What I want to stress here is that the rising demand for articulate intellectuals who combine writing and television experience in the new communication wars in the Arab world is giving women a golden opportunity to enter the power game in the Middle East. But to better understand the empowerment dynamics of satellite broadcasting, one has to keep in mind the intense competition not only among channels, but also among satellite operators which is forcing everyone to switch as fast as possible from manufacturing propaganda to responding attentively to the citizens’ needs for credible communicators. And of course the Sheherazade profile, the brainy, self-confident storyteller is in big demand.

1.1. *Money-losing MBC’s singing girls versus Al Jazeera’s successful female stars*

According to the latest news, MBC is making an emergency move from London to Dubai in order to get closer to its viewers so as to arrest its financial decline due to a catastrophic shrinking of audiences. «We want to be closer to our audience», said Ali Hedeithy, MBC Director General, when asked to justify his rushed move to Dubai and his decision to launch a new MBC all news channel like Al Jazeera. One of MBC’s troubles is that Arab female audiences seem to stick with al Jazeera because of its rebellious images of femininity.

MBC was extremely popular when it first started in 1991. It used Arabsat to target the Middle East and North Africa, Eutlsat to reach Europe’s 20 million viewers and ANA (Arab Network Agency) to recruit an American audience. MBC then had no competitor as a satellite channel – it was the only satellite channel, but soon its «12.5% religious programs, 75.5% entertainment, and only 9.5% information got on the Arabs’ nerves». Consequently, Arab viewers deserted it in 1996 when Al Jazeera gave them the
opportunity to see uncensored news 24 hours a day. But the other reason was that MBC’s systematic censorship was projected through the superficiality of its entertainment programs, alienating viewers, especially women.

«These channels’ activities were reduced to a frantic parade of male and female singers», explained Walid Najm, one of the experts invited to diagnose the viewers’ desertion. «One could say that such channels programmed citizens to hope to achieve one single objective: to become male or female singers»⁴. MBC and other stations like it, who violated citizens’ right to information and reduced talk shows with intellectuals to pitiful masquerades, were deserted as soon as Al Jazeera offered a different image of both informer and informed⁵.

1.2. Arab audiences’ fascination with strong female hosts and war reporters

Promoting strong female stars has proven to be a fantastic asset for the Saudis’ most threatening TV rival. Al Jazeera is winning crowds every night through the eloquence of its news anchors, Jumana Nammour and Kaduja Bin Guna, and economics expert Farah al-Baraqaui.

While state televisions and oil-funded channels traditionally limited their staff by censoring them and denying them the right to decide freely about their program content and what guests to invite, Al Jazeera’s success is due precisely to the freedom its programmers and speakers enjoy, which allows them to become credible communicators.

«Channels that want to be viable are required to rely much more heavily on high-impact ‘brands’ and product lines. Al Jazeera demonstrated the worth of such assets when it developed a range of programs whose titles and presenters have become household names inside and outside the Arab world», explains Naomi Sakhr, the author of Satellite Realms: Transnational Television, Globalization and the Middle East⁶. The most famous reporters in the Middle East today are probably the Palestine-based Al Jazeera reporters, Shirin Abu ‘Aqla and Jivara al-Badri, who are admired for their courage and professionalism. «History will remember that day when there was no one to speak up in the entire Arab nation, from the Atlantic to the Persian Gulf, but women such as Shirin Abu ‘Aqla and Jivara al Badri and Leila Aouda», comments Ali Aziz, the columnist of the avant-garde Egyptian magazine «Critiques» (An-Nuqqad), «while male leaders and gallon-wearing generals have disappeared from our sight and hearing».

How to explain this sudden passion of the supposedly macho Arabs for Al Jazeera’s powerful women? While Amin Hussein, a mass communication expert, gives a technological answer to the question (the satellites’ empowerment of women), the artist Hisham Ghanem gives a more sophisticated psychoanalytical explanation: the Arab male’s identification with the woman as the victim who is taking revenge on her aggressors. For Amin Hussein, «Arab satellite services have responded to the demand of Arab women to portray their true image and role in society to balance the common stereotype in the West of the downtrodden Arab woman without rights and without a role to play other than daughter, wife and mother».

⁴ W. NAJM, Cultural Programems: The Frequency Is Ridiculously Low and the Content Is Totally Divorced from Reality, in Nº 6 of Kuwait’s magazine «Al Funun». June 2001 issue to a survey on Arab Satellite Channels (al-Fadaiyates Al Arabiya), page 39
⁵ W. NAJM, issue Nº 6 of «Al Funun», cit.
According to Hussein’s analysis, Arab women, as consumers, aspired to identify with powerful role-models: «Female presenters of talk shows and cultural and news programs on Arab satellite television channels are very popular. Talk shows, news and programs feature interviews with female leaders in business, government, politics and diplomacy [...] rather than covering only their role in the household of food preparation and as sex symbols in television commercials and video-clips». But for Ahmed Ghanem, an artist who is more interested in aesthetics and hidden emotions which program us to feel attracted to what we identify as beauty, technology does not explain it all.

1.3. Arab men and powerful women

Ahmed Ghanem was one among the dozen intellectuals whom the Kuwaiti magazine *Al Funun* (Arts) invited to contribute to their summer 2002 issue on decoding the mystery of the *Fadaiat*, which is the name in Arabic for satellite TV. *Fadaiat* means literally ‘space-ships’ or rather ‘space-clearing engines’. Not only was I happy to read an Arab man who declares publicly, unlike our much more publicized extremists, that he feels empowered by a woman’s strength, Ghanem goes into detail as both an artist and a designer, in his study on *The Aesthetics of the Private Satellite Channels*. He argues: «If we consider the laws and psychological mechanisms which in each satellite channel define for the female speaker the code for dressing and expressing oneself, as well as the way they use the screen’s space to unfold their personality, then we cannot escape noticing that the aggressive style (*houjoumi*) of the Al Jazeera female speakers is a very distinctive kind of beauty which distinguishes them from the other channels. Mostly if we remember that Al Jazeera is a news (as opposed to entertainment) channel, and that these women’s job is to inform the viewer. The fact that the majority of this channel’s female speakers are far from being young and insecure and display on the contrary maturity in both age and emotional equilibrium, gives them a cerebral charisma and audacity which exercises a particular enchantment on the viewer. The Al Jazeera female speakers exude a spell-binding fascination which transcends physical attractions».

Could it be that Al Jazeera’s powerful women have such an attraction for Arab men because they trigger childhood fantasies, when they enjoyed their mother’s storytelling and improvisations on ‘1001 Nights’? Could it be that the satellite is reviving Arab men’s childhood universe where Scheherazade, the powerful female inventor of adventures, empowered them as children? What is certain, according to Ghanem, is that by contrast to Al Jazeera where women’s strength reflects the freedom of speech they enjoy as journalists on that channel, the superficial beauty of the fragile female speakers on entertainment channels reflects a passivity which does not excite him as a man. If only because, as he says, passivity «mirrors the rules of the game on those televisions. Rules which reveal that only the masters are players».

What is extraordinary about Mohamad Ghanem’s analysis of digital Islam new game, is that, as a male, he does not identify with the masters, the princes or ayatollah

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9 *Ibidem.*
who can afford to buy satellites, but on the contrary he feels his own fate to be linked
to that of the women. And in my view, it is this rejection of the archaic role of the dom-
inant male, whose masculinity increases with women’s passivity, which is the news in
digital Islam.

The novelty in this digital Islam galaxy is, that many Arab men craving for their
own emancipation from authoritarian censorship, have become alert enough to de-con-
nect power from sex: many of the satellite broadcasting male viewers do not seem to
think anymore that their masculinity is threatened if women show their power. They
don’t seem to see the sex difference as fatally locked into a power struggle.

The problem now is how to interpret this new phenomenon?

Is it just a transient fad or are we witnessing a civilizational shift in the perception
of the difference: are the satellite-connected Moslems growing to perceive the sexual
difference as enriching? Are they preparing themselves to embark on a less threaten-
ing, globalized universality? Is the satellite reviving the cosmic vision of the Sufi, the
mystics of Islam who perceive the difference as enriching. For the Sufi, the stranger, the
different other, be it the woman or the foreigner, is not a threatening enemy. On the con-
trary, Sufi celebrate diversity as an enchanting display of the human complexity in their
concept of the cosmic mirror: «The mirror is like a single eye, while the forms (it
reveals) are various in the eye of the observer»11. This is how Ibn ‘Arabi, born in Murcia
(Spain) in 560 of the Hijra (1165 of the Christian calendar) encouraged his contempo-
raries to enjoy foreigners as fabulous reflections of the same divine being: «The essence
of primordial substance is single, but it is multiple in respect to the outer forms it bears
with its essence».

It is not only feminity alone which emerged as a challenge in satellite broadcas-
ting, it is also the question of minorities, be they religious or ethnic, such as the Kurds
and the Berbers, which are claimed as positive enrichment. Morocco has declared
Berber to be a national language and set an institute to enhance it as a vital dimension
of a dynamical society12. The satellite has changed the frame in which the Israeli-
Palestinian conflict is addressed in such a way that exclusion of either parties is ruled out:
«Palestine-Israel: Peace or a racist system?»13. This is how the influential Palestinian
journalist Marouan Bishara frames the question, ruling out any extremist alternative
which is a negation of peace. It is no more «does the state of Israel has to right to exist
or not» which is at stake, but how can harmony be engineered from the difference is the
challenge everyone is facing.

But to come back to Sufi and women, it is no wonder that male Sufis celebrate
femininity as energy, an opportunity for men to blossom and thrive. For Ibn ‘Arabi, the
female lover is Tājyar, or, literally, endowed with wings, an idea that the Muslim minia-

10 One can not but be impressed by the number of feminist books written by Arab men in this last decade
such as NACER HAMID ABU ZAID’s wonderful essay Circles of Fear: A New Reading of Women’s Discourse
11 IBN ‘ARABI, The Bezels of Wisdom (Fuqas al-Hikam). The English translation used here is that of
R.W. AUSTIN: The Bezels of Wisdom, Paulist Press, New Jersey (USA) 1980. The quote is in page 233. The
original quote is «fa l-miraatu ‘aynun wahidatun, waç-çuwaru katiratun fi ‘ayni ar’ai». Dar al kitab al’arabi,
Beyrouth, Lebaon, date non indicated, page 184.
12 Since Berber was declared a national language, you notice regularly in the news stands, magazines
with its unfamiliar alphabet challenging you to learn its mysterious code such as «Le Monde Amazigh»,
«Tasafut» (which means candlelight).
13 M. BISHARA, Palastin-Israel: salam am nizam ‘unsuri?, Markaz al qahira li-dirasat huqiq al Insan,
Cairo 2001.
ture painters often tried to capture. Sufi men seem to explore the subconscious zone of the Muslim psyche where myths and legends, sacred and profane, endow women with extraordinary powers. From the dazzling Queen of Sheba to the irresistible Zuleikha in the sacred Koran, to horse-riding Shirin in the Persian legends and the subversive Sheherazade in Arabic tales, the feminine stands as a challenge in Islamic art, from Muslim miniatures of yesterday to modern women artists of today. And this brings us to understand better why intellectually dazzling Al Jazeera female hostesses enchant male viewers. But there is a final emotional nuance I would like to add which seems to me pertinent to grasp the nascent trends of the digital Islam galaxy: Sufis were very popular in medieval Islam which had to face the constant attacks of Christian crusaders, because they addressed the question of fear. Sufis helped people in medieval Islam to face fear of the unknown by diving into knowledge: «The human being can master his anxieties by channeling his energies into learning. The issue is perplexity. Perplexity creates anxiety (hayra), and anxiety creates movement and movement is life».

Fear is okay, say the Sufis, because it triggers in you the desire to know what frightens you. In so doing, it produces a positive movement within. The worst is to be petrified by one’s fears to the point of being paralyzed and forced to shrink inward. And anxiety is indeed the daily share of many of us, Moslems or not, who witness the apocalyptic vanishing of our familiar frontiers.

2. HOW TO SEDUCE ARAB MINDS: AL-JAZEERA’S SECRET

The Bush administration’s decision to seek help from the media was prompted by a strategic event which happened on Sunday, October 7, 2001: «Americans were glued to their seats as they watched an unfamiliar and sobering dose of real-life adversity unfold on the TV screens. Cable News Network (CNN) broke its regular coverage of the first day of the US strikes on Afghanistan to broadcast a live feed from Al-Jazeera showing America’s iconoclastic arch-nemesis, Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden».

Mr. Bush’s administration discovered that day three strange facts at once. The first was that the credibility of American power depended not so much on flexing military muscles such as bomb throwing as on the media coverage. The second was that CNN has evidently lost its monopoly over world information which established its reputation during the 1991 Gulf war when the entire planet starting with the Arabs, relied on it, to see American bombs hit Baghdad. Last but not the least, the third was that CNN lost its monopoly to an obscure six-years-old Arab station (Al-Jazeera was created in 1996), beaming from a tiny Gulf state called Qatar whose population is little more than an average-size US city.

How would I have reacted, I asked myself, if I were Mr. Bush? I would bomb the dwarf-like Al-Jazeera offices, I thought. And believe it or not, that is exactly what happened: On November 13 in 2001 the Kabul office of Al-Jazeera was destroyed by a US missile. No one was in the office when the missile hit. However, with its two star reporters out of action after their building was destroyed, Al-Jazeera was temporarily reduced to

15 In Fucus al-Hikam, Dar al kitab al’arabi, Beyrouth, Lebanon, date non indicated, page 200.
16 Tratto dal manoscritto in lingua inglese per il settimanale svizzero «Weltwoche», Summer 2002.
airing footage from other networks before it was able to regroup its correspondents in Afghanistan. But just like «Striking Lightening» (Ar-ra‘d al Qacif), the scary jinni in Scheherazade’s «1001 Nights Tales», Al-Jazeera emerged, after the American attack on its offices, more visible than ever for a much wider audience than its regular 35 millions viewers.

What would I have done, I thought again, if I were Mr. Bush and discovered that hitting the unfriendly network is like bestowing free advertising on it? That is when I decided that, if I were the president of the United States, I would finance an American clone of Al-Jazeera. And guess what? I was not surprised when I read: «A new consideration starting in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee is a bill called the ‘911 Initiative’ to invest 500 million dollars into a pan-Arab satellite TV channel to combat the media influence of the increasingly successful Al-Jazeera and to target Muslim youth».

But suddenly, my self-satisfaction at how clever I was at guessing Mr. Bush’s moves stopped when I found myself faced with the horrific task of having to invest successfully the 500 million dollars to sell America to the Arabs! What advice would I give to Hollywood film moguls to help them seduce Arab minds? Of course, I will start by decoding Al-Jazeera’s secret. And since I am among those Arabs who have stopped watching CNN as my first and major source of information and switched to Al-Jazeera ever since its creation in 1996, I had enough opportunities, during the late-night summer discussions with colleagues here in Rabat, to understand the Al-Jazeera appeal. Commenting its programs since it started beaming in 1996 has become one of my regular discussions topics I have to maintain with key men in the souks (markets) I visit weekly, from Hamid, the vegetable seller of Akkari, to Karim, the fisherman of Mehdia beach, who sells fresh sea-wonders from his boat in a shallow Atlantic creek south of Rabat. I have come to a conclusion not everyone agrees with at my Mohamed V university environment: I think that Al-Jazeera’s appeal lies in its unearthing and re-energizing a medieval art called jadal or the art of polemics, as its major programming concept.

To come back to our mission, which is to help the Administration Bush to invest wisely the tax-payers money, the ideal would be that the Hollywood-designed Arab-Television manages to have as much appeal to Arabs as Al-Jazeera.

The first question we have to answer is: Can Hollywood steel Al-Jazeera’s secret?

If we remember that we have defined the Cyber-Islam Time Zone as the arena where the producers of messages targeting citizens living in Muslim nations use satellites to transmit their goods, we could say that the winners are those who treat the viewer as an equal and provide him with impartial two-sided news. The propaganda peddlers who deny him the right to think for himself are systematically condemned to lose. Today, Al-Jazeera’s stunning capacity to capture «70% of Arabs with satellite TV», says Ali Al Hail, a media expert, is due to it being a 24 hours news channel, reflecting thus «the thirst of Arabs for impartial information from which they are deprived through their regimes’ media». If you asked people in the street, like Karim a fisherman, what he likes to see, Al Jazeera’s two shows The Other Opinion (Ar-Ra’y al Akhar) and The Opposite Direction (Al-Ittijah al mu’akiss) are immediately mentioned.

Karim, a 30 year-old fisherman, dropped Saudi-backed MBC in 1998 for Al-Jazeera: «It nurtures my brain». According to Karim, the 30 year-old fisherman I visit weekly in Mehdia beach, a few kilometers south of Rabat on the Atlantic Coast, «Al-Jazeera treats me like a human being with a dimagh, a powerful thinking brain. Its journalists give me jadal (controversy) to feed my brain. They cover the two sides of the story and let me make a decision. They don’t think for me by feeding me one-sided propaganda like all the others. Did you know that in the verse 18 of sorat 21 of the Koran, the verb damagha
means to pulverize?» Well, I knew the verse, but it would have never occurred to me to consider it as capturing the essence of the satellite revolution. Dismissed before as illiterates, that is useless parasites unfit for decision-making, Arab youth is recapturing its self-confidence via satellite-magnified story-telling, listening to Al-Jazeera’s best-selling shows where people with opposite views are invited to argue and explain to the viewer the logic behind it. The novelty of these talk-shows which invite outside callers to join in, explains Mounir Nasser, is that it «allows the participation of the people in a debate... It all used to be from top to bottom, the audience never had the chance to participate».

**Jadal** is to invite Israeli leaders to explain their action to Arab viewers.

The *jadal* concept is what Al-Jazeera programmers used when they invited Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak on one of their talk shows in 1998 to speak directly to Arabs during Israel’s elections, breaking thus one of the major taboos and revolutionizing ever since the way networks reported on the Middle East conflict. That the network was immediately accused of being «financed by the Mossad» was to be expected. In the beginning, explained Al-Jazeera’s Managing Director, «people said we are the CIA or an Israeli channel, because we’ve brought Israeli journalists and experts to talk about the problem». He tried to emphasize to his attackers that the network’s policy was to «get both opinions. We deal in a professional way».

It operates, according to Bagi, an eleventh-century Muslim who lived in Spain and devoted his treatise *The Book of the Technique of Chaining Argument* (*Kitab al Minhaj fi Tartib al hijaj*) to its techniques, «on the assumption that the human brain operates rationally and that once you convince someone by leading him, via a strategically ordered cascade of arguments, to adopt your own opinion, you have won him over». «This science – he explains – is the best of all sciences and the most important because it is the way to understand and distinguish between what is true (*al haq*) and what is impossible (*muhal*)». Where *jadal* is used, force is unnecessary, repeats Bagi, quoting an impressive number of Koranic verses and hadiths (the prophet’s sayings and acts), starting with verse 125 of *sorat* 16 (*An-Nahl*, The Bee) my generation was taught in Koranic schools: «Reason with them (*jadilhum*) in the most courteous manner».

Apart from polemics, fiery debates about vital issues where one’s brain gets the tools to figure out the planet’s bizarre forces, nothing seems to interest Arab viewers. Discovering the other Muslims with their different turbans and robes, and all the other inhabitants of the planet, without visa and without borders checks is the other pleasure, the satellite TV offers to the humble and the neglected. The satellite TV has given them an magical luxury: mobility. Surfing the channels, young Arabs have regained their nomad ancestors mobility, the right to travel and to learn from observing foreign cultures. *Safar*, the Arabic word for travel familiar to Westerners from the safari (tourist ventures), means literally to discover oneself. This is why medieval Muslim education was reduced to traveling. According to Ibn Manzur’s fourteenth-century dictionary (*Lissan al’arab*), a trip is called *safar* «because it unveils the real self of the *musafir* (the traveler)». During the *safar* «the suppressed side becomes visible» and it unveils the hidden face of the traveler. Tapping the humanist dimension of Islam, that of using the brain as instrument to learn and dialogue with the other nations is what explains both Al Jazeera’s success and the failure of all the other Arab networks who are losing money in financing commercial programs no one wants to watch.
The Simorgh is the fabulous bird described in the *Concert of the Bird*, one of the most spellbouding Sufi poem written by Faridu din Attar in twelth century Iranian city Nishapur. The birds gathered by thousands when they heard about the magnificent beauty of a fabulous bird called Simorgh. They travelled for days and nights to reach the Simorgh and many died in the difficult trip leading them nearer to perfection. Only thirtysix survived and they arrived finally and asked the permission to see the Simorgh. They found him indeed magnificent, but what they saw was in fact a reflection of themselves. When they asked the Simorgh to unveil the secret of what they were experienc- ing, he told them that *Si* and *morg* are two persians which mean the first the figure 36 and the last ‘bird’ and that it is their reflection, as a group of birds bound by a common desire to travel towards perfection, which creates the radiance they saw. Any group of creatures who gather together to pursue a high goal could enjoy the dazzling effect which comes from mirroring each others’ beauty.

The internet seems to give that century-old longing among Moslems of modest background to draw of themselves a flattering images which reflects not so much what they own, as much as what they aspire to be. I have the impression, from my modest investigation, started in 1996, on the sudden and unexpected bloom of civil society in some of the most marginalized regions of southern Morocco, that civic initiative performances are due to their giving the excluded the right to believe in and project a posi- tive image of himself. The internet gives the peasants of the High Atlas village of Ait- lktel, who sell their products on the internet (www.elsouk.com), and the nomads of drought-threatenened villages of Zagora and Figuig province at the edge of the Sahara desert, the magic power, for the first time in modern history, to engineer their own image on-line, and not only for their restricted local consumption, but for the universe at large.

If you read 39-years old Ahmed Zainabi’s monthly progress reports on the Association for the Development of the Dra valley (ADEDRA) he created in 1996, with other intellectual born like him in the Zagora province, you feel like calling your travel agent and taking a plane not to miss the environmental feast. He and the association members do not confuse the desert with nothiness and have training programs which teach the local population in general and the tourist guides in particular, who were kept uninformed by state-tourism, the exceptional wealth of the region in terms of plants and animal life: «Our study identified 74 superior species of vegetals. As for animal-life, the study established 8 species of mammifères, 11 kind of oiseaux nicheurs, 8 kinds of reptiles.» The report ends up by alerting the citizens to the fact that among the species classified as rare, some are particulary threahned and need special protection strategies, such as le «le chat ganté, le ratel, le fouette-queue et le cobra».

As a sociologist interviewing the Zagora province tourist guides who benefited from the ADEDRA environment training programs, what struck me was their pride in sharing their new vision of the desert as a wonderful paradise of wild-life. Uplifting the self confidence of the rural population by allowing them to manufacture new identities for themselves, was the missing ingredient which explained the failure of bureaucrat- led development programs, be they promoted by the local state, or the international agencies such as the World bank. Civic initiative which facilitates the access to both

self-enhancing information on one’s local wealth as well as to the internet, seems to give rural youth, from tourist guides to simple sook craftsman, a cosmic dimension only popular sufism gave heir ancestors decades before.

Popular Sufism like the sayings of Mukhtar Soussi, a seventeenth-century scholar who studied and taught in Southern Morocco, stresses in his _Muhadarate_ (Conferences) that the value of a human person can not be reduced or gauged by money of literacy and is intrinsically embodied in universal qualities such as reason, aspirations or skill excellency, in whatever modest field it can be. The three following sayings are still heard often in that part of Morocco:

«A reasonable person is never poor» (La faqra li-‘aqil).
«The value of a person is determined by what he aspires to» (Qadru al ma‘i ma yuhimahu).
«The value of a person is determined by what he excells in» (Qimatu al mar‘i ma yahsunuhu).

It is the capacity of the civic initiatives to recapture and revive mystical beliefs of the Sufi that the human person is capable of everything including to rise to God’s level of excellency which explains the boom of NGOs which has reached the staggering number of 30,000, most of them created in the late 1990s? More systematic research and carefully designed field work in many parts of the Moslem world is needed before answering such a question.

**RÉSUMÉ**

Cet article explore les différentes occasions, mises à disposition par les nouvelles technologies, en particulier la télévision satellitaire et Internet, liées à une conscience de plus en plus grande de beaucoup de gens (surtout des femmes et des jeunes), qui ont traditionnellement un accès limité aux questions et aux débats publiques, et à la possibilité de construire des formes de société civile du bas.

Non seulement Al-Jazeera, chaîne satellitaire née en 1996, apporte une contribution fondamentale à la création d’un «Islam digital», mais elle offre aussi un exemple important d’une approche positive au spectateur, traité sur un pied d’égalité, et diffuse des informations qui ne naissent pas d’une implication émotionnelle et de stratégies persuasives, mais admettent une pluralité de points de vue et d’argumentations. Internet permet aux gens, en particulier à ceux qui se trouvent dans une situation de marginalité, de créer sa propre image en ligne soit pour une jouissance personnelle, soit pour le monde entier.

**RIASSUNTO**

Questo articolo esplora le diverse opportunità rese disponibili dalle nuove tecnologie della comunicazione, in particolare la televisione satellitare e Internet, relativamente alle possibilità di acquisizione di consapevolezza e di orientamento all’azione. In particolare alcune fasce del pubblico, soprattutto le donne e i giovani, tradizionalmente dotate di scarso potere di accesso ai dibattiti e alle questioni di interesse pubblico, acquisiscono finalmente la possibilità di costruirsi una propria opinione sulla base delle risorse simboliche ampiamente disponibili. La rete poi, grazie all’interattività e alla facilità di accesso, rappresenta un’opportunità per la costruzione di forme della società civile dal basso.

Al-Jazeera, la rete satellitare che trasmette dal 1996, ha fornito un contributo cruciale per la definizione e divulgazione di un «Islam digitale», oltre ad avere offerto importanti esempi di stili di conduzione dei programmi che si rivolgono allo spettatore come a un pari, fornendo informazioni che restituiscono la pluralità dei punti di vista sulle questioni e sollecitando l’argomentazione e la riflessione, più che il coinvolgimento emotivo.

Internet consente a persone che per collocazione geografica o posizione sociale si trovano in una situazione di marginalità la possibilità di auto-rappresentarsi, non solo entro la cerchia ristretta del proprio gruppo, ma nell’arena globale.