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Globalization and Development¹

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The two nouns in this chapter's title are among the most freighted in academia and public policy of the post-World War II period, even though both concepts are quite venerable: they existed in Islamic social theory a millennium ago (Mowlana and Wilson 1988).

Development has been a *desideratum* since decolonization began in earnest in the 1940s. Globalization has had even greater currency since neoliberalism began in earnest in the 1990s. The two terms refer to policy fashions within the Global North, applied domestically and to the Global South. The first describes the plan to adopt Western Europe, Japan, and the US as implicit deflators of other nations, as measures of economic and political systems, at the same time as responding to cries for freedom from imperial enslavement and popular penury. The second is a rejection of mercantilist, dirigiste policy in favor of a more market-oriented rhetoric with massive, if often disguised, state intervention. Both are instances of governmentality.

Roland Barthes (1973) coined this term to describe the tendency for regions, states, and cities to claim responsibility for, and legitimacy from, the economy. Michel Foucault (1991) modified governmentality to describe investing in skills as a means to economic growth and social control, a concept animated in policy terms by Amartya Sen via the notion of building capacity (2009; for application to communications, see Garnham 1997). It neatly encapsulates the discourse of development and globalization in its clandestine and sinister, as well as overt and benign, modes. For development is the rubric under which the Global North identifies decolonizing and postcolonial elites that it backs in nationalist movements, while globalization is its means of redistributing gains made by working-class political action back up the social scale. Each intervention may be fundamentally

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anti-democratic, but its rhetoric applauds and invokes everyday people's efforts to transcend economic abjection.

How did such bizarre paradoxes come to pass; what impact have they had on communications; and how do they operate today? These questions elude settled answers, because their complex and conflicted articulations arise across an ever-changing history and geography.

The Formation of the Paradoxes

When modern capitalism met modern imperialism, the resulting encounter bound together forces that were always already both contradictory and compatible. So the idea of free labor in the metropole, ready to work in new farming and factories for entrepreneurs, had as its coefficient enslaved labor on the periphery, ready to work in farming and mining for imperialists. And as a further contradiction/compatibility, empires adopted cultural doctrines of improvement via monotheism and liberalism; they were keen to instruct as well as control the peoples whom they ruled, whether for religious or liberal reasons. This simultaneously delusional, idealistic, and utilitarian mission of ethical uplift, underpinned by invasion, enslavement, and occupation, continued unabated for centuries. Only with latter-day liberation movements, diasporic immigration patterns, the rise of multiculturalism, and the emergence of newly dynamic economies, has it retreated, and perhaps only provisionally.

With Indian independence in 1947 – the epochal moment of postcolonialism – the advent of the United Nations as the permanent consolidation then expansion of the Allies who had won World War II, and the desire of the US government to open up new markets through decolonization, development discourse grew in size and fervor. Starting in 1945, two historic promises were made by established and emergent governments: to secure the political sovereignty of citizens and their economic welfare. At the end of World War II, universal sovereignty required concerted international action to convince the extant colonial powers (principally Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, and Portugal) that the peoples whom they had enslaved should be given the right of self-determination, with nationalism a powerful ideology of political mobilization as a supposed precursor to liberation. When this promise was made good, the resulting postcolonial governments undertook to deliver on the economy. Economic welfare seemed locally deliverable, via state-based management of supply and demand and the creation of industries that would substitute imports with domestic production. Most followed capitalism in one country, known as import-substitution industrialization (ISI), frequently via state enterprises or on the coattails of multinational corporations (MNCs) that established local presences. But postcolonial states suffered underdevelopment because of their dependent relations with the core, and were unable to grow

economically. Public–private partnerships intervened around the world to destabilize threats to US economic dominance that might emerge.

Among the overt premises of this modernity were nationalist fellow feeling and individual/state sovereignty as habits of thought. The daily prayer called for a “modern individual” who would not fall for the temptations of Marxism–Leninism or Maoism. Development necessitated displacement of “the particularistic norms” of tradition by “more universalistic” blends of the modern to help create “achievement-oriented” societies (Pye 1965: 19).

This narcissism derived from the assumption that the US embodied individual freedom, economic growth, and political expression: the ideal form of nation building. It drew on a model of the person to construct a model of the country. This was based on the psy-function’s contribution to communication: cognition (supposedly governed by nature) and behavior (presumptively governed by environment). These concepts in turn derived from Kant’s distinction between bodily and behavioral experiences: morality and cognition separated brains from bodies even as they linked them, via claims to ethical conduct and national allegiance and the need to generate adherence through custom and critical thought as well as state power (Kant 1987, 1991; Miller 2008).

The most compelling reactions to the psy-function model have derived from the Global South. In the words of the great liberation psychologist of Central America, Ignacio Martín-Baró (later murdered by Yanqui-backed assassins): “there does not first exist a person, who then goes on to become socialized.” Rather, the “individual becomes an individual, a human person, by virtue of becoming socialized” (1996: 69). Such forms of resistance recognize that the raw stuff of human beings is not individuals: people *become* individuals through discourses and institutions of culture, in an oscillation between the law, economy, and politics, with the psy-function operating as a switching-point between proclivities and aptitudes (Foucault 2006: 58, 190). But this insight has not ruled the development day. Instead, rites of passage from traditional societies have been displaced, supplemented, or rendered symbolic in industrial and post-industrial economies (Healy 2002).

In keeping with this complex heritage, contemporary imperialism – that is, US imperialism – poses many complexities, for opponents, analysts, and fellow travelers alike. It has involved invasion and seizure, in the case of the Philippines and Cuba; temporary occupation and permanent militarization (Japan); naked ideological imperialism (the Monroe doctrine² and Theodore Roosevelt); and a cloak of anti-imperialism (Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Barack Hussein Obama II).

Yanqui imperialism differs from the classic nineteenth-century model, and it has proven much harder to gain independence from US than European colonists. This is because Yanqui imperialism began at a well-developed stage of industrial capitalism and led into the post-industrial age, breaking down colonialism in order to control labor and consumption on a global scale. The free markets that had been undermined by classic imperialism in 1914 were firmly re-established in the 1990s as rhetorical tropes in ways that confirmed the drive toward a loose model

of domination, with economic power underwritten by militarism rather than settlement, via the exploitation of a global division of labor: governmentality without government, as it were. Today's imperialism is therefore as much a discursive formation as a military struggle.

None of this means that the US variety lacks the drive or the horror of old-world imperialism – just the latter's overt policies and colonial *rites de passage*. The country that advertises itself as the world's greatest promise of modernity has sought to translate its own national legacy, of clearance, genocide, and enslavement as much as democracy – a modernity built, as each successful one has been, on brutality – into a foreign and economic policy with similar effects and, at times, methods.

Given their experience of the Monroe Doctrine over two centuries, it is no surprise that Latin Americans developed a counter-theory, dependent development, in the 1940s. It gained adherents across the Global South over the next three decades in reaction to the unreconstructed institutional narcissism of the US, which ignored the fact that developed societies at the world core had become so through their colonial and international experience, both by differentiating the metropole from the periphery and importing ideas, fashions, and people (Prebisch 1982; Cardoso 2009). These radical critiques of capitalist modernization shared the view that the transfer of technology, politics, and economics had become unattainable, because MNCs united business and government to regulate cheap labor markets, produce new consumers, and guarantee pliant regimes (Reeves 1993]no source??: 24–25, 30).

Despite the power of this critique, it never attained hegemony in policy debates. Formal *political* postcoloniality rarely became *economic*, apart from some Asian states that pursued permanent capitalism, known as export-oriented industrialization (EOI), and service-based expansion. And after the capitalist economic crises of the 1970s, even those Western states that had *bourgeoisies* with sufficient capital formation to permit a welfare system found that stagflation undermined their capacity to hedge employment against inflation. So they selectively turned away from ISI, and required less-developed countries to do the same (Higgott and Robison 1985). Development policies of the 1950s and 1960s were problematized and dismantled from the 1970s, a tendency that grew in velocity and scope with the erosion of state socialism a decade and a half later.

Citizenship was turned on its head through historic policy renegotiations conducted by capital, the state, and their rent-seeking intellectual servants in political science and economics. Anxieties over unemployment were trumped by anxieties over profits, with labor pieties displaced by capital pieties, and workers called upon to identify as stakeholders in business or customers, not combatants with capital (Martin 2002: 21; Miller and O'Leary 2002: 97–99). These reforms redistributed income back to bourgeoisies and metropolises: reactionaries favor individual rights in the economic sphere of investment, but not other fora. Today's privileged citizens are corporations, and people are increasingly conceived of as self-governing consumers (*Economist* 2004).

For instance, George Bush Minor's *mantra* was "making every citizen an agent of his or her own destiny" (2005). In Mexico, this neoliberal trend reached its apogee when then-President Vicente Fox repeatedly and notoriously challenged reporters querying the record of neoliberalism with: "¿Yo por qué? ... ¿Qué no somos 100 millones de mexicanos?" [Why ask me? ... Aren't there a hundred million other Mexicans?] (quoted in Venegas 2003). The burden of his words – offered in the company of Carlos Slim, then Mexico's wealthiest individual and by 2012 the world's richest man and principal benefactor of the *New York Times* – was that people must assume individual responsibility for their material fortunes. The fact that not every Mexican had control over the money supply, tariff policy, trade negotiations, labor law, and exchange rates might have given him pause. Or not.

Thanks to this neoliberal project, financial and managerial decisions made in one part of the world increasingly take rapid effect elsewhere. New international currency markets have proliferated since the decline of a fixed exchange rate, matching regulated systems with piratical financial institutions that cross borders. Speculation brings greater reward than production, as sales of securities and debt outstrip profits from making cars and building houses. The international circulation of money creates the conditions for imposing global creditworthiness tests on all countries. At a policy level, this has ended ISI and the very legitimacy of national economies, supplanted by EOI and the idea of an international economy. Today's governments are supposed to deliver formal sovereignty and controlled financial markets, but globalization orthodoxy and business priorities insist on privately managed international capital. In the words of the radical Egyptian economist Samir Amin, "the space of economic management of capital accumulation" no longer coincides with "its political and social dimensions" (1997: xi). Even *The Economist* (1999: 4) acknowledges that it is "[i]mpossible" to combine political democracy with corporate liberty in this manner. Globalization does not offer an end to center-periphery inequalities, competition between states, or macroeconomic decisions taken by corporations; it cuts the capacity of the state system to control such transactions, and relegates responsibility for the protection and welfare of the workforce to MNCs and financial institutions.

With productive investment less profitable than financial investment, and companies rationalizing production, functions of marketing, labor, and administration have been reconceived on an international scale. The loan-granting power of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund has forced a shift away from the local provision of basic needs, redirecting public investment toward sectors supposedly endowed with comparative advantage.

Changes in development logic have generated an extraordinary redistribution of global income: development norms have shifted into reverse. In the two decades from 1960 to 1980, most of the Global South was state-socialist, or had a significant welfare system, and followed ISI. Per capita income during that period increased by 34% in Africa and 73% in Latin America, while the standard deviation of growth rates amongst developing economies from 1950 to 1973 was 1.8. In the decades

since these political economies shifted to EOI, the corollary numbers disclose a drop in income across Africa of 23% and an increase in Latin America of just 6%, while the standard deviation of growth has climbed to 3.0 – because of China’s and India’s successes. In 1997–1998, the richest 20% of the world’s people earned 74 times the amount of the world’s poorest, up from 60 times in 1990 and 30 times in 1960; 56% of the global population made less than US\$2 a day. In 2001, every child born in Latin America immediately “owed” US\$1,500 to foreign banks, as if this were part of original sin. For a tiny number, that would amount to a few hours of work once they attained their majority. For most, it would represent a decade’s salary (Ocampo 2005: 12–14; United Nations Development Programme 2004; Sutcliffe 2003: 3; García Canclini 2002: 26–27).

Consider a prominent example of neoliberal “development.” After the CIA-engineered Chilean *golpe* of September 11, 1973, thousands of leftists were murdered and tortured, followed by a so-called economic miracle that was nothing of the kind. Under the democratically elected socialist Salvador Allende, who was ousted that terrible day, unemployment had run at 4.3%. Under his successor, the neoliberal military dictator Augusto Pinochet, it reached 22%. Real wages decreased by 40% and poverty doubled, thanks to intellectual allies and corporate chiefs affiliated with US foreign and economic policy. The dictator’s key advisers included freshly minted economics PhDs from the University of Chicago tutored by Milton Friedman, who himself attended the court of the mass murderer (Miller 2007).³

But the neoliberal dream endured. US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick announced to the World Trade Organization in 2001 that compliance with trade liberalization was an acid test of attitudes to terrorism, and the US Government’s 2002 *National Security Strategy* referred to a “single sustainable model for national success: freedom, democracy, and free enterprise.” Identical *nostra* animated the next Administration (Mukhia 2002; Nandy 1998: 48; Holland 2005; The White House 2002, 2010).

This model, elegantly simple and seductively meritocratic in its pure form, has never been applied, and never could be, outside the inequalities and struggles of time and place. Rather than sitting comfortably alongside democracy and equality, the neoclassical economics that drives such princely *laissez-faire* distortions has been a tool of domination. For countries used to occupation by colonial powers, such “development” amounts to one more sign that political participation is pointless.

Communications

While there is a deep and rich history within the Global South of theorizing development and communication (Manyozo 2006), the dominant paradigm in policy terms and influence has originated in the North. We have already seen how the psy-function influenced Yanqui development discourse. Here, my use of

“communications” is focused on the media infrastructure of telecommunications, the press, television, cinema, the Internet, and so on. I begin with the lived experience of unequal media exchange – in an unexpected location.

In 1820, the noted British essayist Sydney Smith asked: “In the four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book? or goes to an American play? or looks at an American picture or statue?” (1844: 141). Three decades later, Herman Melville opposed the US literary establishment’s devotion to all things English. He contrasted a Eurocentrically cringing import culture with a mission to “carry Republicanism into literature” (Newcomb 1996: 94).

Unsurprisingly, the US became an early-modern exponent of anti-cultural imperialist, pro-nation-building sentiment, using ISI to develop its communication capacities by rejecting intellectual-property regimes. That dedication to ISI changed when its market position did, as decades of protectionism and an increasingly large and affluent domestic population created robust cultural industries by the turn of the twentieth century. Overseas expansion soon became necessary because of a saturated domestic market.

Initially, development communication borrowed these practices. Old-school development advocates spoke of countries creating their own infrastructure, from telecommunications to television channels. But this soon turned to a notion of transfer, whereby wealthy nations sold gadgets and genres to less wealthy ones. By the 1950s, the successful export of media technologies and texts from the US to the Global South was touted as critical for the development of populations said to be mired in backward, folkloric forms of thought and lacking the trust in national organizations required for modernization (Pye and Verba 1965). Public investment was discouraged as a means of autonomy, displaced by a cosmic faith in market-driven power.

To US Cold War Warriors like professional anti-Marxist Ithiel de Sola Pool (1983), cultural conservative Daniel Bell (1977), and National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski (1969), communications technologies guaranteed US cultural and technical power across the globe, provided that the blandishments of socialism and critiques of global business did not stimulate class struggle. And today, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger’s consultancy firm advises that the US must “win the battle of the world’s information flows, dominating the airwaves as Great Britain once ruled the seas” (Rothkopf 1997: 38, 47) while former National Intelligence Council chair Joseph Nye has promulgated the embarrassingly penile metaphor “soft power” to describe the use of culture as propaganda (2002) and the State Department uses “regional media hubs” to forward its project of *Leading Through Civilian Power* (2010: 60–61).

Nevertheless, nineteenth-century US critiques of cultural imperialism as per Melville still resonate (elsewhere) in everyday talk, broadcast and telecommunications policy, unions, international organizations, nationalistic media and heritage, cultural diplomacy, anti-Americanism, and post-industrial service-sector planning (see Schiller 1976, 1989; Beltrán and Fox de Cardona 1980; Dorfman and Mattelart

2000). They are exemplified by Armand Mattelart's stinging denunciation of external cultural influence on the Global South:

In order to camouflage the counter-revolutionary function which it has assigned to communications technology and, in the final analysis, to all the messages of mass culture, imperialism has elevated the mass media to the status of revolutionary agents, and the modern phenomenon of communications to that of revolution itself. (1980: 17)

The cultural-imperialism thesis turned Melville's original argument *volte face*. It said that the US, which had become the globe's leading media exporter, was transferring its dominant value system to others, with a corresponding diminution in the vitality and standing of local languages, traditions, and national identities. Lesser, but still considerable, influence was attributed to older imperial powers, via their cultural, military, and corporate ties to newly independent countries. The theory attributed US cultural hegemony to its control of news agencies, advertising, market research, public opinion, screen trade, technology transfer, propaganda, telecommunications, and security (Primo 1999: 183). In addition, US involvement in South-East Asian wars and its adherence to the Monroe Doctrine in the Americas led to critiques of military interventions against struggles of national liberation and targeted links between the military-industrial complex and the media, pointing to the ways that communications and cultural MNCs bolstered US foreign policy and military strategy, which in turn facilitated corporate expansion.

During the 1960s and 1970s, cultural-imperialism discourse found a voice in public-policy debates through the Non-Aligned Movement and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), where the Global South lobbied for a New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). UNESCO set up an International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems to investigate North-South flows and power. It reported in 1980 on the need for equal distribution of the electronic spectrum, reduced postal rates for international texts, protection against satellites crossing borders, and media systems that would serve social justice rather than capitalist commerce (Mattelart and Mattelart 1998: 94-97).

But UNESCO soon ceased to be the critical site for NWICO debate. The US and the UK withdrew from the Organization in 1985 because it denounced Zionism as racism and supported state intervention against private-press hegemony. The past three decades have seen UNESCO distance themselves from NWICO in the hope of attracting these countries back to the fold. The US rejoined in 2003 in time to make noises about the Organization contemplating a convention on cultural diversity that might sequester culture from neoliberal trade arrangements – the wrong kind of globalization, it might be democratically rather than economically driven. The US argued that texts were not culture, which it defined as the less

commodifiable and governable spheres of religion and language. Then the Organization recognized Palestine in 2011 and the US again refused to pay its dues (Gerbner 1994: 112–113; Gerbner *et al.* 1994: xi–xii; State Department 2011).

NWICO was in any event vulnerable from all sides for its inadequate theorization of capitalism, postcolonialism, class relations, the state, and indigenous culture, in addition to its complex *frottage* – a pluralism that insisted on the relativistic equivalence of all cultures and defied chauvinism, but rubbed up against a powerful equation of national identities with cultural forms (Schlesinger 1991: 145). NWICO's concentration on national culture denied the potentially liberatory and pleasurable nature of different takes on the popular, forgot the internal differentiation of publics, valorized frequently oppressive and/or unrepresentative local bourgeoisies in the name of maintaining and developing national cultures, and ignored the demographic realities of its “own” terrain. For example, alternatives to Hollywood funded movies under the banner of opposition to cultural imperialism frequently favored exclusionary, art-house-centered hegemons who privileged “talent” over labor, and centralized authority over open decision making. All too often, this led to public subvention of indolent national bourgeoisies or oleaginous Gringos using proxy locals to fund offshore production (Miller *et al.* 2005).

The Cold War may be over, but the thesis remains. In the contemporary moment, the US forms a power triad of the technical and ideological world alongside Japan and Western Europe. China and India are finally becoming the economic powers that their population numbers should ensure. While the latter have many leading software engineers in addition to a huge army of labor, they lack the domestic venture capitalists, the military underpinnings to computing innovation, and the historic cross-cultural textual power that characterize Sony, the BBC, Hollywood, and the Bay Area. It comes as no surprise, for example, that the triad still accounts for 80% of the globe's TV programming market (Best *et al.* 2011; Boyd-Barrett 2006; *IDATE NEWS* 2009). For instance, the US children's channel Nickelodeon is available in well over 150 countries, young people across Africa are familiar with *SpongeBob*, and 80% of shows for children outside the white-settler colonies and China comes from the US (Osei-Hwere and Pecora 2008: 16, 19; Götz *et al.* 2008).

In the Global North, the post-Cold War era remains dominated by cultural issues, but of a quite different kind, thanks to the contributions of Middle Eastern historian and professional anti-Palestinian Bernard Lewis and Cold War political scientist and Vietnam War architect Samuel Huntington. In the wake of Sovietism, these two men turned from politics and economics to culture in search of geopolitical comprehension.

Lewis (1990) coined the expression “clash of civilizations” to capture the difference, as he saw it, between the separation of church and state that had generated US successes versus their intercalulation in Islamic nations, which had supposedly made those countries subordinate. Huntington appropriated the “clash

of civilizations” to argue that future world historical conflicts would not be “primarily ideological or primarily economic” but “cultural” (1993: 22).

This “cartoon-like world” (Said 2001) has gained immense media and policy attention since September 11, 2001. Journalists across the Global North promote the notion of an apocalyptic struggle between good and evil as the bifurcation of the West and Islam. Across the daily press and weekly and monthly magazines of ruling opinion, extra-state violence is attributed to Islam in opposition to freedom and technology, never as the act of subordinated groups against dominant ones.

The *New York Times* and *Newsweek* gave Huntington room to account for what had happened in terms of his “thesis,” while others adopted it as a call for empire, from the supposed New Left through to leading communitarians and the neoliberal *Economist*. Arab leaders met to discuss the conceit, and Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi invoked it. When the US occupation of Iraq entered its third year, military commanders and senior non-commissioned officers were required to read the book (along with V.S. Naipaul and *Islam for Dummies*) (Rusciano 2003; Said 2001; Schmitt 2005).

Not everyone was so taken with these ideas. UNESCO’s Director General prefaced the Organization’s worthy Declaration on Cultural Diversity with a rebuttal (Matsuura 2001) and *El País*’s cartoonist Máximo traumatically constructed a dialogue alongside the tumbling Towers: “Choque de ideas, de culturas, de civilizaciones” [Clash of ideas, of cultures, of civilizations] drew the reply “choques de desesperados contra instalados” [the clash of the desperate against the establishment] (quoted in García Canclini 2002: 16). Israel’s *Ha-aretz* regarded Lewis and Huntington’s “hegemonic hold” as “a major triumph” for al-Qaeda, and the *Arab News* aptly typified it as “Armageddon dressed up as social science” (quoted in Rusciano 2003: 175).

Study after study has disproven Lewis and Huntington’s wild assertions about growing ethnic struggle since the Cold War and a unitary Islamic culture opposed to a unitary Western culture. Such claims neglect conflicts over money, property, and politics and cultural differences within the two blocs (Fox 2002; Norris and Inglehart 2003: 203; United Nations Development Programme 2004). The clash-of-civilizations thesis does not work if you apply it to Iran supporting Russia against Chechen rebels and India against Pakistan, for example (Abrahamian 2003: 535). Yet we must engage this discourse, because it represents a powerful anxiety underpinning ideas of development and communication that is as fundamental as the concerns about Marxism of an earlier period. Culture is central, but not in terms of opposition to cultural imperialism or resistance to international capital – rather, as an explanation for underdevelopment.

We must also attend to reconceptualizations of economic dependency theory. By the 1970s, developing markets for labor and products, and the shift from the spatial sensitivities of electrics to the spatial insensitivities of electronics, pushed the Global North beyond treating the Global South as a supplier of raw materials to view them as shadow-setters of the price of work, competing amongst

themselves and with the Global North for employment. Production became split across continents via a New International Division of Labor (Fröbel, Heinrichs, and Kreye 1980).

Labor-market expansion and developments in global transportation and communications technology have diminished the need for colocation of management, work, and consumption. Just as manufacturing fled the Global North, cultural production has also relocated: popular and high-cultural texts, computer-aided design and manufacture, sales, marketing, and information may now be created and exchanged globally, to create a New International Division of Cultural Labor (Miller *et al.* 2005; Miller *et al.* 2001). But this almost mundane aspect does not draw the attention of policymakers and the bourgeois press. They are animated by grander stuff

Communications as Development and Globalization

Communications technologies themselves are frequently regarded *as* development and globalization – signs of a transcendent progress. George Orwell described these fantasies 70 years ago in ways that resonate today:

Reading recently a batch of rather shallowly optimistic “progressive” books, I was struck by the automatic way in which people go on repeating certain phrases which were fashionable before 1914. Two great favourites are “the abolition of distance” and “the disappearance of frontiers”. I do not know how often I have met with the statements that “the aeroplane and the radio have abolished distance” and “all parts of the world are now interdependent.” (1944)

Pragmatic desires for a trained workforce and modern infrastructure have dominated the material reality of development, but at a discursive level, technological determinism has characterized development and global communications, claiming magical qualities that can override socioeconomic inequality. Today’s mantra is very similar to the fantasy that Orwell noticed long ago: utopian yearnings for a world free of institutional constraints.

Bourgeois economists claim that cell phones have streamlined markets in the Global South, enriching people in zones where banking, economic information, and market data are scarce. Fantastic claims made for this technology include “the complete elimination of waste” and massive reductions in poverty and corruption through the empowerment of individuals (Jensen 2007). This utopianism has seen a comprehensive turn in research away from unequal infrastructural and cultural exchange toward an extended dalliance with new technology and its supposedly innate capacity to endow users with transcendence (Ogan *et al.* 2009). The latest

media technologies are said to obliterate geography, sovereignty, and hierarchy in an alchemy of truth and beauty. This deregulated, individuated, technologized world makes consumers into producers, frees the disabled from confinement, encourages new subjectivities, rewards intellect and competitiveness, links people across cultures, and allows billions of flowers to bloom in a post-political cornucopia. It's a bizarre utopia. People fish, film, fornicate, and finance from morning to midnight. Consumption is privileged, production is discounted, and labor is forgotten. The *Magna Carta for the Knowledge Age*, for instance, proposes that political-economic gains made for democracy since the thirteenth century have been eclipsed by technological ones:

The central event of the 20th century is the overthrow of matter. In technology, economics, and the politics of nations, wealth – in the form of physical resources – has been losing value and significance. The powers of mind are everywhere ascendant over the brute force of things. (Dyson *et al.* 1994)

Time magazine exemplified this love of a seemingly immaterial world when it chose “You” as 2006’s “Person of the Year,” because “You control the Information Age. Welcome to your world” (Grossman 2006).

This discourse buys into individualistic fantasies of reader, audience, consumer, and player autonomy – the neoliberal intellectual’s wet dream of music, movies, television, and everything else converging under the sign of empowered and creative fans. The New Right of communication studies invests with unparalleled gusto in Schumpeterian entrepreneurs, evolutionary economics, and creative industries. It’s never seen an “app” it didn’t like or a socialist idea it did. Faith in devolved mediamaking amounts to a secular religion, offering transcendence in the here and now via a “literature of the eighth day, the day after Genesis” (Carey 2005).

Consider the publicity generated when Kelvin Doe, a 15-year-old Sierra Leonean, was invited to MIT in 2012 because he had constructed a radio station from detritus in trash cans. More than two million online viewings of the university’s video about him in just one week testify to the appeal of this apparently unlikely story of a Third World prodigy who was constructed as embodying the need to replace aid programs with individual initiative (Lieberman 2012; Hudson 2012). That account erased an alternative that could have analyzed his achievement as an impressive moment in centuries of skillful media raggicking, a heritage that illustrates the power of creativity, collectivity – and pollution. Such stories can be retold to draw us into the materiality and inequality at the heart of development and globalization and question their utility – if they are analyzed in a critical way (Medina 2007).

The contemporary rhetoric of development, globalization, and communications *does* speak of community activism rather than government policy or commercial will (Wilkins 2008). But this is all too quickly appropriated by technological

fantasies: for example, Facebook features “Peace on Facebook” and claims the capacity to “decrease world conflict” through intercultural communication, while Twitter modestly announces itself as “a triumph of humanity” (*Economist* 2010: 61). Machinery, rather than political-economic activity, is the guiding light. Even the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, long a key site for alternative theories and representations of development, has joined the chorus (2012).

But as Orwell realized, the story is more complex. Max Weber insisted that technology was principally a “mode of processing material goods” (2005: 27) and Harvey Sacks emphasized “the failures of technocratic dreams[:] that if only we introduced some fantastic new communication machine the world will be transformed” (1995: 548). So, rather than seeing new communications technologies as magical agents that can produce market equilibrium and hence individual and collective happiness, we should note their other impacts. In 2011, the cost of broadband in the Global South was 40.3% of average individual gross national income (GNI). Across the Global North, by comparison, the price was less than 5% of GNI per capita (International Telecommunication Union 2012: 4). The putative freedoms associated with cell phone usage have created nightmares for public health professionals, as prostitutes at risk of sexually transmitted disease increasingly communicate with clients by phone and are less easy to educate and assist than when they work at conventional sites (Mahapatra *et al.* 2012). Or consider the mad opposition to infant immunization that dominates YouTube videos and responses on the topic. This is just one of countless examples of perilous medical misinformation that circulates irresponsibly on the service (Keelan *et al.* 2007). Similarly, as fewer and fewer media outlets become available to them, tobacco companies turn to the Internet and product placement via “smoking fetish videos.” Aimed at under-age drug users under the soubriquet of “community engagement,” they draw massively positive reactions. Many old TV commercials for cigarettes are also slyly archived there, breathing new life into their emphysemic messages (Freeman and Chapman 2007).

Furthermore, when old and obsolete cell phones or other communication technologies are junked, they become electronic waste (e-waste), the fastest-growing part of municipal cleanups around the Global North. E-waste has generated serious threats to worker health and safety wherever plastics and wires are burnt, monitors smashed and dismantled, and circuit boards grilled or leached with acid, while the toxic chemicals and heavy metals that flow from such practices have perilous implications for local and downstream residents, soil, and water. Most electronic salvage and recycling is done in the Global South by pre-teen girls, who work with discarded television sets and computers to find precious metals, and dump the remains in landfills – less romantic ragpickers than MIT’s Kelvin Doe. The e-waste ends up there after export and import by “recyclers” who eschew landfills and labor in the Global North in order to avoid the higher costs and regulatory oversight of recycling in countries that prohibit such destruction to the

environment and labor. Businesses that forbid dumping in local landfills as part of their corporate policies merrily ship it elsewhere (Maxwell and Miller 2012).

This material reality remains invisible to the new-media clerisy and bourgeois economics alike, but it *has* been recognized in the technocratic cloisters of communications diplomacy. For example, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) acknowledges that the proliferation of communications technology causes grave environmental problems (2008: 67–84; 2009: 2, 5). The ITU predicts that communications technologies will connect the 6.5 billion residents of the earth by 2015. In the near future, then, “everyone can access information, create information, use information and share information,” which “will take the world out of financial crisis, because it’s the only industry that’s still growing”, thanks to developing markets (Hibberd 2009: 1). But at the same time, the Union presses for “climate neutrality” and greater efficiency in energy use, and such venues as the 2008 World Telecommunication Standardization Assembly in South Africa encouraged members to reduce the carbon footprint of communications, in accord with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (Touré 2008).

In a similar vein, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development says communications can play a pivotal role in developing service-based, low-polluting economies in the Global South (offering energy efficiency, adaptation to climate change, mitigation of diminished biodiversity, and diminished pollution) but cautions that such technological advances can produce negative outcomes. For example, remote sensing of marine life may encourage unsustainable fishing (Maxwell and Miller 2011).

Conclusion

We are in the midst of the greatest global economic crisis in seven decades, one that exceeds the 1930s and 1970s versions in both its reach and impact, and a global environmental crisis that is entirely without precedent. Orthodox policies and programs have failed to comprehend or ameliorate these situations. Radical critics continue to problematize dominant discourses of development, globalization, and communication. Although today’s neomodernization models are more sensitive than their forebears to unequal wealth, influence, and status, they do not measure up to critical theories of dependent development, underdevelopment, unequal exchange, world-systems history, center–periphery relations, cultural imperialism, post-colonialism, and environmental impact (Kavoori and Chadha 2009; McPhail 2009; Miller 2012). Such counter-discourses will always struggle against the institutional force, hegemonic media status, and academic endorsement of dominant discourses. But they provide a sharp reminder that there *is* another way. Across the Global South, vigorous and inventive tactics and strategies counter

labor exploitation and occupational health and safety risks, offering power-generation alternatives and mounting vibrant critiques of structured domination in communications (Bycroft 2011; Kapur and Wagner 2011; Bolaño 2012).

Of course, utopia should be part of our deliberations – but couched as citizenship rights rather than entrepreneurial fictions. The UN's definition of communication for development calls for:

two-way communication systems that enable dialogue and that allow communities to speak out, express their aspirations and concerns and participate in the decisions that relate to their development. (quoted in United Nations Development Program 2009)

And the World Congress on Communication for Development seeks:

A social process based on dialogue using a broad range of tools and methods. It is also about seeking change at different levels including listening, building trust, sharing knowledge and skills, building policies, debating and learning for sustained and meaningful change. (Quoted in United Nations Development Program 2009)

How can these aims be achieved? A clear-headed analysis of unequal exchange of cultural textuality, technology, and labor should be our starting-point – not fantasies about individual psyches or technological transformations.

Notes

- 1 Thanks to the editor for her helpful comments and to Richard Maxwell for work that contributed to the section on electronic waste.
- 2 The Monroe Doctrine was adopted as US foreign policy in the 1820s under its eponymous president of the time (James Monroe) in opposition to European intervention in the Western Hemisphere. It holds that all activities in the Americas are the business of the USA.
- 3 His sickening recommendations are proudly displayed by the Cato Institute (Piñera 2006).

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