

SESSION II: Techno parables and feminist paradoxes - Narrations of the CITIGEN stories

This session followed a story telling format. Rather than talk in a linear way about 'findings' and 'conclusions', it presented readings of research contexts that highlight the complexity of the technology-gender discourse. Stories of women's embeddedness in the context, their creative and subversive adaptations of digital space, and the paradoxes that arise in the process, will be shared. This will make explicit the power structures, including digital architectures, that clash with feminist methods and conceptions of change. The moderator will synthesise the narrations and facilitate interactions with the audience.

Story-tellers:

The Philippines story – Francisco dela Tonga, Youth Coordinator, Likhaan, Philippines; and Lisa McLaughlin, Advisor, CITIGEN, and Associate Professor, Miami University, USA

The South African story – Desiree Lewis, Think piece author, CITIGEN, and Associate Professor, University of the Western Cape, South Africa; and Crystal Orderson, Think piece author, CITIGEN, and Specialist Correspondent, SABC News, South Africa

The Taiwan and Hong Kong story – Philippa Smales, Researcher, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, Thailand

Moderator: Phet Sayo, Senior Programme Officer, IDRC, India

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Phet Sayo - Senior Programme Officer, IDRC, India



Phet Sayo

Phet opened the session by sharing that he had recently read an article by a famous American economist who was allayed public fears of the US economy sinking by arguing that like the automobile, telephony were major innovations that changed the economy in the past there are three major innovations which have again been created in the USA which will ensure its position in the global economy. The three innovations mentioned were - Data centres, wireless connectivity and smart manufacturing. Phet felt he must point out the first two innovations because they were very relevant to the ongoing discussions. The second point he made was that technology is not gender neutral.

Phet mentioned that he had been a part of the April 2011 workshop of CITIGEN and someone had mentioned the right to publicity. Publicity in terms of having a voice. With the new technology,

of course, it is an ability to have a digital voice but having voice does not necessarily mean you have a digital voice and having a digital voice has two components. If one considers voice over Internet Protocol (IP), the technology underlying Skype, the IP identifies you and then there is intellectual property around what you say. These have huge implications. As Lawrence Lessig would say, 'architecture is policy', so in that mind frame we have to think about what defaults we are setting now and what are the implications.

Phet said he has been familiar with the ICTD discourse for 15 years and has seen the exclusions as well as the inclusions. Although we talk about empowerment potentials and democratic efforts, he said, he was a bit sceptical about that digital voice and that ability to be able to communicate instantly to everybody - because not everybody could. The right to privacy, protection of the freedom of assembly, the freedom of expression - are becoming increasingly important.

Francisco dela Tonga - Youth Coordinator, Likhaan, Philippines; and Lisa McLaughlin - Advisor, CITIGEN, and Associate Professor, Miami University, USA

Francisco began his presentation by explaining that the project in Philippines was looking at the use of IT for legislative advocacy of the reproductive health bill. IT was being used to reflect on the ground realities from which the need of the bill arose.



Francisco dela Tonga

This feminist action research project attempted to provide a platform (which is the website) for an online magazine that enabled the community activists to share their experiences, needs, desires and analysis on sexual and reproductive health. The action component involved the training of the community

leaders or community-based members to become community-based activists or journalists who would generate stories for the website - voices of the community. Eleven community journalists were trained initially and at the end of the project there were nine active community journalists. Francisco then shared some of the stories from this community journalism initiative.

Most of the stories shared were from Khaila, Emma and Dioshiel because they shared their insights on the aspect of citizenship in the context of a community journalist. Dioshiel Uriarte-Miras, one of the young mothers in the community, also a community journalist, said, "Having a child and a husband does not and should not stop me from being a community journalist. I need to continue my role as a journalist not just for my own development but for other people to become more aware of the women and grassroots issues." Dioshiel already had her first child during the training of community journalism and had some difficulty in attending some of the workshops but she made it finally.

Emma Alagdon-Monzaga, one of the eldest women who was trained in community

journalism, has eight children and also had difficulty in managing her time to take part in the community journalism along with her household chores. She said, "My free time usually happens after all the household chores are done, usually between 9pm to 10pm. The feeling of being fulfilled by something that you learn despite your age and gender is something that I am and will proudly say."

The journalists were picked from the community, they were youth who were looking for a job, a mother, young women, married adult women and one gay community journalist. The gay journalist actually asked - "As the research is really about the reproductive health issues of the community", he pointed out, "What about us from the LGBT community? What is in there for us?" He raised that question in the platform, the online magazine that actually generates verbal comments from the community. There are community journalists who are workers, so they had trouble managing their time writing the articles. One is a freelance cyber sex worker who grabbed the opportunity to get online during her freelance work. There was a student who writes her articles over the weekend because it is her only free time.

When Francisco went to the community and asked them what community journalism brings to you, they felt that it brought a lot to their lives. They began to understand the issue in greater depth as they heard the stories. For example, Mark (a participant) said - he had always heard this statistic of eleven deaths a day of women because of maternal complications but after he went to the community and conducted interviews, he had an in-depth understanding of why women are experiencing these maternal complications. He even had an analysis of the situation that this was due to a lack of support coming from the Philippines households - because of the delays, the poor transportation, and the lack of facilities which the women need to access.

The other community journalists shared that they had become more concerned about women, the society and the issue. They began asking what they could do to address these issues facing the

women such as family planning and abortion. Many women in the community have unwanted pregnancies and want to find out more about abortion services but due to limitations of the law because abortion in the Philippines is illegal, they cannot. So these women might actually ask questions like – How do we get it done underground? The women learnt many new things - like Emma, who started writing her articles in pen and paper. When we asked her to learn to use the computer, she had difficulty because it is very new to her as she was not exposed to this technology. One of the community journalists actually said, “I know how to use a camera but I only know how to take photos by point and shoot. But not by considering the angles, the subjects and the feelings of the photo”. This was a new skill learnt from the trainings.

When asked about the relationship between gender and citizenship to IT, Dioshiel said, “Long time ago women did not have access to technology and opportunities because women were present only in households doing the 'women only' responsibilities. But nowadays women in the societies are invoking the use of information technology. Women are very competitive in the field of technology and this gives us the opportunity to participate in the development of the society. Each one of us in the society has the liberty to express our thoughts and feelings with responsibility”. She was asked to expand on what made her say that women were only doing work that came within their domain and if that had been her experience. She replied saying - “Because in the community it is their orientation that women are responsible for the entire household chores and should not go out to learn something new. So that is their orientation”.

The introduction to information technology helped them understand the need to be informed and educated. Khaila Marcos said, “Most of the time women's voices are not being heard and community journalism actually gives them a platform to raise their voices about the issues of reproductive health”.

Emma said that - “It is very important for women

to learn the use of computers because it adds value to their lives not just as women but also as a citizen”. She said, because of the Internet she was able to communicate with her relatives abroad. It made her feel connected to her family and this is something very important to her now.

Francisco added that the community journalists were proud when they receive feedback, good or bad, coming from the community and the 'netizens'. The project made them feel productive because the women - like Emma and Jane - during their free time wrote stories or took interviews relating to the issues. They were excited by the experience and whenever they finish the article, the question really is – will it be published? – as they want others to read their stories and the stories of their communities. They are really happy to receive the honorarium for each published article, and Emma said, “Being paid for the article we made is very fulfilling because it gives value to our work”. This is striking because these women contribute to the community, for example as health workers, and get paid 500 pesos a month for working 24 to 26 days. The freelance work gives them 1000 pesos which can provide for the family and gives value to their work.

One of the challenges faced by the community journalists, were personal interviews. Through their training they were able to talk to/interview former legislators and the women in the community who had really private stories to tell. Stories that otherwise needed to be hidden, for example - stories of abortion, where protecting the identity of the woman was important. Firstly, they had difficulty interviewing some of the women because the women were not comfortable talking about sex and sexuality issues. The second challenge was to protect the lives of the people behind the stories. Khaila shared that she had interviewed a woman who had a miscarriage and she wanted to protect her identity and hence, raised the question - How do we protect the lives of the people behind the stories? How do we protect their need for anonymity?

Another dilemma for the journalists was how to collect information without disregarding the



woman's rights or her points of view and still receive correct information along with the community's perspectives.

An important challenge was also finding a conducive environment for their writing and thinking. The Internet shops were very far from the community. For example, Jane needed to travel by one rickshaw and another jeep to get into the computer shops. When she got there, it was dark, very humid, very hot, and very noisy - she could not write her article because she needed an environment where she could think and really do an analysis of the outline of her article. As she was not able to write her article in the shop, she came up with a strategy where she wrote her articles at home on paper and then typed them at the Internet store and then uploaded the articles on to the website. Hence the women themselves found solutions to their problems.

One of the challenges for Emma, who resides in Manila where contraception was banned for more than ten years and where local governance officials are really influenced by the city mayor who is pro-life, were the repercussions that might arise due to bringing up the subject of the reproductive health bill. Additionally, as the articles were written in Filipino, (because the journalists were more comfortable with Tagalog, the local language) the outcomes could only be read by Filipino readers. The legislators for whom these articles were intended preferred to read English articles, as was the case with most net users. If these articles were translated, it implied a dependency on English translators. The challenge for community journalism was also that the awareness generation process seemed to be limited to the village, their Facebook friends and a few partner organisations. The stories were not able to move beyond this small circle of people.

Lisa, then followed up the presentation with her thoughts. She said that she wanted to focus on some of the paradoxes and contradictions in this particular study. Contradictions did not imply criticism and she meant to inform the debate with her academic background, which is mostly Marxist critical theory. Francisco's presentation

she mentioned was focussed heavily on women's empowerment or citizen journalists' empowerment. The question often is, what is empowerment? If the women feel empowered does that really mean they are empowered? Not to get into Marx's false consciousness argument, but if the concept of 'eminent criticism' is taken, you take world views that people hold as seriously as they take it themselves, (keeping in mind historical social material reality as well) rather than write off people who feel empowered because they for a variety of reasons, learnt computer skills and were able to affect their own consciousness raising in addition to engaging with consciousness raising that they felt was important to affect.

The drawback is that it can create a halo effect because they know the research is supposed to empower them so they report that it empowers them. But nevertheless, with 'eminent criticism' you take what they have to say seriously. That said, there are a number of paradoxes or contradictions here. One of them is that we are dealing with one level of truth claims which are based on personal and grounded knowledge and that these are outweighed by infrastructural material realities. As the final report says - what they found in the study was that the micro level was the only successful aspect of the project. Which meant that the people felt empowered and that the magazine somehow helped people feel empowered. Yet this micro level success took IT to a broader public to some degree but actually not to a very large degree at all. There were forces that controlled the Internet, the media and the national level debate about reproductive health (such as the Catholic Church), which ultimately meant that 'big change' did not take place.

This is not surprising. For one thing, the issue with the Internet is that it is expanding and fragmenting the public sphere at the same time. So what they were probably drawing was a set of people who were interested in the subject of reproductive and sexual health which does not



Lisa McLaughlin

undermine the fact that citizen journalists felt empowered by what they were doing in the least, nonetheless, they had some formidable enemies.

What Lisa noted was that in such a scenario the Catholic Church did not need any branding. It did not need a web page. It was one of the major religions of the world and anybody who thinks that everything needs to go digital needs to remember all the major religions of the world who will go on and on, and do so without the Internet. Not to mention that there are pages that fight the Catholic Church but it is really quite difficult.

What we need to look at is a number of issues including inclusion and visibility vs exclusion and invisibility. These days it seems like that the only place one can get recognition is on the spaces of the Internet, it is almost as if you do not exist if you do not have that kind of access or the access that is leading to any major social change. We hear it all the time – that to not be on the Internet leads to exclusion and invisibility – yet it is quite as possible to be relatively invisible and digital and this is what we are seeing here.

An issue that is important to bring up is - What does one risk by achieving the goals of this study, if they have been achieved noting that the larger power structures did not pay attention to the voices of the women? The risk then is appropriation and co-optation. The risk is not that this group would be co-opted by the Catholic Church but that they would be co-opted into the terms of engagement of the mainstream media of the Catholic Church. In other words, one needs to perform differently. What it can imply is that all of sudden you are not alternative and resistant any more. Once that happens, you are pulled into the system.

Lisa felt that there was a need to look at appropriation but look at it from the point of view of what we, who do not want to be pulled into some dominant hegemonic order, can do to the best of our ability to not be pulled into the basic information capitalism through the networks.

For this we need to really follow standard modes of appropriation of digital networks, we need to

know the modes of operation of digital networks, we need to know how they can be overridden through appropriation and appropriate them somehow ourselves which leads to somewhat socially relevant change that may raise public opinion and start a discourse that would go beyond the magazine and beyond the micro level.

Sometimes the promotion of the citizen journalists seems very romantic but it is also probably relatively ineffective. There is need to reflect on the Occupy Movement, which is a digital network, that is actually becoming transnational. We should not let the local fade away in comparison but allow for the connecting of the local with the transnational and vice versa.

Another interesting aspect is that, apparently the trained citizen journalists actually never problematised their roles as citizens or problematised citizenship in any way its relevant. What they would do as citizen journalists, was not claiming citizen rights but at some times they were acting as citizens for the online magazine and avoiding making claims in the vocabulary of the term citizenship. The question then is why? Do they recognise that there is such a thing as a citizen and a non-citizen?

Desiree Lewis – Think piece author, CITIGEN, and Associate Professor, University of the Western Cape, South Africa; and Crystal Orderson – Think piece author, CITIGEN, and Specialist Correspondent, SABC News, South Africa

Desiree began the presentation by sharing the reason the topic of their paper interested them. While at the moment South Africa is a very policy rich country and there is a lot of legislation which includes a Constitution that seems to be guarding against violence with the domestic violence act and so many measures, violence against women is steadily increasing and something needs to be done. Most of the paper explains why and gives a history of the violence against women. The main point is that violence has become so deeply entrenched as a way of life, that it is present in the psyches of men and women and has therefore become central to how men and women think about themselves and negotiate

their sense of gendered belonging.

This has been of concern while considering how ICT activism can work to create new identities and new stories about women's lives - the stories



Desiree Lewis

that empower them in a deep, emotional and psychological sense, beyond an existential sense. Desiree explained that one reason why they spent time talking about the media and the mass media coverage of violence, was that those were the sources people turned to, to learn the truth about violence. And those were the sources that reproduce very damaging stories and images of women. Hence their project was concerned with critiquing the media that exists and are responsible for reproducing the stereotypes.

Desiree shared that while exploring ICTs, they were very encouraged by the people who were talking about imaginativeness and cooperation. She mentioned that the presentation would be focussing mainly on the local level, as smaller organisations seem to be the organisations that are pushing the boundaries. There are many heavily funded organisations in South Africa and the tendency seems to be that money is thrown at the organisations. The emphasis is really on training, giving access and there is very little respect for people's own knowledges and the stories that they want to tell and their agendas of change. It is really the kind of agendas of change people have for themselves and their ideas of transformation – that the paper looks at.

Crystal added that the paper ultimately tried to look at how the local activists actually engaged with ICTs. One shocking story which reflects the reality of post apartheid South Africa was of Lisa Conyana, a black lesbian, residing in a township on the outskirts of Cape Town who was open about her sexuality and her family accepted her. Although she was open about her sexuality, a constitutional right in South Africa, it was seen as something very unusual in the township. Conyana's freedom and confidence about her sexuality and being black lesbian in a township, cost her life. She was stabbed to death and

beaten several times about six years ago. Her only crime was that she was a lesbian and she was proud of it. Conyana's case is not isolated, several black lesbians in South Africa have come out and face being attacked, raped and ultimately death.

Conyana's case, six years ago, saw the formation of Free Gender, a black lesbian organisation working on the outskirts of one of the poorest townships in South Africa with massive unemployment, high alcohol rates and the sort of statistics that accompany it. It spurred a group of black lesbians to say – we have a voice, this is our township and we are taking ownership of it and we are not going to allow any person to actually intimidate us. Yet it took six years of activism, six years of mobilisation to actually bring this case to justice. Two weeks ago, the murderers of Conyana were sentenced to 18 years of prison. For the past two years, Free Gender had to mobilise. Free Gender is a group of black lesbians, some of them work, the others do not. They do not have access to Internet, and Facebook, Twitter etc. are a mere luxury for those who can afford it. Yet what they do have, are cellphones.

South Africa, like many other developing countries, has seen the sales explosion of cellphones and has a 'pay as you go' system where you buy an inexpensive basic plan and you can make phone calls and send SMS. Because there exists this large group of people who have access to cellphones, there was an emergence of a group of young people at the Cape Town university who created a platform called 'MXIT' which is instant messaging for free. Free Gender was able to use MXIT as a free platform to mobilise.

Hundreds of young women, old women, men, came out to support Free Gender and they were able to mobilise through MXIT by sending out one liners. One of the key organisers of Free Gender pointed out that – “our members are not necessarily interested in reading a long



Crystal Orderson

newspaper, Facebook is a luxury, their concentration is limited and they do not speak and read English in some places but instant messaging, one liners, 'We are organising at the court. 9 o'clock. Come.' - work". Through that mobilisation one saw the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Police taking it seriously. Last year, the women's month was dedicated to black lesbians and the plight of black lesbians and finally they had justice for her when her murderers were sentenced two weeks ago. In this case study, of course not everybody has access to resources, but how you can use the really limited platforms you have to mobilise in a broader perspective, is seen.

Desiree added that the case study she focussed on was a feminist play, 'Vagina Monologues' by Eve Ensler, and the kind of activity that took place around the play. This play was performed by students at the University of Western Cape and it was successful not only at the campus, but in Cape Town, nationally and to some extent internationally – derived from the fact that it was advertised and spoken about through various forms of new media. Information was shared through SMS, it was copied onto DVD and the DVD was circulated. It really developed a life of its own by being circulated in such a manner. Viewing this phenomena one realises how important it is to think about raising consciousness and developing forms of activism that do not necessarily rely on the conventional understandings of political activism, that actually tap into the creative work that people do – the work that people do in relation to entertainment, for leisure.

The play, for example, is a really strong and powerful form of activism. There were certain things that she felt needed to be flagged in relation to the findings from this work and ICTs. One, was that the power of the play seemed to be derived from the blending of the traditional and new media. On one level the play was a traditional form of communication, but it became so much more rich and exciting because it was fleshed out, it was spoken about through Facebook, SMSes. Certain organisations even bought the DVD and used it as a teaching tool. It made one realise, that so often when people talk

about ICT activism there is this assumption that you abandon the traditional forms of communication and just embrace the new. That rarely ever happens, especially among women who really value, certain forms of communication. So that was an important lesson to learn.

Another important point was regarding the way in which we use the visual and how important the visual is in ICT. The visual is not only seen as capturing something or representing something but something that shapes our sense of the world. Those most affected are women who are severely brutalised, traumatised and seen merely as statistics and as victims and so on. Very rarely do they imagine themselves in positive terms. The young women in the play were extremely assertive, very feisty and inching towards womanhood – such images were very inspiring for women. One of the women who was a part of the play said that what she liked about the play was not just the message and the basic content but the kind of inspirational feel one got through images such as these.

Another point Desiree made, was of branding. What the play also tried to do was use forms of dress like hoodies and t-shirts and so on. This is also interesting because it is an example of the way in which so many young people in order to develop an assertive, positive image, somehow buy into global capitalism. There is a sense in which they are also using that capitalist world, for example clothing in order to define a positive radical, political identity for themselves in the same way of that they appropriate cell phones. She found that the use of clothing was very connected.

Crystal, in conclusion, said that she would like to come back to Desiree's earlier point about the paper dealing extensively with legislation in South Africa, constitution etc. South Africa is the largest economy on the Sub-Saharan continent. With its infrastructure development and events such as the world cup etc., there is a euphoria and, of course, the post 1994 apartheid dismantling put the spotlight on South Africa. On a daily basis though, South African women are faced with the past, present and future,

intersections of race, class and gender in their daily lives and violence against women is a daily reality. This is a challenge not only for South Africa but for Brazil and other developing countries because you can not just erase the past. The past is part of the present and the present we try to define and work with.

Philippa Smales - Researcher, Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, Thailand

Philippa said that she would be sharing the story of two women she interviewed during her research. The first one she spoke about was an Indonesian woman in Taiwan. This woman went to Taiwan for the money, to work as a domestic worker. She found that it was a lot different from what she was expecting. She arrived and the agent asked her if she had a cellphone and she said she did. The agent took it off her and he also took her phone numbers and any contacts she had on her and then she was taken to the house where she would be working. She realised that she would be sleeping on the floor, next to the door with no private space at all. She also had to look after an old lady who was with the family and she was alone with this old lady all day while the other householders were at work. So this was her existence. While the old lady was sleeping, she was able to slip out and go buy some food and was able to go and shop and be outside.

After working for quite a long period of time, she managed to save up and buy a new cellphone which she hid. She was able to slip out and buy phone credit and in this way she was eventually able to reconnect with her family. She was interviewed while she was out buying credit for her phone during one of her very brief breaks and so the interview was very quick. She said that the connection to home was so important to her because it was her only connection outside of that little small world which was not private for her and it was shared with her family and with the elderly lady. Her private life was on that phone, texting her family.

The second story Philippa shared, was about a Filipino woman in Hong Kong. The Filipino woman was extremely educated, she had a Master's

degree. She went to Hong Kong to earn more money too. When she arrived, it was different from what she expected but in Hong Kong they have a lot more rights and they are recognised as workers. Yet she was there for about two months before she got her first Sunday off. But she actually got a Sunday off.

On that day, she was lucky because she had her cellphone and she had a contact from the Philippines. Her aunty had given her the number of a lady who was already over in Hong Kong. So the first thing she did was she called this aunty and said - "I am in Hong Kong, I would like to meet with you and I have a Sunday off". The lady told her to meet her at the train station and they could spend their Sunday off, together. She turned up at the train station where she met with this other lady and the lady took her to the park and there she saw all these women from Philippines in the park – everywhere, very visible. She could see them in their little groups, having their picnics in the park on their blankets, speaking and talking and sharing food. There was a community in the park! Straight away she was a part of this new community and this was an amazing thing for her. The other point was that it was not only a community of women, it was also a community of activists. Domestic workers have the right in Hong Kong to organise and they do organise. So that afternoon she met with another group who was just sitting at the park, on the footpath and they were talking about their rights, about having a protest and they were talking about walking the streets in protest of legislation that was being passed. She did not have another Sunday off for a little while but through her cellphone she was able to keep in contact with the group. Hence she knew when they were going to organise and when they were going to protest. She was able to have that Sunday off and was able to march the streets and be a part of that protest.



Philippa Smales

In both these stories and in these countries, in Taiwan and Hong Kong, all the women interviewed – had cellphones. Almost 99 percentage of them had cellphones and those

who did not said they were saving up for one. They all had lots of SIM cards as well. They all knew what the deals were, what companies were having a deal this weekend, which ones were cheaper for text messages, which ones were cheaper for calls. They were all very knowledgeable about these things. They had the knowledge and the technology. What they did not often have, were the extra skills. They thought of cellphones as just a way to communicate with family and with friends, they did not really see them as tools and did not really have the capabilities to reach all these people or ways to organise in a different way.

After talking to these women and the organisations and groups, it was felt that they had these technologies, they knew how to use it, this just needed to be furthered. They just needed a few extra conversations to think about how they could use this tool in a better way. Right now they receive a message saying "We are going to protest this Sunday" and then circulate it. Yet maybe there is a better system, maybe there could be a database to send out a bulk text message or a bulk text message system through the Internet which was much cheaper and they could reach everybody.

In the end, a publication titled 'Mobilise' was created and it has a cartoon look and feel about it. It also has different visual aspects of women, different looking women – Thai women, Indonesian women, Indian women, Filipino women – in the pages and it was kept very simple so that anybody would be able to understand. Yet it was not too simple and a balance was struck to make sure that it would be useful for everybody.

A lot of time was spent with the women and there were several discussions around the first draft in Taiwan. The second draft was thrashed out with women in Thailand and the third draft with organisations and it eventually got to a point where everyone was quite happy with the content.

It is very interesting that these women do not have privacy. They do not have a home and are living with employers in both Taiwan and Hong Kong. So their private lives, their time was

always on Sundays when they have their Sunday communities. For those in Taiwan who do not have that day off, how do you connect to them and how do you involve them? Through their cellphones, it seemed. So even if they are not outside a lot and their only time outside of their employers household is those few minutes when they go shopping, if you manage to get their number or get a number to them, there is a connection there. There is a way to get to them. There is a way to get their opinion and there is a way to communicate with them and for them to communicate back. This is something that will take a long time but hopefully it will get somewhere.

Discussion:

Phet made a few observations during the presentations. For the first presentation, he said that back in the days of early ICTs for development, there was this notion of the global information which will benefit the local if only they had access to the dearth of information out there. Yet the challenge resides in local content for the local. One wonders what the readership is if you have to go so far out there to the Internet shops to type? So who is doing the reading? And if the legislators do not follow it in Tagalog but only in English, one wonders what are the chances. He responded to Lisa's comments by saying that it was interesting that she spoke about co-opting and the movements. If we talk about the open source movement, it is inherently nurtured and fostered by the Internet and now its been co-opted by big organisations where 'open and free' is big business. All the companies we have named already are 'open and free' advertisements. So one wonders how much co-opting we can do, other than anonymous or supporting the open and free standards and software.

To Desiree and Crystal's presentation of their paper he responded by saying the idea of fashion as networked technologies was intriguing and that we should not necessarily think that network society is all over the screen, there are always things interlinked, fashion and the whole

side of globalisation.

Jan referred to Desiree and Crystal's presentation and said that she wanted to offer two stories about the digital storytelling work at APC. 'Digital Storytelling' was a methodology used primarily with the survivors of violence and to tell their own stories digitally. The first story was of a young woman in Petrus Steyn, from when APC had gone there to do trainings on how to implement this project. The situation turned into something else altogether where it was about activists who work on violence against women and their stories. This particular young woman then told her own story that she had never shared with anyone before. After the workshop, she showed it to her parents. She was 28 years old and was divorced and has a son. She showed it to her parents and it was very emotional. She then went with a clear conscience and shared her story publicly with many women. She showed the story very proudly because it is evidence of her overcoming the situation that she was in.

The second story was of a woman who also made a digital story and for many months gave APC permission to use this story publicly because she felt exactly like the other lady, empowered in ways and by telling the story she felt really great about herself. Eighteen months after the story was made, she called us to say, "Stop showing it. That is not me any more. I am not that person and I do not want people to know who that is." All the while the story-teller was never named. It was always anonymous. No one knew who she was. She used techniques that disguised her identity. Yett for her, it was her in the story. When thinking about self representation, when thinking about methodologies, particularly about women to use the process for different kinds of work, this becomes very important. This whole notion of withdrawal of consent at any given moment of time is something that we have to emphasise. Especially now, everyone wants to know about a story. Everyone wants something to connect to. But if you, as the storyteller, do not connect to it any more, you should have the right to not share it. As a feminist, that really complicates work. It is a powerful story, and one sees how people respond to it. But if she does not

want to use it any more, we cannot.

Srilatha added that there was a very powerful similar story where Amnesty International, got sued by this woman. The woman was a survivor of ethnic violence in Bosnia. She found that ten years after they had filmed her reciting her experience of how the Serbs had used the rape of Bosnian Muslim women as part of the ethnic violence, her story was still on the website for fund raising and she asked them to withdraw the story and they did not. They said that it was a very effective story and she responded by saying – I am trying to get on with my life and you have trapped me in that victimhood for the rest of my life because it suits your purpose. This is a huge issue. The way in which once of these videos get online and take on a life of their own, makes withdrawing consent a very difficult thing to do.

Phet responded by saying that the digital shadows are cast everywhere and dispersed everywhere. You do not own it. It is not even concentrated anywhere. So how do you manage anything?

Lisa replied that the discussion reminded her of a piece she wrote on the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) a few years ago. It was about the degree to which being on the Internet involves a performance and what these various agencies were doing was having women perform a role of victim. In the piece, she wrote about RAWA and it was about co-implication of RAWA and a number of US feminist groups. RAWA had to stand in for the real victims of Taliban. A question then is – Can you possibly end up being too visible? Too visible for comfort. But is it possible to not perform on the Internet as well?

Additionally, she said, that one of the things that was very noticeable about the Filipino project was that the women who could not produce the number of stories or those who dropped out were entirely due to women's traditional obligations. It pointed out what we all know but need to be reminded of – this issue of gender, IT and citizenship has a much larger context which has to do with unequal and unjust gender relations in general as well.

