For Emma Kiselyova-Castells, without whose love, work, and support this book would not exist.
will always have to be attentive to historical/cultural specificity as much as to structural similarities related to a largely shared techno-economic paradigm. As for the actual content of this common social structure that could be considered to be the essence of the new informational society, I’m afraid I am unable to summarize it in one paragraph: indeed, the structure and processes that characterize informational societies are the subject matter covered in this book.

The Self in the Informational Society

New information technologies are integrating the world in global networks of instrumentality. Computer-mediated communication begets a vast array of virtual communities. Yet the distinctive social and political trend of the 1990s is the construction of social action and politics around primary identities, either ascribed, rooted in history and geography, or newly built in an anxious search for meaning and spirituality. The first historical steps of informational societies seem to characterize them by the preeminence of identity as their organizing principle. I understand by identity the process by which a social actor recognizes itself and constructs meaning primarily on the basis of a given cultural attribute or set of attributes, to the exclusion of a broader reference to other social structures. Affirmation of identity does not necessarily mean incapacity to relate to other identities (for example, women still relate to men), or to embrace the whole society under such identity (for example, religious fundamentalism aspires to convert everybody). But social relationships are defined vis-à-vis the others on the basis of those cultural attributes that specify identity. For instance, Yoshino, in his study on nihonjirón (ideas of Japanese uniqueness), pointedly defines cultural nationalism as "the aim to regenerate the national community by creating, preserving or strengthening a people's cultural identity when it is felt to be lacking, or threatened. The cultural nationalist regards the nation as the product of its unique history and culture and as a collective solidarity endowed with unique attributes." Calhoun, although rejecting the historical newness of the phenomenon, has also emphasized the decisive role of identity in defining politics in contemporary American society, particularly in the women's movement, in the gay movement, in the civil rights movement, movements "that sought not only various instrumental goals but the affirmation of excluded identities as publicly good and politically salient." Alain Touraine goes further, arguing that "in a post-industrial society, in which cultural services have replaced material goods at the core of production, it is the defense of the subject, in its personality and in its culture, against the logic of apparatus and markets, that replaces the idea of class struggle." Then the key issue becomes, as stated by Calhoun and Laserna, in a world characterized by simultaneous globalization and fragmentation, "how to combine new technologies and collective memory, universal science and community cultures, passion and reason?" How, indeed! And why do we observe the opposite trend throughout the world, namely, the increasing distance between globalization and identity, between the Net and the Self?

Raymond Barglow, in his illuminating essay on this matter, from a socio-psychoanalytical perspective, points at the paradox that while information systems and networking augment human powers of organization and integration, they simultaneously subvert the traditional Western concept of a separate, independent subject: "The historical shift from mechanical to information technologies helps to subvert the notions of sovereignty and self-sufficiency that have provided an ideological anchoring for individual identity since Greek philosophers elaborated the concept more than two millennia ago. In short, technology is helping to dismantle the very vision of the world that in the past it fostered." Then he goes on to present a fascinating comparison between classic dreams reported in Freud's writing and his own patients' dreams in the high tech environment of 1990s San Francisco: "Image of a head . . . and behind it is suspended a computer keyboard . . . I'm this programmed head!" This feeling of absolute solitude is new in comparison to classic Freudian representation: "the dreamers . . . express a sense of solitude experienced as existential and inescapable, built into the structure of the world . . . Totally isolated, the self seems irretrievably lost to itself." Thus, the search for new connectedness around shared, reconstructed identity.

35 Touraine (1994: 168; my translation, his italics).
38 Ibid.: 53.
39 Ibid.: 185.
However insightful, this hypothesis may be only part of the explanation. On the one hand, it would imply a crisis of the self limited to a Western individualist conception, shaken by uncontrollable connectedness. Yet the search for new identity and new spirituality is on also in the East, in spite of a stronger sense of collective identity and the traditional, cultural subordination of individual to the family. The resonance of Aum Shinrikyo in Japan in 1995, particularly among the young, highly educated generations, could be considered a symptom of the crisis of established patterns of identity, coupled with the desperate need to build a new, collective self, significantly mixing spirituality, advanced technology (chemicals, biology, laser), global business connections, and the culture of millenarist doom.41

On the other hand, elements of an interpretative framework to explain the rising power of identity must also be found at a broader level, in relationship to macroprocesses of institutional change, to a large extent connected to the emergence of a new global system. Thus, widespread currents of racism and xenophobia in Western Europe may be related, as Alain Touraine42 and Michel Wieviorka43 have suggested, to an identity crisis on becoming an abstraction (European), at the same time that European societies, while seeing their national identity blurred, discovered within themselves the lasting existence of ethnic minorities in European societies (a demographic fact since at least the 1960s). Or again, in Russia and the ex-Soviet Union, the strong development of nationalism in the post-communist period can be related, as I shall argue in volume III, to the cultural emptiness created by 70 years of imposition of an exclusionary ideological identity, coupled with the return to primary, historical identity (Russian, Georgian), as the only source of meaning after the crumbling of the historically fragile sovetskii narod (Soviet people).

The emergence of religious fundamentalism seems also to be linked both to a global trend and to an institutional crisis. We know from history that ideas and beliefs of all brands are always in stock waiting to catch fire under the right circumstances.44 It is significant that fundamentalism, be it Islamic or Christian, has spread, and will spread, throughout the world at the historical moment when global networks of wealth and power connect nodal points and valued

individuals throughout the planet, while disconnecting, and excluding, large segments of societies, regions, and even entire countries. Why did Algeria, one of most modernized Muslim societies, suddenly turn to fundamentalist saviors, who became terrorists (as did their anti-colonialist predecessors) when they were denied their electoral victory in democratic elections? Why did the traditionalist teachings of Pope John Paul II find an indisputable echo among the impoverished masses of the Third World, so that the Vatican could afford to ignore the protests of a minority of feminists in a few advanced countries where precisely the progress of reproductive rights contributes to diminishing the number of souls to be saved? There seems to be a logic of excluding the excluders, of redefining the criteria for value and meaning in a world where there is shrinking room for the computer illiterate, for consumptionless groups, and for under-communicated territories. When the Net switches off the Self, the Self, individual or collective, constructs its meaning without global, instrumental reference: the process of disconnection becomes reciprocal, after the refusal by the excluded of the one-sided logic of structural domination and social exclusion.

Such is the terrain to be explored, not just declared. The few ideas advanced here on the paradoxical manifestation of the self in the informational society are only intended to chart the course of my inquiry for the reader’s information, not to draw conclusions beforehand.

A Word on Method

This is not a book about books. While relying on evidence of various sorts, and on analyses and accounts from multiple sources, it does not intend to discuss existing theories of postindustrialism or the information society. There are available several thorough, balanced presentations of these theories,45 as well as various critiques,46 including my own.47 Similarly, I shall not contribute, except when

41 For the new forms of revolt linked to identity in explicit opposition to globalization, see the exploratory analysis undertaken in Castells, Yazawa, and Kisyolya (1996b).
44 See, for instance Kepel (1993); Colas (1992).
45 A useful overview of sociological theories on postindustrialism and information is Lyon (1988). For the intellectual and terminological origins of notions of “information society,” see Ito (1991a) and Nora and Minc (1978). See also Beniger (1986); Katz (1988); Salvaggio (1989); Williams (1988).
46 For critical perspectives on postindustrialism, see, among others, Lyon (1988); Touraine (1992); Shoji (1990); Woodward (1980); Rosak (1986). For a cultural critique of our society’s emphasis on information technology, see Postman (1992).
47 For my own critique on postindustrialism, see Castells (1994, 1995, 1996).
necessary for the sake of the argument, to the cottage industry created in the 1980s around postmodern theory, being for my part fully satisfied with the excellent criticism elaborated by David Harvey on the social and ideological foundations of "post-modernity," as well as with the sociological dissection of postmodern theories performed by Scott Lash. I certainly owe many thoughts to many authors, and particularly to the forebears of informationalism, Alain Touraine and Daniel Bell, as well as to the one Marxist theorist who sensed the new, relevant issues just before his death in 1979, Nicos Poulantzas. And I duly acknowledge borrowed concepts when I use them as tools in my specific analyses. Yet I have tried to construct a discourse as autonomous and nonredundant as possible, integrating materials and observations from various sources, without submitting the reader to the painful revisiting of the bibliographic jungle where I have lived (fortunately, among other activities) for the past 12 years.

In a similar vein, while using a significant amount of statistical sources and empirical studies, I have tried to minimize the processing of data, to simplify an already excessively cumbersome book. Therefore, I tend to use data sources that find broad, accepted consensus among social scientists (for example, OECD, United Nations, World Bank, governments' official statistics, authoritative research monographs, generally reliable academic or business sources), except when such sources seem to be erroneous (such as Soviet GNP statistics or the World Bank's report on adjustment policies in Africa). I am aware of limitations in lending credibility to information that may not always be accurate, yet the reader will realize that there are numerous precautions taken in this text, so as to form conclusions usually on the basis of convergent trends from several sources, according to a methodology of triangulation with a well-established, successful tradition among historians, policemen, and investigative reporters. Furthermore, the data, observations, and references presented in this book do not really aim at demonstrating but at suggesting hypotheses while constraining the ideas within a corpus of observation, admittedly selected with my research questions in mind but certainly not organized around preconceived answers. The methodology followed in this book, whose specific implications will be discussed in each chapter, is at the service of the overarching purpose of its intellectual endeavor: to propose some elements of an exploratory, cross-cultural theory of economy and society in the information age, as it specifically refers to the emergence of a new social structure. The broad scope of my analysis is required by the pervasiveness of the objects of such analysis (informationalism) throughout social domains and cultural expressions. But I certainly do not intend to address the whole range of themes and issues in contemporary societies, since writing encyclopedias is not my trade.

The book is divided into three parts that the publisher has wisely transformed into three volumes, to appear within the span of approximately one year. They are analytically interrelated, but they have been organized to make their reading independent. The only exception to this rule concerns the General Conclusion, in volume III, that is the overall conclusion of the book, and presents a synthetic interpretation of its findings and ideas.

The division into three volumes, while making the book publishable and readable, raises some problems in communicating my overall theory. Indeed, some critical topics that cut across all the themes treated in this book are presented in the second volume. Such is the case, particularly, of the analysis of women and patriarchalism, and of power relationships and the state. I warn the reader that I do not share a traditional view of society as made up of superimposed levels, with technology and economy in the basement, power on the mezzanine, and culture in the penthouse. Yet, for the sake of clarity, I am forced to a systematic, somewhat linear presentation of topics that, while relating to each other, cannot fully integrate all the elements until they have been discussed in some depth throughout the intellectual journey on which the reader is invited by this book.

The first volume, in the reader's hands, deals primarily with the logic of what I call the Net, while the second (The Power of Identity) analyzes the formation of the Self, and the interaction between the Net and the Self in the crisis of two central institutions of society: the patriarchal family and the national state. The third volume (End of Millennium) attempts an interpretation of current historical transformations as a result of the dynamics of processes studied in the two first volumes. It is only at the end of the third volume that a general integration between theory and observation, linking up the analyses concerning the various domains, will be proposed, although each volume concludes with an effort at synthesizing the main findings and ideas presented in the volume. While volume III is more directly concerned with specific processes of historical change in various contexts, throughout the whole book I have tried my best to accomplish two goals: to ground analysis in observation, without reducing theorization to commentary; to diversify culturally my sources of observation and of ideas, as much as possible. This approach stems
from my conviction that we have entered a truly multicultural, interdependent world, that can only be understood, and changed, from a plural perspective that brings together cultural identity, global networking, and multidimensional politics.