"And we call this progress.
Access to satellite, but no roof over my head.
A cellphone in my hand, but no drinking water."

According to the 2003 Human Development Report (HDR) published by the UNDP, 800 million people, or 15% of the world's people continue to experience chronic poverty.

We say to them, take a byte of your computer. Drink your network. If you don't have a roof over your head, too bad, but here, shelter under the satellites. We know what's good for you. Sign here. Believe us. We know.

In neo-liberal parlance we hear much of the "fundamentals" being in place, referring of course to the economic "fundamentals" of the post Cold War world, the New Economic Order.

Fundamentals of this order include market liberalisation, the wholesale selling off of public assets into private (often foreign) hands, the creation of a foreign investor-friendly climate. Fundamentally, everything is for sale. Everything is a commodity available to the highest bidder.

In the development sphere, what would the basics, the fundamentals be? And how close are we to achieving them?

HDR 2003 reminds us that more than one billion people continue to live on less than R7 per day. Most of these one billion people also lack access to basic health services and safe drinking water. Think about how much you've spent today, the water and the food you take for granted. Could you cover your online bill on R7 per day?

The WSIS Plan of Action envisages a computer in every village by 2010. The Millennium Development Goals envisage the eradication of extreme hunger and poverty by 2015, and the achievement of universal primary education by the same time. Currently one in three African children has a chance of finishing primary school (HDR 2003).

What is the morality of bringing high-tech computer equipment to a community with no water supply, without adequate shelter?

Perhaps they could join an Internet chat room with other communities who also have computers and no water supply and discuss the benefits of an Internet connection, a computer, access to satellite and cellular technology, no clean water and inadequate shelter. They could build a network of communities globally with similar problems.

Seeds for revolution? Theatre of the absurd? Or real life immorality in action?

During my interactions with South African community radio stations not long ago, many did not have access to a telephone line. Those who did have telephone access often had their services suspended due to an inability to pay the bills.

Since privatisation five years ago, South Africa's Telkom has secured a 160% increase in tariffs, with two million users cut off from services during that period for an inability to pay the ever-increasing tariffs.

Much acclaimed privatisation has ensured decreased access for the majority, and an increasing focus on the top-end of the market. So who benefits?

The latest model doing the rounds in the high-tech delivery of services to remote areas mission is to provide free short-term telephony access via satellite.

Why? To build an appetite, create a dependency? What happens after the one year, after the satellite company has secured its installation profits? The com-

munity finds money to pay the bills, or another white elephant? Go ask the community radio stations. Any lessons learnt?

What does the global corporate consensus have to gain from the WSIS Action Plan?

Well, somebody has to electrify those villages, somebody else has to roll-out (or dump, depending where you sit on the scale) infrastructure, computer hardware and software (new markets), somebody has to build the "capacity" of the ignorant masses, somebody has to provide "technical expertise", somebody has to provide financing (or increased indebtedness, depending on how you look at it).

And guess who can do that for us?

Missionaries, mercenaries… what's the difference? Modernisation, civilisation, globalisation, colonialism… all systems of surveillance and control… what's the difference?

I write from a position of power, of privilege. I am literate, and well fed. Not only am I a user of the Internet, but I can credit the Internet for introducing me to great contemporary African warriors like Tewolde Berhan Egziabher, to being able to read Arundhati Roy's angry truths and Thabo Mbeki in his own words.

The Internet can be a useful tool. But do I need the Internet to live my life? Do any of us need the Internet? Is it a basic need? A fundamental of well-being?
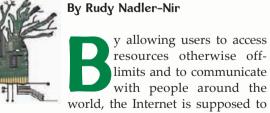
I don't think so.

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Anthea Garman congratulates the winners of the Innovative and Rayborn Bulley (accepting the award for Manu Herbstein's

New space, same

By Rudy Nadler–Nir

By allowing users to access resources otherwise off-limits and to communicate with people around the world, the Internet is supposed to blur the lines of race, ability, and age.

Yet discussions of the "digital divide" abound, with the world divided into technology "haves and have-nots", "doers and do-nots", and "knowers and know-nots."

In other words, not everyone has, uses, or knows how to use technology.

By the way, there is a fourth group of computer users, a very troubling category – these are the have-to-haves. Created by corporations wishing to increase their sales, have-to-haves are people who have to have technology, and they are know-nots of the worst sort: they know not why they are using technology. Have-to-haves do not think critically about technology or understand that the Internet may have serious drawbacks or downsides.

The "digital divide" is a popular catchphrase in circles such as these. And we find various interpretations of the term.

I'd like to offer an interesting – different – take on the issue of "have-nots and know-nots" in the hope that this will serve to open the discussion past the often-used interpretation of these terms.

In the United States, people like Joel Dreyfuss argued that the Internet is a cultural turnoff for African Americans. He saw the problem arising from what he calls "the whiteness of the web" represented by chat rooms filled with "a bunch of white guys talking to each other".

The emergence of such sites as NetNoir (1995) improved the situation only slightly, as the majority of the Net is still dominated, like television and other media, by white institutions: of the "100 Top Web Sites" selected by PC Magazine, not one represents or is owned by minorities. In this case, African Americans are have-nots, because the Net, by virtue of its current characteristics, excludes them from participating.

In an article in Salon Magazine, called "Is the Web

And the winners are...

By Kimala Naidoo

The gold at the Innovative Awards for New Media 2003 went to an online book about the Atlantic slave trade, an Arab newspaper, and a science website.

Manu Herbstein's www.ama.africatoday.com, which has published the book *Ama, A Story of the Atlantic Slave Trade*, was announced winner of the individual category. In 2002 the book won the Commonwealth Writer's Prize. Herbstein beat off tough competition from other finalists, including Herman Manson's Media Toolbox (http://www.media-toolbox.net), and Nandiphotos.com, a photo gallery of people in Uganda, developed by Vincent Mugaba (http://www.nandiphotos.com).

Al-Ahram Online (http://weekly.ahram.org.eg), the online version of the Arab newspaper Al-Ahram, won the corporate category for its focus on science, technology and ICTs, and its independent coverage of the Middle East, especially the recent US-Iraq war. Al-Ahram beat competitors like eLink Publications (http://elinkpublications.co.za), and AfricaWoman (www.africawoman.net).

Janice Limson's Science in Africa (www.scienceinafrica.co.za), which won in the non-profit category, addresses scientific research in Africa. "It started off as a hobby to communicate science understandably," said Limson, a biotechnology lecturer at Rhodes University. "Now it reaches 50 countries."

There were 44 entries for the awards this year. Roland Stanbridge, journalism lecturer at the University of Stockholm in Sweden, a judge, said: "These awards are not just for sites that look good, but for those that address the needs of the continent."

For more information see www.highwayafrica.org.za.

New Media Awards: from left: Ahmed El-Gody (accepting the award for Al-Ahram), Janet Limson for Science in Africa Ama, a story of the Atlantic slave trade). Photograph: Trevor Crighton

disadvantages

too Cool for Blacks", African American writer Leonce Gaiter says that more problematic than the physical problem of access is the nature of the Net itself, which clashes with African-American culture.

Why is this? After all, the web is cool. The web is "new, chaotic, shamelessly undisciplined, alternately revolutionary and reactionary, the web, by nature, butts heads with entrenched Afro-American cultural truths. It mocks some of [American] fundamental beliefs, [and] core desires".

Gaiter says: "The web is considered a place. We call it cyberspace. We visit a website. The web is presented as a series of landscapes or neighbourhoods."

"…Through decades and generations of cross burnings and redlining and beatings and bombings and harassment, black Americans are wary of majority space. The web is no exception to the rule. "

Some suggest that the web is the great uncolouriser, the great colour barrier dissolver, because in cyberspace, one doesn't know what colour one's audience or conversation partner might be.

"But suggesting," says Gaiter, "that black Americans would take solace in conversing with those who would not show hatred or bigotry or cultural chauvinism toward them only because the other party didn't know they were black – that's insulting in the extreme."

We know of many examples of hate speech, hate blogs – or weblogs – and hate email online; this – in a way – is also a creator of the digital divide. In this case, access is not denied – but hate serves as a barrier to entry.

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