

Neoliberalism and Netizenry: The Transnational Mission Civilisatrice Conveyed by Digital Media

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Abstract: *This paper explores how socio-political and economic aspects of neoliberalism (Mignolo 2011; Wacquant 2012) determine structures and functions of digital media and its corresponding discourse of netizenry (i.e. online civil activism), and how the rise of the latter can be related to the experience of neoliberalism.*

After critically exploring the politico-anthropological, geopolitical and politico-economic aspects of neoliberalism's broader historical and socio-political context, this paper seeks to understand its current implications. Its primary aim is to discover related motivations and mechanisms manifested in practical experiences of the ZunZuneo Case in Cuba, discursive tendencies reflected by Wael Ghoneim's Revolution 2.0 (2012) and recent expressions of a mission civilisatrice by the transnational state's élite (Robinson 2004).

This paper offers a social and postcolonial (Massad 2015) critique of netizenry, which is a subjectivity constructed in accordance with intertwined neoliberal politico-economic (transnational) and imperial (national) strategies. This is to demonstrate how relations of transnational corporations on the one hand and US hegemony on the other vis-a-vis digital media constitute two facets of one and the same neoliberal reality. By deconstructing the concept of netizenry, a dualsystem of signifying functions unfolds.

Thus netizenry comprises, constructs and promotes subjectivities favourable to both the Americanisation of the world and to consumerism (cf. Amin 2000; Grewal 2003) inherent in digital media.

*Finally, the common objective both of US (national) hegemony and transnational expansion through neoliberalism's intrinsic features of *gouvernementalité* (Hardt – Negri 2000) and an institutional background lies in defining the general moral, cultural and intellectual *Zeitgeist* of our era.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In his 1936 satirical science fiction novel *War with the Newts* (*Válka s mloky*), the Czech author Karel Čapek describes the intersection between technology and capitalismⁱ as follows:

“In this present period, history, so to speak, is manufactured by mass production; this is why the speed of history is so much greater (estimated to be approximately five-fold). It is simply not possible nowadays to wait centuries for the world to turn [...] The migrations of nations, for instance, which at one time was drawn out over several generations, could be completed within three years using modern transport methods; otherwise there would be no way of making a profit from it. [...] All this could be completed incomparably faster if put into the hands of well-funded business.”

Elsewhere in the same novel – the overall message of which is to portray a hypothetical interplay between modernity and capitalism as a threat – he writes about the news media which, everywhere in the world, understand the “enormous commercial possibilities” offered and which benefit from “effective and large scale advertising campaigns”.

Each of these quotations raises the issue of power relations, i.e. the social implications of the politico-economics of mass communication (cf. Aouragh 2012).

Čapek could not have suspected how valid in certain respects the partly grotesque, partly serious points quoted above would prove to be nowadays, and how thought-provoking – although changed – they would become in other respects. Since that time the wheels of history have been in constant motion, with various consequences and implications across a range of social sciences, while at the same time transcending them.ⁱⁱ

To understand power dynamics and to see how they interact or are merged with mass communication and the concentration of capital in our neoliberalⁱⁱⁱ (cf. Mignolo 2011) era (i.e. the politico-economics

of digital media), what discursive strategies^{iv} follow and to “adequately and relevantly produce insights into the way discourse reproduces (or resists) social (international) and political inequality, power abuse or domination” (cf. Fairclough 2003), it is essential to critically examine the symbiotic relationship between transnationally established digital media on the one hand and US hegemonic projects on the other. These latter constitute two faces of one and the same neoliberal reality.

In recent decades there has indeed been a kind of politico-economic integration between communication techniques and market dynamics. This paper seeks to explore what circumstances have converted this process into political integration and how digital media – a descendant of the “old” news media ridiculed by Capek in the quotation above – can relate to this process.

One characteristic which indeed distinguishes the “old” media environment from its “new counterpart” is that users of the latter not only *consume* content, but also *produce* it. As we will see, this is exactly what they are expected to do, especially as online activism has a special relationship with both with the political economy underlying most ICT (Aouragh 2012) and certain foreign policy trends (Mignolo 2011; Brzezinski 2012; Massad 2015).

What I seek to understand through critical discourse analysis and the case studies (Fairclough, 1997) is how these two theatres of neoliberalism’s operations form a symbiotic nexus with digital media.

This paper does not aim to deny the mobilising– or even emancipatory– potential of these information-sharing technologies and applications, but rather to pose a multi-levelled critical approach to their relationship with neoliberalism and relevant elements of international and politico-economic power formations.

It neither aims to take sides in relation to various and contradicting theories of world power and economics, but rather argues that there seems to be common ground between transnational (corporation-based) and national (US hegemony) spheres, which hypothetically converge through digital media in a joint civilising mission and which *forma dual system of signifying*^v that produces an obscure ideology of netizenry.

Evidence of this is: 1) political aims using digital media as in the ZunZuneo experience; 2) discursive tendencies recent years promoting netizenry (i.e. a collective identity of digital media literati) by the leadership of the ICT behemoth Facebook, opinion leaders such as Wael Ghoneim (2012), Arab Spring narratives, etc.; 3) overlapping interests, as demonstrated by the personal and functional composition of influential think tanks, such as the Council of Foreign Relations, and ideological harmony between transnational companies (hereinafter: TNCs) and the State Department.

I develop this argument by combining social and cultural theories of influential scholars who share a postcolonial perspective.

2. POLITICAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF NEOLIBERALISM

French sociologist Loïc Wacquant (2012: 66) points out that “the anthropology of neoliberalism has become polarised between a hegemonic economic model anchored by variants of market rule and an insurgent approach fuelled by derivations of the Foucaultian idealistic notion of governmentality”.

It is equally important to consider these parallel interpretations of neoliberalism in the context of its implications for the structural and functional patterns of digital media, which can equally be attributed to the framework of a market-centric economic ideology, and contextualised in abstract post-modern concepts such as *gouvernementalité* (Foucault 2004).

The first concept is relevant in terms of a conspicuous and pervasive economic doctrine that generally lays the ground for transnational expansion. The second approach identified by Wacquant rather envisages an elusive but rather pervasive transnational ‘thought collective’, with an accompanying tactically polyvalent discourse, which comprises “a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies” (cf. Foucault, 1979: 100). Wacquant himself agrees to prioritise this latter (*political*) sphere with means over (*economic*) ends. At the same time he relinquishes non-state logic by holding that neoliberalism nonetheless does have an *institutional core that makes it distinct and recognisable*. This seems to be a justified position. (cf. Wacquant, 2012: 71)

While Wacquant is right both in his distinction and in his attempt to find a *via media*, instead of his conclusion of the state effectively redrawing the boundaries and tenor of citizenship through market-conformist policies (2012: 71), I would personally introduce another approach to the debate on neoliberalism which shall be based on a postcolonial critique of modernism and hegemony (Amin 2000; Mignolo 2011; Aouragh 2012; Massad 2015) in the light of recent global political tendencies explained below.

The dual system of signifying (cf. Stuart Hall, 1997) or knowledge-making— which, in my view, is the common denominator between “rule by markets” and *gouvernementalité* – “is steeped in imperial/colonial ambitions from the European Renaissance to US neoliberalism (that is, political economy [...] which guided the latest phase of globalisation, from Ronald Reagan to the financial crisis) was grounded in specific languages, institutions, and geo-historical locations. The languages of Western imperial knowledge-making (and the self-definition of the West) ... were practiced ... by social actors (human beings) dwelling in a specific geo-historical space, with specific memories that ... actors constructed and reconstructed in the process of creating their own [...] identity” (Mignolo 2011: 141).

3. GEOPOLITICAL LANDSCAPE AND SCOPE OF NEOLIBERALISM

As a direct outcome of the victory of the free world over communism, a US-led neoliberal order successfully rose along side its corresponding political agendas of globalising capital (such as the globalisation of trade agreements) and the universalisation of liberal democracy—agendas that have dominated the globe ever since (cf. Brzezinski 2012: 47-48; Mignolo 2011: 50; Massad 2015: 110-111; Nazemroaya 2014; Zabala, 2017).

Joseph Massad (2015: 112) recognises the central importance of this historical moment, which paved the way for the establishment of not only a neoliberal order, but also a cultural transformation rising in parallel with the governmentalised international norms imposed on the rest of the world by the US and Western Europe through the United Nations.

Massad goes onto conclude that this institutionalisation of neoliberalism through US-dictated local economic legislation (inside the United States) was and is imposed on Third World countries by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank – and, more recently, on some European countries as well (Massad, 2015: 126).

He holds that the corresponding discourse (cf. *gouvernementalité*) and organised campaigns have “more of a symptomatic relationship to neoliberal global capitalism: it broaches moments of critique. It attempts to inoculate against neoliberalism’s worst excesses; sometimes it pretends to offer something almost like a counter-public, yet it continues to operate insistently outside the economic sphere, the most important of neoliberalism’s theaters of operations” (Massad, 2015: 133).^{vi}

Concerning the role of the US *per se*, there are certainly opposing opinions (*explained later in detail*). But even those who would express doubt about Massad’s ideas, such as Hardt – Negri (2000: xii), while introducing their theoretical approach and abstract concept of Empire (i.e. a decentred and deterritorialising apparatus of rule^{vii}), also underline the role of a related institutional core that operates transnationally.

Since according to Hardt – Negri (2000: 31): “UN organisations – along with the great multinational and transnational finance and trade agencies (the IMF, the World Bank, the GATT, and so forth), all become relevant [...] within the dynamic of the biopolitical production of world order.”^{viii} At the same time, “huge transnational corporations construct the fundamental connective fabric of the biopolitical world in certain important respects. Capital has indeed always been organised with a view toward the entire global sphere, but only in the second half of the twentieth century did multinational and transnational industrial and financial corporations really begin to structure global territories biopolitically.”

A central point on which their view is highly debatable, however, is that such a new biopolitical world would lie completely outside America’s sphere of interest, and the United States would thus not “form the center of an imperialist project” (2000: xiv).

It is arguably necessary to bring the conceptual core of the power of transnational corporations and the privileged status of the United States into my train of thought, disregarding other abstract and probably unfounded facets of Hardt – Negri’s theory which are not necessarily supported by observable evidence.

I believe that Joseph Massad is right to link huge networks of international organs in one way or another to United States hegemony (see quotation above), as – consciously or unconsciously – they directly or indirectly serve hegemony, or at least contribute to its maintenance. From some perspectives, US hegemonic projects and their institutional background can overlap operationally with TNCs, and the two can complement each other.

Indeed, the hegemony of the United States becomes visible and evident, based on Samir Amin's (1997: 3-5) assumption of five concurrent monopolies. He defines these as: a monopoly of technology, supported by the dominant nations' military budgets; a monopoly of control over global finance, and a strong position in the hierarchy of current account balances; a monopoly of access to natural resources; a monopoly over international communication and the media; a monopoly of the military means of mass destruction.

I hold it is as almost axiomatic to acknowledge that these monopolies essentially and inherently characterise the position of the United States as well as some major transnational companies in our contemporary world. Thus it is of crucial importance to also understand their function when talking about political economy and intellectual (discursive) aspects of society.

It is also relevant to see that the corresponding *neoliberal system of signifying functions* not only has a special historical nexus with the hegemonic civilisational discourse (Aouragh 2015: 274), but is also most visible or detectable through the prism of the latter.

At this point neoliberalism and its beneficiaries – for example TNC-based digital media – provide a basic apparatus for engaging in institutional and purposive knowledge-making that is *geopolitically oriented* (cf. Mignolo 2011: 141).

4. DIGITAL AND TRANSNATIONAL CAPITALISM

Focusing on our contemporary era, what do we find? *Prima facie* the process of economic integration has won an almost epochal victory. The expansion and merger of markets indeed “unites” the world to an increasing degree.

It seems obvious that so-called TNCs as the frontline troops and undisputed beneficiaries of this (imagined or real) unification do not necessarily need state frameworks to bind markets together. They do indeed welcome – or even encourage – harmonisation in terms of norms, customs, health and environmental regulations; but they also manage on their own – at first sight, completely independently of states. The leaderships of these companies are well aware that a high degree of political integration which *completely overlaps* with their spheres of operation is in no way feasible, as they operate transnationally (indeed, transcontinentally), from San Francisco to Singapore. They do not need political integration: on the contrary, they sometimes even profit from operating in a politically and financially heterogeneous world.

What TNCs need, we could say, is a large market and a multiplicity of states, so that they can gain the advantages of working with states but can also circumvent those states hostile to their interests, in favour of states friendly to their interests. According to Wallerstein (2004: 24) this possibility can only be assured by the existence of a multiplicity of states.

We could continue by saying that economic integration does not necessarily require political integration, as the first is not at all – or hardly – inhibited by state borders. No wonder that, once security requirements are met, former imperialist powers – such as Great Britain – have contented themselves with encouraging free trade worldwide. Once this has been achieved, virtually all objectives are realised economically, and there is no need to integrate the political core of commercially linked states. Transnational firms regularly benefit from the more favourable economic climates in emerging markets and some developed markets, such as America (The Economist, 2012).

In order to understand the socio-economic weight of major transnational companies it is enough to look at recent mergers and acquisitions in the global agricultural biotechnology sector (Dunwell 2016: 206), and how corporate interests are generally presumed to determine so-called “free-trade agreements”: i.e. state policies.

The question that emerges is whether neoliberalism provides a framework for the expansion of transnational companies, or for American hegemony, or for both at the same time. Can TNCs wield economic and political power and influence which surpasses that of states – even if such states are “United”?

Although TNCs might be autonomous and sovereign to a certain extent, a neoliberal economic climate supervised by the United States favours their operation. We will soon see that the national and the transnational spheres of neoliberalism converge, and/or act together in a mutually beneficial way.

Ever since Schiller (1999), it has been evident how an expansionary market logic influenced the internet to begin a politico-economic transition toward what he calls “digital capitalism”

Leading multi-national media conglomerates and diversified internet/digital companies (e.g. Google, Yahoo!, Microsoft and Apple) have developed strategies to ensure that the Web 2.0 internet environment reinforces rather than undermines existing power configurations. The digitalisation of communication has prompted the diffusion of a technologically integrated media system in which products and processes are developed on multiple platforms, which support a diversity of content and media expressions within the same global/local communication network. The shared digital language allows economies of scale and – even more importantly – economies of synergy between these various platforms and products (Castells 2008: 710).

While the internet is an autonomous network of local/global communication, private and public corporations also own its infrastructure, and its most popular social spaces and websites are fast becoming a segment of multimedia business (Artz, 2007; Chester, 2007).

Overwhelmingly neoliberal or market-driven policies influence and govern the telecommunications system, and they empower transnational corporations. Cyberspace offers uniquely flexible instruments to cultivate and deepen consumerism on a transnational scale, especially among *privileged groups* (Schiller 1999).^{ix}

Wallerstein concludes (2004: 46) that “from the point of view of entrepreneurs operating in the capitalist world economy, sovereign states assert authority in at least seven principal arenas of direct interest to them”, including the reality of states using their power externally to affect the decisions of (i.e. place pressure on) other states in relation to firms based within their borders.^x

What is even more important is to see if this process also operates in reverse: whether the decision making of states can be influenced by TNC interests.

5. TRANSNATIONAL STATE

A key to understand the overlapping and symbiotic relations of US hegemony and putatively independent transnational companies arising from the neoliberal order (such as Facebook) is professor of sociology William I. Robinson’s theory of globalisation (2004), which follows the rise of a new capitalist class and the *transnational state* (TNS).

Robinson (2004: 86) introduces the concepts of a transnational state, i.e. a *global system growing beyond national boundaries*. Its development of global, interconnected industries and businesses makes the transnational capitalist class (TCC) the drivers of world capitalism. Robinson states that “the emergence and consolidation of the global economy and the rise of a politically active TCC cannot be understood apart from the Transnational State. The TCC has articulated economic interests with political aims in pursuing the globalist project of an integrated global economy and society”. The author refers to this as a “transnational élite agenda aimed at creating the conditions most favourable for global capitalism to function.”

Parallel to the rise of the transnational state as part and parcel of the globalisation process, Robinson (2004: 126) points to “the expansion of a *transnational civil society*”, with well-known specialised associations of transnational capitalists, such as the Institute of International Finance, world-class universities such as Harvard’s School of International Business, transnationally-oriented think tanks and policy planning groups such as Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). A case study that aims to exhibit how the CFR contributes to the neoliberal system of signifying will follow below.

Robinson concludes that “elite planning groups are an important forum for [...] developing new initiatives, collective strategies, policies, projects [...] and forging consensus and a political culture” around them.

In this way *prima facie* independent transnational companies, obviously including digital media behemoths such as Facebook and Google etc., become the tactical allies of nation states – specifically

the United States, which is again the unquestioned hegemonic power of Wallerstein's (2004: 9) world-system, as well as the entity with a privileged position in Hardt – Negri's (2000: xiv) *Empire*.

Before we explore discursive tendencies where the transnational and the national spheres intersect and act together, it is worth exploring the ideological roots of this symbiotic relationship.

6. GOUVERNMENTALITÉ AND THE NETIZENRY'S "CALIFORNIAN IDEOLOGY"

The imperative of the endless accumulation of capital has generated a need for constant technological change, a constant expansion not only of geographical, but also, *inter alia*, psychological and intellectual frontiers (Wallerstein 2004: 2).

Consequently, US hegemony and transnational corporations (or more simply, the TNS of cf. Robinson 2004) directly or indirectly affect societies in several ways – as society is formed around values and institutions, and what is valued and institutionalised is defined by power relationships (Castells 2009: 10).

Wacquant (2012: 69-70) interprets the aforementioned *gouvernementalité* concept according to the definition of Dardot and Laval (2007: 13) as a "generalised normativity": a "global rationality" that "tends to structure and organise, not only the actions of the governing, but also the conduct of the governed themselves", and even their self-conception according to principles of competition, efficiency and utility.

As already introduced, Hardt – Negri (2000: xiii) show how the power of transnational corporations and the increasing dominance of post-industrial forms of labour and production help to define the new imperial global order. In the post-modernisation of the global economy, the creation of wealth tends ever more toward what is called biopolitical production (the production of social life itself), in which the economic, the political and the cultural increasingly overlap and reinforce one another.

Consequently, great industrial and financial powers thus produce not only commodities but also subjectivities. They produce "agentic subjectivities" within the biopolitical context: they produce needs, social relations, bodies, and minds; which is to say they produce producers (2000: 32).

In their critique of online neoliberalism, Barbrook and Cameron attributed such functions to a certain "Californian Ideology." They argue that members of the entrepreneurial class in the information technology industry (or ICT) in Silicon Valley vocally promoted an ideology that has strengthened the power of corporations over the individual and remains distinctly Americentric.

Californian Ideology relies on a postulate of the philosophy of Ayn Rand (1905-1982), namely the only social system consistent with the favoured objectivist^{xi} morality is one that displays full respect for individual rights embodied in laissez-faire capitalism.

Expansion strategies of the members of this hypothetical entrepreneurial class introduced above– or the *digerati* (i.e. the élite of digitalisation, social media, content marketing, computer industry and online communities etc.) – create and reinforce this ideology, which fundamentally is not only digital utopian and neoliberal, but also "reactionary modernist" (Barbrook 1995; May 2002).

At this point, market-driven – i.e. politico-economic – hegemony and psychological features of modern *gouvernementalité* arguably come together in an intriguing way, which is strongly evident with the emergence of a *transnational civil society using digital media*. This again generates an ideology with Americentric, modernist and digital utopian features, interacting with market-centric corporate goals and patterns of consumerism (cf. Schiller 1999).

At the same time, the capability of digital media giants such as Facebook to "determine policy outcomes" (Cassidy, 2015) should not be overlooked.

It is equally important to relate this experience to a neoliberal geostrategic agenda and its modernist and universalist ideological roots (cf. Massad, 2015), as they dovetail both with the transnational élite agenda's global capitalism (cf. Robinson 2004) and objectives related to US hegemonic projects.

This is because at the intersection of hegemony of the modernist epistemology and the ICT capitalism there emerges *netizen identity*, which is constructed in parallel to fetishisation of a modern *civilising mission* and a parallel sensationalism accompanying the TNC-based digital media.

Netizenry, a utopian construction that includes "digital citizens" i.e. persons of the physical space using the internet as a tool in order to engage in society, politics, and government participation (Mossberger 2011), becomes an ideal and *de rigueur*.

This elusive but rather pervasive transnational “thought collective” is spread by “high-profile cyber-figures” (Aouragh 2015) – or *digerati* – who operate transnationally, but are in some ways, ideologically inseparable from Silicon Valley’s IT subculture.

In my view, the base and superstructure of the politico-economics of the ICT (Aouragh 2012) can be understood as a body and spirit duality. In this duality, the immaterial dimension of the synonymous transnational capitalist class or global creative class (cf. Kanter, 2003; Robinson 2004), unattached to geographical locations with their local *digerati* clientele (“spirit”), consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly converge and synergise with a geographically localisable Silicon Valley (“body”).

Per analogiam an insight into such a complex relationship and mechanisms of interactions between the global and the local is given by Rosabeth Moss Kanter (2003), who not only fetishises a global creative class that is able to command intangible assets such as *concepts, competence, and connections*, but explicitly states that there is a class division within the emerging information economy “between cosmopolitans with global connections and locals who are stuck in one place”.

Hence, she argues, to “avoid a clash between global economic interests and local political interests, businesses must know how to be responsive to the needs of the communities in which they operate, even as they globalise. And communities must determine how best to connect cosmopolitans and locals, and how to create a *civic culture* [...] the greatest danger to the viability of communities is not globalisation but a retreat into isolationism and protectionism”. Consequently, she continues, “the best way for communities to preserve their local control is to become more competitive globally”.

The utopian ideal of netizenry, a collective identity that connects transnational subjectivities, *digerati* élite and digitally literate “locals”, operates within a framework of power, institutions and politico-economics. Here the neoliberal thought collective (cf. Wacquant 2012), the production of producers and consumers (Cf. Hardt 2000) and Stuart Hall’s post-Gramscian socio-cultural production of consent and coercion (cf. Procter, 2004: 2) meet with transnational and national hegemonic projects. These will be introduced later in detail.

Such tendencies fit neatly into the central theme of the thesis of cultural theorist Inderpal Grewal (2005), according to which circulation of people, goods, social movements and rights discourses in the 1990s created transnational subjects shaped by a global American culture. Rather than simply frame the United States as an imperialist nation state that imposes unilateral political power in the world, she analyses how the concept of “America” functions as a nationalist discourse beyond the boundaries of the United States by disseminating an *ideal of citizenship through consumer practices*.

In *Transnational America* the author makes a powerful, nuanced case that the United States must be understood—and studied—as a dynamic entity produced and transformed both within and far beyond its territorial boundaries. Spontaneous and generated campaigns “internal to a technology of transnational governmentality” are embraced by a digital apparatus and its great power propagation globally (2005: 157).

Thus online activism has always had a special social and international context, in which the reality of enforcing geostrategic interests also comes into play, if we keep in mind the fact that netizenry internalises a world view more open and more in tune with US imperial design (cf. Massad 2015: 59) and Western notions of individualist subjectivities generally.

In other words, this *netizenry* concept is where Wacquant’s (2012) view on a neoliberal transnational “thought collective” comes into play, encountering the digital capitalist agenda (cf. Schiller 1999) while also meeting modernist and colonialist traditions (Mignolo 2011), as well as the civilisational discourse (Aouragh 2012).

7. SYNERGY OF MODERNISM AND CAPITALISM: MISSION CIVILISATRICE AS A VIA MEDIA

When discussing a globally (transnationally) functioning netizenry, it is arguably necessary to combine political social critique theory with a postcolonial perspective that takes into consideration traditions of imperialism and the corresponding *mission civilisatrice* –or, in contemporary terms, the empowering of civil societies (Massad 2015).

The common ground of these three dimensions of technology, capitalism and imperialism is modern epistemology; and since the Renaissance, the West has led the way in establishing its epistemic

standards globally (cf. Mignolo 2011: 49). It is this “international” culture of modernity that, like *gouvernementalité* (cf. Wacquant 2012), specifies procedures for collaborative decision-making, conceptions and definitions (Massad 2015: 128).

While exploring the intersection of modernism and capitalism, Samir Amin (2009: 14) finds that their emergence constitutes “two facets of one and the same reality”, as “Enlightenment thought offers us a concept of reason that is inextricably associated with that of emancipation. Yet, the emancipation in question is defined and limited by what capitalism requires and allows.”

Relevant structures and mechanisms are convincingly exhibited by Argentinean semiotician Walter D. Mignolo (2011), who introduces a “complex matrix of power”, which he calls the darker side of Western modernity. This ties in with a “project of Westernisation which went hand in hand with the process of building on the idea of Western civilisation”. The earlier project of imperialism – and, later, development and modernisation – have recently been translated into “globalism, the conceptual tool of neo-liberal designs^{xiii}. This trajectory comes along the West-centered nomos, modernity, which is a complex narrative [...] that builds Western civilisation by celebrating its achievements, while at the same time hiding its darker side, ‘coloniality’^{xiiii} (2011: 2-3; 32; 298).

In order to understand digital capitalism’s (Schiller 1999) relationship to the civilisational discourse, it is important to rely on Joseph Massad’s notion (2015: 112) which posits the “hegemony of Western [and, as such, inevitably US-related] interventionism as a *humanitarian mission and as a moral imperative*”. Corresponding transformations “are seen as central prerequisites to the success and domination of the new neoliberal order which the United States and its West European junior partners seek to impose globally” (ibid.)

Joseph Massad (2015: 23) reveals that ever since the 1980s Western NGOs as well as American government agencies have begun to “set the building of ‘civil society’” in the Third World as part of their mission, which promotes an “international” culture of modernity (“one that specifies procedures for collaborative decision-making, conceptions ... and definitions) that is nothing less than the institutionalisation of the culture’s norms.

Binder presents the dominant ideology of such policies as a universal category based on rational (i.e. modern) discourse, which he defines as transcultural and as “the basis of improving the human condition through collective action” (Massad 2015: 73).

Massad goes on to introduce the idea that intermediaries such as NGO and social movement activists play a critical role in interpreting the cultural world of transnational modernity for local claimants (Massad 2015: 127). This not only culminates in a situation in which a (neo) liberal “division between citizen subject and between active and passive would become operative” (2015: 24), but also in transmitting the normative meaning of civil societies as civilised (cf. Viterna et al. 2015).

It is within this context that the “Other” – for example, Arabs and Muslims – have often been studied by scholars and explained by reporters through the prism of Western policy and in the framework of topics pertaining to foreign affairs (Aouragh 2015).

The assumption of a modern netizen identity and traits of the other (whether Central European or African: as long as it can be posited as an antonym it does not matter) is both an act of self-constitution and projection. Additionally it is an imperial strategy that uses cultural assimilation and othering as tactics of economic and political domination (Massad 2015: 19).

Thus arises the model of social and political order (Massad, 2015: 3; 75) of a modern civil society, or a new generation of mission civilisatrice promoting an *ethos*, i.e. “values and spirit” favourable for the politico-economics of a globalisation agenda.

The earlier quoted Rosabeth Moss Kanter’s (2003) enthusiasm for a so-called global creative class reflects both the ideological credo and the global range of related capitalist expansion strategies as “sweeping changes in the competitive landscape, including the presence of foreign competitors in domestic markets, are driving businesses to rethink their strategies and structures to reach beyond traditional boundaries”. Consequently, “communities must determine how best to connect cosmopolitans and locals and how to create a *civic culture* that will attract and retain footloose companies”.

Further on I wish to show how all this is reinforced by a digital apparatus that has been in the forefront of the empowerment of US interests. This is best illustrated in the ZunZuneo case described below.

8. UNITED STATES HEGEMONY AND NORMS OF CIVIL ENGAGEMENT

Mignolo (2011: 281) connects globalism to Americanisation: “an Anglo-American market ideology that reached its zenith in the 1990s [...] was inextricably linked to the rising fortunes of neo-liberal political forces in the world's sole remaining superpower”.

Brzezinski (2012: 207-208) demonstrated how the internet has now become “what outer space used to be: the limitless frontier for commerce, communication, exploration and power projection. Militaries, businesses and government bureaucracies alike rely on a free and safe cyberspace for the successful execution of their responsibilities”.

In this spirit it is of crucial importance to take into consideration that an author admittedly interested in the preservation of American hegemony explicitly states that “maintaining the freedom of the internet while simultaneously ensuring the security of information is a serious challenge (especially given the decentralised and rapidly evolving landscape of the internet). As on the oceans, American power in cyberspace has been essential to the fair regulation and freedom of the internet, because the United States currently controls — via a private non-profit entity operating out of California called the internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)—most of the access to and oversight of cyberspace.”

Nazemroaya (2015) exposes these dynamics in his caveat against current world political processes: “a multi-spectrum war is being waged” between great powers. “Geopolitics, science and technology, speculation, financial markets, information streams, large business conglomerates, the intelligentsia, mass communication, *social media*, the internet, popular culture, news networks, international institutions, sanctions, audiences, public opinion, nationalism, different governmental bodies and agencies, identity politics, proxy wars, diplomacy, countervailing international alliances, major business agreements, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), human rights, prestige, military personnel, capital, and psychological tactics are all involved in this multi-spectrum war. On a daily basis this struggle can be seen playing out on the airwaves, in the war theaters in Ukraine and the Middle East, through the statements and accusations of diplomats, and in the economic sphere.”

Indeed, internet and *a maiore ad minus* digital media have for years now been explicitly in the vanguard of American geopolitics.

Hegemony is a volatile category and is always disputed in accordance with the international balance of power. However, corresponding *interests* seem to be constant. Such aspirations are visible and the voice of *mission civilisatrice* has permeated statements by members of the political elite in recent decades.

In light of this, consider the age-old commitment to a mission civilisatrice by Obama's secretary of state, Hillary Rodham Clinton on Egyptian television less than two months (March 2011) after the removal from power of US-backed dictator Hosni Mubarak by a popular uprising: “We have the greatest respect for Egypt's 7,000 years of civilisation. We are a young country by comparison. But we are the oldest democracy in the world. So we have some idea, having gone through these stages ourselves” (State Dept. press release, 17 March 2011).

Clinton seems to rely here “on the epistemological claims of modernisation theory, which represents Westerners as adults who have gone through the ‘stages’ of growth and can now guide Arabs and Muslims [rest of the world] out of their childhood stage [...] given this rhetoric, the United States, indeed the entire ‘West’, seem to have been waiting for a very long period (perhaps since the emergence of social evolutionary theory in the eighteenth century or at least the since the articulations of Social Darwinism and colonial anthropology in the nineteenth) for the time when Arabs and Muslims would grow up and would begin to work for democracy and the rights of the individual and throw off the sway of undemocratic and despotic [...] traditions [...] over them. In such this declaration of [...] civilisation is being juxtaposed and compared to a political system of governance” (Massad 2015: 33-35).

Although this mission has probably become most conspicuous vis-à-vis Arabs and Muslims, however, it can be placed in a global perspective. Claims of a civilised-democratic^{xiv} region are often contrasted with other parts of the world apparently lacking such civilisational qualities.

From what perspective does digital media converge with this? While visiting Shanghai during his state visit to China in November 2009, President Barack Obama while declaring “freedoms of expression, and worship, of access to information and political participation – we believe they are universal rights”, expressed support for unrestricted internet access and disapproval of censorship.

On 21 January 2010, in a policy speech on internet freedom, secretary of state Hillary Clinton urged US internet companies to oppose censorship in their overseas operations and announced that the Global internet Freedom Taskforce (GIFT) would be reinvigorated (Figliola et. al 2010).

Hereby, more or less the same formula of a civilising engagement becomes charged with a powerful advocacy for digital media.

On other occasions, the same Clinton, whose invocation of mission civilisatrice we quoted earlier, also delivered a number of major policy speeches about the virtues of internet freedom and social networks abroad.

At a speech in Newseum in January 2010, Clinton claimed the US had a responsibility to protect freedoms of expression and access on the internet: a 21st-century extension of America’s history of protecting speech rights abroad. She cautioned that the internet and other “new technologies” did not inherently radiate goodness, but that they could be useful, liberating tools if shaped by benevolent American power: “On their own, new technologies do not take sides in the struggle for freedom and progress, but the United States does. We stand for a single internet where all of humanity has equal access to knowledge and ideas. And we recognise that the world’s information infrastructure will become what we and others make of it” (Meyer 2014).

In a speech at George Washington University one year later, Clinton said the US helped people in “oppressive internet environments get around filters.” In Tunisia, she said, people used technology to “organise and share grievances, which, as we know, helped fuel a movement that led to revolutionary change” (Guardian 2014).

Consequently, the official mission civilisatrice of the United States harmonises with TNC’s agenda of market expansion, i.e. global capitalism.

9. ZUNZUNEO: DIGITAL MEDIA SERVING GEOPOLITICAL AGENDAS

The ZunZuneo experience provides an insight into how digital apparatus provides room for manoeuvre for realising US foreign policy agenda not only reflecting American nationalist commitments and credentials in public (Massad 2015: 31), but also eventually reflecting a corresponding strategic vision of empowering civil societies worldwide.

ZunZuneo is the name given to a US-owned company social networking and microblogging service created by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in 2010.

USAID itself, according to its mission statement, serves to implement an agenda of “promoting the development of resilient, democratic societies that are able to realise their potential.” They “fundamentally believe that ending extreme poverty requires enabling inclusive, sustainable growth; promoting free, peaceful, and self-reliant societies with effective, legitimate governments; building human capital and creating social safety nets”.

According to press reports (Guardian, 2014; Erlich 2014), the U.S. government covertly developed the service as a long-term strategy to encourage Cuban youths to revolt against the nation’s government, fomenting a “Cuban Spring”: a reference to the Arab Spring revolutions. The initiative also appears to have had a surveillance dimension, allowing “a vast database about Cuban ZunZuneo subscribers, including gender, age, ‘receptiveness’ and ‘political tendencies’” to be built.

In 2014, the US office of Cuba Broadcasting announced that it was creating a successor named “Piramideo”. The platform is designed to spread propaganda – anti-communist and pro-United States alike (Erlich, 2014).

In light of the Cuban experience, instant texting service applications appear not only as tools for combatting authoritarianism but also as enforcing national (American) foreign policy interests.

Relevant statements of high-level officials quoted above and ZunZuneo's US origins clearly indicate a commitment to a long-term strategy to bring about a change abroad via digital technologies which has been in the focus of foreign policies. This is not merely true for future undertakings, where an agenda is built on later implemented platforms, such as in Cuba. Political motivations can also overlap with existing digital TNC interests, as will be shown below.

10. TRANSNATIONAL "PHILANTHROCAPITALISM" AND MISSION CIVILISATRICE

Facebook founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg regularly expresses himself publicly on his social networking site, through which both a benevolent new, 21st-century form of mission civilisatrice and a geopolitical agenda of promoting US hegemony interests are manifested.

His ambitious posts – whether reflecting benevolence and philanthropy and/or profit orientation and a transnational intention to penetrate markets globally – ideologically overlap and interplay with national credentials.

A couple of these relevant public declarations follow:

"We need an informed society. We can only have a shared discourse if we have common ground. Giving everyone a voice increases diversity of perspectives, but there is more we can do to build a shared perspective – to reduce polarisation, sensationalism and misinformation. This is an important social function for enabling people to come together.

"We need civic engagement. Our society and governments reflect our values when we all participate in this process. This is an important institution to bring people together to decide what we will do together. Our community has helped millions of people vote, connect with elected leaders, and march to demonstrate their values. We can help even more people come together" (4 February 2017).

Another Zuckerberg post from 27 January 2017 can be interpreted as the core's (Silicon Valley's) declared interest in attracting talented and skilled workers (in other words, a massive commitment to "brain drain"):

"We all benefit when the best and brightest from around the world can live, work and contribute here. I hope we find the courage and compassion to bring people together and make this world a better place for everyone."

On 27 September 2015, Zuckerberg posted that he had changed his "profile picture to support Digital India, the Indian government's effort to connect rural communities to the internet and give people access to more services online. Looking forward to discussing this with Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Facebook today."

This confirms Cassidy's (2015) notion of digital media behemoth Facebook to "determine policy outcomes", and clearly indicates traits of political engagement on a global scale.

Ideological relationships within the ICT are also explicitly admitted by Zuckerberg. In a relevant statement from year 2013 he claims although there are "few bridges between us [Facebook] and Google; we are aligned with their [Google's] open philosophy."

So what if de facto American geostrategic agendas in combination with *gouvernementalité* aim to foster capitalism and consumption patterns along with imposing civil societies (Massad 2015) as a norm?

11. (NATIONAL) COUNCIL ON FOREIGN (TRANSNATIONAL) RELATIONS

Earlier, while exploring the intersection of the transnational and the national spheres of a neoliberal reality, I deployed Robinson's (2004) concepts of the Transnational State and a loyal transnational civil society.

This case study intends to show how a think tank (I e. part and parcel of a transnational civil society) can unite these *prima facie* independent spheres ideologically, functionally as well as structurally, so that a system of signifying arise, resulting in discursive tendencies.

According to its official mission statement, the CFR is "an independent, non-partisan membership organisation, think tank and publisher dedicated to being a resource for its members, government

officials, business executives, journalists, educators and students, civic and religious leaders, and other interested citizens in order to help them better understand the world and the foreign policy choices facing the United States and other countries.”

CFR’s two main pillars operate as a think tank and a body informing the public debate.

A large number of experts and research fellows – some of them (former) members of White House policy planning staff and/or corporate executives– are explicitly identified as either (former) corporate executives of transnational IT companies (including a Google Vice President), IT and/or technology investment experts or specialists from various relevant fields including cybersecurity, social media and technology specialists.

They meet and, as mentioned above, influence the public debate on issues such as the nexus of American primacy on internet policy, cybersecurity, globalisation or “hybrid categories” – such as “digital and public policy” or “emerging technologies and national security”.

Some of these people are researchers who acknowledge exploring the intersection between social media and conflict, as well as its implications for U.S. defence planning, and who work in this body together with a number of Middle East experts.

Most of them direct programmes and initiatives with resonant and suggestive names, such as the Digital and Cyberspace Policy Programme or the Cyber conflict and Cybersecurity Initiative.

Similarly telling are some Council reports and publications listed as recently as January 2017 on the very same official webpage, entitled: “Rebuilding Trust between Silicon Valley and Washington”. This offers recommendations for “repairing the relationship and moving forward on issues such as encryption, data localisation, and cybersecurity”; in other words, to establish (even) better relations between TNCs based in Silicon Valley and the federal administration, which is practically a metonymy for (national) US hegemony endeavours. Such a Council report insists there is at least a common ground – not to mention correlation – between TNCs in the ICT sector and national interests.

After the experiences of ZunZuneo, it is no surprise to encounter another paper from October 2016, entitled “The Authoritarian internet Power Grab”, which aims to “address the stakes of the increasingly contentious struggle over who controls the future of the internet”.

The spectre of multi-spectrum wars (cf. Nazemroaya 2014) and the enforcement of geostrategic interests by the internet (cf. Brzezinski (2012)as one of its key areas are invoked by other op-eds and articles, such as “Time to Get Real About Russia Cyber War” and “War Goes Viral” – both published in the autumn of 2016. The latter declares that: “Social media has altered the nature of war, according to Emerson T. Brooking and P.W. Singer. The viral propaganda of the self-declared Islamic State, Russian disinformation campaigns, and Chinese cyber-nationalism are all indications of a more fundamental shift in conflict—a revolution that threatens to catch U.S. policymakers and social media companies off guard.”

12. DISCURSIVE TENDENCIES CHARGED WITH A TRANSNATIONAL AGENDA

Apart from explicitly setting the borders of the sphere of geostrategic interests and the official commitment to digital media as a bridgehead for imperialist strategies, one of the more interesting aspects of contemporary discourse strategies is a conspicuous tendency that has emerged since the early 2010s. This consists of idealising digital media as the new public sphere – probably most remarkably in the so-called “Arab Spring”.

There are at least two factors that make the online discourse of the Arab Spring problematic. These are its orientalist settings (Said 1978, Massad 2015; Aouragh 2015) and the MENA region’s promising prospects for ICT (TNC) expansion.

Wael Ghoneim’s memoir (2012) represents the epitome of explicitly idealising the base of digital media and promoting its superstructure by mediating a *spiritus mundi* or *Zeitgeist* of civil society activism, i.e. a consciousness of netizenry for the masses.

By declaring “my employer, Google, was a dream company voted often to be the world’s best employer [...] I finally decided to leverage my media, marketing and internet experience [...] My aim

was to establish an ongoing communication channel”, Ghoneim not only expresses a mission civilisatrice, but also idealises an ICT digital giant TNC as a repository of professionalism and authenticity that entitles it to assume a historic leadership role. Persistence of this terminology and related framing feeds into a self-congratulatory attitude and the self-serving prophecies of TNCs (cf. Aboveposts by Mark Zuckerberg).

Vodafone, for example, became involved in a scandal after having allegedly produced a commercial that suggested it had helped inspire the 2011 revolution in Egypt, when in fact many pro-change activists blamed it – and other mobile phone companies – for following government orders and implementing a communications blackout at the height of the social turmoil (Shenker 2011).

Concerning the same revolution, Ghoneim (2012) continues to claim that “increasingly, public exposure became *inevitable*”; I believe this echoes the voice of modernist teleology:

“The [KullenaKhaled Said] page relied on its contributions of its members and established itself as the voice of those who despised the deterioration of Egypt, *particularly as far as human rights were concerned* [...] Social networking offered us an easy means to meet as the proactive, critical youth that we were. It also enabled us to define the fears associated with voicing opposition. The virtual world seemed further from the oppressive regime, and therefore many were encouraged to speak up. This is an explicit reference to the human rights discourse, that according to Massad (2015:) has been inherent to the new neoliberal order imposed by certain states and their “auxiliary” NGOs for the last decades.

“The strategy for the [Kullena Khaled Said] Facebook page was to mobilise public support (for the cause). This wasn’t going to be too different from using the *sales tunnel* approach that I had learned at school. The first phase was to convince people to join the page and read its post. The second was to convince them to start interacting with its content by ‘liking’ and ‘commenting’ on it. The third was to get them to *participate* in the page’s online *campaigns* and to contribute to its content themselves. The fourth and final phase would occur when people decided to take their activism onto the streets.

“Facebook became our means to express our opinions, ambitions and dreams, without pressure from anyone”. Again, this constitutes as an explicit promotion of a transnational digital media behemoth.

Anthropologist Miriyam Aouragh (2012; 2015: 258) debunks myths of social media revolutions. She uses the metaphor “Orientalism 2.0”, which is supposed to express how online activism during the Arab Spring was loaded with Western projections and a “discursive manufacturing” that exaggerates the role of digital media.

Decontextualised formulae of the Other (i.e. Arabs), who “all of a sudden” became “digitally literate” and started to use digital media not only challenged “essentialised views about the region, disproving the notion of Arab exceptionalism to democratisation (i.e. foreign policy) trends so prevalent in Middle East studies” (cf. Massad 2015), but also regenerated “a familiar form of Orientalist representation, suggesting that, despite the prevailing incapacity of the Arabs to *emancipate* (or “modernise”) themselves, digital media (technology) has now entered the game and fuelled the revolutions.”

The idea of a national awakening through the prism of online politics has two benefits: it is a means of avoiding capitalism, neo-colonialism and imperialism, while simultaneously maintaining a self-congratulatory attitude (Aouragh (2015).

Depicting “Mark Zuckerberg’s Facebook as a catalyst of historical change in Egypt” is an interpretative shortcut which is a “pleasant way of diverting our thoughts from issues such as austerity measures imposed by the IMF and the neoliberalisation of the education and health sectors, which strongly contributed to the uprisings” (ibid).

Concepts such as Facebook or Twitter revolutions and such techno-clichés are a special self-reflection of netizenry, and operate as projection screens on which “civil” (i.e. digitally literate) or “modern” versus “uncivil” are contrasted – although shown as standing on the same side.

Such discursive tendencies again reflect: the US agenda’s modernist promotion of civil societies (Massad 2015); the dissemination of a transnational ideal of citizenship (Grewal 2004); and a TNC (ICT)-based function for promoting global capitalism (Robinson).

At this point it seems more appropriate than ever to synchronise a post-colonial critical perspective and social criticism which help to once again identify the neoliberal system of signifying.

This is also where the earlier findings of Grewal (2005) of a new form of disciplinary power and *gouvernementalité*, that is both regulative and productive of American nationalism and transnationalism, emerges in an unprecedented manner; it is facilitated by digital media structures accompanied by “discursive manufacturing” (Aouragh 2015) that signifies, dictates trends, and produces projects and ideals “congenial to the values and spirit of a modern democratic society” (Massad 2015: 75).

Consequently, this is where superpower strategic visions of “maintaining the freedom of the internet” (Brzezinski 2012) and corporate goals of market expansion meet and go hand in hand. If we underline corporate links to neoliberalism and its benefits of setting the playground for market expansion on the one hand and recognize transnational companies’ capacities to foster civil societies (i.e. of “advancing human potential and promoting equality”) globally on the other, than it is arguably important to consider how hypothetically transnational but at the same time equally US-based strategies are (in) directly joined in US- hegemonic projects vis-a-vis “uncivilised” social formations (state and person subjects alike).

In light of the relevant experiences under review, a number of questions surround such a conclusion.

Would a supposed lack of political integration mean that *transnational* companies – even, for example, Google, Facebook etc. – thrive without *national* support? Or, vice versa: could the hegemonic projects of the sovereign state be served by TNCs?

Put in another way: can imperialist strategies for empowering civil societies worldwide (Massad 2015) converge with the expansion of TNCs, and in exchange can interests behind political integration meet TNC expansion?

What if digital media connects and allies the transnational on the one hand and the national on the other, thus creating a new form of neoliberal politico-economics that functions as a signifying system? (cf. Williams, 1981: 207 and Stuart Hall 1977: 1) How and by what is this latter constructed? What discursive implications follow?

Due to the complexity of such focal points, this paper could not and does not aim to answer all these questions. However, it seeks to highlight some linkages that can approach an understanding of the above: first and foremost, how the national and the transnational spheres of neoliberalism converge, and/or act in a mutually beneficial way.

In light of the above, a speech by Pacific Export Company CEO G. H. Bondy in Čapek’s aforementioned novel takes on new meaning:

“Yes. The economics of all this are especially important. Gentlemen, our company is too small [...] we don't have the money for it nor the influence. [...] we need also to have the greatest powers in the world taking an interest. But that can be left till later; there is still no need to name what high places have already shown positive interest in the syndicate. But for now, all I ask of you, gentlemen, is that you do not lose sight of the boundless scope of the affair you are about to vote on.”

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ⁱIt is reasonable to adopt Argentinian semiotician Walter Mignolo's (2011: 33) definition of capitalism, in the sense that it is "not only a domain of economic transactions and exploitation of labour, but of control and management of knowledge and subjectivities".

ⁱⁱHere I am indirectly referring to the concept of unidisciplinarity, which, according to Wallerstein (2004: 98) refers to the belief that in the social sciences at least there exists today no sufficient intellectual reason to make a distinction between the separate disciplines at all, and that instead all work should be considered part of a single discipline, sometimes called the "historical social sciences". Apart from supporting this Wallersteinian concept, this paper does not include it later, nor does it explain it in more detail.

ⁱⁱⁱThis paper does not equate capitalism with neoliberalism. However, considers the latter as a catalyst of the first in that it believes the only real way to maximise human flourishing is to maximise the profits of capitalists. In parallel with this, neoliberalism favours a policy agenda which has vastly increased the power and prestige of capital.

^{iv}Foucault's relevant definition of "discourse" is interpreted in several ways, but mostly with regard to certain means of specifying knowledge as social construction of reality. Lessa (2006: 285) summarises Foucault's definition of discourse in *Archeology of Knowledge* (1972) as "...systems of thoughts composed of ideas, attitudes, courses of action, beliefs and practices that systematically construct the subjects and the worlds of which they speak".

"Foucault himself writes in the *Archeology of Knowledge* (1972: 49) the following: "Of course, discourses are composed of signs; but what they do is more than use these signs to designate things. It is this more that renders them irreducible to the language (langue) and to speech.

^vHere I use the concept signifying system not necessarily the way Raymond Williams (1981) or Stuart Hall (1997: 1) do, but rather as a system and as a geoculture dominated by centrist liberalism (cf: Wallerstein, 2004; Massad 2015) that signifies and thus manufactures consent (cf. Lippmann 1922, Chomsky 1988). In regard to a return to such propaganda model, there is debate on whether Facebook or Google produce content or make editorial decisions, and whether they are therefore media organisations. Ellen P. Goodman and Julia Powles (2016) finds that in fact Facebook and Google produce content if only by algorithmically selecting, prioritising and presenting.

^{vi} Such an institutionalisation is coupled with the proliferation of Western-funded non-governmental organisations propounding neoliberal arrangements of economic and social opportunities that protect and enshrine "human" and property rights, and often ignore or downplay economic and social rights, all the while presenting themselves as, while supplanting, local "civil society" and the state's social welfare function (Massad 2015: 126).

^{vii} The "Empire" concept of Hardt – Negri (2000) contains a rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers.

^{viii}Hardt – Negri (2000: xii)'s *Empire* in contrast to imperialism, introduces the concept of an empire that, unlike traditional imperialism, establishes no territorial centre of power, and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. This apparatus of rule progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers. Hardt — Negri therefore refer to this world order as "biopolitical", following the Foucaultian (1979: 135-145) concept of biopolitics, which produces population and is subject to state power. Biopolitics is interrelated with *gouvernementalité*. Political philosophers Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri link this philosophical transformation to cultural and economic changes in postmodern society: to new forms of racism, new conceptions of identity and difference, new networks of communication and control, and new paths of migration.

^{ix} Nota bene, Schiller drew these conclusions based on ICT-related experiences, long before the advent of today's digital media e.g. social networking services (hereinafter, SNSs), such as Facebook. Digital capitalism takes on a new meaning when we realise how intensively and significantly these TNC-based SNSs advertise. In 2014, Facebook changed its algorithm, so that content which the platform detects that an individual user most likes shows up on his or her newsfeed (Alaimo 2016). Myriad strategies and campaigns of enormous diversity can (micro) target individuals and subgroups accordingly.

^x This logic and mechanism generally apply to the complex relation of core and (semi) peripheral states (cf. 2004: 29), since “the stronger the state, the larger its bureaucratic machinery, and therefore the greater its ability to enforce decisions concerning trans-boundary transactions” (2004: 46).

^{xi} Objectivism expresses the advocacy of reason, individualism, and capitalism, and as suggested, not only inspired Californian Ideology but also greatly influenced free-market ideology of leading circles of monetary institutions such as the Federal Reserve of the United States (Greenspan 2007).

^{xii} The Eurocentric nomos of the earth between 1500 and 1914-18/1945 was indeed the result of a project of Westernisation (which went hand in hand with the process of building on the idea of Western civilisation) that grew and expanded consistently for four and a half centuries. The process and project of Westernisation did not stop with the crisis of the second nomos of the earth, between the First and Second World Wars. It continued not by appropriating land, but by managing finances and natural resources through the project of development and modernisation, in two stages: from 1950 to 1970, when the project collapsed, and from 1980 to 2008, when the project revived. In the second stage, development was translated into globalism, the conceptual tool of neo-liberal designs (Mignolo 2011: 32; 298)

^{xiii} Coloniality, in other words, is constitutive of modernity—there is no modernity without coloniality. Hence, today's common expression “global modernities” implies “global colonialities” in the precise sense that the colonial matrix of power is shared and disputed by many contenders: if there cannot be modernity without coloniality, there cannot either be global modernities without global colonialities. Mignolo 2011: 2-3

^{xiv} Often referred to as “the oldest democracy”, as US president Obama repeated this nationalist topos during a state dinner welcoming Chinese President Hu Jintao in 2011 (Massad 205: 33)

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