexibility of digital technology is therefore a key feature of the new urban culture of consumption. While consumption is good for thinking (Canclini 2001), we might as well add that smart consumption is good for the consumer. Apart from this technique of multiple operator subscription which phone users in the city of Accra are quick to master another feature among phone users is the practice of *flashing*. Flashing is a practice where a caller terminates a call after the first ring. The first ring registers the identity of the call at the receiving end. People who flash are often sending signals to the other end to call them back because they are running out of calling units on their phones. But when asked, they often say the network disconnected the line. Sometimes, flashing is not the deliberate outcome of economizing ones units, but as a result of a network gridlock. The smooth operation of mobile phones depends on the capacity of base stations, which in turn depend on the capacity of the fixed network. With a national network system where there are more mobile phones than fixed lines it is almost becoming a regular feature that at certain times of the day, the network becomes overloaded, leading to random disconnection of certain engaged lines. This real technical hitch aside, flashing is a regular feature of phone use in Accra. It is one practice that I found out to be gender based. Women are most likely to do the flashing and men are often at the receiving end. That means that men are often expected to call back and reverse the bill even though the wish to talk was that of the lady. Ownership of mobile phones cuts across the gender divide.

Another way of economizing ones phone units it to make calls at public phone booths or at telecenters and phone shops while the mobile phone is reserved for receiving calls. It is a practice that is acted out often times at the about 4000 phone booths doted across the city of Accra. The strategic location of phone shops to complement the distribution of public booths makes the city of Accra well wired for the average resident to access the facility. The economic determinants of access, imposed by the commodification of the telecom sector are somehow tampered by the practice of smart consumption.

## Digital Consumption and Participation

I like to think of the quintessential digital consumer in Accra sometimes as a sort of digital *flâneur*. The *flâneur* has his origins in the Paris of early 19th Century. He was conceptualized as the idle itinerant in the city arcades of Paris (Featherstone 1998). From this Baudelairean conception of an exclusives male practice, discussed by Walter Benjamin (1968) the *flânerie* have come to be used to describe the method of reading social text within the commodified environs of the modern city. The *flâneur* is a transitory figure, both real and a product of fiction. Baudelaire's original rendition provides an interesting point of reference:

> "For the perfect *flâneur*, for the passionate spectator, it is an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite. To be away from home and yet feel oneself everywhere at home; see the world, to be at the center of the world, and yet remain hidden from the world…" (Baudelaire 1964, 9).

If these words describes the 19th Century Parisian *flâneur* who was located at the heart of modernity, his postcolonial counterpart, the digital *flâneur* in Accra can live up to the dream thanks to the power of connection of digital communication technology and the market. He lives in the postcolony, but is at the center of the metropolis. Thanks to his active imagination and intelligent consumption practices, he is able to look "for that quality of which you must allow me to call 'modernity'" (Baudelaire 1964, 12). And several avenues are there for him to achieve his dream. The facility of inventing intimacy in the heart of the city, away from home and yet at home with the world, turns the mobile handset and the telecenter into the digital equivalent of the Parisian arcade.

Meanwhile, it is important to note that within the particular limits of urban life in Accra, where market regulation of communication infrastructure is at it most detail, access to digital goods such as telecenter services and mobile phones are not exclusively determined by social class. The Marxist preference for class, defined in the first instance by ones' relations to the economic means of production, as the central category in determining access in a market valorized communication environment should be tampered with other modes of social constitution. My observations from the practice of consumption in Accra suggests that while there is a tendency for access to be determined by income coming from ones' location in the

economic means of production, there were considerable numbers of digital consumers whose access could not have been determined by the economics of labor. Rather, their ability to access digital goods, were principally shaped not by their relations to the economic means of production, but by their familial ties to immigrants in the developed West.

These immigrants, both legal and illegal in the developed West are not necessarily economically privileged workers with higher incomes by the standards of their adopted societies. They are mostly from the low-income groups. But the regular remittances they send home to Accra to their sometimes unemployed siblings are able to support a lifestyle in Ghana that allows them to engage in the increasingly commodified communication environment. The remittances allow them to own mobile phones, if even the phones on most occasions are only good for reception and not for generating calls. They are able to take part in the elite pastime of Internet surfing and chat room life.

The argument then is that it is not every day that the market destroys community. It does restructure community on most occasions though. Judged within the requirement of nation building, it is clear that the commodification of communication access in the city mainly disengages the city from the hinterland. For once the market is entrusted the responsibility of regulating the penetration of the Internet, access becomes limited to the urban spaces of the nation, cutting out the rural. In the process, it redefines the meaning of community for the digital consumer in Accra. The community is no longer that promised imagined civic community for which the chapter of colonialism was concluded. The community or the world, for the urban *flâneur* is both the city in the postcolony and the developed Western countries. The urban *flâneur* as I found out in Accra, does not seek social proximity to his compatriots in rural Ghana. Rather, he or she looks up to the relative living across the Atlantic, and indeed the economy of the developed Western country for association. This is then a very serious transformation in the life of the postcolony, that is, if the nation state project is your concern. Otherwise, it can be read as a welcome development for the digital *flâneur* for whom the community is the world that the mobile phones and Internet empowers him or her to create.

Another way of reading the practice of digital consumption in the urban locations of the postcolony is to think of consumption as a civic act of participation in a particular type of community. There is extensive literature on the way consumption is thought of as an articulation of participation and not just a moment of empowering capital against the self as traditional political economy will have it. Latin American theorist Nestor Garcia Canclini (2001) is one of such latest attempt to articulate consumption in the city as an act of participation in the civic community at a time that the traditional civic structures of imagining membership to the nation are in decline. His research focuses on the Latin American experience but is equally of much relevance to the Ghanaian and sub-Sahara African experience. Canclini's innovative approach on consumption shifts the discussion from the over-worked theme of consumption as identity formation to include consumption as civic participation. Thus his approach serves as a framework for looking at the Ghanaian urban experience of digital consumption.

The digital *flâneur's* quest for participation in modernity leads him to find means of engaging in digital consumption in the market. A common characteristic of most of the users

I talked to was a display of disinterest in matters about Ghana. This then raises a question of belonging and citizenship in the country. Cultural citizenship, discussed by Canclini pushes the old understanding to not only the rights accorded by the state, also social and cultural practices that confer a sense of belonging. "Once we rethink citizenship as a 'political strategy', we can more easily include emerging practices that have not been sanctioned by the juridical order and recognize the role of subjectivities in the renewal of civil society" (Canclini 2001, 21). I do not share Canclini's exuberant conceptualization of civil society, but identifying consumption as an intelligent act in civil society is a rewarding approach. It departs from the traditional discussion of civil society that for example is based on the level of development of the mass media in Africa as for instance found in Helge Rønning's (1996) discussion. Reading Canclini within the context of liberalization and privatization in Ghana, one gets to understand why all most of what used to symbolize the nation is being dissolved unto the global template. For it is only in losing the "national" that the citizen (better still, the *city-zen*) is assured of a new kind of identity, the global consumer, not the global citizen as Canclini and other will have it.

He defines the nation within the context of urban consumption practices as less to do with its territorial limits and political history than as "interpretative community of consumers, whose traditional – alimentary, linguistic – habits induce them to relate in a peculiar way with the objects and information that circulate in international networks" (Canclini 2001, 43). This is very true of my encounter with the digital consumers of Accra. The tragedy is that if consumption provides opportunities for participation, and the spatial logic of the commodity form is globalization, it becomes obvious that participating in consumption redefines the sense of belonging and locality. For within the postcolony, what we have is a tragic case of the most segmented consumption. The objects of consumption are also symbols for interpretation and communication. And within this logic, the old thinking of the nation as an imagined community of citizens in a defined geographical space is under threat. The nation is not going to wither away as such, but the circumstances of its imagination will alter irretrievably to correspond to the logic of the commodity. Thus life in Accra is increasingly like life in London and Paris than life in the Ghanaian hinterland, where some 60 percent of the population lives. The elite of Ghana, mostly in Accra, are having more in common with the hegemonic class in these Western cities than the non-city Ghanaian. This has more to do with the segmented nature of consumption than any definition of class based on relations to means of production. The defining criterion is relations to sources of consumption than relations to means of production.

Interestingly then, the whole project of the modernization of the postcolony can be read as a project of incorporating the "traditional" society into the ambit of consumption. It has been a way to materialize the conditions for participation. But participation is not just limited to the channels of community and communication of the public sphere, but access to the channels of consumption as well. Once we recognize the practice of consumption as an act of participation and new forms of citizenship (belonging) then we will understand the place of the market vis à vis the state in this new dispensation. In the first place it is due to the dissatisfaction of the juridical-political concept of citizenship that makes the idea of cultural

citizenship more appealing. Thus a call for rethinking of citizenship to include the practice of consumption is in a way an argument for the restructuring of society that marketization has brought about. It is an attempt to articulate the realms of the private and public that the market tends to disregard in its onward march at commodification of all aspects of life.

A recent survey under the Afrobarometer[8] project does offer us fresh and revealing insights into the mindset of the people on whose behalf we continue to theorize. The random survey of 2005 persons of 18 years and above in all the 10 administrative regions of Ghana in 1999, despite probable limitations, does indicate some shifts in attitudes after nearly two decades of Structural Adjustment Program. One of the issues that the survey focused on was the attitude of the respondents to market principles as national policy. Bratton, Lewis and Gyimah-Boadi (2001, 249) report that many respondents endorse the market allocation of consumer goods. About 72 per cent agree that "it is better to have goods available in the market, even if the prices are high," compared with the rest who want "low prices, even if there are shortages of goods." What is more is that 77 per cent are ready to accept the payment of user fees in sectors like education as long as the costs are linked to improvement in services. They also report that support for market principles are widespread across all demographic segments. But while they are generally in favor of market liberalization, they are against the shrinking of the state. After analyzing the data gathered, the researchers concluded that Ghanaians are more likely to turn to the market than civil society or the state when they are looking for strategies to solve their personal problems (2001, 254). On the political front citizens are likely to turn to religious leaders or private patrons than their national and local government elected leaders in the first instance.

What do we get from such a study? As consumers, they choose the market as a better facility. And as citizens, they have more confidence in their religious leaders than their political institutions. A Gramscian analysis will suggest that the hegemonic class and its ideology of the market, which has been trumpeted as better deliverer of services than the state, primarily influenced the respondents; and that the opium of religion is also there to complete the equation of domination. That will be a legitimate approach at making sense of these data. But that will foreclose the possibility of interrogating how market serves as an arena of participation at a time when the old civic system is in popular decline. When the public sphere is in decline, either due to its structural transformation and commercialization, or just plain deligitimization of the civic order, the better place to look at citizen (consumer) action is in the market. This is warranted because political citizenship is declining in favor of cultural citizenship. Discourses on the need for stronger state involvement in supporting marginalized communities to also have access to the Internet are totally absent within the public domain in Accra. It is a kind of absence that reflects the distrust of the state to deliver on any promise of increasing access.

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8    The Afrobarometer is a joint project by the Michigan State University, the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), and the Center for Democracy and Development (CDD) in Ghana.

Canclini's claim on the political functions of consumption is very much warranted by the Ghanaian postcolonial experience in many ways. It is an open secret that any government that is unable to let goods flood the markets will be committing a political suicide. While Ghanaians are known to have tolerated for several years the muffling of the press, (1983 to 1990) they have never known to have patience for any government which is unable to allow the flooding of consumer goods into the market. When the military made its first political adventure into Ghanaian politics in 1966 and took power from Nkrumah, the grievances that resonated among the masses was that imported consumer goods were not available in the markets. As Simon Baynham tried to elaborate:

> Economic stagnation caused by the unfavourable terms of international trade, the profligacy and venality of the CPP leadership and the inefficiency of the state industries under its control – all characterized by a growing scarcity of goods, inflation (the national consumer price index rose by 65 percent between March 1963 and December 1965), a worsening balance of payment and unemployment – combined to undercut whatever genuine support the regime once had. Although the deterioration of the economy was probably largely beyond the control of the government at a time when the world cocoa price fell from £400 a ton in the mid-1950s to under £100 a ton by 1965-1966, public discontent was fuelled by the "dash," kickbacks and conspicuous consumption and corruption associated with the governing party (Baynham 1988, 206).

It is true that the Nkrumah regime failed to secure enough foreign exchange for imports leading to imported consumer goods drying out. And this was due to a sharp and dramatic fall in the price of cocoa in the international market. But civil society was ready to welcome the military liberators because the soldiers promised to deliver them to the consumer paradise of free market. And the fact that party members of the ruling government were engaged in conspicuous consumption while the rest of the country did not, gave the impression of exclusion from participation. Thus the best way to participate in national life was to be allowed the opportunity to access the goods. This instance is not to show that the mass media do not function as the public arena, nor am I trying to show that the market and the world of commodities are better. Rather, in following Canclini, I would want to think of consumption as a political practice and participation. Why is it that the people are voting and touting for governments that open the floodgates of consumer paradise?

First of all, we have to remember that the promise of modernity that the postcolonial state made to the people and tried to achieve through modernization was invariably a promise to deliver modern goods, be they physical products, cars, new roads and hospitals, or modern services and convenience such as money, western education and technological know-how in agriculture, urban planning and what have you. If modernization is expected to deliver the hitherto subject into citizenship, then it can only be achieved after access to modern goods has been provided. Consumption is therefore complicit in the formation of citizenship in the postcolony if even it discriminates against the non city-zen. Despite it tragic ramifications consumption marks the moment of arrival into modernity or better still into the modernized postcolony. And the digital *flâneur* is the avant-garde.

# Conclusion

In the eight chapters of this project, I have tried to trace the way issues concerning communication policy are articulated around the subject of nation building often called development and modernization. I have also presented the policy practice of the Ghanaian state in communication by focusing on broadcasting, telecom and digital consumption as cases. My examinations of these cases are done against a backdrop of theories of nation building, civic communities and consumption. By way of conclusion, I want to recap some of the pertinent arguments I have been trying to make. My initial theoretical argument centered on a critique of how the role of the postcolonial state has often been articulated in the mainstream literature on development and international communication. My contention is that due attention has often not been given to the postcolonial state as an institution with individual and collective actors. The flimsy approach to the state has resulted in our inability to grasp the intricacies and vicissitudes that characterize institutional agency in the dicey business of national development and modernization. To understand the postcolonial state, I have argued, we have to look at its trajectory and colonial ancestry and see how the colonial version differs from the contemporary postcolonial state. My conclusion was that apart from differences towards the polity at the normative level, both had similar attitude towards the market in communication and development until the era of SAP.

Both the colonial and early postcolonial state rejected the idea of a strong market regulation of the sector. But the introduction of SAP policies in the last two decades has brought about a structural transformation of the state's view of communication and development. The colonial administration, in its quest to create a community of unity of thought, the postcolonial government of Nkrumah, in its quest for national unity (if even it was a vulgar conceptualization of unity) all tried to stave off the push for private sector participation. My argument was that such an orientation was possible largely in part because of the global conjuncture of the 1960s and 1970s. For instance, how do we make sense of the fact that the British colonial administration in the Gold Coast made a strong case for public service by subsuming financial considerations of broadcasting policy under humanist

requirements of universal accessibility? How do we compare it with the contemporary actions of self-rule governments in Ghana that privilege market calculations over the humanist dimensions of accessibility to an extent that this idea of embracing the market is reified in the national constitution? I am drawing these questions out of the discussions in this study against the conventional understanding that the colonial state was an organ of external exploitation while the postcolonial state heralded a new era of peoples' government. I have tried to make sense of this paradox by working with the methodological framework of articulation, which foregrounds conjunctural analysis.

In the postcommunist, environment of World Bank and IMF tutelary governments in the last two decades in Ghana, the country has witnessed a gradual institutionalization of market principles as instrument of governance of almost all aspects of national life, including the communication sector. After two decades of economic, financial and communication structural adjustment, market also known as private sector got elevated to a sacerdotal pedestal in the Ghanaian imaginary, leading to its inscription into the 1992 Fourth Republican Constitution as the central principle for state policy. The securing and re-securing of free market ideology can then be traced not just to the constitutional entrenchment of the idea, but the fact that the constitution itself came into being after a decade of SAP where almost every aspect of national governance came under the tutelage of the IMF and World Bank. After this complete national ideological re-orientation, neither the World Bank nor the IMF needed to be at the National Consultative Assembly to have the framers of the constitution give the idea of free market the pride of place in national policy direction. Once that is achieved, the obvious line of tangential force or magnetic flow around which policy will speak about development will be the private sector. This transformation sets the pace and paradigm for the re-articulation of key issues about national development. Significant among these issues is the re-positioning of communication as information. I have argued that once such a transformation was achieved, the old thinking of communication for development is re-articulated as communication for bureaucratic control. The community, communality and commonality in communication are dis-articulated and only the transmission sense of information and its ability to command an *exchange value* is maintained.

The re-articulation of communication for community to information as transmission occurs within what I prefer to call the conjuncture of global digital capitalism where discourses about information society in developed countries are transported wholesale into the postcolony. The consequence of such a maneuver is that it unleashes the full force of the violence of economics on the inclusive logic of the nation formation project conceptualized as an imagined community of citizens. I have made these arguments drawing especially from the perceptive analysis of James Carey Nicholas Garnham, Mahmood Mamdani and Achille Mbembe among others.

Another conclusion than can be drawn from this study, if tangentially, is that the market, or the principles of the free-market as an ideological embodiment, is the strategy of the dominant group in society. I raised the fact that despite the fact that 19th and most of 20th Century industrially developed Western countries knew all the advantages of free market, that wonderful body of knowledge was never used in telecom regulation. Rather advantages of

monopoly market were mobilized and articulated in policy discourse. This leads us to the question: who needs the market as an instrument? When is the market as a "truth" applicable to policy? Within what context and conjuncture is market as an instrument mobilizable? My argument is that the market as an instrument is the strategy of the dominant force in society. To describe the market as a strategy is to position it as not an absolute, but an articulable rhetoric, which can be brought into formation at a particular conjuncture. Mobilized strategically within the contemporary conjuncture of digital capitalism, the telecom market in developing countries is viewed as one of a virgin environment that needs to be conquered. At least this is the subtext of most of the World Bank's recommendations to developing countries that consult the bank on its telecom deregulation.

Despite the enormous body of evidence both in theory and as empirical fact that the market fails to deliver it has continuously and successfully been mobilized in policy practice. I have argued in this study that one fruitful way of unpacking the hegemony of the market from a political economic perspective is to ground articulation theory, (from cultural studies) as a mode of inquiry and also appropriate the concept of externalities from economics. I want to illustrate externalities. Externalities is about valuation. In consumption of cultural goods, the benefits that a person derives from their use increase with the number of other persons using the goods. That will happen whenever the other users are in the same "network" as the new buyer or user finds herself. Typical examples are telephones, electronic mail, facsimile equipment, but also computer hardware that accept a greater variety of software programs, and so on. In all those cases, the value of the goods increases as participation in the network increases.

The value of a telephone increases as the number of persons who can be accessed with the telephone also increases. Imagine only five percent of the population having access to a country's phone network. It simply implies that the network can only be used to access five percent of the population so its significance as an instrument of personal and business communication will be minimal. The value of a telephone is therefore very much dependent on the size of the local phone directory. The same applies to the Internet. And as we are all familiar with our various national phone service providers, if you do not want your number listed in the local directory (called 411 in North America) you have to pay to be de-listed. The justification is that vanishing for the radar of the network impacts a devaluation of the network. In some democracies you need a police report and a formal letter to justify your request for being de-listed. Network externalities are not peculiar to telephone networks. They apply to newspapers, broadcasting and all other instruments of mass communication. Surprisingly the concept is hardly theorized in Communication Studies.

Network externalities are less problematic with instruments of mass communication whose significance lies with their character as conduit or channels. The prime example is the telephone network. However, network externalities become more contentious when the medium's significance includes its message or content. Here television is a fundamental example. From the public service perspective, the more people have access to the content, the more valuable it is. From the private sector perspective, the value of the network is determined by the purchasing power of those who can access the content, and not numbers. As I have

argued in chapter six economists believe that when a firm produces a product for which it does not get the full value, externalities are said to occur. The task of the entrepreneur in this regard is to maximize profit by ensuring that all those who benefit from the product pay for it. Economists believe that otherwise there will not be incentive for the continuous production of the product. Externalities come in two forms negative and positive externalities. Communication and informational products predominantly tend to cause positive externalities because of their public nature.

One of the ways that political economy of communication can develop resonance with policy actors is to appropriate this liberal economic concept of externalities. In liberal economics, it is a nuisance that must be reduced so as to allow for market efficiency. From the perspective of political economy, it is the very reason why market is sometimes unsuitable for regulating certain sectors of communication. Externalities, far from being the problem that must be eliminated in the communication industry, actually celebrate the need for public regulation. It marks the moments of market failure. From this perspective then, I want to I propose that this attempt to tease out the ramification of market regulation can be accomplished with the privileging of externalities as a key analytical grid. I have not been able to comprehensively open up this discussion for fear of shifting the focus to media economics. But such an orientation promises illuminating perspectives in new frontiers in communication and commodification. It has the potential of giving us new vocabulary to justify public service as an ethic equally based on economic valuation as well as a humanist imperative. Thus the World Bank's advise against replicating universal access in Africa, discussed in chapter six can be confronted with the advantages that externalities bring to the value of the network.

The focus on the politics of telecom governance in chapter seven allows us to uncover how fragile the state can be when confronted with big business in the now topical industry of digital capitalism. The pressures that we witnessed in the form of WESTEL and the United States, the tussle between Telekom Malaysia and the NPP government leading to the termination of the management contract, and the conduct of Millicom are some of the instances of how murky the world of communication policy can be for a developing and weak country such as Ghana. Within the state itself, its reluctance to follow to the letter and spirit of the law that calls for nothing short of an independent NCA as national communication regulator, the lack of transparency in the conduct of policy affairs, the fear to talk in official capacities and above all, the failure to develop a comprehensive policy framework for communication all tell us a lot more about the vagaries of the state. They tell us more than the normative approaches of development communication will allow. We are able to unwrap the state as an institution, and tease out its itinerary at certain moments of the policy process. Rather than taking its stated policy program for its word, a conjunctural approach that interrogates moments in the policy process gives us a better view of the state in development. Such has been part of the task fulfilled in this project.

Conjunctural analysis enables us to make sense of America's arm-twisting diplomacy through the agency of Lash in favor of WESTEL, G-COM's failure to deliver, and Millicom's dribbling of the state, taking advantage of a change of government and its courtship of the state into a convivial relationship. When I discussed Hyden, I criticized him for singling out the

peasantry as the main liability of the state in its bid to modernize the postcolony into a nation-state. Hyden's acceptance of transnational corporations as the key ally of the state in modernization is not supported by the discussion on the state and multinational telephone companies. Rather, what we see is an unhealthy but hearty relationship that is everything but supportive of the nation building project, all in the name of private sector as the engine for economic growth, and for that matter, national development. It is also evident in the vulnerability of the state, and the fact that the state is occupied by individuals who have to juggle their private interest with public ones, in a community where modes of state accountability are not fully developed.

Thus I concluded, contrary to Hyden, 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. With such a thinking within the corridors of power in the postcolony, I argued that the model of the postcolonial state, as discussed by Mbembe, Mamdani and Nyamnjoh seem to resonate better with what is actually going on than Hyden's model.

The tension between the state and the nation and the claim of the latter to represent the former has been discussed throughout this project. It is a tension that becomes obvious in the practice of communication policy. The unavoidable question then is one of representation. What constituency does the state represent? By articulating a legitimacy of representation, what epistemic and political violence does the state perpetrate on the nation? I am asking these questions in lieu of a conclusion in order to hint at the theoretical possibilities of embarking on a follow up research on the tension between the claim of the state and the reality of the nation. Gayatri Spivak is here instructive.

Spivak (1988) draws heavily from Marx in her discussion of the conceptual deployment of representation both as *Vertretung* (representation) and *Darlstellung* (re-presentation) Spivak illuminates on this double operation of the concept and its accompanying power dynamics. I will like to summarize her exposition of the first form, Vertretung, as meaning the capacity to represent a constituency because that constituency cannot represent itself. Thus the position of "speaking for" or proxy is the first instance of representation. The postcolonial state's legitimacy is derived from this form of an appropriated agency. That is agency by proxy. Such an authorization to act on its behalf empowers the state with benevolence. By empowering the state, the nation looses its ability of Darlstellung or self-agency and self-constitution. Where as Vertretung has a political implication, Darlstellung has economic consequences. Spivak's reference to the original German double operation of the concept of representation is rewarding because in the English and French translation of the concept for instance, the duality of meaning in representation is lost to Vertretung. Spivak argues, "radical practice should attend to this double session of representations rather than re-introduce the individual subject through totalizing concept of power and desire" (Spivak 1988, 279). That is when we

speak for others (including the intellectual's desire and benevolence) we should not foreclose the individual agency of the subject. She uses this global-local; macro-micro framework to look at the operations of global capitalism/nation-state alliances in the postcolonial setting, on the first level and then at the individual agency level where interests operate.

In this articulation of the macro and micro, at the two levels of representation, Spivak critiques Foucault and Deleuze for neglecting the micrological operation of signifiers (semiotics), which to an extent, shape the macrologies of power. Boxing the micrological and the macrological levels of representation into one blocks our understanding of the role of the intellectual in constituting the colonial subject as the Other. That is how far can the Other be represented in both senses without denying its subjectivity? I am introducing Spivak's discussion of the double operation of the concept of representation into my discussion of the policy process in Ghana to point out the peculiar character of actors located within the state apparatus, whose legitimacy is derived from the representative logic of speaking for the national community. Obviously such a scheme of representation as "speaking for" seems unavoidable. But then the violence that characterizes mis-representation can be seen in the way policy actors dis-articulate communication based on need out of the national communication policy. The process of pushing forward the language of ability to pay over the language of according to need then should be marked as a moment of epistemic violence on the imagined community and a political violence on humanism.

Admittedly, this study has been characterized by a generous dose of conceptual and theoretical analysis. Part of the reason for such an approach has been largely due to the need for clearing grounds for the study as an interdisciplinary project. I have taken inroads into postcolonial theory, political economy, cultural studies, studies in globalization as well as history and political science. Such an interdisciplinary approach is required in development communication to shift the discussion out of the stale arguments about development communication and modernization that we have been subjected to for some time now. The narrow theoretical outlook in development communication, for instance, resulted in the under theorizing of the state that I have already alluded to. From this perspective then, this study is an attempt to introduce a much wider framework into development and international communication.

The other reason for the generous dose of conceptual and theoretical analyses that characterize this study is because contemporary policy discourse in Ghana has been implicitly and explicitly informed by some of these vocabularies. Policy language has been characterized by an overly dependence on the mythic purchase of these newly recycled vocabulary of truths. Such key concepts such as leapfrogging, digital divide and participation, whose currency has been occasioned by the new communication technologies and the rise of digital capitalism, have resulted into their mobilization into national development programs. My focus on these concepts, especially in chapter four was aimed at unpacking the elements that were articulated into securing their existence as reified truths.

Leapfrogging in particular, I argued, is actually a reformulation of the language of "stages of growth" that dominated discussions about modernization in the 1960s. Leapfrogging

simplifies the arguments about development, at both the conceptual and programmatic level, to one of increased transfer of technology. Not just any technology, the latest digital technologies to help the developing economies take off. Unmasking its mythical structure enables us to argue that earlier attempts at leapfrogging did not land the postcolony into modernity. The language of leapfrogging, I have also argued, is part of a transnational attempt to expand the market for the latest ICTs in the developing countries by framing the development problematic as an exclusively communicative one. Why abandon the earlier arguments about leapfrogging or requirements for take-off as it was then called, that pushed for more radios, newspapers, cinema and TV when these are still in acute short supply? My argument is that the shift to computers suggests that the discourse about leapfrogging is not sustained by the development needs of the developing countries, but by the commercial requirements of big business in the developed countries in concert with the private interest of actors within the postcolonial state.

Discourse on leapfrogging is tangentially linked to the politicized concept of digital divide, a new kind of information poverty that is said to afflict Ghana and other developing countries. The previous equivalent of this new development malaise is material poverty. Digital divide, like material poverty, establishes in graphical terms the inequality that exists in society. My argument has been not to deny that fact of lack of equity, but to question the very characterization of the issue of inequality of access as tantamount to the source of Ghana's development problems. The discourse on digital divide is framed as if it is the only form of communicative divide that characterizes developing countries. I have pointed out that before digital divide became fashionable and gained its political currency, there was the literacy divide, and other communicative divides. Cheap radio and audio-visual technology have not been in good supply. Thus if we are interested in issues about communicative divides, we may as well start with earlier and cheaper technologies. Framing the problem of access in the language of digital divide leads to recommendations for digital solutions. That is why *Ghana-Vision 2020*, Ghana's development blueprint mentions only computers and not radio and audio-visual technology as the development requirements of the country.

The discussion on digital consumption in the city in Chapter Eight thematically departs from the main thrust of the previous chapters. I elected to do so for more than just demonstrative purpose. A dispassionate critique of commodification will require that we look at the other side of the logic of alien rationality that the preference for *exchange value* over *use value* does. This is what a cultural studies perspective can bring to a political economy of communication. The fixed gaze on the production and distribution process to the neglect of the consumption process denies political economic approaches the opportunity of understanding what human agents outside the state contribute to issues about participation, access and interpretation. Agency within the consumption process is not just circumscribed within the logic of capital. The contribution that cultural studies brings to studies in political economy in the area of consumption is very much needed now because of the dominance of market thinking, market logic and market practice over virtually all realms of society today. Thus when I studied the practice of consumption within the urban limits of Accra, I was able to appreciate the advantages of private sector participation in the democratization of access

to digital technologies in Accra. Within the everyday practice of consumption that political economists shy away from, I was able to establish the international linkages in terms of how people funded their consumptive practice as well as the international linkages that digital goods allowed them to undertake at the realm of civic and social imagination. Obviously such findings have enormous implication for a *political economy of consumption* that goes beyond owners of the mean of production and control of circulation.

The literature that celebrates consumption makes interesting arguments that support the orientation of chapter eight. Mary Douglass and Baron Isherwood argue that goods are by themselves neutral, it is their social constitution and the social constitution of their use that is not. Goods "can be used as fences or bridges" (Douglas and Isherwood 1979, 12). Jean-Paul Sartre (1976, 79) has in particular noted that while humans are mediated by things, in a dialectical twist, things are equally mediated by humans. It is the human mediation of things or objects, which gives these objects their social meaning. That is to say that the meaning of objects is directly related to the symbolic significance that they have in any social milieu. Such a perspective requires that we avoid looking at objects from only their utilitarian objectification and rather read them within the context of both their utilitarian and symbolic significance. On the same perspective, Sut Jhally (1987, 4) makes this point quite clear when he argues that "in all cultures at all times, it is the relation between use and symbol that provides the concrete context for the playing out of the universal person-object relation." Such theoretical perspectives can be mobilized into the study of contemporary use of mobile telephony in Ghana.

One of the most important social transformations that the mobile phone has introduced into society is the collapse of spatial and temporal dimensions of everyday life. The ability to be in contact with everyone else and at every place (let us add, often within the city and its environs) has changed the way mobile phone users relate with time scheduling. This aspect of mobile technology has been the focus of Timo Kopomaa's investigation of Finnish everyday life. In his discussion, Kopomaa observed that the spatial and temporal changes that the convenience of the technology has brought about have altered time culture in Finnish everyday life. He pointed out that the legacy of the industrial revolution has been the linear structuring of time as "preorganised future" (Kopomaa 2000, 56). Uniform time control was at the heart of industrialized production system that emerged in the 19th Century. The factory became an institution for an efficient use of time and remunerations were based on how much time one clocked and how much one really produced. That was the scheduled society of preorganized future (Kopomaa, 2000, 54). This contrasts with the preindustrial cyclical time system where biology and the seasons determined the structure of time. With the dominance of mobile phone usage in Finnish society, Kopomaa noted that a new postindustrial time structure is emerging. This is what he calls rhythmic time. Exactitude in the measurement of time is no longer necessary because "temporal impressions can be mitigated by using the mobile phone to inform others of possible delays, a changed schedule, or perhaps a new time for the meeting" (Kopomaa 2000, 55). What Kopomaa is pointing out is that time consciousness, as known and practiced in terms of punctuality to scheduled temporality is giving way to a new

time orientation that is based on immediate needs and desires. "Precise times no longer matter, the only necessity is availability."

The ironic twist is that this cultural transformation is like what is termed in Ghana as *sankofa*, meaning a return to the past or roots. The move from a biological time to a linear time and back to a biological/rhythmic time, seem to turn the African experience on its heard. It is common practice in many African countries, including Ghana, to talk of time as "African time" which means that scheduled events may be delayed on the whim of the participants. Time is not necessarily a scheduled or pre-organized future, but more or less a rhythmic time. John Mbiti (1969) has discussed this African conceptualization of time quite well in his book, *African Religions and Philosophy*, even if he conflates *Industrial* culture of time with *Western*. To put such a cultural orientation into the vocabulary of modernization theory, one would see this African orientation to time as a struggle to fit into the requirements of modernity and its industrial demands of time management. But if the technological convenience of mobile phones allows a reconceptualization of time in the West, might we say that, given the impressive penetration of mobile technology in Ghana, the African urban society will shift back to its old rhythmic time? We can only hazard a guess as to the future impact of the mobile phone on the time culture of Ghanaians. However, given the unstated assumption of modernization paradigm that the future of the modernizing postcolony is the present of the modernized West, we might as well expect Ghanaian urban culture to revert comfortably into a rhythmic timing. Most likely, the nomadic culture that mobile technology allows, may transform urban culture from the prearranged structure of every day life the urbanites were struggling to fit in, to a more flexible direction that allows for a synchronized and personalized use of time.

If modernization were simply the promise of supply of modern goods for consumption in only the city including the means of communication, the private sector could have been hailed as being instrumental more that the state in the Ghanaian experience. But the promise of modernization is more that just responding to the taste of the digital *flâneur*. It is about transforming subjects into citizens. Thus we have the digital consumer looking up to connect to the outside world while the other members of the nation in the hinterland are left out in an increasingly disruptive mediation. But the market has at least allowed a certain form of participation and construction of a new form of community for the digital *flâneur*. Here, then, is the paradox that the state and market create within the social formation under discussion. It is a paradox that becomes clear when we overcome the theoretical boundaries of cultural studies and political economy and learn to work from both positions. In that respect, this study has tried to make a contribution towards that cross-fertilization of research approaches that Mosco (1996) for instance has called for.

These conclusions point to a number of directions for further research. The first of these is the need for more fieldwork around the theme of communication, commodification and community in the postcolony. This project could not go beyond a rather limited attempt at field study of consumption. Thus my immediate research interest lies in continuing the focus on state activity around the subject of communication and market regulation in Ghana. Another

perspective that this study opens up for further exploration is the subject of a political economy of digital consumption in the postcolony that maps the way the urban and the rural environs are dis-articulated. A study of this sort will look at the way the cities in the postcolony increasingly look more like the cities in the developed countries than the rural environs that they are considered to be part of. Such an approach will contribute to finding a new language to speak about developing countries. For it is increasingly assuming the appearance of a farce to talk of developing countries as a category. I have alluded to this transformation in this study, though I did not have the space to develop it. It is becoming clear that the facility of digital technologies allows for the connections and disconnections of certain parts of the postcolony to and from the economies of the developed countries. This then makes the city of Accra to have a different take on the nation from non-urban parts of the country.

The processes of connections and disconnections that I am referring to here are not just limited to individual access to new ICTs. These transformations are beginning to affect the way work is done. For instance Accra recently joined the growing list of Third World destinations for call center and data processing companies in the United States who are outsourcing work. With about a couple of hundred networked computers in Accra and a satellite link to the parent company in the US, companies that process insurance, credit card and other claims are able to employ staff at very cheap cost to serve their American client from Accra. (Why not? The daily minimum wage there is one US dollar). Such developments occasioned by the liberalization of the communication sector fell beyond the scope of this study. But it promises to be an interesting endeavor as a future research project.

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