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Networking for Change: The Impact of ICT on the Political Organizing of Anti-Trafficking NGOs in Contemporary India

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__Abstract__

This research explores how information and communication, technology (ICT) has enabled relatively resource poor actors and individuals to organize in ways that subvert traditional institutions of civil society. Through an analysis of the anti-trafficking strategies being implemented by three Indian NGOs—Apne Aap, Sanlaap, and the Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC)—I suggest that formation of technology-enabled social networks (through the Internet, electronic networking, advocacy, and communication) force us to rethink the conventional socio-political hierarchy. This has supplanted traditional civil society and allowed for the emergence of NGOs as more visible, central, and globalised political actors while simultaneously bringing the disenfranchised groups they represent into both informal and formal political conversations. I examine how mechanisms utilized by the aforementioned anti-trafficking NGOs, including discussion forums, social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, and electronic forms of protest and testimony, rather than serving as tools of mediation traditionally used by civil society, can serve as tools of direct engagement and political demand.

Introduction

Globalization, digitization, and the rise of global civil society through global networks of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have altered the dynamics of international relations in the contemporary world. The increasing accessibility and prominence of electronic and digital networks has enabled the enhanced visibility of the human rights regime and the transformation of social issues as political priorities within both the national and international arena. Digital space and increasing information and communication technologies (ICTs) have enabled the collaboration of NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs), international organizations (IOs), and even private actors working to promote a common initiative. In turn, this has facilitated the formation of a transnational coalition with the potential to alter both local as well as international politico-social conditions—perhaps most significantly by relatively resource poor actors operating in developing nations.

This paper will explore the significance of electronic networking, ICTs, and digital spaces (i.e. the Internet) in facilitating the national and transnational networking of local NGOs in India working to combat sex-trafficking and their growing influence as informal political actors with global backing. Online forums such as Facebook, Twitter, You Tube and discussion groups enable networked NGOs and activists to transcend the barriers of space and time in organizing, mobilizing, and making political demands. The role of ICT in the anti-trafficking movement, however, must be understood in the context of the opportunity structures afforded to each organization and the transformation of organizational structures and activist mindsets to embrace and actively use technology to their advantage. ICT and electronic networks are vital contributors to progress being made by anti-trafficking organizations in India. However, this is only because these activists and NGOs have chosen to use them in a meaningful way in the context of opportunities afforded to them to do so. Technology serves as a vector and catalyst for

change if the external environment is receptive and embracing of these voices. In this capacity and in this context, relatively resource poor actors, such as anti-trafficking NGOs, sex workers, and victims of trafficking, have gained increasing visibility as informal political actors with the power to transform the current social and legislative framework to successfully combat sex-trafficking in India.

In a traditional conceptualization, civil society and its elements (political parties and other institutions) served as a mediator between governments and their peoples. This form of social organization has to be radically re-thought as social networks form that are enabled by technology to organize in ways that subvert traditional institutions of civil society. As this paper will show, these are not just new forms of networking that replicate what previous forms did; rather, these new methods of organizing also imply new forms of politics. Through analysis of technology use by the three leading anti-trafficking NGOs in India—Apne Aap, Sanlaap, and the Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee—I argue that technology-enabled social networks and electronic communication enable informal political actors and previously disenfranchised groups to participate in political conversations and make political demands with greater ease, heightened visibility, and enhanced impact on formal political decision-making.

Anti-trafficking organizations' use of information technology in their organizational functions has dramatically strengthened their networking capacity, informal and formal partnerships, and global presence. These factors have, in turn, allowed for their growing legitimacy in defining national laws. After a review of relevant social movement, organizational, and network theories, I will discuss the significance of the electronic networking of anti-trafficking organizations within both the national and international arena and how their use of

ICT has supplanted traditional civil society, enhanced the visibility and prominence of NGOs as global political actors, and influenced the local anti-trafficking movement in India.

Literature Review

Information Technology and Global Civil Society: The Transformation of International Relations

Within the past two decades, a considerable body of work has emerged that addresses the role of digital technology and electronic media in altering the dynamics of national politics and international relations. In his pioneering essay, "Computer Networks and the Emergence of Global Civil Society" (1993), Howard Frederick suggests that "global civil society represented by the 'NGO movement' now represents a force in international relations, one that circumvents hegemony of markets and governments."[1] Furthermore, he explains how the "decentralizing and democratizing qualities of new computer technologies are also benefitting a growing global movement for common good."[2] The transformative nature of communication technology plays an imperative role in redefining the traditional parameters of international relations to include the interplay of global civil society and the NGO movement. Perhaps most significantly, Fredericks points to the centrality of communication and information access to human rights and the emergence of "democratic, decentralized, planet-loving movements."[3]

Saskia Sassen echoes and extends Frederick's analysis in her novel Territory, Authority, Rights setting the groundwork for our understanding of this modern interplay. Sassen highlights the significance of globalization and expanding digital networks in allowing for the emergence of a novel, informal political actor, primarily in largely resource-poor organizations and

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[1] Fredericks, Howard, "Computer Networks and the Emergence of Global Civil Society," in *Global Networks: Computers and International Communication*, ed. Linda Harasim (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1993), 284.
[2] Ibid.
[3] Ibid, 295.

individuals. She suggests: "Through the Internet, localized initiatives can become part of the

cross-border networks and move from being subject to specific national/local laws to a global

scale where these laws can cease to be operative."[4] Digital networks have profound potential to

increase the autonomy, agency, and power of such resource-poor organizations and individuals

by allowing them to push their issues on the political agenda in unprecedented ways. Global

networks, to a large extent, promote the free flow of knowledge, and thereby enable the

denationalization and deterritorialization of once localized information. Thus, these actors are

able to rise above the formal political system and, in doing so, they are no longer confined to

their domestic roles but rather assume membership in a global community.

The emergence of the informal political actor and its acceptance in the global community

allows the transformation of local initiatives and social struggles from a purely domestic setting

into "microenvironments articulated in global circuits."[5] The existence of these

microenvironments, particularly in the human rights regime, have allowed for the unification of

organizations and individuals with similar interests. In turn, this provides added (global) political

weight and influence in pushing particular issues onto national/domestic agendas. Utilizing

Sassen's theoretical framework, I will discuss the increasing presence of anti-trafficking NGOs

as "informal political actors" and explain the role of information technology and the Internet as a

contributor to their political agency.

Frederick's assumption on the "centrality" of communication technology to the

emergence of social movements has recently been challenged by social movement theorists. In

Working Wikily, Diance Searce, Gabriel Kasper, and Heather McLeod Grant[6] argue that, while

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[4] Sassen, Saskia, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medievel to Global Assemblages* (Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2006), 338.
[5] Ibid, 337.
[6] D. Searce, G. Kasper, and H. Grant, "Working Wikily." *Stanford Social Innovation Review,* 8, no. 3, (2010): 32.

new technologies are important, "the most important change goes well beyond the tools

themselves…the real transformation that is taking place today is the fundamental shift in the way

people think, form groups, and do their work."[7] Thus, it is not about the technology itself; rather,

it is about "trying to increase leverage and effectiveness by thinking and working in new

ways…It's about reimaging social change with a network mind-set."[8] Physical technological

properties are significant factors in the success of social movements; yet, shifting patterns of

thought that more readily embrace new networking tactics are central to this success as well.

Similarly, in *Link, Search, Interact: The Co-evolution of NGOs and Interactive*

Technology, Jonathan Bach and David Stark note that "viewing technology not as a tool but part

of a co-evolutionary process that shapes organizational forms and practices will help us

understand why NGOs have been able to assume a powerful and controversial role as co-

constituents of global transformation."[9] Acknowledging an "artificial divide" between society

and technology, Stark and Bach critique popular discussion that assumes that "NGOs plus IT

equals new organizational forms capable of transforming global space."[10] They highlight the

inaccuracy of reading social effects from technological properties stressing that NGOs and IT are

co-evolving actors.[11] In a similar essay where they assess NGOs use of interactive technologies,

they note: "We do not presume that these technologies will be either magically liberating or

harbingers of Orwellian control."[12] Starch and Bach draw attention to how organizational

practices are affected by technological changes. As will be exemplified in my case study,

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[7] Ibid, 32.

[8] Ibid, 37.

[9] Jonathan Bach and David Stark, "Link, Search, Interact: The Co-Evolution of NGOs and Interactive
Technology," *Theory, Culture & Society* 21 no. 3 (2004): 103.

[10] Ibid, 105.

[11] Ibid, 102-103.

[12] Jonathan Bach and David Stark, "Innovative Ambiguities: NGOs' use of interactive technology in Eastern Europe."
Studies in Comparative International Development 7 no. 2 (2002): 3.

technological changes, such as the creation of the Internet and social networking sites, have effected how anti-trafficking organizations in India network, organize, conduct advocacy, and make political statements.

Technology and Transnational Social Movements

The role of technology in social mobilization initiatives is vital to deconstructing the context in which contemporary anti-trafficking campaigns operate. In Lauren Langman's *From Virtual Public Spheres to Global Justice: A Critical Theory of Internetworked Social Movements*, he discusses how "technologies of communication have been integral moments of modern social mobilizations."[13] The Internet and electronic communication have contributed to the development of new communities and identifies. Transnational social movements—including the global anti-trafficking initiative—depend heavily on the Internet for information, communication, and coordination and thus must be deconstructed within the larger context of "a globalized network society located within fluid modernity."[14] Contrary to Langman, Stark and Bach maintain that "the social practices that evolve around the use of technology tell us more about its effects than assumptions based on technological properties alone."[15] While technology itself affords certain potential uses, "it is the institutional setting that determines whether these uses are realized."[16] Assumptions being made regarding the potential impact of technology on the anti-trafficking campaign in India must be understood within the context of the external environment in which this movement is situated. Structural factors, such as the political system, access to the internet, and the presence of a strong civil society, to a large extent, determine in what ways technology can influence social and political organizing.

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[13] Lauren Langman, "From Virtual Public Spheres to Global Justice: A critical Theory of Internetworked Social Movements." *Sociological Theory* 23 no. 1 (2005): 43.
[14] Ibid, 45.
[15] Bach and Stark, "Innovative Ambiguities," 8.
[16] Ibid, 8.

The evolution of technology, however, has the capacity to enhance contemporary social movements. Langman notes that the Internet and its architecture has provided relatively "low-cost, easy-access, and far-reaching networks" dispersed across the globe that provide flows of vast amounts of information.[17] The Internet and the deterritorialization of knowledge enables virtual public spheres "where people and information intersect in virtual communities and subcultures."[18] Social mobilizations enacted through virtual public spheres have redefined the notion of collective identities: they are no longer place specific but now can simultaneously coexist as ideological collectives scattered throughout the globe.[19] This provides contemporary social movements with enhanced strength and solidarity in achieving a common objective. For example, through "cyberactivism,"[20] social justice movements form global justice networks which enhance local initiatives by allowing them to transcend space and time barriers in their advocacy. This, then, allows them to expand their reach, broaden their spectrum of support, and organize and mobilize local and global actors with greater speed and efficiency. The anti-trafficking NGOs highlighted in my case study utilize Langman's conception of cyberactivism as a means to bypass the structural constraints of traditional venues of civil society and call upon the Indian government to enhance their efforts to combat trafficking.

However, there are also negative aspects to online activism which remain largely understated. In his essay *Iran: Downside to the Twitter Revolution*, Evgeny Morozov questions the impact of so-called "slacktivism"—a term used to describe feel-good but useless Internet activism. Are the 100 million people invited to join the Facebook group "100 Million Facebook member for Democracy in Iran" really expecting to make an impact? The Internet makes

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[17] Langman, "From Virtual Public Spheres to Global Justice," 55.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.
[20] Ibid.

activism easy, yet at the same time whether or not such activist's efforts will have a significant

and tangible effect on an authoritarian regime is questionable. For example, Morozov states,

"during the 2009 protests in Iran, foreign supporters of the Twitter Revolution, the American

Twitterati, launched a viral campaign to attack key news Web sites of the Iranian government in

an effort to block propaganda."[21] Yet, these activists had not anticipated that their cyberattacks

would slow the *entire* Iranian internet, making it difficult for Iranian activists to obtain any

information or upload photos or videos from the protests.[22] As evident through this example, the

inadvertent and oftentimes unforeseeable effects of cyberactivism and electronic advocacy pose

a potential setback to the effectiveness and efficiency of social movements. These factors must

be taken into account when assessing the role and impact of ICT as a method of social and

political organizing.

Network enthusiasts, however, overwhelmingly point to the functional capacity of the

Internet to serve as a highly-efficient and effective organizing tool: the Internet and electronic

communication enables "mobilizing networks"[23] which facilitate the coordination of activities,

strategies, and ideas (i.e. e-mail campaigns, protests, demonstrations). As noted by Langman,

through these efforts, social justice actors are able to "engage in information exchange, mutual

support and a combination of lobbying, advocacy and direct action towards the realization of

their goal."[24] For example, anti-trafficking NGOs are able to partner and network with other

organizations working on these issues from a variety of angles and environments (i.e. research,

international law, rescue and rehabilitation) which provides increased momentum and strength to

local campaigns and initiatives.

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[21] Evgeny Morozov, "Iran: Downside to the "Twitter Revolution."" *Dissent* 56 no. 4 (2009):13.
[22] Ibid, 13.
[23] Langman, "From Virtual Public Spheres to Global Justice," 59.
[24] Ibid.

Bach and Stark extend this analysis by assessing the new barriers that technology poses to the organizational capacity of NGOs. They posit that "once new technologies are introduced to solve old problems, the problems themselves change."[25] For example, while e-mail may allow an NGO to increase its level of communication, it may also create a flood of requests for information that cause the NGO to become paralyzed. Additionally, the need for computers, bandwith, and skilled staff affects the budgetary structure of NGOs.[26] The functions of NGOs significantly involve information, communication, and networking; however, it should not be assumed that the properties of interactive technology alone will necessarily improve these functions.

Electronic Connectivity and Human Rights: Shifts in State Responsibility

Additionally, David L. Richards attempts to identify a relationship between increasing connectivity (through information technology) and government respect for human rights as a "subset of internationally recognized human rights."[27] He notes that the "penetration of information into previously isolated areas is a major step forward in those people being able to judge their existence by means of comparison to other parts of the world."[28] Multimedia resources such as the Internet allow for the hyper-mobility of information and widespread access that transcends geographic boundaries and facilitates, for a large part, non-discriminatory access to information. For example, those who have "firsthand knowledge of human rights abuses can make a problem previously unknown to the rest of the world into an acknowledged situation by attracting relief from external actors."[29] Global electronic networks have allowed for the

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[25] Bach and Stark, "Link, Search, Interact," 8.
[26] Ibid.
[27] David L. Richards, "Making the National International," in *Technology, Development, Democracy,* ed. Juliann Emmons Allison (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 164.
[28] Ibid, 164.
[29] Ibid, 166.

increasing visibility of sex-trafficking as a violation of the rights and dignity implicit to every human being. The utilization of such networks and digital spaces by NGOs has helped contribute to the evolution of sex-trafficking as an issue worthy of international focus. This has promoted the prioritization of sex-trafficking on national agendas through the global human rights framework and endowed anti-trafficking NGOs an informal space in the national political arena.

Transnational advocacy networks, however, are not new. In Activist Beyond Borders, Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink suggest that international activism around human rights and contemporary transnational advocacy networks find "historical echoes" in past campaigns such as the nineteenth century anti-slavery movement.[30] In both Britain and the United Sates, "activists set up local, regional, and national anti-slavery organizations that frequently exchanged letters, publications, and visits."[31] These anti-slavery organizations borrowed tactics, organizational forms, research and language from each other in order to "promote change by reporting facts."[32] Publications such as American Slavery As it Is: Testimony of a Thousand Witnesses, which compiled extensive testimonials from individuals and clippings from Southern newspapers, sold over 100,000 copies in its first year and became the handbook of the antislavery cause.[33] Similarly, Harriet Beecher Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, which initially appeared in a series of anti-slavery newspapers, sold over 300,000 copies in the U.S. and eight million in Britain in the first eight months of publication.[34] Both publications were extremely successful in broadening awareness on the atrocities of slavery and gathering support of the abolitionist cause. Keck and Sikkink suggest that, in the case of the anti-slavery movement, "a

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[30] Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998), ix.
[31] Ibid, 44.
[32] Ibid, 45.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid, 47.

nascent transnational advocacy network, mobilizing around a moral issue" used tactics similar to modern networks and succeeded in helping create abolition as a pressing political issue in the United States.[35]

Transnational advocacy networks date as far back as the 1800s. However, the nineteenth century anti-slavery movement and the contemporary anti-trafficking movement are not analogous to one another. The anti-trafficking movement, evolving within an increasingly fluid environment, exemplifies a new form of transnational advocacy. Social activist networks, enabled by technology, have broadened the scope, scale, and global presence of the anti-trafficking campaign and, perhaps most significantly, serve as a venue for the emergence of previously disenfranchised voices as equal, legitimate, and influential political actors. This new form of transnational advocacy, unlike the tactics utilized by anti-slavery activists, has enabled the direct participation of these individuals in the formal political arena.

While the anti-slavery movement effectively broadened global awareness on the issue leading to the abolition of slavery, the methods and tactics embraced and implemented by the anti-slavery movement are insufficient to completely address contemporary sex-trafficking. For one, slave-trading and holding were embedded in domestic state policies and practices and thus anti-slavery tactics were largely state-centric, with the primary goal of amending national legislation on slavery. Sex-trafficking, however, is recognized as illegal both domestically and internationally. The contemporary sex trade is propelled by national and transnational criminal networks, which operate largely underground, rather than the state-condoned policies that allowed highly visible slave trade routes of the nineteenth century. Slavery operated primarily within the confines of a singular state and under that state's legislation: sex-trafficking, on the

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[35] Ibid, 51.

other hand, often engages the legal framework of two states though the actions of transnational criminal actors. This proves significantly more complex to effectively address.

Unlike nineteenth century slavery, trafficking networks operate in a highly fluid environment. New communication technologies enable the instantaneous exchange of information cross-borders which has, in turn, enhanced the capacity of transnational trafficking networks to both operate and evade detection. At the same time, however, these technologies have also strengthened anti-trafficking networks. The technological properties and opportunities afforded by the Internet, including online methods of organizing and social networking, provide opportunities for NGOs and social movements to subvert traditional institutions of civil society in ways that were impossible in the anti-slavery movement.

Technology and Political Opportunity Structures

Debates over the capacity of technology to substantially influence political opportunities continue to challenge social movement and technology theorists alike. In *Revolutionary Secrets: Technology's Role in the South African Anti-Apartheid Movement,* R. Kelly Garret and Paul N. Edwards maintain that "we need to move the simple statement that communication technology influenced political capacity to answer the deeper question of how, when, and why."[36] Failure to consider these factors risks oversimplifying the process of "sociotechnical change" and hampers our ability to understand the relationship between ICTs and political activity.[37] Significantly, they assert that in order for scholars to make claims about the implication of new technology for political opportunities available to activists, they must first place these claims in context of the social factors on which the outcomes depend.[38] It is not enough to claim that "new technologies

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[36] R. Kelly Edwards and Paul N. Edwards, "Revolutionary Secrets: Technology's Role in the South-African Apartheid Movement." *Social Science Computer Review* 25 no. 1 (2007): 13.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.

dramatically reduce constraints on activist communication, thereby enhancing social movement organizations' ability to mobilize supporters, challenge elite authority, and more effectively realize their goals."[39] These arguments must be grounded in an understanding of evolving capacities and of the activists' practices, competences, and routines.[40] When assessing technology's role in enhancing the effectiveness of anti-trafficking organizations to influence political change, it is important to acknowledge these factors.

Similarly, in <u>Transnational Protest and Global Activism</u>, Sidney Tarrow and Donatella della Porta suggest that "transnational mobilization is facilitated by the adaptation of movement strategies to the changing environment (including a shift in the type of resources available to challenges)."[41] Central to this is an understanding of political opportunity structures. In his essay, *Where do we stand?* John L. Campbell defines a political opportunity structure as "a set of formal and informal political conditions that encourage, discourage, channel, and otherwise affect movement activity."[42] They constrain the range of options available to movements as well as to trigger movement activity in the first place. Building off the analysis of social movement theorists such as Tarrow and della Porta, he suggests that political opportunity structures are influenced by the degree to which 1) formal political institutions are open or closed to challengers of the status quo, 2) political elites are organized in stable or unstable coalitions and alignments, 3) movements have allies within the political elite, and 4) political authorities are willing to use repression again challengers."[43] In assessing the emergence of anti-trafficking

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[39] Ibid

[40] Ibid, 23-24.

[41] Donatella Della Porta and Sidney G. Tarrow, *Transnational Protest and Global Activism*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield (2005): 13.

[42] John L. Campbell. "Where Do We Stand? Common Mechanisms in Organizations and Social Movements Research." In *Social Movements and Organization Theory*, ed. Gerald F. Davis and others (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 45.

[43]Ibid.

organizations as informal political actors, an understanding of the opportunity structures available to the movement is essential in order to accurately reflect technology's impact.

Women's Organizations and Information Technology

Anti-trafficking organizations are largely women's organizations; thus, identifying potential implications of gender on their access to and use of technology are imperative to accurately reflect their electronic activism. In her essay *Gender, Women's Organizing, and the Internet*, Deborah Stienstra emphasizes the positive impact of ICT development on building the capacities of women's NGOs and the role of women's on-line organizing in "information sharing."[44] She discusses the particular significance of online organizing as a means to ensure access to information for women who are illiterate through mediums such as video or audio tapings.[45] Technology promotes the global unification of women's groups in developing alternative policy documents in relation to health and human rights, in using the Internet to lobby and ensure that their perspectives are included in policy making decision, and in developing common strategies for action across the world. [46]

Given the implicit gendered nature of sex-trafficking, Stienstra's analysis underscores the functioning of many local organizations working on this issue that have formed transnational knowledge networks in the formation of a global coalition for change. She also points out, however, that women's online organizing represents a "counterhegemonic activity" in that, while it is increasingly global in scope, many women do not have Internet access.[47] Stienstra suggests that much of what is available to women through women's online organizing is merely an

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[44] Deborah Stienstra, "Gender, Women's Organizing, and the Internet." *Technology, Development, Democracy*, ed. Juliann Emmons Allison (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 204.
[45] Ibid, 204.
[46] Ibid, 206.
[47] Ibid, 207.

"available list of resources."[48] Structural constraints that hamper women's equal access to the

Internet continue to limit the success and scope of women's organizing on the Internet.

Technology and the Emergence of Anti-Trafficking Networks

Networking for Change: The Role of Electronic Connectivity in NGO Coalition and Alliance

Similar to Stienstra's initial hypothesis concerning the benefits of on-line organization to

local women's initiatives and organizations, Kathryn Farr extends this theory to the role of anti-

trafficking networks in present and past progress made on the local as well as global scale. She

notes:

> "The role played by NGOs in anti-trafficking initiatives cannot be overstated and
> virtually all recommendations for combating sex trafficking emphasize the importance of
> including NGOs in any kind of plan. The most effective and far-reaching NGOs are
> networks or alliances themselves, are part of a larger network, or have formed importance
> alliances with other organizations."[49]

Here, Farr applies the analysis of technology theorists such as Sassen and Fredericks within the

local and global anti-trafficking movement. She establishes a hierarchy among anti-trafficking

NGOs by asserting that the most effective of these organizations are networks or alliances

themselves, members in a larger network, or maintain some sort of alliance with or connection to

another organization.

Ironically, when assessing the potential of networking for broader change, Farr highlights

the vitality of technology and electronic networks to the sex industry—namely through the

Internet. She points out that the "very success of the sex trafficking industry itself has been

predicted on its ability to develop and operate through flexible, sometimes overlapping,

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[48] Ibid, 207.
[49] Kathryn Farr, "NGO, Networks, Alliances." *Sex Trafficking: The Global Market in Women and Children* (Portland, OR: Worth Publishers, 2005), 242.

networks."[50] The existence of sex-trafficking itself is reliant on and utilizes the very same networking techniques in strengthening interstate and transnational trafficking flows. By identifying this parallel, Farr suggests that in successfully confronting sex-trafficking, the networking of NGOs on a national and global scale is vital to effectively addressing the dynamics of the cross-border flows of women and girls.

Global Anti-Trafficking NGOs and the Internet

The growing presence of the Internet, electronic networks, and digital spaces, has allowed for the emergence of transnational anti-trafficking NGOs. Global NGOs with broad mandates (i.e. Human Rights Watch, Global Survival Network, and the International Organization for Migration) have not only directed significant efforts to sex-trafficking but have contributed immensely to global awareness on this issue. For example, in 2001 Terre des Hommes, an international network of ten organizations working for children's rights, instigated the Campaign to Stop Child Trafficking, which was "dedicated to improving protection for children at risk of being trafficked and ensuring that traffickers are effectively prosecuted."[51] Furthermore, organizations that focus generally on women's issues—among them, Amnesty International's Women's Human Rights Network and Vital Voices—have also generated mass attention to sex trafficking as a gender-based violence and a human rights abuse meriting international response.

Among the most specific of these global networks is the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), which is composed of various regional anti-trafficking networks and of affiliated individuals and groups. It serves as an "umbrella" that coordinates and takes direction from its transnational networks and local and global members. As further specified in its

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[50] Ibid, 242.
[51] Ibid, 243.

objectives, CATW "works internationally to combat sexual exploitation in all forms, especially

prostitution and trafficking in women and children, in particular girls."[52] Other prominent

networks that target sex-trafficking include the Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking

(CAST), which serves an a "alliance of nonprofit service providers, grassroots advocacy groups

and activists dedicated to providing human serves and human rights advocacy to victims of

modern-day slavery"[53] and the Global Alliance Against Traffic in Women (GAATW)

(http://www.gaatw.org) based in Thailand but working internationally to fight trafficking.[54]

While Farr establishes the authority of these global NGOs as leaders in the anti-

trafficking movement she does not identify the significance of their electronic domains as global

digital spaces that have mainstreamed sex-trafficking within national human rights agendas nor

does she explain their distinct spaces as actors in an organizational hierarchy. The

aforementioned organizations, most significantly CATW and GAATW, represent key

stakeholders in the global anti-trafficking network. They exist as hubs of technology and

resources within the anti-trafficking electronic framework similar to Sassen's notion and

functional analysis of the "global city."[55] According to Sassen, "cities and the new strategic

geographies that connect them and bypass national states can be seen as constituting part of the

infrastructure for global domains, including global imaginaries."[56] This is achieved from the

"ground up" through "multiple micro-sites and micro-transactions."[57] A global city is a "political

landscape" whose actors represent a variety of organizations working on "transboundary

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[52] Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW), "About Us." http://www.catwinternational.org. (accessed on May 3, 2011).
[53] Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking (CAST), "About Us." http://wwww.castla.org. (accessed on May 3, 2011).
[54] Farr, "NGO, Networks, Alliance," 243.
[55] Saskia Sassen, "Local Actors in Global Politics." *Current Sociology* 52 no. 4 (2004): 650.
[56] Ibid, 651.
[57] Ibid, 650-51.

issues."[58] Sassen suggests that while these transboundary issues may not be "urban in their orientation or genesis, they tend to converge in cities."[59]

We can further extend Sassen's theory by assessing the convergence of local NGOs addressing sex-trafficking within the digital domains of large, global anti-trafficking initiatives, or "global digital cities." Similar components that embody the global city are evident in global anti-trafficking organizations at the forefront of this initiative (i.e CATW and GAATW). These electronic networks serve as make-shift online cities where organizations from around the globe interlink, connect, and cross paths with one another. Transnational networks create a political landscape through which the acting local and regional NGOs can utilize each other and one another's resources, thereby transcending the confines of national boundary, and allowing the simultaneous convergence of once restricted knowledge and efforts. This facilitates the emergence of local anti-trafficking NGOs with a new-found voice and enhanced power to influence the prioritization of trafficking initiatives in local political agendas.

Resources and Report Sharing Through Digital Spaces

The formulation and electronic distribution of NGO reports, research, manuals, and other forms of documentation and information have contributed significantly to international knowledge of sex-trafficking. These resources not only enhance public advocacy and awareness but also promote NGO collaboration by bringing together research findings from around the world and continually updating and adding to their work.[60] For example, The Protection Project distributes a country-by-country *Human Rights Report on Trafficking in Persons Especially Women and Children*. Furthermore, in addition to research reports and general information, many NGOs have utilized electronic networks to enhance public awareness and knowledge of

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[58] Ibid, 651.
[59] Ibid.
[60] Farr, "NGOs, Networks, Alliances," 241.

sex trafficking through user interaction and involvement with the network or website itself. One such example—the Stop-Traffic listserv—provides an outlet for current and updated information on trafficking from around the world.[61]

Previous literature focuses extensively on the role of electronic networks in facilitating the interconnectivity of local and global actors with common goals and values. However, there is a need to repositions this analysis in the context of contemporary social networks that are enabled by technology to organize in ways that subvert traditional institutions of civil society. By identifying the growing presence of information technology in local and global anti-trafficking campaigns, I argue that their use of technology to network, broker partnerships, and enhance awareness on sex-trafficking has created new opportunities for local anti-trafficking NGOs, as well as the disenfranchised groups they represent, to engage with global decision-makers in confronting this issue in India.

Case Study: Anti-trafficking Organizations in India

Sex-trafficking in India is not a new phenomenon however, with globalization, its scope and patterns have evolved in response to rapidly changing socioeconomic trends.[62] As a source, destination, and transit area for trafficking of women and children in South Asia, India is deeply and undeniably embedded in this transnational problem. In order to combat strengthened trafficking networks and the increasing movement of women and children (both cross-border and within Indian state boundaries), there has been "unprecedented collaboration between feminist activists in source countries, transit countries, and countries of destination"[63] as well as a

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[61] Ibid.

[62] Mangala Subramaniam, Manjusha Gupte, and Debarashmi Mitra, "Local to Global: Transnational Networks and Indian Women's Grassroots Organizing." *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 8 no. 3 (2003): 342.

[63] Pamela Shifman, "Trafficking and women's human rights in a globalised world." *Gender and Development* 5 no. 1 (2003): 125.

coinciding increase in the visibility and presence of local Indian anti-trafficking organizations in the global anti-trafficking initiative. These anti-trafficking initiatives have led to the rise of organizations working with women in prostitution and especially with their children to prevent their re-entry into prostitution.

Traditionally, civil society and its elements—political parties and other institutions—served as a mediator between governments and their peoples. As this case study will show, anti-trafficking organizations in India are utilizing technology in ways that subvert traditional institutions of civil society. I argue that this has radically transformed the relationship between a government, civil society, and its people by enhancing the visibility and presence of NGOs as informal political actors and enabling previously disenfranchised groups to participate in political conversations with greater ease, prominence and impact on formal political decision-making. Through an analysis of the anti-trafficking strategies being implemented by three Indian NGOs—Apne Aap, Sanlaap, and the Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC)—I suggest that formation of technology-enabled social networks (through the Internet, electronic networking, advocacy, and communication) force us to rethink the conventional socio-political hierarchy. This has supplanted traditional civil society and allowed for the emergence of NGOs as more visible, central, and globalised political actors while simultaneously bringing the disenfranchised groups they represent into both informal and formal political conversations.

These are not just new forms of networking that replicate the functions of previous forms. As exemplified by these anti-trafficking organizations, online methods of organizing, rather, imply a new form of politics. They provide a unique space for previously disenfranchised voices to participate in the formation of the policies and programs that ultimately impact them. Technology-enabled social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, You Tube, and discussion

forums as well as other modes of electronic communication such as online testimonials and publications allow relatively resource poor organizations and informal political actors to transcend space and time barriers in networking with one another, expressing political opinions, and making political demands.

This political space is unique because it has the technological capacity to collapse the space between the informal and the formal political actor. Here, the voices of celebrities, global activists, and high-level politicians emerge with those of sex workers and victims of trafficking. The Internet embeds these voices in time and space. This enables their replication and repetition which can enhance their visibility and global reach in unprecedented ways. The networking capacity enabled by the Internet and the increasing assertion of these informal political voices in cyberspace has contributed to their growing presence in the formal political sphere.

Before discussing how the use of technology has impacted the anti-trafficking movement in India, an understanding of the external environment in which the movement is situated is necessary to accurately position this analysis. In order to do so, I will discuss the impact of the anti-trafficking movement within the context of 1) internet accessibility 2) globalization, and 3) the political environment surrounding sex-trafficking in India.

Accessibility to the Internet

Disparity in networking capacity and Internet accessibility along the rural-urban divide hamper the full realization and potential of anti-trafficking initiatives. Networking logics remain "unevenly distributed."[64] Girls and women that are most vulnerable to sex-trafficking, as well as sex workers and survivors of trafficking oftentimes come from poor communities and thus are less likely to have access to the Internet. While the Internet and electronic advocacy have

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[64] Jeffery S. Juris, "The New Digital Media and Activist Networking within Anti-Corporate Globalization Movements." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,* 597 (2005): 198.

become increasingly integral to the organizational function of anti-trafficking NGOs in India, it

is less integral to the everyday lives of the marginalized groups they represent. These NGOs are

oftentimes the first platform for groups such as former sex workers to engage with the Internet,

(i.e. as an educational or advocacy tool.) Thus, in assessing its current capacity to bring

disenfranchised groups into political conversations, it is important that we acknowledge this

disparity and division in access. With this in mind, however, India's booming IT sector possesses

profound potential (which remains largely untapped) to expand electronic networks thereby

providing greater voice to those isolated due to technological constraints, strengthening formal

networks, and mobilizing informal networks and grassroots initiatives through electronic

networking.

Globalization and Sex-Trafficking

Despite benefits such as the increased coordination and collaboration of anti-trafficking

campaigns, globalization and electronic communication have also strengthened intrastate and

interstate trafficking networks and encouraged new methods and routes to exploit women and

children for profit. The "free mobility of capital, labor, [and] information"[65] has made undeniable

contributions to the business of sex trafficking and sex tourism. The fluidity of information,

services, and goods has enhanced the commodification and marketability of women and children

for sexual exploitation. Economic liberalization and privatization have exacerbated

unemployment and poverty which has resulted in the increasingly rapid movement of labor

cross-border.[66] Significantly, many of those migrating for work across borders are women:

traffickers have an increasing opportunity to take advantage, mislead, and exploit women

looking for labor. Furthermore, the technological revolution has allowed traffickers to market

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[65] Subramaniam, Gupte, and Mitra. "Local to Global," 342.
[66] Ibid, 342.

girls relatively quickly and inexpensively through Internet portals. According to Ruchira Gupta, a leading anti-trafficking activist in India, the Internet has "made it easier for traffickers to operate their trafficking networks, keep in touch with each other, and find out sites where girls can be sold cheaply."[67] Furthermore, and clients and buyers of sex also use the Internet to find out where to go.

However, as a response to the growth of trafficking, there has been an increase in "counternetworks for anti-trafficking programmes in the area of trafficking prevention, protection, and assistance for victims, and prosecution of traffickers."[68] Global networks such as the GAATW and the CATW exemplify the expanse of transnational activism and the deterritorialization of social justice movements through the Internet. Contrary to her previous statement, Gupta also notes: "One of the positive aspects [of globalization] is that I can sometimes bypass the pressure of my own government, and link up with an activist in Europe, or in America, and get them to put pressure on the Indian government to do more work on trafficking, or create better laws to improve the lives of women."[69] Globalization has exacerbated sex-trafficking while at the same time strengthening the counter-networks, initiatives, and campaigns in place to combat it.

Political Context of Sex-Trafficking in India

India is a signatory of the *United Nations Protocol to Prevent Suppress and Punish Trafficking, Especially Women and Children*. Furthermore, Article 23 of the Indian Constitution prohibits trafficking in persons and forced labor. The current legislation on trafficking in India, the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act 1956, does not penalize prostitutes but rather targets those

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[67]Shifman, "Trafficking and Women's human rights," 126.
[68] Saskia Sassen, "Global Cities and Diasporic Networks: Microsites in Global Civil Society," in *Global Civil Society,* ed. Helmist Anheier and others (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 230.
[69] Shifman, "Trafficking and Women's human rights,"127.

who profit from or exploit prostitutes. Running a brothel, actively soliciting, and pimping are a criminal offence. While the Government of India is taking steps to prevent sex-trafficking, it remains a low-priority issue. Corruption among police personnel and lack of understanding of the law hamper its effective implementation. There are few criminal convictions, and brothel raids are usually prompted by NGO activists, as are efforts to provide rehabilitation and protective services to victims of trafficking.

It is important to note that the discourse surrounding sex-trafficking in India is largely embedded in the debate over the legalization or decriminalization of prostitution. Opponents of the legalization of prostitution argue that prostitution is violence against marginalized classes while proponents maintain it is a legal right of individuals or a functional necessity. Given that women are trafficked into prostitution, this debate significantly affects anti-trafficking campaign strategies, funding sources, and activities.[70] In 2006, an amendment of the ITPA was proposed by Apne Aap, a leading anti-trafficking NGO in India, that would make buying sex in India a criminal offence. The Bill has sparked protest from diverse quarters. Perhaps most significantly, a division currently exists between two federal ministries of the Indian government that has stalled the amendment from passing. Proponents of the Bill, including the Ministry for Women and Child Development, argue that by criminalizing the buyers of sex, demand for commercial sex will decrease, and thus demand for sex-trafficking will minimize. Opponents of this amendment, such as public health experts and India's Ministry of Health, however, argue it will force prostitution underground and hamper efforts to control HIV/AIDS.[71] This, they suggest, will make it more difficult for health intervention organizations to reach the women and also less likely that the women will practice health-seeking behavior.

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[70] Indrani Sinha and Shamita Das Dasgupta, *Mothers for Sale: Women in Kolkata's Sex Trade* (Kolkata: Dasgupta Alliance, 2009), 51.

[71] Patralekha Chaterjee, "Anti-human-trafficking law sparks debate in India." *The Lancet* 321. no. 9617 (2008): 975.

There is also a division among NGOs working on anti-trafficking issues in India, namely between those whose primary mandate is trafficking and those whose mandate prioritizes health interventions. In 2007, the opposition movement against the Bill organized the National Consultation of Sex Work, HIV and the Law in New Delhi to discuss the potential impact of the proposed changes.[72] Members of the sex workers collective in India have demonstrated in front of Parliament in opposition of the proposed changes, and victims of trafficking, through several anti-trafficking NGOs, have testified in support of the amendment.[73]

India represents the largest democracy in the world. The strength of the debate over this proposed amendment including government officials, NGOs, sex workers and trafficking victims exemplifies the strength of India's civil society and the receptiveness of the Indian government to their voice and demands. Through their collective efforts and active participation, specifically in working with the government on prevention, rehabilitation, and repatriation efforts, NGOs are integral actors in the campaign to combat sex-trafficking in India. Global anti-trafficking networks, local NGOs, and victims of sex-trafficking have emerged as voices of contestation demanding that sex-trafficking is an unacceptable violation of international law. Local anti-trafficking NGOs in India have sought to mobilize communities to demand accountability from their government and are working to alter national legislation and international law on sex-trafficking.

In assessing technology's impact on the functional role of civil society, specifically, as exemplified by anti-trafficking NGOs in India, it is important to first acknowledge that these changes are taking place within a democratic space and by an established and sophisticated civil society. With this in mind, I suggest that technology-enabled social networks and electronic

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[72] Ibid.

[73] Ruchira Gupta, (Founder and Director of Apne Aap, New Delhi), interview by Sara Amri, May 23, 2010.

communication provide a space where resource-poor and marginalized populations gain visibility, voice, and presence as both social and political actors on a local and global scale.

Apne Aap

Apne Aap is an Indian NGO working to end sex-trafficking by empowering trafficked and at-risk women and children to organize against the demand for purchased sex and the injustice in their own lives, assert their right to dignified lives and livelihoods, and advocate their cause to trigger policy and institutional change.[74]

Apne Aap's website (http://www.apneaap.org) serves as a virtual database of information on sex-trafficking in India and exemplifies the extent to which the organization has utilized the Internet and electronic communication as an integral part of its anti-trafficking strategy. It contains a variety of resources tailored to the needs of law enforcement, government officials, other anti-trafficking organizations, and informal activists. Internally produced resources include the "Compendium of Best Anti-Human Trafficking by Non-Governmental Organizations," and "Confronting the Demand for Sex-trafficking: A Handbook for Law Enforcement." Viewers can access links to a plethora of international and national laws addressing trafficking. By creating public awareness of the legal tools in place to combat trafficking, Apne Aap emphasizes the responsibility of the Indian government to uphold an international legal standard and, thus, calls on its local and global partners, through its website, to hold the government accountable for its failure to do so.

Through the Internet, Apne Aap provides the knowledge, tools, and resources for viewers to become informed political activists and serves as a vector for these activists to actually extend their voices into formal political conversations and debates. For example, they have an electronic

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[74] Apne Aap, "Vision and Mission," http://www.apneaap.org/about-us/vision-and-mission, (accessed 2 May 2011).

signature campaign to "appeal to Members of India's Parliament to amend the Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956 to incorporate the provision to criminalize the buyer of prostituted sex and decriminalize the victims of human trafficking."[75] The campaign has been influential in rallying the voices of over 3,000 activists, both international and domestic, many of which have identified as victims of trafficking themselves.[76] In doing so, the organizations has enhanced global awareness and support for this issue and, significantly, made it possible for activists around the world to engage in the political debate by expressing their support of the proposal.

This global public expression has helped prioritize trafficking on the national agenda. Increased attention has been allocated to the amendment within the Indian Parliament and it is presently being debated. While signature campaigns have long been used as a form of protest or to exert political pressure on a government, the electronic signature campaign utilized by Apne Aap is unique not in its purpose but rather in its ability to bring diverse voices from around the world into the political debate almost instantaneously, transcending space and time constructs. Social media and interactive technology have altered the dynamics of contemporary politics in this way.

Other electronic forms of public awareness include news, press releases, media articles, and events as well icons and links such as "Follow us on Facebook," "Pics on Picasa," "Videos on You Tube," and the "Add This" application which enables viewers to bookmark and share the website via alternative digital spaces like MySpace and Twitter. These mediums increase traffic back to Apne Aap's website. Viewers from around the world can also donate online via a link presented on the organization's homepage. Furthermore, Apne Aap's e-magazine, "Red Light Dispatch," provides trafficking-related articles from a professional perspective (i.e. Ruchira

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[75] Apne Aap, "Signature Campaign," http://www.apneaap.org/get-involved/signature-campaigns/signature-campaign, (accessed on May 2, 2011).
[76] Ibid.

Gupta, Director of Apne Aap) as well as from a grassroots and community perspective (i.e. women and children living in Red Light areas and trafficking survivors). The Internet enables the deterritorialization of sex-trafficking as a place-specific issue. The articles presented in this e-magazine allow readers to perceive the realities of daily life in the Red Light districts of India. Sex-trafficking in India is no longer solely an Indian issue; rather, it becomes a global issue.

In addition, Apne Aap posts testimonials online through print, video, and audio with "first hand accounts" from victims of trafficking on their experiences.[77] As noted by Gupta, "the act affirms the storyteller's confidence and determination to keep taking risks in her life, both personally and politically" as well as develops her leadership skills and self-confidence. Similar to the function of truth and reconciliation commissions (TRCs) in post-conflict countries such as Liberia and South Africa, the act of sharing their hardships and feelings helps victims of sex-trafficking come to terms with their past abuse (which often includes violence and rape). To some extent, this testimonial serves an informal, self-determined form of therapy. Additionally, it allows victims to formulate and articulate political demands to prevent trafficking and criminalize and punish their traffickers, madams, and abusers. By presenting these testimonials on the Internet, anti-trafficking NGOs aim to broaden awareness on this issue by magnifying the voices of the victims themselves and their often traumatic experience. While far more informal in structure than TRCs, the online testimonials posted by anti-trafficking NGOs via the internet 1) serve as a form of rehabilitation for victims trafficking, 2) broaden awareness on the political demands made by victims of trafficking, and 3) serve as a form of political expression.

Apne Aap's use of the Internet as a means of electronic advocacy to enhance political focus on sex-trafficking in India can also be exemplified through its use of the video-sharing site You Tube, which is hyperlinked on the organization's website. On their YouTube profile, the

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[77] Ruchira Gupta, (Founder and Director of Apne Aap, New Delhi), interview by Sara Amri, May 23, 2010.

organization has posted various informational videos and radio jingles created by the organization and trafficked women themselves, documentaries on sex-trafficking, testimonials and interviews with victims of trafficking and women and girls in self-help groups, as well as footage from National Survivors Conference Apne Aap hosted with support from the United Nations Development Fund for Women.[78] Other videos include statements of support for the organization's work from celebrities like Ricky Martin and politicians such as Bill Clinton, which enhance the organization's profile. Additionally, Gupta received the Clinton Global Citizen Award in 2009 for her work on sex-trafficking in India. Because of this connection and association between them, YouTube searches for the "Clinton Global Initiative" enhance the probability that users will gain awareness of Apne Aap.

As exemplified through Apne Aap's video postings, You Tube serves as a venue where the voices of formal political figures, such as Bill Clinton, and disenfranchised groups, such as former sex workers and victims of sex-trafficking emerge within the same spacio-temporal construct. This is not to suggest that the traditional socio-political hierarchy is completely dismantled through the Internet. Rather, the linking of both voices afforded by audio-visual platforms such as YouTube are allowing for a new form of politics and political expression. Technology enabled social networks and online forums bring disenfranchised voices to the table in ways that transcend the formalities and barriers of the traditional political sphere, specifically by enhancing the consciousness of formal decision-makers and leaders to their issues, political views, and demands. Additionally, these voices, testimonials, and political articulations remain embedded in electronic mediums such as YouTube, unless the administrator of the profile chooses to take them down. Given the relative open accessibility provided by the Internet, this, then, allows for their repetition and redistribution by other activists through hyperlinking.

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[78] Ibid.

Though their use of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, Apne Aap broadens awareness on trafficking by brokering connections and promoting interaction between both local and cross-border activists and individuals that may otherwise not exists. Here, local and cross-border activists are able to rally together on a uniform platform with the common objective of combating trafficking. Apne Aap posts various updates on their work, including their publications, facts on trafficking, and links to other anti-trafficking organizations, websites, and campaigns.[79] For example, one post reads: "Don't let the Sex Industry turn the Commonwealth Games into a pimping opportunity. Help us by signing this petition. Numbers count in a democracy." They then hyperlink to thepetitionsite.com where individuals are encouraged to sign the petition as an appeal to the President of India to "ensure that the Government of India puts into place sufficient mechanisms to stop the proliferation of sex trafficking in the run up to the Commonwealth Games."[80] By sharing this link on these sites, Facebook and Twitter serves as a means to rally international and local support to put pressure on the Indian government to take a stronger stance to prevent trafficking. Additionally, their Facebook profile allows viewers to 'Join Our Mailing List' and hosts an online discussion forum on topics relating to trafficking such as "How can legislation help to end sex-trafficking in India?" Technology-enabled social networks such as Facebook and Twitter serve as forums where activists from around the world and different socioeconomic backgrounds can connect, interact, and share thoughts, ideas, establish new contacts and promote new organizing and activities to combat trafficking.

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[79] Ibid.

[80] Apne Aap Women Worldwide Facebook Profile. "Wall Posts." http://www.facebook.com/pages/Apne-Aap-Women-Worldwide/121770722507>, (accessed May 15, 2011).

Sanlaap

Sanlaap is a community-based initiative of researchers, teachers, and women activists based in Kolkata, India that works to rehabilitate and reintegrate socially unacceptable children and women into local communities.[81] Formed in 1987, with explicit aims to protect the human rights of women, Sanlaap has "built and maintained networks beyond the local context and its strategic goals facilitate the establishment of ties at the national, regional and international levels."[82] While less established than Apne Aap, its works with various transnational human rights groups, among them, Anti-Slavery International (ASI) in the United Kingdom, End Child Prostitution in Asian tourism (ECPAT) in Thailand, National Alliance of Women's Organization (NAWO) in India, and the Coalition again Trafficking in Women (CATW), and the Asian Women's Human Rights Council (AWHRC) in the Phillipines.[83]

In addition to international networks, Sanlaap has also partnered with an extensive list of community-based organization and works to coordinate and implement activities at the grassroots level. The organization has networked with the Government of India and the Government of West Bengal as well as Panchayats, or local village assemblies, and is working with each to implement prevention campaigns as well as in ensuring the rehabilitation and reintegration of victims of trafficking. The Internet and electronic connectivity have enhanced the organization's capacity to broker and nurture relationships with a broad constituency of international, regional and local partners. In turn, the strength and span of their network has broadened global awareness on its causes enabling Sanlaap to situate itself as an established and legitimate organization at the forefront of the anti-trafficking campaign in India and a vital contributor to the global anti-trafficking movement.

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[81] Subramaniam, Gupte, and Mitra. "Local to Global," 344.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Ibid.

Similar to Apne Aap, Sanlaap's website (http://www.sanlaapindia.org/) serves as a hub of knowledge and information on sex-trafficking as well as a means to frame sex-trafficking a means to draw local and international support to the anti-trafficking campaign. For example, the website possesses a sophisticated, dramatic, and artistic introduction that displays the following message: "Girls always have two homes. One that of their father. The other of their in-laws. But none that they can call their own. Here at Sanlaap, I have found my own!" This statement, taken from an anonymous girl staying at Sanlaap's shelter, in combination with the dark and dramatic backdrop serves to draw on the viewer's emotions and thereby sets the conceptual framework under which those accessing the website understand trafficking (i.e. trafficking is bad and sexually exploitative of children). Its website is often the first and only insight activists and other stakeholders in the anti-trafficking campaign have into an NGO. Furthermore, it provides a clear and explicit link to research undertaken by the organization as well as their Resource Material Centre which serves as a central unit for documents related to women and children's rights. Sanlaap's sophisticated design, display of information, and framing of sex-trafficking to play off viewer's emotions by stressing the violent and oftentimes exploitative trade helps draw in partners and donors from diverse spheres while reaffirming donor confidence in the organizations capacity to conduct its work.

Sanlaap uses its website as an interactive platform to rally international and local support for its work and the local anti-trafficking campaign. Their "Support Us" link allows viewers to select alternate links in such as "Volunteer," "Partner," and, perhaps most interestingly, calls for viewers to "Be our communicator."[84] In addition to fundraising, volunteering time, and promoting general awareness, Sanlaap suggests that users of the website provide the organization with their personal mailing lists so that they can contact them as well. Thus, the organization

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[84] Sanlaap, http://sanlaapindia.org, (accessed May 2, 2011).

calls on its viewers, as activists in support of a common cause, to actively contribute in broadening the campaign's reach. Additional advocacy tools utilized by the website include access to their annual report (which provides information on sex-trafficking in India), a list of their publications (while for purchase), and links to their E-magazine and articles on sexual exploitation and violence against women in India.[85] As exemplified by its website, the organization is utilizing the Internet in order to 1) broaden public awareness on sex-trafficking and Sanlaap's anti-trafficking activities, 2) attract potential partners, 3) solicit monetary donations, 4) solicit help from volunteers, and 5) utilize viewers' contacts to network with potential donors and supporters through electronic communication.

Furthermore, Sanlaap's extensive list of regional and international partners allows the organization to utilize external knowledge bases in furthering its internal anti-trafficking campaign as well as partnering with global initiatives in the support and implementation of legislation such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution. Furthermore, in building linkages at the grassroots level, Sanlaap is also able to utilize the Internet to coordinate and collaborate with local and community-based organizations in assessing on-the-ground needs and implementing anti-trafficking strategies and rescue and rehabilitation services.

In 2005, Sanlaap formed the Youth Partnership Project for Child Survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation in South Asia (YPP) with the core objective to "encourage, support and strengthen youth participation and partnership in the fight against commercial sexual exploitation and at-risk youth living in red light districts, on streets or slums."[86] The project works to empower youth so that "they themselves are equipped to initiate dialogue and create

[85] Indrani Sinha, (Founder and Director of Sanlaap, Kolkata), interview with Sara Amri. June 7, 2010.
[86] Sanlaap. "The Youth Partnership Project," in *Sanlaap Annual Report 2008-2009*, http://www.sanlaapindia.org, (accessed on Mar 12, 2011), 9.

platforms where their opinions are viewed with gravity and respect. There is a psychological

shift in their perception of themselves from passive beneficiaries or victims to active citizens."[87]

As a part of this program YPP, and with funding from UNICEF, Sanlaap developed

YOU(TH) SPEAK, a multi-language monthly newsletter that "provides a voice to at-risk youth

through publishing poems, articles, writings, drawing and pictures" and serves as a platform for

"spreading awareness of social issues that directly affect the lives of youth, such as child labor,

drug abuse, and HIV/AIDS." [88] The publication, in addition to being distributed in print, is

released electronically. These youth have also had their articles published by UNICEF and in

online blogs. As noted by Indrani Sinha, director of Sanlaap, it is important to know how the

children who are surrounded by this environment and have been trafficked themselves feel and

how they think the prevention programs and initiatives can be directed at them.[89] YOU(TH)

SPEAK is significant because it gives children a chance to express their feelings about the issue

as well as how they think that programs and initiatives on trafficking can be directed at them.

Technology-enabled modes of political expression, as exemplified through YOU(TH)

SPEAK, foster, promote, and strengthen the political voice of the individual participant.

Representatives from YPP and YOU(TH) SPEAK acted as Indian representatives to the World

Congress against Commercial Sexual Exploitation during 2008 in Brazil among governments

and NGOs from around the world.[90] This opportunity enabled them to interact with decision-

makers and key stakeholders in the anti-trafficking campaign. They also presented a workshop

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[87] Ibid.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Indrani Sinha, (Founder and Director of Sanlaap, Kolkata), interview with Sara Amri. June 7, 2010.

[90] Sanlaap. "Youth Without Borders: YPP Spreads Awareness Around the Globe," in *Sanlaap Annual Report 2008-2009*, http://www.sanlaapindia.org, (accessed on Mar 12, 2011), 10.

on the YPP program and presented findings of a research project they conducted on child vulnerability in Red Light areas.[91]

Representatives of YPP have also participated in a Regional Consulation on trafficking and commercial exploitation of children along with youth representatives from several regional anti-trafficking organizations. Here, they created a 13-point charter of recommendations, "asking governments to speed up actions, implement existing laws, [and] introduce new legislation to combat trafficking."[92] Participants in the consultation included the Prime Minister of Nepal, the Prime Minister of India, the Foreign Minister of Nepal, and Nepal Government Representatives, as well as local and international NGOs.[93] The Internet and technology-enabled forums foster the political expression of informal political actors and strengthen their capacity to interact in a formal political setting.

Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee

The Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC) operates under a far more informal and unconventional structure than the aforementioned organizations. The DMSC is a "collectivization of about 65,000 sex workers in the Red Light district of Sonagachi but representing sex workers in the state of Bengal that promote sex worker's rights."[94] As specified under their objectives, "Durbar's shared mission is to enhance a process of social and political change with an objective to establish, promote and strengthen the rights, dignity, social status, and improvement of the quality of life of all marginalized communities in the globe." This organization differs from Apne Aap in three distinct ways: 1) it takes a pro-legalization stance on prostitution, 2) anti-trafficking initiatives are not its main focus but rather the political objective

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[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Ibid.

[94] Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee, "Welcome to Durbar," http://www.durbar.org, (accessed on May 12, 2010).

of sex worker's rights, and 3) it is run by sex workers themselves as opposed to formally trained

Indian activist feminists.

Given these factors, the DMSC's anti-trafficking strategies differ significantly as do their

political assertions.[95] They maintain that members of the sex worker community they are better

positioned to:

> "…keep a strong vigil in the red light districts through groups of volunteers who intercept any new entrants into the area, make enquires about where they have come from and their relationship with the people accompanying them, if any, and thoroughly examine the role of brothel owners and landlords in the process of recruitment."[96]

Differences in approaches to combat trafficking sometimes strain collaboration of organizations

like the DMSC with others such as Apne Aap and Sanlaap. Similar to the latter organizations,

however, the DMSC uses Internet to network, raise awareness, and mobilize international and

local actors in support of anti-trafficking efforts.

While much of the DMSC's funding and associates are internationally located, it

networks overwhelmingly with grassroots initiatives of marginalized populations such as the

Anandam, which works towards Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT)

empowerment as well as Amra Padatik, which aims to fight the stigma and discrimination faced

by the sex worker community.[97] Their website and the information presented on the website is

developed and selected by sex workers themselves as well. Through this, sex workers assume

authority and agency in determining the face of their organization in cyberspace as well as using

it as a vector to make political demands on sex-trafficking. Electronic advocacy tools utilized by

the Committee include posters, articles, films, a digital archive, and a link to their publications.

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[95] Anomyous. (Project Coordinator, Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee), interview with Sara Amri, June 8, 2009.

[96] Smarajit Jana and others, "A tale of two cities: shifting the paradigm of anti-trafficking programmes." *Gender and Development* 10 no. 1 (2002): 75.

[97] Anomyous. (Project Coordinator, Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee), interview with Sara Amri, June 8, 2009.

Viewers can also "interact" with the organization through an online discussion forum, a virtual tour, photo gallery, and via on-line donations.

The DMSC is a compelling case to analyze because it is headed by the marginalized population it seeks to empower. Members of the organization come from some of the most stigmatized sectors of India's population—women, sex workers, LGBT—many whom descend from lower castes.[98] Yet, despite this, the organization has achieved a profound amount of agency and autonomy as a social and political actor. For example, they have partnered with the Government of West Bengal in implementing their anti-trafficking strategy: this means sex workers are collaborating directly with government officials in formulating effective strategies to combat trafficking.[99] While the DMSC website infrastructure and technical capacity are not as advanced as that of Apne Aap, technology-enabled networking and communication has contributed to the organization's success in sex worker empowerment and anti-trafficking efforts. Technology has provided an opportunity for the sex workers that are members of the organization to present their voices, opinions and make political demands and observations through the Internet.

Through the Internet, electronic networking, and advocacy, NGOs and resource poor actors such as sex workers and victims of trafficking can organize, raise awareness, network and make political demands in ways that subvert traditional institutions of civil society. Technology-enabled social organizing and networks can cultivate and elevate the voices and political assertions of individuals, particularly, resource poor actors such as sex workers and victims of trafficking. Within the context of India's strong civil society and democratic and participatory environment, these mediums have brought previously disenfranchised voices into political

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[98] Ibid.
[99] Ibid.

conversations and helped foster and strengthen their political voices. With this in mind, I suggest that following the creation of the Internet in the 1980s, there has been increasing representation of these individuals and groups in the formal political sphere. This can be exemplified by the anti-trafficking organizations discussed above. For example, in October 2009, Ruchira Gupta, Director of Apne Aap took a panel of survivors of sex-trafficking to the UN General Assembly in New York and, in 2010, led a group to speak before the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.[100] Furthermore, as discussed, Sanlaap has brought members of its YPP to speak at various international forums on anti-trafficking. In 1997, the DMSC held the First National Conference of Sex Workers and have cultivated ongoing partnerships with Department of Health, Labor and Social Welfare as well as the Government of West Bengal. More recently, the organization has been working with the Government of West Bengal to register State-level Coordination Committees of its Self-Regulatory Boards to facilitate the rehabilitation of victims of sex-trafficking rescued by DMSC.[101] While acknowledging the external and environmental factors that enable this participation, I argue that technology-enabled social networks and electronic communication have enhanced the interconnectedness of local disenfranchised groups, NGOs, and anti-trafficking activists across a global landscape. In doing so, they have strengthened their participation, visibility, and voices in the formal political sphere in ways that were previously impossible.

Global Cities

Anti-trafficking organizations such as Apne Aap, Sanlaap, and the DMSC operate in global cities that enhance their capacity to network locally and transnationally. In Sassen's essay

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[100] Ruchira Gupta, (Founder and Director of Apne Aap, New Delhi), interview by Sara Amri, May 23, 2010.

[101] Anomyous. (Project Coordinator, Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee), interview with Sara Amri, June 8, 2009.

Global Cities and Diasporic Networks: Microsites in Gobal Civil Society, she notes that global

cities enable cross border struggles and allow the convergence of global networks for trans-

boundary campaigns such as anti-trafficking initiatives. These cities "help people experience

themselves as a part of a global non-state network as they live their daily lives" and "enable

global civil society in the microspaces of daily life rather than some putative global scale."[102]

Here, local and global networks form "thick enabling environments" for activist struggles that

allow for the "unbundling of the exclusive authority over territory and people" that have long

been associated with the nation-state.[103] All three of these organizations organizations maintain

their central offices in the metropolitan cities of Mumbai, Kolkata, and/or New Delhi. These

cities are sites for the convergence of interstate and intrastate trafficking networks (i.e. Nepal to

India) as well as transnational and local anti-trafficking initiatives which converge at

"microsites"—namely the cities and organizations themselves. Given the urbanization of Internet

accessibility in India, this means that these global cities, as exemplified by the aforementioned

anti-trafficking organizations, serve as sites of convergence for electronic anti-trafficking

networks, activities, and campaigns as well.

Transforming Notions of Citizenship

The denationalization of activist struggles have contributed to changing notions of

citizenship that can "allow large numbers of localized people and organizations to become part

of global civil society."[104] Global cities and the convergence of local and global activist networks

are transforming traditional state relations in favor of collective citizen authority over that of the

state. The de-linkage of people and territory has contributed to the "loosening of identities from

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[102] Saskia Sassen, "Global Cities and Diasporic Networks," 217.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Ibid, 236.

their traditional sources" (such as the nation or village) which engenders new notions of community of membership and of entitlement.[105] Most significantly – this enables disadvantaged and marginalized populations to claim space as active participants and agents in global civil society and allows unprecedented opportunities for social change achieved by the marginalized for the marginalized.

Networking, communication, and global social movements such as the anti-trafficking campaign have contributed to an "emergent transnational sense of one's community of membership and, to some extent, an often key part of one's sense of identity."[106] Many aspects of the anti-trafficking movement "illustrate these cross-border identities in that these activists tend to identify more strongly with the global movement than with their national state."[107] Applying this theoretical framework, I posit that through their emergence as increasingly active and visible components of the global anti-trafficking movement, members of local anti-trafficking initiatives in India display shifting notions of citizenship and identity. The DMSC's vision (as displayed on their website) reads as follows: "Durbar seeks to build a world where all marginalized communities live in an environment of respect, rights and dignity. Durbar hopes for a new social order where there is no discrimination by class, caste, gender or occupation and all individuals live in peace and harmony as global citizens." The DMSC calls for the deconstruction and dissolving of social hierarchies and divisions present in contemporary Indian society; in this process, and in their identification as actors in the global anti-trafficking campaign, members of the DMSC display deterritorialized interpretations of citizenship and identity.

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[105] Ibid, 218.
[106] Ibid, 232.
[107] Ibid.

Conclusion

      Globalization and the Internet have allowed for the surfacing of a new type of modern social movement—one which possesses an increasingly broad spectrum of social actors and an enhanced and promising capacity to mobilize for global justice. Anti-trafficking organizations use of ICT in their organizational structure and function exemplifies their network-oriented mindset. Their deliberate use of ICT to gain international support has enabled resource poor organizations and groups, such as Indian anti-trafficking NGOs, to transcend the traditional confines of the state and citizenship and emerge as independent, legitimate, and autonomous actors with the power and authority to demand change.

      The mechanisms utilized by the anti-trafficking NGOs I have referred to, including discussion forums, social networks such as Facebook and Twitter, and electronic forms of protest and testimony, rather than serving as tools of mediation traditionally used by civil society, serve as tools of direct engagement and political demand. Here, political debates between relatively resource poor organizations, activists, politicians, and disenfranchised voices such as sex workers or victims of trafficking, emerge simultaneously on a relatively uniform platform. Traditional concepts of civil society must be re-thought and understood in terms of the technological environment in which they occur and the network-oriented mindset of civil society actors. Technology-enabled social networking, organization, advocacy, and political expression and action exemplify a networked, online civil society. This represents a new form of politics that brings previously disenfranchised voices into political conversations with greater ease, efficiency, prominence, and impact on decision-making. The rapidity, fluidity, and accessibility of this online space subvert traditional institutions of civil society and allow resource poor actors and other individuals to bypass many of the barriers to political participation previously in place.

In the case of anti-trafficking NGOs and activists in India, this has enhanced their growing recognition in formal political spheres.

Transnational spaces such as the Internet facilitate and promote the "experience of collective identities and solidarities" which enables the ascendency of citizenship outside the confines of the national state.[108] Not only do the aforementioned NGOs exemplify this ideology but through their local and global activities (i.e. collaboration with government officials and international organizations) they have already begun the deconstruction of social divisions and traditional political hierarchies. Advances made by anti-trafficking organizations in India signal that the international community must invest increasing attention to understanding the potential of ICT and network-oriented mindsets in strengthening social justice movements in local contexts.

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[108] Sassen (2002), 234.

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