New Media in the Third World

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Being a European "egghead," I try to systematize all occurring problems before examining the facts. As such, I attempt to understand the various systems of new media and their impact on society and the individuals, particularly in the Third World, as parts of a wider and more comprehensive system of reference, that is, a national culture, which is itself part of the all-inclusive and comprehensive system of world culture.

I understand "culture," in the American sense of the term, to be a system of technology, language, attitudes, beliefs, and sociopolitical means of power and interaction within a historically bound community. I put "technology" first, because man, being a "tool-making animal," structures his culture according to technology before modeling it along social, political, and ideological patterns (Ribeiro 1971). Consequently, when speaking about the role of the new media in the Third World, we have to ask ourselves:

1. How does it interfere with the traditional systems of economic, social, political, and personal interaction?
2. How does it influence the prevailing overt and hidden trends of development?

These questions have to be considered from various angles, the most important being the communicative aspect of the new technology in the public as well as in the private sphere.

Television allows us to witness physically a reality which is actually far from our eyes. Being trained, as we are, from early childhood to believe that reality is what we see and what we hear, we are induced to believe that what we see and hear on the television and via videotape is real even if we know that we are, in fact, watching a piece of fiction.

This fundamental notion is of course much older than the modern tool of audiovisual technology. The traditional media, for instance, theater,

makes use of the very same mechanisms of perception, emotions, and consciousness for interaction. However, there is a basic difference between traditional media and the moving images created by modern media. The spectator of traditional media understands what is involved in the performance, who produced it, how, and for what purpose. The production of reality produced by modern media is based on an economic, social, and especially technological system of which the viewer remains oblivious. When people watch a puppet theater in Java, when they see and listen to the epic poem of Ramajana, they are confronted with a reality which is as far removed from theirs as that of a cowboy movie which comes to them via videocassette. Through their cultural system, they learned in their early childhood to distinquish the reality of the play from the experience of their daily lives. In contrast to this, American fiction is foreign to them. They are ignorant of its roots and therefore absolutely incapable of incorporating what they see into their internalized conceptions of reality and fiction. I will return to this problem in more detail later.

Films made for television and video cassettes are sophisticated technological and cultural systems of production which cannot be made transparent, especially when the audience is made up of people in the Third World. To do so one is forced to analyze the interconnection between producers and users of the new media. That is, one is impelled to examine the system that creates and represents a new cultural identity which contrasts to the reality of the Third World.

By definition "to analyze" means to separate the facts and to search for the causal or correlational link between them. Herein lies the first major difficulty concerning the use of modern media in the Third World. Compared to the past and to former technology, it is much more difficult to isolate the different aspects and phenomena surrounding the mass media. In the words of one of the foremost experts in this field, Armand Mattelart:

The convergence of a number of networks, through which travels a flux of information onto a television screen, no longer allows for the isolation of domains that were once dissociable: newsreel information—entertainment information—education information—social control information. (Mattelart et al. 1983:13)

The new technology makes it very difficult to determine the cause-effect relationship between the mode of production and the ways of consumption. On the production end you have technical innovations,

commercial trends, power, and profit. On the consumer end, the needs, expectations, social, and cultural background of the viewer. How the two worlds interrelate is not at all clear. Where once we could blame imperialism or transnational companies for the creation of a particular mode of production, now we have to look elsewhere to understand why television and video films are consumed in the Third World so eagerly by people whose needs, materially speaking, clearly do not lie amongst the fruits of Western industrial culture.

In order to face the difficulties of analysis, let us choose a method which was elaborated by Donald McGranahan (director of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development in Geneva) especially for arriving at an understanding of Third World development. It involves the use of an "indicator." An indicator is a variable that points to something quite different than that which it measures. A thermometer, for example, measures the body's temperature. The measurement of an abnormally high temperature becomes the indicator for something not quantifiable, namely illness. In a similar manner, the statistics measuring the use and diffusion of television and video cassettes in the Third World can serve as a valuable indicator for the health or the illness of the Third World's social body.

The profound changes which are occurring throughout the Southern Hemisphere did not, of course, originate with the emersion of the new media, nor can they be considered as the cause of the revolutionary transformations which are shaking the whole system of interaction in the developing countries, and yet through the indicator "TV-video" we can better comprehend the general trend of economic, social, and psychological changes in world culture.

Taking the diffusion and use of the new media throughout the Third World as an indicator of development, it would be naive to equate its increasing presence in the urban areas of the Third World with the general progress of developing societies. It is evident that in any society the linear growth of one particular factor within the global system, in this case that of the number of television receivers or video recorders, does not necessarily indicate progress. Furthermore, it may even accentuate preexisting economic, social, political, and cultural disparities and contradictions, so that a continuation of growth in this area could even provoke the collapse of an already precarious balance in the social system. For this reason, the widespread application of a new means of

communication or any other technological innovation has to be put into perspective and weighed against the improvement or worsening of the general economic and social conditions. More specifically, such factors as food, work, health, and distribution of the gross national product must be compared to the mobility, autonomy, and freedom of the individual, to his potential and his expectations. In other words, the rapid increase of television sets and video recorders, the multiplicity of offered programs and cassettes in Caracas, Lagos, or Jakarta is by no means an unequivocal indicator of general progress among these societies. As we shall see, this kind of "progress" creates immense problems and so far has done more to contribute to the economic, social, and cultural crisis than to alleviate it.

In order to demonstrate how new media may indicate actual and predictable development, it is useful to consider a 1960 UNRISD study of eight countries that shows that completely different indices such as life expectancy, average number of person per room, percentage of households that were electrified, as well as number of newspapers, number of radios and telephones all correlate with per capita income. And without any reference to the internal social stratification, the difference between radio and newspaper diffusion is much higher in the $300 annual income bracket than in the $1,500 one. The higher the income, the narrower is the discrepancy between the amount of newspapers which are read and the degree to which radios are listened to. This may be due to a number of economic and technical reasons, two of which are the extent of press distribution and the level of literacy. What appears certain is that information which needs a mental translation from reception to understanding, let us call this "digital," has a much wider market in the higher income bracket and correlates with a higher degree of education.

The analog type of information, the audiovisual one, if it still correlates with the income rate because it needs a receiver, correlates inversely to the rate of education. One needs to be literate to read a newspaper. Less education is necessary to understand the message of a comics magazine. One need not be literate at all to watch a television film. Moreover, the audiovisual message transmitted via television or video will reach the illiterate viewer by the visual alone and not by the accompanying language for the simple reason that either he does not understand the language in which it was produced (e.g., English) and

even if he does understand it (e.g., when the subject is a national product), he doesn't comprehend the meaning of the text because the cultural background of the spoken universe does not correspond to the one in which he grew up. McLuhan's "the medium is the massage" may be placed in doubt, but one cannot refute the gap between the perception of messages which require digital training of thought and those of an audiovisual nature, which need none. Thus far his theory has proven to be correct and applies fully to the study just discussed.

Nonetheless, in this study of international comparison, the most important indicator for our topic, that of the discrepancy in income within individual nations, is missing. It seems that in the Third World, the greater these differences are, the more the usage of new media becomes concentrated in the very narrow strata of high incomes. At the same time, but for other reasons, the longing for them becomes especially urgent among the poor. If it is true that the have-nots of modern media, who are the very large majority in the Third World, are not about to tolerate being deprived of such innovations, then we can conclude that the introduction of the former in the Third World is a potentially explosive catalyst of social unrest with unpredictable political consequences.

To illustrate the meaning of social disparity in Third World countries by the indicator "use of new media," let me take an example which illustrates the situation in all developing countries with the exception of Singapore, Hongkong, and Taiwan. The average income of the owner of a video recorder in Latin America is $52,500 compared to only $32,950 in the United States and $27,450 in Europe. This means that the buyer of a video recorder in Latin America needs an income ten times superior to the average of his countrymen, while in the United States and in Europe the ratio is only 2 to 1. It can be said that the gap between the social classes in the Third World is indicated more by the access of the latter to the new media than by the accumulation of such status symbols as housing and cars.

As to the use of such apparatus, Mittelart and Schmucler estimate that 75 percent of Latin American videocassette owners purchase prerecorded fiction. In the United States this number is 48 percent and in Europe, 41 percent. This ratio points to the disturbing fact that until now the new communication technology has been adopted by the Third World in a purely consumptive way without any attempt to use it to

increase personal culture or to encourage individual development. The two authors cite a marketing study of Time Review which came to two interesting conclusions. First, the introduction of modern media accentuates the social division within the already small minority in the Third World between those who own electronic media and those who do not. Second, all the publicity around the liberating function of television usage and video recorders has proven to be an illusion because almost nobody in Latin America records television programs through personal choice or makes any other creative use of the possibilities offered by the new technology (Mattelart 1983).

Now let us come to the important problem of the promotion of the new media as an indicator of the growing economic and cultural dependency of developing countries on the industrial ones. The extent to which the promotion of modern communication's technology is monopolized by the First World is an indicator of the degree to which the Third World is deprived of its own cultural power and technology. Take as an example the following descriptions of two Latin American enterprises, which upon first view give the impression of being autonomous and very successful:

The first is Rede Globo the major television chain in Brazil, with headquarters in Rio de Janeiro. The second is Televisa in Mexico. Both are corporately connected, multimedia enterprises with chains of newspapers, a radio station, book publications, audiovisual and audiocassettes. Globo owns the largest television chain in Brazil with five broadcasting stations and thirty-six affiliated stations, plus hundreds of retransmission stations. It has an AM and FM system, an audiovisual recording studio, the electronics firm, Telecom, a theater, an art gallery, and still more. The latest statistics indicate that their programs reach 58 percent of the total population of Brazil.

Mexico's Televisa, in existence since 1973, owns four television chains with sixty-one stations of retransmission. According to 1979 statistics Televisa reaches 41 million of Mexico's 55 million television viewers. The company owns forty-seven enterprises within the cultural industry; with a total of 70,000 television hours of fiction and documentation at its disposal, Televisa annually exports 24,000 hours of television viewing for the 18 million members of the Spanish-speaking population of the United States. Furthermore, it owns five of the biggest radio stations in Mexico, five publishing houses for books and maga-

zines, nine show business enterprises, three film studios, four record studios, a tourist agency, and more.

These two impressive examples would not suffice as an indicator if Rede Globo and Televisa were considered simply as successful national enterprises. The penetration and diffusion of modern media technology in the Third World serves as an indicator of the profound economic and social changes only when considered internationally. It is impossible, within the limitations of this article, to present an exhaustive account of the dependency imposed on the Third World in this realm. Instead I have chosen an example.

In the very country where Televisa is a powerful, independent, national enterprise, the United States, Japan, West Germany, France, and the Netherlands established around 500 electronic plants in the Free Trade Zones of Mexico precisely for the purpose of producing new media technology. In 1982 these employed 120,000 workers, 85 percent of whom were women between the ages of 17 and 23. Their output represents 10 percent of the world's production under foreign contract and 30 percent of the whole Third World market. The United States alone established 370 plants for electronic products in Latin America, 193 of them in Mexico and 140 in Puerto Rico. In South East Asia, 226 other U.S. plants are established, 90 of them in Hongkong and Taiwan, 62 in India and Singapore. In 1975 already 7 out of 11 enterprises controlling the color television market in Brazil belonged to international companies and 80 percent of their components were imported from industrial countries. In Venezuela 89 percent of the capital invested in the cultural industries was of foreign origin and the 11 percent of national origin served only for the production of unsophisticated goods such as wood, cardboard, paint, etc.

The problem of dependency is aggravated still further by the one-way transfer of advanced technology. Out of a sample of 29 contracts for media production and diffusion made for Venezuela, 62.5 percent were of U.S. origin, 16.7 percent Dutch, 12.5 percent Japanese, and 4.2 percent West German and French. The stipulations for these contracts are still more revealing: 37 percent prohibit the production of derived products, 43 percent prohibit the export of goods produced with the help of the transferred technology, 65 percent comprise legal clauses which severely limit the access to technical information, and 62 percent limit the use of these technological innovations once the contracts are broken off.

Mattelart points out that Sony has produced its semiprofessional U-matic in cooperation with the Brazilian company Motoradio since 1981 and intends to produce the series of Betamax-type cameras, monitors, and video reporters outside Japan (Tirado 1983).

These are some examples of the way in which Third World countries are driven to become dependent on the hardware of new communication media produced by the industrial nations. They are significant indicators of the degree of dominance claimed by one part of the world over the other. They demonstrate how this dominance clearly lies in the monopolization of advanced technology by a few centers of the Northern Hemisphere.

The concentration of technical know-how is invariably followed by the concentration of corresponding software production in the studios of the industrial powers. Monopolization of the new media industry also follows because those countries which export their studio creations to the Third World are the former colonial or imperialist powers, who once imposed their language and culture on the small corrupt native minority, today ruling most of the officially independent former colonies. Hence, most developing countries import the broadcasting systems of their former colonial rulers or, in Latin America, those of the United States. For example, India's broadcasting system is a close imitation of Britain's; that of the francophone countries of Africa is modeled after France's; and TV in the Philippines it is based on the style of U.S. broadcasting. Intangible elements, such as broadcasting norms, styles of production, professional codes, and expectations are all strongly influenced by those of the former colonial rulers. This is even more relevant to cassette production, especially where subject matter and style are concerned. Training courses, technical assistance contracts, advisers sent from the centers of technology and economic power virtually guarantee the continuity of cultural dependency.

In addition, there is a simple economic reason why Third World countries continue to rely on others for technical leadership and materials. The following passage taken from a study on "media imperialism in the Philippines" makes five points:

At an average cost of only $500.00 per hour, a country would require a production budget of close to one million dollars a year. Third World countries, with the exception of OPEC countries, do not have this kind of money—nor do many of them have the necessary trained manpower or production facilities. Consequently, in order to maintain a daily schedule, programmes must be imported

and, for poor countries, American programmes are available at an unbelievably low cost. For instance, the price range of half-hour episodes of American series in 1980 was $150–200 in Thailand, $130–150 in Korea and $225–260 in Hong Kong. (Mercada and Buch 1981)

A further quotation from H. J. Schiller (1977:33–43) also taken from the above-mentioned study demonstrates the subtle way in which Third World audiences are caught up in the craze of new media consumerism:

The production of movies, television programmes, games, records, magazines, and books is consolidated in a few corporate superstructures and made part of multiproduct lines of profit-maximizing combines. . . . The transformation of national media structures into conduits of the corporate business system and the heavy international traffic of commercial media products flowing from the center to periphery are the most prominent means by which weaker societies are absorbed culturally into the modern world system. (Schiller 1977:33–43)

Economic and especially cultural domination is indeed a much more complex phenomena than would appear at first—let us say—materialist glance. While statistical indicators prove the technical dominance of the United States, Japan, and Europe, they fail to explain why mass audiences in the Third World do not choose to ignore the instruments of their further oppression. Instead, no matter what the message is, whether it proclaim the revitalizing efficacy of Coca-Cola, the lightning speed of the latest model of a brand-name car, whether it be a Western, a horror film, a sequence in the long-running *Dallas* series, if it comes from the Northern Hemisphere it seems to fascinate a public living in the most dire conditions of malnutrition, shabby housing, and unemployment. This phenomenon is still more baffling when one considers that the very same audience that feeds on the shallow products of industrial media, possesses its own rich indigenous culture.

In order to arrive at an explanation to this seemingly incomprehensible dilemna, we must have a closer look at the revolutionary change in the cultural needs of two billion members of the world's population.

"Basic needs" is the term that socioeconomic scientists use when refering to food, housing, health, work and education. Never, however, do they include the viewing of television or video recorders in this category. When speaking about that part of the world's population which lives below the poverty line and whose only goal can be to survive, there is no doubt that those needs listed above are the major concerns. However, I am less certain that when refering to those living above the poverty line, one can so easily divide basic human require-

ments into those that are "primary" and those that are "secondary" to survival. The following passage from Mattelart should illustrate more clearly the difficulty I see in trying to rank human needs hierarchically:

More and more often one can spot in the Iquique Zone a Brazilian Indian pulling out from underneath her sixth skirt a roll of dollars with which to buy electronic devices which she then sells as contraband in her own country.

In the South of Bolivia whole villages are beginning to see their daily lives being transformed by the introduction of sophisticated technical apparatus, whose acquisition was considered impossible just a short time ago. Overnight little islands of transnational culture are being implanted in the midst of thousand year old traditions and are beginning to gnaw these away. (1953:58)

The question here is why this simple Bolivian Indian wants to buy electronic gadgets and why her village or poverty-stricken neighborhood agrees to spend the little money that they have or that they can borrow on the purchase of U.S.-produced video recordings and the like. If there is indeed a hierarchy of needs, one would think that these people would first think of bettering their water supply and establishing some kind of sanitation facilities, investing in agricultural equipment, or seeking training for a skilled job. Instead, the Indonesian taxi driver, the Nigerian oil field worker, the Indian shopkeeper choose to remain for a lifetime in debt for the satisfaction of being able to watch television programs. How can these needs be more urgent to them than the alleviation of their miserable conditions? To answer this question by blaming advertising for creating such absurd needs or by accusing the consumers for their lack of education and common sense is too easy. This kind of reasoning ignores the sociopsychological link between fiction and reality, which I mentioned at the outset.

When we think of our needs and the way they are satisfied, what comes to mind are the goods and services which we have learned to regard as valuable within our specific social group. Inside our cultural environment we have learned to eat a certain kind of food and to respond to a particular manifestation of love and tenderness. More precisely, any behavior is goal-oriented. The goals, in turn, represent collective and individual means of satisfying needs. These may be basically organic, but they are shaped and historically produced by the expectations of the group or the culture to which we belong.

To use an example, research has been published expounding upon the needs and sources of gratification of young American and European TV viewers and on the reasons why they desire video equipment. The

interpretations that social researchers have come up with to explain these needs are not only quite different from one another, they are often contradictory. On one point, however, they all agree: The satisfaction derived from watching television and other media productions serves as a compensation for the need of active communication and interaction, like play, work, and tenderness, which remain unsatisfied. What appeals in this case to children applies in general to the Third World customers of modern media. The need to watch the screen and the satisfaction that goes along with this activity is inversely proportional to the opportunity which the watcher believes he has before him to cope with his expectations or to fulfill culturally determined goals by planned activity. Put in a different way, television viewing is compensation for frustration in social communication and interaction and such frustration is the consequence of economic, political, and cultural conditions.

In this light, we can define needs as feelings whose conscious expression arises in response to the distance between social goals and self-expectations and the capacity which each individual imagines himself as having in order to fulfill these expectations. When a need is felt by an individual or by a group it is necessarily linked to the goal which is strived for. It is historically and socially irrelevant to judge such goals as being "right" or "wrong." The ambition of a 12-year-old U.S. boy to one day become President of the United States and that of his Iranian contemporary to go directly to the seventh sky of Allah by running into the Iraqian mine fields are both based on the same ground of human psychology. They vary only in their degree of realistic or fictive thinking when considered in their cultural context. Keeping in mind this hierarchy of needs in the Third World, it would therefore be a typical example of Western ethnocentric prejudice to judge as "wrong" the Indian Sikh who purchases a television on heavy credit.

The distance separating the individual's or the group's real situation from the pursued goals, be these economic, social, political, or ideological is considered by those who seek them to be needs. The size of the gap depends itself on the actual situation of the individual and of his group. The greater this distance is conceived to be, the more urgently it requires a fictive solution. By a "fictive" solution I mean any answer which seems to satisfy the felt need without actually attaining the goal which is sought after. A fictive solution shifts the goal from something

which is longed for, but which is somehow unattainable—be the hindrance real or imagined—to a dream of a goal. From this, we can conclude that:

1. The greater the distance separating a need and the possibility to fulfill it, the more fictitious must be the individual's attitude and behavior.
2. The fictive solution must effectively compensate for the disability, whether it be real or imagined, to reach the goal created by the need.

Historically and as can be judged from individual biographies the fictitious answer to a need is as effective as the real solution. One can say that the whole production of thought, of fantasy and art, of literature, and of religious ideas and rituals are the fictive solutions or the compensation for real needs, that is, of internalized goals. One can also say that the industry of culture understands perfectly well this need to compensate. It sells its products with increasing success precisely because it excels in promoting its market of dreams on a worldwide scale.

Perhaps this may all seem like very abstract thinking. Such reasoning, however, explains the fads which allow for the penetration of new media in the Third World in the first place.

Let us consider first the social group toward which the marketing of electronic hardware is geared to primarily. It is composed of the higher income brackets, a very small minority of indigenous urban commercial administrative and military agents of national or foreign power. These are people who educated themselves in the West, which means that their internalized goals are to be active consumers in the manner of the former political heads and actual economic rulers of the world. They see no possibility of attaining the position of their dominators. That is to say, they will never be the managers, politicians, generals, scientists, or artists of New York, London, Paris, or Tokyo. Nonetheless, they can compensate for this frustration by driving the same kind of cars, by playing golf, by sending their children to the same exclusive schools that the elite send their offspring and above all, by storing all the information and the fiction produced by the cultural industry. Through television and video viewing they feel that they can partake in the active life of those in power from which they otherwise find themselves excluded. They resemble those European and North American children who are mesmerized by horror films and space vessel commandos because they are deprived of actively shaping their own daily lives.

This is not the whole story. I already mentioned the fact that a television receiver and even more so a video recorder are very important status symbols. They separate the few "haves" from the innumerable "have nots." Now, for the "haves" in the Third World, the simple fact that they possess such a sophisticated tool, whatever it may be—the car, the color TV set—it is proof to themselves and to the world around them of their success. Usage of a television or video machinery is analogous to the sense of satisfaction that their children derive upon receiving a grade of "A" at school or college. It is something like a certificate guaranteeing to all who can see them that they indeed belong to the mighty, successful world of the elite from which they are actually excluded because they live in Lagos instead of New York, in Lima instead of Paris, in Jakarta and not Tokyo.

But, let us now turn to the much larger group of those who are forced to strive for physical and social survival. This is the overwhelming majority of the very poor, especially the deprived youth in the Third World countries. These young people emerge from the patterns of traditional societies and are accosted by the reality and the fictitious aspirations of industrial society, which mark the economic and social trends of today's world.

In pre-industrial cultures the needs of the group and the individual were internalized within a traditional framework of communication and interaction. So too, were the compensatory mechanisms. Thus, the real solutions as well as the fictitious ones fit into the context of the social group and individuals pursuing them. The expectation of a girl in an African tribal culture, for instance, conformed with her real and compensatory means to achieve the internalized goals and thus to satisfy her basic needs. Not so, when the needs she learned to recognize while growing up in the African tradition clash with those nurtured by industrial and post-industrial culture. The traditional forms and modes of communication and interaction inside her family and her village are violently intruded upon by the products of industrial culture—be it a transistor radio, Western music and language, school, or what her brothers relate of their attempts to earn a living in town. The girl's self-estimation of her ability to cope with these newly felt needs, stemming from industrial culture, is extremely low and yet her craving to belong to this irruptive style of life is inversely proportionately strong. Since she sees no chance of obtaining the real goals of industrial society, she must seek compensatory satisfaction.

The most effective source of compensation comes across audiovisual devices. The visions and sounds they produce allow the spectator to participate emotionally and therefore "really" in this fictive world of abundance, ambitions, and conflict. The longer our African girl is separated from her authentic social and individual situation by the reality presented to her on video, the greater is her need for this kind of compensatory fiction.

Television viewers in the Third World are as excited by anything that appears to them on their screens as children are in the Northern Hemisphere when watching television commercials. The major difference is that, being adult, the needs of this audience are all the more urgent. However, instead of working for the satisfaction of their needs—a task which their low self-esteem assumes to be impossible—they compensate for them by living them on television. As long as these adults are convinced that they can never belong to the industrial culture, which they admire so much, at least they can hope to be able to one day purchase the hardware for audiovisual dreaming.

One of the most serious studies undertaken on the connection between poor youth and communications systems, was conducted by two Indonesian social scientists and published in the English edition of the influential Indonesian magazine, *Prisma*. The subjects under consideration were the youth of the poor kampong of Jakarta. In order to be classified in the low income bracket, the subjects of the study had to meet at least one of the following criteria: 1) those living in areas of illegally erected houses; 2) those living . . . near railroad tracks, riverbanks, under bridges, etc.; 3) those living in the parts of the city with minimum facilities, where housing is crowded and where sanitation facilities are wanting; 4) the unemployed, regardless of whether they have a home and are supported by others or not.

If the assumption was true that compared to that of other media the impact of television is relatively greater among the youth and that much of the behavior of the youth is influenced by information sources such as movies and television, there would be good reason to say that there is a widening cultural gap between the youth and the well-to-do on the one hand and the elders on the other hand. This asymmetrical cultural growth may be able to explain the increasing alienation of the youth, the formation of limited groups, the widening generation gap and the conflict between generations. The alienation of the youth is also noticeable from their participation in religious activities and their views on these activities. Generally speaking, the youths relatively seldom attend the mosque or

langgar together with their elders except on special occasions during religious festivities.

The most obvious impact of communication with the metropolitan centers around the poor kampongs is the formation of a certain pattern of consumption among the poor youths. The discrepancy between the ever-increasing hope and the ugly daily reality surrounding the youth is being bridged by various forms of emulation of sumptuous conditions they notice of their neighbor, the modern metropolitan center. This consumption pattern manifests itself in the imitation of the newest thing in fashion, in talks about luxurious topics or things and in the emulation of attitudes they see around them. The emulation is frequently overdone and is more for demonstration effect than to reflect the reality of their daily lives. For example, the imitation of dressing with such conspicuous colors, thick powder and cosmetics, long hair, the use of symbols of youth like necklaces, bracelets, chains or excessive scribblings, pictures and attitudes. (Karamoy and Sablie 1975)

In order to underpin this sociopsychological approach, a number of our correspondents at the Institute for Education in the Third World in Frankfurt were contacted. I sent them a short questionnaire and requested of them statistical material or their own estimations (see Appendix A). In the very short time that I had at my disposal, I received responses from Singapore with most valuable statistics of the "Survey Research Group" under contract with the "Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Center," Singapore. It is recorded in a "General Report, 1982, on Cinema and Television." It covers Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia. Another response came by telex from Jakarta with short but most significant data, answering the questions in our inquiry. Finally, we received data from our Senegalese correspondent. The latter gave a short comment concerning the general aspects of television and video in Dakar. For Latin America I relied on two publications of Mattelart's and the personal accounts of contacts in Peru and Columbia.

The preliminary results gathered from the bulk of this material indicate that television as well as video recorders are distributed throughout the urban areas and that their presence is increasing at a high rate. The progress of telematics largely exceeds that of any other productive activity in the Third World at least in as far as urban areas are concerned. A brief scan of the statistics, however, shows that this rapid expansion of the television and video market is out of proportion with the increase in national and per capita income. The following is a sample of this data:

The cost of a color television set compared to monthly income:
    in Indonesia: 20 months' wages of a peasant
                    10 months' wages of a teacher
    in Senegal: 24–30 months' wages of a peasant
                    12–14 months' wages of a teacher

The cost of a video recorder compared to monthly income:
    in Indonesia: 30 months' wages of a peasant
                    15 months' wages of a teacher

The distribution of television sets and video equipment:
    in Indonesia: 1 TV for every 25 inhabitants in urban districts
                    1 TV for every 80 inhabitants on the whole population
    in Senegal: 1 TV for every 12 inhabitants in Dakar
                    none in the villages
    in Indonesia: 100,000 video recorders
    in Senegal: 80,000 video recorders

Regarding the rate of increase in the distribution of television sets and video equipment:
    in Indonesia: yearly official increase in registered TV sets: 100,000
    in Senegal: No statistical data, but "the interest in owning such apparatus
                    is very strong and increasing rapidly"

To adequately judge this data we have to remember that in Indonesia the yearly per capita income is $450. In Senegal for the year 1981 the per capita income was $436. The cost of a television set is about $1,250. Calculating very roughly, this would mean that the yearly increase of color televisions in Indonesia is equivalent to the combined yearly income of 6 million peasants, representing about 5 percent of the national income from the agrarian sector. In Senegal, with a much lower rate of industrial production, the ratio is still more frightening. These statistics support the thesis presented above regarding the revolutionary transformation in the so-called hierarchy of basic needs.

The second striking revelation produced by this information was the fact that household income and the extent of education are not determinants of television and video consumption.

The Singapore statistics point out that in regard to Malaysia, Indonesia, and Singapore, on the average 60 percent of television and video viewers watch their screens from five to seven days a week for one to four hours, which means that when they are not working this is their major pastime.

Finally, our Senegal correspondent reports that 40 percent of the programs available are of an informational, documentary, or educational nature, most of them coming from foreign trained producers: 45 percent of the programs are films, serials, plays, Westerns, and gangster movies. Of these 60 percent are imported from Western producers; 35 percent are produced in Senegal and 5 percent in other African countries.

Further evidence supporting this thesis came from another series of data from Singapore. A report on the "Frequency and Recency of Viewing Network Programs" in Malaysia shows that among women in low income households, there is a greater rate of television viewing than among women coming from high income households. Only among the 15-to-24-year-olds in the $1,000 annual income bracket is the rate of television viewing lower than in the $1,000 to $2,000 annual income bracket. Between the $1,500 to $2,500 annual income range, the rate of television viewing among the 15-to-24-year-age group drops to less than half. From 25 to 29 years of age the rate of television viewing is more than twice as frequent as among the same age group belonging to the next higher income bracket and nearly three times that of the highest income level.

The corresponding table for men between the ages of 15 and 24 years of age shows no deviance from the general rule applied to women. For all ages the frequency of watching television decreases with the increase in income. The difference that does exist in the amount of time spent in front of the television set between the two sexes in this age group is due to the patriarchal base of Third World society. Within the poor income bracket young women are too busy with household duties to reach the same viewing rate as their male counterparts.

The statistics for Singapore, comparing women and men, are slightly different. This is because the population is almost exclusively urban and the average household income is much higher than that of Malaysia. For all ages and all income brackets, the frequency of viewing is more or less equally high and in comparison to the viewing habits of Europeans and North Americans, it reaches Western standards. One reason for this could be that once the need for television as an escape from poverty becomes less urgent, people of different income rates and education become choosier as to what they will watch. Television becomes less of a drug and more a source of pleasure corresponding to the tastes of the viewer and his social group.

The statistics that I received on the type of programs watched in Jakarta read as follows: 35 percent of the programs are documentaries, informational, and educational shows; 35 percent are better action films, theater, and folklore; 20 percent are films of crime, Westerns, spy films and science fiction. The remaining 10 percent of television time is filled by sports. The same ratios apply to bought or borrowed video showings. Recalling to mind the information about the attitude of the poor kampong youth toward the programs, my thesis is entirely confirmed: the poorer the real situation, the more it produces the need of fictive gratification.

Our Jakarta correspondent's response to question 11 of the questionnaire reads "TV runs permanently," and to number 12, "Everybody watches when the opportunity is available." In other words, it doesn't matter what the message is, the essential thing is that the spectator be saved from having to face the miserable reality of his condition and its exigency.

Two Philippine experts on the subject state: "In terms of programming, television schedules tend to be heavily weighted toward entertainment programs (70 to 75%) at the expense of more serious programs such as news, documentaries and talk shows (25–30%)" (Mercado and Buck 1981:77).

"General Report's" detailed statistical analysis of Indonesia discloses slightly different results than those for Singapore and Senegal. For both sexes of all ages and income brackets the type of programs which are preferred are fiction (40%) and home and world news (47%).[1] If one contemplates the distance separating the censored and ideologically intended home and world news broadcastings and the average viewer's daily uncensored existence, one is led to conclude that what he seeks when watching the news is the kind of thrill that he could just as well derive from a Western or a crime film. The "reality" which he sees on the news is nothing less than the glamour, the horror, the "action" of a universe to which he does not belong, but yearns to join.

There remains still another aspect of the contradictory impact of television and video on the Third World. As fictive as the heroes of the United States, European, and Japanese films and newsreels may be in comparison to the daily reality of the masses in the Third World, they represent earthly men and earthbound situations rather than mythological men and women in fantastic places. Their dwelling places, their fast-moving cars, the glamour and despair of their love affairs or con-

flicts over money, the influence and power that these heroes of the industrial world command is real to them because they witness it with their own eyes in the streets of their towns or villages every time a political or military figure of some importance makes his appearance in their neighborhoods.

In traditional cultures the heroes and the masters were supernatural, heavenly gods and goddesses, clearly beyond the human experience. The characters of Gilgamesh, of the Trojan War, of the Mahabarata or the Ramajana were looked upon as possessing superhuman faculties. They fought with magic and invincible weapons, they moved swifter than any living creature, flew higher than any bird, and could watch sights far beyond their eyes. The tales created around the deeds of these extraordinary beings procured a sense of deep satisfaction among the spectators, who were able to share in the magical mood of the accounts not just by listening and watching, but by actually partaking in the religious beliefs and rituals of their heroes.

The heroes of the modern world, as they appear on television, are endowed with very human characteristics and at the same time with the powers of the deities of traditional societies. They love, they fight and kill, and they succeed in gaining power over nature and other men. The tales of their bold exploits, however, allow for no route to success other than by individual or collective effort. The fiction which comes over the TV screen blocks out any possibility of spectator participation. There is no hope. There is no ritual to join in, other than that of imitating the manner, the dress, and the habits of the white hero.

The active communication between producer and spectator that was aroused by traditional media in the form of figurative art, story-telling, theater, dance, and music was a very efficient means of maintaining sociopsychological balance. As such, traditional media was a stabilizing factor in a world pervaded by misery, cruelty, ignorance, and oppression.

To the contrary, modern media, especially the audiovisual kind, induces an ever-increasing sociopsychological imbalance. Not only does the compensatory escape fail to provide an occasion for participating in and acting out one's needs, it adds to the feeling of frustration and craving. For this reason modern media is an enormously powerful instrument in disrupting the traditional course of social interaction and of intruding upon the class structure and the relationship between the

generations as well as of the sexes. Audiovisual media destroys traditional values and norms. It dismisses the social hierarchy. Finally, it nullifies all ethical and moral beliefs and robs its victims of any religious consolation.

With each television set or video recorder that we export via the one-way path to the Third World, with each show or cassette that we sell in these parts, we transport the germ of unrest, of instability, revolt, delinquency, and violence, because the practical means of attaining the fictive goals that the media delivers are missing.

Nevertheless, there is perhaps one redeeming aspect to the impact of telematic imperialism which is of great importance and which is certain to become even more significant in the near future. In order to counteract the catastrophic predicament of two-thirds of the human race, I am convinced that the only effective weapon is creative thought, not only and not even primarily from the centers of science and technology, but from the workers and oppressed masses all over the world. The new media, the latest devices in communication and information technology are, in fact, capable of opening up this opportunity for creative thought among the poor. Which isn't to say that we musn't remain very critical admirers of the wonders that these modern means of communication are opening up to us every day.

First of all, we must ask ourselves, what are the positive effects which could come from the diffusion of television programs bought in the United States or Europe. One outcome is the emergence of a mythology which is neither local nor tribal nor national, but of cosmopolitan origin and orientation. The United States and European cultural industry produces the same feelings, goals, hopes, attitudes, and behavior all over the world. The same rhythms of music, a cerain standard in clothing fashions, identical status symbols are gradually being spread on an international scale. From Lima to Rio, from Lagos to Nairobi, from Bombay to Jakarta and to Manila an international language is being spoken. It is a tongue communicating identical notions from the centers of imperialism to the farthest corners of the earth. The propaganda that is a good part of this idiom is responsible for transforming the traditional norms and values.

All those responsible for cultural policies regret and resist this development. They try to preserve the traditional principles of their respective cultures. Their struggle is, however, to a large degree hypocritical

and futile. I call it hypocritical because when all is said and done, the government, its military and civil servants, are in fact the economic agents of the large transnational companies. Even if they make an attempt to include elements of tradition and folklore into their programming, in truth those in power seek to eradicate the traditional mentality in order to insure for themselves political and economic supremacy. This is so because their own education shaped them into people who must calculate everything in terms of input and output. No longer do they trust in the magic cosmic powers of their traditions. In order to secure their position the national elite depends on schools, universities, industrial technology, and know-how. Further, they rely on the power, arms, and concepts of their former colonizers. Hence, while these agents of the industrial centers claim to be fighting for an autonomous culture, in reality they support the dissemination of the standardized profit-making culture of technological rationality. This is the hypocritical aspect of their "fight." The reason their pretended combat is futile is because the population has already adopted the new mythology of the industrial culture and has placed their trust in its gods. The gods of Coca-Cola, of Suzuki motorbikes, and of the Denver Saga have replaced, to a large degree, their own indigenous deities.

How can anyone possibly refer to these terrifying worldwide changes which are rapidly destroying thousands of years of old cultures and upsetting the delicate balance between frustration and compensation as being positive, the reader must be wondering. Are not the Third World's hungry peasants and jobless urban youth simply being handed over to the manipulative power of the transnational companies and their cultural industry? The answer is yes, but there is something else that the changes can bring with them.

A fundamental idea, however perverted, transported by modern media is making its way into the hearts and heads of the Third World masses. The essence of it is that the general conditions of individual and collective life are not shaped in the heavens, off limits to human endeavor, but here on earth in human hands. There is no doubt that the needs and expectations of the Third World population are being manipulated. Invariably, though, the poor of this world will be forced to ask themselves the reason for the harsh contradictions between the happy faces that appear on the television screen and the desolation which is the reality of their surroundings. It is only a matter of time before they

become convinced that the misery of their lives is not a matter of fate, but of the human potentials of good and evil. The result of this realization could be creative thought. It is precisely the most advanced devices in communication technology which could open up such progressive perspectives. For instance, closed-circuit television and cable television allow the spectator to act out the feelings and thoughts experienced during the viewing of a preselected piece of reality. The filmed reactions give way in turn to group-learning, group-dynamics, and to finding new solutions. The latest technological innovations in communication enable viewers geographically or socially separated from one another to see a common sight, to hear the same information, and even to feel similar emotions. In this way people have the possibility of together experiencing new and tentatively better ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving. In a word, the new media hauls the spectator out of the isolation and hopelessness which is inherent in the contradiction in which he lives between reality and manipulated dreams.

If this opportunity for creative thinking, brought on by the new media is to be taken advantage of, then the power structure of production and the diffusion of cultural industry must undergo far-reaching changes. A change would require that the seat of know-how in the technological production of hardware and software be shared with the Third World. Scientific as well as economic cooperation must evolve on an equal footing between the metropoles and the peripheral nations. Not the short-sighted, profit-seeking interests of competing companies or government agencies should determine the goals of research and its technological outcome, but rather the long-range perspectives for development.

If, with the help of low-energy running media on a local and national scale we are able to join the Pakistani peasant with the young inhabitant of a Brazilian favela in coming up with new solutions to satisfy their needs, then the market for new technology could turn out to be the most promising branch of industrial production.

This perspective is more than just the dream of a European "egghead" in search of utopian solutions to world problems. It is an actual occurrence going on at present in the Third World. Allow me to cite some final examples from Mattelart and Schmucler:

A group of researchers in Social Sciences, with assistance from engineers of informatics and with the help of a minicomputer, have tried to "systematize and

disseminate the basic information on the Brazilian and international reality." This information is spread and addressed in particular to base movements and organizations, such as trade unions, professional associations and local voluntary groups. But at the same time, it is meant for institutions like the universities, the political parties and the churches which are all linked to social development and to the transformations of society. IBASE in its pledge to aim for the "democratization of information" tries to "collect the socioeconomic information produced by already existing agencies and by popular currents or movements. "We aim," they declare, "to integrate, generalize and transform such information into practical know-how. We will translate it into accessible language in order that it be made available to base movements who can use it in seeking political alternatives and in guiding action . . ."

Some Venezuelan engineers in the professional movement, Antonio José de Sucre, reflected in 1976 on the attitudes of professionals towards society and the state. "We believe that the scientist and the technician can adopt a style of life, in which money is not the parameter of success and where administrative corruption and the distortion of values—so rampant today—are absent. We believe that governmentally run enterprises inside an economic and social system which tends to accord them quite a new importance are able to and should demonstrate their technical as well as administrative efficiency. Finally, we believe that a scientific and technical development that responds to the real needs of humanity and to all humans is possible." (1983:145–146)

Appendix A

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Number of television receivers per number of inhabitants, when possible according to city or town.
2. Increase in the number of television receivers per year within the last 5 years.
3. The number of video recorders per number of inhabitants, if possible with the same information as in 1 or 2.
4. The price of a television set in comparison with the average wage earnings of a farmer and of a teacher.

5. The same for video apparatus.
6. What is the percentage of Western produced programs in comparison to those produced in the native land, either per week or per year.
7. The same for video cassettes.
8. The amount and kind of national production in governmental and nongovernmental studios for television and cassettes.
9. The percentage of broadcasting time for the following kinds of programs:
   —Information/ Documentaries/ Education
   —Action films/ theater/ folklore/ crime films/ westerns/spy films
   —Sport
10. The same for videocassettes.
11. How many hours of television are watched on the average every day? Which programs are the most popular?
12. How do viewing habits differ according to salary, sex, and age?
13. What kind of videocassettes sell best?

Note

1. Obviously video recording will never cover the news the way television does. Developing along the same lines as television minus the news coverage, video is bound to accentuate the trend of contemporary fiction.