

# GLOBALISATION AND CITY-ZENSHIP IN A NOT-SO-NETWORKED SOCIETY: LOOKING FOR NARRATIVES OF EMPOWERMENT IN THE PROCESS OF SEEPAGE OF TECHNO-CULTURAL PRACTICES

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*The article seeks to answer questions crucial to the marginalisation debate like - Is commercial globalisation bringing in more than consumer goods into the developing countries? And if so, then what is the consequent impact on the relationship between the state and its citizens. While the city in the developed world acts as a node of contact with the forces of globalisation, sending out the messages of the global 'fantasy', the city in the developing world acts as the receptor of such signals from which the 'fantasy' can be accessed by the rest of the developed world. Persons living in the city in the developing world, as a result, can not only have greater access to the cultural products of globalisation, but also absorb the practices of the networked worlds. This process of seepage of practices of globalisation, these city-zens undergo a change in their equation with the state, which previously used to be the sole mediator between the city-zens and the worlds of modernity and progress.*

## Introduction

Capitalism is a system of production for sale in the market for profit and appropriation of profit on the basis of ownership, whether collective or individual.<sup>1</sup> It permits the seller to profit from strengths in the market whenever they exist but enabled them simultaneously to seek, whenever needed, the assistance of political entities to manipulate the working of the market in their favour. It is a system that becomes relatively free only when the economic advantage of the upper strata is so clear-cut that the unconstrained operation of the market serves effectively to reinforce the existing system.<sup>2</sup> The role of the powerful entities in this world-market is largely played by the forces of Western capital, which have systematically captured markets earlier through colonization and in the era of globalisation, through cultural dominance.

The western project of creating new world orders is carried out under the garb of extending the message of modernity and progress. The agenda of empire-building continues as economic forces penetrate new societies, with an exemplified lack of respect for difference, to create more replications of the developed, modern West - which purportedly stands for freedom, progress and modernity.<sup>3</sup> The economic aspect of this civilising mission is the spread of the logic of market forces and inducing the increased dilution of protectionist barriers in the developing world. But the economic motives of empire-building and civilizing the non-West are almost inevitably entangled with the

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<sup>1</sup> I. WALLERSTEIN, THE CAPITALIST WORLD-ECONOMY 66 (1997).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> D. Slater, *Rethinking the Geopolitics of the Global: The Case of North-South relations*, in E. KOFFMAN & G. YOUNGS, Ed., GLOBALIZATION: THEORY AND PRACTICE 49,50 (2003).

cultural penetration into these societies. Such penetration takes place through the invasive discourse of Western liberalism process which is often termed 'the project of Western modernity'. This penetration in the era of globalisation takes place along bursts of time-space compression (made possible by the awakening of networking technology).<sup>4</sup> The agenda of modernization continues using these possibilities of instantaneous communication to create networked worlds. There exists intensified inter-dependence and interconnectedness between these networked societies. Global processes extend through movements of 'stretching and deepening' to accentuate the power-relations between the developed and modern West and developing non-West.<sup>5</sup> To maintain these power equations, the need for a semi-peripheral sector is acute. A polarized system is created wherein a small distinct high-status and high-income sector coexists with a large low-income sector, leading easily to the formation of classes, which tend to think of themselves as significantly better off than the lowest sector, thus serving the purpose of averting political resistance to the economic dominance of the highest strata.<sup>6</sup>

This narrative of dominance of the Western networked societies and subordination of the not-so-networked society in the world run by information networks, is a much-told story. But various other stories of the global cultural economy are left out in these constraining categories of center-periphery, of surpluses and deficits, and of producers and consumers.<sup>7</sup> Many underlying forces, which play a role in the global cultural, technological and commercial practices, are ignored in this construction of polarities in global power-sharing. Significant stories of the reconfiguration of power-alignments remain untold, particularly in the context of relations of the citizen of the not-so-networked society vis-à-vis the global networks. One such is the story of the changing relationship of the state and the city-dweller.

It is precisely this dimension of globalization (and its relationship to marginalisation) that I will attempt to examine in this paper. I shall try to do this by tracing out the picture of the Indian 'big-city' which is at the receiving end of the chain of global information/technological flows. I shall try to demonstrate how this exposure causes the city-dweller to find linkages into global information networks, participate in international commercial strategies, resulting in some sort of *detritorialisation*<sup>8</sup> of elements of local cultures. The effect of this dynamics in the space of the city causes reconfiguration of the state-citizen equation, as the state settles down to a new role. This is the narrative of the counter-empowerment of the city-dweller who, at various levels, the marginalised or the subjugated, is less and less constrained by the state-based identity, and finds herself partaking in the project of modernity without the mediation of the state.

Before venturing into the crux of the story, it is necessary that I bring in the context of the 'global city', so as to be able to draw a distinction with its not-so-global cousin later. To this end, I will first trace out a sketch of the global city, which has emerged as a significant node in the discontinuous

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<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, at 50-51.

<sup>6</sup> WALLERSTEIN, *supra* note 1, at 69.

<sup>7</sup> A. APPADURAI, MODERNITY AT LARGE: CULTURAL DIMENSIONS OF GLOBALIZATION 32 (1997).

<sup>8</sup> Several cultural theorists including Sassen use the term "detritorialisation". Deterritorialisation refers to the changing nature of culture that no longer defines itself in terms of a particular place.

network of the global cultural economy. It is here that the fantasies of globalisation are created and relayed to the rest of the world. Then I will look at the city in the not-so-networked societies which are at the same time extended nodes in the global information/technology networks, sites of cultural hybridization (so as to fulfil the commercial agenda of the global forces), and also the sites of seepage of global practices into the modes of local cultural consumption. Once the dynamics of such cityscapes are drawn out, I will move on to looking at how the role played by the state in prodding the society into modernity has been significantly altered in the context of the city. Finally, this change in the role of the state will be studied from the perspective of the city-dweller as a citizen, dimensions of whose identity undergo change as she gets more and more networked, while a last comment on illegality in the cityscape as a means to this alteration in identities will also be included.

### I. The Global City as a Space of Centrality in the Global Economy

As more and more states moved away from the logic of protection, the urban space emerged as the site of capital flows and the nodes of transmission for global practices and processes. The increased information flows and dematerialised/digitalized economic operations have not completely eliminated the need for major international business and financial centers on land.<sup>9</sup> The global city serves as the contact point of the business of global control through dematerialized operations.

Besides, the trends towards the spatial dispersal of economic activities at the metropolitan, national and global levels have created a tendency for new forms of *territorial centralisation* of top level management and control operations.<sup>10</sup> The space created by these distant cities, is one of centrality in the global economy, creating a 'new geography of centres and margins' across the globe,<sup>11</sup> which has come to undermine the geopolitical boundaries articulated through the 'state'.<sup>12</sup> This networked space of the global city is in a sense supra national. A New Yorker is primarily a New Yorker and would hardly identify with the suburban Midwest, despite sharing the common cultural bracket of being American. As opposed to this spaceless, borderless, physically discontinuous world of the networked global city, which forms the receptacles of the information economy and producer services, the rest of the globe is defined in traditional terms of physical and political boundaries.<sup>13</sup> The global cities transmit their products and processes into the rest of the non-networked societies, and the urban site in the not-so-networked world becomes the extended node of globalisation. In these commercial transactions, forces originating in the global cities reach new societies through the not-so-global cities where a process of hybridisation takes place.<sup>14</sup>

The global city is the site of conception, manufacture and dissemination of the 'global culture', which is used to create consumer markets across the globe. The emergence of this 'cultural market' is made

<sup>9</sup> S. Sassen, *The Global City: Strategic Site/New Frontier*, 503 SEMINAR 29, 31 (2001). Sassen argues that even as the economic topography is being rewritten by electronically driven communication channels, a good part of it is still embedded within the non-electronic space. Global cities form sites for these dematerialised operations of firms.

<sup>10</sup> *Id.* The concentration of all resources, expertise in these cities, is understood as *territorial centralization* of control operations.

<sup>11</sup> S. Sassen, *Urban Economies and Fading Distances*, <[http://www.megacities.nl/lecture\\_sassen.htm](http://www.megacities.nl/lecture_sassen.htm)> (visited on 12.04.2003).

<sup>12</sup> E. Kofman, *Political Geography and Globalisation as we enter the Twenty-first century*, in *supra* note 3, at 18. Kofman comments on the space-time depression initiated through the practices of globalisation that have mapped the globe in terms of the global and the local, transcending the rigid nation-state boundaries which divide it into 'fixed units of sovereign space'.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* at 21.

<sup>14</sup> APPADURAI, *supra* note 7, at 32.

possible by global economic processes, which create common symbolisms and through them, a common market across the globe. Appadurai perceives this to be occurring along five 'scapes': *ethnoscapes*, *mediascapes*, *technoscapes*, *financescapes*, *ideoscapes*.<sup>15</sup> For the discussion at hand, two are important. Technoscapes form the global configuration for distribution of technologies that create the imagined worlds that surround nations and technological flows.<sup>16</sup> Mediascapes refer both to distribution of electronic capabilities, and the images created by the media.<sup>17</sup> These spaces are used by global corporates to create 'industries of the imagination'<sup>18</sup> by creating universal symbols out of aspects of certain cultures and deterritorialising them in the form global fantasies.<sup>19</sup>

## II. The Not-so-global City as an Extended Node of Globalisation

From the power-zones of the global cities, the processes of globalisation are extended into the non-networked or not-so-networked societies, through the node of the city. These cityscapes are points of contact between the spatially integrated worlds and the electronically deterritorialised ones, and are therefore significant sites of extension of the global processes. This category of cities would be best described by the example of Bangalore. The capital city of the state of Karnataka in India evolved from being a serene 'pensioners' paradise' to a site of Nehruvian industrialization [it was home to the primary flagbearers of the Nehruvian paradigm- enterprises like HAL (Hindustan Aeronauticals Limited), BHEL (Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited), Hindustan Machine Limited thrived in Bangalore]. It was also home to a thriving textile industry providing employment and cottage industries (silk being the leading one).<sup>20</sup> Bangalore went through a clear shift in its self-representation, when US-based Texas Instruments entered into an agreement with Videsh Sanchar Nigam Limited (VSNL) and the first 'offshore' software production center was set up in the city. The late '90s have seen Bangalore being publicized as Indian equivalent of Silicon Valley, complete with its own Electronics City.<sup>21</sup> Simultaneous was the packaging of Bangalore as a modern city, with the key components of life in its global cousins (be it greenery, golf courses, pubs, international schools, abundance of technical and scientific educational opportunities), which presented Bangalore as the

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<sup>15</sup> APPADURAI, *supra* note 7, at 33. The suffix 'scape' has been used by Appadurai to explain the formation of fluid landscapes, which shape the various flows of the processes of globalisation. By *ethnoscape* he indicates the landscape of persons who are continuously shifting worlds. The word *financescapes* is used to describe the landscape of global capital. *Ideoscape* indicates the flows of political ideologies and counter-ideologies.

<sup>16</sup> APPADURAI, *supra* note 7, at 34.

<sup>17</sup> APPADURAI, *supra* note 7, at 35.

<sup>18</sup> B. DE SOUSA SANTOS, TOWARD A NEW COMMON SENSE LAW, SCIENCE AND POLITICS IN THE PARADIGMATIC TRANSITION 253 (1995).

<sup>19</sup> The best examples of such deterritorialisation can be seen in the world of globally marketed food. The pizza, part of the diet of a certain geographic or cultural communities, was taken up by the processes of globalisation, marketed as globally, such that today it is deterritorialised and recognized as part of the 'global culture' (if there can be any such global culture). The origin of the pizza is not global, in that it was not consumed originally in many parts of the world together, if that is what makes something global. The only thing making it global is the global marketing strategies of the corporates.

<sup>20</sup> For a detailed discussion on the transformation of Bangalore from a Nehruvian city to a site of extension of the network of global cities. See J. Heitzman, *Becoming Silicon Valley*, 503 SEMINAR 40 (2001).

<sup>21</sup> *Id.*

city in which urban expatriates would be able to adjust very easily. The desired consequence was the location of Indian counterparts of numerous multinational companies in Bangalore.<sup>22</sup> It was now home to an increasing population of middle-classes who constituted the technological manpower of India. The opening up of employment opportunities was also responsible for an increased influx of those who were not part of the imagination of the architects of the electronic city. What the state or the transnational capital flows or information networks could not prevent were the mushrooming slums, the unplanned pockets in the outskirts of the city which house the small entrepreneurs and the unskilled workers employed in the various projects of city-building.

The city in the developing world has thus emerged as a node through which this world finds linkages to the information economy and related global processes. It has triggered off a parallel remapping of centers and margins in these parts of the globe. Increased migration into these cities has transformed them into equivalents of the global city on a smaller scale. In terms of volume of production of services and financial turnovers, it may still have a long way to go, but in terms of its role as receptacles for the feelers from the network societies, and relaying them on into developing world, it has a crucial role to play.<sup>23</sup>

The dynamics of such a city will be inadequately represented if the image of the city with its unique subculture is left out.<sup>24</sup> The elements of diverse cultures and the varied political and economic forces at play in a city, give rise to forms of urbanism, unique to every city. The presence of global information networks or commercial establishments influences the creation and dissemination of such subcultures. The not-so-global city becomes the first site of contact between the citizen of the developing nation, and the phenomenon of globalisation and information networks. The global product is marketed through this space. To appeal to distant markets, the global symbols are enmeshed with aspects of 'local' cultures of those markets and marketed as products, which can be conceived as part of local cultures. Hence, McDonalds creates a Chicken Tikka pizza, and Coca Cola is marketed as 'thanda', a part of the everyday culture of a city-bred ruffian. The forces of commercial globalisation arising out of the global city carry the global product, through the technological/commercial processes of globalisation. Their agenda is to tap these markets, perpetuate and extend the 'global culture' which normalizes the consumption of the products of globalisation. This process may trigger off more exchanges than expected. That the processes and strategies may also be assimilated into local modes of cultural consumption is never contemplated within the initial agenda.

The networks of integration carry messages of cultural homogenization from the 'control towers'. But the messages mingle with shared local cultures and help deterritorialise elements of local cultures, besides creating cultural hybridity.<sup>25</sup> For example, the commercial strategy of the brand name and the chain-outlet when adopted by local manufacturers, deterritorialises traditional South Indian *idli-dosa*,

<sup>22</sup> *Id.*

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

<sup>24</sup> J. S. KAHN, CULTURE, MULTICULTURE, POSTCULTURE 108 (1995).

<sup>25</sup> Hybridity or hybridization is also a term frequently used by theorists of globalisation to describe the process of assimilation of components of the alien culture, during the interaction between the home culture and the alien culture as Western economic forces enter non-Western societies, along with their cultural baggage. For example, English which enters non-Western countries as an essential part of the forces of commercial globalisation, is very often assimilated into the local cultures along with components of local languages. What we get as an outcome not homogeneous English-speaking communities, but various versions of the English language in different parts of the globe. See, SLATER, *supra* note 3, at 53.

and the spicy north Indian snack, creating eatery chains like the New Shanti Sagar in Bangalore and the Haldiram Bhujawala all over India. The cultures of enterprise carried on locally, assimilate the culture of deterritorialised consumption and entrepreneurial strategies. The exchange involves not simply the product of globalisation, but also of the processes and strategies that carry the products. The consequence that follows is that local cultural consumption methods change, causing local cultures to be deterritorialised.

### III. The Role of the State in the Not-so-global City

The state in the network society has long foregone its role as the active promoter of welfare as the *developmental state*.<sup>26</sup> Today, most of these developed states are facilitators of competition between private economic entities, and can be, in a sense called the *competition state*.<sup>27</sup> This state is keen on marketing itself so as to attract the forces that drive the interpenetrated economic world.<sup>28</sup>

The picture of the state in the developing world cannot be said to have entered that mould completely. With respect to the big city, however the role (or at least, the visibility of the state) has undergone significant changes. For example, in India, from the '50s through to the late '70s, development was based on the Nehruvian Plan, which constructed the nation as a space bracketed and fissured from global space. Nehruvian nationalism sought the spectacular not so much in the city as much as in the architecture of energy and power – the dam being the key-image of such fantasy.<sup>29</sup> This was the era of the state as the *via media* between the global phenomena and the rather stationary local citizen. This citizen would find a legitimate place in the global phenomena only if the state equipped her adequately. Modernity, in the Nehruvian era, was essentially a project undertaken by the developmental state (in terms of economic growth, high technology) such that modernization was not so much the business of citizens. Today, with increasing contact with the networks of globalisation, the fantasies of modernity are within the reach of citizens.<sup>30</sup> Modernity, therefore, is a part of everyday experience, which takes place without the mediation of the state. Allegiance to state is to that extent diluted, in the context of the city, where one pursues the products of modernity without being part of the larger project of modernity that is undertaken at the national level.

### IV. The City-dweller as a Citizen

Having seen that transformation of the role of the state vis-à-vis the city-dweller, it becomes necessary to look at whether or not the nature of citizenship of this city-dweller has reacted to these circumstances. Citizenship is ordinarily understood as a legal category, which is not contingent upon any other group (ethnic, religious, cultural) affiliations. Being a citizen is also different from being a

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<sup>26</sup> P. G. Cerny, *What next for the State?* in KOFMAN & YOUNGS, *supra* note 3, at 208.

<sup>27</sup> *Id.*

<sup>28</sup> *Id.*

<sup>29</sup> R. Sundaram, *History and the Contemporary in Urban Electronic Culture*, <<http://www.monoculartimes.co.uk/texts/architexts/bazaarandcity1.shtml>> (visited on 04.05.2004).

<sup>30</sup> APPADURAI, *supra* note 7, at 10. Fantasies of modernity, that of becoming part of the technological, economic and cultural practices of better living. But the components of 'modernity' change with time. The Nehruvian era saw dams and mills as symbols of modernity, whereas today's world sees internet and credit cards as modern. Besides, the components of 'modernity' that are bound to change, the experience of being modern citizenship has transformed considerably in the context of globalisation.

vassal or a subject or a serf in the precursors to the liberal democratic state.<sup>31</sup> Citizenship is supposed to satisfy the need for identity without arousing animosities. A citizen is supposed to exercise moral responsibility and autonomy towards the state and other citizens, disciplining all other illiberal emotions.<sup>32</sup> A strong sense of citizenship can counter the selfish and mutually antagonistic identities that may exist in a society. But the situation of having large numbers of citizens in various conditions of deprivation can be a detriment in the effective exercise of citizenship in a state. These citizens may turn for support towards others who share their conditions, or feel discriminated against by the state or the powerful communities in a state.<sup>33</sup>

In a modern society, to exercise effective 'moral membership', a minimum requirement of literacy and technological competence is required. The citizen becomes a part of the national 'imaginary' only by subscribing to a brand of education imparted in a particular linguistic medium, such that there may be no way of accessing the mainstream national life other than this educational system.<sup>34</sup> The wave of global forces while changing this language to the language of the global imaginary, may also undermine the role of the categories in the state which had so far excluded some groups from access to the national mainstream.

When developing nations come in contact with the forces of globalisation, the global forces that seek to implement their commercial agenda meet this group of marginalised citizens in various ways, in the backdrop of the city. The city is then transformed into a site of opportunities to be tapped outside of the framework of privileges bestowed by the state. Despite the narrative of marginalisation by the forces of globalisation, the cityscape, which is becoming increasingly networked, then curiously opens up other channels into denied resources for these groups.

The 'societal culture' of globalisation that emanates from the zones of economic centrality, is institutionally embodied in schools, media, economic institutions, etc.<sup>35</sup> The forces of globalisation while carrying out its commercial agenda through the technological, financial and information networks, reach this shared language to the not-so-global city. Sassen contends that citizenship in these cities, even though not equal in terms of rights and privileges, does not turn the disadvantaged into marginals. Instead she points out that "*the denationalizing of the urban space and the formation of new claims centred in transnational actors and involving contestation constitute the global city as a frontier zone for a new type of engagement.*"<sup>36</sup>

As individual citizens try to appropriate parts of the global fantasy and accommodate them in their own socio-economic practices, the consumption of global fantasies breathe some sort of agency into these individuals, be it in the form of resistance, irony, or exercise of selectivity.<sup>37</sup> Appadurai creates the distinction between the 'fantasy' and the 'imaginary' to show that instead of being fed the 'fantasy' blindly, citizens of the developing world consume the fantasy differentially, such that varied experiences created varied personal *imaginaries*. An example of the way I see this distinction operating is that of the satellite channel. While the advent of the satellite channel disseminates the 'fantasy' of

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, at 184.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, at 186.

<sup>34</sup> E. Gellner, *Nationalism and Modernization*, in HUTCHINSON & D.SMITH, ED., NATIONALISM 55-58 (1994).

<sup>35</sup> W. KYMILICKA, MULTICULTURAL CITIZENSHIP: A LIBERAL THEORY OF MINORITY RIGHTS 76 (1996).

<sup>36</sup> SASSEN, *supra* note 9, at 39.

<sup>37</sup> APPADURAI, *supra* note 7, at 7.

downtown Manhattan, its experience in some sections might at the same time breathe resistance towards American 'sitcom' culture and produce deterritorialised versions of 'desi' culture using the same media practices (the most apt example being the 'k' soaps of Ekta Kapoor).

The experience of engagement with the global processes not only empowers the city-zen to find linkages into these processes without always being entitled to one, but also reduces dependency on state to be pushed into the world of modernity. It is in the city that the identity of citizenship becomes less pronounced, as city-zens tune into the culture of globalisation and find newer economic and cultural avenues for themselves. The familiarity with the English language signifies not merely an increased affinity towards Hollywood movies amongst urban youth, but also employment opportunities in the form of 'call-centre' jobs. The traditional route to global fantasy in the Indian middle-class was through technological education (hence, the IIT's, IIM's, etc.). Today, however, the phenomenon of business process outsourcing through the "call-centre"<sup>38</sup>, have become crucial entry-points into the world of global mobility, for urban youth who do not have access to elitist technological education. For these sections that cannot access quality education, and hence are not getting commensurate employment opportunities, avail other opportunities because of their familiarity with aspects of global culture (familiarity with English language and American popular culture, being some of them). Notwithstanding the uncertainties of the outsourced jobs in back-offices, what is significant is the process of empowerment by way of increased accessibility to newer avenues. This encounter with global processes transforms them into subscribers to the communication cultures of networked societies, which enables them to devise newer ways of accessing resources.

The nature of technological practices associated with economic globalisation is such that its effects cannot be contained within clear-cut boundaries. The consequent spillover effects of commercial globalisation are illustrated vividly by Ravi Sundaram. He distinguishes two layers of urban contemporary landscape in the context of the multimedia industries- the first being the new media enterprises, corporate owners of satellite channels, software. The second layer is the "large and dynamic media space" which includes cable television networks, public phone booths in neighborhoods which number in their millions, street music sellers, the computer grey market, the CD-piracy market, and public cyber-cafés.<sup>39</sup> Direct linkage to global culture of connectivity is thus possible without having to depend on the government department to grant one a phone. Seepage of technological practices makes it possible for the marginalised sections- those that would not ordinarily have access to these technologies, or be part of these networked communities- to claim their share of the city's output. It is this legal/non-legal seepage of the *globalism* of electronic mediation that has revolutionized the perception of the global fantasy in the urban imaginary. The contact with global cultures of connectivity has translated in terms of numerous avenues being open to the city-dweller to explore in search of opportunities of better living. That she is a resident of the not-so-networked world, that she is deprived of resources, that she is entitled to within the legal regime of the state are no longer factors constraining her foray into this global culture of connectivity.

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<sup>38</sup> See <<http://www.delhicall.com/why-india.htm>> (visited on 04.05.2004). This is a website of an intermediary organization which mobilizes young aspirants and coordinates with TNCs looking for cheap labour.

<sup>39</sup> SUNDARAM, *supra* note 30.



Another spillover effect of the processes of commercial globalisation is the seepage into the practices of illiberal cultures in the multicultural city. They then become a tool of deterritorialisation of these cultures, and operate as modes of communication with the wider community of the cultural/religious affiliation.<sup>40</sup> A Muslim citizen in New York, who feels alienated in the multicultural society she inhabits, will listen to recorded lectures of a Muslim religious leader somewhere in the middle-east, on digital audio systems. Hindu fundamentalists gather support and resources to organize themselves, tapping the loyalties of the Hindu diaspora in developed nations across the globe using the internet. The illiberal outcaste thus finds a way to deterritorialise her cultural/religious ideas through contact with global processes and practices, and strengthen her identity.

### V. Illegality as a Means to Empowerment in the City

In the post-1990's situation, the urban landscape has transformed in terms of linkage with global processes. The more visible picture of this linkage is that of the plush corporate offices of multinationals being set up in the urban landscape, promising prosperity and global mobility to the technical personnel, that is created out of the middle-classes. But Ravi Sundaram focuses on the obscure part of the picture that takes place through the pores of legality, amidst the lower economic rungs; through the 'grey market'. The sections in the city that are left out the discursive space of modernity, information networks and hyper-mobility, find their own linkages into the space through the *pores of legality* operating within the city. Ravi Sundaram points out that an alarming level of non-legality exists in the production of this culture in India, which bypasses the state, undermines the hierarchies in the global processes, and finds linkages into the global fantasy.<sup>41</sup> Though India is emerging as one of the largest software-exporters and a 'key-player in the new commodity chain of electronic capitalism', eighty per cent computers sold in the Indian market are in the 'grey market'.<sup>42</sup> The boundaries of legality increasingly become blurred as street hawkers, slum-dwellers, pirated CD dealers lay their claims on the city, and through it on the products of modernity. Rather modernity is grabbed by disregarding the mandate of the good citizen-diverting electricity lines into slums, to tune into popular soaps on satellite channels, latest movie sound tracks on MP3 CDs. The seepage of global technological practices is not always contained within the safety-nets of legality. The pores of legality give way and city-zens in the not-so-networked societies find ways to use these technological practices to their benefit, even though it may often in violation of restrictive legal regimes.

### Conclusion

Contact with technological practices and information networks that are associated with commercial globalisation can have liberating experiences on identities constructed within limits of space, time, and group affiliations. In the case of citizens of non-networked societies, some such reconfiguration of identities are often not part of the initial agenda of commercial globalisation. The processes of globalisation thus have much wider impact than the calculated effect of extending the global cultural market. Identities are reconfigured not simply in terms of being influenced by cultures carried by the global networks but also in terms of being able to tap these networks and technological practices in one's everyday experiences. Through this process their dependency on state diminishes and their

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<sup>40</sup> APPADURAI, *supra* note 7, at 50.

<sup>41</sup> SUNDARAM, *supra* 29.

<sup>42</sup> SUNDARAM, *supra* 29.

identities become more and more constructed in terms of access and participation in the global processes, through their association with the city. The larger project of modernity that the state may have embarked on is undermined by micro-narratives of individual experiences of modernity in these cities. This makes way for broader questions about the changing role of the semi-peripheral state from that of a *via media* between its citizens and the forces of globalisation, to that of a facilitator of globalisation.

I am not in a position to comment on whether resource-availability for the deprived in the semi-peripheral city, increases in real terms, through this process. Neither am I seeking to establish trends of empowerment in economic terms. This seepage of practices delivers some ideas to places and people they were not originally meant to reach. It is especially interesting to speculate on the impact this may have on the illiberal elements within liberal frameworks, which are denied any legitimacy within the narrative of the state. These are identities that can use global techno-cultural practices to consolidate group identities, in a situation where these are not granted legitimacy. For the otherwise kept-out-of-the-loop citizen, this seepage means finding new linkages to the global fantasy, which in turn transforms identity conditioned by location in space and time.

If at all one can cause some sort of leakage in the processes through which global corporates penetrate the remote markets allying with whom the state machineries strengthen themselves, such that the processes can be used and reproduced by persons otherwise left out of this scheme of global profit-making, I believe it would make for a story of empowerment. All in all, I think, it makes for an unexpected story of empowerment amidst numerous stories of dominance and marginalisation.