

SESSION I: What is network society all about? - Feminist analysis of contemporary times

The panel reflected upon critical questions confronting feminist politics in relation to the rise of the global middle class, the fragmentation of the public sphere, cultures of consumerism and hyper-capitalism, and the changing nature of the state. Exchanging views, panelists explored how networked ways of being and doing change institutions, social practices and norms, requiring new frameworks to grapple with the feminist project of democracy and gender justice.

The session was designed to be a freewheeling conversation with:

Andrea Cornwall, Advisor, CITIGEN, and Professor, University of Sussex, UK

Graciela Selaimen, Coordinator, Instituto NUPEF, Brazil

Lam Oi Wan, Regional Editor for Northeast Asia, globalvoicesonline.org, China

Srilatha Batliwala, Advisor, CITIGEN, and Associate Scholar, AWID, India

Anchor: *Parminder Jeet Singh, Advisor, CITIGEN, and Executive Director, IT for Change, India*

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Parminder Jeet Singh, the anchor for the session, opened the session by stating that the question at the heart of the first session was to understand the entity called the network society, from a feminist perspective. Being an abstract idea, this was to be approached through an analysis of how the macro structural of the information society (IS) combines with the micro empirical of how information and communication technologies (ICTs) impact our lives.

The network society is a tentative framing of the emergent changes our society is experiencing and is yet to be well established. We do know that ICTs connect to the network logic by changing the manner in which communication takes place, making it rapid, easy, flexible and increasingly available for all to use. When this happens, there is a change in social space. Deterritorialisation takes place, enabling conversations previously not possible across the globe. Horizontalisation takes place, and people no longer have to speak in vertical organisations and can reach out horizontally. Flexibility takes place, allowing us to pick and choose relations, and no longer sticking to those in our physical proximity, or institutions that were tied to these physical spaces. These are big changes taking place currently and related to the many tectonic shifts taking place around us.

In this session, through conversations with the four panelists, where they will speak about the

areas they have specialised in, the session will explore how the network society logic is or is not, a useful frame for explaining the current phenomena experienced by all.

Andrea Cornwall - Advisor, CITIGEN, and Professor, University of Sussex, UK

Having worked extensively in the area of participation, citizenship and women's empowerment, Andrea, outlined potentially interesting emergent areas which would require more engagement.

She noted how the context of CITIGEN was a very different way of thinking about engagement than working with physical spaces. In physical spaces it was possible to study and organise to create categories. The changing nature of public engagement, now no longer restricted to physical space, seems to need new categories.

In the ten year research on citizenship, participation and accountability that Andrea was a part of - where concepts of invited, closed, popular spaces came up – it was possible to define those spaces and distinguish them from each other in bounded categories. Now, it was increasingly difficult to begin to think in this manner. There was now, a profusion of spaces



Andrea Cornwall



splintering old dichotomies and reconfiguring possibilities of engagement - the kind that were impossible to imagine 20 or 30 years ago, now taking place due to technological change.

It is not only that these new kinds of virtual spaces enable people to get to know each other and to use networks and social networking, but it is actually the very different ways in which people can engage. For example, if one looks at the old ways of engagement and participation from consultations to more dialogic forms of interaction, there now exists quite a different way of engaging, a different way of thinking about what participation means through these new kinds of spaces and new kinds of modes of interaction. They are radically different and are related to different kinds of discursive practices. The old theories, the old concepts, the old tools - will not be really helpful in making sense of these new spaces.

This is interesting when considering political action what it then means to participate. Who gets noticed, who is absent - when you cannot even see who may be listening, following a conversation or tracking or re-tweeting and so on. Also the possibilities that technology has opened up for self representation and representation, that simply were not there before, are enormous. People sending and sharing images of themselves or shooting images of things they are seeing around them, or using images to re-imagine their own world, to see themselves and their world in different ways and change themselves and their own sense of themselves. The ways in which people can use technology to map their world and look at other maps and other worlds, and share those things in different kinds of ways - is astounding.

Twenty years ago thinking of using participation methods like Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) was radical, never realising that there would be something that allowed people to do that on such a scale and in a very diffused effective way rather than a more organised method. What that could lead to politically is very exciting.

Andrea mentioned that through the 'Pathways for women and empowerment' programme, it had emerged that the concept of empowerment built

by women in their everyday lives was heavily influenced by the imaginary - the ways in which women imagined themselves and could represent and see themselves. The emerging technologies offer an enormous amount in that process of empowerment which is simply about not limiting the vision of ourselves anymore - breaking away from stereotypes, received wisdom and opening up the possibilities of fantasising and seeing other kinds of realities. We have to then see how that gets used politically for opening up spaces for women to organise, build new kinds of relationships, and mobilise around justices, so that in these very non-linear, non organised ways - people can then begin to disrupt the status quo and reimagine themselves.

She also pointed out that when studying participation - in the past, it had been something that was purposefully organised, that could be categorised. For example - consultation was a defined process with goals and outcomes. The new forms of participation do not really have a goal or a purpose. It is happening at the same time in lots of different places, in lots of different ways. They cannot be categorised. There are a lot of splintered fragments flying around, sometimes connecting - in good ways or in ways which are not political at all. It is a very different field to look at considering participation and this kind of unruliness is very exciting because it is politically quite potent and quite disruptive yet its also very hard to get our heads around and very hard to understand.

Hannah Arendt has this image of people coming together in a public space and leaving something of themselves behind where something grows, something changes. This is what public engagement can be - people leaving a space and leaving something about themselves behind or changing or moving compared to people simply interacting. People simply spending a lot of time on Facebook or here and there in chat rooms or in endless amounts of diversions and engagement which lift people out of the real world, maybe interesting interactions in terms of chaos and complexity but when while studying participation and empowerment, we just do not tend to think about these as much more purposive and organised interactions.



Concluding with some comments on the nature of the state, Andrea said that it was interesting how the state is refracted and is absent from these processes, which is very different from the absences of the state in traditional processes of participation. The state is almost completely outside some of these other engagements. So how we rethink about the state is a very interesting question. What kind of other borders are growing? What are the borders made by the people? Are the physical borders, the borders between countries breaking down?

Discussion:

Parminder agreed that it was indeed fascinating how new spaces of participation not only give way to political possibilities but also cultural self expression – all mixed in one. The political potency of the whole situation was indeed huge.

In classical participation debate though, there was always an intent to influence a centre of power and therefore to influence a certain political agency which was concrete. He then asked if Andrea felt, that while participation was improving in the manner described by her, was political application meanwhile growing weaker? Is the connection between the two to be problematised at this stage?

Andrea replied saying she felt that people were using new technologies as a method of doing old activism. Each of the methods in which people have engaged with the state, has been done virtually as well as in lots of other ways. She shared that in Britain there was a profusion of e-petitioning, a lot of online protesting along with old methods of protest. What has changed, she felt, was the transnational aspect of activism. Now a whole of lot of possibilities have opened for activism - the transnational is mixed with other forms of activism to challenge authority and to build movements.

Srilatha Batliwala shared a debate that existed in the late 90s and put forth the questions - Can there be a citizen without a state? Is there a state formation at the global level? She shared that that was when for the first time the term

'globizen' was created. Because the whole transnational civil society realm emerged as quite a concrete space, this transnational civil society was the kind of place where people were claiming global citizenship. This was a citizenship of a global kind, that was very distinct from the conventional political science definition where the nation state confers citizenship. What, she felt, had reversed since the late 90s was that no one was now conferring citizenship but people simply claim citizenship and belonging. Now a new term 'netizen' has emerged and the implications are of claiming a citizenship beyond a mere belonging to Facebook. It seems to imply that the person is locating themselves in a realm which is beyond the state, beyond leaders, and regimes. Also Srilatha alluded to the idea of the 'global' - as a region. If that is a given, then the notion of network society has a region and also, the possibility of then claiming citizenship becomes very real, she said.

**Graciela Selaimen – Coordinator,
Instituto NUPEF, Brazil**

Graciela began her talk by sharing the similarity of the present situation with that of the industrial revolution period. In both cases there are people behind the line of production and someone owned the machines and technology and developed it. Here we have people behind screens who claim themselves to be 'netizens' but are operating on structures that are proprietary. We are operating in this new society or we are exercising our citizenship in architectures that are built to protect private property. The only privacy we have in our days is private property.

She felt that it was a major concern to imagine this global network of citizens sharing, connecting and operating politically on the proprietary structures of the network. Even states are dependent upon this huge proprietary infrastructure. For example, something difficult to find out or understand is why Brazilians pay 17 to 18 times more for the same bandwidth that is accessed by and paid for by someone in London. Why does that happen? What is the difference? It is the issue of the ownership and the interests there are operating behind it. Not even the governments have any information on the price of

the transit of the data packet of information that runs on this network. Why is this price so much more for Brazil than for the countries in the North? This is something that affects everyone in the developing regions - especially women and the poor women who are the most marginalised citizens in our society.

Talking about the framework of rights and specifically the right to freedom of expression, Graciela shared her experience of working in the field of ICTs policy since 2001 when people first started asking questions in preparation for the WSIS. She was invited to a meeting of civil society organisations who were gathering in London to speak on communication rights. Good work took place then which had a strong impact in Brazil. The term 'communication rights' was appropriated by civil society and is still used today, but this is not true at the global level. This concept totally disappeared from the civil society agenda globally. Now conversations seem to be more concentrated on freedom of expression and privacy and hence it becomes important to ask – where are the other rights? The right to knowledge, the right to assembly and all the other rights. Freedom of expression per se does not resolve the issue of the realisation and defense of the other rights. How do we see this difference?

In Brazil, activists have been defending and strengthening the concept of communications rights as not only to share, to impart, to have access to information - but also to have access to the means of production of communication. It makes all the difference. When we talk about communication rights in the network society, this means somehow challenging the whole structure of property in the means of communication. This also implies challenging the structures of property and the architecture of property at the logical level of the network. Who develops the software that we use? What are they aimed for? What is the world view that is behind these codes which we are incorporating in our lives without questioning? What are the values embedded in it? There is no technology which does not have a political aim behind it. It is natural and a part of human nature to embed its intentions in the things that we create and develop. Whose

intentions are we incorporating in our practices, in our everyday world - as 'netizens', is an important question to raise.

Asking these questions is an important part of building a strong communication rights agenda in the network society added to which there is need to build a pedagogy of network citizenship. Speaking from the perspective of being involved in community media and community radio and especially in the development, creation and management of community telecentres in Brazil, Graciela emphasised the need to work on this pedagogy from scratch, addressing questions on how people understand to whom the infrastructure belongs (why when one is talking on Skype, for example, in certain regions of Brazil one cannot speak for more than 5 minutes), why the quality of bandwidth signal gets degraded, how does it happen, etc.



Graciela Selaimen

She strongly felt that people needed to understand these processes. She felt that this pedagogy would also need to incorporate an understanding that when one uses a certain hardware or software, you choose ways of seeing the world and ways of thinking. This is important to include in any agenda that we plan to implement when we're thinking of empowering and strengthening the capacities and abilities of the socially excluded people to intervene realities using these tools. There is a need to perfectly understand what the choices that we make mean in our everyday lives and for possibilities of changing realities. This also applies to the level of the content that we create, that we share, that we consume.

Lam Oi Wan - Regional Editor for Northeast Asia, globalvoicesonline.org, China

Oi Wan began her talk by describing a recent virtual fight with a right wing opinion leader. The issue of discussion was the 'locust' discourse – the word 'locust', in recent times, has been used to describe the pregnant women who come from mainland China, to give birth in Hong Kong. The



Constitution says that if a child is born in Hong Kong, the offspring will get Hong Kong citizenship. Last year 60% of the offsprings in Hong Kong were from China. The image of the 'locust' is one of the imaginaries used by 'netizens' to incite fear and mobilise against the women.

This issue makes a good entry point to question the character of the network society. Hong Kong is the nexus of global capitalism, a point of transit for capital flows. So the question of the nature of this network society studied through its example throws up several issues. One of the points that emerges is the constant fear - everyone feels the fear of being excluded or kept out of the network of capital. The mobilisation against the 'locusts' is supporting this kind of culture of fear. We do not address that imaginary world that affects our emotion or our attitude in our interaction with others.

In Hong Kong, the second factor which perpetuates a structure of fear, apart from the neoliberal network society, is the China factor. As an example of how global capital flow injects fear – Hong Kong realty prices are highest among the world and an average apartment is 30 times the average income of the average family, which means that if you do not eat or spend a cent, you have to spend 13 years to buy an apartment. The majority is getting marginalised in such a neoliberal capital society and the civil society is very weak in responding to these situations. At most they have called for an inclusion policy. Such exclusions are very disempowering. When the protests against the right wing took place, civil society did not even react, not even the feminists.

How the China factor instils fear, can be explained by the example of the 'locust' issue. Local people feel marginalised and are pushed to using public facilities as good doctors in private hospitals are more expensive and are used by the Chinese. The China Constitution has power over Hong Kong Constitution hence the Hong Kong people have no say in defining citizen rights. The current Constitution is quite unfair to other ethnic

origins, for example, if you are working in China for 20 years and your child is born, natural citizenship is not granted. So the right wing wants to deal with this situation by removing Chinese incursions, and the left want it to be fair and ask for removing racial discrimination. Hong Kong is still dealing with this new citizenship movement for exclusion and is currently in negotiations with the state.

Discussion:

Parminder mentioned that Oi Wan's example of Hong Kong is a good one to begin to understand how flows in the network society can create imbalances and how struggles play out in times of conflict. It is then interesting to see how institutions are used by the marginalised in network systems.

Srilatha Batliwala - Advisor, CITIGEN, and Associate Scholar, AWID, India

Srilatha used Lisa Veneklasen's piece for Open Democracy, titled '[Citizen action and the perverse confluence of opposing agendas](#)' to share her thoughts on the emergent transnational activism.

She began with a quote from Evelina Dagnino, a Brazilian political scientist, who introduced a concept: perverse confluence. Evelina points out that "opposing political interests – social movements, the state, and the drivers of neoliberalism – all use and promote the notion of active citizens as if united harmoniously in a shared vision of democracy and inclusion. But, in reality, social movements claim and redefine citizenship to recognise and build inclusion across race, class, gender, sexuality and other barriers; the state uses the legalities of citizenship to control who counts, has access, and decides; and neoliberalism equates citizens with consumers and embraces the idea of active citizen engagement as a way to expand markets". Three diametrically opposed agendas snuggled into the same political terminology – an example of perverse confluence, and of the messy contradictions of the moment.

In the article, Srilatha explained, that Lisa had not gone into looking at the proprietary



Lam Oi Wan

structures, but examines whether the network society has changed the nature of social movements, the nature of organising strategy and the nature of how movements work.

Srilatha, added that this also brought to her mind how the vocabulary of the virtual world was increasingly being used in the real world and gave the example of the phrase 'gone viral' and how it is now being used to describe the very real world spread of the Occupy street movement.

Returning to the article, Srilatha felt that one of the interesting conclusions that Lisa has arrived at was that the felt change was partly a function of age. Younger people who have been involved in



Srilatha Batliwala

the Arab spring for instance, including women, really believed that technology had changed the nature of activism from what they have seen and heard of social movements from their elders. The most cited difference experienced in the movements now is that movements are non-

hierarchical and are leaderless. Srilatha said she did not agree with these contentions even though movements have an appearance of this and they are relatively less hierarchical and have less formal layers of leadership structures than before.

The second conclusion made by Lisa in her article was that while a lot has changed, yet some deep essence of the nature of organising remains the same. For example - the speed at which one can organise, mobilise around issues, how quickly you can cross all kinds of borders not just national-political or geographical ones, but even issue borders, and mobilise people from other issues movements – are examples of changed. Yet in other ways, things are the same. She explained this by agreeing with Graciela's point on the need of a critical pedagogy for the 'netizens'. She felt that there was a need to have a kind of consciousness raising – to know what kind of platform one is using, who owns it, why is there a price difference, how do private interests determine what one searches on Google etc. At the end of the day it is those forms of organising

for social movements that have to take place to have impact.

Sharing the example of the online movement called 'One million strong against Operation Greenhunt' in India, which was against the government targeting indigenous populations and labelling them as 'Maoists' due to their resistance to mining interests in the forest regions. Srilatha said that one recognises that it is not purely the virtual movement which pushed the central government to undertake an enquiry. There had to be protests in situ, mobilisation in Delhi like the kind done 25 years ago against rape and domestic violence. So its like a cliché to realise that the more things change, the more they remain the same. And this is certainly true, for social movements organising in the network age.

She added to Lisa Veneklasen's analysis by concluding with some additional points. One point that she felt came naturally out of the analysis was the question of rights. We have to make a distinction that use of network spaces to raise claims of rights cannot be confused with imagining that there is a duty bearer in the network space who can be held up as responsible.

Secondly, she pointed out that some issues had remained the same for women even within the network society. These were issues of - opportunity costs; capability ; permission and policing; identity; asset ownership.

On the positive side, an important point which remains the same is that how 30 years back women's collectives in rural spaces became the non-traditional space where women were able to escape patriarchy, the network society can now be that space for a large number of women.

Discussion:

Lisa McLaughlin pointed out Aihwa Ong's work on citizenship which spoke about how in countries like Malaysia, there were both people who were not full citizens and those who enjoyed more rights than citizens. A lot of this discourse is applicable to the Internet - we talk about

diasporic networks for example, which brings into high relief the clash between the state that is less economically developed who wishes to become a knowledge economy and anyone who brings it the resources (like in countries such as Malaysia and India) – ends up often times doing so to the disadvantage of the citizens of that place and lots of times citizens who are marginalised who do not get to claim or enjoy their rights -like women. Having access to the Internet is not in itself going to solve that particular problem.

Graciela shared a recent experience of Brazil relating to surveillance and control by the state. A law was put forward, at the end of 2011, to create a database of pregnant women where participation was made compulsory. The government claimed that this was to ensure that health services – public and private – reach women. Yet of course, a state which is under the heavy influence of the church, has other motives to monitor pregnancies and women's choices. This law is still being heavily debated. The positive outcome of this situation though was that for the first time organisations which work on communication and Internet rights have been approached by the women's movement – a bridge that several people have tried building for years. Although the communication rights discourse was developed in consultation with other social movements, it has still been very difficult building this bridge and bringing different rights groups and movements together. Yet now with this very concrete case, the communication rights groups and others are beginning to dialogue in a more systematic way and hope to take this opportunity to build better relationships and awareness regarding the importance of incorporating communications as an end and not only as a means.

Andrea added that this was an interesting example of what happens between virtual and real spaces. She had heard about this Brazilian law from a Brazilian activist, who asked - Is there someone in your room who can make your government aware that this has happened, in reaction to which Andrea wrote and her email went around to people who were in the government. So there was this whole string of

events set in motion – displaying how the virtual and the real constantly intersect.

Phet Sayo felt that one needed to push the notion of the transnational 'netizen' identity a bit more. Is it really true that the youth who have access or privilege think they belong to the global citizenship? Or do they belong to Google, Apple, or these other digital ecosystems? About the only mobility they have is email and webpages, so in the region we call network, mobility only happens by the standards set by these companies.

Srilatha addressed this concern by saying that one way of thinking about this question was again to fall back on some older wisdoms. One of the things learnt in the course of sectarian violence and pogroms, looking at the role of women in such violence, was that a huge number of women have been mobilised by fundamentalist movements. One had to examine how this was happening. What was that space creating which was attracting women?

One thing that was learnt through this enquiry was that when any space gives you an opportunity to be a co-architect in constructing something - you can live with some of the means used which may not appeal to you like violence for example. The other observation had been that women who had been part of very progressive consciousness raising processes also went quietly home and tacitly supported their men taking part in such violence. This revealed that people live with and are comfortable with - multiple identities. So people can be 'netizens' and can also be fundamentalists etc. All this coexists alongside each other. Some societies have enabled this multiple identity more than others – this ability to move through multiple spaces with different values.

Parminder added that the problem was not just that people were trapped in proprietary spaces, the boundaries of which we have not even begun to grapple with. The issue was also the affluent transnational global middle class who are now a political force more stronger than the people who are on Facebook. We are now witness to a global middle class which is the single most strong political force today and they control many states which are otherwise poor. That new class



segmentation which is taking place because of this phenomenon, which is a mixed phenomenon, is connected to being trapped in these proprietary spaces. The interactions between these two problems is the animal which is being created - which is the formulation we're trying to understand of a network society.

Sarala Emmanuel noted that governments are eagerly getting e-governance programmes off the ground, one of which in Sri Lanka is the citizens registration. Coming from a long war period, everyone is obviously suspicious about enrolling into such databases. She mentioned coming across the tentative declarations of the human rights of a virtual citizen - so in such cases, for what should one negotiate with the state?

Graciela replied to Sarala by stating that governments had always collected data which is often the basis of the state - statistics is the knowledge of the state. It is not a new phenomenon. What is new is the capacity of holding and managing, processing and keeping this information and the speed with which this is done. This ability of the state to control, administer and exercise its bureaucracy to a level unimaginable. However, she added, private companies have been doing this for ages and we did not even know because they do not ask you for the data, you give it to them in exchange of goods or services. We offer information for free to private companies with no concern of accountability in exchange. These are the kinds of issues, she felt, needed to be understood.

We do not want to be surveyed by governments but at least as citizens in our local context and national states we have the right to demand from the government a certain level of accountability and transparency - through right to information, public information etc. In contrast, where other private databases are concerned (which are larger than the government's), we do not say anything. We don't even know where these are. When it is the government, you can go somewhere and knock, but when you think of a huge transnational corporation that is capturing your data by means that are completely opaque, in such a scenario you cannot see, you cannot

perceive. They are embedded in our everyday practice. To whom can one talk to? To whom can one go to demand rights? Which door does one knock?

When talking of government surveillance, people use the image of the 'panopticon', but we are actually living in another piece of literature which some scholar says is like 'The Trial', by Kafka. Like the protagonist in the story who is prosecuted for a crime unknown, and goes knocking from door to door to understand why. We have to be aware of such scenarios when we think of us as citizens in relation to the government and as consumers in relation to transnationals.

Jan Moolman also pointed out the collusion between state and non-state actors. She felt that there was a lot of focus on the role of the states but the role of the non-state actors was equally problematic. For example in Brazil, the government was making an agreement with Google to remove abortion related advertisements. That kind of private sector power was becoming increasingly worrying. How, she felt, this happened was through a kind of mobilisation of anxiety. Through that anxiety a false consensus is created or constructed, and we are told this is what we need. She said -this brought us to the point that Srilatha was making in that the same strategies have been used over and over again and hence we need to be careful about not forgetting our learning from before.

Gayatri Buragohain felt that there was need to have a clear distinction between the accountability of the state and accountability of the citizens. On one hand, the state is elected democratically and hence is accountable to the citizen and people can try to demand transparency through tools which are technology based. With the excuse of increasing the efficiency of the state, more and more information is being collected like in the case of the Unique Identification (UID) in India and in such situations no one is asking why this data is required, who holds it, how is it protected etc.

Crystal Orderson added to Jan's point, stating that these collusions were obvious in the telecommunications sector too where the state

quoted efficiency and terror as reasons for registering all cell phones. How that data is used needs to be understood, she felt.

Jessica Colaco, mentioned that Kenya has launched an open data portal to increase citizen government engagement but it has not progressed. She asked the group what they thought about the open data portals across countries and contexts. Open data in the developing world is not the same as the developed world, so what was the network society in the developing world and what did it mean to the citizens?

Graciela replied by sharing an argument by Michael Gurstein once made. He asked who the data was open for and who knows what to do with the data. Having the data open does not solve the problem. Someone has to translate the data somehow to turn it into concrete facts that can lead to concrete outcomes and understandings of reality. It is a question of having access to knowledge, not only to data, she said.

Parminder added that the larger systemic problem of these initiatives was that they were becoming a smokescreen for actual activism, political engagement and agency. These initiatives were good but they needed to be pushed by greater activism.

Srilatha felt that a way to derive deeper insight would be to study the movements which have centred around information such as the right to information or the slum dwellers movements, where data has been self-created or contested. By going to these sites of activism that have used data as a key strategy we can understand what the politics has been. Additionally, she felt that considering the history of the citizen and the state, it would be instructive to see how in situations of oppression, the citizen has found methods of subversion. Feminists have always functioned through various subversions. She felt that there was a need for a larger project to then build feminist visions of a network society based on a deeper understanding of these subversions.

Oi Wan responded to Sarala's concerns. In China, she shared, activists have a motto – you can

control my data but not my imagination. The imaginary world or expression is a very strong weapon. To give an example, recently in a protest which was very successful, a reporter asked a very young participant how they learnt these strategies. Is it because of the tradition of this village (as it had communist revolutionary history) or access to Hong Kong TV etc.? The youngsters said we learnt how to fight through war video games.

Andrea added that the questions about resistance and disruption were interesting considering the power of the imagination. It brought up the possibilities of waking in people a sense of indignation and create dissonance through these technologies.

Graciela mentioned that there were many methods of subversion and resistance. For instance she used Facebook to flag issues regarding Facebook. She outlined the need for two things – collaborations across movements and for research (giving the example of how APC led research ensured that women's groups were more aware of communication related issues and hence could respond with greater understanding).

Parminder closed the session by reminding the group that there seemed to be some native characteristics of the network society. For example - collaboration, a characteristic of the network society, had been best utilised by the most powerful today. The network, he felt, had the characteristic of being aggrandising, it seeks out power and it tries to remove itself from normative ethical political structures. These are characteristics, he added, normally associated with capital.

He felt that it was important to remember that the network would be capable of causing such extreme exclusions, those of irrelevance, that we would consider the old methods of exploitation as better as they were at least in proximity, in connection to a social relationship. Irrelevance, he said, takes place when powerful groups which are unconnected to you, can cut you off and act as if you do not exist. These are native tendencies of the network which need to be addressed.



He said that there was currently a big struggle going on between the market system and the democratic political systems on gender lines and many others. In this struggle, the network society has some inherent tendencies which takes it towards the market systems. There is a need to put counter networks and certain circuit breakers, literally like the Tobin Tax on the financial markets against extremes. Because networks tend to do move in problematic ways, these kind of insights help us chart our way forward.