TRANSNATIONAL WOMEN'S NETWORKS: MATERIAL AND VIRTUAL SPACES IN MANILA, BANGKOK AND JAKARTA

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ABSTRACT

This research sought to examine the relationship between material and virtual space for Transnational Advocacy Network members in Manila, Bangkok and Jakarta. In the decade since the seminal work of Keck and Sikkink's 'Activists Beyond Borders' there have been significant technological advancement and the ensuing literature has positively portrayed the possibilities for network members and other activists. Through extensive semi-structured interviews with members of Transnational Women's Networks in Jakarta, Bangkok and Manila and thorough review of the literature it sought to establish the relationship between traditional, material spaces and emergent virtual spaces across four main themes; access to technology, relationships, freedom in virtual space and collective identity. These themes emerged from the fieldwork and presented themselves as trends within the literature which then led to their consideration within this research. This work argues that there is a continued relationship between material geography and virtual space and that an individual or groups physical location continues to have overriding implications on their online presence both in terms of their direct access, legislative obstacles and their perceptions of relationships and identity.

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INTRODUCTION

Since the initial publication of Keck and Sikkink's seminal work on Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs) in 1998, there have been rapid advances in technology, including the mainstreaming of the internet; the advent of much more portable devices for accessing it; and developments in the way this online space can be used. This naturally has an impact on the functioning of TANS; after all, they are in essence communicative structures.

Within the literature on the possibilities for all actors and activists that are created by technology there is one particular area that emerges as a predominant theme; space and spatiality. The literature is filled with references to space; "cyberspace", "virtual space" and even spaces that directly relate to physical realities: "information superhighways", for example. It is these concepts of space that form the framework for any consideration of activism within this thesis. They provide the overarching backdrop and lead to all the questions that follow. These concepts of space are inherently linked to technology and the advances of the previous fifteen years, and offer the power to reform and reshape networks and even individual activists. Some (Marston 2007; Paasi 1991) go as far as to argue that a change of space is as fundamental as a change of actor, and that the seemingly boundless possibilities an emergent space presents offer the ability to completely alter the way perspectives are formed, dialogue occurs and agendas are set. It has the potential to empower new actors and create a radically new way of operating.

There is reason for optimism that these technologies will have offered TAN members a different space than their physical realities in which to interact and operate, by making communication instant and offering new means and spaces for it to occur. Virtual space as a newly emerging space offers the potential for a more limitless space, separate from the restrictions TAN nodes may

experience in their material spaces (their geographically located spaces) and the freedom to be unbound from these material locations.

Spaces for Networks

It is important to consider understandings of how space can be defined in order to establish whether a space without a set of bound and definable limitations can truly be perceived as a space that TANs can utilise.

Traditionally, there has been a strong juxtaposition between traditional perceptions of space as bound and more contemporary interpretations of space as fluid. To leave behind these bound ideas of space is to leave behind the ideal of hierarchical scales, which are often demarcated by territory: i.e. the local, the national, or the global. Therefore for us to conceive of a virtual space, this space is reliant upon a perception of space as fluid, and not something that could be confined to a scalar perception.

There has been a distinct shift within the scholarship of recent years towards a more open perception of space: a move away from territorially bound and hierarchical interpretations (Juris 2009, Lagorce 2011) to one that is more open to negotiation and renegotiation while being constructed by the actors within it. This means that there is now the potential for virtual space to be interpreted as a space in its own right, and accordingly operate as a space separate from traditional geographies for TANs.

This trend towards a more fluid perception of space can be seen in the work of Gilson (2011), who suggests that space is a 'social product' (p.294). This builds on the idea of Featherstone et al that space is "open to [being] shaped, contested and produced through social and material relations" (2007; p. 384). Important to both of these conceptions of space is the concept that space is created – constructed through social relations, and those within it – rather than something determined by a bound geographical scale.

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Roces advances this idea of space as being shaped by those within it in her work on women's networks (2010). She proposes the idea of a 'transnational mental space': that women's networks operate in a place generated by their own imaginings, rather than something bound or defined by geographical or territorial borders. She also makes the argument that this mental space affects the material space in which they carry out their daily lives. Massey, on the other hand, sees space as the product of a series of 'interconnections' and social relations (1991).

Essential to contemporary fluid perceptions of space is the idea that it is a space created and negotiated by those participating in it, rather than delineated by a set of established boundaries. This in turn means that for there to be a virtual space, this must be demarcated by those TAN members participating in it and perceiving it as part of their operational space. To understand what this space could mean for those TANs requires a consideration of virtual space itself.

Virtual Space

Largely due to the exponential growth in the rate of technological development and access over the last decade there has been a visible increase in the amount of literature surrounding activism and virtual space (although virtual space itself goes by a variety of names). This particularly seems to have been relevant to the recent 'Arab Spring', in which technology was seen to play a pertinent role (i.e. Castells, 2012). There is a trend within this literature to see this as not only a 'new space'[1] but also as being reformatory and revolutionary, creating new opportunities and almost limitless possibilities for activists utilising it. The advantages of instant communication and the ability to share large quantities of information with great speed, and to access large quantities of information

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[1] New space being taken to mean one that has emerged as a product of technological innovation and separate from the traditional geographies of physical spaces

with equal speed is said to be overcoming "tyrannies of distance", allowing the formation of new relationships, embedding networks and creating new freedoms.

There are positive possibilities when it comes to freedoms in virtual space There has been a massive growth of online political and activist groups (Bowen 1996), a significant reduction in barriers to entry for networks and movements (Garrett. 2006), and the internet and modern forms of computer-mediated communication offer instantaneous access to large amounts of information quickly and cheaply (often for free), alongside the opportunity for many-to-many communication and the ability to disseminate information widely between interested parties. These are all positives of new technologies for activists.

These instant forms of communication are often seen as creating huge potential for the formation of new relationships, and to a further extent new networks. Virtual space allows for likeminded activists, donors and interested parties to find each other and build relationships regardless of geographical and time zone obstacles that traditionally would have posed potentially insurmountable barriers. This possibility is a cause of much of the optimism found in the literature on the potential of virtual space for activists and TANs (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2001; Bennett 2003; Castells 1997; Cleaver 1995, 1999; Escobar 2004; Lins Ribiero 1998). The theory is that as a result of the large numbers of forums and sites online, we now live in a highly interconnected world, and that the internet has woven this world into an "electronic web" (Harasim, 1993; p.284), allowing relationships to be formed within this technologically created space (Dahlgren 2000). There is even evidence to suggest that these virtual relationships can be translated into embedded long-term relationships, and therefore ongoing new networks. If this proves true in these cases then it would imply that virtual space is not only a legitimate space but one that is distinct from the material spaces in which the TAN nodes that participated in this study operate: it allows them

to develop in a way that they could not have done prior to the changes in technology of the last two decades.

It is well established that technology allows for what Garrett identifies as "immediate reach" (2006; p.214).This "informational empowerment" (Annis, 1992) is heralded in the literature as being one of the most significant developments brought about by technological advancement in recent years. Whether or not the simple ability to access and disseminate information more easily establishes a newly emergent space is contentious. Information could previously be shared; it was a slower process, and it was difficult to share as much information, but whether or not this is revolutionary is questionable and whether it implies more freedom for TANs in this 'emergent space' is something worthy of further research.

Castells sees virtual space as being one of "autonomous communication" for "unfettered deliberation" (Castells, 2012), the implication being that it offers new freedoms for activists. This idea is supported in works by both Kidd (2003) and Scott and Street (2003). This is the way in which the internet and virtual space could be the most reformatory for activists and TANs: to be able to operate without fear of repercussion in the same way they are often limited in their 'home' locations (for example, being subject to laws about public meetings and protests). If it can create a space to share ideas and opinions, to carry out protests and raise awareness without immediate risk, then it truly is a a space that is separate from individuals territorially bound, physical space in which they go about their daily lives.

There are some critics of this positive view of technological advances. Graham as early as 1998 suggested that we are at significant risk of "technological determinism", especially given the "utopian rhetoric surrounding new media technologies", while Featherstone calls for the reinsertion of geography into the transnational (2007). These concepts are both relatable to scholarship on technology and its potential to create spaces that offer more freedoms and new opportunities for TANs. It increasingly appears that when scholars are looking at virtual space,

there appears a form of disconnect between material and metaphorical spaces; in this case, between the geographical location of a TAN or TAN member and virtual space. Zhang identifies this as an assumption that there is a "radical distinction and disruption between the online and the offline". (2007; p. 221).

This problematisation of the more positive scholarship surrounding technology is where a lacuna in the existing scholarship is most visible. The existing work remains, while not unchallenged, without strong opposition, particularly in the area of literature on activism. Castell's hopeful 2012 work which was published in the aftermath of the Arab Spring embraced the tide of optimism about the possibilities technology could offer to those disenfranchised activists seeking to make themselves heard within their home countries; this is demonstrative of the wider trend within the scholarship. There is cause for optimism –this is not being disputed –but not without caveats. The grounded empirical nature of Keck and Sikkink's work on TANs has not been replicated in the light of technological advancement. There is a need to provide a more contemporary picture of the realities of modern network members in specific parts of the world. The intention of the research undertaken here is not to reinvent Keck and Sikkink's seminal work; rather it seeks to problematize the existing literature on activism in virtual spaces and challenge some of its understanding through a programme of deductive empirical research.

The relationship between these technologically created spaces and more traditionally established ones is a subject of contention. While this will be fully explored both in the literature review and throughout the text of this thesis, it is worth identifying that a significant proportion of the literature continues to identify these emergent spaces as being independent of traditional physical geographies. It portrays them as unbound and fluid, contrasting with the understanding of place-bound geographies as rigid and dictated by a scalar geography. The difference between spaces created around fixed physical locations and those that are perceived as being almost

'floating' spaces is dramatic: the former is shaped by inherent characteristics that are dictated by the physical context, whereas the latter is free to be shaped by the actors within it through a series of negotiations and renegotiations.

The contention arises when considering whether these spaces are entirely separate from one another. Those identifying technology as providing revolutionary free spaces for activists offer the argument that it has provided them with so many new means of communicating and organising that it has completely reformed their environments, detaching them from the constraints of time, distance and regulation traditionally imposed by physical spaces. The scholarship that counters this argument states that in fact technology has not "emerged into a vacuum" (Mynatt et al, 1998) and that there is still an ongoing relationship between online and offline spaces. The essence of this scholarship is that technology is born into an existing social and cultural context (Khiabar 2003; Mansell 2004; Miller and Slater 2000), and that this context will inform how users engage with it and what possibilities it really offers. This would mean that even with all the possibilities technology has offered, limitations continue to be imposed by activists' material spaces.

By leaving behind traditional territorially bound understandings of space, there is a tendency to leave geography behind as a whole. To focus on the transnational (Olesen, 2004) and the horizontal (Juris, 2009) means that there is often an implication that traditional spaces and scales have been reductive to the point of redundancy. This is seen particularly in recent literature on the virtual, both the technology that allows for it and as a space in itself. These perspectives heavily inform this work and resulted in the overarching research question; *what is the relationship between material spaces and virtual spaces?*

This question was then contextualised by narrowing it to; *what is this spatial relationship and its implications for TAN members in Jakarta, Bangkok and Manila.*

This work seeks to answer these core questions through the thematic consideration of four main concepts; digital divides, relationships, security and freedom in virtual space and finally collective identity. Through existing literature and sustained empirical work then an analysis can be undertaken of a fluid space which is shaped by those negotiating it and how those individuals and groups are perceiving the realities of virtual spaces.

Transnational Advocacy Networks

This research identifies TANs as its core unit of analysis, however this does not mean there is a requirement to look at all elements of a network, nor how technology could have changed them in every permutation. Rather it seeks to look much more narrowly and explicitly at the experiences of individual nodes of different women's TANs in relation to technology. These nodes are grouped geographically, and are all part of wider networks that look at women's issues.

The human element to this is the possibilities that are created by this technology: that it truly could offer new freedoms to activists, both within and outside of advocacy networks. Technology, has the potential to empower individuals, and to offer them the ability to join networks and find likeminded groups and people to share knowledge and information with, in order to create real change in their physical realities. However, in order for this to be true, the internet would have to offer them a genuinely free space in which to do so. This thesis seeks to examine whether the internet and technology have truly facilitated a new, unrestricted space for activists who identify as part of TANs to operate within.

Understanding the implications of technology for TANs and the activists who constitute them is of importance, as it allows us to comprehend the future potential for operating and mobilising the forces that challenge states. If we can identify a comprehensive shift in how TANs are working as a result of the proliferation of online spaces, this has possibilities for enfranchising those who had previously been excluded from having their voices heard with the click of a few buttons. It also potentially offers a space in which even the most repressive governments can be challenged in more anonymous and safer ways than physical mobilisation would offer. Finally, if the more optimistic claims regarding technology prove true, it will allow those in more repressive states to access a wealth of new ideas and methods by which to challenge traditional sites of authority.

There is also a shortage of empirical data on the changes within activism that have been caused directly by technological advancement. Change has happened at an expedited rate, with desktop computers ceding way to laptops and now smartphones and tablets; the internet going from slow dial-up connections to fibre-optic broadband with the ability to connect remotely from almost anywhere means that the scholarship has not been able to catch up with the daily realities of activists. This means that much of the work surrounding technology is now either dated or based on theoretical assumption that had yet to be proven, or disproven, through empirical study. There is a need to correct that, by making an empirical offering to the field through extensive qualitative data gathering and analysis.

In order to make this contribution and to offer a focus for the qualitative data requires identifying a core actor for examination, in this case Transnational Advocacy Networks. There are a number of reasons behind this, primarily which as members of TANs they are already interacting on a broader scale than that which is dictated by their physical location. Working at a transnational level means that they already have international connections; these connections in turn can be facilitated by technology and the advances in computer mediated communication. This means that

there is a greater scope for technology and its resulting outcomes to have changed the ways in which they operate.

Furthermore, they are by their very nature dense webs of communication and information-sharing – something the literature on technology purports it to facilitate in new ways –so it would be logical that this development would have had a number of outcomes for TANs that it may not have had upon actors outside of such networks. The advent of email, Skype, social media and web forums have provided a vast number of new tools for communication, and this diversity has had huge power to change the way in which networks communicate. Stone even argues that the "growth of TANs has been propelled by technological advances in transport and communication" (2010; p.38) demonstrating the inherent link in the extant scholarship between technology and TANs.

Methods

This project, like the majority of work on TANs, falls within the broader church of social constructivism. This has informed the methodology pursued to answer the questions posed above. It is an attempt to understand how TAN members have constructed their understandings of virtual space in the ways outlined above, and to pursue this goal, it has examined a purposefully delineated sample: Transnational Women's Network members in Manila, Bangkok and Jakarta. In order to build a picture of how they are experiencing virtual space, extensive qualitative research was necessary, alongside the employment of a full review of the relevant literature.

The empirical contribution this project seeks to make to the field is primarily derived from an extensive series of semi-structured interviews carried out over two periods of fieldwork in the three constituent countries. Semi-structured interviews offered the opportunity for participants to share their own experiences of virtual space in an open format. Participants' identities were a key part of understanding their negotiation of virtual space; therefore, subjects taking the lead in the

interviews allowed them to construct and expound on their identities in relation to the topics that were introduced, rather than risking interference from the interviewer.

Interview Subjects

Participants were identified members of TWNs, either through self-identification (i.e. public statements of being members of women's networks that operate transnationally; for example, Homenet, which clearly demonstrates on its website its status as part of a TWN) or through inferences and referrals: for example, the interview with Primar Jardaleza from Patamaba, which came from a previous interview subject's recommendation as someone who was part of her wider network.

Even when limited to members of TWNs there was a noticeable diversity –as one would expect from networks –in participants and the groups of which they were members. There were those who were directly linked to states: for example, GABRIELA, which both forms a TWN and acts as a political party; those that did not have their main branch in the city in which the activist was based; like Women's Participation Org.; and those which were small local organisations that participated in far bigger networks, such as Likhaan Women's Health Centre, which provides front-line services and works on wider advocacy issues. The common factors were their membership of networks and their focus on women's issues; either of bodily integrity, or legal equality. Further details on the nature of the organisations can be found in appendix B.1.

In total, 42 women participated in interviews for this research with seventeen in Manila, ten in Bangkok and fifteen in Jakarta. There were six group interviews and three interviews where a participant came with someone to act as a translator. All candidates were members of wider women's networks

Research Methods

These participants were interviewed during two extensive periods of fieldwork undertaken in the region, from July to October 2012 and from July to October 2013. Semi-structured interviews informed the topics that became the backbone of this thesis; topics were derived from interviews, rather than enforced upon them. Themes that emerged then merited further research and consideration, as they were evident issues arising in interactions within virtual space.

By conducting the interviews face to face, there was the potential to develop a relationship and relax the interview subject. The face-to-face nature of the interviews was also necessary, as it allowed for the inclusion of participants who did not have access to the necessary technology or the time to carry out remote interviews either online or by telephone. Furthermore, given that this research is a consideration of whether virtual space has surpassed the importance of geographic spaces, to have considered only those who could be found in virtual spaces would have undermined the research topic substantially

The majority of interviews were undertaken one on one. This was in order to foster a sense of freedom to speak and directness without any one particular voice dominating a discussion, meaning the interview subject was fully heard. However, this was not always possible. Language barriers meant that in a number of interviews there was more than one participant, with occasional translation. The questions used for the interview, or rather the loose topics, can be found in Appendix A1. While this script offered a guideline for the interviews –as can be seen in the transcriptions –they were carried out in a very wide ranging way that allowed the subject to lead the conversation, and therefore offer their interpretations of virtual space and what issues relating to it were important to them.

The group discussions, where the majority of participants spoke English, allowed for free-flowing and open discussion and offered insights into group dialogue surrounding constructions of virtual space. It also allowed for translation, which meant that subjects who may have been excluded from the study for not being English speaking (which would have had particular implications for

the sections of this research that consider the importance of language in virtual space) could participate and offer opinions, giving a wider scope that may otherwise have been neglected .As support for the interviews, an initial survey was distributed to candidates, along with a request to share it with members of their network, friends, and anyone else engaged with women's activism in their locale. The survey offered some groundwork for the fieldwork; however, uptake was limited, in part because it was online and in part because of language barriers. Even when it was successfully disseminated, it was difficult to ensure the actors completing it were relevant to the goals of this research; therefore, the data gathered from it is of limited use, and is minimally cited in this thesis. It is only referenced when considering digital divides: the qualitative data used to build a picture of TWN member's understandings of virtual space was gathered through the interviews, rather than the survey.

Participants for the fieldwork were located in two main ways. The first was cold-calling or emailing those organisations whose profiles fit this research; i.e., members of transnational networks working on women's issues. While this had some success, it was challenging to garner responses: those contacted were clearly reticent about engaging with an unknown researcher via email or telephone calls. Much more successful as a method of finding interview subjects was 'snowballing'. Initial contacts in all three case studies were frequently willing to introduce other members of their networks or activists they knew through conferences or personal relationships. This led to the majority of the interviews featured here. The fact that introductions were made through personal connections also led to an increased range of subjects, and ensured that not all those who participated were found in virtual space: those who only predominantly operated offline were included in this research. This contributes to preventing a bias towards only those TWN members who were comfortable with online communications being included.

Case Study Selection

There are two key elements to case study selection beyond the consideration of selecting TANs as an actor: firstly, why women's networks rather than another form of TAN? Secondly, why Indonesia, the Philippines and Thailand?

The initial consideration is 'Why women's networks?' One of the prevalent divides in the digital divides scholarship is that of gender: the literature talks of a 'gender divide' in virtual space and online engagement (Chen and Wellman, 2004). This divide will naturally factor into any network's processes within online engagement. Therefore, one of the simplest ways to overcome this variable was to look solely at women's networks: these networks are dominated by women, meaning that gender divides will not pervade findings.

Secondly, the nature of women's networks informs their identities, and the narratives and discourses around 'femininity' in each state offer identities to those within networks in a way that offers them a "hybrid agency" (Hilsden, 2007; Roces 2009). This idea of a hybrid agency automatically promotes the ability to engage across mind-sets and spaces; this is not only beneficial in terms of network membership, but also in terms of the ability to move between and negotiate within different spaces. This makes them a natural fit for considering the relationships between TAN memberships and spatialities. This transnationalism is already inherently present in the "transnational mental space" (Roces, 2010; p.3) that has been so prevalent in shaping women's networks.

TWNs are wide reaching: since the 'UN Decade on Women' and the Beijing conference, the emergence of women's networks has been rapid and high profile. This means they were likely to be present in any country where the conditions for TANs were appropriate (i.e. not completely repressive). Furthermore, women's issues are found in almost all states, giving them a greater

relevance to most case studies. This allowed for a broader choice of geographic locations when selecting case studies, and ensured one type of network was able to be compared across all the countries included.

The reason for narrowing case selection to women's networks is also linked to the location for this research. Asian women's networks offer their own "peculiar context", as they have frequently rejected the word 'feminist' and adopted their own narrative, intentionally choosing to separate themselves from what they perceive to be "Western feminists" and creating their own stories. This relationship between place and identity within networks makes for a particularly interesting context for considering women's networks. It also implies a level of independence in how they frame their issues, which offers an interesting variable in considering networks.

A practical reason for considering women's networks is the construction of relational identities. As a woman identifying with women's networks, this allowed for an understanding and an ease in developing relationships, as there was already a similarity upon meeting candidates for interview that allowed conversation to happen naturally and subjects to feel an instant relationship. This benefitted the research as it allowed for a more honest dialogue and a deeper insight to be ascertained than if there had been particular obstacles between the researcher and the participants.

Overall women's networks offered a diversity of issues and locations, which meant that there was the possibility for a variety of contexts, making them the most suitable type of network for this research.

The next question that factored into the case study location was where the research should be conducted.

Region

There are strong reasons for choosing South East Asia as a region for analysis. Within close geographic proximity, there are a diverse range of countries that are at different stages of emergence as democracies. The geographic proximity is significant: not just for practicalities of fieldwork, but for understanding the challenges that their international location may impose upon activists. All of these countries are roughly the same distance from developed Western democracies, which have traditionally dominated TANs and their agendas.

To some extent, it also ensures that the activists examined face similar obstacles in terms of travel and location: they will have the same distance to travel to conferences further afield, and face the same obstacles in building relationships internationally. Controlling this variable is essential when considering the changes that technology can cause in relationships and its power to replace face to face communication.

Another similar obstacle that is regionally related is that of language: an area that has no countries where English is spoken as a first language means that English as a first language would not be a demonstrable variable. However within Asia there was the interesting concept that some states histories had been very heavily influenced by European and American colonialism which has implications for languages spoken in the region. This is obviously somewhat varied by the teaching of English in Filipino schools which is directly related to the American influence in their history whereas there was not a similarly established programme in the other two case studies. This posed

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a variable that had the power to have a dramatic outcome for virtual space and therefore was useful in terms of gaining a broader picture of the factors affecting relationships between TANs and online spaces.

This still leaves the question of ''Why South East Asia?' as opposed to North Africa or other developing regions. South East Asia is uniquely placed in offering a variety of political regimes and context (Roces, 2010; p3). These, in turn, have implications for activists in the varying contexts. The differing histories and regime structures allows us to have insight into the relationship between offline and online spaces for activists in a mixture of contexts, which allows us a wider scope and prevents the peculiarities of a single location or structure.

The emergence of democracies, particularly over the past three decades, also makes it a region that is ripe for TANs and activism. As will be firmly established in the literature review, TANs require certain conditions to be able to operate: primarily, that a state is not overly repressive. If a state is overly repressive, then the model by which TANs seek to create change in individual states cannot function, as they cannot apply pressure from above and below (See Brysk, 1995; Keck and Sikkink, 1998; p.12) From a technological perspective, overly repressive states would also be problematic. While two of the biggest state regulators of internet access are present in East Asia (China and North Korea) they do not lie in the South East Asian region considered throughout the cases included in this thesis.

However, crucial is the fact that the region has traditionally had "stark limits" for activism (Roces, 2010; p.3). This means that there has been a real need for new freedoms and ways of organising: while the three states considered are not so repressive as to completely prevent activism or the development of TANs, they have been limited in their methods of forming and mobilising.

Therefore, if the more optimistic literature regarding the powers of technology proves itself to be accurate, this will have significant effects on activism in this region. If it can offer new, unregulated, spaces where there are not such "stark limits" then it has the potential to hugely empower TANs and their members; perhaps to an even greater extent than in more traditionally 'free' countries.

Country Profiles

Having answered the question of 'why Asia?' the natural follow-on question is 'why Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines?' The three countries included in this study, taken as a whole, demonstrate the diversity implied in the above discussion of the region. This is combined with a number of similar comparable: all three states offer enough freedom for TANs to be able to form and function. This is demonstrated by their strong history of activism, which is discussed in more detail below. Furthermore, all three countries are archipelagos; while this may appear to be a small detail, it has substantial implications for the structure of activism in the countries. The island nature of each state means that there is significant internal diversity, and, more importantly, travel obstacles even within each country.

This again means that technology has the potential to play a significant role in solving difficulties for networks within Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. If face-to-face contact is challenging due to extensive travel times – even internally within states – then there is even more reason to embrace instantaneous forms of communication that remove the barriers of time and cost that come with travelling to meetings. The archipelago structure of these countries will also have informed the shape of existing networks: hubs are more likely to be located in one geographic location, with outreach to the wider state. This is vital to the reasons behind selecting these three countries,

technology is cited heavily as causing "time and space compression" Harvey (1990) which would be of such huge benefit to these networks given their scattered nature even in a domestic setting. There is the real power for virtual space to offer change for their operations and this made them ripe for comparison. This was evidenced by the fact that in all three countries activism was concentrated within the political hub – the capital cities – rather than spread broadly across the country. This is explored in further detail within the 'rural versus urban' section of this chapter.

All three states also have an extensive history of both activism and women's activism. Without these two preconditions, then there would be no way to analyse how activists may have experienced change as a result of technological advancement. Furthermore, without a deep and embedded activist population, it would be difficult for networks to operate as they require a strong local as well as transnational base in order to be successful. However this activism has emerged in different forms and at different periods and in response to different challenges which allows for a broad set of variables in how it has established itself and how it operates; for example Filipino women's activists are frequently asked to host UN events due to their proficiency in the English language (which is taught in schools). These differences create different circumstances for the interview subjects in each city state and create varying environmental contexts.

Further to this each state chosen exhibited differing levels of state control and structure; varying from Thailand which was considered (even at the time of research prior to the coup) to have a reasonably repressive governmental structure to the Philippines which was considered to be substantially more open. This creates different needs for the activists and may influence their experiences of both material and virtual spaces allowing for a more rounded picture of the realities for TAN members in these spaces to be established.

This research focused on women's activism and therefore the history of women's activism in the candidate cities is a crucial element to understanding the context in which this research was

undertaken, and it requires a full consideration to establish the 'offline' space in which interview subjects had been carrying out their day to day work prior to the advent of the internet.

While there is not an extensive scholarship on women's activism in South East Asia specifically in order to successfully understand how NGOs are operating in each country in the present, an overview of the political context is necessary. Where historical contexts continue to inform civil society and the women's movements in the present, they also need to be considered. Moreover the religious context of each country cannot be disregarded; even in the most officially secular of states, wherever there is a predominant and particularly strong religion, this will inform debates and perceptions – not to mention activists' agendas. It can provide a help or a hindrance to the advancement of civil society; in some cases, it can prove both

In all three countries there was a rejection of 'Western feminism' and a need for it to be adapted to suit local narratives and identities (Roces, 2010; p.3).to fit the context of each country. Thai activists interviewed rejected feminism as 'un-Thai'; Filipino women felt the need to do more than merely graft Western ideologies onto their movements (Roces, 2010; p.35; Falk in Roces, 2010; p.111) and instead refocused them for the 'Filipino woman', and in Indonesia, the origins of the feminist movement being linked to the nationalist movement led to wariness about being identified with Western feminism who were deemed to be 'non-Indonesian' (Robinson, 2006; p. 175).

It is partially these individual narratives that make the three countries such useful case studies. By having such specific narratives and attitudes regarding feminism they are likely to contribute unique elements to TANs, and particularly TWNs. TANs also have significant power to shape the discourse of their members so there is real room for shifts in the individual member's attitudes and identities as a result of network membership. Therefore if technology has created a real change in conditions for TAN members in the three countries considered, then there would be a very strong evidentiary case that technology really can have a dramatic outcome for TANs, and that the existing scholarship has not overstated its potential or been 'technologically deterministic'.

Indonesia

The political history of women's movements in Indonesia can be broken down into four major periods: colonialism (under the Dutch until 1945 Sukarno's early democracy (1945- 19867), followed by Suharto and his 'New Order' authoritarianism (1967 – 1997), and finally the period of democracy from the fall of Suharto to the present. Each of these periods has provided different political opportunity structures for civil society and activism in Indonesia, with the last three all continuing to inform how women's movements operate in the present. Furthermore, activism in Indonesia has all occurred within the context of Islam, which acts to shape how the movements operate and what agendas they act in accordance with. However Indonesia is not an Islamic state – governments have never enforced or operated Islamic law –and therefore the influence of this faith does not primarily make itself felt through legislation. (There are, however, areas of Indonesia that are experiencing an upsurge in political Islamic movements – for example, Aceh – and these have placed pressure on central governments and on civil society to adopt more explicitly Islamic legislation).

Following Indonesian independence, and throughout the early period of democracy, women's movements and NGO activism began to flourish. However, with the arrival of Suharto's 'New Order', the dominant political structure began to present a significant obstacle to activism of any kind. However, some women's organisations continued to exist by maintaining a low public profile and not presenting any form of threat to Suharto's government. These organisations exist to this day (Muhammadiyah and NU) and represent the only mass women's organisations in Indonesia, claiming 15 million followers. This means Islamic activism has a following that secular women's activism cannot claim to have, leading to secular activism being open to accusations of elitism and a lack of legitimacy, which in turn affects its ability to exert influence on the state.(Feillard 1997; Rinaldo, 2008). As a result of years of repressive government, women's

organisations revel in their autonomy and guard it, meaning that there is not much room in which an umbrella organisation aiming to include and represent all women's movements can operate.

Civil society of all kinds in Indonesia is still in its early days, with only 18 years of democracy in which to operate. However, the emergence of literally thousands of NGOs since 1998 shows the potential for the growth and power of civil society in Indonesia. This civil society remains heavily affected by Indonesia's religious dimension context, despite it being a secular state; women's movements have been concerned with Jakarta's recent agreement with Aceh (in order to attempt to quell separatist movements)

Women's groups in Indonesia do have some access to government, via the National Committee on Violence against Women. However, the nature of factional coalition government's post-Suharto has meant that activists' focus on passing legislation that some consider radical (i.e. reform of the marriage act) has limited the success that activists have been able to achieve with their agendas. Also, during the early years of democracy, governments were short lived, often brought down by corruption and scandal. However with President Yudohyono has come consistency and longevity, and the first real potential for civil society (Mujani and Liddle, 2010), women's movements and activists to make some gains in Indonesia. This has led to a reaching-out across borders for support in achieving goals domestically.

These elements all offer contextual implications for TWNs. The nature of women's networks and activism shapes the way in which the participants in this research will operate. The heavy influence of the state over previous decades means that civil society –particularly the lower-key women's networks –is still developing and establishing themselves. This will have implications for how they can be expected to function. The disparity between secular women's activism and religious women's organisations also creates a divide internally that we may expect to see reflected in these movements' transnational activities. The independence that the literature ascribes to Indonesian women's movements (Blackburn in Roces, 2010; p.29) may make them unwilling to join networks

that they see as dominated by overseas members and prevent them from embracing the internationalism that virtual space claims to offer. It will also have consequences for how they form relationships; they will be likely to form relationships with likeminded, local groups that have emerged across the same period.

The Philippines

Over the last century the Philippines has undergone a number of changes in governance structure. It has a unique historical context: it has been "pre-colonial, post-colonial and transnational".

The history of colonialism in the Philippines is critical to the women's movement and much of civil society in the Philippines. Under colonialism, women's movements were often directly linked to nationalist movements. However, initially, causes like women's suffrage were not high on the agenda as there seemed little prospect of anybody getting the vote under the colonial regime. This history of colonialism still informs contemporary women's movements: by linking female oppression to the despised Spanish colonial period, they create a narrative that frames discrimination against women in a context that automatically gives it negative connotations. They develop this by illustrating the pre-colonial period as a golden era for women's rights in the country.

Historically, the Philippines is Asia's oldest democracy. However, activism faced a number of obstacles since the end of colonialism; most significantly, the period of martial law. Under Ferdinand Marcos, there was no political space for activism to operate within, and from 1972 activist movements were forced underground as a result of the execution of prominent activists – i.e. Lorena Barres – and a hiatus of almost all civil society movements. However, there was some organisation; for example women in the Communist underground formed KALAYAAN in 1983. Nevertheless, the structure of the political resistance to Marcos militated against any focus on women's activist movements.

It should be noted that the nature of Filipino women's activism has always been and remains transnationally and internationally linked (Roces, 2010; p. 35). This is in part due to the very nature of Filipino identity: for example, the prevalence of human trafficking and overseas workers have required its activists to operate in a transnational space. Furthermore, the substantial Filipino diaspora means that there are pre-established connections overseas that allow messages to be shared and dialogues to occur across borders. An example of the internationalism of politicised women's activism in the Philippines is the group and political party GABRIELA, which has offices in the USA, Europe and Australia. The NGO DAWN operates in both the Philippines and Japan, and the Centre for Migrant Advocacy has links worldwide. Both of these groups are members of TWNs and were participants in this research. This transnationalism allows them access to a different political opportunity structure.

Furthermore, this transnationalism has always encouraged activists to think globally, giving them a different mentality and making them proactive in hosting international conferences. Filipino] activists are regularly asked to chair panels at UN meetings and NGO conferences and to participating in the international feminist movement. This internationalism has implications for this thesis: being so proactively engaged transnationally means that they have pre-existing overseas relationships, which will have been established through varying forms of communication. This will have implications for their ability to integrate new technologies and spaces into their operations, and will also affect how they already identify and perceive themselves in a wider context.

Activists face two main obstacles in the Philippines: the Church and the State. The state often maintains traditional positions [on women's issues such as abortion], and is heavily linked with the Catholic Church. Furthermore, there are often issues of corruption and dynastic politics that have continued long since the end of Marcos's period of martial law (Kang, 2002). These place obstacles on the ability of activists and movements to achieve goals, as they are not operating

within what we would consider a traditionally democratic context. However, Filipina women's activists do have some government participation in 'critical collaboration' (Sobritchea, 2004): they act as members of the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women, complicating the delineation between civil society and the state. Furthermore, a number of women's movements seek to get members elected, with GABRIELA being the most recent of these. However, there has only ever been limited success in getting women's organisations' candidates into office: no GABRIELA candidate has ever won re-election, and overall women's representation in government represents only 22.5 percent of congress according to the Philippines Commission on Women).

The Catholic Church poses a contradictory and complex obstacle. Despite feminist nuns being some of the Philippines' most important feminist theoreticians, the Church's uncompromising views on women's issues, from contraception through to sexuality, place a significant obstacle in the path of the women's movement in the Philippines. Recent examples of this difficulty have been the church's refusal to support sex education (outside of religious teaching on abstinence) within schools. When it was trialled in a small number of schools in Manila, representatives of the Church organised protests and preached to parents that it was against the principles of Catholicism to educate students on safe sex. A further example – and one which also highlights the often direct relationship between church and state – was the bylaw that made the sale of contraception in Manila illegal in 2000 until 2005, passed by the then Mayor Joseph Atienza.. These traditional attitudes held by the State and reinforced by the Church have provided a substantial barrier to women's activism in the Philippines, and prevented the Responsible Parenting Act (which enshrines policies like sex education in schools, the right to contraception etc.) from coming into law.

Thailand

It must be noted at the outset that the coup that took place in Thailand in 2014 took place after the fieldwork for this research had been completed. Therefore, the current political situation –which is substantially more repressive –does not form a part of this profile, as it does not offer context for the research analysis that follows in this thesis. It will, however, be need to take into account in any future research regarding TANs' operations in this state.

Contextually Thailand could, at the time of the initial research for this project, be considered as somewhat politically confused (Hewison and Connors, 2008; McCargo, 2005; Pongsudhirak 2008). It has emerged from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy, as a result of a hugely protracted process that has been ongoing since the 1930s. This is an obvious variable that differentiates Thailand from the other two case studies included in this thesis: it does not offer a case study of a state that has fully moved towards democracy. While in 2013, it appeared to be on a path towards an increasingly democratic political context, the monarchy played a very significant role in controlling the state.

Thailand has long offered a more tumultuous political context than Indonesia, and is more akin to the Philippines, with a history of revolutions and coups that have led to changes in governances and regimes. The monarchy has, however, remained throughout in varying forms and with varying levels of influence over state structure and policy.

This does not mean that there was not a very significant role for civil society within Thailand; this had existed since the days of absolute monarchy. The women's movements were deeply linked with the movements towards democracy

Thaksin Shinawatra's reign as Prime Minister of the country from 2001 to 2006 represented a significant setback for activists of all kinds. Shinawatra sought to exert high levels of control over dissent and forces that he felt worked against the state. Simpson described this period of governance as one of 'competitive authoritarianism' (2005; p.1), which demonstrates the

regression that democracy experienced in the early 2000s. Shinawatra's period of Government resulted in the incarceration or disappearance of a number of activists, which led to a climate of fear among network members and movements in the country.

Religion does not create the same obstacles for women's activists in Thailand as can be seen in the previous two profiles. Although the country is predominantly Buddhist, religion does not have such a strong influence in shaping government policy and is therefore not an area that requires a change in discourse in order to ultimately create change in state-proposed legislation. In fact, Thailand is the country with the most egalitarian gender relations of the countries found in this thesis, and compares positively with other countries in South and East Asia (Falk in Roces, 2010 p. 111).

This has led to a division in the types of women's groups that feature within Thai civil society: namely, between those groups that are advocacy-focused and those that work on welfare. Advocacy-based groups seek change, attempt to represent disenfranchised women within the country and make sure their stories are presented in an effort to effect policy change. Welfare-based groups, which are the more prominent of the two, simply work to provide welfare where required within a gender-based programme aimed at women in need of assistance.

The division will have obvious implications for a study involving TAN nodes: the former groups will feature heavily as participants, whereas the latter are far less likely to be represented within networks. While this presents a concern, this research has narrowed itself to focus on participants within TANs. Although not all groups within a case study country may be equally represented, an examination is to be carried out on the realtionship between material geography and virtual space within TAN nodes, rather than NGOs or civil society groups. Technology will have had an impact upon how welfare groups within Thailand operate; however, the nature of this change will likely have differed between groups outside of TANs and those within TANs, owing to the latter being platforms for dense exchanges of communication and ideas.

Perhaps also as a result of the egalitarianism in gender relations (Falk in Roces 2010; p. 111) 'feminism' has negative connotations in Thailand. It is considered in many circles to be 'un-Thai', rooted in Western ideals and values, and therefore not considered to be suitable for Thai women. This has led to the creation of a unique narrative surrounding women, womanhood and the issues involved with gender. This, as with the discourse surrounding feminism in the Philippines, is important as this dialogue has the power to be changed with increased exposure to outside ideas and influences – either as a part of TWNs, or as a result of the added densities of communications that technology can provide. This is a part of the identity of female activists and TAN members in Thailand, so if virtual spaces offer the power to shape identity, this may be an element that changes as a result of increased discourse regarding 'feminism' with cross-border activists.

This particular female narrative does not mean that women's movements or their members in Thailand have remained inwardly focused. Groups from Thailand have participated in international and transnational women's movements and networks in a substantial capacity. They participate in international institutions: the head of the Asia Pacific Regional Planning committee for the Conference on Women (which is often seen as a seminal moment in women's networks) was a Thai activist, as was the head of the NGO forum. This means that, although technology will offer access to some newly emerging spaces, there were already efforts made by the women's movements in Thailand to build transnational connections and participate in international dialogues. In this sense, technology and the growth of virtual spaces does not offer a completely revolutionary space or identity change.

Data Analysis

The initial period of fieldwork demonstrated a number of themes that were pursued in a second period of fieldwork. This initial fieldwork was used as a preliminary exercise to establish focus and deduce core themes which were then further assessed in the secondary fieldwork. The analysis of the initial fieldwork was conducted using hand coding and the development of an understanding of what topics were important to the activists interviewed.

The data gathered through the extensive range of interviews that were undertaken in the second period of fieldwork were then analysed primarily using hand coding to assess discourse and establish recurring themes and words. It is this coding that has led to the inclusion of specific quotes through the ensuing text. The advantage being that it allowed for an obvious emergence of trends in discourse and theme. This discourse analysis was then placed in the broader context of extant literature on the topics that presented themselves through the period of deductive fieldwork.

Thesis Structure

Stemming from the fieldwork and the literature a number of clear themes emerged which form the structure that follows. The initial chapters offer a literature review of the background topic of spatiality and the evolution of the scholarship surrounding it, and an overview of the literature surrounding the core actor in this thesis, TANs. The former offers an understanding of the context that TANs work within; the latter allows for an understanding of how these TANs operate. Using these two literature reviews, a framework is established for the substantive chapters that follow.

Drawing on the themes that were evident in existing scholarship and those which arose from the statements of interview participants, the following four substantive chapters use literature and supporting empirical evidence drawn from interview participants. The first chapter establishes the context for accessing virtual space: considering infrastructure and social factors, and their implications for TWN members to be able to access online environments. The second chapter

offers an analysis of the impact of virtual space on relationship formation and development for TWN members. Chapter three considers online freedoms, and whether virtual space offers a more deregulated space where activists can enjoy greater freedoms than in their material realities. The final substantive chapter offers a consideration of the impact of virtual space on identity for those who involve themselves in networks. Finally, the conclusions offer a consideration of the contribution and limitations of this project, and the potential for future research.

Each subject area contains its own small literature review and methodology at the beginning that establishes the framework to consider each topic. Rather than include these in the overarching methodology they allow an introduction to each chapter's specific subject area and provide a clear outline for the analysis that follows.

DEFINING SPACES AND SCALES

In much of the literature there is a "utopian rhetoric that surrounds new media technologies" (Graham, 1998 cites Bell, 1981; Kling, 1996; Negroponte, 1998; Rheingold, 1993), the idea that suddenly thanks to faster and cheaper access to communication there is the room for a public space, without boundary or constraint (Papchrissi, 2002). There are reasonable grounds for this optimistic view of technologies, the internet has seen a massive growth in the numbers of online political and activist groups (Bowen 1996; Browning 1996), and the literature is almost unanimous on the idea that the costs and barriers to entry of networks have been significantly reduced by the growth and advancements in technology in recent years (Leizerov 2000; Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2001, Myers 2000; Brainard and Siplon 2000; Garrett; 2006).

In order to understand whether technology has created an alternate space for activists requires an understanding of perceptions of the space in which they exist and practice. Without this understanding we cannot build a complete picture of what defined spaces prior to recent technological changes nor perceive how this may have changed with the opening of these technologically created spaces. Furthermore it is necessary to be able to interpret the meaning of these spaces. There is a definitive split in the literature between traditional approaches which view space as a bound entity and alternative approaches that view space as fluid and open to negotiation. This juxtaposition between fluid and bound spaces is pervasive and an important way of delineating between approaches and directly affects whether ''virtual space' can be interpreted as a 'new' space.

The traditional model applied when understanding the spaces in which activism operates has been the scalar model of contentious politics, originating in geography and utilised in a range of disciplines. It proposes that space is a "relational, power-laden and contested construction that

actors strategically engage with, in order to legitimise or challenge existing power relations. In the course of these struggles new scales are constructed" (Leitner, Sheppard and Sziarto, 2008; p. 159).

A recurring interpretation of the scalar model found in the literature is that of the 'vertical' or the 'horizontal', with the onus often on the idea that technology will allow a move away from a 'vertical' hierarchical use of space and move towards a more 'horizontal' and 'democratic' (Juris, 2009; Lagorce, 2011) space. Notably even a scalar understanding of space allows for the development of a horizontal, not all those applying a scalar lens insist on this framing of space being vertical; particularly in contemporary scholarship there is an understanding that scalar frames need not be vertical (Collinge 1999; Leitner and Miller, 2007). This theory is limiting in that it sees spaces as necessarily bound and does not allow for their creation or negotiation by those acting within them. If spaces are enforced on actors, both groups and individuals, then there is no room for them to be creating and recreating spaces through an ongoing process of discourse and negotiation. The space comes from the top down. This would not allow for the consideration of a newly created space which has emerged through this process of navigation. This very bound concept of space therefore gives little room for the actors involved in any action and considers it as almost a separate issue. This is particularly problematic when considering 'virtual space' as it is not a physical or material space and therefore would struggle to fit this picture of space.

Another interpretation of this filter of politics of scale, which is most frequently applied with a focus on the geographic levels at which activists are seen to engage It places activism within a context of local, national, regional and global defining their space by territorial entity, despite the often transnational nature of activism it directly relates and is often applied placing them either in a 'regional' or 'global' space (Leitner, Sheppard and Sziarto, 2008). Olesen critiques the idea of using global as a frame suggesting that it is so inclusive as to be "analytically useless", this carries

with it an implication that social action is becoming detached from the local and national and that discussing any form of global society in the absence of a global state is inappropriate (2005, p.42). This has obvious implications for scalar understandings of space in that the criticisms are directly relevant; it is such a broad understanding that it makes space a very reductive concept, especially in terms of the idea of the global. Bunnell and Coe suggest that focusing on these spatial scales overlooks the network connections that "run through and across different spatial configurations" (2011; p. 439). Therefore it appears that to look at space as territorially bound is highly limiting in terms of the transnational, and very narrowly focused thereby limiting the room for human agency.

By implying a scale created by a territorial entity be it a "body or a country" (Leitner, Sheppard and Sziarto, 2008) it binds networks to established spaces, removing the ability for activism to create and define its own spaces. Furthermore it relies on relationships operating on a vertical scale, thereby implying a hierarchical employment of space, whereas for advocacy and activist networks people and places are argued to be connected in horizontal relations (Sheppard, 2002). This conception of place and space as bounded to a pre-established territorial idea seems overly reductive when considering the transnational as we are here. Building on this Olesen proposes that the transnational (in the case of his work on transnational publics) "cannot be confined to geographical spaces" (2005, p. 422). Furthermore given the vertical nature of a scalar understanding of space the conception as a whole seems ill fitting and arbitrary for understanding the space for activism. Herod and Wright argue that the "role of activists is not to jump between scales but to constitute them" (2002). This develops on an earlier argument that scales are socially constructed (Massey 2000; Radcliffe 2000) – if this is the case then any rigid understanding of space or scales is going to steer wide of the reality for activists.

Featherstone et al promote an idea of the "multiple and generative spatialities of transnational practices" implying that space is something that is generated, either through thought or practice,

but importantly by the actors themselves, not by a predetermined geographic boundary. There are a number of other theorists that support, in varying ways, this conception of a fluid and constantly negotiated idea of space. It is this fluid idea of space that allows for the creation of online spaces, formed by actors and based on their interpretations of the space in which they exist or operate.

Gilson (2011) argues for a move toward this fluid understanding of the space in which focusing on space as a "social product" (Gilson, 2011, p. 294). Drawing upon Lefebvre (1974, trans. 1991) she argues for space as a production of interconnecting actors and constituted by their experiences (Gilson, 2011). This would be a more fluid conception of space: one that is "open to be shaped, contested and produced through social and material relations" creates "significant possibilities for work on transnational practice" (Featherstone et al, 2007; p. 386). Also looking at space in a more fluid fashion Roces discusses a conception of a 'transnational mental space' in which activists operate and perceive themselves as existing, it also informs how they think and act (Roces in Edwards and Roces, 2004; p16). This coincides with the idea that global politics creates a "psychological or physical space" that allows for the involvement of female activists in transnational discussions and common projects, thereby creating "a virtual space that sets up the context for more permanent involvement of local activists in the international policy processes" (Cichowski, 2002, p.236).

Both of these spatial conceptions are fluid, identifying space as a perceived concept rather than a physical one, not bound to an entity but allowing networks to create a space as they construct it. By conceiving that there is a space they create one – this 'virtual' entity. This transcends the boundaries inherent in the scalar model and allows for more freedom when applying an analytical perspective questions of space.

Maintaining this idea of actors playing a role in space creation, Latour suggests that non-human elements of a network can play a role in power relations of activist networks (Latour, 1999; p.245). Its focus is on the "mechanics of power" within networks (Henry et al, 2004; p. 850) and it sees

"space as constructed within networks" (Murdoch, 1998; p.359). An actor-network perspective is fundamentally incompatible with the absolute understanding of space (Murdoch, 1998) implied by traditional bound models. In this view of space it is a "question of the network elements and how they hang together" (Mol and Law, 1994; p.650).

Significantly not only does this theory promote a version of space that is constructed through relations between participants but in allowing for non-human actors it creates a formal role for technology within our understanding of both networks and space. Slightly more problematic when considering actor –network theory in relation to transnational activism however is the element of this argument that proposes space cannot be viewed dualistically. Latour argues there can be no shifts in scale between 'global' or 'local' and that network space must simply be followed wherever it goes (1993, p.117). While there is a rejection of traditional scalar conceptions of space, rejecting any possibilities for multiplicity in our understanding of space is overly reductive. This approach is limited in that it does not allow for the idea that activists are operating in more than one space i.e. the local and the virtual while navigating and negotiating them constantly to suit changing goals and relationships. This is not to say that the spaces cannot merge, dependent on actor perception, but to rule out dualism completely is one step further than to build on ideas that reject space as constructed.

A second theory which gives a role to objects in relation to space is 'socio-spatial theory' which states that "spatial phenomena… are made by materials which are in space – but which also have spatial effects" (Law and Hetherington, 2000; p.36). It differs from actor-network theory in that while it creates a position for 'non-humans' it demarcates them as 'non-humans', arguing "humans are humans, and non-humans are non-humans even if they live together" (Law, 2000; p.3 in Koch, 2004; p.173), it retains the idea of hybridity between technology and human spaces but still allows for a dualistic understanding of space and with separation between actors and objects (Koch, 2004). While this theory provides us with a way to incorporate technology in human constructed

space it is still reductive in its arguments. By building on the work of Latour it still implies a difficulty in working across levels and existing or operating in multiple spaces. Given that nodes form networks, and the fluid and shifting nature of networks there is a high likelihood that they will perceive themselves as operating in more than one space at any given time, not accounted for in these theories.

Massey however promotes the idea of an "engagement in multiplicity" (2005). In essence this suggests that TANs and their members will work continuously and seamlessly across spaces. This requires them to not be bound to a single, physical space. The fact that they are in nature transnational means that networks as a whole are continuously working in different spaces, this will have implications for their constituents as they will be required to work in a similar fashion to the network as a whole. This would support Massey's suggestion of "an engagement in multiplicity".

It is important that space is viewed as fluid, as something that is continuously and often subconsciously negotiated. In order for TANs, and other forms of transnational activism, to work they need to be able to leverage space and if it is not a flexible concept then this would prove challenging to explain as allowing the established method of operations for TANs. Therefore for these purposes the most appropriate definition of space is "the diverse and ongoing connections and networks that bind different parts of the world together and that are constituted through (and in fact constitute particular sites and places)" (Featherstone et al, 2007, p. 383-384). What does this then mean for our understanding of virtual spaces?

Virtual Space

If we have established the conception of space as being fluid and constructed then there is a room for new spaces. In particular when talking about the internet and computer mediated communications (CMC) a multitude of phrases have arisen directly implying a new space has been

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constructed– 'virtual space', 'cyberspace', "networlds" (Harasim, 1993) and 'superhighway' being the most immediate examples. It seems widely agreed upon that a 'convergence' of computers when combined with advances in CMC has created a 'cyberspace' (Graham, 1998, p.158). The diversity of terms are all referring to the same idea and for the ease of understanding the term utilised here will be virtual space. This clearly delineates it from the idea of bound territorial spaces, explored later, and immediately implies a relationship with technology to create a non-visible space. It is worth observing that all the existing terms have connotations of a territorially equivalent space coming into existence as a result of new technologies and telecommunications. Where there has been some discussion of the implications of this but without an extensive consideration of whether this assumed space really exists.

Castells in his 2012 work "*Networks of Outrage and Hope*" seems to seize on this conception of virtual space (to which he refers as a cyberspace) in his discussions of "digital social networks" (p.11), he argues a creation of a "new public space" has occurred, implying a new and real space in which activism can operate, significantly however he notes that this space exists between the digital and the urban, and being one of "autonomous communication" (p.15). This space is conceived as being a free space for "unfettered deliberation" (p.11). If Castells is correct then not only is there a transformative emergent space as a result of technology but it creates substantial possibilities for activist engagement, and could significantly change the ways in which they engage and operate. Conversely Fuchs criticises this concept suggesting that Castells is so focused on technology and this space that he "overlooks human actors… embedded in the antagonism of contemporary society" (2012; p. 781). This tendency to reduce the ongoing role of material spaces over metaphorical ones in the practice of activism.

However if Castells were to prove accurate this space could function as a "space of flows… at the core of the globalisation process", in this space of flows "networks are the central concept" (Castells, 1996), this concept of a space of flows would work alongside the idea of TANs (to be

discussed later) as highly fluid in their formation and action, and would imply as does his 2012 work a new space, a reinvention of existing space for network engagement and arguably therefore vast changes in the existence and operation of networks. Notably this earlier work does not remain without criticism; Perkmann calls Castells notion of networks "an empty signifier" 1999; p.263), with his definition of networks being so broad and generalised that while it can operate across the "most diverse domains and scales" (Stalder, 2006' p.170). It should be observed here that in Castells earlier works he stressed the inherent internal spatiality of networks. This internal spatiality comes with its own hierarchies and power structures, if this earlier work is seen as informing his later 'Networks of Outrage and Hope' then this work is in fact not an empty signifier but rather a slightly more optimistic perception of technological development which, when considered in the context of his earlier works, still allows for the complexities Perkmann feels are missed. However if the definition remains this broad it causes questions as to whether a tighter definition would allow for the same understanding, or if his argument can only function with a loose understanding of networks and will struggle with a much tighter and less flexible network understanding.

Massey in her work on space and place rejects the binary opposition between the global and the local stating "we can no longer regard places as separate entities; rather, we must think of them as interlinked and open" (1994, p.210). This concept of space and place as not a freestanding entity, but as a series of links works alongside Castell's 2012 assertion that there is a new space emerging between the "digital space and the urban space" – in respect of Massey's work this could be seen as one of interconnectedness between two spaces, meaning it is not a space as such but an area of connection, combining material reality with a secondary site of 'virtual space. This would mean that work that considers 'virtual space as a new public space is open to challenge – if no space is an entire entity but the sum of social connections that link it to every other place and space then they will always be interdependent, with one negotiating, informing and influencing the other. Meaning any 'virtual space is reliant on the experiences, perceptions and understandings of those

navigating it, being constantly formed and reformed as those change and evolve. This feeds into an understanding of network space as one that is constantly renegotiated as actors and understandings changed. It also allows for a constant fluidity and change as the space is redeveloped.

Significantly (with the focus on networks and technology) Leitner, Sheppard and Sziarto (2007) also point to the notion that cyber-networks aren't embedded within some larger scale so aren't reducible to a scalar model. This would reinforce the idea that when considering notions of cyber-space a fluid interpretation of spatiality is required, where space is constructed.

If we return to our accepted interpretation of space; the diverse and ongoing connections and networks that bind different parts of the world together and that are constituted through (and in fact constitute particular sites and places)" (Featherstone et al, 2007, p. 383-384) there remains the freedom for the advent of CMC and technological advances to affect activist's conception of a constantly renegotiable space. So if we accept space as constructed through the perceptions and actions of those within it, and as something constantly renegotiated we have the freedom to accept that virtual space is in fact a space for TANs, on the proviso they perceive it as such. Therefore the question arises: what is it that technology is doing to create a space for activists?

<u>Ease of technology</u>

There are grounds for an idealistic view of technologies, the internet has seen a massive growth in the numbers of online political and activist groups (Bowen 1996; Browning 1996), and the literature is almost unanimous on the idea that the costs and barriers to entry of networks and movements have been significantly reduced by the growth and advancements in technology in recent years (Garrett, 2006). Harvey summarises the advantages as 'time and space compression' resulting from developments in communication and communications systems (1990). Ebner

considers these advances significant to the extent that the technological revolution has surpassed the industrial revolution in its importance (Ebner 2001 in Carty 2002; p.31).

The internet and modern CMC allow for instantaneous access to a plethora of information and contacts due to their "immediate reach" (Garrett, 2006, p.214), allowing them to feel global in their actions. This also allows them to "efficiently and cheaply disseminate information" (Carty, 2002; p.134). Annis calls this kind of access to information "informational empowerment" (1992) and views it as a significant development for activist movements, suggesting it will affect their operations as real time information sharing leads to more immediate reactions and an increased advantage to forming networks by which to share information. This "many to many" communication (Slevin, 2000)

Another argument in favour of the idea that recent technology has had a revolutionary outcome for activism is the supposed freedom it offers from censorship and repression of ideas (Kidd, 2003). If the internet is as impervious to regulation as is purported then activists have an unrestricted space to operate and communicate within. (Scott and Street, 2000, Kidd, 2003). This would have significant implications for how movements, networks and individual activists are likely to operate – they would have a freer space for truly open speech without fear of recrimination. It would also create a new space in which they can 'meet' and form relationships with other groups and individuals they may otherwise have not been able to interact with due to travel limitations. If this were to prove to be the case then it would offer a much freer space than those geographically bound spaces in which TWN members have traditionally operated. This would create a sense of an 'unbound' space, removed from the limitations that come with spaces that are associated with territorial scales (i.e. the state or the city) that activism has historically centred around.

A number of scholars talk about the ease of forming new relationships allowing for the creation and emergence of new social movements (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2001; Bennett 2003; Castells

1997; Cleaver 1995, 1999; Escobar 2004; Lins Ribeiro 1998). Dahlgren works on this concept talking about the almost unlimited number of forums and sites that can be found online (2000), all of these providing places for activists and groups with shared values to find each other and engage – arguably developing relationships that then inform networks. All this suggests "computer supported social networks" (CSSN) are revolutionising the idea of communities and social relations by allowing people to meet and communicate across great distances. This literature again reinforces the idea of a newly emerging space for TAN members, or in this case TWN members. By giving individuals and groups new spaces to form relationships then they are offering an almost revolutionary space; something with unlimited possibilities to change how individuals and groups are operating and engaging on a daily basis.

 Further to this there is evidence to suggest the internet can implement a collective identity across a dispersed population embedding these relationships (Myers 2000, Brainard and Siplon 2000, Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2001, Garrett 2006). Furthermore Hampton propose that by generating a collective identity online networks that form only weak relationships can still facilitate collective action. However this idea that the "world has been woven into an electronic web" (Harasim, 1993; p.284) isn't without contest; Papachrissi (2002) suggests that it is in fact no compensation for face-to-face communications, Diani reminds us of the cultural context of activism and its sub culture of "coffee shops and other semi-public spaces" (2000, p.389). If activism relies on coffee shops and face-to-face relationship does this mean there is still a role for material space? If this material space remains key then can the internet really offer the creation of a freer 'virtual space? This is crucial for the understanding both of spatialities and their ability to evolve and for interpreting the operations of TANs and their members in 2015.

Interconnectedness of Material and Metaphorical space

Much of the technology literature, especially that which seems deterministic, is seemingly influenced by the idea that a new metaphorical space will be without the limitations of the material

spaces activists find themselves in. There are however challenges to this which come in three predominant forms; firstly the idea that the internet is a free space in that it lacks the ability to be regulated by states thereby becoming an ideal space for activism (Chung, 2011) , secondly the idea that this space allows for strong and developed relationships to be formed is questioned (Diani, 2000) and finally that there is a disparity in technological access creating an ongoing 'digital divide' which is perpetuated as a result of material factors (See Norris, 2001; Compaire 2001; Chinn and Fairlie 2007 among others) thereby informing all elements of the 'metaphorical' space that is virtual space.

Technology – be it CMC, access to information or any other form of technological advancement – does not appear into a vacuum (Mynatt et al. 1998) and this is a consideration to be remembered, it emerges into a world of existing social networks (Norris, 2004) and already developed understandings of the world and of relationships. Communication and technology are embedded in a social context (Olesen 2005; Sassen 2002). Rosenau presents the argument that technology itself is a neutral "actor" in the sense that its form only takes that which it is given by social actors (Rosenau, 2002; p. 275). While it may allow for "many to many communication" (Slevin 2006; Rucht 2003 cited in Olesen 2005, p.430) this communication is only as relevant as the actors involved choose to make it, they decide who they communicate with and how as well as the content of that communication.

TAN members and activists are based in discrete geographical locations, and even when online, are still materially bounded; no absolute separation is possible between 'online' and 'offline' realities. The idea that their 'online' reality would be completely divorced from their 'offline' lives seems to be an overstretch. Even ideas are formed and influenced somewhere in the world. Smith and West propose that both local and global factors shape transnational alliances, by creating and reinforcing political opportunity structures they allow for a particular scope and availability of access to wider networks and political spaces (2005, p.263). This material reality for activists has

the potential to inform the metaphorical one they are supposedly leveraging. Technological infrastructure is a significant factor in their ability to access virtual space. The digital divide is well covered ground, both in empirical reports and academic literature (Norris 2001; Compaire 2001; Dimaggio and Hargittao 2001; Warscher 2003, 2004; Chinn and Fairlie 2007; World Bank 2010) and is an example of the importance of the material reality activism is operating in. If it cannot be accessed, or the actors involved do not understand how to utilise technology then the freedom of opportunity it offers is irrelevant.

Another way technology and its ability to disconnect activism from its material space is possibly overstated is in terms of regulation. While much of the literature does refer to its 'fundamental resistance to regulations' (Kidd, 2003), in practice that does not seem to be an accurate portrayal. Zheng and Wu in their examination of the internet as a public sphere in note that because the state is acting as the designer of internet development it limits nonstate actors' ability to exert a political impact as "entrepreneurs find it more profitable to cooperate with authorities than to challenge censorship policies" (Kalathil and Boas, 2003; p.29). As Chung confirms in his 2011 briefing on internet censorship if a state wants to control freedom on the internet it is manageable, certainly in repressive states (p. 4). While Chinese citizens have found ways around these restrictions on their use of the internet (Hermida, 2002) it is not with freedom and no risk of repercussion so is a limited space, if viewed as a space at all. There is also the potential that users will not take the step using this virtual reality if they fear repercussion from the state that informs their material reality, this fear being generated through cultural context or legislative practice. It implies there is not a complete disconnect when operating in virtual space from the geography that informs networks material realities.

Returning to the original work that informs this study, that of Keck and Sikkink, they themselves suggest that "TANs represent ideas more than constituencies and so are more flexible and less geographically bound than most social movements" (1998), this implies a disconnection from

geography, from the constraints and boundaries of place. This seems at "risk of global long-sightedness" proposed by Olesen (2005; p.241). The existing literatures optimism about the potential of this 'unbound' space that the internet and surrounding technologies can offer seems displaced. With close examination of existing literature we can see challenges to the idea of the internet offering an unregulated space for relationship formation, access and TWNs to operate within. These pose obvious challenges to the idea of 'virtual space' as a new, free space for activists. The possibility that that 'virtual space' does not offer these freedoms requires challenge, both within the literature and through further research. However if the bulk of the literature is accurate and the internet is an alternative space and does supersede material reality, especially for the ideational – can we see a separation between the state and activists within them, essentially an 'end to geography'?

<u>End of Geography</u>

Prior to the publication of "Activism Beyond Borders" (Keck and Sikkink, 1998) Mitchell called for a "reinsertion of geography into researching and writing on transnationalism" (1997). Leitner, Sheppard and Sziarto do this by proposing that material reality "regulates and mediates social relations and daily routines within a place and is thus imbued with power" (2005, p.161), reinserting the importance of the local among which (in their case) contentious political actors operate from within wider social movements. However a focus on technology as a virtual space has the potential to create a 'disconnect' between geography and the transnational. Is there still a role for this material space?

Traditionally it is been demonstrated within TANs the face to face remains key for relationship building, this has involved being within close physical distance of each other. Building on this there is significant research to show that relationships formed online in an activism context often lack the strength and longevity that comes with personal relationships (Virnoche and Marx, 1997). If this remains important to the forming of networks, the development of face-to-face relationships

then the "tyranny of distance" is not yet overcome. With advances in technology people can communicate instantly, and can carry out video calls via Skype, but these are simulations of face-to-face communications and the question remains as to whether they can serve as a replacement for it.

Activism has been described as operating on 'trust networks' (Tilly 2007), these require established personal relationships and strong connection (see Marwell, Oliver and Prahl 1988, McAdam and Paulsen, 1993), these have traditionally been founded at conferences or forums where multiple activists or actors surrounding an issue have been brought together. This focus on the speed and ease of communications is described as "overly transmissional" (Sawhney, 1996, p.39), focusing on the importance of ease of transmission of information and communications rather than the value or human element behind it. While there is scholarship to suggest these ties can be established and replicated virtually (Turkle 1997; Cerulo and Ruane, 1998), there is increasing contention that internet communications are not a sufficient replacement for face-to-face communication, that relationships within activism still rely on 'trust networks' and therefore the ability to communicate virtually hasn't replaced the need to attend conferences (Virnoche and Marx, 1997).

Purdovska and Ferree further expound on this in a different form suggesting that "opportunities for networking are neither unlimited nor random. Organisations make use of the web in ways that reflect their self-concept and institutional location" (2004, p. 120). This again reinforces the role of material reality, implying that networks abilities to recruit, to engage and to expand are limited by their geographical location. Therefore it seems likely that geography continues to play a role in the formation and development of activism.

Sassen brings a slightly different perspective to the importance of geography in her work on 'global cities' (2003). She proposes that "different cities have different strengths" (Sassen, 2009, p.330) and while they form global circuits through economic links alongside migration, cultural work and

civil society (2009, p.5) they each maintain these strengths and have become the site for the evolution of new kinds of political practices and political actors. This builds on her earlier work on the localisation of strategic elements of globalisation which she argued allowed access for the disadvantaged to new forms of powers in these new sites of globalisation (2003, p. 59). This is significant because once again it suggests that material space still affects actors (in this case activist networks) despite technological advances. These technological advances will be being decided by the city spaces, whether they have established infrastructure to allow online access which in turn will be decided by the Government and the presence of varying companies and actors to promote the importance of a virtual infrastructure. It also has the potential to create inherent differences in terms of online access and this may be a 'strength' of some geographic areas and not others. Chin identifies this difference as having the potential to create an inherent

This makes it especially important that a range of geographic locations are compared; if Sassen's work proves accurate and different city spaces do offer different strengths then we would expect to see a clear differentiation between the subjects engagement with online spaces if it were to prove true that material geography affects virtual space. Although contrary to this Sassen also implies that new sites of globalisation will offer new freedoms; the cases in this thesis are all cities or Sassen's "new sites of globalisation" which would logically infer that they will offer new freedoms to TWN members, and alongside this 'virtual space' would also do the same. Whether this will bear out under empirical examination is significant as it directly speaks to the questions at the heart of this research.

 It could alternatively be argued that virtual space is the new site of globalisation, that the interconnectedness much lauded as occurring online and the access it has the power to provide to markets and information worldwide and in real time has replaced the power of cities to offer 'new freedoms'. If the literature that argues that virtual space is an advancing free space proves

true and without caveat then this would challenge Sassen in the sense that it would be a direct departure from the importance of material geography. However if virtual space is still heavily informed by the geographies of material spaces then these varying strengths will directly inform the experiences of activists in virtual space. This would also give certain cities inherent power – those activists residing in cities in which digital infrastructure was a strength would have an advantage over those that did not. In this sense it almost creates a role for the city itself to become an actor within virtual space, informing the perception of those navigating it. Building on this idea Graham proposes a "co-evolution" of virtual spaces alongside material spaces. In his work looking at place, space and advancing he proposes that there is a relationship in the development between material realities and cyber ones (1998; p.167). This relationship between the two is central to his work, making the argument that one space cannot exist without the other he views virtual space as 'adjunct' space – co existing alongside the material realities of individuals and groups. Further to this he proposes place, space and information communications technology (ICT) as being 'inter-relationships'. He demonstrates this with the example of what he terms urban cities illustrating them as being a 'locus' for "socio-cultural, economic and institutional networks and practices" and perceives the relationships between spaces created by ICT and material geographies as being the same principle. Core here is that he argues that new technologies are "enrolled in complex social power struggles within which both new technological systems are produced and new material geographical landscapes" (Graham, 1998; p.167). This does not involve a departure from traditional material spaces, rather an evolution of them and suggests their continued influence on these emergent spaces. If this proves true then how is one space informing the other to create the 'co-evolution' Graham describes? This directly leads back to the central research question of 'what is the relationship between material and virtual spaces?'

Literature on activism or NGOs and technology is often at risk of overplaying the ease at which technology allows groups to tap into the global, to disconnect themselves from the local. Talks of

'global arenas' and access to the world through the internet, through the availability of computer mediated communication, through once again the ability to overcome this "tyranny of distance". This overlooks research on the "strengths of keeping it local" (Escobar, 2001) and the transformative power of the local (Freeman, 2001), it states that not only is virtual space creating a new sense of the global but more significantly that that is how actors within these networks want to identify themselves and their operational space.

Furthermore the main object of contention for activists remains states, while they may cross borders and often utilise international political opportunity structures Keck and Sikkink propose they are informed by grassroots activists (1998), thereby placing an importance on the locals, and furthermore that they seek to change the behaviour of states – this maintains a significant role for the local.. Featherstone et al argue that the focus on transnational practices (and in this case their advancement through CMC and the growth of the internet) does not erode "the importance of the place or the nation" as proposed by Castells (1996) or Smith (2003), despite Smith's contention that "in this age of globalisation, international boundaries blue, domestic and global arenas become intertwined, and national social movements may become less relevant" (Smith 2003, Tarrow, 2003), nor Sassen's claim that the "national has become cracked in terms of its role in defined boundaries for social power and politics which has opened up possibilities for a new geography" (Sassen, 2005; p. 32). More convincing are arguments by Massey that the "binary opposition between the global and the local needs to be rejected" (1994, p.210). In order to understand this relationship between spaces a real consideration is required of how one informs the other, of whether there remains a relationship between the two or whether virtual space has superseded material space.

Summary

The working assumption will be that space is an entity that is open to negotiation and renegotiation by those who constitute it through their social relations and practices. It is necessary when looking at the transnational and the immaterial to leave behind traditional scalar understandings of space which for an analysis of this type is "overly reductive" (Olesen, 2004). A more fluid version of space, as offered by Featherstone allows us freedom to see space as constituted by those within it. This in turn creates an opening for virtual space to be a new and practicable space, which raises certain questions for understanding contemporary activism; primarily is it truly a space for them to operate in?

A further issue arises when considering whether (on the assumption virtual space can be viewed as a space) the material space these activists function in on a daily basis has become irrelevant or whether it continues to inform their practices and operations. If we have overcome tyrannies of distance, and the national has become 'cracked' (Sassen, 2003) then does the location of an individual, organisation or network still matter? This affects how we understand relationships to form and limitations on their practices in particular.

The positive assumptions made about 'virtual spaces', primarily their ability to offer democratic, horizontal spaces free from the threats and state control that come with material geographies, have a huge bearing in this context. The idea that 'virtual space' offers a fluid space, free from power dynamics and easily navigated in ways that material spaces are not has implications for TANs. It is for this reason alone a consideration of spatiality was necessary.

The disagreement within the literature surrounding the power of these virtual spaces to offer freedom to TWN members is significant, and very little of it is based upon detailed empirical analysis. There is a need to test these claims in the realities in which TWN members operate on a daily basis. Whether material spaces have a significant impact on unbound 'virtual spaces' or whether they have a more co-evolutionary relationship is worthy of a high degree of examination.

The implications this could have for activism are wide ranging; the ability to move the space of challenge and discussion would change the way in which activists operate.

While space is fluid the local has the potential to remain paramount, to inform how these new more fluid spaces are navigated and to shape the identity of those actors negotiating them. This implies an ongoing relationship between traditionally rigid spaces and these new, evolving fluid spaces. It is this relationship that will be examined throughout this thesis by using TWN members within three cities to consider the importance of physical geography upon 'virtual' engagement.

In order to answer these questions there needs to be definitive unit of examination. The unit of examination here is of Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs). They work across borders, and form networks and involve a wide variety of different actors – allowing us to create an analysis of whether virtual space truly is a 'network space'.

PROBLEMATISING TRANSNATIONAL ADVOCACY NETWORKS

The previous section of the literature review established the framework of this research; spatiality with a definition of it as open to negotiation and capable of being fluid and reshaped by those navigating it. This project also needs to define its actor; the central unit of analysis – Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs). While the introduction briefly touched upon the concept the definition needs to be fully problematized and understood so that the ensuing research has a clearly delineated actor.

At its core a network is simply a set of links between a series of nodes. This provides a wide and open definition for how defining and identifying Transnational Advocacy Networks (TANs) and in fact whether the title 'TAN' is even the most suitable by which to work. Therefore in order to study these networks requires a consideration and problematisation of definitions in the extant literature in order to come up with a conclusive definition by which to identify networks.

Within the literature on advocacy, civil society and NGOs there is a plethora of definitions and names for networks and movement collectives despite academics coming "late to the party" (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). However they frequently seem to be describing the same type of actor while utilising different terminology, including the same actors or challenging existing explanations of the same kind of network. It is important to establish the differences to delineate the actor that is being considered.

This also involves understanding which actors are not TANs but are often compared or interchangeably linked with them. Keck and Sikkink themselves observe that "to understand how change occurs in the world policy we have to understand the quite different logics and processes among the different categories of transnational actors" (1998).

In order to fully understand TANs an examination of the broader context within the literature is helpful to exclude similar, alternative organisations..

Social Movements

The literature on transnational networks is often located within the broader background of social movement analysis. Therefore it is worthy of consideration and exclusion. Social movements have some immediate overlaps with TANs namely the fact both mobilise activists and arguably carry out collective action. Tilly (2004, p.3) states that social movements are a distinctive form of contentious politics and TANs exist outside of this contention.

Tarrow furthers this in his analysis defining social movements as being "socially mobilized groups with constituents in at least two states engaged in contentious interaction with power holders in at least one state other than their own, or against an international institution, or a multinational economic actor" (2005: p.11). He separates them from TANs as he considers them not only being outside contentious politics but as being "informal and shifting structures through which NGO members, social movement activists, government officials and agents of international institutions can interact and help resource-poor domestic actors to gain leverage in their own societies" (p.12.) Notably he observes that social movements are not an alternative to TANs but rather that they can contain them. This is worth consideration as it clearly delineates the two as being separate structures that may coexist but are not interchangeable. Both are loose and shifting structures, often operating in transnational spaces, however TANs are a particular networked form of organisation rather than the even looser and often temporal social movements.

This does mean actors interviewed for this research could straddle both TANs and social movements. However the terminology TAN is more analytically appropriate in this context as individual nodes are being considered in the context of their experiences over time; if a social movement is a very loose cooperative they do not have a fixed structure to understand the changes in their practices over time.

Knowledge/Information Networks/Epistemology Networks

Stone (2010) distinguishes between several types of networks constituted by NGOs and operating within what is broadly termed "civil society" – one of these is 'Knowledge Networks' or KNETs. She portrays these as being an ideal type of network. This is explained by proposing that they cannot and do not exist in isolation from other types of network but at their heart is intellectual exchange with information exchange as their "dominant modality" (p. 37). Parmar (2002) also applies the term KNET considering it a network of "coordinated research, study, results dissemination and publication across national boundaries" (2002: p.13), using this definition they form a very distinct network from the others summarised in this review.

These "KNETs" so called by Parmar and Stone also overlap with the definition of 'epistemic communities' provided by Betsill and Bulkeley (2004: p.474) – "a network of experts who share a common understanding of the scientific and political nature of a political problem". Again the constituents are experts and while Betsill and Bulkeley don't touch upon knowledge production it is a logical inference that a community of experts (likely to include academics and field leaders) would be researching and producing information around an issue. A significant contributor to the literature on epistemic communities is Haas who defines them as "a professional group that believes in the same cause and effect relationships, truth tests to assess them, and shares common values" (1990:p.95). The importance here is the differentiation between TANs and epistemology networks with TANs united around a shared discourse and a value set whereas epistemic communities are linked by a shared set of objective truths and a set of shared values based upon them. Betsil and Bulkeley (2004) support this differentiation between TANs and epistemic communities on the basis that the former share values whereas the latter share truths; an important distinction considering the discussion surrounding shared values as a component of TANs (p.475). They are also not analytically appropriate given their 'perfect' nature; not only are TANs operational and easily identifiable but they offer a broad picture of activism due to the nature of

their constituents that neither KNETs nor epistemic communities could match in the same fashion. Furthermore both are arguably elitist networks and therefore will likely have a different relationship with virtual space than an average TAN member which would be more illustrative of the bigger picture of the relationship between material and virtual spaces.

Transnational Networks

Transnational Networks and TANs are often used to mean the same thing; Jeamdu defines transnational networks as "functional and complementary interactions of various international and national NGOs, which aim to accomplish common objectives" (2004; p.150) this is given a caveat by Henry et al who state that the actors in a transnational network are "conscious of their participation in networks" (2004) – both of these definitions could very easily be applied to TANS. These definitions are vague and could also be applied to a great deal of other types of networks. Keck and Sikkink offer us a more comprehensive definition of TANs in their seminal work "*Advocacy beyond Borders*" (1998).

Keck and Sikkink identify TANs as being dense webs of communications that exhibit shared values. These provide categorisations for consideration, if the definition is to be accepted then it requires examining the contention in the existing scholarship. By working through these characteristics the central actor within this research can be delineated, defined and identified.

Shared Values

A core component of Keck and Sikkink's definition of TANs is the concept of shared values. The idea that to establish and maintain a network requires a commitment to an established set of values. In principle this is a logical assertion; in order to hold a network together there needs to be the acceptance of certain core ideas and values that should naturally be in place if network members

are working towards the same goal. However this idea of TAN members having shared values is not without criticism.

Nelson enters into the shared values debate proposing that in fact the North and South differences have extended into activist networks and that this undermines the concept they are all acting on a set of shared values (1997: p.274). This critique would only be applicable to networks operating in both the North and South and overlooks other arguments about an elitist class of activists, however it does highlight the idea that it is unlikely that all members of a network will automatically be subscribed to a set of values given their different contexts and operational realities. Taylor (2002) proposes that in fact membership of a network can be "transformative (p. 344) with networks serving as "vehicles for communicative and political exchange" they allow for participants to be shaped, this would imply that values are changeable, that if by being part of a TAN a participant can undergo transformation that they do not initially necessarily have a shared set of values but rather they emerge as shaped by being part of a network. Hajer (2005) attempts to solve the contention and builds upon the arguments made by Taylor with the suggestion that the shared values don't necessarily exist initially, that a shared agenda is not immediate but rather it is reached through a far more discursive process than allowed for by Keck and Sikkink but that the end result is what appears to be a set of shared values.

This idea of shared values relates directly to a core theme of this research; collective identity. This, in turn, means it is essential the definition of a TAN should speak to this idea; without a set of values or the ability for discourse to shape identities and values of TAN members there is not a space for them to develop a sense of collective identity. It not only offers clarity to the nature and identity of TANs but forms part of the context of the broader work undertaken here. Therefore shared values are part of defining a TAN, however in a departure from Keck and Sikkink, the shared values may not be present at the outset but have the potential to be developed through a discursive process within the network.

Horizontal Characteristics

Hajer proposes that networks are formed and operate using discursive processes (2005) leads through to the contestation as to whether TANs are horizontal structures as proposed by Keck and Sikkink's now dated work. Especially if different motivations and values and the outset lead to a different structuring of the network (Wu, 2007). If some members of a network carry more authority and influence or are responsible for more donor money within the network and potentially have more 'power' (which would likely be the Northern members of a network) then they have more control over the final agenda, over the 'shared values' they then act in accordance with. Keck and Sikkink see networks as being "voluntary reciprocal and horizontal patterns of communication and exchange" (1999: p.91), this is supported by Hudson who sees networks as "flat organisational forms" (p.334) and Stewart who found networks were more likely to be horizontal rather than hierarchical.

Challenging this, in their study of Amnesty International, Lake and Wong reach the conclusion that while members of a network can have some influence over the more powerful or 'central' nodes (in this case the London outpost of Amnesty International) the central nodes will always have the powerful ability to set the agenda for the network and these "privileges and interests" come at the expense of others that the network represents (p.17). These are examples among a number of papers and studies that have reached the same conclusions about the nature of power within networks (Sell and Prakesh 2004; Hertel 2006; Wu 2007; Carpenter 2007). This challenges the original definition of TANs as horizontal structures; although as with much of the literature surrounding TANs it is already becoming dated due to advances in technology. However it does suggest at least some reconsideration of the understanding of TANs is necessary

This contention in the literature is important, it also applies to understandings of virtual space; the nature of vertical versus horizontal structures and spaces proves key in all of the challenges that are analysed in this research. The claims are made about the horizontal nature of both have

implications that they should offer a levelling space without inherent power dynamics. This is disproven by the contention in the literature, it was also challenged further by the findings of this research. This debate between the nature of TANs and spaces is core to this project. If virtual space is neutral in terms of power dynamics (which technically it is until someone enters it, which is a paradigm given that it does not exist without an imbued meaning) then the ones that make themselves present have to be imposed upon it. If TANs are vertical structures with inherent hierarchies which then 'spill over' into these supposedly more democratic spaces it demonstrates that these spaces are not created without being influenced by existing social and political contexts. If this is the case then virtual space will not prove to be a separate space from material realities.

Membership

Another cause for disagreement within the literature on TANs is who can be a network member – whether or not it is solely NGOs and INGOs, whether it can include individual activists and academics or if it can expand to include state actors. Keck and Sikkink while offering a central role to non-state actors (Keck, 2004: p.52) allow for a range of participants from individual actors to NGOs to state agencies. Without an explicit understanding of who can participate within a TAN then it is difficult to delineate between case studies which invalidates any possible findings. Some of the literature defines networks by their participants (Henry et al, 2004; Ferree, 2006) and if this is the case then who is viewed as eligible in terms of composing a transnational network is essential. However as with much of the literature on networks there is no unanimous conclusion. A number of scholars include individuals as valid network members; Keck and Sikkink do in their original work (1998) and Stone building upon this characterises networks as containing NGOs and individual activists (2000).

Contrary to this Jordan and Van Tuijl (2000: p.2054) see networks as consisting purely of NGOs and organisations, with no mention or room for individual actors. Katz and Anheier (2005: p.241) go one step further still in their discussion of the 'transnational networks' explicitly stating that

these networks exclude relationships with individuals; although it must be observed that Katz and Anheier do not refer specifically to TANs but rather transnational networks (2003). Wapner excludes for-profit actors and INGOs in his definition of the actors that can form a TAN (referred to as a transnational activist or advocacy group) on the basis that actors operating for a profit will always seek to maximise profit above and beyond achieving social change or working towards an altruistic cause (2002: p.39.) However there is no requirement for an organisation to be acting in an altruistic nature, should their actions and self-understanding identify them as a member of a TAN it seems unnecessary to exclude for profit actors from the definition of a TAN, so long as they meet the other requirements.

Dumoulin sees networks as consisting of organisations forming a broader organisation and infers there is not a space for the individual activist in their work on eco-activism (2003: p.600). Piper adheres to this with her proposal that it involves two or more NGOs or organisations (2004) but again this is in reference to the vaguer 'transnational networks' that has already been established as being too generalised a term.

To exclude individuals is overly limiting and removes the role of the grassroots activist whose story or initial action is often a part of the original formation of a network, but to include any actor or individual seems too broad. Wapner seeks to exclude INGOs from his definition of TAN membership on the basis of their accountability to states, is trickier as often they are necessary for funding or creating the space for TANs (for example the UNs conferences and summits during the decade on women is often seen as providing a space for TANs surrounding women's issues to form (Moghadam, 2000). Without this space creation the network connections that are traditionally essential to the formation and maintenance of TANs would not be possible. Furthermore it is apparent in other literature, particularly that surrounding women's networks that they are a key actor within relationships between individual organisations and groups (see Moghadam, 2000). Therefore there cannot be an exclusion of INGOs as seen in Wapner's understanding of networks.

Hudson defines networks as involving NGO's and "other civil society actors" this is broader in that it allows for INGOs, individuals and NGOs but would limit actors from outside civil society i.e. for profit actors and therefore seems to befit the networks described by Keck and Sikkink; however it requires focusing in order to establish these "civil society actors". Tarrow considers these actors to be wide ranging and shifting, he allows for state officials, members of social movements alongside activists and NGOs and implying an existent space for the individual activist within the broader structure (2005: p.12). The definition of membership that will be applied here seeks to include groups and individuals and for profit actors where they demonstrate a commitment to a cause.

Sites of Authority

In the model of TANs illustrated by Keck and Sikkink the key referent of action by networks is the state with the goal being to influence or change government policy and thinking around an issue through campaigning and advocacy as well as international pressure; this is highlighted within Keck and Sikkink's seminal work (1998). However Sage (1999) illustrates yet another possibility; that transnational corporations can in fact be the referents of network action as can individuals. He suggests that as TANs arise to change social conditions anyone responsible for creating them can be the object of their action (p.207). Despite employing the term TAN and in fact citing Keck and Sikkink's work he analyses a case where Nike was the referent of the networks action. This is developed by other scholars in the field (Wapner 2002: Hale and Wills 2007) who look at and consider smaller referents when considering networks as opposed to pursuing influence over state policy. Wapner explicitly states that networks can target the cultural attributes of referents that are smaller than states (2002: p41) while referencing "advocacy or activist networks". Hudson goes so far as to broaden the referents of TAN actions to "policies and practices of consumers, companies, states and international institutions" (2001: p.333). It could be argued that as long as the cause fits within the defined terms of a TAN then any actor considered to be

violating the cause could become the target of action; this would therefore include for profit actors.. However to broaden it to individuals seems a stretch, TANs require a number of actors, the use of international norms and discourse framing in order to be successful, bringing this to bear on an individual (that is not a central part of the operational mechanism of a state) seems to be an overreach. This understanding of the referents of TAN action allows a consideration of the spatial scale of TAN action, and in this sense it remains bound to traditional scalar narratives of space defined by and bound to geographical locations. It is also notable that the referents remain rooted in material spaces as it already begins to imply a necessary and ongoing relationship between material and virtual spaces for TAN member.

Strategy

Through their deductive study Keck and Sikkink identify the 'boomerang model' whereby networks function by seeking support from 'above' the state as well as 'below' by utilising international norms to create pressure The model has three main parts. It begins with the violation of rights by a domestic government, individuals and domestic groups frequently have no recourse domestically and therefore seek recourse through international connections. Following this a second phase occurs - the formation of linkages transnationally; many TANs create linkages between those in developed states with those in less developed countries. The final phase is the application of pressure to the target state (that against which the domestic activists are seeking recourse) by the TAN, this can be done in conjunction with other international organisations and more powerful states (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; p.12 - 15). The strategy is using local pressure from below and applying international pressure from above to change state policy, this is inherently linked to sites of authority as it challenge states – again this is a traditional spatial understanding and sites TANs firmly within spaces that focus on territorial explanations of space.

A number of scholars engage with the model, a 2004 study by Bertone found empirical evidence to support the boomerang model in TANs that campaign against trafficking. Furthermore it has been described as the most systematic and sophisticated theory of NGO behaviour currently available Florini, 2000 (alongside Price 2003; Yanacopolus 2005; Bloodgood and Clough 2007). Again however this literature is relatively dated when considering the advancements in technology that have occurred, both since the initial study and since the majority of the critiques. In 2000 Bob critiqued the TAN model asserting that it failed to acknowledge the difficulty that ideas and norms experience in crossing cultures and transnational borders, instead asserting that the Boomerang model functions much more effectively at a domestic level. In the period since this assertion domestic movements have had increasing access to social media and communications technology allowing greater awareness of the international opportunity structure and creating a virtual space in which it can be taken advantage of. Thereby not only as a result of the lack of unanimity in conclusions as to how TANs function, but also due to the fact there is not enough recent literature to ensure that an accurate picture can be established it does not seem to be advisable to consider the boomerang model the defining characteristic of a TAN but rather a guideline by which it may be understood they operate. Especially if this research is considering emerging spaces it should in turn allow for new strategies to have emerged since Keck and Sikkink's initial work, based on research which is now twenty years old.

The literature that has emerged on the boomerang model since its initial conception suggests it is not always this simple; Sikkink in Risse, Ropp and Sikkink suggests advances need to be made on the model, that it doesn't always allow enough for state repression to act as a barrier for the seeking out of international connections to Northern NGOs (this is in spite of the fact she was an original contributor to the initial boomerang model) and furthers it with a five phase spiral model (Risse, Ropp and Sikkink, 1999: p.273) to account for this failing. Bob challenges it in a different fashion suggesting that it is not as easy to cross cultures as the model implies; making it hard for issues to move from less to more opportune venues (2002: p.398). This he asserts means that in fact it may

be applied more successfully to national networks in domestic settings rather than transnationally. This is supported in work by Tarrow (1998) in which he argues that changes in the international political structure are less likely to be perceived by domestic activists (the grassroots or 'below' part of the boomerang model) than those which occur within the domestic political opportunity structure

Stewart (2007) argues that the model requires a shift that moves too far away from the actors involved; it leaves little room for activist agency. It fails to capture the role and context of the individuals; their interpretations, definitions and mobilisations. Furthermore she suggests that it overlooks the role of the nation state within the context of its international relationships particularly as to why a grievance would become transnational in cases where there is no specific domestic blockage. Finally she takes issue with its failure to predict when movements remain local as opposed to why the go global. While there is little argument to brook with Stewarts point regarding the lack of room allowed for the motivations and actions of the individual activist within the bigger picture, this is something that could be investigated with further scholarship and not a question the model sought to answer initially there is a direct response to her criticism as to a lacking explanation for why some movements remain local where others go global. Where there is no international norm for TANs to frame their discourse around it will be very difficult for a movement to go global, there will also be other factors that help the emergence of a transnational movement; for example countries that have high levels of diaspora and migration (i.e. the Philippines) which naturally creates transnational linkages. Tying into this response to the criticism by Stewart comes another challenge to the definition of networks by Keck and Sikkink; that in no way can TANs be independent as actors; they are reliant on international organisations to be 'norm diffusers' (Park, 2007: p.536). The implication of this is that without international organisations to spread norms and to trigger a tipping point whereby they become accepted principles in the international system they will struggle to function as they do not have the stand alone power to ensure these norms become fully embraced by the international system without the

support of INGOs. This could be seen to link into the earlier discussion of social movements and social movement organisations which could be framed as being norm diffusers or norm entrepreneurs.

<u>Issue Area</u>

Previously mentioned has been the idea that TANs form around certain cause or issue areas; namely bodily integrity or legal equality (Keck and Sikkink, 1998). So can TANs be identified because they are operating in these issue areas and therefore defined by it? While there is support for the concept that forming around issues of bodily integrity or legal equality is characteristic of TANs; namely due to the fact this both appeals to international norms allowing it to cross cultures and because it creates a short causal chain (Finnemore and Sikkink 1998: Stewart 2004) there is some criticism that this is overly restrictive and limits networks operating in other areas from consideration when they concur in every other aspect of the definition of a TAN (Waterman 1998: Evans 2000: Nelson 2002: Tarrow 2001, 2005: Stewart 2004). By being so narrow in the issues it considers Nelson argues that it overlooks financial policy and trade issues which he considers a core component of the international system. Evans and Waterman reach similar conclusions; Evans suggesting it overlooks labour issues while Waterman asserts that it is too focused on middle class activism thereby overlooking broad areas of activism that also need to be understood and explained in the context of TANs. (Waterman, 1998). This understanding of what issues networks can form around is essential; the diversity in TWN members interviewed for this research demonstrates the broad range of issues from sexual and reproductive health right (bodily integrity) to labour organising for female employees (legal equality). To disenfranchise groups based on an overly restrictive definition would result in failing to portray accurately the impacts of newly emerged spaces on these members of transnational networks.

Therefore the idea that TANs operate in the arena of bodily integrity and legal equality, in spite of facing academic challenges continues to be utilised in this definition. Issues need to remain cross

cultural in order to operate on a transnational scale. However legal equality and bodily integrity can be interpreted in a less restrictive fashion to include labour rights.

Conclusion

From examining and unpacking the literature on social movements, networks and TANs it is clear that there is no unanimous definition or set of characteristics that can be used to assert that something is or is not a TAN. However certain elements are more obviously essential criteria than others; primarily that they are operating around an area that allows for cross cultural understandings – so here the Keck and Sikkink definition holds true as those arenas most suited to this are those of "bodily integrity or legal equality" (1998). Certain elements are drawn from Keck and Sikkink as core to their work and here critiqued as to whether or not they still hold true. These criterion were shared values, strategy, membership, structure, sites of authority and issue area.

In terms of constituent members despite contention in the literature there is no requirement to exclude for profit actors so long as they clearly meet the other requirements of the definition.. There is a lot of discussion around other members of TANs however excluding individual activists, particularly when an involvement at a grassroots level is a necessary part of the functioning of a TAN, is overly restrictive the definition needs to allow for individuals, NGOs and importantly INGOs to all be operating elements of the loose structure that forms a TAN. The participant members are liable to change as constituents enter and exit the network according to need and interest.

As for whether they are required to have shared values; in light of the critiquing literature it seems unlikely that all the members of a TAN will have the same values, agenda and motivations at the outset. However the idea that this is linked to the common discourse, and shaped by a discursive process into a set of operating values for the network has merit. Without some sense of shared values a network would find it difficult to unite and act coherently in around a cause; but these

values may be shaped and emerged through a process rather than a neatly packaged set of values present from the beginning. They may also come about through the need to establish a set of shared values in pursuit of a shared purpose.

Keck and Sikkink assert that networks will be self-defining – the idea that networks will recognise themselves as 'Transnational Advocacy Networks' requires that they are aware the terminology exists, that they operate in the language of academia (as it is a term that emerges in academic literature rather than common parlance) and that they can identify themselves accordingly. Furthermore it also requires that they would choose to identify themselves with such a formal label – a stretch for often "loose and shifting" structures. However to assume they don't need any consciousness of being something more than a stand-alone organisation or individual again seems to leave the definition as overly broad. As a result the best compromise is to draw on the literature around 'transnational networks' and use the Henry et al conception that they require an awareness of being part of something larger, of having an understanding of their "relationships as networks". Otherwise there is the risk of the assumption that NGOs going about their "day to day" business of communicating with each other are networks rather than simply individual organisations sharing information rather than an agenda or values set.

 Finally the idea that networks are ultimately democratic and horizontal structures also seems not only unlikely but impossible. All members of a network will bring different resources; be it the legitimacy that comes with being a grassroots actor or the power to appeal to donors for support and the resources that often come with being a larger NGO based in the global North. These resources will mean that even in a loose and shifting network there will be those members with more power to set the agenda.

So for the purposes of this work a TAN will be considered to be: *a network of actors (including individuals, NGOs and INGOs) operating around issues of bodily integrity or legal equality across borders targeting those actors responsible for social conditions (predominantly this will be states*

but TNCs may also be objects of TAN action) with a common, a shared purpose and an understanding that they identify themselves as being a larger structure or network.

This definition is unchanged by advancements in CMC and the surrounding technology, it is as relevant and accurate now as it was at the time of Keck and Sikkink's initial fieldwork, what may have changed is their operational nature due to the changes in ease of communication and access to information. Informational empowerment is a part of the nature of a TAN that does not present as a characteristic but is vital, both in Keck and Sikkink's work and that which followed; information sharing is a core benefit of being within a TAN and an incentive to membership. If anything this is something that should have been improved by technological developments of the last two decades. Therefore the concept remains as significant to understanding activism across borders as it did originally.

Their utility in this research stems not only from this cross border nature but also the diversity that nature breeds. They operate by having nodes in a variety of geographic locations which allows for an understanding to be developed of the different influences material spaces can have upon virtual space. Different cities will offer different limitations if the relationship does involve an inherent interconnectedness and this can be seen directly in a TAN through a simple consideration of different nodes. Furthermore the geographic dispersion of TANs means that technology has an inherent use for them and virtual space has the power to connect them more quickly and more cheaply than previous arrangements which creates an incentive to embrace it.

The variety of actors involved in a TAN also allows for a consideration of the utility of virtual space for organisations through to individuals which mediates for the role of resources in access and understanding of communications technologies and virtual spaces.

Their cross border nature means that if technology does emerge into existing social contexts they will experience different limitations not only in infrastructure but in language and education which

if material space is shaping virtual space create apparent differences in their engagement and inform the conclusions that can be reached about the relationship between spaces that forms the heart of this work.

The supposed low barriers to entry offered by virtual spaces should be enticing to TANs as it makes it easier for them to be found, joined and further networked. It could also make it easier for members to leave TANs and their more fluid nature helps make this analysis possible.

Overall TANs offer a diverse, geographically broad actor that through their very nature would inherently benefit from the emergence of a virtual space as described in the literature and therefore allow for an analysis that speaks directly to the research question that forms the heart of this work.

This allows for a clear understanding that they can form around women's issues in a broad context, that they will be able to engage with alternative spaces and that they are not purely bound to geographical spaces. This project now moves to consider the infrastructures and divides which pervade these networks.

Introduction

As established in the previous literature review there is an argument that the internet offers a new 'virtual space' that has the potential to be revolutionary for its users. This space is 'unbound' and separate from the material spaces in which activists exist in their daily lives.[2]

In order for virtual space to be considered a space for TANs, let alone an alternative space, it must be accessible to those people wishing to access it. If it cannot be accessed without minimal obstacles then it cannot realistically be considered a viable space for activists operating in Manila, Jakarta and Bangkok. TANs form around issues of legal equality or bodily integrity, this means that ultimately they represent people, and therefore maintain a need for accessibility. If they start operating in ways or spaces that remove this accessibility then they will no longer be able to function in a representative fashion.

The internet itself has evolved rapidly over the past two decades; from web 1.0 (the ability to access content i.e. view webpages) to web 2.0 (the ability to engage with content i.e. message boards and forums) and now web 3.0 (the ability for users to generate platforms and content). This means the internet is a fluid entity, this means that the divides to access that pervade it will also not be static. The literature separates these barriers into infrastructure (or material access) and social factors.

There are a number of elements that are critical to understanding whether the internet forms an accessible 'virtual space' that can be inferred from the existing literature. First, there is infrastructure; namely, whether the physical tools are there to allow internet access, such as the

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[2] See the previous literature review chapter

hardware that allows internet access like laptops, desktops and these days' tablets and smartphones. Van Dijk focuses on this 'material access' in particular. .Once an infrastructure has been established, secondary barriers include age, gender and education alongside socio-economic obstacles. These illustrate how it is not simply the lack of infrastructure alone that needs to be overcome. (Warf, 2000; p.5). In this vein, Kling proposes that internet access is a question of both technological and social factors, where 'technology' means physical access to hardware and software, and 'social factors' represent a combination of economic resources, technical skills and professional knowledge (1999). These two types of divides have previously been classified as an "accessing divide" and a "using divide"; the former representing the gap in access and ownership of hardware such as computers, laptops and smartphones and the latter representing the demographic and geographical divides among users themselves, including gender, age, and geographic location. (Attewell, 2001; Norris 2001; Chinn and Fairlie 2004; Cheong 2007; Zeng 2011). This returns us to the idea of a social divide versus an infrastructure divide. The way these two types of divides have been discussed in existing scholarship has often been under the broader banner of a 'digital divide' (see Compaine (2001 Norris (2001), Selwyn (2004), Van Dijk and Hacker (2003), and Warschauer (2004),). The current study adopts this combined approach to understanding the context for digital engagement.

Methodology

Methodologically, Van Dijk's categorisations offer a useful point of departure for determining infrastructural barriers. He uses four specific categories to cover the majority of divides: material access, meaning a lack of access to computers and equipment; skills access; namely a lack of digital skills; mental access, which means a lack of experience or interest, along with other mental factors like 'computer anxiety'; and, finally, usage access, which means a dearth of opportunities for using technology. However it should be noted that while there are neat separations between some categories that is not true of all. 'Mental factors' are not as neatly social or infrastructure as

a category like 'usage access'. Therefore while it provides a departure point for this week it requires further clarification as to which factors are infrastructure, which are social and which offer us both.

Infrastructure is heavily tied into the principle of usage access, the ability of activists and TWN members to access technology that allows them to use 'virtual space'. Infrastructure is defined here as the mechanics by which people can access the internet: i.e. ability to connect, viable connection speeds, and the basic necessities for internet connections. The ability to connect is the existence of an available internet connection at the most basic level; this requires access to some form of hardware to facilitate access which is the basic necessity for internet connections. Viable connection speeds are access to internet that operates at a speed that will allow activists to use it in the way in which they need to properly engage with 'virtual space'. Van Dijk (1999) in his consideration of the 'digital divide' refers to this as "material access": i.e. the ability to access computers and equipment. Van Dijk's work was published 15 years ago, and therefore does not take account of the subsequent preponderance of alternative forms of technology that allow interested parties to get online, such as smartphones and tablets. I will examine both types, from physical geographical opportunities and limitations, to the effects of web-based

Internet penetration is defined here as the percentage of the population who access an internet connection on a regular basis from any form of platform (i.e. mobile phones, laptops or tablets). It does not take into account what this internet connection is used for, and does not discriminate between time spent, for example, online shopping, using social media or engaging in online activism. It is logical to assume that if internet penetration is high, then there will be a substantial and effective infrastructure in place. This infrastructure in turn creates suitable conditions for TN members to access virtual space, thereby reducing the constrictions upon our understanding of it being a separate, alternative space.

Cost and speed are also essential to understanding people's infrastructural barriers because if the internet is out of reach of most of the population then it limits those activists who will be able to access virtual space to only those who can afford it which will have the secondary effect of reinforcing social divides in access. Furthermore if internet speeds are so slow as to make 'virtual space' difficult to engage with then this again is a divide in access based on geographical factors between those who have easy and instant online access and those for whom it is much more challenging to load web based programmes and engage with technology like Skype that has a minimum operating speed.

Under the banner of 'social' issues are a number of principal concerns. First, the rural/urban (Second, gender issues; in the literature there is a firmly established digital divide predicated upon gender. The idea that women and girls have a barrier in engaging with 'virtual spaces' and the technology that facilitates this compared to men. This is particularly important in this study as we consider women's networks implying there will be a divide between this networks and others which are not predominantly run by women. Thirdly age offers a social divide, this is closely linked to gender as once again it is based around who the user is rather than where they are. This divide is classed in the literature as the difference between 'digital natives' and 'digital immigrants' meaning those who have grown up in the age of the internet will have advantages in using online spaces compared to those who have been introduced to the technology at a later stage in life. Fourth socio-economic conditions are important because they create a barrier immediately; this is closely linked to infrastructure as this barrier is often linked to access to the technologies that facilitate engagement with a digital space. Finally, the element of language is significant. These divides could act as limitations for network members to access virtual space an assessment of the implications of this will follow. Social factors seem to clearly divide between who someone is and where they are terms of barriers to access. Gender and age are decided by who someone is when accessing 'virtual space' whereas language and education are predominantly shaped by where they are in physical space.

Socio-economic divides are not clearly defined as a social divide in access. They are also heavily linked to infrastructure. The only way to analyse the socio-economic divide in Manila, Bangkok and Jakarta is to break it down in terms of costs to users. The issue of cost involves both hardware and software costs. This particular form of material divide has also been classed as an accessing divide: inability to access or own hardware with which to access the internet (Attewell 2001, Cheong 2007, Chinn and Farlie 2004, Norris 2001, Zeng 2011). In terms of hardware, there have been significant developments since the early days of internet access, and early scholarship is in this sense outdated: desktop computers are now only one of a multitude of ways by which to access the internet. With the advent of increasingly inexpensive smart phones, laptops and tablets, the cost of hardware is decreasing.

One of the ways of mitigating these high hardware and wifi costs has traditionally been internet cafes, described in the literature as providing 'ways for ordinary people living in economically poor areas to access the internet' (Furuholt and Kristiansen, 2007). Their growth and development have been perceived as offering a way to overcome the steep initial costs of internet access. Internet cafes allow users to purchase internet access on an immediate basis for a chosen period of time and provides the hardware to allow them to do so at a low cost, with no initial start-up fees. Wong perceives the development of internet cafes as having been "underrated" (2010; p. 383). An example of their prominence is that in 2006, two-thirds of Indonesian internet users were gaining access through these cafes (Wahid et al, 2006; p. 279), and as early as 2002, there were 2000 internet cafes in Indonesia (although they were concentrated in large cities) (Purbo, 2000).

However there has been some suggestion that even the cost of these is prohibitive; Wong (2010) finds that even these relatively low costs act as a barrier to access for some potential internet users (p.387). This implies that 'cybercafes' are not 'bridging the gap' (Mathur and Ambani, 2005) in relation to material access. Furthermore, internet cafes pose other forms of limitation: individuals are accessing the internet in a public place, which in itself may not prove conducive to activists

seeking to participate in networks. Skype conversations and email access will not be private and may be logged, which may compromise participants. Users are also limited in terms of the times they are able to access a 'virtual space' or participate in a 'virtual network': public spaces come with opening hours; which is particularly significant for transnational networks who frequently operate across different time zones. While they may offer some access to a 'virtual space', they are no replacement for a private connection in an office or home, which provides consistency, immediate access and privacy

In terms of purely social factors gender is a primary consideration, and one that is defined by who someone is as much as where someone is. While there is discussion of using technology and the internet to empower women – such as by giving them access to greater resources, more information, and decision-making processes (Huyer and Siskoska, 2002) – key texts within the literature establish that women are "disadvantaged" in terms of learning about computers or obtaining computer-related information (Cooper, 2006; p. 320;). Wilson *et al*. substantiate the proposition that women are disproportionately disadvantaged in terms of computer access and skills (2003); Cooper and Weaver (2003) refer to a 'dramatic' divide in terms of gender. As highlighted by Van Dijk (1999), this divide begins with material access; women are underrepresented in their use and ownership of computers (Yelland and Lloyd, 2001; Pinkard 2005.) Without this initial access to infrastructure, they have no way of participating in a 'virtual space'. This 'initial access divide' leads to a more general divide, based on all three other elements of Van Dijk's (1999) access categories. In terms of mental access, Cooper (2006) finds that women are far more likely to suffer from anxiety surrounding computer use. They also suffer from issues with skills access, as they lack the 'digital skills' required to utilise computers or internet access points they may be able to use later on. This lack of digital skills is most likely to be prevalent in countries where women are disadvantaged from an early age in terms of educational opportunities. And this is about gender, not mental access.

A further form of 'digital divide' that is directly linked to socio-economic factors is educational, rather than material. Typically, education levels are related to socio-economic background for individuals, and in a broader sense are often linked to national economic development (and notably usage of the internet is strongly correlated with economic development. Hargittai describes the digital divide caused by education as a 'second level divide' and defines it as the differences in people's online skills. She also identifies that education has "consistently been a predictor of access to the internet" (2002). This is supported by empirical research asserting that education is a critical factor in ICT adoption and usage (Quibria *et al*. 2001: p. 9). Without access to IT education, potential TWN members will lack digital literacy (digital skills in Van Dijk's lexicon 1999).

Education and digital skills are not only socio-economically linked; they are also related to, and reliant upon, the material space in which the network member operates. In the Philippines, information technology education is a government-mandated element of any curriculum; in other states, this is not the case. Access to education of any form is also socio-economically and materially related. In developing countries, there is not always universal free education, and access to education is informed by a number of socio-economic factors (children being sent to school rather than being made to work at a young age, ability to afford either fees or uniforms and supplies, etc.). This lack of equity in education will directly be replicated in terms of digital education or digital skills, this is directly interrelated to infrastructure but both social and infrastructure factors will have some continuous overlap as they will often inform one another.

A final form of digital divide is, again, one that can be seen in existing network relationships and hierarchies: language. Language acts as a digital divide, as much online content is in English, referred to as the 'official language of the internet (Wolk, 2004; p.174). Seventy per cent of web content is estimated to be in English. More significantly, however, many online forums and web groups operate in English. This means that to engage with much of the content of virtual space a user (in this case a TWN member) has to be English-speaking in order to operate with complete

freedom. Kausse (2005) found in a study of Uganda that even those who had 'material access' to the internet often opted not to, as a result of lacking English language skills. While this is a divide that is to some extent perpetrated by socio-economic factors, advantaging those who can afford an education involving English language classes or to have private tuition, it is also informed by the material space in which networks nodes are formed and their members are based.

Piper and Uhlin suggest that cross-border activism is "by no means borderless or non-territorial" (2004; p.103): it is informed by the geographic locations of its members, and the resources available to them. Some of the digital divides considered below are based on material factors that would affect members of networks to different extents dependent on location. Therefore, the question to be considered is whether or not for members of a given network "virtual space" could transcend borders and territorial factors that inform offline activism and offer a democratic and horizontal space for TN nodes to operate, as much of the literature on digital space tells us it should (Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2001; Bennett 2003; Castells 1997; Cleaver 1995, 1999; Escobar 2004; Lins Ribeiro 1998).

It is the above factors that will be applied to the cases of Manila, Bangkok and Jakarta in order to understand the digital divides affecting access to virtual space in this context.

Rural and Urban Divides

There is an area of infrastructure that needs addressing before individual cases are considered. The Rural and Urban divide that has pervaded the literature and ensuing research is touched upon in the methods and introduction section of this thesis but in terms of physical infrastructure there are some further considerations. This section will consider the divide from both a social and an infrastructure perspective as it is necessary to understand the divide as a whole.

One of the divides that has become immediately prevalent within this research is the rural-urban divide. The rural-urban divide is at its origins created by structural factors: without investment in

'material access' (Van Dijk, 1999) i.e. infrastructure elements in rural areas (for example wireless networks and broadband connections) existing divides between the two will only be exacerbated.

In existing scholarship on the rural-urban digital divide, Furuholt and Kristiansen identify that at a national level there is a "rural-urban digital divide" (2007, p. 3); Rao, in his analysis of the digital divide in India (2005), agrees. This divide is seemingly compounded in developing countries where "clear tendencies of increased concentration of information flows to urban and central areas" (Wong, 2002; Muesige, 2004) can be seen. Hindman, in his detailed analysis of what he calls the 'metropolitan versus non-metropolitan uptake of technology', discusses the potential for information technology to minimise the 'rural penalty' currently paid by those living in non-metropolitan areas. In theory, 'virtual space' has the potential to allow TWN members to operate and engage in activism from anywhere without having to travel to, or be based in, metropolitan or urban areas. However, in spite of this, Hindman concludes that information technology will actually further embed these inequities. This is significant as if it will further embed these inequities then there is no levelling power in it for those in rural areas; the internet and 'virtual spaces' will not enfranchise them. It will continue to main an urban geography for centres of power.

These structural factors are further embedded in a number of ways: from a socio-economic perspective, urban areas have traditionally offered higher incomes, and technology comes at a cost, particularly the devices required to access a 'virtual space'.

This existing divide reinforces the structural divides in terms of infrastructure development; this creates a lack of significant usage opportunities, which Van Dijk classes as issues of "usage access" (1999, p.315). Another issue to be considered in this context is the lack of interest in developing skills or using technology; there is traditionally a lag in technological uptake caused by computer anxiety, lack of interest and other psychological and sociological factors, which is termed "mental access" by Van Dijk (1999, p.315).

There is statistical evidence to demonstrate that the existing rural-urban divide is far from being overcome as a result of technological advances: only 27 per cent of all cities and municipalities in the Philippines have any infrastructure for broadband, and outside of these cities, there is little to no high speed internet access (Baldivia, forward.ph. 2014). Of the 61.1 million estimated internet users in 2012, 56.6 million of them resided in urban areas (emarketer.com, 2014). Through lacking opportunities to connect materially, potential users lack familiarity with the technology involved, and therefore this divide becomes entrenched even if material factors change (i.e. via the development of a more advanced infrastructure). This in turn promulgates further divides in terms of 'skills access' and 'mental access': without usage opportunities, individuals may experience computer anxiety when the opportunity does arise, or lack the necessary skills as they have not previously been exposed to the technology.

One of the questions asked of interviewees was whether they still felt a need to be based in their nations' capital cities, or whether technology allowed them to operate more remotely. The feedback was overwhelming: all subjects in all three case study locations experienced a strong need to remain based where they were, a consequence of factors beyond simply material access to the internet. Reasons given ranged from the need to be where government was based (Patamaba, Jakarta) to the need to be where other women's groups were based (Likhaan, Manila – based in Quezon City many of the other women's groups are also based within the district). In Bangkok, one interview subject's case for remaining in the capital city was based primarily on donor relationships: they made the point that there is an international airport that also acts as a 'gateway for the rest of Southeast Asia', and that this made it an easy place to meet with international donors and other partners that would find it more difficult to meet in a more rural city. While the access to technology is the focus here this divide was clearly not down to technological access alone and far further entrenched. Established prior to 'virtual space' this divide was created by things as simple as lack of road and transport access, lack of entrepreneurial opportunity and lack of physical infrastructure. This created an urban geography that attracted activists seeking to challenge the

state at the site of government. This image of an urban geography is supported by Sassen who states "different cities have different strengths" (Sassen, 2009, p.330) and while they form global circuits through economic links alongside migration, cultural work and civil society (2009, p.5) they each maintain these strength and have become the site for the evolution of new kinds of political practices and political actor. Hindman's argument that these inequities are going to be further embedded by technological advances means this divide is unlikely to change and the geography of TWNs and individual activists will continue to be dominated by the urban,

Further, often the communities that these groups represented were not online: i.e. women in poor communities struggling with SRHR (sexual and reproductive health rights) issues. Junice from Likhaan, based in Manila[3], said that she would struggle to do her work outside of Manila because the women she represents cannot send an email or access an online space; Manila is a central location for these women to be able to come to, and – just as importantly – for her to travel out from to meet them. This highlights why TWN members value their physical environment and why their physical position within a state continues to be significant. The transport links that are facilitated by being based in an urban area are far greater than those in rural areas. This again ties into the divide; while not technological this divide will continue to dominate the politics of TWN geographies despite technological advances and are again based upon infrastructure. This concern about being based in a rural location was also voiced in Bangkok, where one subject said that being accessible to women in need was a significant concern, and that Bangkok was the most accessible place for their constituency (not just for international donors, as mentioned earlier)[4]).

However, concerns regarding material access were also regularly voiced when interviewees were asked about the need to be located in urban areas. TWN members in Jakarta were the most concerned about the ability to access a 'virtual space' from rural areas. One subject said that their

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[3] See Appendix A. 5.
[4] See Appendix A. 20.

relocation to Jakarta had been in order to be able to properly participate in their network (in a paid position); this had not been possible in the much more rural area where she was from, and she had left her child in the care of her parents and had had to move to Jakarta. She stated that telecommuting still was not a possibility in Indonesia, with online access only easily available in urban areas. (See A. 18.) It is worth noting here that Indonesia in particular suffers from a large technological development gap, so while it may be the case that 2.4% of the world's Tweets come from Jakarta (techinasia, 2013), those in rural areas are unlikely to have any access to the internet, let alone be highly active on social media. This means that those outside the urban areas are essentially disenfranchised from this new 'space'.

Telecommuting is still not possible as a result of material access factors, and, secondary factors such as transport links, being near to the central hub of politics, and being near to other groups that are dedicated to similar issues (an issue which will be further explored in the relationships chapter of this research). There is a resulting value in having an urban geographical location that is not being mediated by technology and access to the fluidity of 'virtual space'.

Now the divide between the rural and urban has been assessed, and highlights why the cases considered here are all cities rather than states the individual case studies cans be analysed. These will be broken down by countries and into factors, dealing initially with physical infrastructure and then moving into a broader, comparative, consideration of social factors.

The Philippines

Infrastructure in the Philippines permits only limited access to virtual space for activists. This is in spite of the fact that, as shown by the cases included in this study, virtual communication is used heavily by activist groups in the Philippines. The majority of survey respondents stated that internet access was only 'somewhat available' with only two stating that it was 'very available'.

This is further demonstrated by the fact that the Philippines (and in this specific case Manila) have the fastest rate of increase in internet penetration in Southeast Asia. In 2013, there were 33.6 million active internet users. And while the nation currently only has an internet penetration rate of 35% (or 3.5 users per 10 people) (forward.ph, 2014?)[5], this still represents a growth rate of 531% since 2000 (when the Philippines had a penetration rate of just 2%) (Horwitz, techinasia, 2014). Given the fact that only 20 per cent of households in the Philippines have a computer, this growth rate seems unlikely to be based solely on access to desktop computers (Casambre, 2013). There are 95 million mobile phone owners in the Philippines and Marevic Parcon from the Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights in Manila describes it as the 'texting capital of the world.' (see Appendix A. 8.). This observation is supported by a US study from 2009 that found the average Filipino was sending approximately 600 text messages per month (Tuazon, 2012). Twenty per cent of all internet access is through mobile phones and of those using the internet, Filipinos also spend the most time online of any group among the three considered in this research: the average Filipino internet user spends 6.2 hours online a day with approximately four of these being spent on social media.[6] It must, therefore, be asked what the barriers are for TWN members based in Manila that resulted in them only having 'somewhat easily available' internet access.

Firstly, studies by techniasia have demonstrated that even in terms of a basic ability to connect, there remain ongoing obstacles. The Philippines offers the slowest connection speeds in ASEAN and ranks 155th in the world in terms of speed of connection (techinasia, 2014). This was a recurring theme in interviews; more than one subject mentioned the fact that using the internet for Skype or online discussions is a struggle, as pages are likely to time out or be unable to connect.

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[5] One of the problematic elements for this study is that statistics for technology ownership and internet penetration are national rather than based on cities. Where possible figures have been found for individual cities but most have had to be analysed on the context of the national rather than the local. While this poses a drawback it still gives us the broad brush picture of the infrastructure limitations faced by activists in each case study.
[6] Notably, though. the statistics relating to hours spent online only consider those who access the internet regularly: as such, while those who have a consistent internet connection can be shown to spend large periods of time online, there is less evidence regarding those who are most likely to be disenfranchised from 'virtual space'.

These difficulties are attributed to the government and their lack of structural investment in developing faster internet (Santos, 2014); access to 'virtual space' is therefore an issue over which governments exercise significant influence. The state (or more specifically the Department of Science and Technology, Information and Communications Technology Office) seeking to address the issue by legislating for internet service providers to offer a minimum speed. Although this is a potentially positive development; change is likely to be slow due to the diffusion of responsibility for internet issues and infrastructure among a variety of departments (Santos, 2014). A barrier like this is likely to dissuade potential users from changing their methods of communication from more traditional telephones and faxes to emails and Skype. If this is the case, then the slow internet connection speeds in Manila can pose a hurdle for TWN members based there trying to access virtual space.

One of the claims in the literature (see Denning, 2001; Earl and Kimport 2011) surrounding the internet and activism is that it is inexpensive. However, for Filipino network members high costs mean that groups that might otherwise wish to access the internet cannot commit such a significant portion of their resources to it, and will rely instead on more traditional methods of communication. Despite the fact that the costs of communicating via the internet are significantly lower than attending meetings in person, it is not the case that technological advances have removed all cost barriers for communication.

Indonesia

Indonesia is experiencing a rapid year-on-year growth in numbers of internet users, implying an increasingly developing infrastructure. As of 2013 Indonesia had 71.19 million Internet users, a 13 per cent increase on 2012. It is anticipated that this penetration rate will grow a further 11 per cent by the end of 2014 (Citizenlab 2014), resulting in an overall penetration rate of 33 per cent. Indonesia also has a reputation for having a huge number of users of social media: it has 62 million active Facebook users (although it should be borne in mind that one person may hold more than

one account) (Citizenlab, 2014), which places it second in the world in terms of number of accounts based in a single country. Social media enjoys a 25 per cent penetration rate amongst the population. In the first three months of 2014, 2.4% of all Tweets came from Jakarta alone (Magdirila, techinasia, 2014). Indonesia is also third in the world in terms of number of Twitter accounts held (Asrianti, *Jakarta Post* 2011). Notably, in relation to mobile phone subscriptions, there is a 112 per cent penetration rate (a result of many users having several subscriptions) (Horwitz, techinasia 2014). It could be inferred from these trends that internet access in Indonesia is sufficiently available, and infrastructure is sufficiently developed, to allow TWN members to operate with little constraint or restriction (at least in terms of ability to get online) in virtual space.

However, as with the Philippines, there are a number of obstacles for those wishing to operate in 'virtual space'. One source suggests that Internet speeds are decidedly better in Indonesia than in Manila, ranking them among the fastest in the region (Ookla Net Index, 2013). Importantly, Indonesia has a much larger plurality of internet providers than the Philippines, with over 300 Internet service providers (LIRNEasia, 2013). In theory, this should result in a high level of competition, as speeds increase and prices fall. However, there is little evidence of this having happened so far.

As with the Philippines, the government of Indonesia is attempting to intervene in the market: it has launched the 'Indonesia Connected' programme, aiming to increase connectivity, particularly in remote areas. The efforts to intervene in Internet connectivity, and therefore increase access and infrastructure fall under the purview of one department – the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology. The Chairman of the country's largest internet provider has stated that the "government needs to facilitate Internet service providers" (APJII, 2014), reiterating the perspective that the state itself has a responsibility for internet provision.

Thailand

Overall, internet penetration in Thailand is at 27 per cent (Freedom House, 2014: page), which is a lower percentage than that found in either Indonesia or the Philippines. However, it must be noted that Bangkok interviewees were the only ones to unanimously respond that internet was 'very' easily available when surveyed (although there could be other explanatory factors for this, as discussed in the section on digital divides) (See Appendix A. 21 – A.23).

Alongside Indonesia, Thailand has a reputation for widespread use of social networks (e27, 2014), with a 25 per cent rate of social media penetration (US Census Bureau, 2013) and the average social media user spending 3 hours and 39 minutes on social media sites daily. Unlike the cases of Indonesia and the Philippines, Thailand offers significantly faster internet access, with the second fastest internet speeds in the region (Ookla Net Index, 2013). As of 2012, 22.7% of households have a broadband connection, meaning most Thai citizens with home internet access have it at a relatively accessible speed. There are therefore seemingly fewer structural barriers to material access in Thailand than the other case studies in this region. The implications are that TWN members in Bangkok should have minimal obstacles when trying to engage in 'virtual space'.

As previously established there are some divides that are related to both infrastructure and social factors. The most apparent of these is socio-economic divides. The cost of access is partially decided by infrastructure factors such as the availability of competitive providers and the availability of means of access. Therefore before considering the purely social factors it is logical to consider that which straddles both categories.

Socio-economic Divides

First to establish socio-economic divides in accessing 'virtual space' an analysis of the costs in the three cases is required. An average internet connection in the Philippines costs 2402.92 pesos per month (Philippines Price Index, 2013: page) – approximately £33.08p GBP as of 19th August

2014[7]. The average wage in the Philippines is 11,700 pesos per month (ILO, 2013) meaning that an internet connection is 20.53% of the monthly wage, and therefore out of reach for those not earning significantly above the average wage. This price includes a basic internet connection, with a capped download limit and a slow speed, which therefore may not be suitable for all purposes. In Indonesia, internet costs as a percentage of monthly income are actually lower than those in the Philippines: a capped average-speed connection costs 409,375 rupiah, and the monthly average income is 14,850,024 rupiah (ILO, 2013), meaning that internet access would cost 2.7% of the average monthly salary. Falling in the middle   of the three case studies in terms of connection costs is Thailand: the average internet cost is 639.98 Thai Baht (numbeo.com, 2014), compared to an average monthly wage of 15,633 Thai Baht, which equates to approximately 4% of an average Thai income. Although this makes Thai and Indo affordable in a way that isn't in the in the Philippines, an example which comparatively highlights the material access differences between states, the cost of an internet connection clearly puts it out of reach of those from poorer socio-economic backgrounds, even before differences that may create wage divides are taken into account: i.e. gender, location, and education level. This creates a socio-economic divide almost instantaneously.(v. repetitious) It is noteworthy that these fixed internet lines usually require some form of hardware in the home, for desktop, laptop or tablet users. Mobile phone providers may offer a cheaper alternative for connecting to the internet, but this system, too, has its drawbacks: smartphones make for flexible usage in various locations but do not provide the easy viewing of large quantities of data or documents, and the uploading of information and production of documents is not easy.

As discussed earlier in the chapter one of the ways of mitigating the costs of internet access has been internet cafes. Since much of the existing scholarship on internet cafes has been published,

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[7] All internet connection costs are based on the same time of package which is available in all three countries. This is 6 MB per second, unlimited data, and cable or ADSL. This is to ensure a reasonable comparison. However both less expensive and far more expensive connections are available.

the situation on the ground has evolved. No longer are internet cafes the primary way of accessing online spaces for those who do not have access at home; this is evidenced by the lack of internet cafes in the cities considered in this study and further demonstrated by the fact no respondent mentioned using internet cafes to facilitate their engagement with virtual space. Over the last few years, free public Wi-Fi has become increasingly common, including in the three case study cities considered here. This Wi-Fi is often accessible in coffee shops, restaurants and in some cases even entire shopping malls (for example, SM Chain Malls in Manila offer free Wi-Fi for patrons). In terms of its ability to revolutionise technology Wi-Fi has been described as "certainly useful... but not an epochal shift" (Standage 2003: p.11). As with internet cafés, Wi-Fi is also not without its drawbacks: unlike internet cafes it requires the user to have a device with which to access this Wi-Fi and this device also needs to be portable; namely, a tablet, smartphone or laptop. Furthermore, publicly accessible Wi-Fi is often slow due to the number of users logged on at once, which drains bandwidth. Finally, it still often comes with a cost premium: in the cases of coffee shops and restaurants, one must frequently make a purchase in order to receive the password. As with internet cafes, public Wi-Fi also creates a reliance on operating between prescribed times (the location offering Wi-Fi needs to be accessible) and lacks privacy, meaning once again that while it offers some redress to those disadvantaged by material access disparities, it is not without limitation. There is certainly a socio-economic divide between those who can afford a private connection and hardware and those who rely more on public access, and a further divide for those who cannot afford even this reduced form of access.

Secondary Divides

As noted earlier, Van Dijk considers that the so-called digital divide manifests itself in a number of ways beyond simply material issues, to include 'skills access, mental access and usage access'

(1999: p. 351) This secondary divides section will consider divides that present themselves as predominantly social; gender, education and language.

The importance of the gender divide has already been well established in the introductory section of this chapter; including its special relevance due to the consideration of women's networks. The empirical cases bore out this divide

Interview subjects discussed active efforts to bridge material access divides for gender, which all acknowledged to exist (See interviews with Naomi from Indonesia Planned Parenthood[8], Ana Sabeia of Kalikasan,[9] Sarochinee of Goodwill [10]Bangkok for examples). The most significant concern, based on interviews and discussions, is the skills divide. Thus, for example, ISIS International, based in Manila, offers computer training to women in order to try and bridge this gap; however, Marevic Parcon of WGNRR[11] says that one of the biggest hurdles they face when trying to operate online is that their members still do not always have the skills required to join and operate forums and other online forms of communication.

Adrianna Venny of the Women's Participation Organisation in Jakarta referred to the difficulties of trying to organise online discussions and forums as many of those they would wish to include are not comfortable with online participation, something she attributes at least in part to gender issues: "If it were men we were trying to communicate with, we would find it much easier to do it in emails than we do trying to make women become involved". This of course has a link to age as a social factor, both are informed by who the user is and this will be analysed shortly.

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[8] See Appendix A.20
[9] See Appendix A.2
[10] See Appendix A.23
[11] See Appendix A. 8

Some of the literature surrounding gender divides online does however offer some hope for this particular block to access – immediate barriers to equitable gender participation tend to shrink over time, although more subtle barriers remain. One study shows that between 1997 and 2002, the percentage of internet users in China who were female rose sharply, from 12 to 29 (Wong,2007: p. 227). This indicates that as time passes and the internet becomes increasingly established, the demographics of those navigating it also change, which means there is the potential for this gender gap to shrink in all three cases. Supporting this, Ana Sabeia of Kalikasan,[12] Manila was highly positive about women's uptake of technology; throughout her 25 year history within women's movements, she has seen gender gaps close in relation to almost every form of technology, stating that "although it sometimes takes us longer, we always catch up", and citing previous examples of faxes and employing media strategies.).

Prasong Letpayub[13]from Bangkok proposed that they had seen changes over the period they had been involved with women's activism seeing a change from transnational discussions only occurring in physical forums like conferences to an increasing move towards technology uptake, initially with the telephone and faxes and now to moving online with more and more occurring using computer mediated communications. The fact that this gap closes over time does once again reinforce the importance of material space upon virtual space; if a network member is operating in a state where the internet has been embedded for a more extensive period of time, then they will already suffer less from a gender divide in technological access, meaning once again that their material space affects their navigation and operation within 'virtual space'.

It is also important to note that the gender gap will directly affect most members of a TWN: it should not therefore create or embed hierarchies between these members in 'virtual space', as all members should, at least in this sense, be at a similar disadvantage due to the fact that by the nature

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[12] See Appendix A. 2.
[13] See Appendix A.23.

of the networks and the issue they are working around (women's issues) they will be heavily dominated by women which should create a lack of a divide within networks in this sense. However, women in those countries that have the most developed internet histories will already have overcome this 'bump'. This does therefore lead to a more vertical form of network structure in this 'virtual space': those who have overcome a gender gap, and are therefore the first to navigate and construct this technologically created space, will have time to establish themselves before those countries and network members that lag behind have entered the same space. These hierarchies in an online space will replicate existing hierarchies within a network, predominantly this will be informed by those who have the resources and education and those in locations where they have less technologically education and more of an inherent gender divide at a local level.

Age

Those recently educated, or those still in school, will be some of the first to receive education in ICT from an early age, rather than developing these skills when they are already outside of a formal educational setting. This age gap may prove difficult to address through government programmes, but may be solved simply through the passage of time. It is considered within some literature to be the "biggest determinant of online skills" (Hargittai, 2007), due to the fact that younger generations have had earlier exposure to, and are more likely to have had training in, ICT. The divide is between those who were born and have grown up in the 'digital era' and those who have experienced the internet only as adults; the divide can be categorised as between 'digital natives' and 'digital immigrants'. There are now also thought to be very significant divides between simple ICT users and those for whom sophisticated ICT usage was part of their toddlerhood. This is a divide that is statistically evident in all three nations studied. In the Philippines, 40 per cent of users of the internet fall into the youngest surveyed age bracket (`15-24). In Thailand, not only are three-quarters of all mobile subscribers under the age of 24 (with mobile devices offering a platform for internet access) (Kemp, 2012), but 45.2% of all website visits are from users aged 15

to 24, and a further 29.5% come from the age bracket directly above (24 to 35). Only nine per cent of those over 50 in Thailand use the internet (Nielsen, 2011). In Indonesia, 58.4% of internet users are under the age of 35, with only 12.6% of all users being over the age of 50 (APIJI, digital profile, 2013).

Age is not just a 'skills access' (Van Dijk, 1999) issue, but also an issue of "mental access". For those unused to them, new technologies can cause computer anxiety (Russell, 1995; p. 174). This anxiety is attributed to 'naïve users' lack of experience of technologies in new contexts. This lack of experience and understanding can discourage older members of networks from engaging with the technology, and the resulting anxiety means that it takes them far longer to engage with these technologies and to learn how to use them (Simonoson *et al*. 1987: page). This applies not just to the idea of accessing 'virtual space' with the initial connection, but goes one step further stretching to the tools and opportunities provided by this alternative space and its developments.

Handayani Konseling from Patamaba, Jakarta raised the significance of social media campaigning for modern network groups, but also explained that it was only prevalent in groups with a younger membership like Patamaba and those working in the area of 'youth issues' [14](Groups with an older membership or focus had not yet grasped the need for social media, and did not have the same enthusiasm for it. Social media is very popular in Jakarta; according to a 2012 study analysing Twitter patterns, this city produces more Tweets than any other in the world (Lipman, Forbes, 2013). This engagement with newer technologies also attracts younger members to networks and movements and has the potential to change the dynamic and make-up of networks, particularly for those who utilise this new 'virtual space'. Traditionally members of civil society – be they individual activists or TAN members – have been portrayed as unrepresentative (Kaldor, 2003; p.6), often middle class and middle age with the education and resources to allow them to push agendas, and it is here that technological advances could really have a significant impact on

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[14] See Appendix A.13

creating a 'level' network. While this may seem very obvious it is crucial when considering the divides that are prevalent in networks and the problems it may cause in terms of agendas and whose voices are hard is at present substantial.

Potentially, this divide may lessen over time, As the 'natives' begin to form the entirety of the internet population, and the number of digital 'immigrants' naturally reduces, it is possible to perceive a scenario in which there is no longer an age divide in the digital space. The Internet is not a static technology, and this means there will likely always be a subtle form of divide between those immersed in, and adept with, new advances in the 'virtual space' and better equipped to use tools like social media to their full potential. This, in turn, could – as previously mentioned – help level the traditional hierarchy of the older, middle class activist having more power as a result of more resources. Although it must be observed that there is still the potential for these middle-class activists to become adept with the new technologies as before those with fewer resources have the opportunity, in which case while age could act as a leveller in some regards it would retain its limitations.

Education

Of the three case studies considered in this research, the Philippines offers the best education and, specifically, ICT education for its citizens.[15] School is compulsory and provided by the state from the ages of five to 18, and since 1996, the Department of Education has developed and implemented policy on ICT education, seeking to roll out computers to all secondary schools for

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[15] The focus here has been on primary and secondary education as this is more uniform across all three states and education at these levels is more prescriptive and based on mandated curriculums meaning a direct involvement from the state itself, tertiary level education tends to lean towards specialisms and personal interests so is not as directly relevant here.

both the provision of ICT education and use within other educational contexts. As of 2007 it had achieved a 60-75 per cent penetration rate. This means that despite the problems interview subjects attested to in Manila, there is a concerted effort to educate people in ICT and provide them with digital skills, and as such, this could be a divide that essentially 'ages out.'

Indonesia has a shorter education requirement. It currently requires nine years of compulsory education, and the state provides education accordingly. However, as of 2014 there is a rollout plan that seeks to increase this to 12 years of compulsory education (Franken, *Jakarta Post*, 2010). In terms of ICT education, the Ministry of Education has made a commitment to improve digital literacy, and students are introduced to ICT education in their primary years (UNESCO, 2013). However, the quality of this education varies heavily, and there is a shortage of computers in schools (UNESCO 2013). This educational disparity results in embedded inequalities later on in terms of digital skills and literacy. It should be noted that, since 2006, Indonesia has had a legislative policy inserting ICT into all curriculums under a programme introduced by the directorate for vocational education. Furthermore, Indonesia is a strong example of a divide on the basis of education, with only 18.7% of all internet users having completed less than a high school education (APIJI, digital profile, 2013).

In Thailand, free education is provided for 12 years, with nine of those years being compulsory and with a 60 per cent enrolment level for the full 12 (UNESCO, 2012). UNESCO identifies an overall problem with the quality of state provided education in Thailand, which is particularly unequal dependent on location. However, ICT is a compulsory element of education for all schools, and under Schoolnet Thailand, the government sought to provide the necessary hardware for ICT education to all schools (Makaramani, 2013).

As a result of the differing education policies in relation to technology, network members have different origin point. This provides them with differing digital skill levels which will naturally cause divides within networks and affect how groups may connect, and who may comprise them.

These divides are created by the material space in which network nodes operate: if a group is based in the Philippines, their employees and members are more likely to have had a better education in technology than those in Indonesia, This means that the ability to engage with virtual space from a skills perspective is heavily influenced by material geographies.

Within the research carried out for this study, there was some effort being made among those already familiar with ICT technology to educate those potential TWN members who had not had access to such education previously. In Manila, both Homenet and ISIS International sought to share their digital skills by holding classes and workshops for members on using the internet, both for communication and participation. However Marevic Parcon of WGNRR[16] observed that these classes were limited in their reach, and that there is a divide even within WGNRRs networks, between those who know how best to utilise the internet and those who struggle to engage with it. This divide reaches further than just accessing the virtual space created by new technologies: those with awareness and understanding of how to maximise the tools it provides (namely, the power held by social media) have the opportunity to advance agendas, to create branding, and to promote causes in a way that other network members with lesser knowledge and skills may not be able to. The idea that the dialogue will be dominated by those with digital skills is important. This dialogue and agenda setting shapes networks and their programmes. This bias may create a hierarchical power structure between those wielding the 'power' of the virtual and those without. Those classes that this research has examined are basic, mainly dealing with how to manage email and communications technology, and how to search for information. This is a world away from the more sophisticated elements of TWNs' online operations.)Education is evolving to keep up with changing technology, although this change is taking place at a rate that education cannot progress at.

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[16] See Appendix A. 8.

As with age the fact that technology evolves at such a rapid pace (it only takes a consideration of a decade of advances to see how much it can change and at what speed) means that education is always being outpaced. As soon as classes are introduced the material which needs to be 'understood' has changed. In order to remain entirely updated on digital skills continual cycles of training would be required – this would be expensive and often impractical for those involved in activism, some of whom do it on a voluntary basis rather than as a form of employment and already struggle to balance it with existing commitments. As with the fact that even digital natives will be replaced by younger generations more apace with current developments those who lead the way in digital skills will also eventually be replaced by newer generations with more advanced and more current skills.

Language

Languages spoken by TWN members are inherently materially and geographically decided. The three case studies considered here demonstrate this clearly: in the Philippines, English has traditionally been a compulsory part of education (including in state funded schools), with classes starting at the beginning of elementary school. This results in a large percentage of the population having significant fluency in English, which will make them more capable of operating online, as they will be able to not only understand English-language information and content but also communicate in English-speaking forums and groups. Indonesia has removed English from its elementary school curriculum; however, highlighting disparity even within states, Jakarta has opted to maintain it as a compulsory educational requirement (Elyda, *Jakarta Post*, full date 2013). Here, too, the rural/urban divide manifests itself: those born and educated in Jakarta will come to a 'virtual space' with a higher likelihood of being able to operate in its predominant language. In Thailand, schools are not required to teach English as part of a national curriculum; however there has been significant effort made to promote learning English in schools, as a result of a push by ASEAN (Hodal, the Guardian, 2012). These inequities in language teaching even between three

developing and geographically close countries are obviously far less significant than those between network members based in Western English speaking countries and those in Southeast Asia, and if 'virtual space' is predominantly English-speaking, it is highly likely that existing power dynamics will continue within networks even in a new, non-material space

It should be noted that transnational networks require some understanding of English, so this obstacle will be mitigated here more than it would be for normal activists. Because they are transnational in nature they have to find a common form of communication and this has been led by English, in part because much of the women's agenda has traditionally been set by Western participants. This does not mean that it will not be an obstacle, the simple fact that some of the interviews for this project required a translator disproves the idea that all TAN members speak English, it will however be less of a dramatic one than it may be for activists outside of transnational networks.

Luz Martinez, of ISIS International, referred to a forum they had run which not only operated in English, but was moderated by an English speaking group[17]. The moderators maintained the right to control posts, both in terms of who could and could not post, and removing content that they thought was a security concern. When members of the forum, were based in countries with more repressive regimes – i.e. Myanamar – posted information that moderators deemed sensitive, given the potential for retaliation in the members' home country, these posts were then removed in order to protect them. The fact that all moderation was carried out by those from the Philippines demonstrates their control of the discourse in this case and the power it offers them. Traditionally, Filipino women's groups have had an active role in TWNs, particularly those with roots in East Asia, as a result of their English-speaking abilities as well as their established machinery for women's networks (Angeles 2003; p.174). This traditional control has continued through to this new 'virtual space', suggesting that claims that it is a democratising space are overreaching. By

[17] See Appendix A.1.

moderating and controlling a forum, the group (or network node) maintains content control, which allows them to inform and shape agendas through the control of discourse. While there is not a suggestion that this power is being deliberately used in this way, this language divide does create barriers to equitable participation.

Although the power of Filipino groups has been highlighted, the associated disadvantage that Thai Women's groups suffer was made explicit in a number of interviews conducted in Bangkok. Arpaporn Winijikulchai, the head of the Asia Foundation's Women's Programme,[18] was the first to raise the issue. She stated that one of the problems Thai women's network nodes have had is in being able to communicate, both prior to and since the development of virtual space (See Appendix A. 23.). She suggested that even those who speak English are often unwilling to communicate in it, due to concerns about misunderstandings and not feeling confident in their mastery of the language, and that this problem has replicated itself online, both in terms of communications and in establishing an online presence via websites and forum interactions. Therefore the fact that English predominates online puts Thai women at an immediate disadvantage in relation to other groups within networks, i.e. Filipino Women's Groups, as they are – as a result of material and geographical factors – excluded from discussions. In some ways this divide is even more problematic online than in other contexts. For example, at a meeting or conference a translator may attend, allowing something closer to equal participation in discussion.(although, as previously mentioned, English speaking groups were more likely to be chosen to chair or host conferences, which already created a subtle advantage). Online, this same solution to language difficulties is not present. Therefore, the obstacle can be perceived by some women's network members as insurmountable, and create a 'mental access' issue due to anxiety caused by language concerns.

It should be noted that as the internet has evolved, so have translation tools. Social media has inbuilt translation options for content; Google allows for translation of its pages; and even Skype

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[18] Appendix A. 23.

has developed a real-time translation programme (Chong, 2014). For other websites without an inbuilt translation option, there are many free online translation tools that may be employed, which have the potential to lessen language-based divides. Furthermore, these tools are always evolving and improving by developing new language-mapping algorithms and improving on previous versions (technologyworld, 2013). However, these tools remain limited: digital translation is often patchy and does not allow for grammatical and structural differences inherent between languages (translationbydesign, 2011), and importantly, also require a high degree of trust from the user. In order to post in a forum like ISIS's in English using a translation tool, requires faith that the translations it provides are both understandable and convey the subtleties implicit in verbal conversation. Furthermore, users have to rely on the translation tool having translated previous posts accurately to ensure their responses are appropriate. Finally, despite advances in translation technology, problems still persist: a recent example is that Google Translate struggles with genders in all languages (Accredited Language, 2013) making some translations have an entirely different meaning than that which was intended.

These language divides have, as previously mentioned, played a role in network hierarchies prior to the emergence of a 'virtual space' for TWNs and continue to perpetuate themselves within this virtual space.

Conclusions

TWNs operate across national boundaries and are therefore more susceptible to these kinds of divisions than groups operating within one state. Those who have access to resources, infrastructure, and education and speak the 'right language' will continue to predominate and to hold power, and those nodes with the most power will continue to set the agenda and to hold more influence across the network. Therefore, even in this virtual space the hierarchies that prevented traditional networks from being flat in their organisational structures will continue to exist. Far from being a 'new' space, 'virtual space' is in fact an adjunct space, replicating the material and

geographical factors that its constituents bring with them into their navigation, understanding and operations. As established earlier, space is a product of its constituents and their perceptions; this 'virtual space' comes loaded with hierarchies and dynamics that replicate the material and geographical spaces in which TWN members go about their day to day lives.

TWNs, even when operating in 'material spaces', have inherent divides and power structures. Since the initial assertions of Keck and Sikkink in 1998 that networks are flat, horizontal organisational structures, there has been substantial research and scholarship to prove otherwise (Bob, 2002; Piper and Uhlin 2004; Pieck 2012) In early literature on this topic, there was optimism that these disparities would not exist in 'virtual space', and that it would be democratising for individuals and actors; in this case, networks(See Annis, 1992; Kidd, 2003 as examples) However, what is apparent from existing scholarship and the interviews and surveys undertaken for this research is that the existing power structures and inequalities found within – and outside of – TWNs in material space carry over into this new 'virtual space'.

Infrastructure is materially decided: some network nodes will have access to much better, cheaper, and faster internet, particularly those in more developed states. This will allow them greater 'material access' to 'virtual space'. While all three localities examined offer some form of structure for enabling internet access, the limits of this have been made clear above; particularly, this study was simply not able to consider networks from a truly state-wide perspective, owing to the pervasiveness of rural/urban divides in the nations examined, and had to maintain a focus on capital cities for this reason. This means the geographical location that a network member is operating from vastly affects their ability to access virtual space.

While the rural/urban divide mainly causes inequities within states the other divides have the ability to perpetuate and even worsen power hierarchies between members of TWNs based in different states. Language is the most obvious of these: given the English languages' ongoing predominance in terms of online content and discussion, those network members from English

speaking countries are automatically privileged in their online interactions. Consequently, by being able to control the discussion – especially in terms of forums and discussion groups – these network members have control over the framing of issues and the agenda of the network. Familiarity with English also gives them greater ability to engage with potential donors online, both through making initial contact and submitting grant/funding requests, and through having their content and websites be in a language the donor can speak or read. This power of language in terms of donor relationships exists offline as well, and is well-documented (Thayer, 2010), but its significance here is that it is being replicated even in the new, virtual space. This divide is increasing disparities within networks: if technology becomes an increasingly important element of network relations and the ability to access 'virtual space' becomes a necessity, then increasingly those outside of urban areas (who already suffer a 'rural penalty') will become disenfranchised from discussion and agenda-setting within networks. This disenfranchisement is detrimental; networks represent people and if these people cannot be involved in the dialogue then networks risk suffering from a loss of accountability to those they seek to represent. The value of an urban location is well established, but to lose touch entirely with those rural communities would be a great loss as these women are often the ones most in need of representations within networks. The value of relationships within networks and with donors will be further explored in the following relationships chapter.

In terms of education it was clearly established that it poses a further social divide, the problematisation of a lack of digital skills cannot be overlooked. In this sense the transnational nature of networks has clear benefits; some groups within the network have the power to share ideas and skills to the benefit of all. This was demonstrated by the classes run by ISIS and WGNRR to educate other network members in Manila in digital skills. This idea that some groups will educate others is also a reason why divides and virtual space are especially relevant in the consideration of TWNs (and in fact all forms of TANs). There has typically been an understanding that services and knowledge are shared across networks, leading to a professionalization of

standards and a shared knowledge of skills (Bailie Smith and Jenkins, 2011). Therefore, within networks, digital skills and literacy should – over time – become less of a divide; however, whether this will prove the case relies upon willingness to teach and disseminate digital literacy skills. There is also the difficulty of communicating digital skills transnationally: sharing information is substantially easier than educating fellow TWN nodes in best practice online; this is predominantly as information sharing simply requires making something available, educating takes a significant time commitment and further resources

In the case of TWNs superficially gender is not an issue throughout the network itself due to the very nature of its constituents; however, it may permeate in subtler ways. Different educational standards and gender narratives in a node's individual country may affect their engagement with ICT and therefore 'virtual space'. Jakarta evinces the largest disparity in male/female internet use in Southeast Asia, whereas in Manila, there are more female internet users than male. Local gender narratives are therefore likely to play a part in dictating patterns of engagement. Furthermore, they may put women's networks at a disadvantage overall, particularly within those countries which suffer a stronger gender digital divide; women in these nations will not be able to raise their issues online or campaign in the same way as other, more digitally-literate, networks and nodes, especially given that much of the work a TWN does in an individual country is driven by local member groups (Piper and Uhlin, 2004; p.103). Campaigns regarding labour rights or the environment, for instance, in Indonesia may have more 'online presence' and garner more resources and attention, once again putting TWN members – and individual groups working on women's issues – at a disadvantage.

The fact that this gaps regarding social factors have the potential to close over time does once again reinforce the importance of material space upon virtual space; if a network member is operating in a state where the internet has been embedded for a more extensive period of time, then they will already suffer less from a gender divide in technological access, meaning once again

that their material space affects their navigation and operation within online spaces. This is also true of education and skills access. However, there is also the limitation that every time a gap closes technology will change and it may, once again, reopen. At the rate of technological change there is no way for divides too fully and permanently close as there will always be leaders in technological uptake and those who lag behind. This may be decided by gender, age or physical location or a whole host of other potential social factors. However no matter the shifts in where the divides lie there is no viable way for there to be no divides at all.

Borders exacerbate these demonstrable divisions. While there may be some inequity in terms of access to infrastructure or education within a country, particularly the common rural-urban divide, these divides cause much deeper fractures transnationally than they would in a domestically-based network. A state is likely to establish an education policy on a national scale, and while some areas may experience better education than other this overall policy should reduce the disparities within a state. However on a transnational level the discrepancies between groups and individuals based in states with different policies are going to be far more substantial; as demonstrated by the different experiences of activists in the three case studies. This means that power structures are at least partially based on inherent material factors, and therefore for TWNs, there is no absolute way of separating 'virtual space' from the material kind. The subtleties and nuances of existing dynamics of inequity are brought in by the actors who populate this virtual space, and as such, material geographies continue to have a significant bearing upon metaphorical virtual space.

RELATIONSHIPS; TRUST AND POWER IN ONLINE SPACES

Following on from the previous chapter, which established that divides in access and understanding alongside differences in available infrastructure create inherent inequalities throughout networks reliant on 'virtual spaces', this chapter seeks to understand if these new virtual spaces can offer a space for horizontal relationship formation – for activists to make new connections and develop new partnerships – or if, once again, it is a space that promotes inequalities and reinforces uneven power dynamics throughout TWNs.

Much of the power ascribed to the Internet and accordingly virtual space stems from its ability to eradicate distance, both in forming and continuing relationships. The idea of 'many-to-many communication' (Slevin, 2000; p.79) is linked to and informed by the concept that the Internet offers "time and space compression", which was an argument for the benefits of technology offered by Harvey as early as 1990, more specifically that technological connections allow users to conquer geographical distance without long-haul travel and to communicate regardless of differences in time zone. Existing scholarship focuses on the idea that virtual space creates a new way for the likeminded to meet and form networks, and with low barriers to entry compared to international conferences (no travel costs, for example) (see Garrett 2006; Myers 2000)this could promote membership and offer these members an alternative space in which to connect.

The literature also focuses on the ability of the Internet to offer a collective identity[19] to these newly-formed relationships; meaning that they are more than fleeting and have the ability to become embedded, long-term and significant relationships (Myers 2000, Brainard and Siplon 2000, Arquilla and Ronfeldt 2001, Garrett 2006). The literature was developed on the assumption that ease of communication would offer disparate groups and individuals enhanced abilities in forming a shared discourse and identity purely through their new access to enabling technologies

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[19] This conception of collective identity and its role in virtual space will be much more widely explored in the final substantive chapter of this thesis.

allowing them to meet in 'virtual spaces'' and increase their density of communication. By having access to forums and messenger programmes there were new ways for likeminded activists to find each other and this in turn had the possibility of creating new working relationships and networks.

There is scholarship which challenges this perception of relationships in virtual space. Papachrissi found that electronic relationships are no replacement for face-to-face communications, and that computer mediated communications (CMC) do not create the same strength of relationships as those made in more traditional ways (2002). This was reinforced by Zhang in 2007 who made the argument that while the online offers some form of imagined communities these need reinforcement through offline relationship building (p.227). Furthermore, as already discussed in the chapter on digital divides, language is a barrier for activists in this study: much of the Internet is written in English, and those who are not fluent in this language will likely face increased challenges in forming relationships across language barrier. The question of whether or not the "sub culture of coffee shops" (Diani, 2000; p.389) is being replaced with online forums and discussion groups was therefore considered during both periods of fieldwork, in all three cities.

While there has been some contesting of the idea that virtual relationships can replace face to face ones(Tarrow, 1998; Calhoun 1998; Breslow 1997), the conclusion in much of the extant scholarship remains that virtual space will offer a replacement for the traditional "sub culture of coffee shops and other semi-public spaces" (Diani. 2000; p.389) for TANs. Meetings among individuals, and personal relationships providing the foundations for working relationships and collaborations, can and will occur in this emergent space. The traditional understanding behind this is that face to face communication is a necessity for building the relationships that underpin networks. These face to face meetings were heavily dependent on the ability and resources to travel in order to form these new relationships, or the convenience of geographical proximity: it is this limitation that virtual space is said to eliminate the need for. This in theory creates a levelling space, in which participants can build relationships on an equal platform without the resource

investment required for transnational travel. Routledge considered those who could afford this travel to be an elite of mobile "global activists" (2003, p.341). In a TAN result in certain members being power brokers within the networks; this would consequentially mean that they would have a vertical. If this 'elite' component can be diluted then virtual space would represent a revolutionary, more horizontal space for TWNs. It is from this perspective that relationships and virtual space are considered here.

The vertical and the horizontal are key terms when considering any form of space but particularly virtual space as the claims made upon it assert that it is 'horizontal'. This research uses the terms to apply to the nature of power relations within networks and the spaces they inhabit. A horizontal space is one that offers no inherent power dynamics, where there is no "elite activist" (Routledge, 2003; p.341) that has dominance over dialogue and agenda. The vertical is taken to mean one where the opposite is true, where there are structural factors that mean there are certain components (individuals or groups) that do have control over the agenda or discourse within the space. This can also be applied to networks, the claim that TANs are horizontal was made by Keck and Sikkink (1998) and quickly challenged in the ensuing literature (See Stewart 2007). The power of virtual space to offer a horizontal, level space would mean leaving behind offline power dynamics within the relationships that constitute networks operating in material spaces and is core to any consideration.[20]

Empirical Evidence

To offer a brief context to what follows it needs to be noted that not a single respondent stated that they were forming relationships or expanding their networks online at the expense of face to face communications, there were nonetheless some variations in activists' responses. Kathy Melville

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[20] Power dynamics featured in the previous chapter on digital divides but will be more explicitly addressed in the context of relationships in this chapter

of WGNRR[21] gave an example of making initial contact with someone who has since become a partner; however the shift in the relationship to one with more seriousness and gravity did not occur until a face to face meeting (in this case the now partner flew from Africa to the Philippines for this occasion) had occurred. It should be noted this would have been an expensive flight and a significant fiscal investment in order to develop a relationship; this would not have been affordable for all and any individuals or groups and ties into the idea that TANs are not a horizontal space but demonstrate some degree of entrenched elitism. She further elaborated that without this face to face 'sit down' she would remain "sceptical" as to the likely longevity of the relationship, and to whether it could have achieved any real depth. This implies that those without the resources to finance meetings in person are considered even more peripheral as there is no future prospect for developing the relationship to its full potential, meaning that even those relationships formed via the internet have two inherent levels; those who can meet in person after initial contact and those who cannot.

Another Manila interviewee, Luz Martinez of ISIS International[22], talked of two circles of relationships, one based on personal relationships, face to face meetings and close communications. She described these relationships as having more depth, and being long-term and significant connections. The outer circle could be met virtually or third hand through other contacts. Where this exclusively involved communicating within a virtual space, it was far more likely to remain short-term, and would lack the depth of those built on face to face interactions. What she was depicting was a core of trusted relationships that were lasting and significant surrounded by a periphery of looser, weaker vague connections.

On the contrary to these examples another case from Manila; Jean Franco, stated that now she is unable to travel to meetings for APWW she feels excluded, and she relates this specifically to the

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[21] See appendix A. 13
[22] See appendix A. 1

fact that her travel grant is no longer available in order for her to attend conferences. She emphatically uses this to reinforce the importance of face to face relationships. This was reinforced through interviews in Jakarta and Bangkok.

In Jakarta Afra made the case that while her organisation (PAMFLET)[23] runs Facebook groups and mailing lists these relationships are simply not enough to create lasting bonds or to organise a network through and that the face to face connections have to follow these initial forms of online communication to turn online organisation to offline outcomes. In Bangkok Prason Lertpayub of Thai Rak Thai explicitly said that online relationships were not enough as "Raks Thai empowers people, builds capacity of people… doubt that technology will help with this as it requires a lot of human touch"[24].

In order to establish context it is beneficial to understand whether we can see a change in the patterns surrounding technology and whether virtual space is defying the previous trends.

This idea of virtual space failing to overcome existing social relationships and create new patterns of interaction is not isolated to internet technologies. Older research done on longer established technologies like the telephone or fax machines demonstrates similar findings, showing that rather than creating new patterns of communication it just creates denser patterns between those who were already socially connected.

Overestimation of technologies ability to override cultural and social tendencies has been previously seen in the scholarship that emerged about the possibilities of fax machines and telephones (Parks and Flloyd, 1996; Calhoun, 1998) among others. They lauded these developments (including cheaper long distance call rates for example) as having the possibility to impact massive change upon traditional communication and social structures. However the reality

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[23] See Appendix A. 14.
[24] See appendix A.23.

demonstrated that communications remained primarily between those who would have contacted each other regardless, only it increased the density of these communications rather than changing their very nature. (Rheingold,1998).

The idea that 'technology does not emerge into a vacuum' (Mynatt et al, 1996) is reinforced once again. Geographical groupings have traditionally had the densest exchanges of communications, and according to this research, access to the Internet has continued to compound this situation rather than radically reinvent it.

Existing research on older forms of technological development show that technical developments are best applied when used in existing social contexts, the primary example of this being geographic communities. These communities, according to Rheingold, can use them to take full advantage of existing social commitments and are more likely to do this than use them to develop new ones. While this draws on 'dated' literature, it still holds true in the case of this research, and summarises accurately what the empirical research found; that TWN members do not utilise technology to form new relationships but do use it to maintain existing ones. Forming new relationships then requires geographic proximity, as they needs to be followed up on in person in order to create a sustainable long term relationship.

Other superficially dated literature that supports the idea that virtual space may not be the revolutionary space some argue it to be includes Parks and Flloyd (1996) who argue that computer mediated communication simply creates social spaces that are similar to those we encounter in everyday life; that they replicate those social relationships that exist without a virtual space to operate within. The empirical research undertaken for this project supported this claim, with subjects like Mars Mendoza saying that they still need to work near other women's groups, as they still depend on face to face meetings for any form of coordinated or network effort against the Filipino government. This means that the reality for TWN members has not departed from findings

made nearly two decades ago; suggesting in turn that it is unlikely that there will be a sea change in how relationships are formed and developed as a result of internet advancements.

The literature on technology and social relationships suggests that whenever an advance in forms of communication occurs, there is a wave of literature to suggest it will have a huge impact on the way social relationships form and are conducted, only for the empirical research to then demonstrate that rather than change the status quo, it simply reinforces it. The research undertaken here fits this pattern, implying that the internet and its enabling of computer mediated communication platforms is unlikely to break the cycle. Technology continues to be what users make of it.

As was made very apparent by the TWN members interviewed and surveyed, the Internet and Computer Mediated Communication has not resulted in a major shift in the way in which they connect with network members, nor has it replaced face to face communication. Technology has, in fact, reinforced existing power dynamics meaning that virtual space does not offer newly horizontal relationships. Therefore more important than a drawn out analysis of whether virtual space has offered a new way to form relationships and build networks is an analysis of why and in what ways, at least for TWN members in Jakarta, Manila and Bangkok, it has not.

This chapter is divided into four main sections; trust and its relational importance, cultural and generational values, relationships and public spaces and relationships in private spaces.

Trust

Explanations for why face to face communication is still a necessity for embedding and building significant relationships within and outside of networks repeatedly centred on trust. This thread of trust runs through a variety of issues in different ways; from how technology is accessed, to who they are communicating with, and finally, how safe they feel their communications are.

Traditionally relationships have been formed face to face, and this has obvious contextual links. The idea of meeting face to face in coffee shops (Diani, 2000; p.389) has been an accepted part of the culture of networks and activist movements, with relationships often built on personal rather than professional connections. These relationships will then be directly linked to the state and geographic area in which an activist or network member is based. Furthermore, surroundings influence understandings and perceptions, with daily interactions shaping the way in which these individuals think about and build relationships within and outside of their networks. If these geographic influences lead to a distrust in relationships built virtually then this will have a clear and immediate impact on how they use online spaces and their ability to reform the way in which they make and strengthen connections to other groups and individuals. Trust is vital to relationships between activists and within networks. It is fundamental to the functioning of interpersonal relationships within TANs, due to the often sensitive and controversial nature of the issues around which they are working. It became apparent that virtual space does not foster the same trust as face to face communications and relationships built upon more traditional foundations.

This accords with Tilly's argument surrounding trust networks. Tilly applied the idea of trust networks to the concept of international migration (2007), to understanding the process of democratisation (2001), and to social movements (2005). He defined them as consisting of "ramified interpersonal connections, consisting mainly of strong ties, within which people set valued, consequential, long term resources and enterprises at risk to the malfeasance, mistakes or failures of others" (2005; p 78). Tilly observed that trust networks were often formed in conditions of uncertainty to work towards social change– something that TWNs should have by their very nature. This idea of trust networks and a search for trust underpins this entire chapter and all relationships with TANs and between activists.

This description of trust networks bears striking similarity to the description of TAN relationships and the environment in which they form and operate. Relevant here is the idea that in order for trust networks to function, there is an emphasis on 'ramified interpersonal connections' (Tilly, 2005; p.78) that form the foundations for that which follows. It is these deeply entrenched interpersonal connections that are not being facilitated in virtual space, at least not for the TWN members in the cities considered by this research. Without this element, the ability of virtual space to allow for the creation of relationships will fail to remotely compare to the depth of those formed in traditional material spaces.

Trust can be embedded in a range of spatial contexts however it operates at its best in private, local spaces; be they coffee shops or discrete offices. Zhang (2007; p. 227) reminds of the importance of the offline in reinforcing relationships online. It is this issue that presents itself in a variety of ways throughout the research on relationships in virtual space. In order to properly consider this issue of trust this chapter first considers themes of trust, then cultural and generational values that inform the building of trust in differing contexts and then divides the themes between spatialities of the public and the private.

There is no overstating of the need for trust in TWNs in all three case studies; Louise De Vera (see Appendix A. 6.) of the National Federation of Women's Labour in Manila stated that they "insist on meeting face to face" and that nothing is a substitute for "eyeball to eyeball contact". This idea of trust presented itself, without introduction from the interviewer, in over fifty percent of the interviews undertaken for this research. Trust on the Internet has different implications than trust in more traditionally formed relationships. Interview subjects made clear that this was related to the difference between core and peripheral relationships: the seemingly hierarchical nature of relationships within networks and between individuals. The research focus here was upon women's networks and while some of their work was non contentious, this was not always the case; for those working on issues surrounding sexual and reproductive health rights, there was

frequently controversy and the potential for a legal backlash surrounding their work, making trust a crucial component in any relationships they formed.

A clear demonstration of this need for trust came from Patchanee Kumnak[25] stated that she relies on long held, face to face relationships to form what she perceives as being a trust circle, and that these relationships develop over time. While the ongoing process of deepening them can take place partially online, without the initial face to face introductions and the personal element, there is too much 'risk' for her to consider conducting virtual relationships in the same way she would any other.

Initial and more obvious concerns about building relationships online consisted of issues in trusting technology. Initially, issues of trust made themselves apparent in conversations surrounding technology itself; following this, trust concerns arose regarding the nature of interpersonal relationships built through computer mediated communications.

Trusting the efficacy of technology is a very logical concern. As established in earlier discussions regarding infrastructure and access, the three case studies considered within this research all suffer from some form of technology lag, in the sense that they often suffer slower speeds or higher costs. This has an obvious impact on the formation of relationships. Any issues with accessing virtual space make it a less than ideal place in which to form, establish and embed relationships as it does not allow for the ease of back and forth conversation that a face to face meeting does. While basic infrastructural challenges were discussed in the previous chapter on digital divides there are anxieties that are separate to these and yet require faith in technological access.

This issue of technological difficulties manifested itself in all three cities in some form. A strong example emerged from the interview conducted with Prasong Lertpayub, a member of Thai Rak Thai, in Bangkok. When discussing the ability of technology to replace the need for conferences

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[25] See appendix A.21

and face to face meetings, he immediately asserted that this was not to be the case. He illustrated this with an example of a recent attempt by Thai Rak Thai to participate in a Skype conference. Due to slow internet speeds, they struggled not only to view others' contributions, but suffered a complete inability to contribute when their time came due to inadequate internet speed. [26](Skype requires a connection speed of 512 kb per second upload and 128 kb per second download for even the most basic video call). He spoke of the embarrassment and difficulty that came with this. This example clearly indicates the problems of online conferencing and meeting new partners online – if the infrastructure is inadequate not only can it be difficult to contribute but it can lead to future anxieties. The fact that Thai Rak Thai found their inability to properly participate in the conference "embarrassing" will likely lead to their mistrust of similar situations in the future, thereby meaning this will not be a method through which they engage with other groups and network members again, at least not with any enthusiasm; furthermore, they are unlikely to recommend it to partners and friends, thereby meaning it will be less likely to spread as an accepted technology

The idea of 'online posting anxiety' is well explored by Liu (2010) who considers the feelings of anxiety that can come with engaging in online spaces. Liu relates them back to trust and the feelings of stress that are induced by not having trust in the online space in which they are posting or lacking faith in the technology with which they are engaging and how this can pose an obstacle to online access as it creates a mental barrier (2010; p. 218). The nature of trust therefore underpins the idea of online relationships, if there is no trust even in the technology then it creates a dynamic within virtual space which is difficult to overcome.

In a subtler way, the frequent mentions of concerns about miscommunication are also related to a lack of trust in technology. TWN members interviewed for this research did not trust technology to accurately communicate their message in the same way that face to face meetings can. These concerns about miscommunication presented themselves in a number of ways: most frequently,

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[26] See Appendix A.6.

they were concerned that the written word was easily misinterpreted due to the lack of tone of voice or body language to accompany it, they were concerned about things being 'lost in translation', and they were worried that if they did not know the person they were communicating with in person they may be quick to take offence to jokes and attempts at being lighthearted (meaning communications were often kept formal and serious in tone when they were attempted). Ana Sabeia[27] offered an example of trying to make a joke in an email only for it to be somewhat lost in translation through the virtual medium and having it actually cause offence rather than ease the passage of a new relationship, this has put them off trying similar bonding efforts in the future as well as creating a sense of disquiet about online technologies altogether.

To surmount the issues in trusting technology to work successfully there is only one solution and that is for technology to work better and internet access to be more reliable. This is something that is likely to improve overtime, as infrastructure develops and software advances there will be an increasing reliability to technology. There will, however, be a delay in the improvements to infrastructure and the level of faith that activists and network members place in technology. It will require sustained effectiveness over an extended period in order to restore trust in the efficacy of new technology.

The second issue surrounding trust is also obvious but the solutions are more questionable; if there are any at all. Face to face relationships are underpinned by trust, it allows for a precise knowledge of the person on the other side and a visible interpretation of their reactions. In order for online relationships created and operated purely in virtual space to replace or even equal face to face relationships requires a transition in the understanding of trust in online spaces. Putnam (2000; p.177) was the first to posit the question: 'Is trust different in cyberspace[28]?' He coined the idea of online relationships as 'drive-by relationships' meaning that the lack of trust resulted in superficial

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[27] See Appendix A. 2.
[28] For the purposes of this work the term 'virtual space' is being used interchangeably with cyberspace however this is referent to the title of a specific piece of work and therefore remains as cyberspace

relationships that were, as the name implies, short term. Zhang identifies online communities as "often anonymous and decentralised" (p.221), this nature is what creates the 'drive-by' nature of relationships, fostering a lack of the familiarity and similarity identified in the scholarship surrounding trust in any space (see Putnam, 1993; Nissenbaum 2001). This is a problem with the fundamental fabric of virtual space for relationship building. If there is no way in which to establish the conditions which foster trust between activists then it will be a continual struggle to make these relationships more than peripheral.

It has already been established throughout the fieldwork that these relationships cannot and are not being built through technology that simulates face to face meetings, so is there a future where trust networks can be embedded within online relationships? Online relationships do not involve the same 'commitment' as those initiated through face to face meetings. The 'drive-by' nature of online relationships (Putnam, 2000) stems from the fact that they take little fiscal or time investment in time or travel. This conception of them involving minimal investment - something held up highly as a positive in existing literature – is a negative in terms of facilitating the formation of trust networks. An initial gesture of effort and committing to a relationship is a significant first step in establishing a bond of trust, as it creates the idea there is something to be gained and something to be lost. This is an initial form of interpersonal commitment "despite the uncertainty from actors not yet knowing each other well" (Cheshire and Cook, 2004; p. 222).

The only other way to change this would be to adopt new norms in relationship building. Relationship formation and trust networks currently have an established set of norms and preconceptions, which need to be altered to fit the different space in which they find themselves. This would in turn have implications for the internet as a horizontal space. Those willing to form relationships online will have broader networks and a wider scope for influencing the discourse that sets agendas. For norms to shift requires 'norm entrepreneurs' (Finnemore, 1996; p.141). Arguably these are already present, those members of networks actively participating in online

spaces could be seen as those initiating the change in norms and the network itself acting as a mechanism for spreading the norm. Furthermore a TWN could be seen as a natural place to spread norms between members quickly and effectively.

One of the benefits of operating within a TAN is the density of information sharing among members; there is an argument to be made that this also includes the sharing of norms. If enough members of a network adopt certain new 'norms' then a 'norm cascade' may occur throughout the network. This idea of norm cascades (Finnemore, 1996; p.141) and norm entrepreneurs is relevant as it is the best prospect for relationship formation in online spaces to become an accepted and embedded concept within the nodes of TWNs considered here. Networks also promote the sharing of best practice, well demonstrated in the professionalization within networks literature. If best practice were to involve the forming of relationships in virtual spaces with set methods and processes by which this could be accomplished then this, as a set of norms, could be shared throughout the network. This snowballing effect would then result in the value of online relationships being reinforced and a change in the norms and notions surrounding trust. The current difficulties experienced by the subjects who participated in this research in trusting relationships developed in online spaces could be overcome if the norms around which those who do currently build working network relationships online operate were to spread. This would create an understanding of how relationships online can be developed virtually throughout the network and for all members. This would create a more horizontal space with all network members able to access online spaces with the same perceptions and therefore with the ability to utilise and take advantage of its well argued positives in the same way, thereby m the current inherent disparities in this regard.

However in order for this to occur there needs to be an acceptance of norms spread through networks and possibly through online interactions, which would require overcoming cultural norms in communication and relationships building.

Presently, there is no scope to make this commitment online and it is something that virtual space would need to replicate in order to promote the formation of lasting trust networks. This will prove continuously challenging: the positives of online spaces, and their easy access, mean that replicating the efforts that go into 'real life' relationship formation is almost impossible. Online interactions may continue to be perceived as essentially disposable: to change this perception would mean creating barriers to entry that must be overcome in accessing online spaces. The very idea of having obstacles that require time and energy expenditure to overcome defeats the object of virtual space and the ways in which it could reform relationship development within TWNs. Therefore it seems unlikely online relationships will ever have the same commitment requirements in their initial phases. There is the possibility that with extended periods of time invested in online communications, the relationship could deepen, but it would likely require a much slower building of a relationship than the existing, more traditional methods.

The values activists require in order to be able to place trust in norms and virtual spaces are arguably based in cultural and generational contexts and therefore these require consideration/

Cultural and Generational Values

There are two core value sets that make themselves present in online relationship building; cultural values and generational values. The former is obvious and has been well covered in other places (such as Danet and Herrig 2003; Miller and Slater 2000; Orgad 2006) and the latter is the difference in values between digital immigrants and digital natives (Prensky 2001)[29]

This research has focused on a particular geography; that of Southeast Asia. This raises questions about the navigation of virtual space based on cultural values, and whether a particular set of

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[29] The concept of an 'age divide' and the definitions of digital immigrants versus digital natives were covered in the previous chapter. See for further elaboration.

cultural values has informed the ongoing importance of face to face relationships in these particular cases.

In order for virtual space to operate in the way some of the literature contends with freedom of communication and the ability to form online communities, it would require cultural values informed by material spaces to be set aside. However, it was immediately apparent from interviews in all three case study countries that this has not been a reality. Typically, working relationships between activists in the three member countries have been developed upon and around personal relationships. This is for a number of reasons, most significant of which is the fact that often the issue that they are working to address is contentious, and that they are based in countries that have recently represented (or, in the case of Thailand, currently represent) hostile environments for activists. Therefore, personal relationships offered the greatest guarantee of trust and lowest risk, and as a result informed working relationships for NGOs and women's groups in the region.

The question here is whether these geographically informed cultural values can be superseded by new 'online values'. While a definition of cyberculture proves as had to pin down as a defining explanation of cyberspace, the only agreement throughout being that it is a narrative that involves the interaction of people with machines and technology (see Levy, 2001; p. 4, Miller and Slater, 2004; p.14, Cavallaro, 2000; xi; Edwards 1996; xv and Bell, 2001; p.11). This thesis uses a loose summary of multiple definitions taking the one element that repeats itself throughout in that it is a culture found in online spaces created when people interact through machines and technology.

Cyberculture has the ability to inform this new virtual space and the interactions that take place within it. If it were to become dominant in informing how these interactions occur, it could create a shift away from the importance of geography and the local to those operating within TANs. This cyberculture has been classed as being malleable and diverse and – like the traditional world – far from homogenous. The potential for having a new online culture validates the argument that online space is a new world for activists, by having its own customs, it leaves behind geography, making

TAN members 'placeless' in this emergent space. As early as 1993 this new 'cyberculture' was identified as being a cognitive one rather than a geographic one (Howard, 1993). It is also said to create a culture where 'like-minded people can interact' (Kitchin, 1998). For TAN members this would create an alternative space in which to form relationships – like-minded people could form or join networks to which they had a commitment, or in which they had an interest.

However, advocates of the idea of a new culture in cyberspace also perceive it as being more 'fragile' than traditional cultures rooted in geography (for example Graham, 1998; Putnam, 2000).This fragility is evidenced in the relationships that those interviewed formed online, with regular explanations being that these relationships were more temporary, less solid and less important than those formed with people sharing physical space with them. This also links to the earlier ideas that relationship formation requires a trust rooted in a shared sense of similarity and familiarity (Seligman 1996; Nissenbaum 2001).

Cyberculture is an important concept as it would create new boundaries for those operating within it, not only by informing the way in which they interact, but also by giving them new limits and creating new systems. This, in turn, would mean that TAN members and the networks themselves would experience potential changes in their established vertical power hierarchy and how they choose to operate. Embracing cyber culture could directly impact how networks relate and how they engage in advocacy, spreading new ideas throughout its membership. However whether all members of a TAN are buying into this new 'cyberculture' is decidedly questionable.

Again, there seems to be some signs of a move towards absorbing this new culture. Early adopters include some of those subjects interviewed in Jakarta who are embracing the idea that the online is different; not only in terms of how they write and speak, but in the idea that it creates a "common place to interact" (See interview with Fita of ARRI, Appendix A.17), and where they find like-minded people in discussion groups and forums that they may not otherwise have come across. This is the essence of a TAN and how it forms, with those with similar agendas coming together

around a cause or issue area. Therefore in this sense cyberculture seems to create a viable environment for the formation and promotion of TANs that leave behind their local geographies.

A question arises as to whether a 'cyberculture' would be value neutral; there is a strong argument to be made for the fact that those with the most technological dominance will also dominate cyberculture. Those with dominance are likely to be those with the best access and the earliest adopters as by being entrepreneurs they forge the path for those that follow. This has been illustrated in studies that show the Western, hegemonic nature of virtual space (Flew and McElhinney, 2000; p.308) demonstrating the power of those with most access to shape virtual space. So once again we return to the idea of those with cheapest, easiest and fastest access having the power to set agendas (this time within a cyberculture) and given that these have predominantly been Western operators this means that cyberculture is itself unlikely to be value-neutral and instead informed by Western norms and values. If all were equal in terms of access to online spaces and power in virtual interactions then this may not be the case, however as was conclusively established not all is equal when it comes to accessing and using technologies and CMC. This reinforces the idea of power dynamics entering virtual space, this in turn creates a vertical space with inherently dominant members who set agendas and control discourses.

It is clear that the importance of personal relationships still predominates within Southeast Asian online relationships. Anecdotally, many of the interviewees who agreed to participate in this research only did so on the recommendation of a friend or long term colleague who had previously taken part. Ana Sabeia of Kalikasan (Appendiz A.2) talked about the evolution of her involvement with women's campaigns and TANs through the evolution of different technologies, but stated that common to all was the relationships she established what is now considered to be 'offline'. When asked why she thought this was her response was simply 'because that is how it has always been done' (See Appendix A.2.). This indicates the insinuation of cultural values and established norms into the new realms of virtual space. For a space to be new or a reinvention of the existing

space within which TANs operate, it would have to provide a value-free space to be interpreted and negotiated as those within it see fit. However, the obvious implication from the research is that this is not the case. The further implication is that if norms of online relationship development and network building have been adopted by some network members they have failed to spread throughout as yet. Not all norms that are adopted by some end up becoming embraced by all. Some norms fail to take off in this sense and there is the possibility that this will be the case for those norms associated with 'cyberculture' within TWNs. If those understandings of relationship formation continue to rely on face to face meetings and personal connections then there is little hope for this element of cyberculture radically reforming how network participants in Jakarta, Bangkok and Manila operate. .

Notably this issue seemed to be informed largely by age; the only respondents who were positive about newer forms of CMC (specifically social media or WhatsApp and other instant messaging programmes) were younger. This is a constructed set of generational values. The idea that age dictates the ability to place faith in relationships formed in virtual space is significant as it is a step away from cultural values and suggests a set of secondary factors, and more importantly the possibility for change. In Jakarta where subjects included a number of 'youth' women's activists (women involved in activism who were between 24 and 30) there was a more obvious uptake of these technologies, both in how they communicated with each other and in how they communicated regarding this research. Interviews were much more easily arranged via email, details were communicated via online messaging programmes like viber and whatsapp and they were much more likely to discuss social media (in fact all interview subjects under 30 in all case studies mentioned social media, while no one from older generations brought it up in discussions).

Significantly these were the three youngest interview subjects, and therefore have been exposed to technology as 'normal' for the greatest portion of their lives. They had all been originally involved in youth movements and youth activism before moving on as adults to being part of

groups that identified themselves as TAN members. This age divide while previously addressed does offer hope that the Internet will with time become less divisive in reinforcing power structures, as it becomes more trusted by users and becomes a more 'native' element of their lives. However in the meantime it has the power to create barriers between network members of different age groups; those more traditionally functioning members who are not yet engaging with new technology may continue to operate in one fashion while those more contemporary members may operate in another creating a division in between the two. This has the possibility to create disunity within TWNs; and once again create new dynamics of power. Notably those more senior members of a TWN are the ones operating in an 'offline' manner – and this means that power decisions are currently being made in a way that while accessible to younger members is not their natural way of operating. This could mean that they become disenfranchised from more established networks and lead them to form their own based on more modern forms of communication – if so these newer network would be better placed to take advantage of online spaces and have wider reach for donors and new members than the traditionally established women's networks.

If certain generations or cultures accept the importance of building relationships within virtual space and they can translate trust into virtual spaces, overcoming the limitations of the lack of face to face communication or the previously established need for investment of time and resources in relationships and find new ways to construct and understand relationships then they will have an increased level of power in virtual spaces. This power comes from the ability to connect in a much wider reaching way. If discourses surrounding a networks agenda shift to online spaces then those who can participate fully and without hesitation will be the most dominant in terms of contribution. The increased level of input into these dialogues will mean they are heard the loudest and as a result will have much greater levels of power in directing networks. Once again this demonstrates the relationship between trust in virtual space and power and the way things will look as technology continues to move forward.

Part of trusting in virtual space is being able to form relationships in a 'public space' (Papachrissi, 2001), this is an explicit issue in its own right and is considered next.

Public Spaces

Setting aside infrastructure and access issues discussed in the previous chapter, the reality remains that often access to virtual space is undertaken in a public environment (Wahid et al, 2006). This is particularly true for individual activists wishing to participate in a network or networks while not being a member of a more professionalised NGO. While this more public access is decreasingly reliant upon internet cafes, the increasing expansion of free Wi-Fi means that there is still an element of this public nature, even if it is carried out on a private device. Free Wi-Fi is most often found in shopping centres, restaurants and cafes – none of which is highly conducive to private conversations, particularly about what may often be sensitive information or controversial opinions. Furthermore the virtual space is, in many ways, a public space in its own right. Much of what happens in virtual space is done in visible ways, in public forums or website postings, even social media often lacks privacy.

In one sense the semi-public nature of virtual space is not problematic. Accessing it in online space this is theoretically perfectly serviceable for forming relationships. It allows for participation in online discussions within forums and via email, and allows individuals to access websites and information that would facilitate contacting pre-existing networks. However, it is not conducive to replacing face to face communication, as carrying out video conferencing discussions (the closest technological equivalent of in person communications) of a sensitive nature in public areas is unlikely to be something that potential or existing network members are comfortable with. These would offer the best way for preventing 'missing identities' (Nissenbaum, 2001) that can cause barriers to trust. Furthermore online face to face conversations would also help overcome the obstacle that comes with the lack of personal characteristics in online textual communications that Seligman identifies as being so crucial to creating and embedding relationships based on trust.

However neither discussant in a video conversation is likely to be open to one half of a conversation occurring in a public place. This means that these conversations would have to be conducted in private spaces, which has proven through the discussions on access, are harder to come by.

Further to this, a frequent condition of accessing free Wi-Fi is an agreement that data accessed while using it will be shared with the organisation that provides it and requires a login with an email address or some form of identifier, meaning that any information accessed or websites visited are recorded; another threat to the security of those using it for potentially controversial purposes. This also makes anything done while accessing these free networks public, or at least semi-public. If a record is being kept by an outside party of all communications occurring under certain access conditions then this space is essentially public in nature, even if the communications are not occurring in a publicly visible forum in the more obvious sense. While this theme will be explored in more detail in forthcoming chapters, it is worth noting that in Thailand particularly accessing free Wi-Fi in public places comes with the complication that it gives the government permission to access the data used while online (an example most Thai visitors would have come across being the free Wi-Fi available in the airport and the requirement that passport details are provided in order to be provided with the login details). This creates a substantial difference between meeting in semi-public spaces where both parties are aware of their surroundings and can hold informal and private conversations and having a conversation via a video conferencing medium whereby other parties may have access to the data and only one party is privy to the people and possible listeners around them.

In order for this to change allowing individuals to establish private Wi-Fi connections the costs of Wi-Fi would have to be drastically reduced in all three case study countries, which as discussed in the chapter on digital divides is not on the immediate horizon. This lack of private space to easily access Wi-Fi at an affordable price creates inherent inequalities in networks between those who

can have cheap access to fast Wi-Fi and those in locations that cannot. Even within a state, access to free Wi-Fi is mainly available in big cities with large chain shopping malls and other developed locations with corporations willing to provide it as an incentive to attract custom. A key initiator of this trend in the Philippines, for example, is the SM Group, a chain of malls and supermarkets who have used it to increase the number of people shopping in their facilities. Areas without these corporations willing to make this kind of provision therefore lack even this access to Wi-Fi, limited though it may be. Not only does this return us to the value of an urban geography for TAN members it reinforces the power dynamics discussed earlier in this chapter.

The differentiation in access to private online spaces has the potential to create friction between those activists within networks both working in the same country but based in different areas – an ongoing rural/urban divide. Without being able to rely on rural activists to maintain communication and online participation it can create friction between partners working domestically on a project. Ms. Iswarini who was interviewed in Jakarta (see Appendix A.19) discussed the fact that they work mainly with other urban groups and individuals as they can rely on them to respond quickly and work in real time rather than suffering communications delays. This further exacerbates the digital divide initiated by differing access to technological infrastructure. It also ensures that virtual space is a vertical one, carrying forward all the power dynamics that are inherently found within material spaces.

A core part of the power dynamics created by the public nature of online spaces are accessing donor relationships and resources. A central facet in any TAN is relationships with donors: without funding, TANs will not have the necessary resources to work towards their objectives (Carpenter, 2007; p.112; Cooley and Ron 2002; Stone 2004). Traditionally, as with other forms of activism funding, this has come from interested parties. With TANs, these are typically based in a variety of geographic locations, often not where the immediate battle ground is. Virtual space arguably

provides a new location to develop these relationships, to attract attention and build connections with donors and potential donors.

This has in proved true in the interviews conducted for this research. Rini of Women's Circle (A.19) talked about the potential that virtual space had given her organisation to build donor relationships. Through online communication and promotion, they attracted the attention of a Dutch organisation called Hivos, and were encouraged to apply for one of their grants. These grants also require an online application and are advertised on Hivos' website.

Hivos are a vast advocacy network in their own right, working with 700 other organisations internationally. In order to receive a grant, requires an effective presentation of a case, understanding Hivos' guidelines, and most importantly apply online, selling the strong potential partnership in the process. In this case, Ms Iswarini's (A.19) organisation was successful in receiving a grant; however, had they not had the tools necessary to access and operate online, this would not have been the case according to Ms. Iswarini. She stated that in this case, the Internet had been a powerful tool in developing and maintaining relationships with donors. However, for other members within her own network, this was not the case. The nodes within her network who struggled to establish and maintain an online presence failed to have access to these same opportunities, and were likely in her opinion to miss out on funding and resources as a result. She suggested there was also a risk of them becoming marginalised due to their inability to access these same resources. It must also be noted here that she commented that the rural members of the network were the most disenfranchised, due to their shortage of resources.

This highlights the fact that the Internet does have the potential to create the beneficial relationships the existing literature implies, but that this is unlikely to form a horizontal structure regardless. These relationships are formed in a public space, once again requiring an implicit trust in new technologies and virtual spaces. Along with the positive potential for new relationships with donors to be formed online, there are some significant potential drawbacks. The actions being

undertaken by an organisation receiving the funding are more public, reports can be expected on a more regular basis, and there will be a more much more accessible way to track outcomes. This gives a much higher profile to the actions of TAN members, and with this visibility comes the opportunity for increased accountability. While accountability is a positive for those relying on an organisation to advocate for them and their needs, for the group or TWN node itself it could create problems in the context of ongoing relationships with donors.

Agendas rarely match up identically, and in order to receive a grant groups will adapt themselves (at least superficially) to meet the donor's agenda (Carpenter, 2001). Tatarchevisky identifies the incentive to create a "personal donor identity" or a "brand community" essentially marketing the relationships between donors and civil society actors (2011; p.301). This is entirely related to the nature of virtual space as a public space and the fact that actions are increasingly high profile which has a direct relation to donor relationships. How this money is then spent and what actions are undertaken are much harder to keep low-profile than before the developments in technology we are considering here. This means organisations are much more constricted in how they spend donor money, particularly in situations where they require repeat funding. Therefore while it is easier to ensure money is going to and being distributed as agreed it does mean agendas may be forced to match those of distant donors when local geographies could have differing needs and require different approaches than those most 'approved' of by donors. The counter argument that donors are more likely to provide funds if networks have improved accountability is superseded by the fact that virtual spaces allow donors to act without having to fund local groups so the internet could end international donor relationships with local groups altogether. Furthermore there is also the risk that the donor side of the relationship will see a higher profile or better 'branded' group working on or around the same issue. This organisation could be more in tune with their agenda or simply benefit from a more prolific online presence, and as a result they could become the preferred recipient of donor funds. This means there is more pressure to bend agendas to fit those

people funding TANs as opposed to finding a compromise, the reduction in barriers to entry created by online space therefore also equates to a reduction in barriers to switching.

Any autonomy from donors is reduced in this virtual space, not only reinforcing existing power dynamics but in fact deepening them. Virtual space once again is inherently fraught with power dynamics, and is firmly established as being a vertical space for activists rather than the horizontal one it held the potential to be. Again there is a positive side, prior to the internet it was harder for smaller groups to gain recognition from foreign donors but with a website and online communications it is theoretically easier to form these relationships; but with all the issues with who has access to these spaces and relationships this is not likely to have shifted. Those who traditionally had a bigger 'presence' are likely to have continued this into online spaces and continue to receive more attention.

Another impact of virtual space upon donor and group relationships is the push for funding to be sunk into technological infrastructure and online campaigns. The aforementioned Women's Circle was required to spend a proportion of their grant from HIVOS on maintaining an online campaigning presence, as this was a condition for grant donation. This reinforces the idea that a presence in virtual space is a necessity rather than a choice for TAN nodes that wish to receive transnational funding, particularly from European and American donors that may be more advanced and focused technologically. As was firmly established in the divides section, this will instantly disadvantage particular organisations within TANs and work in favour of others. Without trust in online spaces, offline power dynamics will continue to factor into virtual space. This is informed by factors within the material spaces in which these groups operate, once again bringing vertical power relations from geographical spaces into this new supposedly horizontal virtual space.

Inherently trust is best fostered in private spaces, the internet and computer mediated communications technology, does not offer a private space in many permutations. It does offer a limited amount of privacy for communications and this is considered next.

Constraints in Private Spaces

There are some communications programmes, that dependent on how an activist is accessing virtual space (such as through a private internet connection in a private space rather than through a public access WiFi or internet café). These are primarily forms of online communication that offer one to one communication (rather than Slevin's "many to many" communication which is by its very nature public (2000). These forms of communication offer the best chance of replacing face to face communications and include platforms like Skype, Facetime and even to some extent email. However these two offer demonstrable constraints, again linked to trust, these relate back to concerns about identity and miscommunication.

An issue that was prevalent in the interviews for this project when discussing private online communication was concerns about formality, phrasing and how to appropriately conduct oneself in virtual space. These concerns come back to the concept of 'netiquette' and trust. The trust element factors into the idea that there are certain accepted behavioural norms that allow trust to be built into relationships, and netiquette is a set of these norms which cause anxiety in those activists seeking to communicate and build relationships in virtual space. Netiquette is an established set of rules for operating and communicating in virtual space. Sometimes written and explicit –although often not –they inform the ways in which people communicate online. They range from things like the fact that writing in capital letters or carrying out 'thread necromancy' (responding to a topic that is effectively closed and has been for a significant period). It places "an onus of acceptable behaviour onto users of the internet" (Gretsky et al, 2005; p.565) essentially

creating a set of norms for online interactions. These practices are not unanimous, and while most of them are available to find written in some form or other, there is no codified document handed to first time Internet users to explain the codes of practices. They are rather a set of evolved understandings for communicating politely (or intentionally impolitely) in virtual spaces. It is this lack of a codified document that caused anxiety to the participants in this research.

Netiquette can be established in a number of ways in different forums for interaction. In some, it takes the form of posted rules for behaviour informed by a webmaster or –masters (essentially, forum moderators). In others, it is enforced with peer pressure and some internet spaces offer no such limitations (for examples private email communications), and the rules are considered to be implicit and self-explanatory. Notably some of these communications are regulated; which again raises questions regarding the power to moderate a forum: to set and enforce rules is to exert some form of control. This would mean those moderating a TWN forum are once again given some sort of power by which to regulate the conversation and discourse in the name of 'netiquette', but the fact they can enforce it at will means that they control the conversation. Furthermore those like to be responsible for moderating forums are those with the best access and education in how to establish things like internet forums so once again we see the previously discussed digital divides recurring. An example that came from Luz Martinez of ISIS was her discussion of the moderation of a women's forum where they censored posts coming from Tibet as they risked repercussions from the Chinese government. While the rationale given by the interviewee was the protection of the Tibetan activists, this could well be viewed as the exercise of improper control over other people expressed views. The forum was private, only viewable to members of the network, however there were still certain moderation norms that allowed conversational posts to be removed. This once again demonstrates the inherently vertical nature of virtual space; there are those who control the dialogue and those who peripherally participate in it.

Part of the reason for the evolution of 'netiquette' is to guard against online misinterpretations, as without tone of voice or facial expressions to offer reassurance there is the risk of offence or miscommunication of intent. Despite the fact a great deal of online communications occur in private spaces there is still the recurrent concern that a recipient of communication may misinterpret the intention behind the communication. This concern recurred throughout interviews when discussing online communications, with subjects discussing the use of smiley faces to try to soften emails (see Luz Martinez, Appendix A.1.). They mentioned the anxiety they felt when having conversations via email or on online forums with people they hadn't spoken to or formed a personal bond with, and the fact that they did not have a way to prevent these miscommunications. An established set of protocols by which to communicate and understand received communications could feasibly overcome these concerns.

While there are many sites that offer guides on netiquette (examples include www.learnthenet.com or www.albion.com/netiquette) and even books claiming to offer guides to being a 'digital citizen' (examples include 'Because Netiquette Matters' by Judith Kallos (2004) and 'Netiquette: Tips for Teens and Adults' by Michelle Cimino (2009) among many others) and outlining netiquette, these had clearly not yet reached the interview participants, or if they had not offered sufficient reassurance although it could alternatively due to the fact these books and online guides are published in English creating a potential barrier to their uptake (see the digital divides chapter). Furthermore, these codes are developed by those users who are already comfortable in navigating virtual space. Finally, these codes may well have been developed by those with a different cultural perspective than the users interviewed for this research (Flew and McElhinney, 2003) which may explain their lack of implementation in these circumstances. If this is the case then they are unlikely to ever truly become embedded unless they can overcome cultural 'norms' of relationship development and personal interaction which still seem to be geographically shaped and less flexible than seems to be assumed in much of the existing, optimistic literature.

If these codes of conduct cannot overcome the cultural barriers that cause concerns about misunderstandings in online spaces, then this raises questions as to whether these protocols are truly sufficiently established to be viewed as a coherent set of understandings for using the internet. Internet forums often offer a set of guidelines, but these are obviously not accepted as being universal for communicating across virtual spaces and platforms, or the anxieties felt about operating purely in 'virtual' terms would not have been so prevalent among interview subjects.

Some awareness of netiquette did, however, exist; one of the questions asked of subjects was whether they behaved differently online. The most recurrent response was that they did behave differently regarding how they communicate. A number (including Obeth Montes[30], Oldri Sherli[31] Prasong Lertpayub[32] and Toni Fulgado[33] See) stated that they repeatedly checked emails and other online communications before 'sending' them; another frequent response was that they worked hard to ensure a more 'informal' tone – making efforts to include emoticons and expressive punctuation to make up for lack of tone of voice or facial expression. It should be observed that these participants cover all three case study locations, meaning this is not a problem specific to an individual city or network but rather one that is far more pervasive. These different elements fuel the idea that there are ways to express oneself online that adhere to a certain set of norms.

However if the 'rules of netiquette' were to be accepted then the other side is that anxiety surrounding these rules and the risk of contravention pervades internet communication, creating a potential barrier to new relationships. Subjects expressing concerns regarding the lack of ability to ensure clarity of interpretation and fears of offending people with online communication were in essence expressing concerns around contravening the rules of netiquette (Della Porta and Tarrow, 2005; p. 10). However were netiquette to be explicit in all circumstances rather than a set of

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[30] Appendix A. 10.
[31] Appendix A. 17
[32] Appendix A. 23
[33] Appendix A. 12

implied practices then this may not be the case, an established set of rules and guidelines would have the potential to reassure TWN members operating in virtual space that there was no risk of misinterpretation. It could offer assurances that their behaviours were appropriate. This would require netiquette to be a set of universal, established and well known rules – something that is not yet the case. Rules are varied in different virtual and are not firmly established or explicitly listed as one codified set of understandings. Instead they are a set of norms that differ upon location and are constantly open to change – dependent on user needs and understandings; meaning that netiquette is likely to remain a cause of, rather than cure for, user anxiety among TWN members in Southeast Asia for the foreseeable future.

However it should be noted that the younger interview participants, and this returns to the idea of generational values, had far less concerns about netiquette or online behaviours. This suggests netiquette[34] is something implicitly understood by those who are digital 'natives' rather than digital 'immigrants'. This was also apparent in how they responded to questions about whether they behaved differently online: Gita Pragati[35] laughed at the question responding 'of course', Handayani Konselig of Patamaba said she followed what she termed the 'rules of the Internet'[36], and Oldri Sherl[37]i made the point that they followed Internet-specific codes of behaviour, in the same way that they would follow specific behaviours considered appropriate to other contexts.

There were other concerns surrounding miscommunications, the obvious solution to concerns about online communication lacking tone of voice and body language is video calling: i.e. Skype and FaceTime. However, this is not something that has had a wide uptake among the subjects interviewed for this research. When asked whether they use it responses varied from "not at all" through to "yes, but only with contacts I have already met". Following on from this, interviewees

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[34] NB netiquette is explored further later on within this chapter
[35] Appendix A.14
[36] Appendix A.16.
[37] Appendix A. 17

were asked to elaborate on their problems with Skype and why it has not had a broader set of implications for building relationships. The responses to this had a clear and recurrent theme; they were not comfortable even having a virtual face to face conversation with people they didn't know from previous interactions in person.

Handayani Konseling stated that she felt 'awkward' on Skype[38] with someone she didn't know in a personal context. Sarochinee Unyawachsumrith[39] said that using Skype made her nervous or anxious as she was worried about her body language, about what she looked like and what they would think of her. This 'anxiety' about Skype was a continuous theme. Curiously they viewed it differently to meeting someone in person for the first time, suggesting that it did not offer the same interaction and that it was more formal than meeting someone in a public place an 'in person' conversation. One possible cause is that rarely when having an in person conversation is an image visible in a bottom corner of a screen (which would at least be a simple fix). This anxiety could be perceived to link back to the ideas of 'mental access' discussed in the previous chapter – this idea of a mental block to the uptake of new technology seems to be pervasive when it comes to the use of Skype, and this is limiting the generation and maintenance of new relationships in virtual space.

Notably, subjects in all three cities expressed these concerns surrounding video calls, suggesting it is a broader issue rather than geographically specific. Overcoming this anxiety surrounding Skype and other forms of virtual video chat may simply be a matter of time; however, should the anxiety be less about the technology itself and more to do with a new way of forming relationships and communicating, it could continue to be a barrier for the foreseeable future.

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[38] Appendix A.16

[39] Appendix A. 23

One concern, present in the interviews,[40] that cannot be absolved through establishing behavioural protocols for communication or even overcoming the lack of trust in virtual communication as a whole is the problem of misrepresentation. There is no way to ensure that in a purely virtual relationship that is not built upon any form of personal connection that the person the relationship is being developed with is not misrepresenting themselves in some way. This is inextricably related to the idea of trust; without establishing identity the grounds for trust are shaky. If the assumption is that trust is based, at least partially, on identities then the fear of lacking the identity of the opposing partner in a dialogue is insurmountable. Online communication and dialogue in virtual spaces lacks the "mutuality and reciprocity" identified by Putnam (1993; p.172) as necessary for developing relationships built upon trust. It also fails to allow for the trust that is built upon similarities and familiarity that Seligman (2006) considers to be crucial for long term relationships.

In theory Skype allows for the establishment of the identity of the person engaging in its use including the gender and approximate age that they claim to be; however, it does not overcome barriers of misrepresentation relating to opinions or understandings or real world positioning. There is only so much that current technologies can offer by way of guarantees about the person utilising them, and this presents a real risk for those engaging in TWNs and any form of activist work, particularly around sensitive subjects. As Nissenbaum phrases the problem with Skype "you could be in a virtual space with a rapist" (2001; p.10). Identities are easily hidden online and this is a significant barrier to instilling any kind of trust within networks.

Another potential for misrepresentation is the ability to communicate online anonymously. This idea of anonymity is often sold as an advantage of online communications; it means the freedom to be able to participate in online discussions anonymously, and to be able to speak freely with limited fear of repercussions due to the hidden nature of identity in an online setting (Bernstein et al, 20011; Postmes and Brunstig, 2002; Yang, 2001). However anonymity does not embed trust

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[40] See Appendix A.20, Appendix A.1., Appendix A.23. Appendix A.9.

within groups that require personal connections to form lasting networks. It certainly seems to fail to promote 'offline relationships' – those which may begin virtually and continue in a 'real world' setting. So while this conception of anonymity as a positive attribute of virtual spaces may be accurate superficially, particularly in activist and advocacy contexts, the reality is it allows for misrepresentation and fails to generate an often necessary personal connection to embed long term relationship forming for TAN members. The nature of network relationships for the participants in this research was that face to face, offline connections were necessary, even when initial contact was made in a virtual setting – the importance of "eyeball to eyeball"[41] mentioned earlier and brought up by a participant in Manila. This is not possible if the goal is to maintain anonymity.

Particularly where personal trust between individuals and groups is so significant, honesty in opinion and self-representation is necessary to establishing trust networks and deep interconnections of personal relationships (Tilly, 2005). Without the guarantee that someone is not only who they claim to be, and espousing views they truly feel, there is little chance of people such as those interviewed in this research building a lasting relationship with them, for fear of negative repercussions. These could be as simple as conversations not remaining confidential and being shared among other groups or on online forums, or information being taken and repeated without acknowledgement of its source through, to far more significant risks like someone being a government employee or someone with less discretion than is necessary given the nature of the situation and context of the discussions

Conclusion

There is a reason that when interviewing participants in this research they were often located within close proximity to one another. For example, Quezon City acts as a hub for Filipino Women's groups in Manila, both close to the seat of government and allowing them to be located within

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[41] See Appendix A.6.

easy reach of one another. As Mars Mendoza suggested the ability to 'ambush the President' also comes in useful. Geographic proximity continues to remain at the heart of relationship formation for TWNs. Without face to face meetings, over coffee or at a conference, and the personal relationships that this facilitates, online relationships born of virtual space fail to facilitate strong, long term working relationships. Technological advances have not changed this reality – Skype and its ability to offer a 'face to face' experience often leads to discomfort on the part of those using it (assuming internet speeds are strong enough to allow it to work).

The sensitive nature of the work carried out by advocates, and the fact that it involves opposing and contradicting authority – be this local leaders, the government, or religious establishments– means that those within networks require trust and faith in their working relationships. Sensitive discussions can potentially be used against them if overheard or shared in the wrong places, and this is a risk that the interview subjects for this research were not willing to take without a 'personal guarantee' based on knowing the person they are meeting with and being able to read and understand them in the knowledge they also have something to lose.

Fears of misunderstandings and misrepresentations continue to be pervasive for members of TWNs in Manila, Bangkok and Jakarta. Accepted codes of conduct have failed to become embedded in environments that have traditionally operated on face to face meetings and personal relationships. It has not eased concerns that an email can be read the wrong way – or, for that matter, by the wrong person. These are issues that do not look likely to be resolved in the immediate future. While the internet is a 'newer' technology, it has had a significant period of time to embed itself, and while it continues to evolve, its 'freedom' of communication has not yet radically changed relationship formation and development in the cities considered here which has implications for wider networks. If this continues then networks will continue to be enabled by conferences and long distance travel which remains significantly more costly and a far greater barrier to entry for joining networks than the options offered by virtual space.

It also means that those coherent and comfortable operating online will have access to a much broader range of relationships, including with possible donors, than those who are not. As with digital divides and access issues this once again has the power to create a vertical power hierarchy within networks rather than the proffered democratic and horizontal space the internet is supposed to offer them. This idea that virtual space is as vertical as offline spaces is of substantial importance. Resources, access and information continue to inform power politics within networks operating in material space and unless all members can become equally as proficient with and comfortable with forming relationships online this is likely to continue; those who have access will logically predominate. The potential and promise of the internet and technological advances to offer a more horizontal, level space for activists was significant. However as with the technologies that came before it, like the telephone, this potential was seemingly overstated.

Furthermore, those network members who are more enabled at forming relationships in a virtual space will have access to a far greater range of networks from the comfort of their office or home than those who are not. This also gives them the power to leave networks with minimal barriers should they find one which seems to speak more to their current agenda, leaving those relying on traditional methods of relationship formation arguably forced into agendas that may not be a perfect fit through lack of choice. It is this power dynamic that is central to the problems in virtual space, and also crucial to the importance of how material spaces continue to impose themselves on virtual space. No technology comes without a social context and this is worth restating.

This is not new. The advent of the telephone and fax machine were both met with optimism that people would be able to form relationships in new ways, only to demonstrate that technological developments in fact generally entrench already-existing social contexts. Geography and culture continue to inform practices and understanding, even within transnational network settings where we may expect otherwise. Even within a network "technology does not emerge into a vacuum"

(Mynatt et al, 1996). All the research undertaken here contributes to a reinforcement of the idea of virtual space as coexisting and coevolving with real world spaces.

This does not mean there is no hope for change; as TWN members embrace technology as 'native users', there is significantly more scope for the development of relationships online. When they become as comfortable using it as they do in meeting in coffee shops there is the room for it to become a new way to develop and form networks. HIVOS was one example where virtual space has been embraced, and younger network members interviewed were more comfortable making introductions via email or even WhatsApp. However it is unlikely that, at any time in the immediate or mid term future, these initial introductions will not need to be followed up with a 'real world' meeting, in order to deepen the relationship and create a long term connection that is necessary to strengthen and embed networks for the future. The promise offered by generational values is also at risk of their aging out when new technologies and platforms for communication within virtual space. As social media advances and new virtual spaces, both public and private, continue to evolve eventually even those first generations of digital natives will be replaced by those knowledge who are born into the newer technologies that will eventually replace Facebook and the current platforms for communications. This means the power dynamics that are currently present in virtual space, and that make it a vertical space for activists, will continue to replicate themselves.

Finally, for network members in Manila, Bangkok and Jakarta to engage in virtual space they have to feel safe operating within it. This leads into the next issue: security and freedom in virtual space.

Previous chapters have considered the basic demographies of access; the implicit psychologies of relationship building; and the dynamics these factors impose on the virtual environment. This chapter considers the security of TANs acting in online spaces; whether physical geographies constrain this element of 'virtual space;' and the impact of these constraints on the subjects considered within this thesis.

In order for the internet and its surrounding technologies to be considered a new virtual space, free from traditional geographies, it needs to offer new securities and freedoms for those TAN members operating within it, as well as new rights and safer spaces. Therefore, such new freedom requires freedom from traditional forms of government control over activists.

Traditionally, governments have exerted influence over activist networks in a number of ways. These include harassment, censorship, control of freedom of movement, surveillance and intimidation (Abbott, 2001; Gomez 2004; He, 2004), all of which are bound within particular geographies as the controls placed on a person's activist activities are determined by the state in which they live. Virtual space has been lauded, especially since the 2012 events of the Arab Spring, for offering freedom to those engaging within it. Scholarship suggests that, particularly for those who live in traditionally more restrictive spaces, virtual space offers freedoms to communicate, organise protest and challenge government without fears of being overheard or caught in action (See Castells, 2012; Postmes and Brunsting, 2002). Kidd argues that virtual space offers an overriding resistance to regulation (2003), thus implying a space that cannot be managed by state government. Such virtual space avoids the traditional constraints of geographic location, and allows activists and networks to operate with a freedom not found in the days before technologies facilitated online access. In reality, the intervening years have led to the development of content filtering by over 30 states, to the extent that Deibert and Crete-Nishitara talk of a 'global arms race for internet controls' (2012; p. 339).Freedom House's 2014 report makes a case that localised rules

are changing the 'net' from a global space into one that is a 'fragmented mosaic of local spaces' (2014; p.2). This shows a clear link between the physical locations of TAN members and their relationships and behaviours in 'virtual space,' and undermines the idea of a global, virtual space that is created by those who navigate it, divorced from their geographical locations. The fact that it is localised legislation and regulation that has this effect also demonstrates a relationship between the state and the virtual. If the state creates legislation that imposes limitations on an otherwise unbound space, then it is once again in the hands of the state to control dissent. This is especially significant for TAN members: if different elements of global networks are being subjected to different rules, then there is a strong argument to be made that this 'fragmented mosaic' will divide and weaken the network. This again feeds into the earlier themes of differing power dynamics informed by geographical location, which undermines the levelling nature of technology and virtual space.

According to Freedom House, all three countries studied here have, followed the global trend of decreasing levels of freedom in online spaces. The logical inference from this is that governments are catching up with technology, a trend unlikely to be reversed in the near future. Thus, governments now have the wherewithal to continue to exercise control by barring significant upheaval or change in the structure of governance. This chapter examines the experiences of activists in relation to such traditional forms of government control of activism. It seeks to do this by look at three main categories; censorship, surveillance and harassment. These three categories were drawn from empirical studies (see Freedom House' 'Freedom on the Net Report' and the scholarship on offline forms of controlling activism that are well established in existing literature (see Caouette 2013; Kalathil and Boas 2001; MCargo 2012; Sen and Hill 2006), Censorship of media outlets, surveillance of activist groups and harassment and intimidation all recur as themes within the literature on traditional forms of controlling activists in material spaces and to understand how virtual spaces may differ requires a consideration of these same factors.

<u>Legislation</u>

Indonesia and the Philippines are both democracies – one is listed as 'free' and the other 'partially free' in terms of internet freedom by Freedom House – and both have an international profile that would suggest TWN members could be free from the threat of arrest by expressing themselves online. This is true in neither case.

The criminalisation of online speech acts and the introduction of heavy penalties can only be designed to dissuade activism and challenging speech online. The pretext that it is to prevent hate speech and incitement of crime would be more believable if the prosecutions that stemmed from these laws had not been focused on those who challenged governments or officials in all three countries.

In order to understand the sections that follow a brief overview of existing legislation in the three case studies is beneficial. In all three states current control laws exist. These laws are often depicted as being in the best interests of the citizens; see for example Indonesia's anti-pornography law or the Philippine's anti-cyber bullying laws, however are used to censor activism and political dissent. Legislation is created, implemented and enforced by governments, therefore their interests will remain central to the usage of censorship and online filtering controls. In order to establish context for the work that follows an understanding of extant legislation is required.

The Philippines

Most of the legislative concerns around the Philippines centre upon the Anti-Cyber Bullying Law (a.k.a. the 2012 Cyber-Crime Law). Currently held up in constraints in the Supreme Court the bill seeks to criminalise online libel with prison terms for those who break it. The law goes so far as to impose punishments on those who share and reshare content as well as those who originally post it.

There has been an outcry from a range of organisations, this will be considered in more detail further on into this chapter.

Indonesia

The 'anti-pornography law' in Indonesia that is one of the primary legislative tools used by the state to justify the removal of significant amounts of online content and it is one that is specific to Indonesia, passed by a state government and justify the control the information posted online by TAN members interviewed for this research

This trend continues, as in late 2013 the Ministry for Information and Communication proposed a law that would allow the government to block any content it deemed negative. This would allow it to regulate any online content, and to impose filtering and blocking, or to serve notice on those who host content with no external overview process. This law was adopted in July 2014 (Citizenlab, 2013).

As with the Philippines there has also been a move towards criminalising online defamation, however Indonesia has already enforced this law on a number of occasions, imprisoning people for private email communications. Again this will be properly explored in the censorship section of this thesis.

Thailand

Thailand demonstrates by far the most restrictive legislative climate within this research. Through its laws on Lèse-majesté (injured monarchy) it exerts huge amounts of control over online content and uses them as grounds for accessing private communications data and arresting those they feel are in violation of these laws. Lèse-majesté also need not be proven only seen to exist. These controls are very restrictive and since the 2014 coup have significantly increased in their application.

The current legislative controls in Thailand exist within a fragile political environment where those in power are working to stay in power. This means anything posing a threat to the incumbent government is going to be retaliated against, using either legislative means or intimidation and harassment. It should be observed that the groups in this study were focused particularly on sexual reproductive and health rights and as a result they are less likely to have suffered significantly under these laws as they would not be a priority for government control.

Censorship

The initial area of government control of virtual space is censorship. Any form of censorship implies some kind of regulation of virtual space; by saying content is inappropriate or unacceptable for a population a space is being created that is shaped by rule, and rules when broken come with retribution.

Castells calls virtual space an 'unfettered space for deliberation' (2012; p.10). This implies a freedom from the traditional forms of censorship that have been applied in the past to media and other forms of public expression of dissent (Couldry and Curran, 2003). To TANs, the ability to communicate ideas and information without censorship would allow them to inspire new members and movements and encourage people to join networks. It would also allow them to widely publicise the issues taken with government, creating the potential for a snowball of pressure to develop and create change in government policy (the end goal of any TAN action).

Media outlets have previously been subject to censorship in all three countries of the current study (for the Philippines see: Gonzalez 1998, Johannen et al 2004; Indonesia: Heryanto 2000, Sen and Hill 2006 and for Thailand: Hamilton 1993, McCargo 2012). Online media and websites, should they be free from censorship, would be significantly reformatory in this sense. A number of online platforms have the potential to allow for this development; social media allows ideas to go viral almost instantly (as has been seen with a number of news stories); websites allow the posting of

information and content that is instantly accessible; and chat rooms allow people to directly communicate ideas.

Outside the countries in this study, there are very clear examples of online censorship: China is the most cited of these. A highly technologically advanced population is heavily restricted in its online access. Facebook and other 'free post' forms of social media are inaccessible within the country; news content is limited; and all forms of online behaviour are censored by the Government and its Ministry of Public Security. This is a highly repressive form of internet censorship in a highly repressive state. Chung asserts that if states want to censor online content then it is possible, although they also note that this is far easier to do in more repressive states as it is easier to control those posting and to make citizens fear the consequences of accessing material which is banned by the state (2011; 501). None of the states examined by this thesis is as politically repressive as China (or other states that have such regulatory control over the internet). Therefore it could be assumed that they will not censor online content, or at least not in the same heavy handed way. However, while censorship is not as immediately obvious the fieldwork carried out for this thesis and certain bodies of scholarship suggest that it is still occurring to varying degrees in Manila, Bangkok and Jakarta. It should also be noted that censorship is the most prevalent form of online control.

Kala (cited in Zheng and Wu, 2005; 510) asserts that 'entrepreneurs find it more profitable to cooperate with authorities than to challenge censorship policies". This means that when it comes to online content filtering or blocking, it is not in the interest of major companies (notably Google) or server hosts to seek to dissent against government policies. As a result, even in democratic countries, corporate entities can be dissuaded from hosting content that a government deems to be inappropriate. Censorship need not be publicly obvious – it can, and often is, be managed by a notice being served on a server host rather than on those posting the content. This means it often occurs in a more "under the radar" fashion than traditional censorship of media outlets, or in the

very public fashion in which Chinese internet censorship is carried out with extreme limits being imposed upon contents and high levels of state control in terms of access to online states

In spite of these complications, Freedom House seeks to offer statistics on online freedoms, broken down by state and with a number of qualifications. All three states involved in are included in the Freedom House reports; however, they are not broken down by city, as with the research for this thesis. All three states come out with a different score for censorship and censor different content in varying ways. However, all three do carry out some form of online control of content.

<u>The Philippines</u>

The only state considered to be 'free' by Freedom House's 2014 report is the Philippines (2014; p.72). The report suggests there has, to date, been no systematic and politically motivated blocking of online content. This does not mean there have not been other forms of internet restriction, but it does imply that there is no automatic removal of websites and content from Philippines-based websites and servers.

A recent development in online censorship in the Philippines was the Supreme Court's ruling that the censorship and internet content restrictions proposed by the Cybercrime Prevention Act of 2012 were unconstitutional. This was an affirmation that censorship in virtual space is considered to be unlawful in the Philippines and that this is likely to remain the case. The law would have allowed for widespread content blocking without court orders, on the grounds of very broadly-defined transgressions such as 'cybersex', and so the striking down of this provision within the act is a welcome development for those championing internet freedom in the country (Meruenas, 2014).

Interestingly Freedom House identifies the Philippines as offering freedom online that it does not offer the press. The 'Freedom of the Press' report offers the Philippines a 'partly free' judgement, which implies there are greater limitations on traditional forms of media than there are on online

spaces. This is significant for the actors considered here. If they can share and disseminate information in virtual space with a heavily reduced risk of censorship, then it really does offer them a comparatively new set of freedoms, and this in turn implies that it does offer expanded opportunities for network members within the Philippines.

However, this assessment comes with one significant reservation: it is likely that if a country represses its traditional media outlets it will, in due course, seek to do the same to contemporary online media sources. The strongest explanation for a discrepancy between the press freedom and online freedom scores is that the government has not yet caught up, either legislatively or technologically, with online media censorship. If this is the case, then it is something that is going to change in due course with the two scores coming increasingly closer together. It is something that would be worth observing over coming years.

It was evident from fieldwork interviews carried out in the Philippines that there is a high degree of self-censorship by TWN members. Almost every interviewee who was involved with SRHR spoke of being concerned about posting information or sharing ideas in virtual space, due to concerns that it would be censored by the government. Junice Melgar from Likhaan Women's Health Centre –a very active element within a larger network seeking to share information on contraception and safe abortion practices[42] – had considered hosting information on overseas servers, in order to maintain its safety from government censorship. This may seem like an alternative and therefore more 'free' way of sharing information, however the fact it involves working with an overseas partner and Ms Melgar still expressed concerns regarding government repercussions means even this is significantly restrictive. Another reason for self-censoring behaviour in the Philippines is supported by literature. This makes the case that the reason for the limited restrictions on online journalists is due to the fact that these are usually offshoots of traditional media which heavily self-censor due to the high level of violence against journalists

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[42] Appendix A.5.

that has been prevalent in the Philippines (Gonzalez 1988; Brooten 2011). Historically journalists have been subjected to heavy repercussions and the fact that many online media outlets in the Philippines[43] are evolutions of these traditional offline media providers means the incentive to self-censor is already innate and is carrying over into online spaces. This is another example of the local affecting the 'virtual' and material spaces continuing to dominate methodology and thought processes.

Indonesia

Indonesia is declared in the 2014 report to be partially free (2014; p.402), demonstrating a significant degree of censorship by the Indonesian government. The 'Freedom on the Net' report states that the Indonesian government imposes significant restrictions in online contents. It states that the database provided to servers and hosts to block sites contained over 800,000 URL addresses by January 2014 (Freedom House, 2014; p. 415). This is supported by local media reports and a legislative overview.

The 'Information and Electronic Transactions Law' briefly outlined in the legislation section of this chapter will directly impact the TWNs considered here, due to the fact that they frequently dissent from government positions and current policy. This could very easily be classed as 'negative' content and removed or blocked for Indonesia-based users. The limitations this would then impose on information sharing, communication of ideas and stories and raising message awareness would be drastic. If the content is not available for access, then it will present major barriers for those TWN members in Indonesia operating in 'virtual spaces', and provide a fairly insurmountable obstacle in communicating important messages.

Content blocking and filtering is done on a number of grounds. The widest reaching is that surrounding pornography and gambling; this provision is applied very arbitrarily and is the one

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[43] Appendix A. 2.

that most affects the TWN members interviewed for this research. Further to this there are legislative grounds to block content that represented either as 'forms of disturbance', being contrary to the 'public interest' or 'public order', or as an 'abuse of public information' (Citizenlab, 2013). The 'forms of disturbance' provision is particularly concerning, as it could be interpreted to mean any form of anti-government agenda when expressed online, or the mobilisation and organisation of protests and other collective movements against governments. This returns to the concept that laws to control virtual space are implemented and enforced in the best interests of those who introduce them; governments. It should be noted that this particular legislation would have huge ramifications for the power of TANs to form networks, to mobilise activists, or engage in any of their other activities. A TAN that cannot mobilise cannot really apply pressure, and a TAN that cannot share or express ideas cannot inspire others to join the cause or pressurise the government. Additionally, if Indonesian activists cannot mobilise in online spaces, then they will be limited in their ability to form connections with others to work across borders. Therefore, the increasing limitations on content in Indonesia will have a vast impact on the work of TWN members in Jakarta.

It should also be observed that, even prior to this new legislation, there has been a high degree of content filtering in Indonesia. Under anti-pornography laws, there is a heavy degree of content filtering and blocking of sites and search terms deemed to be 'inappropriate'. These wide ranging blocks have had implications for TWN activists interviewed for this research. Oldri Sherli[44] gave an example of how it had affected her organisation: the website had hosted contraceptive advice for young women (they were working to raise awareness of SRHR issues). The website one day became 'unavailable' when the link was clicked. They rapidly became aware that their site had been removed as it was classed to be in breach of the laws on pornography.

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[44] Appendix A.17
[4] Appendix A..14

Gita Pragati stated that Kencana's website had become impossible to find without the explicit URL,[45] as it was banned under one of the search terms. They were also hosting content that was LGBT-related, which was once again considered to be in contravention of the laws on pornography within Indonesia. Eventually their website was removed altogether. This meant that even content that was not considered to be inappropriate was filtered out, not only preventing information dissemination but also awareness-raising. While the group themselves seek to challenge government policy (as does the wider TAN), the website itself did not in any way promote anti-government rhetoric. This is about content rather than delivery but it is about content in a space which is meant to be 'resistant to regulation' (Kidd, 2003). If content is this easily controlled in online spaces when there is an issue the government selectively dislikes then this space is not resistant to regulation. Furthermore with the website removed, Kencana could no longer raise awareness of the causes it represented, even in a way that was benign to state government. This means their ability to express themselves had been fundamentally altered to the point at which they could no longer make their opinions heard in virtual space.

Not only does this make information difficult to access: if website hosts are required to take sites down, or choose to, (the law gives provision to private companies to remove sites deemed to be in violation of the spirit of the legislation) then it stymies a conversation before it can even happen. Providing contraceptive advice is not pornography, but it was classed as violating the law as it is a subject that the government considers to be inappropriate. This makes it very difficult for the organisation to spread the message to women throughout Indonesia, and also creates an undue level of stigma surrounding sexual and reproductive health rights. While the cases considered here revolve around women's issues, and therefore stand a greater risk of contravening the loose interpretations of the anti-pornography law, the recent legislative changes mean that it will not just

be TWN members who are censored in broad, sweeping bans on content. The new laws will allow for censorship of any dissenters, and TAN members campaigning across the spectrum of issues will likely be affected. However there is a consideration of women's rights specifically and the extent to which they are detrimentally effected by these laws means that there is an inherent gender bias; by being the most damaging to women's groups

New technology has also facilitated the Indonesian government's ability to introduce censorship legislation. The Ministry for Communication and Information now has a database programme named 'Trust+': this is a continuously updated list of websites that is managed by the Ministry, and that service providers are obliged to block. Private citizens can also request that websites be added to the database by simply sending an email [to the Ministry of Communication] from a public email address with the URL. Internet Service Providers are required to filter the websites on an ongoing basis as the database is updated.

Also significant in Indonesia is the clear support for the concept that it is "more profitable to cooperate with authorities than to challenge censorship" (Kala in Zeng and Wu, 2005; p. 515). In order to ensure compliance from private companies with the censorship legislation that has come into law in Indonesia, the government has threatened to restrict those who do not immediately enact content filtering and blocking in accordance with policy. Not only does the Ministry for Communication and Information implement the above described 'Trust+', but it directly regulates industry. In 2011 the Indonesian government threatened BlackBerry with limitations on its market access if it failed to institute the required content blocking on its devices (Abma, 2011). Pursuant to this, BlackBerry introduced the required content blocking in order to guarantee continued market access. This is a clear example of how corporate entities support the individual censorship policies of the countries that they operate within, and also highlights how governments can continue to effectively censor something that is intended to be a much freer entity.

Thailand

Thailand is considered by Freedom House to be, in the online sense, 'not free'. This means that there are such restrictions and such heavy censorship in place that it is an incredibly limited space for those who engage with it. Content filtering and blocking takes place on a very large scale in Thailand. Censorship in Thailand is most heavily focused on anything deemed to be insulting to the monarchy or anti-monarchist in tone. Censorship is so extensive that Thailand is ranked 56th out of the 70 countries included in the report for Internet Freedom (2014; p.6). Countries considered to be less free include Iran and China; even Myanmar is considered to offer its citizens more freedom online.

It is not possible to discuss the situation regarding online censorship in Thailand without acknowledging that, since the initial fieldwork for this thesis took place, the situation has undergone dramatic change. With the seizing of power by the junta censorship has increased, both of traditional media and online media. The context of intensifying political repression has had impacts both on the material space and the virtual space that those TWN members who contributed to this research operate within. While this, again, demonstrates the relationship between traditional and online spaces it does mean that the primary empirical research is only able to offer us an insight into a continuously evolving situation.

There has been a dramatic increase in censorship from May 2014 with the changes in governmental structure (Privacy International, 2015). New orders were introduced that banned the propagation of opinions that "will cause social division" (Ramsey, 2015). The government has also actively targeted websites that criticise the new regime or their human rights violations, blocking both specific websites like Human Rights Watch and broader search terms. This means that heavy online censorship makes it difficult both to criticise and to read criticisms of the new government. This highlights the true ability of governments to regulate the internet and the online spaces it offers, and very much demonstrates that Kidd's 2003 assertion that virtual space is "resistant to regulation" tells the story of an earlier period but is no longer relevant.

If we consider the period in which fieldwork was undertaken for this project, and before the coup that has left Thailand with a significantly more repressive government, there is still clear evidence of heavy online censorship. Even prior to the change in government structure Freedom House considered Thailand to be 'not free'.

URL blocking and content filtering in Thailand differs from Indonesia. Indonesia has leaned towards filtering content based on its immoral or illegal nature (namely, under the anti-pornography laws). This has been heavily influenced by the dominance of religion within the Country and the rise of increasing religious values. Thailand has typically censored information that it considers to be politically challenging or anti-monarchist in nature.

2013 had actually seen a significant decline in court orders to block URLs in Thailand. In 2013 58 orders were made to block 5,639 websites which was a huge reduction compared to the 20,000 URLs that were blocked in 2012. The majority of these were websites that insulted the 'King, Queen or heir' (Bangkok Post, 2013). There are two interpretations of this; either the government was working on liberalising online policy or that having blocked so many websites in 2012 activists began to self-censor and there were as a result fewer to block. If it is the former then this would have been a huge development for TWN members, however the evidence from following years suggests that in fact it was a case of the latter. An interesting statistic from the report is the fact that they measure websites taken down for discussing abortion pills. This is connected to this research in that a lot of the networks interviewed in all three cities, including Bangkok, were working on sexual and reproductive health rights issues including safe provision of abortion. Freedom House observes that the practice of blocking websites that discuss abortion pills was completely curtailed in recent years. They track the numbers of websites blocked from 2007 (when content blocking became common practice in Thailand) and in 2008 37 websites were blocked for discussing abortion pills, in 2009 this rose to 320 (2014; p. 771 with original information taken from the Thai Statistics Bureau). This suggests that blocking the work of women's networks is

unlikely to be a priority for the Thai government, which appears to be more concerned with direct challenges to government and the monarchy.

This information matches the picture painted by those subjects who were interviewed for this research in Bangkok. When discussing limits in virtual space, no-one raised the issue of having material they had posted online removed. This was a stark contrast to the other two cities included in this case study where everyone interviewed had experienced some form of online censorship within their networks and social groups. It was also surprising, given that it is considered by Freedom House to have the lowest level of online freedom of the three case studies.

One of the reasons for this could be a genuine lack of interest in censoring TWN groups in Bangkok. [46]However this seems somewhat unlikely, given that at least some of their work will involve challenging government policy, and they do disseminate information that could be seen as challenging the state or the existing status quo regarding the monarchy. One interview subject suggested it was because the Queen was a believer in women's rights and did not want to see groups working for women censored. This also seems to come under challenge as some of those interviewed admitted that their work involved challenging the traditional monarchic involvement in state policy. Most likely is the fact that women's groups are not a priority for censorship, as stated in the section which outlined legislation Thailand offers a very fragile political environment and governments priorities in terms of control are going to be centred around those who pose the most immediate and direct challenge to staying in power. Women's groups while they may quietly challenge state policy are not seeking to radically reform the regime structure or ultimately overthrow existing government. Therefore it seems the reason they were not heavily censored is due to their relatively benign nature in the eyes of the government. This is supported by the information quoted above on the URL removal of websites that discuss abortion pills implies that there really has been a comparatively limited degree of censorship, at least in the area of sexual

[46] See Appendix A.20 – A.23

and reproductive health issues. Further to this, interview subjects were offered anonymity (either full with no mention of their name or partial where their name would not be used when discussing a sensitive topic), and in spite of this they still did not acknowledge censorship.

However in spite of the implications that this offers; that TWN members in Bangkok were the only ones interviewed who do not experience censorship when trying to carry out their work it still remains unlikely. The widespread nature of censorship even in 2012 and 2013 makes it difficult to accept that they were in no way affected by it, especially given that their very nature is to challenge existing legislative and government status quo in order to affect change. This has concerning implications, if they are experiencing censorship but are unwilling to discuss it then the inference could be made that they are severely concerned about repercussions. If this is the case, then there is a substantial argument to be made that behaviours in virtual space could have severe real world impacts. The ways in which online behaviour can affect material lives due to state sanction will be discussed later in this chapter, but the silence over censorship in Thailand is not something that can be dismissed without proper consideration.

Furthermore there is an argument that even in countries where there is little direct censorship of women's rights issues, TWN members still cannot be said to be free when they are operating in a context where the government can arbitrarily shut down any websites, particularly, as illustrated by the recent change of governments, in an environment where government priorities can change with incredible rapidity.

Overcoming Censorship

There are ways for TWN members in all three countries to overcome government blocks on websites. There is a wide variety of software available that allows internet users to circumvent online content filtering and blocked URLs. Much of this software is free to download and access, and can be found easily through a simple search, although it should be noted that in a country that

regulates internet as heavily as Thailand there will be blocks on related search terms and on the sites that offer the free downloads.

There is also the additional obstacle that in order to go looking for software that allows for the viewing of restricted content, there needs to be an awareness that it exists. This requires a degree of technological literacy that not everyone is guaranteed to have, particularly those of older generations who are 'digital immigrants' rather than 'digital natives' (Hargittai; 2010) [47] this point returns to the ideas of barriers to access that are created by demographics and that these limitations institute their own power hierarchies. Those who are more technologically adept will be able to find content, meet others online and interact in ways that those who are not will be unable to. Digital skills to overcome online censorship empowers those with an awareness of these downloadable programmes that can help find content with greater freedom, but disenfranchises those who cannot from the conversation, once again instituting power dynamics in a supposedly flat, horizontal virtual space.

As these websites are blocked by government orders, browsing them is an infringement of the law. This will provide a significant obstacle to people who may otherwise have engaged with the software. Although activists – in this case, TWN members –seek to challenge the government this does not mean they do not abide by nationally established legislation. They will still be concerned with potential repercussions of accessing blocked content should they be caught, and with the risk of downloading illegal software. In interviews conducted in all three cities TWN members did admit an awareness of ways around content filtering: one interviewee in Jakarta admitted to using surfing software that allowed them to access some restricted content regarding LGBT rights in other countries[48]. There was a very distinct and apparent age divide between those who knew of the programmes and those who were unaware that there were ways to circumvent content filtering.

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[47] For more on digital natives and digital immigrants see the chapter on 'digital divides'
[48] For the safety of the interview subject they are to remain anonymous

However, outside of this there was little evidence that using alternative software to evade information censorship was carried out with any regularity. There is the possibility that interviewees were uncomfortable discussing the matter; however, as many of them were willing to discuss other sensitive issues and ways in which they consider taking steps which could be considered legally questionable, this is unlikely. It appears more likely that using software to evade content filtering is just not something that is regularly practised in the cities considered for this research. While Chinese activists are established users of bridging programmes to access banned social media and information sharing sites (Yang, 2003), it could be that in more moderately censored countries, there is not the same incentive to break the rules. In states that are more moderate in their censorship – blocking individual URLs and search terms rather than entire social media applications and news websites –TWN members still have access to information. They can still see news and share stories; they just cannot freely search or communicate without limitation. It could be that these limitations are not so regressive they feel the need to rebel against them. If Thailand were to start filtering higher levels of content, altering access to news and preventing online interaction (thus far they have only blocked Facebook once, and this was for forty minutes – suggesting it was in the interest of preventing violence) – it might inspire "ordinary citizens" to become radicals as Zuckerman (2014) suggests internet control pushes people towards.

It should be noted that, by looking at states in terms of their online freedoms, the Freedom House report automatically implies a direct link between traditional physical geographies and virtual spaces. This is also illustrated by the fact that the report finds all three states in this study to have differing levels of freedom. While a number of elements go into the construction of the reports, and a number of criteria are assessed when considering the freedom status of each country, legislation is a key consideration. Legislation is shaped by the governments of individual states and this therefore has a bearing on virtual space.

It is apparent that there is a significant degree of difference between the degrees of online freedom enjoyed by activists in the three nations examined by this thesis. These differing levels of censorship automatically create a power dynamic regarding sharing and accessing information. If a Thai activist were to post information about a domestic situation, only to have it removed, then their experiences will have less of an effect on the overall agenda setting of a TAN due to their restricted ability to give their input. If in Indonesia TAN members cannot access pages established by TANs, then they will not be able to access information relevant to the broader picture of an issue, and this will in turn result in a power dynamic between those who can access all information and those who cannot.

Zuckerman makes the argument that the more governments seek to restrict online behaviours, the more they turn ordinary citizens into radicals (Zuckerman, 2014). This is built on the assumption that when the government creates an obstacle, people will seek to overcome it rather than act within the established guidelines. However, this assumption is not borne out by the evidence. Particularly for those citizens, and – in the context of this research – TWN members in more repressive environments (for example Thailand) there are large scale risks attached to defying the government. It is easier simply not to access the blocked content and URLs than it is to download software and consciously object to online content filtering by the government. Therefore while some citizens may seek to overcome these obstacles, it is unlikely that everyone will; realistically more are likely passively to observe the online content restrictions with little awareness as to what is behind blocked URLs, let alone engage in active defiance of the state.

The existence of censorship was something that was discussed within the fieldwork carried out for this thesis and it was a recurrent theme within discussions about limitations felt in online spaces. The existence of online censorship single-handedly challenges Castells assertion that virtual space is one of 'unfettered deliberation'. Even without other forms of state control of online dissent, content blocking and filtering is a form of controlling the discourse in this virtual space. As these

regulations are imposed by states, this once again demonstrates the importance of traditional, physical geographies in shaping virtual spaces. It highlights the inability to separate virtual space from material space. The two spaces are intrinsically linked, decisions made in material spaces continue to pervade online ones. If activists cannot access material or share it at will then they do not have true freedoms or a space for dialogue that is uncontrolled. Virtual space is inherently shaped by the same forces that control an individual's normal daily life, be it governments or other controlling bodies. As long as this relationship remains then the two spaces are interlinked and the power dynamics and other implications that come with this will translate into virtual space..

Surveillance

Alongside censorship, another traditional form of monitoring activists is surveillance. As mentioned at the outset these categories were drawn from a systematic consideration of the literature on how states control activism and existing empirical works. In order to assess them as a challenge to the government, and take action accordingly, states need to observe interaction and communication.

In order for the internet to offer true freedom of communication, it needs to be unobservable and private when necessary (Staehli, 1994). Superficially, the internet presents as a very public space: forums and online chatrooms are easy to follow, and search engines provide an easy way to see who is talking about what topics and where they are doing so. Failing the ability to offer discretion virtual space would at least need to offer no repercussions by those observing actions taken within it and speech acts made even if it were being monitored in order to be free. Also, the majority of online communication happens in writing. Emails are typed, forum posts are written and blogs are also readable by anyone choosing to unearth them. This means opinions expressed are automatically recorded in ways that verbal conversations are not.

There has been a narrative in the press worldwide about the storing of online data and the use of it by intelligence agencies, even in countries held up as strong democracies. If a state's use of online monitoring corresponds to its use of online censorship, we would expect to see high levels of surveillance in Jakarta, Manila, and particularly in Bangkok. Online surveillance has the power to be more surreptitious than traditional surveillance of activist's behaviour (Bennett, 2001; Cohen 2008; Fairfield, 2009) Capturing emails, for example, does not require the same level of manpower as carrying out a 'real world' surveillance operation (Zhang et al, 2009). One person at one computer can filter and sort through a huge amount of online data using search terms and 'flag words'. This can also bring people to the attention of those individuals and agencies carrying out any form of surveillance in online space. The tools that capture online data require far less management than relying on referrals and human intelligence, and can operate on a huge scale (Tyma, 2007) (as demonstrated by the revelations surrounding the US PRISM programme) (Landau, 2013). This has the potential to hugely restrict how TWN members behave online: if they are concerned about being 'watched' by their governments then they are not as free as the earlier literature implies.

As with the programmes that offer ways around content blocking, there are of course systems in place that allow people to communicate online in ways that are supposedly untraceable. The original, and most complex, one of these is TOR (The Onion Router): invented by the US Navy, it allows users to 'bridge' to filtered content and to disguise their ISP address, making them harder to trace. It also hides the usage from programmes used by the government to track online traffic. This is heavily used, especially in China: run by volunteers, it allows activists to share news and views and access information in a discreet fashion that should protect them from government retaliation by making them untraceable (Bradbury 2011) However even this complex system is now coming up against challenges. MIT's Tech Review recently reported that the Chinese government has now found ways to block access to TOR (MIT Tech Review, 6th April 2012). This

is yet another example of governments catching up with technology, as has been seen throughout this chapter.

The three case studies in this research; Manila, Jakarta and Bangkok, continue to fit the same pattern when it comes to surveillance as they did with censorship. Both from the research carried out and interviews with subjects, Manila does not appear to practise widespread surveillance at present. There are some moves away from these freedoms, however; under the 2012 Cybercrime Law there is some provision for online surveillance that does not require warrants or orders from a court (Republic Act No. 10175) (Pinlec, IFEX, 2012) The legislation would allow for increased online surveillance and a rising prevalence of criminalising online behaviour with no oversight from the judiciary. The constitutional nature of these laws is still under challenge, and the Act itself will receive greater attention in the section to follow on intimidation and violation of user rights (Bauzon, Manila Times, 2015; Macaraig, Rappler, 2015) It was also interesting to observe that despite the lack of evidence of widespread online surveillance of internet users in the Philippines, those interviewed still discussed an apprehension to put controversial ideas in writing or to be seen to use the internet in ways that could provoke government response.

Junice Melgar from Likhaan Women's Centre talked about working with an international partner within the network to host controversial content on a foreign server in order to prevent its censorship by the government. At the same time she expressed concern about being seen to break rules in cyberspace. This implies that the Ms Melgar[49] did have concerns that what she posted online was being watched. Marevic Parcon of WGNRR also expressed extreme anxiety surrounding the law and its implications for the groups stating that it would dramatically affect the way in which she interacted with other activists online.[50]

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[49] Appendix A.5.
[50] See Appendix A.8.

A number of interview subjects were also aware of the 2012 Cybercrime Law (they called it the 'anti-cyber bullying law') and the possible impact this would have for them online. The government now has the right to carry out surveillance of their private email, as well as their publicly posted content. They expressed concerns about the fact that putting something in writing; even as a private communication, would have potential repercussions for them and that this made them mistrustful of the internet, as discussed in the previous chapter.

Therefore, while the overall picture of internet surveillance in the Philippines depicts a government that is relatively benign in tracking online activism, there is a definite feeling that this is changing, and genuine concerns among TWN members in Manila about their safety from government oversight in cyberspace. As mentioned, while oversight in itself is not a problem, those participating in TWN activity are likely to be directly challenging government policy and this is likely to come with a degree of retaliation from their governments so in this respect even simple oversight is problematic as evidenced by the interviews with Junice Melgar and Obeth Montes of Gabriela The latter shared her concerns about the fact that they directly sought political change (even constituting a political party to alter government[51]) and that this new law could be used to directly prevent opposition to the government. This feeling of concern could be linked to the lack of freedom traditionally experienced by the press in the country and the long history of government repression, and as such be a hangover from previous decades rather than reflective of the current situation, but there does appear to be a trend for increasing control of cyberspace as demonstrated by the increasing attempts to introduce regulatory legislation It will be necessary to wait and see how the situation continues to evolve in Manila over the coming years.

There has been a significant upswing of online surveillance in Indonesia. In September 2013, it was reported that the Indonesian government spent $5.6 million on new tools for online surveillance, purchasing the programmes from a British company (Citizenlab, 2013). The

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[51] Appendix A.10

procurement was managed by the Ministry of Defence. Given Indonesia's struggles against domestic terrorism, this would be a logical purchase in order to track communications between those operating within virtual space who could present a security threat to the country. However there were concerns about this purchase particularly in light of the reported wiretapping of Joko Widodo's home in February 2014. Using this technology to carry out surveillance on political opposition implies that the purpose of the purchase was not purely domestic security. There are in total ten laws that allow for government surveillance online, including the most prominent law that regulates online spaces in the country: the ITE law.

The increasing evidence of surveillance fits with the emerging profile of the Indonesian government as being repressive of users of virtual space.(Citizenlab, October 25th, 2013; Poetranto 2013; Widiadana 2013; Between the widespread use of content filtering, and an increasing trend for online surveillance, the Indonesian government seems to be particularly adept at controlling cyberspace. Investment in surveillance and filtering technologies is high, and clearly well-utilised. The government of Indonesia is undoubtedly taking steps to keep up with current technologies that enable people to use virtual space. Whether the government is using it in order to control political challenges is to some extent a separate issue. There is, however, evidence that state control of content and surveillance is affecting those users who operate within TWNs based in Jakarta.

TWN members interviewed in Jakarta reported real concerns about online surveillance. Particularly those who were members of wider umbrella organisations that included groups working on LGBT rights (like 'Our Voice') reported apprehension [52]about who may be examining the contents of what they posted in cyberspace, and their general internet usage. One interview subject stated that everything they do on the internet, they do under the assumption that it is being

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[52] Appendix A.19

tracked by the authorities, and that this has implications for what they are prepared to put in writing in cyberspace.

Thailand is once again the most active in online control of those cases considered here. Even prior to the coup, the government was carrying out high levels of online surveillance under the auspices of monitoring cyberspace for 'lèse-majesté' content. There is little argument in Thailand that surveillance is most heavily carried out against those who are considered to be political agitators; those who challenge the status quo rather than those who may be 'inappropriate'. Prior to the recent political changes[53] there was a reasonably high degree of online surveillance, including analysis of internet traffic and the observing of online social media. According to Freedom House, since the coup there has been a huge increase in digital surveillance, which has led to arrests and other violations of user rights against those whose "freedom of expression displeased the Junta" (Privacy International, Ifex, 2014).

There have been discussions of a new single entry point for all online traffic in Thailand. While discussion of this issue began before the coup, the state forces controlling the internet have a gained a "second wind" since the Junta came to power (Sambandaraksa, 2014). This would mean that all data shared and accessed could be captured and tracked at a single point. They have put this proposition out for bid to technology companies. It would create IDs for every person logging into the internet, and allow for regulation of all online content. This would mean surveillance of any internet traffic would be incredibly easy for the state to manage and create a genuine inability to do anything online without being tracked by state forces. This would pose a huge threat to activists and TWN members: for while they may not be directly working against the government they will often rely on group forums and other social media applications where controversial content may be shared by others.

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[53] Discussed in the country profiles in the introductory chapter of this thesis

Further to this proposal, senior police officers have announced they have a duty to investigate online content posted on social media, including those online Facebook groups that express discontent with the junta or organises congregation. The Department for Special Investigation has also joined group messaging services in order to look for controversial content that poses threats to the government (Asia Sentinel, February 17th, 2015; Saiyasombut, 2014).

Alongside these methods of capturing public information, there are reports that the security services have also sought to monitor and capture personal data. There are reports a story that those who attempted to access blocked websites received a pop-up message. Attempting to close the message led to a request to share the user's personal data; if a user were to click 'agree' then it automatically captured their Facebook account details (Privacy International, 2014). This is a highly invasive form of data capture; simply attempting to access banned sites appears to have been enough of a cause for the Junta to monitor an internet user's private social media interactions going forward.

In another – slightly strange – form of surveillance, the TCSD also invited people to 'friend' the department on Facebook in order to allow them full access to people's pages and thereby to monitor their activity online (Thaicoup, 2014).

None of these grounds for investigation are immediate threats to the groups who were interviewed for this project. They were working on issues surrounding SRHR and legal equality and freedoms for women, which do not directly challenge the junta. However, the work they do is a challenge to the status quo, and simply by nature of being transnational it engages internationally with those who may express concerns about the Junta or their policies. If they are seen to engage in Facebook groups or online forums with other groups who are less quiet about the change in government, then they may be considered to be associated with them simply by being members of the same network. This leads to extreme risk for those based in Bangkok interacting online, either with more

outspoken Thai network members, or with those overseas who may express views considered controversial under the new regime.

While, once again, the interview subjects in Bangkok remained relatively quiet on the issue of concerns regarding online surveillance, there was a general feeling that they would be incredibly apprehensive of communicating online – either in private communications or on public forums – about anything they considered to be controversial or particularly challenging of the government. These interviews were carried out before the coup was staged and the Junta took control of the country, and the situation for network members is likely to have worsened in the aftermath. Given the extreme restrictions the Junta is trying to apply on online spaces, and the risks for even personal communications to be captured it appears that all communications between network members that could in any way be considered sensitive will either need to be carried out offline or using heavy data encryption programmes.

If network members are technologically aware enough to have access to encryption software and other complex programmes that allow internet users to find ways online that genuinely offer anonymity when browsing and posting, then they are to some extent presenting themselves as subversive should they ever be found to be using these programmes. By taking active steps to find ways around government inception of communications they immediately appear to be a threat, even if there communications were neutral. It can also be assumed that more outspoken network members are likely to be on the radar of those who are responsible for instructing online surveillance, and for these people to access online spaces - even surreptitiously - poses a risk if they should be found to be using encryption software. This is by challenging the government even on minor issues will become high profile in a time of increasing levels of control and social movements and women's groups are interlinked with democracy movements. Furthermore, as previously discussed in the first substantive chapter on digital divides, the age and gender of network members is significant. This means that because of biases in education and access the

TWN members this study focuses on are less likely to have knowledge of these programmes and alternative ways of browsing online spaces, and therefore are more limited in their access.

Once again, we can see barriers to online interaction that are geographically specific: restrictions and limitations placed upon those TWN members in Bangkok are not the same as those in Jakarta or Manila. The sheer threat of surveillance is enough to affect TWN members' behaviour in Manila, especially combined with the historic control of freedom of expression; the increasing trend for surveillance exercised by the government of Indonesia has implications for members there; and the increasingly repressive actions by the Junta in Thailand are going to have long reaching implications. Further to this, if we assume this is the beginning of a trend as it appears to be in all three countries, with technology and knowledge at state level continuing to advance, then we will see an ongoing increase in online surveillance and even more incentives to once again find discrete methods of communication and information dissemination.

All of these ways in which online surveillance can be carried out facilitate further actions by the state. If they find TWN members and other activists to be challenging the status quo in ways they deem to be unacceptable or inappropriate, they can resort to further methods of controlling not only the narrative but those who are contributing to it. This is when more extreme forms of state intimidation may be involved, as will be shown in the next section.

Intimidation, Harassment and Imprisonment

Censorship and surveillance are, superficially, relatively benign actions by governments. Not being able to access content – while frustrating – is possible to overcome, and does not pose a direct risk to network members. Surveillance is slightly more concerning, as it is a direct action by a state against a user: monitoring the usage and traffic of an organisation or individual constitutes steps taken against them. However much more concerning is a government that resorts to arrest,

imprisonment or harassment against an individual or organisation based on their behaviours in virtual space. This is in some senses a natural escalation from the former types of restriction in online behaviours. There is for example a limited purpose for surveillance of people online if there is going to be no consequences for what is discovered.

The idea that an individual can be arrested for online behaviour may be viewed as a precautionary measure by some, whereas arresting an individual by framing their actions in a more sympathetic narrative could be regarded as a legitimate action by a government. However, of the state's violation of 'freedom of expression' or 'freedom to congregate' can impinge on human rights and freedoms (Freedom House, 2014; p.25) If these risks mean that TWN members are changing their behaviours, and these rules are established by the states in which they live and operate, then once again there is a very strong argument to be made that not only are 'virtual spaces' anything but resistant to regulation (Kidd, 2003) but they are once again extensions of an individual's traditional, geographically bound, material space rather than a new and evolutionary one (Graham 1998; Olesen 2004)

The biggest cause for alarm for activists that arose during interviews in the Manila were the new laws surrounding cyber-bullying and cybercrime. These laws seek to make online libel a criminal rather than civil offence with a prison term of eight years attached to it. The Anti-Cyber Bullying Law, also known as Republic Order 2708 or the Cybercrime Law, is presented by the government as being designed to prevent bullying in cyberspace. However a number of activists (both interviewed for this research and who participate in online advocacy groups like Global Voices) are arguing that it is actually an underhand way of preventing anyone from speaking out against the government in online spaces. (Marevic Parcon, Appendix A.8.; Trivedi, CNN, 2012; Global Voices, 11th February 2014).

The law is far reaching enough that there was concern in its initial phases that even 'liking' content on social media would come with an attached risk of prison time.[54] If this action is perceived as 'malicious' online activity then a criminal trial and jail sentence could be the result. The law was very wide reaching as it asserted that it was not only the originator of the 'malicious' content that could be convicted of libel, but rather anyone sharing, disseminating or liking the content that could also be held responsible. If a 'friend' were to post the content on a Facebook page the owner of that page could also be held responsible, a point that is of particular relevance to those involved in TWNs, as transnational members may unthinkingly post or share content on social media and the owner of that 'micro site' would then be held responsible under the Cybercrime Act for that content, even though it was international in origin and not intentionally expressed as an individual's opinion. At the time of writing elements of the law are still under consideration by the Supreme Court (Magdirila, TechinAsia, 2014) so whether this comes to pass remains to be seen, but the fact it is causing anxiety among activists will cause behavioural changes and reflect in the ways in which they behave in virtual space.

This addition to the overall Cybercrime Act was very much a last minute addition, and was proposed by a member of the Senate who had been derided on social media earlier in 2012 for plagiarising a number of sections of his speeches (Consunji, 2012). It was viewed as retaliation and this, according to Kathy Melville of WGNRR, added to concerns as to the intentions behind the legislation. Activists were concerned that politicians and state officials who were challenged in virtual space would use the legislation to arrest those they considered to be behind it. Given that the law was vague enough to implicate those who shared content, it would prevent widespread dissemination of any challenge to the government for fear of imprisonment. This action alone would lead to a significant degree of self-censorship, as any form of intimidation will cause network members and other activists to express caution in their online behaviours.

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[54] See interviews with Marevic Parcon, Kathy Melville and Obeth Montes in Appendix.

In 2012 the United Nations Human Rights Committee declared that the criminalisation of online libel in the Philippines was incompatible with the freedom of expression protected under international human rights law," and that the Philippines "should take appropriate actions to reform its libel laws to conform with international standards" (Pinlac, 2012). This what highlights the true challenge this law poses to online freedoms for TWN members. This law does however have the potential to bring online spaces in the Philippines more in line with the control seen of traditional media outlets. Offline or media libel has carried a penalty of 6 months to four years, and this law is more extreme and online comes with a possible penalty of up to 8 years in prison (Wood, 2014).

It was not only internationally that the Law came under challenge. Bloggers, commentators and activists reacted very strongly to the proposal of the Act in 2012. The Philippines Alliance for Internet Freedom (PIFA), were established in response to the Act, declared it to be 'cyber martial law' and organised a number of protests and judicial challenges in order to attempt to stop the passage of the legislation (Rappler, 2014). In total 15 petitions were filed with the Supreme Court to challenge the constitutional nature of the legislation. At the time of writing the Supreme Court has upheld the legality of the Act, stating that the criminalisation of online libel is legally permissible and the Act may continue to be implemented. The groups challenging the legislation are now lobbying Congress for change as they have exhausted the legal avenues within the country (Torres, 2012).

When the final period of fieldwork for this thesis was undertaken in 2013, every interviewee expressed some level of concern about the legislation and its potential implications for them in their daily work. They raised the issue during my interviews with them, and clearly articulated it to be something they viewed as an immediate worry. Since the fieldwork the legislation has come under challenge in the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court ruling has upheld the overall provisions of the act, but it has specified some of the implications. Notably, it has ruled out the sharing of content as being committing a cybercrime; now, only the originator of the content will be held

legally responsible. This will still pose significant limitations on TWN members if they want to post content that challenges a particular politician's opinion in a way that could cause them to challenge them legally.

GABRIELA is both a political party and a women's organisation in Manila. When interviewed for this research, Obeth Montes[55] of the organisation was seriously concerned about the law's impact on the group's ability to act in virtual space. She discussed the fact that they have spent a number of years working for a Reproductive Health Bill to be pushed through Congress, and that in recent years one of the ways they have sought to gain support is through online organising and lobbying. This has also involved making reference to current Congressmen and Senators and challenging them and their views on women's SRHR issues. They have often done this in ways that she argues are comedic, in order to help them gain traction. Her fear was that this would no longer be an avenue for them: if deriding politicians can be seen as libel and result in imprisonment then she argues it is no longer a risk they can take as a group. This reduces their available forums to challenge existing policies.

The fact that this law closes down one area and method by which TWNs have been organising their actions has significant implications for activists and members in Manila, who have previously had significantly more online freedoms than their counterparts in the other two cities in this study. It will also mean that tools that are available to TWN members in other countries within their networks will no longer be available to them: this could affect their ability to "apply pressure from below" (Brysk; 1995) a key component of any TANs work.

Indonesia has taken fairly extreme steps in criminalising online 'libel'. Since the fall of Suharto in 1998 the country has protected both 'freedom of expression' and 'freedom of opinion'. However, legislation passed since 2005 has been used to prosecute a number of citizens for online expression.

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[55] Appendix A. 10.

The Internet and Electronic Transaction Law, passed in 2008, allows for both content filtering and has been used to prosecute individuals for online libel.

Unlike the Filipino act that criminalises online libel the Indonesian law has provisions to allow criminal charges even for private personal communications between two people. Pritya Mulyasari was charged with online defamation as a result of an email sent to a friend in a private communication that expressed dissatisfaction with the service provision of a hospital she had been admitted to. Since the ITE law was implemented, 35 people have been charged within online defamation (Amnesty International, 2012; p.7). The cases for defamation are brought by politicians or officials, which is significant as it means those challenging government are at the most risk of receiving charges or being investigated for online defamation. A case begins when the affected politician or official reports the offence to the authorities: this means any action begins based on the perception of the authorities. Cochrane writing in *The New York Times* suggests this is reminiscent of earlier eras of Indonesian government (2014).

There has been a backlash against the recent implementation of the law. In 2014 Benny Handoko was imprisoned for a tweet that accused a local official of corruption. The politician concerned saw the tweet and engaged in a 'Twitter war' before informing police he had been defamed by Mr Handoko. He was found guilty and sentenced to one year's probation; the protests at his imprisonment meant that he was released from incarceration while awaiting trial after one day (Lukman, 2014). The case drew international attention to the "draconian" internet laws in Indonesia (Cochrane, 2014), but has not resulted in any reversal or amendments to the legislation. This, alongside the purchase of new surveillance software suggests that control of virtual space remains a priority for the government even under Widodo.

As with the Philippines, it should be noted that online libel and defamation charges carry much higher penalties than offline libel. This means acting in online or virtual space comes with a greater risk: should an individual or group seek to challenge government (or in this case an official or

politician) in an offline space, then you risk a shorter prison term and a lower fine than would be received for the same action in an online one. It also limits the ability for information sharing, as the potential for a story or issue to go 'viral' is hugely enhanced in online spaces. It is easy to share information on Facebook or 'retweet' on Twitter; it is far less involved than disseminating the same story to the same number of people in real world spaces. Intimidating network members with penalties for online behaviours removes this option, which would otherwise be highly effective when compared to traditional forms of sharing information that challenge the government status quo.

2011 saw a further tightening of the legislative framework for online actions, with legislation establishing a criminal penalty for sharing state secrets: 'state secrets' being incredibly vaguely defined within the legislation. While some civil society activists sought to challenge the constitutionality of this law, they were unsuccessful, and it has now been enacted. The more legislation passes that regulates online spaces, the more likely citizens and therefore TWN members are to self-censor, in order to prevent risking government backlash. Particularly for networks that seek to challenge governments, not being able to accuse officials or politicians of acting against the interests of the citizenship without risking huge fines and prison sentences imposes a significant limitation on online behaviour.

The TWN members interviewed for this research were very aware of it and admitted to self-censorship out of fear of arrest. As with those who were interviewed in Manila, TWN members in Jakarta all brought up the legislative framework and how it affects their online behaviour. Everyone interviewed expressed concern at the implications of their behaviour on the internet, and many were incredibly hesitant to post government criticism in public forums, with others conceding they would not even include it in private emails due to the risks of putting controversial opinion in written form (as in the case of Pritya Mulyasari) (Human Rights Watch; 2010)

There has also been a level of intimidation by non-governmental actors. In an interesting side note there have been news reports of a number of fundamentalist Islamic groups carrying out raids on internet cafes (Warungs) out of fears there has been inappropriate browsing undertaken on the computers. They have checked internet histories and searched the buildings and made threats regarding the online activities of the cafes customers. It is an interesting aside as it is an example that at least in Indonesia online censorship and surveillance is not only being undertaken by the government but also factions of society who wish to force their views to dominate local agendas.

As with censorship and surveillance, Thailand is once again the most repressive of the case studies within this thesis for security and freedom in online spaces. The focus remains on challenges to the monarchy, with criminal convictions for the posting of lèse-majesté content online. These convictions and imprisonments started many years before the recent change in political dynamics in the country, with online defamation having long been a criminal rather than civil offence, and with a very broad definition (Human Rights Watch, 2015).

Charges relating to expressing opinions online in Thailand are brought under the 2007 Computer Crimes Act. The Act classes a large number of speech acts as being criminal offences. The CCA also links a number of crimes, such as hacking, to online speech acts. Prosecutions under the CCA have been instigated by officials, politicians and government organisations; these range from Yingluck Shinawatra bringing a defamation case against a political cartoonist to the Thai Navy suing two journalists for defamation (Petty and Temphairojana, CNN, 2015)). It should be observed that a lot of the cases brought under the auspices of the CCA are against journalists; this is imposing limitations on new media (such as online news sources and blogging), as well as on activists operating in online spaces (Bandow, Japan Times, 2015).Furthermore by restricting journalists they are enacting control over traditional forms of media as well as those which are active in virtual space, once again demonstrating the interlinked nature of the two.

The CCA, as with the original provisions of the Anti Cybercrime Law in the Philippines, provides for charging those who host or share content with defamation as well as those who originate it (Saiyasombut, Asian Correspondent, 2015).. This again impacts TWN members, as they once again risk legal outcomes for being parts of forums or groups that may share content. Furthermore, it also deters members from hosting websites or forums where other transnational members may post content that could result in action being taken against them in Thailand (Sakawi,TechinAsia, 2013; Achapreeat, Prachathai; 2015). This will once again put them on the outside of power dynamics within networks, as they will not be able to take a leading position: if they cannot host content or discussion, it once again limits their input in agenda setting, which is a core part of the dynamics of any TWN.

In a concerning aside to criminal prosecution there is evidence that those who post controversial content online are subject to physical harassment as well as legislative intimidation. Somsak Jiemteerasakul, who posted content online about the monarchy was subject to a violent attack as well as a government investigation as a result of breaking the 'lèse-majesté laws' (Freedom House, 2014; p.778). The fact that this is widely reported will act as a deterrent for network members to become involved in challenging governments, and dissuade individuals from joining networks that they may be concerned are trying to change the status quo. If Thai citizens are continuously deterred from joining transnational networks then their voices will not be heard; they will not be able to participate in agenda-setting; and their stories will not be used to change policy with pressure being applied to the government internationally. This is hugely important as TANs (and in this case TWNs) depend on local input in order to form agendas and policies. This is another way in which Thai TWN members and Thai women could become disenfranchised from participation in transnational agendas.

There are reports that since the 2014 coup, the situation has deteriorated further. There has been a vast increase in the number of arrests for online content, as well as an increase in digital

surveillance. Freedom House states that they have created a climate of fear with "online and offline witch hunts" (2014; p. 775). There are also reports that those arrested have been required to hand over the passwords to social media accounts (including Facebook) to the army. Alongside political detentions, there has been an increase in lèse-majesté crimes reported by fellow citizens. Charges filed since the coup have been filed under martial law, which means that they are tried in a military court with no appellate system (; Saiyasombut, Asia Correspondent, 2015b). The implications of this for TWN members are substantial: there is little chance that they will continue to speak out in either online or offline spaces if they are under such threat, as is evident in historical literature on Thailand activists and activism suffer in repressive material spaces (See Hewison, 2010; Simpson, 2005). Particularly as information posted online will be in written form, there is huge risk involved. While the women interviewed for this research were rarely involved in action directed against the monarchy in the current environment, it appears that any form of challenge to the status quo is now considered to be unacceptable.

Once again, even before the coup, TWN members were reluctant to speak about the risks of harassment and arrest under the CCA during their interviews for this research. Under the guarantee of anonymity, one interview subject did acknowledge that they were scared of arrest and government harassment and that this did affect what they said or wrote online; she also admitted that other friends had been arrested for online speech offences and this had made her very afraid of what she said in virtual space. While they may be anomalous, given the climate and general feelings expressed by other subjects, it is far more likely that the others were concerned to share their stories on these matters and this interviewee was more confident in telling their story. Following the change in government it seems likely that any activist – even those working on women's issues rather than directly challenging the monarchy or the government – will be showing caution in their online posting.

The fact that all three countries also impose higher penalties for online defamation rather than offline defamation highlights the fact that the internet could have a phenomenal power for the spreading of ideas and challenges to policy and states if it were as free as the literature claims it to be. However, legislation and criminal charges are passed, established and implemented by the state. The state in which someone resides is a material and physical location; this bound idea of space is, at least according to much of the scholarship, meant to be something does not apply to online spaces. The fact that online behaviour is regulated by legislation, and repercussions – up to and including prison terms – will be served in the country in which an individual or group is resident argues against this idea of unbound and perfectly free spaces.

Conclusions

It is clear that, in all three case studies, the virtual space has lost its 'resistance to regulation' (Kidd, 2003). Legislative changes mean that the law is catching up with the technologies available to TWN members: this means that the internet does not offer an "unfettered space for deliberation" (Castells, 2012) unless an individual is technologically literate enough to be aware of, and capable of using, the software and VPNs that allows an individual to operate outside of government control and in an untraceable fashion. The assertion that internet regulation by governments turns ordinary citizens into 'activists' does to some extent present itself as true in the case of Manila, Jakarta and Bangkok, but when online offences come with such heavy penalties and many of the ways around the regulations require an advanced level of technological knowledge, then this is a statement that needs to be heavily caveated.

Once again, the fact that there are differences between the experiences of TWN members based on geographic location highlights the fact that virtual space is an extension of an individual's physical geography rather than an entirely new and unbound space. As online technologies

continue to evolve, legislation and government-managed technologies are also likely to escalate accordingly. As has been previously discussed the scholarship on the internet and virtual space is often dated, much of it having been published before governments had the chance to catch up with the pace of technological advancement. This window is now closing; governments are increasingly legislating for technologies that exist, and including provisions for technologies still to come.

The trend is towards increased regulations and limitations, and decreased freedoms for TWN members operating online. The hope for a free space depends on advances in digital knowledge by those members of networks in these countries, but even the younger candidates interviewed who suffered less at the hands of a digital divide were not keen to use technologies that circumvent government controls.

The new, heavily legislated, environment in Manila, Bangkok and Jakarta ensures hesitance on the part of TWN members and increasingly ensures their online silence. Criminalisation of libel in Manila and Jakarta will deter people from sharing challenging content or expressing views in writing which could be considered to be controversial. Prison sentences and hefty fines are intimidating, and in Bangkok, activists face threats of physical violence. Overall the picture painted by this research and online reporting is one of increasingly repressive – and effective – movements by the governments of all three countries included here against those attempting to make use of online spaces.

Control by individual states of virtual space and online content is on the rise, and this seems likely to continue unless there is a unified and significant challenge which has yet to emerge. Furthermore it is difficult to see what could challenge these trends, as internationally there are increasing moves towards tighter controls on 'virtual space.' For this reason, it is unlikely that we will see action agreed on an international scale, either through an organisation like the UN or as a condition of aid. Technology is continuing to advance with increasing levels of internet access, and it could be that software becomes widely available that allows TWN members to bypass the controls and

content filtering put in place by governments. In turn, however, this does not prevent intimidation and arrest based on actions in virtual space. Alongside these factors, with every advance governments seek to catch up, meaning that they will be able to maintain control in the long term. As a result it seems highly unlikely there will be any successful challenges to the ongoing trend of control by governments of virtual space.

IDENTITY FORMATION AND VIRTUAL SPACE

Previous chapters have established divides in access to technology, examined the impact of 'virtual space' on relationship building and social interaction within networks, considered the role the state is playing in managing and regulating 'virtual spaces', and painted a very sceptical portrayal of TWN members' access to, and usage of, 'virtual space' in the three case study cities. However, there was one area that interviews offered a slightly more hopeful portrayal of; namely, how this emerging space affects the issue of identity. Identity still needs consideration, despite the shaping power of spaces it has not yet been analysed throughout this thesis and it was an issue that became prevalent in the interviews that inform this research.

A core part of how TANs function is their ability to take a local narrative and share it transnationally within a framework that allows it to translate across borders; this local narrative is in part contingent on the identities of those involved. Therefore any emergent space that has the power to change this identity will have substantial implications for TANs.

Collective Identity

Collective identity, in its most basic sense, is the shared sense of belonging to a group. McAdam and Friedman identify it as being a "public pronouncement of status" (1992; p.156) this idea that it is a status, something subscribed to is a powerful idea. It has been used to demonstrate how a network can sustain membership and loyalty over time (Ayers, 2013; p.145). It is a concept of inclusion, this would be fundamental for networks in achieving longevity of membership and embedded relationships. It also very clearly has a relationship with the space that activists find themselves inhabiting, these spaces are informed by dialogues that Hunt and Benford define as "identity talk" for the ability of discussion to shape identity (1994; p.289). Identities are shaped and influenced through interactions, and to feel a sense of belonging within a wider group will

depend on who and where those interactions are taking place. This means virtual space should, at least based upon these theories, have the power to shape identities for TWN members. Johnston asserts that "the collective search for identity is a central aspect of movement formation" (Johnston et al, 1994; p.10), this speaks directly to the importance of identity within TANs and TWNs. Collective identity is held as an incentive to join a movement, or in this research a TWN. It is described in terms of being a positive attribute and this is important in that if it is a motivating factor to join networks should it no longer be the case that collective identity is something they offer then it will change engagement with networks. This holds true of TANs, or in this case TWNs.

Social movements are argued to thrive on 'collective identity' (McAdam and Mcarthy, 2006; Polletta and Jasper, 2001; Gusfield, 2009) and these remain moments in time where a number of individuals and groups come together on an issue before separating again. The differences between social movements and TANs were expounded upon in the literature review and do not need to be revisited here; however, their 'collective identity' is both questionable and fleeting. Della Porta and Diani, in their work on social movements, define identities as being "the process by which social actors recognise themselves and are recognised by other actors" (2000; p.85). This reinforces the idea that identities are constructed which is essential for considering their relationship to spaces; if identities are constructed they have the power to be reconstructed dependent on who they are interacting with, something that is in turn shaped by space. As defined by Polletta and Jasper, collective identity "does not imply the rational calculus for evaluating choices that interest does" (2007; p.285. The principle definition here is that of Polletta for critique definition of collective identity, with rational choice being core to this research's understanding. The literature surrounding TANs discusses them as being based on common interests (Keck and Sikkink, 1998); if we saw a shift away from this and towards one of collective identity, then we could expect to see a number of changes to the nature of networks with less rational choices in terms of joining or leaving, and more actions motivated by emotions linked to identities. However

collective identity could offer an explanation for the loyalty and longevity of networks that makes it worthy of examination.

This collective identity has the power to bind networks; beyond this, how an individual actor identifies will affect their narrative and language and the way in which they see themselves. Polletta and Jasper in their broad consideration of collective identity consider it to be

"an individual's cognitive, moral and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice or institution. It is a perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly and it is distinct from personal identities although it may form a part of a personal identity... it depends on some acceptance by those to whom it is applied... Collective identity does not imply the rational calculus for evaluating choices that "interest" does. And unlike ideology, collective identity carries with it positive feelings for other members in the group" (2001; p. 285).

This definition allows for the consideration both of how members of networks feel about being within TWNs, and of themselves as individuals and their sense of personal identity. This is essential to this research, as the two are so interwoven it would be challenging to ask for a separation of the two. Furthermore, it depicts the way an actor (be it an individual or an organisation) participates within a network and allows for the social relationships that may be formed accordingly. However it does notably require "positive feelings for other members in the group" (Polletta and Jasper, 2001; p.285) and within a TAN there will always be moments of contention, so this definition is not without caveats.

There are a number of factors which can inform identity from language (Melucci, 1995; p.41) and the idea that the sharing of a common language creates a bond and an understanding which reinforces an identity. Existing social ties, this naturally follows in that existing social ties underpin changes in space and carry forward as an element of collective identity. A shared goal or ideology

that allows individuals to relate to each other in the face of an 'other' (Friedman and Macadam in Morris, 1992; p.156). These are just some explicit examples, more important is the commonality between all these elements is that they are an "affiliation to others" made as a "public statement" (Friedman and Macadam in Morris, 1992; p. 160). There is therefore an inherent assumption of a broad definition of collective identity with the understanding it can be shaped through a range of process but that it does require acceptance by those to whom it is applied and is stronger than simply one factor or a shared ideology.

It is clear that the formation of collective identity is a process in and of itself which combines with the argument that participating in a network, movement or organisation that challenges authorities or cultural codes leads, as part of the process, to the development of new identities "which both help to recruit and sustain membership" (Wall, 2007; p.261). If this is the case then the process of shaping this new identity will be through the dense exchange of discourse and communication which characterises network structure (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; p.8). This identification of networks as informing new identities means that there will be a collective identity or at least a process by which identity is shaped within TANs. Technology also inarguably increases the density of the communications within them, and expands their reach. Therefore, by increasing the density of communications, there is more cause to believe that those actors involved in TWNs will acquire new identities, as well as an alteration to the identity of the network as a whole; that by participating, they will take on some elements of these identities, and carry them through to their work and lives outside the network and outside of 'virtual spaces'

Identities and Virtual Spaces

In the literature, there is a suggestion that there is a new idea of geography and space. Batty argues for 'virtual space' offering a "new geography of everywhere" and "cyberspace [changing] the role

of real places" (1997; p. 340 – 341) and Longan argues that computer-generated spaces simultaneously allow connections to more than one place (2002). Sassen identifies this shift as a "repositioning of citizenship" identifying that we are seeing a transnationalisation of citizenship and identities in this new era of modern cities and globalisation (Sassen, 2002; p.4). If we are seeing a 'crack' in the idea of the local then we would expect to see the same shift in identities, particularly of those actors who regularly interact on a broader scale (for example within transnational networks). Castells argues that the transformation of space has also led to a transformation of identity (1996, 1997). He observes that the changes towards a networked society create a "distance between personality and identity… individuals and communes" (1997; p233). His differentiation between the space of flows (an electronically connected space that resembles the virtual space discussed here) and a space of place which is related to geographic locality (material space in this work) creates the need for a change in identity. This existence in a networked space distancing people from identities informed by their immediate communities. The implications of this are for a fundamental relationship between space and identity. This in turn means that virtual space should have consequences for identity, both for individual activists and for those operating within the TWNs examined. There is literature that takes issue with these arguments; for example Deibert argues that national identities have not been left behind, that they still inform individual actors identities substantially (2000; p.264)

Literature on social media shows that the internet has been "heralded as a new space for identity formation" (Staehli et al, 2002; p. 994)(see also Rheingold 1993, Elkins 1995 and Schuler 1996). Khan and Kellner go as far as to discuss an era of "post subcultures" with the internet offering "the articulation of new constellations of identities" (2003). If this were to prove true, it would offer a radical possibility for TWN members in 'virtual spaces'. Social interaction has long been established as informative of identity, but a shift by which network members acquire a more permeable sense of identity and are shaped by the networks they operate within could lead to new discourses, narratives, and a fundamental shift in their structure and method. Bennett, however,

challenges the arguments that suggest virtual space will offer any form of collective identity. Instead he proposes that communications technology will do the opposite and by allowing looser networks weaken identity ties and make networks as a whole more fluid (2003; p.167). TWNs are vehicles for dense networks of communication and information sharing, if Bennett is correct in his assertions and virtual space is not offering any form of identity then the informational and communicational transactions that take place within it will be to some degree without value.

If 'virtual space' can shape actors' identities in this sense, then this is of particular importance to TANs, or in this case TWNs. Networks are shaped by the actors that constitute them, from NGOs to International Organisations to individuals. Their agendas and discourses are shaped by those who form them; their fluid nature (Keck and Sikkink, 1999; p. 92) means that they are continuously in flux as actors join and leave. If identities can be shaped in different ways, then the role they play in a network and the voices and views they express can also change; reshaping the discourse in new ways. It can also change the nature of relationships and the way in which they engage with other members of virtual space both within and outside of the network.

In order to understand what impact virtual space could have on the idea of collective identity in networks requires an understanding of what identity values are held in virtual space. Sunstein (2001) argues that "political cyberspaces are better at creating a sense of me than we". This is not a conclusion, this is all part of the definition If this were to be true, then adopting a collective identity as a result of interactions in 'virtual space' would be harder rather than easier. Should virtual space promote individualism rather than social collectivism through its establishment of the need to be unique and standalone (Sunstein 2001) then there would be even greater barriers for TWNs seeking to exhibit a shared identity rather than interests or values. Also notable is that if the identities promoted in online spaces is more 'me' than 'we' then the impetus to join networks and work in a broader collective fashion will surely be reduced.

The empirical research sought to examine identity through consideration of how virtual spaces were influencing self-perception of identity. The idea that virtual spaces might have caused this change in identity perception was derived from the early interviews for this research rather than being introduced into initial discussions. The question of the implications for TANs as a result of identity shift, and how far reaching the power of virtual space to cause this differentiation in collective identities arose as a result.

Expected Identity Shifts in Virtual Space

Interacting on a global scale and thinking in an international sense as a regular and significant part of a TWN member's activities (particularly for those involved in professional organisations that constitute TAN) has the potential to alter how a network member self identifies in their offline lives. Roberts and Crossley propose that the interaction with global events within their daily lives helps them construct a "cosmopolitan identity in small but significant ways" (2004). If identities can be shaped by this interaction with the global then the inference is that members of TANs will be fundamentally affected by these identity shifts as the global acts as part of their daily existence. This idea is supported by the proposition that a relationship with a global '; other' creates a sense of identity that opens up to the idea that "cultures travel" (Sheller and Urry, 2003; 117 -118)

Hossek (2004 and Drezner and Carroll (2004) both establish that access to global news and updates in a real time basis feeds identity changes in the same way that social media interactions and global relationships do according to Roberts and Crossley (2004). This all builds a picture that implies that the increased density of transnational communications we expect to see in networks, particularly when deepened by an increased ease of this communication, will lead to an identity shift towards the global. This is of special relevance to TWNs due to their very nature as vehicles for cross border relationships and considerations. Furthermore the importance, as established in

the earlier chapter on relationships, of personal connections in the work of TANs means that not only will their working lives be dominated by this global perspective but that it is likely to have a spillover into their social lives as well. All of this gives strong grounds for the assumption that there will be a more global perspective to how TWN members identify themselves compared to activists focused only upon local issues with only local partners.

The idea that 'virtual space' can make individuals feel more global rather than having their identity bound to physical location is an interesting way in which it may be causing genuine shifts in the work of TWNs in Manila, Bangkok and Jakarta in spite of the obstacles demonstrated in previous chapters regarding digital divides, relationships and security in virtual space.

Identity Formation and Virtual Space in Manila, Bangkok and Jakarta

The empirical element to this research, the fieldwork, unveiled three very clear divisions in identity as a result of virtual spaces. As previously discussed, the idea of a shift in geographical identity only became a present theme as a result of the semi-structured nature of the interviews undertaken for this project; had it not been for the subject arising then it would not have been a concept for examination. There was an immediate difference between the three cities: Manila showed a broad identity shift, Bangkok showed a connection with the global and Jakarta showed no movement from the local to the global in their personal narratives.

Manila was the first city where interviews were carried out, and is the reason why identity became a prevalent theme throughout the research. In Manila the subject of identity arose in interviews when subjects were asked how they felt 'virtual spaces' affected them, both as part of a network and as individuals. The overwhelming feeling, and word choice in responses, was that it made them feel more 'global'.[56] Without instigation this word recurred throughout interviews in the city. When the discussion continued, responses included the fact that "access to people and information

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[56] See Carmelita Nuqui, appendix A.5., Obeth Montes appendix A10, Luz Martinez appendix A.1)

all over the world made them feel like they were larger than Manila or the Philippines" (Carmelita Nuqui of DAWN[57]), that they were part of something "bigger" and more "international" (Jean Franco, APWW) and overwhelmingly something 'global'. So prevalent was the use of the word 'global' that it recurred in eleven out of the fifteen interviews carried out in Manila during the second period of research. The implications of this are clear; that for TWN members in the Philippines there was a clear departure from an identity that was informed on only a local level and that the scholarship which argues for the power of identity transformation as a result of relationship interaction and virtual space has merit. This is a departure from traditional geographies that imply identity as being bound to material spaces. It also directly contradicts earlier findings in this research which argued for relationships to be based on physical proximity. The implication here is that if a Filipino activist can adopt a global collective identity then they should be able to invest that same value in relationships in virtual space.

Notably Manila was the only city where interview subjects were located within incredibly close proximity of one another, they were all based in one particular area of Manila (Quezon City). This suggests even in terms of office location geographic proximity is considered to be of a high level of importance, supporting the earlier findings in the relationship chapter. It also could have been the reason that there was such an overwhelming identification as being global. If discourse and relationships do so substantially inform collective identity then there is significant grounds to believe that there was a local discourse around feeling global that pervaded the close network of relationships between women's activists in the city. This would mean that their identities were not being decidedly shaped in online spaces but were still being created, predominantly, by their interactions with colleagues and neighbours in Manila. This theory has particularly strength given

the failure in all previous elements of this research to show a real engagement of women's activists in Manila to engage fully with virtual space.

The ensuing discussions with Filipino interview subjects after they identified the global perception of their identities was to discuss whether this was how they viewed themselves on all levels or whether it was a concept and identity they particularly applied to themselves within the context of networks. The most illuminating of these responses was from Ana Sabeia[58] explained that she felt "attuned" to a global way of viewing the world and that her ideas were not "limited" by the Philippines as a result of 'virtual space'. Ms Sabeia has been a part of women's networks in the Philippines for four decades and said that the move towards feeling global started, for her, with the telephone and being able to phone people all over the world, but has only really become a significant element of her perception since "getting a computer with a modem". This continual access to a world news cycle and her connections who have moved all over the world made her feel less 'Filipino' and more "international". This shows an implicit link between Ms Sabeia's identity and her access to technology, even if its origins revert to technology which established connections transnationally prior to virtual space. Jean Franco said that given the cancellation of her travel grant and her inability to travel to meetings within her network (APWW) she actually felt increasingly less global, so in her case it was inherently linked to her involvement with a TAN. In both of these responses identity was clearly related to interactions with others, shaped and negotiated in relation to their lives at the time.

The narrative of activists who participated in interviews was substantially different in Jakarta, where there was not a single subject that was immediately forthcoming about feeling more 'global' in their identity either when operating online or in offline spaces as a result of 'virtual space' interaction. Even when questions were specifically asked about feeling more global there was no recognition of the concept as being one used to identify themselves. Asked how they describe their

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[58] See Appendix A. 2.

identity in terms of place most referred to being from a specific Indonesian island or Indonesian; there was no evidence of a broadening of their identities when asked if they felt the same in 'virtual' or 'cyber' space. Rita of the Indonesian Women's Aid Comission[59] identified herself as being Jakartan and stated that she was proud to perceive herself that way. When asked for further explanations she continued to say that Jakarta was the most important place to her and where she felt she 'fitted' most easily despite her origins [60]being from Aceh. Rini of Women's Cicle answered with the fact she felt Indonesian and that being from Indonesia was special and that it made her what she was. When asked if they felt different when 'online' (engaging with virtual space) there was no positive responses. This result was particularly surprising as in previous chapters where generational values have been a factor; for example digital divides or relationship formation Jakarta offered the strongest engagement with virtual spaces and the highest likelihood of a positive response. It suggests that when considering identity in virtual space age is not the same dominant factor it has been in other areas of this research.

The implication is that identity in Jakarta has a very particular narrative, informed by local spaces and discussions. Unlike activists in Manila the interviewees in Jakarta were significantly more spread throughout the city and many of them came from organisations that actually had their primary office in other parts of Indonesia with smaller offices based in Jakarta. This could mean that there was not the same dialogue about identity among the participants that would explain the similarity of answers in Manila and the variation in answers present in the research from Jakarta. However many of the candidates were still found through 'snowballing' meaning there would be some form of relationship between the candidates so some form of collective identity would still be expected. A better explanation therefore seems to be that the fractured identities they represented are linked to the much individualised nature of the different regions within Indonesia (for example the differences between Jakarta and Aceh are as substantial as those between two

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[59] A.20
[60] Appendix A.19

different countries). There is also a strong succession movement in parts of Indonesia which could also account for a fractured identity.

It is notable that there was no shift in identity scale here as it implies a significance of other factors; beyond access to 'virtual space' in creating identity shift, or at least in leaving behind self-identity as being linked to physical, geographical location. It has strong inferences that there is a difference between TWN members in Jakarta when compared to Manila, at least when approaching identity. These variations can also not be accounted for by the suggestion that they operated within different networks as there was a degree of cross over between the networks in which participants operated in within the two cities.[61] The only viable explanation is that there is a different narrative of identity in Jakarta than is present in Manila. This reinforces the idea that identity is as much informed by material space as it is by virtual space.

Bangkok interviewees occupied the middle ground between Jakarta and Manila, once again this was not present in the earlier chapters of this thesis or present in the research that informed them. Typically Bangkok interview subjects were the least engaged with online spaces, which was well demonstrated in the limitations they experienced in the consideration of their online freedoms. They, in all previous chapters, exhibited the highest level of unwillingness to even discuss their opinions on virtual space. However, a number of respondents said that, while they did not feel more global or international in their offline lives as a result of online interactions, they did, in virtual space feel more "cosmopolitan" (Anjan Bose, ECPAT[62]), more "disconnected" from Bangkok (Sarochiunee Unyawachsumrith[63], Goodwill Group) or from being specifically Thai in their identity (Patchanee Kumnak, CAW[64]). Again, this was surprising given the previous

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[61] For example members of WGNRR in both cities were interviewed and Gita Pragati was referred by Olive Parila who was a member of her wider network in Manila
[62] Appendix A. 22.
[63] Appendix A. 22.
[64] Appendix A.21.

responses regarding online relationship building, where Thai TWN members presented themselves as being the most inhibited.

It is also of particular interest due to the fact they were, and continue to be subject to the most online monitoring of any of the subjects within this research. The implication of such substantial monitoring by a localised structure would imply they would be the most unlikely to engage with a global narrative regarding their identities as they are so limited in their access to all areas of virtual space. When asked for more information on how they viewed the differences between how they feel about the way they identify in virtual space as opposed to material reality, Patchanee Kumnak identified that while she lives in an international city, which she also referred to as a "gateway city[65]" she feels Thai in her views and beliefs; nevertheless, virtual space allowed her to be more "global and free in what she thinks". It should be observed that while interview subjects expressed themselves in an international and a global context, and the majority of them described having a different view of themselves online as opposed to in their daily life, there was not the same repetitiveness of language or recurrence of a specific word that was seen in the Manila interviews. This implies that there was less of a shared discourse and more of a natural understanding of their collective identities. As demonstrated above there was the use of the word cosmopolitan and disconnected rather than the repetitiveness of the word global that was present in the interviews with participants in Manila.

Thai activists demonstrated the most definitive evidence of multiple identities for multiple spaces. They highlighted that they had a different way of perceiving themselves in virtual spaces that was separate from how they viewed themselves in their material space. This has implications for collective identity as if it is not pervasive enough to carry through to all elements of their self-identification then it is also going to be less binding in its nature. In order to have a strong and long term form of collective identity it would need to carry over into their offline lives. This

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[65] Appendix A.21.

separation between identities also suggests a perception of the two spaces as distinct from each other; which is a departure from the interrelation evidenced between them throughout the rest of this thesis. This independence between material space and virtual space in this one sense is anomalous in relation to the rest of the findings of this project. None of the interview participants could explain this differentiation between identities only that it existed.

The most plausible reasoning behind why there was this discrepancy is actually due to the regulation they experience in online spaces. If they feel particularly controlled by their local governments in these spaces then they will have to take more radical steps to access controlled content and operate in more subversive ways (returning us to the idea from the previous chapter that the more control is exerted over virtual space the more there is pressure upon ordinary citizens leading them to become activists).

There are a number of potential explanations for the differences found in the three cities; the most obvious of these is language. As discussed in the earlier chapter on digital divides, the TWN members in Manila were the most likely to speak English to a high standard. Having been educated in the language during their schooling and often speaking it in day to day life they were able to use it online. It is therefore possible that not having to essentially mentally translate online discussions and information into a different language to engage in online spaces made it easier to blend their online and offline identities and perceive it as one identity rather than the kind of split as evidenced in Thai discussions. Language is a factor in shaping collective identity so this reasoning would follow. It also explains the discrepancy between interview subjects in Manila and those in Jakarta: the interview subjects in Jakarta were less likely to be highly fluent in English than those in Manila, so interacting online was likely done in Bahasa or required a significant degree of effort in terms of language translation. The websites for women's groups in Manila were also the only ones that were in English as a primary language. Even those international organisations members interviewed in Bangkok had websites that were primarily in Thai with translation options for

English. This pattern can be seen in other arenas: Filipino women are, for example, much more likely to chair panels and participate in international conferences on women's issues due to their language abilities. This alone is more likely to induce a global narrative in their day to day lives. If this were to be the cause of the variations in identities then it once again creates a form of 'digital divide'; this time, rather than relating to access to 'virtual space', it is to do with a barrier in adopting a 'collective identity' which may otherwise be spread through TWNs. This relates firmly to the issues of access in the earlier chapter on digital divides, and the implicit power dynamics that were established in the chapter on relationships. If this is the case then it creates a further power dynamic based upon language than just the obvious ability to communicate or to access information. It makes them an 'other' within their own groups.

Mina Roces discusses the fact that women's issues and feminism offer differing narratives dependent upon geographic location, and uses the Philippines as an example of how feminism is culturally specific (2000; 2006 and 2009). She suggests that in this case it is imbued with its Catholic context creating a narrative which is entirely specific to the Philippines. This would prove true of both Indonesia and Thailand as well. As previously discussed in the introduction which offered country profiles as part of case selection all three countries have different issues and narratives surrounding women informed by religion and cultural context. One of the possibilities to explain the discrepancies in those TWN members who felt more global versus those who did not even begin to integrate the international elements of 'virtual space' into their personal identities could be the difference in the narratives surrounding their version of feminism and women. It would also explain the discrepancies in those Thai interview subjects who claimed to have differing identities in the two spaces; it could be that they are subscribing to two different narratives. While narrative and collective identity are not synonymous it would offer a bonding factor, the idea of a shared sense of womanhood and a local dialogue around understandings of feminism would inform identity. If Filipino narratives around 'womanhood' were more relatable to those espoused in virtual space then we would expect to see demonstrations of their identity as

being more closely related to a 'global' movement as this shared language and understanding would inform their sense of identity and therefore collective identity. This would also be related to the idea that TWN members who feel most embedded within their wider networks would feel more akin to their global colleagues through this shared sense of similarity (as with the explanations of trust in the relationship chapter there is a value in similarity and recognition in collective identity (Seligman 1996).

If either of these factors are the cause of this disparity in identities then this is not a construction of virtual space, but one arising from specific national contexts and histories, given added depth due to the ease of communication offered by virtual space. It also once again brings traditional material spaces back into the discussion, as history and religious contexts that inform individual feminist narratives and specific women's issues are geographically dependent. Therefore, once again the factors that affect a networks member's navigation of virtual space and its ability to impact upon their lives as a whole are decided by traditional rather than contemporary spatiality's. This in turn would once again challenge the idea of a "new geography of everywhere" (Batty, 1997; p.340)

There is a final plausible explanation for the identification by Filipino activists of themselves as being more global; the extensive diasporic community worldwide. Given the nature of migration from the Philippines being on such a large scale it could be that this changes the nature of identity within Manila. Tyner and Kuhlke ascribe a 'pan-national' identity to the Filipino diaspora (2000). This changes the nature of geography for the communities involved and therefore would have a bearing on the nature of identity, even for those left behind. Primarily it extends the social networks of those Filipino activists even more transnationally than the simple involvement with a TWN, secondly it means thinking on broader scale than the local is more widely established which would make it easier to perceive a personal or collective identity in a global sense. This will pose an element in the process of identity for those resident in Manila, if family and friends are scattered

internationally then it is logical to not identify as separate to them given the strength of those relationships; this in turn would inspire a degree of global thinking.

The understanding between the differences in collective identity across the three case studies is as multi faceted as the conception of identity itself. It is the sum of incalculable numbers of factors and processes, those listed above are just the most prevalent and apparent explanations. Discourse plays a substantial role – "identity talk" will have caused some of the differences between the three cities, as will social relationships and language. What can be firmly established is the most closely bound members of networks continue to be those who can meet in 'coffee shops and other semi-public spaces' (Diani, 2000) this is evidenced in multiple interviews; Louise De Vere (see appendix[66]) stating that "you" need to come "eyeball to eyeball" or Pawadee of APWW Thailand and her assertion that "you have to meet people offline as online alone is simply not good enough"[67]. Furthermore all elements of establishing a collective identity relate to commonality; be it common cause, common language, common discourses or common social bonds. This commonality or sense of it is what informs collective identities in networks; a shared identity is based on a sense of commonality.

<u>Implications for Transnational Advocacy Networks</u>

This chapter has demonstrated that the ingredients that amount to collective identity are complex. There are a number of key parameters that presented themselves in this case study; strength of relationships, dialogue, geography and communication (be it language or frequency). Collective identity is also not a fixed point, it is continuously shaped and reshaped by an "interplay of social interactions" and "imagined as well as concrete communities". In order to establish strong and long lasting networks a degree of collective identity is needed. Should Bennett's assertion that virtual space is weakening this identity (2003; p.167) prove true then this is damaging to the future

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[66] Appendix A.6.
[67] Appendix A.22.

of TANs. As technology becomes an increasingly embedded element of 'doing business' networks will become ever looser making sustained, collective action a challenge due to the fluid nature of membership.

No matter the elements that inform collective identity networks require members, a part of the incentive to join and remain within a TWN is the sense of this shared identity which results in a "sustained solidarity" (Polletta and Jasper, 2001; p.291). Furthermore the nature of networks are shaped by their members, so as membership changed so would network identity making TWNs never a fixed point but rather a moment in time. While an innate characteristic of TANs and therefore TWNs is their fluidity and the discourse that continuously changes as members enter and leave they need some degree of fixed membership in order to achieve sustained pressure from "above and below" (Brysk, 2002; p.194). Hunt and Benford identify the link between sustained, collective identity and commitment both to a cause and a network (2004; p.433). The importance of this cannot be overstated in achieving policy outcomes. Achieving policy change requires this sustained effort on the part of activists and the vehicles through which they seek to effect that change. The relationship between collective identity and commitment is substantial; the shared sense of identity and the "positive feelings" (Polletta and Jasper, 2001; p.291) referenced earlier is what inspires continued loyalty within networks. Without this sense of shared purpose which informs identity (by creating a commonality between members). However there is no evidence here to believe that Bennett is correct in his assertions about the powers of virtual space to loosen identities (2003; p.167). All the examples evidenced above showed a sense of shared identity, even if these identities varied dependent on location. The simple fact that material geographies still demonstrate an inherent relationship with collective identities means that virtual space is not dominating identity formation, it remains weaker than activist's offline realities. There was also no evidence that this was in the process of changing, even in Manila where a global narrative dominated identity discussions it was apparent upon further analysis that even this discourse

around identity was informed by factors that were ultimately local such as social relationships and language.

One substantial issue for TANs is the nature of identity. If collective identity within networks were to become purely global, if virtual space broke down the local entirely then this would erode the value of TWNs. Batliwala makes the argument that we have seen the end of 'grassroots movements', as all movements can now identify as being global (2002). If this were to prove true, and all movements and groups could escalate to a global level and identify accordingly, then this has implications for TWNs. Part of their work is to take 'local stories' (Keck and Sikkink, 1998; p.19)and frame them for international audiences. If grassroots movements can now do this without the need for a wider context to operate within, then there is surely no longer a need for TWNs. Batliwala challenges this conception of TWN organisations with the idea that the internet and technological advances have allowed for the emergence of identity based organisations on a transnational level (2002; p. 736). This suggests that what 'virtual space' is doing is allowing local identities to become global, rather than allowing network members to identify as global rather than local. Interestingly Batliwala uses Homenet as one of the core cases which supports her work, this group was included within this research and they still very much identified as being part of a TWN. This speaks to the idea that identity can be interpreted in a range of fashions even by those to whom they belong; seeing themselves as a global movement eleven years prior to this research when forming a part of the previous research and perceiving themselves to very much be a part of a TAN (be it with a global element to their identity) in 2013.

Keck and Sikkink themselves make the case that local actors' stories can be framed and reframed so many times by a network that they essentially lose control of their own narratives. If these local actors can identify as global and these stories can be promoted upwards by those who tell them originally the local space in which they start would eventually constitute an element of transnational or global spaces. Rather than the assumption of a global identity, it could be that

rather than operating under a global collective entities these groups and movements remain local actors, able to operate internationally as a result of technological changes, and that therefore the local narrative has become the global one. This undermines Batliwala's argument and that means despite the potential for a change in the formation of collective identity TWNs will remain essential to the escalation of local issues to a transnational scale.

It has been overwhelmingly proven within this research that utilising virtual space to its best advantage is certainly not a universal skill (see chapters on relationships and online freedoms), and that even those who know how to use it fail to have negotiate it without any form of constraints. Even if identities can now be scaled up to a global level and the local has lost its relevance in that sense; not that this was borne out by the evidence, then networks still offer a vehicle for skill diffusion and informing narratives and this alone has ramifications for the identities of its members. Those interviewed had to self-identify as members of TWNs in order to qualify as subjects for this project; there was not a shortage of participants willing to do so. Therefore it seems that even those grassroots movements which can now be 'global' still have other components to their identity: being a network member or a Filipino women's group rather than simply a 'global women's group' for example. It should be noted they are not mutually exclusive, however what this does speak to is the idea that identity is more complex than a single spatiality. One identity does not discount another, but rather this evidences the idea that TWN members enact multiple identities across a range of spaces. This multiplicity also contributes to the network as a greater entity. It returns this research to the concept that TANs are best served by the ability of its members to work across a range of scales; one of these scales is now virtual space which operates alongside transnational and local spaces with each informing the other and identities sharing a degree of commonality alongside the differences that innately constitute each space.

One way in which the evidence does suggest a limitation that comes with political identity within virtual space is in relation to power dynamics. So much of this project has come back to the

problems of virtual space and its inability to offer a horizontal landscape for TWN members. Even in the sense of identity it continues to offer an uneven playing field for those navigating it. Those TWN members who share in a global sense of collective identity will relate more to other online partners and they will exhibit the best chances of becoming full participants in virtual space. Those very much constrained to identifying based on their material location are to some extent excluded from elements of the global identity exhibited in virtual space. The ability to work across scales through a multiplicity of identities is of value in agenda setting and dominating as is the ability to adapt to a variety of collective identities. While all the participants exhibit some adaptability (or they would not be part of TWNs) those which can naturally think globally will have more power in setting discourse as they will relate the most to the bigger network rather than being bound more firmly in their local, geographical context.

Conclusions

It can be firmly established that identity is a fluid entity; changing in both reactive and reflective ways as a result of social interaction. Virtual space is also by its nature fluid and the product of a number of negotiations and renegotiations by its constituents. However this fluidity is informed predominantly by geography and this in itself is far less fluid. Social interactions are dominated by proximity, as demonstrated in the chapter on relationships. This proximity is informed by material space, therefore collective identity remains rooted in traditional geographies.

This once again returns us to the fact that an element of TANs is decided by factors beyond the control of their members. These elements have ramifications for the power dynamics of a network. Those who can use virtual space in order to control the discussion around collective identities will increasingly have control of the nature of a network; the importance of commonality means even a minimal variable in how identity is shared has the power to leave network members on the

outside. This is significant as if the ability to adapt to collective identities is decided by material factors (even if it is not one specific factor the ones evidenced above all come from the physical spaces that activists inhabit) then once again the virtual space in which an activists finds themselves is decided before they access it. This returns us to the concept of the nature of virtual space as a vertical one rather than the horizontal, level space that is suggested by much of the extant scholarship (Castells, 2012)

Virtual space has not replaced material spaces in terms of influencing collective identity , even in the cases of those who identified themselves as global, analysis suggests that this is linked to their context in their material geographies; a history of colonisation, a strong diaspora, and/or lower language barriers. This means that even in this sense their traditional geographies continue to be dominant and to supersede anything that they experience in 'virtual space'; not to mention that, as proven in previous chapters, their ability to even access these spaces is decided by their physical locations). Furthermore Thai activists did not even combine their identities, choosing to main a separation of their self-perception between their online and offline selves. This implies that virtual space cannot influence all scales, whereas those impositions that virtual space make on material space (well covered in previous chapters) inherently determine what it can offer to those entering it. This means that material space continues to be the predominant space in all facets of networks, including in shaping collective identities.

This returns us to the idea that TWNs have the power to influence: they offer individuals and groups within their networks the power to feel global, shaping their narratives and discourses to the point where they ultimately self-identify in a new way, and insert the global into discussions of the local (and vice versa). However this does not mean that this supersedes their physical geographies, which continue to inform their identities far more drastically than 'virtual spaces', and this seems unlikely to change at any point in the foreseeable future. TWNs have, since their inception, introduced a global element to the narratives of their members and offered connections

across borders; it is their nature to do so. If this has not yet transformed how members in Bangkok and Jakarta self-identify, then an increased density of communications and easier access to information is unlikely to change this any time soon. While global collective identity is related in a personal way and influenced by a range of factors the reality for activists is that these factors continue to be pervasive. Collective identity comprises complex components, some of which are salient in one locale but absent elsewhere however the national state context or 'culture' continues to be of overriding importance.

This means that TWNs are likely to retain their relevance as vehicles for interaction on a broader scale and while they will remain fluid as long as they continue to foster a sense of collective identity they will remain attractive to those who join them and will prove themselves to be more than a moment in time as Bennetts interpretation of the power of virtual space to create ever looser structures suggests (2003; p.165).

It also reinforces the elements of Polleta and Jasper's definition which asserts that collective identity ultimately hinges upon their "cognitive, moral and emotional connection with a broader community, category or institution" (2001; p.285).

CONCLUSIONS

This research sought to analyse the realities of virtual space for TWNs in Manila, Bangkok and Jakarta and to consider the relationship between their traditional material spaces and the emergent spaces offered to them through technological advancement. It posed the question; is there a relationship between material space and virtual space for TWNs?

The continued relationship between material and virtual spaces for TAN nodes in Manila, Bangkok and Jakarta has been firmly established throughout this thesis. The idea that 'technology does not emerge into a vacuum" (Mynatt et al 1996) has been continuously supported throughout. The social and political contexts in which activists operate throughout their daily lives inarguably continues to inform their 'online' behaviours, relationships and operations. Their ability to engage in online spaces is informed in both physical and social ways by their geographical locations; their willingness to form relationships virtually is informed by their cultural contexts, and this means their relationships are still decided by their geographical spaces.

States and private companies establish physical infrastructures and internet connection hardware, set prices, and establish markets that create physical access limitations dependent on physical location. Access to hardware is also limited by the constraints that come with material spaces: access to public computers, for example. There are also social factors that are decided by the geographical locations of activists: education and its consequent impacts on the levels of digital skills that people are able to develop, and language and its compatibility with virtual space. Age and gender also continue to have material impacts. These divides are all informed by offline realities, and affect the construction of virtual space for each individual, which then creates a series of negotiations and renegotiations for networks as a whole.

Who an activist knows and how closely they work with them is also decided by geographical proximity. The literature and empirical research clearly portrayed a noticeable difference between

those relationships formed virtually and those which were established through face to face connections and personal conversations; be it at conferences and larger meetings or at a coffee shop between two activists who live in the same place. Offline relationships remain at the core of activism in all three cities considered within this research. These offline relationships require either the money to travel, or for relationships to be formed with those in close proximity. Online relationships remain peripheral and lack the trust inherent in personal relationships based on face to face connections. Trust remains at the core of all relationships, and continues to be founded on relationships established in private spaces, rather than the public ones predominantly on offer in virtual space.

Virtual space is increasingly regulated by governments looking to control how it is used. Although in the past, technology was progressing at a rate that outpaced developments in legislation or censorship; this state of affairs is increasingly changing. In all three case studies, Manila, Bangkok and Jakarta, freedoms in virtual space are increasingly impinged upon by regulations. There is legislation in all three cases that is decided by state controls. Furthermore, all three experienced some degree of censorship in online spaces which has traditionally been a method of control in physical spaces. This again shows the high level of interrelation between online and offline realities, material and virtual spaces.

Finally, identity is still a factor that is shaped and influenced by an activist's geographical location. How they perceive their identities, and the bound or fluid nature of these, has been demonstrably linked to the material location in which they go about their daily lives.

All of this demonstrates that a large proportion of the existing literature is at risk of technological determinism (for example Castells, 2012), as suggested as early as 1998 by Graham. This research suggests that, in order to arrive at an accurate conception of the true nature of TWNs, there needs to be a reinsertion of place into space, or of the local into the global. Offline factors continue to dominate activists' operations: from who their contacts and colleagues are, to their sense of

identity. While virtual space is no longer something accessed only in a fixed location or even sporadically, it is still not a replacement for physical realities.

Significance of Findings

This project has sought to offer an empirical contribution to the scholarship that speaks to the existing literature on technology, space and activism and at the same time attempting to offer an update to it. The original work on TANs is now almost twenty years old, a period of time that has seen leaps forward in the forms of communication and information sharing that Keck and Sikkink identified as forming the heart of the networks. While the nature of TANs remains the same, the ways in which they function have had an extensive period in which to evolve, and the goal of this research was initially to ascertain whether this model is operating in precisely the same way as it was 20 years ago. This became less of a focus after the first period of fieldwork, which established that although activists within networks are communicating more and using slightly different methods to do so[68] what they are communicating remains the same.

This research contributes to the literature on spatiality, TANs and technology. Through the undertaking of extensive semi-structured interviews with 67 participants across three cities in three states with differing social and political contexts, it seeks to make a qualitative empirical contribution to these areas of scholarship.

By considering the nature of virtual spaces and their relationships to more traditional ones, it seeks to make a direct contribution to extant literature on spatiality. It has found that even the new, incredibly fluid spaces that are emerging as a result of social and technological changes are bound to much more scalar geographies based around territorial locations and material realities. This is

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[68] See the relationships chapter or the interview with Ana Sabeia of Kalikasan in Appendix A.2.

inescapable, at least in material spaces where technology has constraints and does not act as a portal to a radically reformative space; a space that at this point in time does not yet appear to exist. It problematizes previous scholarship on technology and its possibilities for activism, particularly some of that seen after the Arab Spring, through empirical analysis and its findings that what may apply for the countries considered in other work does not apply to all activists in all geographies.

This research seeks to make a contribution to the existing literature on TANs by acknowledging that there has been significant and dramatic technological advancement, which has altered the way in which TAN nodes communicate and increased the density and frequency of these exchanges. By considering them as the actor in this research, it seeks to offer some update to the understanding of them as vehicles for transnational change. However, as mentioned above, the substance of their communications has not changed. There have simply been some slight variations in the 'how' and the 'to whom'; in the case of the latter, even this change has been limited. At least in Manila, Bangkok and Jakarta, networks continue to be constituted of the same individuals and groups that they would have included when Keck and Sikkink's seminal work was published.

It should be observed that TANs remain as relevant an actor as they did in 1997. If technology has offered them anything, it is to make them a more significant actor for analysis within the broader backdrop of civil society. Technology has offered them new ways to form and mobilise and an easier way to structure their communicative systems and share their ideas both with each other and outside parties. It has reinforced their importance as a way of organising for activists; by facilitating communications, it has established their contribution even more firmly. Technology has not changed how they form; however, when they have formed, it has made communication easier. TANs do, however, continue to maintain vertical power structures as established in the literature that followed the initial work by Keck and Sikkink (1998); this is not something that has

been mitigated by technology, contrary to some of the existing scholarship on virtual space (Garrett 2006; Kidd 2003; Scott and Street 2003).

By problematizing the existing scholarship on the possibilities for technology, the empirical research undertaken to support this project has found solid grounds to challenge the more optimistic literature on the spectrum. While the internet and virtual space continues to have significant potential, it will continue to be bound to existing realities which are shaped by a substantial number of factors that cannot be mitigated simply by access to a laptop or a smartphone. Technology provides new methods of organising but, at least in the cases here, it is not revolutionary. It does not override established hierarchies or offer unlimited freedoms.

These contributions could be of interest to future research into the contributions of technology to activists in all forms, although those with a specific interest in networked activists may find it to be of the most benefit.

Wider Implications for Activism

The co-evolution of online and offline spaces has limitations for TAN members, and therefore other activists. A fact of particular significance arising from the findings of this research is that, as technology evolves, so does state control. The imposition of legislation and regulation on virtual space by states is something that is increasing as time passes, rather than technology outstripping governance.

While the world is increasingly interconnected, so, it seems, are material spaces and virtual ones. Increasingly, the connections between activists' physical locations and virtual space cause the multiple spaces they inhabit to become enmeshed. This has significant negative consequences: by introducing the social and political contexts of their daily lives into these emergent spaces, they

also inculcate existing hierarchies and power structures. Throughout this thesis, the prevalence of continuing power dynamics in online spaces has been a recurring theme. What is described in existing scholarship as an 'unbound' or 'horizontal' space has, in the examples used here, not proven to be the case; it remains a vertical space, bound to individuals' physical contexts. This space is not neutral but rather enmeshed in existing social constructs and power dynamics

This thesis echoes Featherstone's call for a reinsertion of the local into the global. It is the local contexts of these interview participants and TAN members that have informed their experiences of the global. This is not purely a negative factor in the development of virtual space: the local remains an important element in the work of TANs, and without local narratives and stories, those most in need of representation can end up becoming disenfranchised from the process. Local stories should remain at the heart of TANs, informing agendas and discourses and being used to push for change from both above and below.

Spaces can only be shaped by those negotiating them, and the most fluid spaces are continuously negotiated and renegotiated. However, this negotiation is dependent on the actors carrying out those processes and their identities and experiences, all of which are brought into virtual space. This means that virtual space is in a continuous cycle of being shaped and reshaped, rather than remaining 'fixed'. It can be changed through the consistent process of negotiations and renegotiations as activists' perceptions and understandings change. However, all change will be subject to broader contexts, informed by activists' physical spaces.

A return to 'place' rather than 'space' would offer a more precise understanding of the nature of virtual space. It would allow an understanding of how activists' local contexts continue to inform the hybrid nature of virtual space. It would also permit the idea of multiple spatiality's constituting one place: an activist standing in Manila using their smartphone effectively exists in multiple spaces at once, which combine to create a single 'place' .the idea that standing in a city in Manila an activist can be using their smartphone to exist in multiple spaces that all create for that

individual one place. Space and place are personal to individual activists, and are only created through their construction of them. Therefore, if technology is allowing TWN members to exist across multiple scales at any one point in time, then their sense of place will differ accordingly. Place may be constructed by virtual and material space all at once; this will shape activists' identity, discourse and agenda through the varied interactions that take place.

The pervasive truth of virtual space is that, while it advances the ways in which activists may communicate, it does not ultimately change how they communicate or about what they communicate. This fact alone means that the implications for activism of technology are only operational: increasing the density and ease of communication, rather than changing ideologies. It also means that power hierarchies are carried through to this virtual space.

These power structures have implications for activism and networks in the broader sense. As long as agendas are continually set by certain groups based in certain locations, there will be hierarchies. The most important change virtual space could have offered TANs and their constituents would have been an eradication of the hierarchies that so often reflect a North/South divide, an issue considered across far broader literature than that considered in this thesis. The fact that it fails to offer this reform is a fundamental limitation for activism in virtual space, and one that shows no signs of being overcome as technology continues to evolve. Rather, the opposite appears true: virtual space is further embedding these inequalities that are apparent within networks. This is problematic as so much of the scholarship is concentrated on the freedom to be equal in virtual spaces (|Juris, 2009) and the levelling nature of virtual space.

This research has also had implications for the literature on spatiality. While it has reaffirmed the fluid nature of spaces, and their potential to be negotiated and reshaped by those entering them, that were established in the literature review it has also determined that we have not left behind a scalar narrative of space. The territorially bound understanding of space maintains its relevance purely in the nature of it to influence any evolving space, for example virtual space, outside of

this traditional understanding of space can be perceived as adjunct spaces rather than ones that are entirely separate to material spaces. The continued link between traditional spatial understandings and new more fluid ones suggests a co-evolution with emerging spaces. This implies the formation of an adjunct space rather than one that is unique and without ties. This means as a material space does so do the spaces around it, it also means that the 'state' can remain the central unit for challenge by activists.

This is central site of authority is important as it returns us to a territorial understanding of activism. Networks seek to challenge policy, if we view material spaces as maintaining the overriding level of importance then it logically follows that the key arena for policy change is within governmental structures which continue to be dominated by states (we are as yet without an international legislative body that supersedes individual nation states).

Limitations

This research is not comprehensive, and looking at individual nodes of individual networks has limitations. Having exclusively interviewed participants in women's networks means that some of the challenges faced by interview participants may be unique to women's networks. While it was necessary to limit the sample, and using women's networks removed the gender bias of the digital divide and also provided a clear platform for consideration, it does mean that broader networks – such as, for example, TANs formed around environmental issues –are not included. This has implications for the conclusions reached here: it may be that broader networks have differing experiences, and that those that involve a mix of genders in their work face a different range of online challenges. This would be worthy of a comparative consideration, and further research could examine the differences in the challenges faced by different types of transnational networks and infer from the broader commonalities that emerge.

One significant limitation has arisen for the case study in Bangkok: it has to be acknowledged that there has been drastic political change in Thailand. While this does not invalidate the relevance of the research carried out in Bangkok, this issue cannot be ignored. The findings in Bangkok may not be as accurate a reflection of the reality of activism in virtual space in Bangkok today as they were in 2013 when the fieldwork was undertaken. This has been addressed as far as possible in the chapter to which it is most related; that on freedom and security in online spaces. As governments become more repressive they will seek to exert more control over communication and gathering of those forces they see as challenging the status quo, and where data or qualitative analysis was available in secondary sources, this was included within the chapter on internet freedoms. However, secondary data does not have the same power as that gathered directly through interviews for the purposes of informing this particular project. The only mitigation for the changing situation is the fact that is has changed in a way which was evidenced within the trends throughout; towards virtual space becoming 'less free' with increasing legislative restrictions and government control, something that was present in the data even prior to the coup.

We can conclude from the evidence emerging from Thailand that online freedoms will continue to be restricted, and that the nature of the governing structure is such that these will be particularly restrictive to TAN members and other activists. It is clear that connections between material and virtual spaces will continue to operate; however, we do not yet know the extent of this. Furthermore, the research undertaken does not examine regimes that are as repressive as Thailand's has become, so the conditions activists now face both in material space and in virtual space cannot be fully understood. The increased control of virtual space could cause a fragmentation from material spaces as activists become even more unwilling to trust it and the fact it often involves putting in writing ideas that may be perceived as contentious. Alternatively the increased control could do as suggested in the chapter on freedom and security and turn ordinary citizens into activists (Yang, 2013) who seek to overcome government methods of control by deepening their technological knowledge to find ways around censorship and barriers to

expression. Unfortunately without new fieldwork –which could be considerably more challenging to undertake –or the analysis of a similar political regime, the answers to these questions cannot be definitively given; only inferred from the trends present in the research presented above.

A further constraint in the case studies is that, while comparatively analysing a number of different TAN members and interviewing a range of participants offered the ability to infer a broad set of understandings, it did not offer the depth that analysing a single network in multiple locations may have done. Other studies have considered TANs in this way (See Bob 2005; Stewart 2007) in order to develop an in depth picture of their operations and functions transnationally, and this has proven successful. In a single network, there may have been knowledge sharing and professionalization that could have mitigated a number of the circumstantial factors that are evident from this research.

As touched upon above, regarding the change of the Thai regime, this research considered only case studies that exhibited certain degrees of freedom and democracy. This was because TANs flourish in particular societal conditions (see Risse, Ropp and Sikkink 2001). However there is a wider range of conditions in which activist networks can operate than were considered here. The fact only states with certain degrees of freedom were considered means that inferences cannot be made about how network nodes in much more repressive states (for example China) are engaging with virtual space; as with Thailand, it can only be assumed [try to find a better word] that the trends this thesis has identified are exacerbated the more a state's level of control increases.

Further Research

The limitations of this research also offer clear paths for future research. While touched upon above, they are worthy of further exploration.

There are a number of areas for future research to pursue, both to advance these findings and to overcome their limitations. Primarily, future research could benefit from a broader field of analysis; by considering more of a variety of networks, or by moving away from a form of network

analysis and instead considering activism and the implications of technology on a far wider scale. This would allow a more developed picture to be formed of how technology is affecting the experiences of those activists not already operating on a transnational level. Its potential ramifications beyond those who already work on an international scale are significant: it could introduce them to entirely new scales and groups, and change the way in which they express their dissent, allowing them to make use of the "above and below" we already see in networked activism.

There is also the potential for the broadening of the geographical scope of inquiry. This research focused on a specific area of the world – South East Asia –and three particular case studies, all with their own independent variables. By broadening geographic horizons and considering case studies from other regions, then there is the potential to identify whether these findings carry over cultural boundaries and into new contexts, or if they are primarily relevant to a particular area of the world. Activists in the region is affected by particular cultural contexts which could have influenced the way in which activists are engaging in virtual space; it would be worthy of further comparative study to look at other regions that face obstacles to online engagement, and consider whether they are overcoming them in an alternative fashion.

As previously mentioned, there is significant scope for a consideration of the power of virtual space to turn ordinary citizens into activists in states that make particular efforts to control online space through censorship, legislation and harassment. If were to prove the case, then it would have implications for future trends in online activism, due to the fact that countries in this research are increasingly trending towards regulating virtual space in a number of ways.

These are just the most glaring possibilities for future research; as technology changes, there will be an ever increasing number of facets to virtual space and activists' engagement with it. These will outpace the rate at which empirical research can be carried out, but this does not mean that completed empirical studies are outdated as soon as they are completed: they can offer insights

into broader trends that carry forwards and can inform future research. It will also offer inferences for the likely behaviour of states that are engaging with virtual space at different paces to those examined here.

<u>Wider Contribution</u>

With so much scope for future research, the value of this particular thesis can be restated. It has made a contribution to the literature, and it does offer broader inferences for activism outside of the narrow focus of these explicit case studies. While it is at risk from the rapid pace of technological advancement, as with most empirical contributions to fields involving technology and online engagements the trends identified throughout   and specifically outlined in this conclusion offer value to future research, even if technology continues to rapidly evolve (as can be safely assumed it will). The trends towards greater online interference by states; the increasingly interlinked nature of online and offline spaces and identities; and traditional cultural contexts' implications for online behaviours are unlikely to change at the pace of technology.

There has been a lag period in the responses of states to these new online spaces and activists' involvement with them. Despite the emergence of the internet over twenty years ago, it is only now that the countries involved in this case study, and many others, have started to catch up. More legislation is only now being passed that criminalises online behaviour and software has not previously been available to offer true online censorship and moderation by governments. In addition, as government software evolves, so does that of those whose goal is to find a way around it. This lag is likely to continue; sate technology will continuously fail to keep up with pirated software that allows connection to TOR or the 'dark web', for example. However this lag period does mean that trends will continue; the literature will begin to catch up with the engagement of technology. The research here that engages with the idea of digital natives particularly highlights future possibilities: as TAN members are increasingly members of generations that have engaged with technology for their entire lives, there will be continued engagement. This means that their

generational experiences, as discussed in this thesis, will be a particularly relevant factor going forwards.

However, these generations will also 'age out' and be replaced by those with knowledge of the latest technologies and social media: already Facebook is suffering from being 'left behind' as new technology users come through and find different ways to engage in virtual space (Garside 2014). So, again, the findings of this research will continue to be relevant: age divides will remain, pervasive, and there will always be activists suffering from a lack of up-to-date digital skills. Furthermore, the other relationships between material and virtual spaces demonstrated in this research will continue to be pervasive. Governments will seek to control; different locations will have different infrastructures and social factors, and identity will continue to be more multi-faceted than virtual space can guarantee. Most importantly, power dynamics will remain defined as much by offline spaces as by virtual ones, which is key for understanding the functioning of activism and networked politics.

The only way in which there might be divergence from these trends is if 'digital native' generations demonstrate a radical departure from previous generations of digital immigrants. However, even these digital natives will bring with them specific social and political contexts and power dynamics that will spill over into virtual space through their own negotiations and renegotiations. While they may bring more online awareness, and be more familiar with social media and other sharing platforms, this will be unlikely to invalidate the clear conclusion that the relationships between spaces are becoming ever more bound, through the actions of both states and individuals. It is more likely that these trends will embed themselves, with digital natives experiencing an even more 'co-evolutionary' reality where their material and virtual spaces demonstrate an increasing level of interrelation. This is made possible through the increasing portability of virtual space; already it is no longer just accessible on a desktop in a designated physical space but constantly through smart

phones, tablets and laptops. The increasingly accessible nature of virtual space means that virtual and physical spaces will become increasingly less separate. .

Conclusions

This research succeeded in answering the following questions; is virtual space a 'new frontier' for activism; has material space been superseded by virtual space; and what constraints do traditional geographies impose on contemporary spatialities. While it has faced a number of limitations and challenges, it makes a contribution to varying areas of extant literature, and it has identified core trends that will continue to be relevant in spite of the anticipated continuation of empirical advancement.

It resolves that technology is, as has been much repeated throughout, not born into a vacuum but rather a social and political context that will imbue it with meaning and constructed nuances. Space is ultimately a "social product" (Gilson, 2011; P.294)

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APPENDIX