

Chapter 38

Reproducing Dependency: How Hegemonic Discourses Shape ICT Policies in the Periphery

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ABSTRACT

Although many critical scholars in the West have acknowledged the unequal distribution of power across the globe, few have attempted to undertake systematic research on how countries in the periphery are drawn into the neo liberal project of globalization under the discourse of Knowledge Based Economy (KBE) and how this process effects policy formation regarding ICTs. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze Knowledge Based Economy (KBE)/Information Society (IS) discourses in constructing global dependency relations on ICT policies within the context of Turkey. These dependency relations have many aspects including a discursive one. In this study, the focus will be on policy documents to better understand the overall discourse, social processes and structures which have been reflected in, represented and constructed or constituted by this discourse to theorize and transform. Four documents were selected as representing the hegemonic center; one produced by the World Bank and three policy documents from the European Union. Additionally three documents which represent the Turkey context were selected. Upon examination two documents were found to be counter hegemonic and the other supported the hegemonic visions of the World Bank and the European Union. Turkey has signed a number of stand-by agreements with the IMF/World Bank due to economic crisis over the last twenty years and Turkey's bid to become a full member of the European Union necessitated alignment of legal infrastructure and domestic policies. The chapter also explains how the dependent discourses reversed ICT and network policy formation based on local capabilities and local needs.

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INTRODUCTION

The theoretical framework of this paper can be described as post-disciplinary drawing on Jessop's cultural political economy (CPE), which combines concepts and tools from critical semiotic analysis and from critical political economy (Jessop, 2004; Jessop & Sum, 2006). CPE differs from several other approaches that emphasize the importance of culture in that; it defines the co-evolution of the semiotic and extra-semiotic aspects of political economy rather than celebrating the subjective meaning production as the determining moment. According to Jessop, the Knowledge Based Economy (KBE) discourse is the dominant "imaginary" which seems to deal with accumulation regimes of the most developed countries like the United States and also the European Union (EU). It can be seen as a strategy for achieving a new "fix" for an accumulation regime (economic) and the mode of regulation (political, cultural, etc.) in the aftermath of the demise of "Fordism" in the most developed economies (Jessop, 2004 and Fairclough, 2005)

KBE seems to have become the leading economic narrative in many accumulation strategies in the 1990's aimed at consolidating a relatively stable post-Fordist accumulation regime and corresponding mode of regulation (Jessop, 2004). Although Jessop has paved the way for a critical analysis of the post-Fordist accumulation regime, peripheral or developing countries have not been sufficiently analyzed by scholars from the West within this accumulation regime, although the unequal distribution of power across the globe has been acknowledged. The aim of this chapter is to analyze how discourses of KBE generated by hegemonic global powers, affect developing countries' science and technology policies in general and ICT policies in particular.

Mansell categorizes global ICT policies either as Idealist or Strategic policies. The Idealist model founded on theories derived from purportedly competitive markets falls within the scope of

analyses which are based upon an idealized notion of markets and technology (Mansell, 1993; Babe, 1995). The Strategic model is rooted in theories of imperfect markets, monopolistic competition, oligopolistic rivalry and monopoly. In this model, the structure of markets is captured with technical change and the determinants of change are located within a broad range of social and institutional arrangements. They are not found solely within the price mechanism and the effects of exogenous shocks created by technical change (Mansell, 1993). Although our theoretical approach will be mainly enlightened by dependency theory and critical political economy of communication, participatory development models and idealist/strategic dichotomy will be analyzed using the experience of Turkey.

By analyzing policy documents from the World Bank and the EU and linking those documents to the Turkish case it will be shown how the KBE discourse reproduce dependency relations at discursive and material level. Besides, we will attempt to show, how participatory approaches have been used in Turkey and how it helped producing counter-hegemonic discourses. In this study, the focus will be on the discourse of the following written policy documents; World Bank World Development Report 1998/1999, policy documents of the EU (Lisbon Agenda, Relaunching the Lisbon Agenda, i2010, e-Europe, e-Europe+) and policy reports from Turkey (TUENA master plan, 2023 Strategy Document, Turkish Knowledge Society Strategy Document (2006-2010).

BACKGROUND

Under a post-Fordist accumulation regime developing nations are expected to become part of the global market. The economic policies offered to the developed nations were also offered to the developing world. The economic prescription, which can be defined as neo-liberalism, has three components; transfiguring the role of markets in

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