

An archaeology of the global era: constructing a belief

Armand Mattelart

UNIVERSITY OF PARIS VIII, FRANCE

Into the Global Age . . . (Giddens, 1999)

As in any serious discussion, words are sovereign. (Braudel, 1979)

Translated from the French by Susan Taponier with Philip Schlesinger

Few terms have been stretched as far or proved to be as infinitely extendable as the word 'globalization'. Few terms have come into widespread use at such a 'global speed', as Paul Virilio would say, taken over from English by every other language on earth. And few terms have been so widely disseminated in a context of such widespread social atopia, without any prior inventory of its possible significance or time for scrutiny by citizens, thus leaving an aura of doubt concerning the conditions and meaning of its source. It is a notion that refers not just to an actual process but also to a project, not just to fragments of reality but also to firmly established beliefs. Indeed, the terms governing interdependence have profoundly changed. National systems, whether technological, economic, cultural, socio-political, civilian or military, are all permeated by a logic that transcends and reconfigures them.

The project would have us believe that self-regulated trade is the necessary path, the Caudine Forks of 'prosperity for all' or 'happiness for everyone'. This is what gives the notion of globalization the configuration of a new totalizing ideology, lending support and legitimacy to the neo-liberal scheme. Incorporating all individual societies into the world is now reduced to incorporating them into a social and productive system, based on what is conventionally known as integrated, global capitalism. The ideology of corporate globalization is indissolubly linked to the ideology of

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worldwide communication. Together, they form the matrix both for the symbolic management of the worldwide scheme and for the further, unacknowledged reality of a world ruled by the logic of social and economic segregation.

This technoglobal newspeak operates like a latter-day *lingua franca*, making its pronouncements as if they were self-evident truths requiring no discussion. It stipulates how we must talk about the present and future. It endows the historical process of world unification with its own particular features. It transmutes a phenomenon with multiple dimensions both symbolic and real into a single body of beliefs. In the end, it blurs our grasp of what is at stake in the complex new forms of contemporary interaction and transaction between economies, societies and cultures. In this article, I propose to unearth the archaeology of some of the expressions of this *pensée unique* (one-sided thinking), in keeping with the intellectual project I have been pursuing since the second half of the 1980s (Mattelart, 1994, 1999, 2001). This archaeology appears all the more necessary to make the politics of the contemporary era intelligible as words convey beliefs which summon symbolic forces, a *mana* which forces action in one direction within the limits it imposes and prohibits our going in the opposite direction. Whether we like it or not, these beliefs conceal uncertainties that weigh on the process by which the world is being rearranged and, at the same time, they keep history on a path that far from represents our universal best interests.

Forgetting history

History is bunk. A glance through the panegyric discourse and meta-discourse concerning our entry into the global era seems to suggest that this observation, once uttered by Henry Ford on the threshold of his industrial triumph, is now making a conspicuous come-back. Global integration is being achieved through a multi-secular movement divested of any memory of conflict and, hence, of any grasp of what is now at stake. The historian Marc Ferro, a disciple of Fernand Braudel, is right to warn us against repressing the historical view:

The end of this millennium is dominated by the idea that we have entered a new historical era, that of globalization. But isn't this simply an optical illusion? The movement in the direction of world unification appeared long ago, even though it has recently been extended and expanded at an accelerated pace. (Ferro, 1999: 28)

Historians are not the only ones to remind us of the need to take a long-term view of this process. Some economists have expressed a similar concern. Robert Boyer, the leading economist of the so-called 'regulatory'

school, insists on the fact that history seldom repeats itself in an identical fashion and that the contemporary situation of the global economy represents an original configuration. He speaks of 'true' and 'false' novelty with regard to globalization, and argues that we must urgently transcend the 'retrospective analyses of economists and most researchers in social science which deal at best with a period of one or two decades' in order to 'take the long-term view of capitalism into account' (Boyer, 2000: 32). Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant have expressed a similar need for caution:

The globalization of material and symbolic exchange and the diversity of cultures are not products of the 20th century, they are co-extensive with human history, as Emile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss already pointed out in their *Note on the notion of civilisation*. (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 2000: 7)

We might add that the concept of interdependence, which sounds like a recent invention, was in fact forged at the end of the 19th century. It is actually a metaphor borrowed from biology, which used it to designate the close ties linking the cells of an organism to each other. The metaphor was developed at the time by the advocates of what was called 'worldism' or 'worldwide solidarism' to signify the 'new meaning of the world' which, in their view of the evolution of international life, was already emanating from the planet-wide network of underwater cables and communication routes. The notion of interdependence was at the root of the new project of creating an 'international community', first achieved in the League of Nations, and simultaneously lent legitimacy to the national plans for creating the welfare state.

One thing is certain: defective memory has encouraged the return of an eschatology with a religious connotation, drawn from the writings of the theologian and palaeontologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, the early inventor of the notion of 'planetization' (Teilhard de Chardin, 1955). Marshall McLuhan, who was a convert to Catholicism, was already steeped in Teilhard's writings when he launched the cliché of the 'global village', the modern version of the old Christian myth of the 'great human family' that keeps coming back in new garb (McLuhan, 1962). One can find repeated references to Teilhard de Chardin, the thinker of the noosphere and of 'cosmic totality', among the authors who originally constructed the notion of the 'global society', such as Zbigniew Brzezinski. Since the sudden arrival of the Internet, however, there has been a qualitative leap in the use of Teilhard's name through intensive appropriation by the techno-libertarian crusaders of cyberspace (Lévy, 2000). He has even been claimed as a kind of patron saint by American Net-war strategists, who introduced the concept of 'noopolitics' in a report prepared for the Pentagon under the aegis of the famous think-tank, the Rand Corporation (Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 1999).

Amnesia provides the foundation for a modernity without substance. Instead of a genuine social project, techno-mercantile determinism has instituted endless, unlimited communication, the heir to the notion of ongoing, limitless progress. In the process, the old scheme to westernize the world has been recycled along with the coming of the so-called knowledge-based society. 'The educated person of the future will have to expect to live in a globalized world, which will be a westernized world', proclaims the management theoretician Peter Drucker (1990) in his book on 'post-capitalist society', a society free from friction. The diffusion theory of linear progress, first formulated by 19th-century classical ethnology and updated a century later by the sociologies of modernization and westernization in the fight against 'underdevelopment' of the 1960s and the first half of the 1970s, has resurfaced with a new liberal Darwinist twist, on the pretext that today's technology has made 'universal knowledge' accessible to the whole world. The cultural models of modernity can only branch out from the centre towards the periphery. It is a modernity in line with a Euro-American centre, which anticipates the future of the rest of the world, provided it faithfully follows the canonical stages of the evolutionary process through which adult nations have already passed. The global age, which both *ingénues* and cynics view as the end of imperialism, has hardly put an end to the ethnocentrism of the age of empires. The obvious fiasco of development strategies in the 1970s had, or so one assumed, sealed the fate of the schematic steps of historical maturation: history – modernization – progress. Corporate thinking ignores the fact that, in the meantime, new critical ways of understanding the formation of modernity have been developed – starting in the 1980s – which compel us to question the processes whereby global flows are being appropriated by individual cultures and territories. In arguing that the information revolution has resulted in a new westernization of the world, Drucker makes a case for a broad alliance between managers and intellectuals, which he considers the main prerequisite to successfully achieving the plan for a planetary society guided by the knowledge industry:

They [managers and intellectuals] are opposites; but they relate to each other as poles than as contradictions. They surely need each other. The intellectual's world, unless counterbalanced by the manager, becomes one in which everybody does his own thing but nobody achieves anything. (Drucker, 1990: 215)

Thus, the old demons of anti-intellectual populism surreptitiously rear their ugly heads.

The refusal to join historians in 'seeing the future in the mirror of the past' means deliberately overlooking the underlying moments of conflict that have built up the imaginary picture that we carry in our minds of planetary society and consciousness. Indeed, from the 15th century to the present, it is possible to track the dream of world unity as variously coming

under the sign of a religion, an empire, an economic model or the struggle of the oppressed. There has been a profusion of plans and schemes for reorganizing and ‘pacifying’ the planet. In the early 18th century, Abbot Saint-Pierre imagined a world government, a conception that was to haunt every plan for world integration until the Treaty of Versailles and the founding of the League of Nations (1919). In 1776, Adam Smith spoke of a universal mercantile republic and a single worldwide factory. In 1794, in the midst of the French Revolution, Condorcet drew up plans for a universal republic of the sciences, taking his inspiration from the *New Atlantis* by Francis Bacon, the founder of the experimental method. In the first quarter of the 19th century, the followers of Claude Henri de Saint-Simon formulated the first doctrine of ‘Universal Association’ through technological networks. Throughout this long history, the generosity of exchange often fell back into the tyranny of *la pensée unique*, just as utopias were in danger of withering in prison. The ‘discovery’ of a New World, opened up the prospect of dialogue and, thanks to 16th-century Spanish scholastic theologians such as Francisco de Vitoria who justified the *jus communicationis* (the right to communicate), paved the way to modern international public law, but ended in massacres and the negation of Native Amerindian culture. Yet, four centuries later, the self-same international public law made it possible to indict General Pinochet for genocide. The philosophy of the Enlightenment sketched out a plan for the joint control of nature and provided a justification for the great colonial enterprises. The international thrust of true socialism was diluted as it gave way to nationalism. Free trade turned into an imperialist nightmare. To an unusual degree, the promise of redemption by building a universal community veered into damnation of the ‘wretched of the earth’, to borrow the expression of the Martinique-born writer Frantz Fanon.

Each of these historical moments has contributed successive notions of universality and of our relationship to others, which in turn were reflected in utopias that emphasized either technological networks or social networks in the service of building a ‘supranational social bond’ or both.

To exorcise the technoglobal representation of the world’s destiny that forces us to adopt the short-term view and allow ourselves instead a clear picture of our *devoir de mémoire* (duty to remember), we might well go back and read through some of the essays by the Argentine writer Jorge Luís Borges on the Holy Grail of the ‘universal library’, ‘Babel’ or ‘The Congress’, on the impossible quest for a ‘planet-wide organization’. Or yet again, ‘The Analytical Language of John Wilkins’ which recounts the equally quixotic quest for the ‘principles of a world language’, undertaken at the time of the great intellectual restoration, which translate into a ‘thought chart’ enabling all creatures to be ordered and classified, the same utopian scheme at work in all the ensuing projects to develop a ‘universal language’, including the new language of ‘computerese’.

Let us shift our gaze from this brief look at the founding moments of the project for world integration and unification and take up a vantage point in the more recent past. This angle is just as essential, for it has resulted in the one-dimensional discourse announcing the entry of human societies into the global age and the development of the 'end-of' thesis, responsible for the insidious infiltration of an ideology that prefers to remain nameless.

The 'end-of' thesis

In the early 1970s, the manufacturing of an imaginary related to a new era in history was already well under way. By 1977, an IBM advertisement declared: 'Information age: there's growing agreement that it's the name of the age we live in.' As the processes of deregulation and privatization were stepped up, the image of the information age encountered that of the 'global age'. In March 1994 in Buenos Aires, Albert Gore, the then Vice-President of the United States, announced his plan for a Global Information Infrastructure, holding out to the 'great human family' the prospect of a new Athenian agora on a planetary scale. The notion of the New Economy appeared for the first time in official speeches that same year. In February 1995, the G7 countries met in Brussels where they ratified the notion of the Global Information Society, along with the decision to speed up the pace of telecom market deregulation. We had come full circle, ending the long conceptual flight forward during which – bearing the stamp of determinism – the field of ideas about technological change was formed.

The process had begun in the wake of the Second World War. The Cold War set the stage, overseeing the construction of concepts intended to announce, if not explain, that humanity had reached the threshold of a new information age and, hence, of a new universalism. There were three successive sources of this discourse: first, the social sciences, then forecasting techniques and, finally, geopolitics.

The first step involved decreeing the death of the previous age of 'ideology', which, according to its gravediggers, was consubstantial with the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, and of 'mass society'. That was precisely the task assigned to the participants at a meeting in Milan in September 1955 on the topic of 'The Future of Freedom' sponsored by the Congress for Cultural Freedom. The latter organization was founded in Berlin in 1950 and, apparently unbeknownst to the meeting's organizers, financed by the CIA under the cover of a private foundation. The list of participants included the economist Friedrich A. von Hayek, Raymond Aron, who had just published *L'Opium des intellectuels*, and the American sociologists Daniel Bell, Seymour Martin Lipset and Edward Shils. The agenda referred to a series of endings, among them the end of ideology, the end of politics, the end of classes and

of class struggle, as well as the end of protesting intellectuals and the end of political commitment. The idea was put forward that 'sociological analysis' was in the process of sweeping away the prejudices of 'ideology', testifying to the new legitimacy of the 'Western liberal intellectual' (Shils, 1955, 1960; Lipset, 1960). Another recurring thesis, first expressed in 1940 by the American philosopher James Burnham, who had broken from the Trotskyist Fourth International, played into the hands of the 'end-of' discourse: the managerial revolution and the irresistible rise of organization men, bearing with them the new society, the managerial society that prefigured the convergence of the capitalist and Communist systems (Burnham, 1941).

In 1960, Daniel Bell, director of the international seminar program of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, published *The End of Ideology*. Between 1965 and 1968, he chaired the Commission on the Year 2000, set up by the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, during which he worked on the concept of the 'post-industrial society'. In 1973, he brought out *The Coming of the Post-Industrial Society* in which he correlated his earlier thesis of the end of ideology with the concept of the 'post-industrial society'. The latter, also called the 'information society' or 'knowledge-based society', would be free from ideology. Bell was making a prediction; hence the subtitle of the book: *A Venture of Social Forecasting*. It is worth coming back briefly to this text, particularly in view of the fact that a new edition has just been brought out with a 30,000-word preface by the author, on the occasion of the publication of Manuel Castells's magnum opus on the 'network society'. Castells pays tribute to his American colleague, by the way, while taking him out of context. Even Bell himself, in his eagerness to demonstrate the validity of *The Coming* in the age of the Internet, presents his ideas out of context in the new preface, thereby offering further proof of how little regard is shown for history when the point is to celebrate the future (Bell, 1999).

Bell extrapolates from observable structural trends in the United States to construct an ideal model of society, a society featuring the rise of new elites whose power lies in the new 'intellectual technology' geared to decision-making and by the pre-eminence of the 'scientific community', a 'charismatic', universally oriented, disinterested community, 'without any ideology'; a hierarchical society, governed by a centralized welfare state in charge of planning change (hence his insistence on methods for monitoring and evaluating technological changes); a society allergic to network thinking and the topic of 'participatory democracy', an issue that cable television had, however, already put on the US agenda at the time. In such a society, where the economy is gradually shifting towards 'technical and professional services', growth will be linear and exponential. The prevailing 'history-modernity-progress' view is in keeping with mathematical information theory and the westernized-evolutionary model sketched out in

1960 by Walt W. Rostow in his 'Non-Communist Manifesto' concerning the 'stages of economic growth'.

Uncertainty about growth and the 'crisis of governability of western democracies', diagnosed by the Trilateral Commission, the informal headquarters for representatives of the political and intellectual world of the triad (Japan, Western Europe and North America), soon made the hypotheses of the initial projected schema of the information society look shaky (Crozier et al., 1975). Though this scientistic vision was flagrantly contradicted by subsequent events, it nevertheless succeeded in establishing the idea that organizational doctrines had supplanted politics. The new society was functional and would be run according to the principles of scientific management. Among his illustrious precursors, Bell mentions Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon, Frederic Winslow Taylor and Robert McNamara, former head of the Ford Motor Company, who oversaw the rationalization of Pentagon operations in the early 1960s, and later became president of the World Bank.

The professional forecasters

The idea that objective methods existed to explore the future gained legitimacy during the 1960s, and a market for the production of future-oriented scenarios developed. Professional forecasters offered their services to companies and governments, eager for advice and ready to pay for it. Through them, the general public became familiar with the new techno-information age.

One of them was Herman Kahn, director of the Hudson Institute, which made a number of forecasts under the aegis of the Commission on the Year 2000, headed by Bell. Kahn predicted, among other things, that Argentina and Spain would arrive side by side at the threshold of the post-industrial society and that, in the coming post-industrial (and therefore post-scarcity) society, people would work no more than 5–7 hours a day, four days a week, 39 weeks a year. The leading voice among forecasters was the independent consultant Alvin Toffler, author of the bestsellers *Future Shock* (1970) and *The Third Wave* (1979). A former Marxist, Toffler clearly indicated the role that anticipatory scenarios were designed to play: it was necessary to generate a desire for the future among the citizenry in order to avoid the 'trauma of future shock'. He publicized his expectations for the foreseeable future, including interactive democracy, the end of 'mass' media, customization, the return of the consumer, pluralism, full employment and flexibility. Above all, he predicted the end of that 'dangerous anachronism', the nation-state, which would be swept away by the 'matrix organization' of global companies. Instead of pitting the rich against the poor, or capitalism against communism, the new dichotomy would oppose

the Archaic to the Modern. At the time, 'interactive democracy' meant the 'wired cities' still on the drawing boards that were taken over by think-tanks and transformed into laboratories for experiments in technocommunitarian ideology.

The precocious determination, revealed by the wave of forecasting, to give political legitimacy to the idea of a real 'information society', here and now, overcame any doubts one might have had about its epistemological soundness. By the 1970s, it was a *fait accompli*, with strategies for achieving economic recovery being formulated through information technologies in the major industrial countries. There was an increasing tendency to assimilate information in statistical terms (as data) and to recognize it as such only when a technology capable of processing it was available. As a result, a purely instrumental concept of the information society took hold. Along with the vagueness of the concept, which was supposed to indicate the new destiny of the world, came a gradual fading of the socio-political stakes involved.

Soft power networks

By the end of the 1960s, Zbigniew Brzezinski, a specialist in the problems of communism, in his analyses of the worldwide consequences of the convergence of data processing and telecommunications, was explicitly presenting a geopolitical grid that lent legitimacy to the notion of the information society as a global society. In fact, his book on the technocratic revolution published in 1969 can be read as the final outcome of 'end-of' discourse, expressed as a strategy for worldwide hegemony. His central thesis went like this: President J.F. Kennedy was the first president of the global era, because he viewed the entire world as a domestic policy problem; since the United States controlled world networks, it was the 'first global society in history', the one that 'communicates the most'; the 'global society' model represented by the US foreshadows the destiny of the other nations; the new universal values flowing from the US will inevitably captivate the imagination of humanity as a whole, which will then imitate them. The moral of the story: the time of gunboat diplomacy was over; the notions of imperialism, Americanization and a *Pax Americana* were obsolete; long live the new 'network diplomacy'. In 1974, two years before his appointment as national security advisor to James Carter, Brzezinski proposed setting up a special inter-ministerial body to manage the 'economic-political-international machinery' or 'global system', which would report to the Vice-President and be in charge of 'global matters'. The plan did not materialize, however, until the Clinton administration, which created an ad hoc Under-Secretary of State position.

With the expression 'network diplomacy', we find ourselves projected three decades into the future. In 1996, the political analyst Joseph S. Nye and Admiral William A. Owens, both of them advisers to the Clinton administration, said exactly the same thing when they introduced the notion of soft power as the basis of the new doctrine of 'global security':

Knowledge, more than ever before, is power. The one country that can best lead the information revolution will be more powerful than any other. For the foreseeable future, that country is the United States. . . . The information edge is equally important as a force multiplier of American diplomacy, including soft power – the attraction of American democracy and free markets. (Nye and Owens, 1996)

Conclusion: only modern communications, first and foremost the Web, can 'encourage the expansion of a peaceful community of democracies, which will be the best guarantee of a safe, free, prosperous world'. The notion of 'soft power' was launched by Nye in a book bearing the telling title *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power*, published a year after the fall of the Berlin Wall. It was defined as:

. . . the ability to achieve desired outcomes in international affairs through attraction rather than coercion. It works by convincing others to follow, or getting them to agree to, norms and institutions that produce the desired behavior. Soft power can rest on the appeal of one's ideas or on the ability to set the agenda in ways that shape the preferences of others. If a state can make its power legitimate in the perception of others and establish international institutions that encourage them to channel or limit their activities, it may not need to expend as many of its costly traditional economic and military resources. (Nye, 1990: 12)

In contrast to this definition, it is helpful to remember the warning issued as early as 1931 by Aldous Huxley: 'In an age of advanced technology, the greatest danger to ideas, culture and the mind may well come from an enemy with a smiling face rather than from an adversary who inspires terror and hatred' (Ramonet, 2000).

There is another leitmotif at the core of the doctrine of soft power, which tends to eliminate any sense of responsibility: the interdependence of nations, the increase in the number of players and stakes involved, and the weakening of hierarchies across the world makes the notion of power so 'complex, volatile and interactive' (Nye uses all of these terms) that it loses all consistency. The world system has no head, and therefore none of the players in the global scenario can be held accountable for their actions. In *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes described the bourgeoisie as a 'limited company'. The same name could well apply to today's 'global business class', as global leaders like to describe themselves.

As everyone knows, the year that the Berlin Wall came down also gave fresh impetus to the 'end of history' discourse, in a new version devised by Francis Fukuyama, in the light of the victory of free-market democracy.

Global security or the ‘revolution in military affairs’

The concept of soft power reflects the hidden side of globalization doctrines, namely the thinking of the military establishment. A new doctrine arose in connection with the Gulf War, and was later consolidated with regard to the war in Bosnia and the implosion of Africa. The new strategic idea that enshrined the position of the United States as the ‘lonely superpower’ to use Samuel Huntington’s expression, or head of the ‘system of systems’, was an updated notion of ‘American national interests’ at a time when US information dominance was becoming obvious. Pentagon experts, inspired in part by Admiral Owens, immediately dubbed this new geo-strategic outlook resulting from the disappearance of the ‘global enemy’, i.e. the communist bloc, a ‘revolution in military affairs’.

The doctrinal revision aimed at redefining ‘military control in an uncontrollable world’ where the players in the ‘global system’ have increased in number, along with their modes of action. According to its proponents, wars of agrarian and industrial civilization in the era of information war were a relic of the past, requiring careful doses of intervention and abstention. War, which acquired legitimacy in the name of humanitarian universalism, thus had a number of targets, from which America’s overriding national interests would choose. The US should avoid intervening in local wars, in which belligerents solved their problems by hacking each other to death. In any case, when intervention did occur, it should be limited to the commitment to bringing into play the resources of cyberwar, namely, control of the skies. Ideally, the US alone should decide on the military operations, including those outside the European-Atlantic zone, within the scope of NATO, which they tried to turn into a virtually autonomous security organization. At the bottom of the ladder were the countries destined to remain fatally ‘unconnected’, the irretrievable ‘failed states’, still mired in agrarian or industrial conflicts. State organization in these countries was decomposing and was obviously incapable of fulfilling the geo-economic tasks assigned to it by the new world order (Joxe, 1996). What was new was the fact that the military was starting to use geo-economic criteria for decision-making. It was promoting an offensive strategy of peaceful enlargement of the world market as a paradigm, in place of the defensive strategy of containment adopted during the polar opposition of the Cold War years. Hence, the revolution in military affairs assigned prime importance to extending the realm of free trade, revealing the close links it was developing among the control of information networks, the universalist model of market democracy and the so-called ‘global security’ strategy intended to ensure the stability of the planet viewed strictly through the prism of the new liberalism. The concentration of geopolitical power in the hands of the lonely superpower was the logical

counterpart to economic globalization, defined as nothing less than decentralization at the planetary level.

Since the fall of the Berlin wall, experts in the military establishment have delighted in celebrating the 'revolution in military affairs'. The antiseptic wars in the Gulf and Kosovo seemed to confirm this vision, with its traces of technological determinism, until the attacks on 11 September 2001, when they were forced to observe that the macro system of remote surveillance via spy satellites and planetary eavesdropping had not been able to anticipate the terrorist actions, since old-fashioned human information gathering methods ('humint', as they call it in intelligence circles) had been relegated to the dustbin. Similarly, the doctrine of zero casualties from among their own ranks appeared totally outdated when formulating a counterattack on a faceless enemy.

The rise of management metaphors

In a tribute to the new legitimacy of geo-economic reasoning, a number of metaphors bloomed to designate the global company, such as 'hologram-firm' or 'amoeba-firm'. A global company was composed of relationships and information, a paradigm of the fluid, 'circulating' society. It was free of the complex modes of Fordist compartmentalized, hierarchical organization and could adopt the credo of company flexibility, employee autonomy and the 'good-citizen firm'. The watchword of this new form of organization was 'integration'. First of all, this meant the integration of geographical levels: the local, national and international levels would no longer be compartmentalized, but would instead interact with each other and be thought about simultaneously. Integration also meant combining design, production and marketing. It meant joining together activities that were once separate (the giant mergers of software and hardware firms, of contents and containers, come to mind). This cluster of convergences generated its own neologisms, such as 'glocalize', a term invented by Japanese management theorists to describe local-global circularity, and 'co-producer' or 'prosumer', which designated the consumer's new interactive function. The word 'integration' naturally refers explicitly to a 'holistic' or better still, 'cybernetic' philosophy, whereby the world is organized into large economic units. This new 'management-speak' had only one obsession: the death of the infamous nation-state (Ohmae, 1985, 1995).

This system-oriented view distilled its own imaginary. The 'network-based company' was another name for the 'postmodern company', an immaterial, abstract unity, a world of forms, symbols and information flows. The more aesthetically inclined management gurus unabashedly quoted the most scholarly references from Derrida, Lyotard and Foucault to

lend legitimacy to the new fluid order of so-called 'dissipative' structures (Cooper, 1989). What stands out clearly in this hazy picture of the entrepreneurial world is the dissipation of the stakes involved in restructuring the world economy, the failure to mention the appearance of neo-Tayloristic methods applied in the face of stiff competition and the quiet acceptance of the shameful exploitation of workers making electronic devices on assembly lines in tax-free zones. It confused words with realities, since only a few companies could be properly called 'global firms'. 'The global firm is more of a project than a reality'. It also ignored the fact that 'globalization deepens the specific features of each economy and greater globalization need not be an impediment to diverse production models which take the particular social and economic aspects of the various countries into account' – in short, that 'complex hybrids' exist (Boyer, 2000: 21).

The weightlessness of the postmodern corporation and the Net economy do not offer any protection against reality. With the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the techno-libertarian myth of the end of the nation-state has suddenly been cracked at the seams by the force of renewed patriotism and state intervention.

The global democratic marketplace and freedom of commercial speech

Globalization walks hand in hand with deregulation. The debate on culture, information and communication has gone beyond UNESCO and shifted to technical organizations, the first and foremost of which is the GATT or General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, renamed the World Trade Organization in 1995. In administrative terminology, these areas now come under the heading of 'services'.

A new version of free speech and choice appeared in response to initial controversies surrounding deregulated advertising and television. The very definition of the citizen's right of free speech was now competing against 'freedom of commercial speech', which was claimed to be a new 'human right'. This has generated a recurring tension between the empirical law of the marketplace and the rule of law, between the absolute sovereignty of consumers and that of citizens, guaranteed by their parliaments. It was in this context that the neo-populist notion of a global democratic marketplace, the cornerstone of free trade legitimacy, arose.

The management language (not to say the language of states that are accomplices to their own dispossession) used to describe the information society is the outcome of this ideological project: the definition of cultural diversity is transmuted into offering a plurality of services to sovereign

consumers; the cultural term 'work' has been supplanted by the market notions of 'service' and 'product'. In 1998, a European Directive was issued concerning the protection of personal data, to the indignation of global marketeers who consider building databanks to be one of the main driving forces of targeted e-commerce. The objections to the Directive raised by information industry pressure groups were based on the same 'philosophy' of the freedom of commercial speech: 'Restrictions laid down in the name of protecting privacy should not be allowed to prevent legitimate business from being carried on electronically both inside and outside our borders' (Eurobit et al., 1995). Here Pierre Legendre's analysis takes on its full significance: management doctrine is indeed the 'technical version of politics' (Legendre, 1992: 26).

Lobbies immediately denounced legitimate objections to the market concept of freedom as an attempt to restore censorship: there should be no restrictions on the freedom to communicate. The movement of cultural and information flows should be regulated only by the consumer's free will in a free marketplace of products. With this axiom, any attempt at formulating national and regional public policies in this domain lost its legitimacy. There was no point in debating whether or not the state should play a role in organizing information and communication systems with a view to protecting citizens' free speech from the logic of market and technological segregation, nor was there any reason to examine how organizations in civil society might act as decisive pressure groups to demand arbitration from public authorities on this issue.

Clearly, the claim of full rights to freedom of commercial speech was an attempt to push back the limits imposed by society to 'using the public sphere for public relations purposes', as Habermas would say. The notion of the freedom of commercial speech, as a principle of world organization, is indissolubly linked to the old principle of the free flow of information, which American diplomats began using at the start of the Cold War, but which was actually developed during the middle of the Second World War (Mattelart, 1995). The business management doctrine of globalization is a recycled version of this principle, which equates freedom itself with freedom to trade. Hence, any position that holds that the principle of the free flow of information is not synonymous with justice and equality among people is considered obsolete, if not altogether antediluvian.

In the GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services) negotiations which were slated to begin at the third WTO conference, known as the Millennium Round, organized in Seattle, Washington from 30 November to 3 December 1999, one of the issues was to make sure the doctrine of free trade was not applied to all types of goods and services. The aim was to have not only culture but also health, education and the environment recognized as universal public goods.

The search for the global standard

The search for a 'global standard' has stepped up the production of possible scenarios for future society. By 'publicizing' a future free from the weight of 'centralization', 'territoriality' and 'materiality', these scenarios plainly seek to hasten its arrival. The bestsellers by Nicholas Negroponte (1995) or Bill Gates (1995) are typical of this logistical system, which has been given the task of supporting the promise of *le grand soir* of 'friction-free capitalism'. 'The digital' turns into a 'natural force'; there is no way of 'stopping' it or 'holding it back'. Its power lies in 'decentralizing', 'globalizing', 'harmonizing' and 'empowering' (Negroponte, 1995). The verb 'globalize', like its ally 'communicate', has become intransitive, testifying to the implosion of thought.

As for think-tanks, they have become the purveyors of 'organic' system-bound intellectuals and salesmen of deregulation. In a January 2000 interview in *Le Monde de l'économie*, one of the heads of the Cato Institute summed up his 'liberal philosophy' this way:

The 20th century has been nothing but one long state-oriented parenthesis. We are responding to the issue of poverty by saying that, the freer the economy, the more jobs it creates, the better it pays its employees, the fewer poor people it creates. State intervention is only necessary for the army, the police and the law. Everything else can be managed by the private sector. As far as I'm concerned, the new economy is clearly in tune with this project for freedom. (Boaz, 2000: III)

This think-tank, specializing in monitoring public policy, belongs to the most radical libertarian current in the neo-liberal family, precisely because of its anti-government stance. It has only one doctrine regarding network regulation: the application of common business law. The role of the state should be restricted to creating an environment conducive to free trade.

Free-market fundamentalists are by no means the sole proponents of this vision, as the discussion on digital convergence has shown. At the present time, an attempt is being made to merge the regulatory systems applied to audiovisual communication and telecommunications and make both of them subject to a 'simplified' standard dictated by 'market forces'. This is tantamount to putting telephonic communication on an equal footing with cultural products, and the latter would thereby cease to be given special treatment.

The new messianism

Globalization also goes hand in hand with megalomania. Discourse on the values of the global firm and the market totality exudes overweening self-confidence: 'Where conquest has failed, business can succeed.' The global

business community has continually claimed for itself the messianic role of midwife of world peace. In fact, the organizers of the economic forum in Davos (transferred from this Swiss city to New York after 11 September 2001), where the business elite comes together every year, have defined their undertaking as a 'sort of global social conscience', but only after first recalling its 'apolitical' nature. In an astonishing interview broadcast by the TV channel Arte in November 1997 as part of a documentary film, Ted Turner, the founder of CNN, pushed this new-millennium position to an extreme:

We have played a positive role. Since CNN was set up, the Cold War has ended, the conflicts in Central America are over, there is peace in South Africa, etc. People can see how stupid war is. But nobody wants to look stupid. With CNN, information circulates throughout the world and nobody wants to look like a jerk. So, they make peace, because it's smart. (Laffont, 1997)

Two years later, this determinism with its crusader-like tone was especially piquant in light of the *realpolitik* of the Allied Forces in ex-Yugoslavia.

The rudimentary discourse used to give legitimacy to the ideology of corporate globalization is an affront to the real complexity of our interconnected world. Its increasing social legitimacy has been indissolubly linked to conceptual destabilization resulting from the deregulation of the information and communication systems. That is exactly the point Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari were making when they denounced the use of 'communication universals', the most basic of which is the notion of globalization. As they wrote:

The absolute low-point of shamefulness was reached when data processing, marketing, design and advertising, all the communication disciplines, took over the word 'concept' itself and said: this is our business. . . . It is profoundly depressing to learn that 'concept' now designates a service and computer engineering society. (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991: 15)

Deleuze saw this semantic expropriation as a further sign supporting his definition of the new society as a 'control society': a society in which the company serves as a paradigm and control is exercised in the short term, in rapid yet ongoing, unlimited turnover, replacing the mechanisms of the disciplinary societies revealed by Michel Foucault.

The asymmetrical planet

By announcing the arrival of the Global Information Infrastructure to the 'great human family', the then Vice-President of the United States, Albert Gore, was holding out the dazzling prospect to underdeveloped countries of escaping from their problems, along with a 'new Athenian age of

democracy forged in the forums that this network is going to create' (Gore, 1994). Experience has shown, however, that communication networks not only link people together, but often widen the gap between economies, societies and cultures along the lines taken by 'development' (Braudel, 1979; Wallerstein, 1983).

In 1999, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) made a critical assessment of globalization, confirming the growing marginalization of most of the world's countries from the standpoint of information technology. Ninety-one percent of Internet users were found in the OECD countries, which comprise the 29 richest countries in the world and represent 19 per cent of the world's population. More than half of them were in the United States, which accounts for only 5 per cent of the world's population. To finance computer connections for the planet's cyberspace misfits, the UN proposed the shock therapy of a 'byte tax', a sort of network tax, equivalent to the 'Tobin tax' on financial transactions worldwide proposed by French anti-globalization social movements (UNDP, 1999).

The World Report on Culture published by UNESCO for the year 2000 presents a telling picture of enormous disparities in new technology equipment. In the industrialized world, for every 10,000 inhabitants, the study documented the existence of 1,822 cellular phones (compared to 163 among the other [majority] portion of the planet), 444 faxes (compared to 13), 1,989 personal computers (compared to 113) and 2000 Internet addresses (compared to 4.7). More than 50 percent of the earth's inhabitants do not have a telephone line, or even electricity. In order to access basic telecommunication services, there must be one telephone for every hundred people, whereas a quarter of the world's population has yet to reach that point. As if that were not enough, the cost of Internet access is directly proportionate to the density of the country's Net-user population. Whereas the average cost of 20 hours of Internet connection in the United States is \$30, it jumps to well over \$100 in countries with few Net users.

The world economy can best be described as an 'archipelago' or 'techno-apartheid' global economy, due to the growing dichotomies within it, which are also found, in their own way, inside the rich countries themselves. The gap becomes a gulf when the potential for information technology development is used as a veneer for an economic model that many countries and social groups today correctly perceive as unbridled. In a similar context, the way the digital era is reconfiguring the physiognomy of cities offers further testimony. Increasingly, we find fortified centres, veritable enclaves along the lines of private towns in the United States, and companies where the employees live closed in upon themselves on planned sites linked by new information technologies, in opposition to the vast no-man's land of the information-poor and excluded. The neo-liberal fundamentalists readily admit that this is the world's unavoidable new deal,

invoking a magical figure of 20/80, which means that the global economy model can benefit only 20 per cent of the world's population, whereas the fate of everyone else will remain precarious. People are being openly encouraged to believe that the former plan for a modern world based on the desire to end inequality and injustice is a thing of the past. It is a 'stupefying period of mass mystification', says Alain Joxe; the 'ideologists of global laissez-faire' are concealing the de facto 'exclusion of those condemned to death by economic war'. Joxe, an expert on war and peace studies, concludes: 'The war against the poor, and even the genocide of the poor, is the agenda of modernity' (Joxe, 1997: 24).

Contrary to the geo-techno-economic vision of a world supposedly held together by free trade, there are signs everywhere that given socio-cultural systems are being unhitched from the drive towards a unified economic field. The dissociation between the two is an ongoing source of conflict and tension that feeds the various networks of planetary disorder which take on their own form of globalization. In contrast to new hybrid landscapes, some assertions of cultural difference respond to the threat of creeping homogeneity by refusing otherness, even though they are inextricably linked to the common reconstruction of identity-affirming processes in the age of global flows.

A global system with new global actors

By taking to the streets in the 1990s to protest against the rule of the market, new social movements on a worldwide scale revealed the harshness of the notion of globalization that was coming dangerously close to achieving a consensus. The protest movement was a salutary awakening of citizens who brought to the fore terms such as domination, power struggle and inequality, which had been called into question by the project for neo-liberal flexibility.

As the stakes became planetary in scope, they ignited equally far-reaching protests. The new political deal came into focus most clearly in Seattle, at the time of the mobilization (a genuinely global event) of non-governmental organizations, trade unions and associations against the drive towards, and danger of, a wholly market-oriented world. While less spectacular, in 1998 the concerted action of 600 organizations in some 70 countries, linked together by the Internet, had already succeeded in interrupting the MAI (Multilateral Agreement on Investment) negotiations on the deregulation of unbridled investment. For three years, one example of using the Internet to lodge protests was in the back of everyone's mind: the 'information guerrilla' action in Mexico's Chiapas region by the neo-Zapatistas and Sub-Commander Marcos. Downstream, this emblematic

experiment gave food for thought about social movements to theorists of the global network society (Castells, 1996). Upstream, it called forth a Net-war strategy at the Pentagon, where new forms of political activism were eagerly monitored (Swett, 1995; Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 1998).

The unification of the economic sphere presents a major challenge when it comes to choosing the form of protest. It requires that social organizations, anchored in a historically situated territory but capable of broadening their scope beyond national boundaries, discover what binds them to other realities and struggles. Searching for multilevel articulations was one of the main tasks of the global movements gathered in the two first World Social Fora of Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2001 and 2002. They testify to the different forms of social interaction emanating from the grassroots, pervading national societies and ultimately achieving true global reach.

Buoyed by the high visibility and efficient communication of the cyber-mobilization of the new social networks on a worldwide scale, groups from one end of the political spectrum to the other soon began proclaiming the arrival of a 'global civil society'. In examining how that notion was manipulated, however, one must be more circumspect, especially as the notion of 'civil society' itself carries with it a long history of ambiguities. Such extrapolation generally ignores the complex ways in which the nation-state has been reconfigured in its articulation with national civil society, both of them being faced with the logic of global system integration. It masks a refusal to think about the state outside of the ready-made idea of the 'end of the nation-state'.

Like it or not, the territory of the nation-state remains the place where the social contract is defined. It has by no means reached the degree of obsolescence suggested by the crusade in favour of deterritorialization through networks. It takes the nearsightedness of techno-libertarians to support this kind of globalizing populism, which avails itself of the simplistic idea of a somewhat abstract and evil state in opposition to that of an idealized civil society – an area of free exchange between fully sovereign individuals. Despite all the talk that relativizes the position of the nation-state, negotiations between states continue to be necessary as a counterforce to the deviations of ultra-liberalism. One of the tasks of organized civil society is indeed to ensure that the state is not robbed of its regulatory function. That is precisely what the sociologist Anthony Giddens, promoted to advisory status by Tony Blair, has rejected in his search for a 'third way', tinged with a Christian communitarian spirit, to rebuild worldwide social democracy (Giddens, 1999). What he calls the 'global age' functions as a kind of determinism. The corollary to his univocal celebration of the mythical power of a global civil society shaped by new social movements is the disempowerment of public authorities. This type of meta-discourse can only be formulated within a national

situation in which ultra-liberalism has already swept away social achievements and reduced state intervention to a minimum. Once again, the 'global' keeps showing its 'local' face.

To conclude, I would say that the current confusion surrounding words, concepts and notions relating to the global age, which appear to make sense and generate consensus in the most varied cultural and political contexts, forces us to remain on our epistemological guard. Long study trips to China, the Indian Ocean islands and the Middle East during the past year have prompted me to emphasize the visible wish of citizens throughout the world to reappropriate the process of worldwide integration by starting with the idea of a 'regional cultural community'. In spite of numerous political tensions, such attempts to build large geo-cultural entities (with their own specific features) are an essential response to the plan for a globalization that can grasp culture only in instrumental terms. Of these attempts, which I have observed in every cultural area, what pleased me the most was the fact that they not only reached across physical borders but also across academic disciplines. Geographers, anthropologists, historians, economists as well as life scientists and many others have all been invited to think and rethink the new world of networks. On the fringe of global events, on the fringe of the new totalizing theories about the future of the world led by a techno-globalizing ideology, an alternative way is being paved to build a viable planet for everyone.

It is significant that the United Nations placed the year 2001 under the auspices of the 'Dialogue between Civilizations' proposed by President Khatami of Iran, who was seeking thereby to counter Samuel Huntington's thesis on the inevitable 'clash of civilizations'. The call for dialogue seems increasingly like a premonition, in the light of the spectre of the crusade and holy war following the 11 September terrorist attacks.

To date, the most important narrative accounts of a social utopia have talked about 'nowhere'. The slow rebuilding of a utopian vision on the threshold of the 21st century needs its *genius loci*, the spirit of each place, the singularity of places. No doubt, this is the only way to accomplish a new vision of the universe and of the universal.

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Armand Mattelart is Professor of information and communication sciences at the University of Paris VIII. From 1962 to 1973 he was a professor of sociology of communication at the Catholic University of Chile, Santiago, and a United Nations expert in Social Development. During the Popular Unity period (1970–3) he worked with the Chilean Government of President Salvador Allende and was expelled from Chile in September 1973. He has subsequently taught at the University of Paris VII and at the University of Rennes II and is author or co-author of many widely translated books. The most recent include: *Networking the World, 1794–2000* (University of Minnesota Press, 2000) and *The Invention of Communication* (University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

Address: CEMTI, Département (UFR) de communication, Université de Paris VIII (Vincennes à Saint-Denis) 2, rue de la Liberté, F-93526 Saint-Denis cedex, France.