

The Age of the Corporate State *Versus* The Informational and Cognitive Public Domain

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Abstract

This article analyses concepts of the bourgeois State, capitalist corporations and the democratic public domain. The main thesis presented is that today nation states have fused deeply with corporations; both orders have become transformed into one indivisible entity. The article considers how, in the Corporate State, society arrives at a dangerous condition; if the alternative forces to capitalism-imperialism are not able to oppose (under the rule of law) or dismantle its prime agent (the corporation/capitalistic companies), then humankind is in danger of having its democratic order hollowed-out or destroyed completely by the corporate State. Throughout the article, there is evidence of how the corporate State has corroded part of the public domain in the library sector by means of capitalistic commoditisation and privatisation of its services. Evidence exposes the corporation's lack of ethics or morality. Finally, it is advocated that citizens re-establish the public domain and to force corporations under the rule of law to be judged by enforced legal accountability in a manner comparable to the relationship between the law and the public citizen.

Keywords: Informational and cognitive capitalism, public domain, public interest, public sphere, citizens, cultural political economy, libraries, repositories of public knowledge.

1. Introduction

This paper is a philosophical discussion on the constant attacks from the corporate State against the public domain: specifically against attacks on access to culture, information and knowledge through libraries and other repositories of public knowledge. Thus, the analysis focuses on the political economy and cultural aspects of the public domain. From the pertinent literature, the works of Herbert H. Schiller are the most significant. He foresaw at the end of his

career that the state “as cultural production, in its basic forms and relations, becomes increasingly indistinguishable from production in general, a political economy of culture – a rigorous examination of its production and its consumption – becomes more an obligatory and vital site for research and analysis” (Schiller, 2000, p.62). He also emphasizes that:

To ignore or minimize the value of this field of inquiry is to relinquish understanding of, and therefore the capability for resistance to, the latest crucially important terrain of capitalism. The political economy of cultural production and consumption is a core element in a twenty-first century understanding of capitalism (Ibid.).

This article concurs with the aforementioned perspective, and expands upon research and analysis of the political economy of culture in the current stage of capitalist development; i.e. the political economy of the so-called informational or cognitive stage of capitalism.

It focuses on some of the most corrosive effects of capitalism in its phase of “market imperialism” as termed by Marquand (2004, p.136), effects which are affecting adversely the public domain. The political economy of culture is a very broad subject area, as is the public domain. Hence, this article analyses the role that the State plays in contemporary capitalist society: in particular, demonstrating the transformation of the State into a corporate State. From here, it is demonstrated how the corporate State is the main cause for the hollowing out of the public domain in general, and of the informational and cognitive public domain (within which libraries are an element) in particular.

Along the same lines, the Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek (2000) alerts us about the importance of the politicisation of the economy due to recent developments aimed at the monopolistic concentration within and between media, communication, and information and knowledge sectors:

A further indicator of the necessity for some kind of politicization of the economy is the overtly 'irrational' prospect of concentrating quasi-monopolistic power in the hands of a single individual or corporation, like Rupert Murdoch or Bill Gates. If the next decade brings the unification of the multitude of communicative media in a single apparatus reuniting the features of interactive computer, TV, video – and audio-- phone, video and CD player, and if Microsoft actually succeeds in becoming the quasi-monopolistic owner of this new universal medium controlling not only the language used in it but also the conditions of its application, then we obviously approach the absurd situation in which a single agent, exempt from public control, will in effect dominate the basic communicational structure of our lives and will thus, in a way, be stronger than any government (Žižek, 2000, p.356).

Thus, the three elements guiding this analysis are:

- 1) The capitalistic corporation on the economic front, and
- 2) The State within the political dimension, and
- 3) The informational and cognitive public domain on the cultural terrain

Therefore, the central part of the public domain analysed here is the informational-cognitive impact on the function of libraries, and, by extension, on other repositories of public knowledge. Furthermore, since the concepts of “information” and “knowledge” affect all human relationships these will be analysed based on evidence found in the literature from some of the varied forms of production, distribution and storage, or use of either information or knowledge. These phenomena are analysed from a variety of angles in this article: such as ethical, educational, social, and political and other perspectives. Thus, the article aims to invite the public and the community of librarians and cultural workers involved in repositories of public knowledge in particular, to reflect and debate on the tenacious and persistent attacks of capitalist States and corporations on the public domain and its institutions. At the same time, this article invites readers to counter-attack the trend of destruction by market imperialism, with its neo-liberal policies commanded by the corporate States against the public domain. Marquand (2004, p.134) alerts us to these issues. A key aim of this article is to stimulate debate on these significant contemporary issues. In addition, we need to explore how to re-establish the increasingly undermined public service ethos in libraries set within a public service context that is increasingly at risk from corporations and the capitalist State. Thus, a case is set out for information and knowledge that is available, accessible, and usable in a corporation-free zone. Furthermore, these vital services should be free of charge, provided on an egalitarian and equitable basis to users and potential users, and seek to be relevant for community needs, thereby nurturing democracy and the democratisation of knowledge and information.

2. The Advent of the Corporate State *Versus* the Informational and Cognitive Public Domain

What is the State? The fundamental feature of the State is to maintain a society divided into classes. The dominant class exerts political power and defines (by legal and extra-legal means) its right

to expropriate the socially generated wealth and to exploit and subdue the dispossessed classes under its domination. Nevertheless, the dominative elite ruling the State – and its various apparatuses such as the government to manage social affairs – need resources from the dominated classes, under the pretext of the *status quo*; the rulers and governed keep a *sine qua non* relationship. Engels defines the State in this way:

Only one thing was wanting: an institution which not only secured the newly acquired riches of individuals against the communistic traditions of the gentile order, which not only sanctified the private property formerly so little valued, and declared this sanctification to be the highest purpose of all human society; but an institution which set the seal of general social recognition on each new method of acquiring property and thus amassing wealth at continually increasing speed; an institution which perpetuated, not only this growing cleavage of society into classes, but also the right of the possessing class to exploit the non-possessing, and the rule of the former over the latter. And this institution came. The State was invented (Engels, 1884).

Although this is the essential nature of the State, in this analysis some functions of the republican democratic State relate to the provision of social services. For the public, these services have traditionally been free of charge, democratically organised and users (in theory) are socially equal. These services are necessities in terms of the functioning of democracy and the concrete manifestation of a whole range of rights that ensures society does not degrade to levels of slavery, barbarism, or savagery. Nevertheless, what is not discussed here is the disappearance or establishment of any other alternative state to the bourgeois Parliamentary State. That is beyond the aims of this analysis.

However, it is important to emphasise how the class essence of the State influences society in the ways that its rulers in turn provide the aforementioned social services to people. To the extent that the ruling classes of their State ignore their minimum mandate of providing people with such services in the way considered here, then to that extent (quantitatively and qualitatively) it will hollow-out the democratic principles of the public interest and the public domain. Ideally, the State's activities and practices incorporate the principles of democracy and public interest. To the degree that the State deprives the public from services incorporating these principles, it degrades and alienates the people.

What is the public domain? The concept of the 'public domain' is significantly different from the notion of 'public sector'; the latter is included and subordinate to the public domain:

In the public domain, citizens collectively define what the public interest is to be, through struggle, argument, debate and negotiation.

If the rulers of the State and the officials who serve them are not accountable to the citizenry and their representatives, the language of the public interest can become a cloak for private interests (Marquand, 2004, p.33).

However, what is it the corporation? To understand this we need to examine the core characteristics of *contemporary* capitalism. The characteristic features of contemporary capitalism are:

- Privatisations of public services;
- Deregulations where corporations are free from being accountable for their activities by the State power;
- Advocacy for free trade or free exchange, to pay the lowest taxes, etc;
- Free enterprise;
- Incorporated, or limited liability institutions for profit; and
- Entrepreneurship – is that vehicle of embodiment and materiality of the philosophy of the dominant classes of contemporary capitalism-imperialism that precisely and sharply carry out the mandates of its class.

However, for practical purposes it is the *corporation* – in its Anglo-Saxon definition – that is the most representative institution of the current capitalist and imperialist system of exploitation and expropriation of wealth. It feeds on all the above factors. Thus, this is the most adequate definition:

As the corporation comes to dominate society – through, among other things, privatization and commercialization – its ideal conception of human nature inevitably becomes dominant too. And that is the frightening prospect. The corporation, after all, is deliberately designed to be psychopath: purely self-interested, incapable of concern for others, amoral, and without conscience – in a word, inhuman (Bakan, 2004, p.134).

Bakan indicates that the features that are common to all corporations are their:

...obsession with profits and share prices, greed, lack of concern for others, and a merchant for breaking legal rules. These traits are, in turn, rooted in an institutional culture, the corporation's, that valorises self-interest and invalidates moral concern (2004, p.58).

He also highlights the view that all corporations are even prone to their own destruction, like the case of the Enron Corporation. All of

this is an integral part of its institutional character, inherent to its nature, and with psychopath features: "Greed and moral indifference define the corporate world's culture" (2004, p.55).

Based on comprehensive research on the psycho-pathological character of this institution Bakan highlights a list of features that define the essence of corporations as being psychopathic (2004, pp.56-57). For Bakan, the corporations are:

- *Irresponsible*. In an attempt to satisfy the corporate goal, everybody else is at risk; including their own shareholders.
- *Manipulative*. Corporations try to manipulate everything, including public opinion.
- *Grandiose*. Corporations self-claim grandiose visions and goals, always insisting they are the number one in their competition with the rest.
- *Asocial*. Corporations lack empathy and have asocial tendencies. Their behaviour indicates they do not really concern themselves with their victims of competition and greed, or with damages to the public or the environment.
- *Insensible*. Corporations refuse to accept responsibility for their own actions and are unable to feel remorse for their victims.
- *Superficial*. Corporations in order to achieve their bottom line aims of greed, profit, and money are above or against everybody else; corporations relate with the public in nice and superficially appealing ways, but are not be like that in reality.

Bakan also reported in a well-documented way, several serious cases of corporations' negligence, ecocide, and crimes (2004, pp.87-88). Yet there are many well-known cases where dozens, or hundreds, or thousands of humans die in labour accidents or in other circumstances where corporations are involved. There are also cases of ecocides where corporations pay fines but the State does not punish sufficiently those responsible. Discussion of all of these cases goes beyond the limits of this paper. Sufficient to say, the State in contemporary capitalist society indulges corporations' psycho-pathological character. This is crucially important to emphasise since in many disciplines –and particularly in library and information science – the majority of academic communities have adhered to or have been seduced, consciously or unconsciously, by corporations' good-natured and charming discourse. However, such positive discourse is contrary to their true nature: to lie is their essence, to sell is their drive, and to knock down their competition their mission.

Why a corporate State? In some countries, States are implementing legislation regarding free access to information through government

Acts and regulations from government bodies to make them accountable before their citizens. Such Acts try to avoid forms of government corruption: nepotism, favouritism, interest conflicts, and the like (Muela-Meza, 2004a). However, in the majority of Western democratic States owners of corporations' can also be elected or appointed to government positions. Notwithstanding that there are nowadays more anti-corruption locks, the truth is that corporations' owners will not abandon their corporate ideology, and neither are they necessarily forced to dissolve their corporations or cut themselves off from commercial interests they are involved in.

The State, and the public domain, where it is confined have diametrically opposed aims to those of corporations: the public good versus private profit. The overt or covert fusion of the State and corporations represents grave dangers to the democratic State and to the public domain, and the values it enshrines (Marquand, 2004, p.24). On the other hand, "The State power has not been reduced. It has been redistributed, more tightly connected to the needs and interests of corporations and less to the public interest", according to Bakan (2004, p. 154).

Thus, in assessing public policies in general, or those particularly related to libraries and other repositories of public knowledge, at any level of government or at the national or international levels, it can be determined what social classes, sectors, or groups of people are benefiting or being affected. On the analysis of this article, the social class character of this fusion between the State and the entrepreneurial corporation is precisely the character of the dominating classes of capitalism-imperialism with their neo-liberal policies. Yet on the other hand, the dominating classes of capitalism-imperialism are increasingly becoming more political; they close ranks, but they do so precisely to depoliticise the public domain, as noted by Zizek:

The big news of today's post-political age of the 'end of ideology' is thus the radical depoliticization of the sphere of the economy: the way the economy functions (the need to cut social welfare, etc.) is accepted as a simple insight into the objective state of things. However, as long as this fundamental depoliticization of the economic sphere is accepted, all the talk active citizenship, about public discussion leading to the 'cultural' issues of religious, sexual, ethnic and other way-of-life differences, without actually encroaching upon the level at which long-term decisions that affect us all are made (Zizek, 2000, p.353).

Therefore, to the extent that members of society – including librarians - participate or do not participate in acknowledging and resisting the increasingly psycho-pathological character of public administration through the corporate State, then to that extent

outcomes for good or bad of the public domain in general, or the informational and cognitive public domain of libraries in particular, will be determined.

3. Information and Knowledge Societies, or Plundering Societies of Nature and the Public Domain?

The self-styled "information societies" or "knowledge societies" are in fact neologisms which hide the ideology of the dominant classes of capitalism in its most violently renovated imperialist phase. They are euphemisms that seek to magic away or cover up the essence of such social phenomenon. On the contrary, here the underlying ideologies of these concepts are analysed, and their bourgeois class nature revealed. Expressions such as "information society" and "knowledge society" are in hock to the corporate State and its obfuscating and condescending ideologues, or followers, or apologists, or logographers who echo them.

From the scarce critical and analytical literature reviewed, emerged the remarkable work of the Mexican poet, essayist, editor, and critic Juan Domingo Argüelles, from his book *¿Que leen los que no leen? El poder inmaterial de la literatura, la tradición literaria y el hábito de leer (What do They Read those Who don't Read? The Immaterial Power of Literature, Literary Tradition, and the Habit of Reading)*. Following his analysis from the perspective that reading should be done freely and for pleasure, he accomplished a substantial hermeneutic analysis of some critiques of the so called "information society". He highlights the works of the French sociologist Dominique Wolton: *Internet, ¿y después? Una teoría crítica de los nuevos medios de comunicación (Internet, and after? A Critical Theory of the New Mass Media)* y *Sobrevivir a internet. Conversaciones con Olivier Jay (To Survive Internet: Conversations with Olivier Jay)*. Argüelles considers Wolton's works to be some of the few critical analyses that escape from praising the ideology of the dominant classes, and the creators and advocates of their masterpiece: "the information society". Thus, he states that:

For the market ideology, the over abundance ... is in itself, the democratization of its access, which of course is false: who buys is who can afford to buy ... Within the same perspective, over-information is not in itself a benefit; we can be over-informed and lack the capacity to understand, value, discern such an informative accumulation. ... The critical function is more important than the capacity of access (Argüelles, 2003, p.165).

The ideologues of the dominant classes of the corporate State are a volcano in constant eruption: like red-hot lava, they must cover

everything as they advance. So currently, they now are talking of the disappearance of the World Wide Web. To replace it, new neologisms have up-surged: World Wide Grid, Omninet, Hypergrid, Oxygen, etc. All of them driven by the needs of corporations, and substantially financed by the public domain purse via universities, such as the MIT case. Their aim is the development of technological megalomaniacs, where computing capabilities, through electronic networks of bits or qubits, permeate all human life almost as to its totality as with oxygen (Von Baeyer, 2003, p.6). In their dreams and in reality they seek to control it, dominate it, subdue it, exploit it, oppress it, etc. In fact, the ideologies and apologists of the fallacies of the "societies of information and knowledge", as they lack any self-reflective critical analysis are bereft of modesty. The triumphalist megalomania of the cognitive capitalism (Dyer-Witford, 2005) blurs their sight. From the physics field, Hans von Baeyer, in one of his few glimpses to theorize with a social consciousness, demystifies the happiness-giving character of the information and communication technologies. At the same time, he situates them in a dimension more akin to the reality of the conditions of life of the human beings and their environment:

We are still learning that the impact of the age of information is not universal as it seems. For us in the developed West, information technologies appear to dominate life, but for the majority of the global population they are vastly irrelevant. The World Wide Web will not solve the problems of poverty when half of the people in the world don't have the means to make or receive a telephone call. Self-driven cars will not improve the living standards of three billions of people who survive with less than 2 dollars a day. Robotic surgery will not cure more than a million and a half who don't have access to drinkable water. Eventually, an appreciation of the treacherous depth and width of the digital divide may begin to suffocate our limitless appetite for information (Von Baeyer, 2003, pp.6-7).

So, what kinds of ages or societies are we talking about? Von Baeyer also shows strong evidence regarding the dangerous physical limits involved in the production of all the material bodies, which combined make possible the computation and transmission of information. He also evidences its hidden costs (or those that the happiness-giving ideologies hide) in the production of such bodies. For example, to produce a simple computer chip of 2 grams requires using materials 36 times its weight in chemicals, 800 times its weight in energy – mainly electric that originates principally from fossil fuels – and 1,600 times its weight in water. At the same time he notes that the champions of the "information society" skate on thin conceptual ice, since the concept of "information," at least within physics, has not yet been defined adequately. He also criticises Shannon's theories that until today information technology lacks one of the main element critical for humans: information

technology is unable to compute *meanings*. Therefore, a great proportion of information found on the Internet (if in fact it is locatable) has a meaning deficit. Furthermore, Internet sources are either badly organised, or the information is simply wrong, whilst so much of it is neither accessible nor useful (Von Baeyer, 2003, p.7). However, Von Baeyer's analysis, according to the position sustained throughout this paper, presents some weaknesses. When he tries hard to reach for a conceptualisation of "information" as the new language that permeates all sciences, he does not criticise the negative effects of the commercialisation of information for the public domain or for the environment. For example, he argues that information be measured in the same fashion as "energy" is measured in order to become a commodity and be commercialised (Von Baeyer, 2003, p.11).

At the heart of the debate, concerning the plundering of information and knowledge by corporations supported by corporate States is that their ideologues hide the crucial antagonisms. Principally, those between the nature of information and knowledge that cannot be owned by anyone on the one hand, and the roles for expropriating, usurping, and plundering information and knowledge by the dominating classes of capitalism-imperialism through the corporate State and their *ad hoc* national and international organisations, on the other. These ideologues also cloak the activities of those charged with subduing all human beings of the planet to their legislative Bills, by making everyone criminal and punishable for producing, reproducing, storing, and sharing information and knowledge that formerly existed free of human domination. To fill such a vacuum, Zizek poses this question to these ideologues of 'information':

Do not the two phenomena we have mentioned (the unpredictable global consequences of decisions made by private companies; the patent absurdity of 'owning' a person's genome or the media individuals use for communication), to which one should add at least the antagonism contained in the notion of owning (scientific) *knowledge* (since knowledge is by nature neutral to its propagation, that is, it is not worn out by its spread and universal use), explain why today's capitalism must resort to more and more absurd strategies to *sustain the economy of scarcity in the sphere of information*, and thus to contain within the frame of private property and market relations the demon it has unleashed (say, by inventing ever new modes of *preventing* the free copying of digital information? (Zizek, 2000, p.357).

Such questioning shows evidence of the irrational and contradictory nature of capitalistic production. On one hand, the owners of capital frantically produce –through the economic exploitation of the working class, the ones who actually produce are the workers – products or commodities, only to obtain personal benefits or

benefits for the owners and shareholders of their corporations. But when society uses such products and commodities *directly*, thus stopping capitalist directors in the process from extracting any profits out of that production, then the role of those capitalists' *alter ego*, the corporate State, is poised to attack in order to try to expropriate such human beings' sensory capabilities, depriving them from accessing such information and knowledge by means of their subduing processes of keeping an elitist, selective, and excluding use to those who cannot afford to buy the private symbol of its access. Such expropriation goes along the lines with keeping intact the vertebral column of its nature: copyright laws, patents, and so on.

The industrial, commercial or financing corporations of information and knowledge – which also possess psycho-pathological characters like all kinds of corporations – have the over-arching goal to achieve the bottom-line goals of their owners and associates, regardless of the social good or ecological considerations. As it has been discussed before, the corporate State is only good for preserving the private property of corporations, including that of the plundering of information and knowledge. But citizenship within the public domain mainly looks after the common good of all the public, and the balance between the public and the environment, through politics. Thus, the organizations and institutions which overtly or covertly seek for the private appropriation of the public, or the co-existence between privateers and the public, show evidence of their class character against the public domain and its democratic principles.

4. Information and Knowledge for What?

Regardless of the purposes of information and knowledge, the conception we have about them depends on our world-view, our cosmogony, and finally our social class position:

Knowledge is mediated by the individuals who produce it, therefore, there is no neutrality, neither in the way to know, nor in the knowledge being produced...This knowledge is partial since it comes from particular positions and articulations, and in constant transformation. From the different positions of an individual, different realities can be seen (Montenegro Martínez, 2001, p.271 and p.279).

4.1 – *Information and knowledge for the welfare of all or only for a few elites?*

There are many possible answers to this question. Einstein (1949) argued that in the capitalist system of production, given its internal logic, social information and knowledge for the development of technologies, systems, products, commodities, etc. were arranged with the unique purpose of the dominating capitalist class, the owners of capital (and their corporations) and their State representatives to maintain their political power and control over workers. As can be read below, information and knowledge for workers only meant as much information and knowledge as were applied in production. In turn, this only meant more unemployment for many, more curtailing of their freedom, and in general more alienation:

Production is carried on for profit, not for use. There is no provision that all those able and willing to work will always be in a position to find employment; an "army of unemployed" almost always exists. The worker is constantly in fear of losing his job. Since unemployed and poorly paid workers do not provide a profitable market, the production of consumers' goods is restricted, and great hardship is the consequence. Technological progress frequently results in more unemployment rather than in an easing of the burden of work for all. The profit motive, in conjunction with competition among capitalists, is responsible for an instability in the accumulation and utilization of capital which leads to increasingly severe depressions. Unlimited competition leads to a huge waste of labour, and to that crippling of the social consciousness of individuals which I mentioned before. This crippling of individuals I consider the worst evil of capitalism (Einstein, 1949, pp.15-16).

Thus, apologists of the "information and knowledge societies" stand side-by-side with the dominant capitalistic class for the fattening-up of the loins they would ride. In other words, all of them argue precisely for the sophistication of control technologies and mechanisms created with intent for the domination, subduing, and alienation of the producers of information-knowledge.

Traditionally universities were the major centres for the transformation of information and knowledge, incorporating social obligation and ethical perspectives set to solve the problems of our world and its species, including ours. But along with the advent of the *Universities, Inc. & Ltd.*, and the alliances between the corporate State and universities, contradictions between the academy as pursuing knowledge-for-its own sake and knowledge for capital become more evident. The borderline between corporations and the State is blurred. The State has compromised its autonomy regarding the universities by yielding to the interests of its corporate patronages, and shaken by corporate assaults to its

intellectual integrity. Universities Inc. & Ltd. undertake research based on the agendas of corporate businesspeople, aided and abetted by the State. Corporate sponsors of research try, contrary to their cynically expressed pretensions regarding respect for democratic rights and freedom of expression, to censor their research publications for public consumption (Dyer-Witthford, 2005).

However, not all researchers have been subdued to this post-modern oppressive inquisitional machine of the corporate State. Such is the case of the scientist Ignacio Chapela, who was working at the University of California, Berkeley, which is associated with Monsanto and Syngenta (Novartis) corporations. He discovered that the technologies for Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO) have represented grave dangers for the maize farming in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico (Quist and Chapela, 2001). Given this scientific research, as published in *Nature*, the Mexican government has stopped the implementation of such GMOs in national lands and waters. It is also exploring possibilities for issuing Bills and regulations that prohibit definitively such applications. Chapela is openly alerting the scientific community and the Mexican government not to allow passing any Bill on GMOs, since the masterminds of such a Bill are precisely the corporations associated with UC Berkeley: Monsanto and Syngenta, besides Dupont and the Mexican Seminis/Savia! In addition, these companies will be the only beneficiaries by selling GMO technologies to the businesspeople from within and outside the Mexican government (Chapela, 2004).

On the analysis here, corporations only care about getting their bottom line goals: profits and greed maximisation. They do not care, like in this case, if due to the application of GMOS to maize – basic food for the Mexican and Latin American diet – people's health will sustain irreversible damaged, or if all the lands and waters from Oaxaca, Mexico wide, or the whole world would result in being damaged as well. In response to Chapela's scientific discoveries, the University of California Berkeley sacked him from his post in December 2004 without any reasonable explanation. He believes that Monsanto and Syngenta are the masterminds behind UC Berkeley's drastic decision (*Science in Society*, 2004). The list of these kinds of post-modern oppressive inquisitions is long; consider, for example, the monstrous ways in which the tobacco company operates, and so on.

4.2 – Information and knowledge for the welfare of humans and the ecological balance or for the destruction of humans and the environment?

The ethical foundation of scientific research needs to be reaffirmed by the international labour community. It is not ethical that, in the name of scientific research, weapons for the destruction of the species are constructed. The dominant social classes back the construction of these weapons. Practically, they invest in individuals holding power in States, governments and corporations who lack any moral fibre to this end, whilst indulging in covering discourse that manifests hypocrisy appropriate for social psychopaths. It suffices to watch, listen to, or read in any medium of communication of the criminally deadly use of information and knowledge – the general intellect – crystallised in all sorts of armaments employed, by means of any propagandistic sophisms, to murder other human beings, or to destroy our human civilization, or vast areas of our planet. An Australian critic, Brian Martin, in his book *Information Liberation: Challenging the Corruptions of Information Power*, elaborates on this issue, thus:

Military research is a big proportion. Here the aim is to develop more powerful weapons, more precise guidance systems, more penetrating methods of surveillance, and more astute ways of moulding soldiers to be effective fighters. For the researchers, the tasks can be very specific, such as designing a bullet that is more lethal – or sometimes less lethal, for crowd control purposes. Many talented scientists have devoted their best efforts to making weaponry more deadly. In most government and corporate labs, practical relevance to the goals of the organisation is highly important. In these labs, the direct influence of groups with different agendas is minimal. ... Overall, university research is less targeted to specific outcomes than most government and corporate research. This is especially true of fields like philosophy and mathematics (Martin, 1998, p.126).

Martin (1998, p.129) also indicates – see the following table – in the Australian context, how some disciplines or interdisciplinary fields within the humanities or the social sciences get little funding from governments or universities, whereas applied sciences, managerial and military disciplines obtain plenty of funding:

Funding / Discipline Type	Plenty of funding	Little funding
Disciplines	chemical engineering, computer science, accountancy, law	philosophy, history, creative writing
Interdisciplinary fields	policy making, military planning, corporate strategies	peace studies, women's studies, political economy

On the same lines, Jennifer Washburn, author of the book *University, Inc: the Corporate Corruption of Higher Education* (Washburn, 2005), argues that the corporations are taking over universities to such an extent that universities' commitment to ethical behaviour is questionable. She, in accord with Martin (1998), notes emphatically that the consequences of blurring limits between the academic and corporate scenarios are very serious. She deplores that these corporate-driven universities are pushing out the search for theoretical knowledge and curiosity-driven 'blue sky' enquiry, to give way, instead, to commercial research. Washburn also deplores the situation where some disciplines that make money, study money, or that bring money are showered with resources and laboratory spaces, yet "physics, philosophy, and other fields that have trouble supporting themselves are left to scrape by" (Washburn, 2005, p.19). She also denounces examples of how some scientists have abandoned academic ethics to adopt the anti-social, anti-ethics of corporations. Such is the case of some researchers from the University of Utah. These researchers discovered a gene responsible for inherited breast cancer in 1994. Yet instead of making public their research – financed by the public purse with 4.6 million US taxpayers' dollars – the university patented the gene and granted monopolistic rights over it to Myriad Genetics Corporation, whose owner was at the same time a University of Utah professor (Washburn, 2005, p.19). Washburn also puts forward a proposition that aims to distinguish or separate the academic sphere from the corporative one:

There's an obvious solution: apply conflict-of-interest rules to all publicly funded scientists. If we want to rein in the commercialism that is destroying our public research institutions, they must all be held to the same high standards (2005, p.19).

In the UK and Australia, some authors (Slee and Ball, 1999, pp.290-291) claim "the aim of research is to produce new knowledge essential for the growing and competitiveness of the nation". On the other hand, supporters of paradigms for research with critical, exploratory, and creative foci must wage strong struggles to open up critical space in order and to express their ideas to a wider public. The narrowing of research along corporate goals is termed as "academic capitalism" by Slee and Ball (1999). This type of research is simply an economic instrument, where the researcher is exhorted to become an "entrepreneur", to forge alliances with industry and to create research agendas that can be demonstrated to be economically productive.

In Mexico, there exist many cases where Universities Inc. & Ltd form close association with the Corporate State Inc. & Ltd, and their corresponding branch governments. The most relevant cases are to

be found in the state of Nuevo Leon (state as a political entity not as the State as country), where paradoxically the people of the government of Nuevo Leon has passed a Bill promoting knowledge. They also project the city of Monterrey, Nuevo Leon as the International City of Knowledge. However, at the same time, they have dismantled undergraduate courses in philosophy, sociology and history, and have changed the name to the one of librarianship courses (Carrizales, 2005; Galán, 2005). Furthermore, the Federal government of the Mexican State (as a national State) through the Ministry of Labour and Social Planning has begun an official crusade to dismantle courses such as philosophy, sociology, and political sciences from all the country's universities (Martínez, 2004).

The bourgeois State *per se* is a giant power that the public cannot control, even when laws exist for that very purpose. The capitalistic corporation is another giant power, essentially out of the public's control. As it has been analysed here, with the fusion of the bourgeois State and the capitalistic corporation, the latter becomes the ideologue of all public policy. This fusion already poses most grave dangers against the public domain and nature, as examples in this article have demonstrated. Furthermore, there exists another major power. The scientific and technological knowledge in itself is a major power for their cognoscenti to explore, exploit, dominate, and control physical and human nature. This totalitarian and anti-democratic fusion of these three powers into a single one is the perfect formula for the advent of a corrupted, neo-absolutist, and monopolistic power that operates on human, physical and cosmic scales. Never before in history has there existed a power as deadly and destructive as this. At the same time, never before it has been urgent for the political participation of the citizenry in favour of the public domain and the cosmic equilibrium, to dismantle such dangers. These are the grave dangers that the age of the advent of the corporate State against the informational and cognitive public domain generates and nurtures. These forces are against terrestrial and cosmic equilibrium. These are the same dangers that the philistine and fallacious apologists of the "societies of information and knowledge" – among them many librarians – seem incapable of stating, debating or contesting.

5. The Corporate State as a Barrier against the Access of Information and Knowledge in Libraries and other Repositories of Public Knowledge

Never since the advent of the Gutenberg printing mechanism has there been manifested more clearly the blockade of access to

information and knowledge as in our current epoch. Nowadays, the enemies of the public domain have tried to sell us the idea that the electronic networks of information and knowledge would reach all human beings of the planet nearly to the speed of light, and other similar marvels. The reality of things is the opposite, because precisely nowadays is when the production of information has increased to an *EXA* exponential, but at the same time the vast majority of people throughout the planet do not have access to it. Before computer networks, or the Internet, this could possibly be justified due to the incapability of the technologies of communication, information, transport, and other modes of communication to make possible such access. Today, it is unjustifiable. The main cause, on the analysis of this article, lies in the corporate nature of the State into which almost all the nations of the world have transformed.

That is, the corporations moved by their self-interest and greed, only search for profit; money from those who can buy their legal or illegal commodities. Once corporations have penetrated, permeated, and led the interests of the State, then automatically the major goals of the pre-existing State are hollowed-out: in particular, those goals involved in serving and servicing the public good above private interests. In this process, public goods transmute into private ones, a kind of reverse alchemy: they become qualitatively different. Schiller elaborates on this:

The changeover now occurring in libraries is not simple a matter of introducing superior techniques and instrumentation which permit all participants in the information arena – providers, users, and the general public – to benefit. Along with the new electronic technologies come a set of arrangements – social relations if you will. These, as they developed in recent years under the pressure of private interest and deliberate conservative budget-cutting policy, introduce the mechanics of the market to what had been a public sphere of social-knowledge activity (Schiller, 1989, p.81).

Thus, members of the library community from all over the world are following this destructive amalgam of the corporate plus State power against the public domain. In this dangerous ideology of the State with its corporate and entrepreneurial essence, the public services in the public domain, such as the free, free of charge, unhampered, egalitarian and democratic access to and use of information and knowledge inside or through libraries and other repositories of public knowledge, do not matter any more. They do not matter any more for all the inhabitants of the world; only for those who can pay for them. Some U.S. critics, from the very few who have managed to escape from the propagandistic machine of the Corporate State Inc. & Ltd., argue that:

Transforming information into a saleable good, available only to those with the ability to pay for it, changes the goal of information access from an egalitarian to a privileged condition. The consequence of this is that the essential underpinning of a democratic order is seriously damaged. This is the ultimate outcome of commercialization information throughout the social sphere (Schiller and Schiller, 1988, p.154).

In the UK, Webster adds to this critique:

Fundamental principles, most importantly free access and comprehensive service, are under challenge, threatened by a new definition of information as something to be made available only on market terms. As this conception increases its influence, so may we expect to see the further decline of the public service ethos operating in libraries (users will increasingly be regarded as customers who are to pay their way) and with this its public sphere functions of provision of the full range of informational needs without individual cost (Webster, 2002, p.182).

Also in the UK, Ruth Rikowski (2002) shows evidence on how libraries are already being controlled by capital's global agenda through international mechanisms such as WTO (World Trade Organization) and its GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services) and TRIPS (Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Services) Agreements. These mechanisms are internationally legal extensions of corporations: operating primarily to boost profits and sale of information and services. This pernicious trend is hollowing-out the traditional library ethos of providing services to users free, and free of charge.

In another research paper, Muela-Meza (2004b) has criticised diverse challenges that libraries and other repositories of public knowledge face before the ceaseless attacks from the plundering and usurping societies of public information and knowledge; the self-called "societies of information and knowledge". The most remarkable challenge in that study is precisely the economic one: the psycho-pathological fact that libraries seek to charge for access to information and knowledge.

The corrosive effects of the aggressive corporate takeover of libraries and other repositories of public knowledge are clear. In Europe, all the members States of the European Union must subscribe to the 1992 EU/Directive where all library users must pay 1.00 € Euro per each book borrowed to be read at home. In Spain, librarians are fighting and resisting such regressive taxation, because if they surrender their struggle and end up accepting it, that will precisely deprive users from accessing information and knowledge in their libraries (Martín, 2005, p.6). Furthermore, as Calvo (2005) argues, by the simple fact that libraries stock authors'

works in the stacks, and librarians promote them, this means that they may even end up owing royalties to libraries, librarians and users:

I am going to take this absurd case further: If it is considered normal that libraries pay royalties to authors, then someone should pay royalties to the librarians who manage to lend many books of a given author, and someone should also pay royalties to the users who borrow many books to their homes, and so they generate incomes for the librarians who lend much and for the authors... If that absurd world becomes a reality, do not doubt that it will be a world without library services. Libraries will disappear, they will lag behind for a second time in our history in the terrain of dreams (Calvo, 2005).

6. Conclusions

Regarding the public domain in general, the major danger is precisely the hollowing-out and corrosion of democratic values:

Democracy, on the other hand, is necessarily hierarchical. It requires that people, through the governments they elect, have sovereignty over corporations, not equality with them; that they have authority to decide what corporations can, cannot, and must do. If corporations and governments are indeed partners, we should be worried about the state of our democracy, for it means that government has effectively abdicated its sovereignty over the corporation (Bakan, 2004, p.108).

To give an example on this: in the Mexican scenario, it is evident in the worrisome links between the Nuevo Leon state government and the corporations in the recent Act for the Promotion of Development Based on Knowledge which was passed by the majority of legislators of the ruling party in the state government (PRI, Revolutionary Institutional Party). This law bolsters the manifest link between the Nuevo Leon State Government and the corporate-entrepreneurial sector:

To implement mechanisms and instruments to link actions that in the topics of science and technology carried out by the state Government, the corporate sector, the social sector, and the education institutions and research community, that facilitates the promotion, dissemination and application of scientific and technological knowledge (Poder Ejecutivo del Estado de Nuevo León, 2004, pp.1-2).

And this is so because as it has been argued above, "corporations are not democratic institutions – their directors and managers owe no accountability to anyone but the shareholders that employ them" (Bakan, 2004, p.151). Thus, owners, shareholders, directors and executives of the corporations are not accountable under the rule of law in case their companies are responsible for crimes against people or ecocides, precisely because the laws from all the capitalist

governments protect corporations. Bakan (2004, p.17) argues that in the first decade of the twentieth century in the USA it was very common for popular discontent and organised dissent (especially from growing labour movement) to move against the dangers corporations represented in terms of their undermining of social institutions. It is thanks to these struggles that social movements achieved government regulation for corporations, and saved vital social institutions from abolition.

On the other hand, for Marquand, the public domain must be reinvented:

Two lessons emerge from the history of the last thirty years. The first is that the public domain cannot be reinvented without halting and then undoing the neo-liberal revolution. The second is that it is equally necessary to make sure that the failings that undermined it in the second half of the twentieth century, and gave the neo-liberals their opportunity, do not reappear (Marquand, 2004, p.138).

These are the general strategies required to stop the dismantling of public services and to halt the "neo-liberal revolution". Societies must search for mechanisms that allow citizens to begin the process of holding accountable (under the rule of law) the owners, presidents, CEOs, or shareholders of all the corporations (or capitalist companies of any sort). In the same way, citizens hold accountable all elected members of the State or local governments. Thus, citizens could bring any entrepreneur to book under the rule of law, on a personal one-to-one basis, to respond to any wrongdoings against human life, all species and the environment. These corporate folk receive no different treatment from any other common individual citizen.

This process should begin by repealing the *impersonal* character of social institutions. Additionally, these institutions should be subdued to the opening of the access to the information of their assets. And in the same ways that States and governments around the world are being forced by the struggles and claims of citizens to free access to public information, corporations should also be forced to open up, make 'transparent' and enable access to all of their information to the public. This process should begin with opening up all of their scientific research projects. Citizens should force them to do so with the same innovation, quality, efficacy, efficiency, and all the terminology of the jargon of 'market imperialism' that corporations invented and employ. Their own discourse is utilised to undermine them. A more extensive list can be made of the major struggle strategies for the re-vindication of the public domain, but this could be a good start.

On the other hand, regarding concretely the informational and cognitive public domain, this strategy parallels other progressive anti-corporation strategies analysed throughout this paper. In particular, the strategies of separating the corporation from the public domain, and also from State power, and to subdue it to public control and accountability, and to do the same to all of its members within its domain, States and governments, means that:

The public services of libraries, as factors of library policy that converge between the cultural policy and the policy of information, are indispensable elements to achieve the common good. That is one of the highest ideals that should keep on guiding the practice of professionals in public services in general, and the librarianship discipline in particular, as well as the whole of humankind. The common public good regarding libraries, by virtue of its bases of liberty, equality, and justice, and therefore of its democratic foundations, cannot and should not be given up to the private good, under penalty of putting in check the State of democratic right, the social State (Meneses Tello *et al*, 2004).

This is an introduction to the critique of the advent of the Age of the Corporate State. In this far from Golden Age, the Corporate State is antithetical to the informational and cognitive public domain. This is the starting point to fight for the re-establishment of a once democratic public domain and the common good for the benefit of society as a whole and its environment, or, this is the edge to the abyss into which society, destroyed by market capitalism and imperialism and its demolishing machine of the corporate State, falls.

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