

## **Reflections on Digital ICTs, Gender and Sexuality in Asia**

(Draft: For discussion purposes only. Please do not reproduce.)

Michael L. Tan

Professor, Department of Anthropology  
College of Social Sciences and Philosophy  
University of the Philippines  
Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines  
upanthrodept@gmail.com

PAPER PREPARED FOR AN ASIA REGIONAL DIALOGUE ON SEXUALITY AND GEOPOLITICS.

SPONSORED BY SEXUALITY POLICY WATCH AND INSTITUTE FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

HANOI, VIETNAM – APRIL 10-12, 2009

This paper will present an overview of issues related to gender and sexuality in an age of digital ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies), referred to by the futurologist Alvin Toffler (1980) as the third wave, following the Agricultural Revolution and the Industrial Revolution.

My presentation is divided into three parts. I will first explain the theoretical framework used for this paper. The second part will be a historical review of information media in general, leading to the current digital revolution. I will also present some statistics on the reach of digital ICTs in Asia.

In the last part of the paper I will describe distinctive characteristics of digital ICTs that have implications for the area of sexuality and move on to a focus on digital ICTs in terms of its space-making functions and interactions, as they relate to gender and sexuality.

### Introduction

Much has been written about the digital revolution but there seem to be different worlds in the academe, each dealing with the digital revolution with particular perspectives. Even in the area of social sciences, there are distinct differences in the analysis of the digital revolution, depending on the field: sociology, anthropology, media studies. Each too has its own jargon, of sampling and bits (and bytes) and packets, of CMC (computer-mediated communication) and SCSSK (sociology of cyber-social-scientific knowledge) (See Hine 2005:9).

To prepare this paper I had to go through some of the technical material explaining some of the intricacies of digital technology, and then wade through media studies, before ending up with the emerging field of virtual ethnographies.

For this paper, I will be revisiting the works of Harold A. Innis and Marshall McLuhan, both known for their analysis of mass communications and modernity and sharing a view that technologies constitute social relations. McLuhan's proposed that "the medium is the message", which meant that while a technological medium may itself carry no message, its transformation of space and time shapes people's perceptions of the world and the way they structure their social relations. McLuhan's examples of how important the medium is included the differences between watching a movie on TV and watching it in a theater, as well the difference between listening to and reading the news. Today, we could reflect on the implications of people requesting particular newspapers, for example The New York Times, to email alerts on very specific news articles.

McLuhan's first book, "The Mechanical Bride: Folklore of Industrial Man", published in 1951, already had a reference to sexuality, with some interesting insights into how his own conservative Catholic background was shaping his views. Analyzing 60 print ads, one of his conclusions was that the body had been transformed into "a sort of love machine capable merely of specific thrill, a view which reduces sex experience to a problem in mechanics and hygiene" (p. 99).

McLuhan's later work had a more optimistic view of the power of mass communications, with an interest in developing taxonomies of mass media. Similar to Innis' work in the 1950s, McLuhan looked into space- and time-biases of various media, depending on its portability. For example, light information media such as paper was important for the administrative functions of bureaucracies, one that was biased toward space with its portability, but which had the disadvantage of deteriorating rapidly. Time-biased media, on the other hand, used more durable media (eg text etched in stone) and was more useful for preserving and propagating religious doctrines. McLuhan also developed a taxonomy of "hot" (intense media like cinema, which tends to create passive consumers) and "cold" (more interactive) media. He died in 1980, right at the threshold of the era of personal computers, but he had already taken notice of the emerging electronic media.

While McLuhan has been accused of technological determinism, his work resonates in this era of digital ICTs, particularly in the way these technologies have allowed people to reconfigure not just space and time but their social relations and personal identities.

The strong role attributed to communications technologies is certainly not limited to McLuhan. Benedict Anderson's classic, *Imagined Communities*, describes how print technologies transformed societies. Specifically, he refers to how a printed Bible meant more people could have their own copy of the Bible, which they could reflect on and which led to a questioning of Catholic religious leadership and its monopoly on the interpretation of the Bible. Anderson also describes how, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, "imagined communities" and nationalism were facilitated by the mass circulation of newspapers.

The digital ICTs allow us to examine modernity (and postmodernity) in relation to both structure and agency, technologies and technological media. We get to better appreciate the work of De Certeau (1984) on everyday life, and his view of popular culture as consisting of operations performed upon texts, rather than actual domains of texts. There is also the work of Giddens on modernity and structuration (1986), and Appadurai (1996) on globalization, global ethnoscapas and global imagination. Finally, given the many powerful metaphors of digital and virtual realities, and our interest in the dialogue in geopolitics, Auge's (1995) work on spaces and places and non-places, becomes all the more relevant.

Together then, these various social theorists allow us to navigate the digital sexual landscapes in a way that goes beyond traditional phenomenological studies of texts (which in fact Appadurai is sometimes prone to), with the often disembodied and depoliticized focus on meanings, as well as classical political economy, which tends to look at mass media mainly in terms of ideological hegemonies in capitalism, manipulating passive consumers.

## **A timeline**

Jensen (2002:3-4) proposes a framework for looking at the development of media, calling them "degrees". The framework lends itself well to a historical review.

Media of the first degree are ". . .biologically based, socially formed resources that enable humans to articulate an understanding of reality, for a particular purpose, and to engage with others in communications about it." These include verbal language, song, musical expression, dance, drama, painting, creative arts. There is social interaction but this is limited to small groups or communities.

Media of the second degree are ". . .technically reproduced or enhanced forms of representation and interaction which support communication across space and time, irrespective of the presence and number of participants and include printed materials, cinema, television. Interaction is limited, with a passive recipient (reading, watching a movie) although the telephone, technically a medium of the second degree, was one important exception. Analogue recording media developed across time to produce high quality recordings, but this depended on capturing large amounts of "data" (soundwaves, for example) which had the disadvantages of needing large storage media, and erosion with each re-recording. These media did allow some play with reality in the way images and sounds could be edited and retouched.

Media of the third degree refers to ". . .digitally processed forms of representation and interaction which reproduce and recombine previous media on a single platform." These are highly interactive, and allow much re-representation. Data – text, sounds, colors – are converted into numbers (digits) which can be packed for rapid re-reading (or sampling), reproduction and dissemination.

The digital revolution is usually dated to 1947, when the transistor was developed, paving the way for digital computers. Through the next two decades, many small but important discoveries – integrated circuits, the Intel chip, the mouse, floppy discs, even Spacewars, the first computer game – paved the way for an explosion of digital technologies. In 1969, Arpanet – the predecessor of the Internet – was developed to facilitate communications between computer networks. Microsoft and Apple Computers were formed in the 1970s.

In 1979, IBM introduced its first personal computer (PC) and in the 1980s, PCs (IBMs and clones) became commercialized. The 1980s also saw software such as Lotus 1-2-3, Microsoft Word, as well as other digital technologies, from Swatch watches to the first handheld mobile phone.

The 1990s and this first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century saw the explosive expansion of the Internet and the World Wide Web with all its derivatives: blogs and social networking sites. The last decade has also seen greater access to personal computers and laptops, as well as mobile phones, digital cameras and video recorders, MP3 players.

Digital ICTs still build, and are partly dependent, on older information technologies and media (for example, broadband Internet connections are still largely dependent on fixed telephone lines) but have taken radical new forms, allowing an interrogation of the very concept of “information” and “communication” itself. The new forms come about as these technologies converge: for example, cellphones now having Internet capability and incorporating digital cameras and audioplayers/recorders while the Internet allows for the transmission, and reproduction (often illegal) of data captured through these digital technologies. Digital technologies have also allowed more reproduction and distribution of older analogue products, an interesting example of modernity riding on nostalgia as old movies, old songs, old photographs, are restored and re-stored.

The digital ICTs have penetrated developing countries. The International Telecommunications Union’s latest yearbook (2009:iv) notes that:

In the developing world, mobile phones have revolutionized telecommunication and have reached an estimated average 61 per cent penetration rate at the end of 2008 – from close to zero only ten years ago. This is not only faster than any other technology in the past, but the mobile phone is also the single most widespread ICT today. The number of Internet users, on the other hand, has grown at a much slower rate, in particular in the developing world, where at the end of 2007 only 13 out of 100 inhabitants used the Internet. Fixed Internet access in developing countries is still limited, and, where available, often slow and/or expensive. High-speed (broadband) connections are rare and mobile broadband, while increasing steeply in high-income countries, is still insignificant in most developing countries.

The appendix provides statistics on ICTs from Asia, with the leading developed countries included for purposes of comparison. Asia provides an interesting case for study because quite a

few countries have leapfrogged into the digital age – many countries now have more cellphone subscribers than fixed phone lines -- with some countries (eg South Korea) faring better now than many developed countries in terms of digital ICT coverage and access. The percentages for digital penetration may be small but because Asia's population is so large, these percentages convert into large absolute numbers. China for example has an estimated 200 million Internet users, while Vietnam had as of the end of 2007, 24 million mobile cellular phone subscriptions. (ITU 2009:5-6, 31)

Also important is the way the ICT sector itself has become globalized, especially from 2002 onwards, from software development to manufacturing of hardware, all the way up to the operation of call centers, so that the ICT sector is now a vital part of many Asian countries' economies.

## **Digital ICTs and digital spaces**

The revolutionary potential of digital ICTs draws from several distinctive and common attributes:

First, digital technology has meant greater reproducibility, with large amounts of information packed into smaller and smaller media, without losing fidelity or quality.

Second, digital technology is marked by its ease for and versatility in sharing and dissemination, including the options of going from one-on-one to many-to-many connectivity, and the many peer-to-peer file-sharing functions.

Third, digital technology is flexible, digital data being easy to reconfigure, recombine, re-embed.

Fourth, digital technology is relatively accessible. While many of the computers and gadgets are expensive, costs have been dropping over the years. In addition, Internet cafes allow even low-income individuals to access the Internet at extremely low costs.

Fifth, digital technologies allow for autonomy and decentralization with reproduction and distribution, often in the privacy of the home.

Sixth, digital technologies allow for relative anonymity.

Note how these attributes allow us to revisit Innes and McLuhan's contentions about media shaping society, even while rendering their taxonomies obsolete. Multi-platform, multi-media, these digital ICTs transcend both space and time.

These attributes have allowed digital ICTs to become more than information media. Instead, we speak now of digital ICTs as constantly growing potential spaces, albeit "virtual", "hyperreal" or even "non-places", which I have broadly categorized into 7 types, and where we can apply Innes and McLuhan's view of socially constituted and socially constitutive spaces. (I invite others to

come up with more metaphors besides the “information superhighway” to describe the digital spaces and places.)

- 1) Libraries. Sites for information. Given the digital ICTs’ characteristics, we speak here of large amounts of information now becoming more accessible and through facilitated searches (search engines and, simply, being accessible through a computer). Digital ICTs have allowed a customization of information, people now choosing what they want. The potentials are tremendous, for education, information and advocacy around reproductive and sexual health. This can range from vital biomedical information about contraception and abortion to explanations of homosexuality and other issues around which there is stigmatization or socially-imposed silence.

I use “libraries” here loosely. The idea of private electronic libraries is also important, with its tensions between privacy and disclosure. If in the real world people keep “dirty drawers” of porn and sex toys, folders in computers can be “secret” places for “sexy” materials, materials produced on something as basic as a digital camera embedded in a mobile phone.

- 2) Recreational sites (amusement parks?). The entertainment aspect of digital ICTs cannot be underestimated. Internet cafes cater more to these recreational demands than education, from downloading of MP3 music files to gaming. There has been an explosion in the availability of videos, including previously banned films with sexual themes, escaping censors and becoming readily available at extremely low costs. Appropriately, the regional dialogue is being held in Hanoi, where tiny DVD shops can yield films ranging from those of the Spanish film maker Almodavar to Japanese hentai (anime pornography) and even an occasional Filipino indie film like “Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros” (The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros) about a transgendered child growing up in an urban slum area with a family of cellphone snatchers, while struggling through first love, the neighborhood policeman.

I intentionally chose the term “recreational” to highlight the way these electronic spaces are entertaining as well as re-creational (and re-presentational) in a selective way, so important as we look at sexuality. The recreational spaces are most intriguing in the way they let loose the surreal and the fantastic (as in fantasies), a point to which I will return later when discussing digital spaces as platforms for performance.

- 3) Socialization. Digital ICTs allow socialization that defies physical borders and, more importantly, overcoming social strictures and inhibitions. At the most basic level, mobile phones, email and, increasingly now, VOIP (voice over Internet protocols) have revolutionized communications and the meaning of “being in touch”. As part of its marketing, Skype flashes on the screen how many other users are online and on April 8, when I was using Skype, the numbers ran from 8 million to 15 million.

Other Internet sites further expand the potentials for socialization, explicit about possibilities for partnering, from cruising to non-sexual “dating” (including as a prelude for actual physical dating or eyeballing), to sexual activities (audio or audio-visual). Again, the numbers can be staggering. Planet Romeo, an international gay site, reported the following number of posts a few days ago:

Planet Romeo postings, statistics posted March 21, 2009

Europe	607936
Asia*	260352
No America	75537
Africa	14259
So America	12430
Middle East	7193
Australia	7174
Central Am	2566
TOTAL	987447

Note that for Asia, the Philippines accounts for 133,545 posts, compared to Vietnam with 760 and Afghanistan with 74.

#### 4) Social networking.

The term “social networking” is used to describe sites like Friendster and MySpace. I use social networking here as distinct from socialization. Social networking has a more deliberate organizing component that goes beyond dyadic social relations. Social networking is particularly important for organizing people around common interests, as well as in the building of identities around gender and sexualities. The number of groups that have sprouted is amazing, including intersex people, transsexuals. . .and the many types of “sexual minorities” or even “sexual outlaws”.

Social networking sites allow people to acquire thousands of friends. In relation to gender and sexuality, the social networking may be more circumscribed, but are still significant, and some sites that cater to specific sexual minority populations can become highly segmented, allowing subgroups to form around specific interests, from sexual fetishes to pets to religion.

In countries like the Philippines and Indonesia, mobile telephony remains a major channel for social networking. In the Philippines, “clans” that take on a fraternity/sorority nature, with up to a hundred members, have been built through random dialing of numbers, and then snowballing through the new contacts. The clan members

meet up physically, and allow for new friends beyond the immediate geographical neighborhood.

#### 5) Marketplaces

E-commerce has opened many new possibilities in terms of access to sexual materials, from pornography to sex toys to academic materials to Viagra and Cialis (which seem to form the bulk of spam solicitations). Although access to foreign exchange is still restricted in many countries, E-commerce has developed rapidly and it has become easier now to obtain materials that was previously heavily restricted. Digital technology allows potential buyers to overcome many of these restrictions, starting with initial “browsing” or “shopping”. Even in relatively liberal societies that have sex shops, entering the store may be considered embarrassing so online shopping opens new possibilities. E-commerce has also allowed access to lifestyle pharmaceuticals, sex toys, books and videos.

E-commerce has also expanded the possibilities for sex work, from the more traditional forms with agents or pimps processing bookings, to autonomous sex workers now advertising themselves openly.

#### 6) Platforms for performance. Digital spaces, and technologies, allow a reconfiguration of the self and of one’s private lives, as well as of communities, of what Appadurai calls “imagined selves, imagined worlds” (1996:3). Socialization and networking in digital spaces hinges now, not on “presentation” but on re-presentation and performance. Suddenly, for example, every other gay Filipino male presents himself as “bisexual”, “discreet” and “masculine” because these are the perceived desirable traits among men who have sex with men.

There are other implications for gender and sexuality that may not be as apparent but are important too, especially as we look at lived sexual lives, from the little lies around one’s physical location (a theme which has made it into Thai and Filipino rap songs, of the feckless husband lying to the wife on the cellphone) to the “reinvention” of self on MySpace.

Performance allows other digital spaces to be constantly recolonized and reculturalized, allowing an explosion of digital fantasies, from stripteasers on one’s desktop (See for example [www.74.virtuaguyhd.com](http://www.74.virtuaguyhd.com), [activedancer.com](http://activedancer.com)) to webcam-facilitated cybersex. In the Philippines, there have been at least two instances where police raided Internet cybersex shops, with male transvestites pretending to be women to entertain heterosexual Korean clients.

#### 7) Political arenas. To a large extent, all the previous “spaces” that I discussed have characteristics of social arenas. Digital spaces are forums for expression, and for



contestations of those views. Blogs and chatrooms, even in sites for dating and cybersex, are also active with chatters, discussing everything from sexual fetishes to national politics. Sites can be subversive, allowing prohibited images, and ideas to be reproduced and disseminated.

I will return to the discussion of politics and political arenas, but wanted to emphasize here that the taxonomy I presented is in a sense artificial because digital spaces are often contemporaneous hybrid or “mestizo” spaces (Auge and Jacob 1999), used at once for recreation, political expression, socialization.

It is also important to remember that the digital spaces, for all its hyperreal attributes, are still linked to the physical world. In fact, the power of digital spaces lies not just in simulation of the physical but in attempting interfaces. This has been particularly important in the area of cybersex, with attempts to conflate the virtual and the real with gadgets and devices like the cyberdildo (a USB interface dildo, used while watching porn).

## **Politics of Digital Spaces**

Hine (2000:2) suggests three possible ways of looking at the Internet, which could well apply to an examination of the actors and stakeholders in digital ICTs.

First, we could look at the technologies as a “. . . logical upshot of modern society preoccupied with rationality and control”. Toffler’s description of a third wave for humanity does in fact recognize how, in industrial society, information needs grow for the military as well as corporations, with the need to organize and access this information more efficiently.

There are questions revolving around political economy. Who controls information and information flow, and for what purposes? Certainly, digital spaces often end up maintaining, if not amplifying, the status quo, with essentialized, medicalized, commodified sexualities, together with further privileging the male in terms of access to the spaces.

Other sexual ideologies are reproduced through the digital ICTs gendered spaces. An example comes with the re-presentations of self on Internet sites to conform to perceived norms, as well as explicit rejections of certain types such as, among gay men, “uglies”, “fems”, “fatties”. Often, too, the rejection of physical types carry elements of class discrimination: “no fems”, for example, is actually a rejection of lower-class transgenders.

A second view proposed by Hine is that of digital ICTs as “. . . embodiments of postmodern mode of (dis)organization, with fragmentation of science, religion, culture, society, self.” This “postmodern” view could look at the digital frontiers as areas of refuge, and growth, of diverse ideas and identities, without sexual minorities and sexual outlaws. For conservatives, this is seen

as modernity leading to moral decay, and the response is moral panic, with stricter rules and laws.

Finally, and this view overlaps with the second, digital ICTs could be looked at as “. . .agents of radical changes in social organization”. Information and information flow are important, and the spaces for talking, and talking back.

How might we go about studying the politics of digital spaces? Taking off from Grint and Wolgar (1997), Hint (2000:10-12) de-emphasizes attributes of technologies as shaping or determining forces and suggests instead that we look at the Internet both as a cultural artifact (a product of culture) and as a space where culture is being formed and reformed. She also emphasizes the need to look at social processes involved in the digital ICTs – from the design of its technologies and Internet’s architecture to actual utilization.

Some of the methods for looking into these digital spaces come from traditional media and communications research. There is content analysis, looking at representations in the texts and images of the digital jungle. There can be discourse analysis, looking at who is “saying” what, and to whom although the digital ways of expression may be very different. “Links” on a website, for example, speak of who someone, or an organization, might be, and its interests. International links on the Pro Life Philippines website, for example, are all American and include a link to “Courage Apostolate”, which claims to help people with “same-sex attractions” to develop an “interior life of chastity”.

There is “big picture” analysis. State, supra-State and non-state actors recognize the power of the digital ICTs and its spaces. Classical political economy focuses on the hegemonies, with concerns of First World colonialism being reproduced through the digital spaces, as well as the political economies of media control through the big five: Time Warner, Disney, NewsCorp, Viacom and Bertelsmann (Bagdikian 2004).

Digital ICTs have also sparked off social and moral panics, with responses taking many forms. These institutional responses are important to document. For example, the Catholic church in the Philippines went into its own Internet filtering as early as 2001 with prepaid Internet cards. Entry into an “X-rated” site brought up a warning message, and a block. The business went into bankruptcy a year after.

Even earlier, in 1997, China’s State Council passed Computer Information Network and Internet Security, Protection, and Management Regulation, with Section 5 providing for very specific prohibitions “No unit or individual may use the Internet to create, replicate, retrieve, or transmit the following kinds of information”. This includes such prohibitions as “inciting to overthrow the government or the socialist system” as well as “promoting feudal superstitions, sexually suggestive material, gambling, violence, murder”.

The moral panic continues and takes many forms. In the United States, the last few weeks have seen a focus on “sexting”, where young people send photographs of themselves to friends, through mobile phones (Gibbs 2009). An even more controversial development was the case of a 14-year old American girl charged, just last month (March 2009), with distributing pornographic materials. The materials were photographs of herself, naked, and which she posted on her Internet site. The debates here resurrect many old issues around civil liberties and the very definitions of obscenity and pornography. The following passage from a National Research Council study (conducted by a Committee to Study Tools and Strategies for Protecting Kids from Pornography and Their Applicability to Other Inappropriate Internet Content) reflects old debates on what constitutes obscenity:

Extreme sexually explicit imagery to create sexual desire on the one hand, and responsible information on sexual health on the other, are arguably unrelated and, many would contend, easily distinguished. But much content is not so easily categorized. While some extreme sexually explicit material meets legal tests for obscenity (and therefore does not enjoy First Amendment protection), less extreme material may not—and material described in the previous paragraph, lingerie advertisements, and models in swimsuits generally do enjoy First Amendment protection, at least for adults and often for children. [Section 7.3]

In short, sexually oriented content that falls outside the realm of extreme sexually explicit imagery is likely to be the source of greatest contention, and there are arguments about whether such content would be subject to regulatory efforts aimed at reducing the exposure of minors to material that is or may be sexual in nature. [Section 7.3] (Thornburgh and Lin 2002:5)

Some of the moral panic draws from old social phobias, as in the Religious Right’s tirades against homosexuality and homosexuals while others result directly from the digital representations, as with recent fears over “sexting”.

The digital chattering certainly often shows the overarching effects of class, race, ethnicity with gender. One example is an extended discussion that began with the murder of a young man in California (<http://www.topix.com/forum/oakland/TKV3FNPVDE17SO5JB>) bringing out tensions around masculinities, Asian-ness and race.

Many governments, as well as non-State actors such as religious bodies, face dilemmas, wanting to tap into digital ICTs and its potentials, as well as its being a symbol of modernization and progress, yet fear its potential. We thus have the paradox of a country like China, where the government is actually wiring households for high-speed Internet access, and yet needs to bring in “information purifiers” to filter the Internet.

## **Future Spaces and Places**

The moral panic itself is one of the social processes to look at, but it is equally important to look at how Internet users themselves develop their own “street-smart” cybersex networks, including degrees of self-regulation for safer networking. This will mean going to the level of individuals and small groups, at how Internet cruisers look at themselves and their risks, so well summarized by one contribution to an anthology, “Six word Memoirs on Love and Heartbreak”: “If I get Chlamydia blame MySpace” (Slocum 2009).

For all the fears of an Internet-induced STD epidemic, we might miss out on how the Internet could in fact create, in some instances “virtual virtue and sex discarnate” (Levinson 1999:57), with the way “virtual” sex allows a safe (and relatively chaste?) distancing of bodies. This puts McLuhan on his head, the master of modern mass communications actually fretting at one time about “discarnate man. . .relieved of all commitments to law and morals”. Almost tongue-in-cheek it seems, Levinson (1999:60) talks about the relative chastity: “. . .as long as online angels take care not to jeopardize their status by falling offline, or coming to Earth to confirm or extend their relationship in the real, palpable world.”

Virtual ethnographies need not be elaborate exercises in discourse analysis. Even casual surfing of the Internet will show how digital or electronic spaces reinforce older concepts of gendered spaces, for example, “female” sites devoted mainly to housekeeping and “male” sites to cars and gadgets.

De Certeau reminds us “spaces are a frequented place”, where there is “intersection of moving bodies”. Ultimately, it is important to look at how virtual spaces “converse” with embodied places. There is in fact a whole field of cyberdildonics attempting to link the virtual and the physical to enhance sexual experiences, for example, dildos hooked up to the computer through the USB port so it can be remotely operated while watching porn.

The interfaces between the virtual and the “real” spaces are strongest for socialization. Some electronic chatting eventually leads to “eyeball” encounters, for actual physical interaction. Its links to sex tourism have been described for the Philippines, where a Filipino may have contacted potential sex partners in Thailand long before the actual visit (Dalisay, Tan and Ting 2008).

It is important as well to look at the physical “brick-and-mortar” structures that accompany the virtual worlds, for example the Internet cafes, which have become so important in developing countries. Internet café clients tend to be more of young males using the cafes for gaming and for socialization. In a way then, the Internet and Internet cafes become sites for male socialization and reproduction of male ideologies, while excluding females (simply because more of the clients are males). One could look too into gender breakdowns in the ownership of personal and laptop computers, mobile phones.

Finally, there are the very real physical establishments involved in the production and distribution of sexuality-related digital products. The networks for DVDs, with their many

sexually explicit titles, need to be analyzed: who determines which titles and genres are to be produced and how are these consumed? I am also fascinated with the places these DVDs are sold: in Manila, it is in Quiapo in a predominantly Muslim district, in the shadow of a mosque and Catholic basilica.

The growing interest in social justice and sexuality (Correa, Petchesky and Parker 2008) means that we must deal as well with the continuing digital divide, not just among but also within countries. The ITU report (2009:18) highlights two important features that affect ICT use: an ICT price basket, and something as basic as literacy. Without basic literacy, even the cheapest ICT would be useless. And in countries with fairly high literacy, as in China and the Philippines, even relatively cheap ICT would limit its access. One could argue about the impact of this digital divide. On one hand, it could mean depriving people of alternatives in relation to gender and sexualities. On the other hand, it could also mean people not becoming trapped by the increasingly globalized essentializing of sex and sexuality.

One should revisit, too, many of the assumptions about communications and information that are too quickly transferred into digital ICTs, for example, the assumption that the Internet amplifies the exploitation of mail order brides. Constable (2003) provides an interesting challenge to this, showing agency and negotiations in the Internet correspondence between potential brides and grooms.

We are challenged to explore, to map, the digital world, yet one is reminded of Baudrillard (1995:1) “the territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it.” Even as we map the digital, the territory changes, morphs, mutates.

To give one concrete example, we might want to look quickly at how digital ICTs affect Filipino overseas workers, some 9 million spread throughout the world. What do the digital ICTs mean for them? Is “being in touch”, including cybersex, sufficient to keep them faithful to spouses or partners left back home? What new tensions emerge as the digital technologies are used? For example, there has been some discussion of cybersex being sinful. An article actually appeared in PC Magazine in 2001 talking about cybersex, and included a reference to the Catholic view: “To remove all murkiness, the church ruled recently that carnal e-mail and illicit online relationships are sins. "Virtual reality can be just as much a vice as a reality made up of facts and actions," said Reverend Antino Sciortino, editor of Famiglia Cristiana magazine” (Behr 2001).

Correa, Petchesky and Parker (2008:20) refer to the brave new world of sex in late, modern capitalism, marked especially by an “explosion of intimate possibilities”. Many more exciting developments are likely in the future in this multi-terrain, multivocal age of digitalized bodies, senses, fantasies and desires, wired and lived.

## **References**

Anderson, Benedict. 2006. *Imagined Communities*. New Edition. London: Verso.

- Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Auge, Marc. 1995. *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. John Howe, trans. London: Verso.
- Auge, Marc and Jacobs, Amy. 1999. *An Anthropology for Contemporaneous Worlds (Mestizo Spaces/Espaces Metisses)*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Bagdikian, Ben H. 2004. *The New Media Monopoly*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2004
- Baudrillard, Jean. 1995. Sheila Glaser, translator. *Simulcra and Simulation. The Body, In Theory: Histories of Cultural Materialism*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Constable, Nicole. 2003. *Romance on a Global Stage: Pen Pals, Virtual Ethnography and "Mail-Order" Marriages*. Los Angeles and California: University of California Press.
- Correa, Sonia, Rosalind Petchesky and Richard Parker. 2008. *Sexuality, Health and Human Rights*. London and New York: Routledge Press.
- Dalisay, Soledad, Michael L. Tan and Raul Ting. 2007. *Men Searching for Sex*. Unpublished report prepared for the Cross-Border Sex project, coordinated by Gadj Mada University.
- De Certeau, Michel. 1984. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1986. *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*. San Francisco: University of California Press.
- Grint, K. and S. Woolgar. 1997. *The Machine at Work: Technology, Work, Organisation*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Hine, Christine. 2000. *Virtual Ethnography*. London: Sage.
- Hine, Christine, ed. 2005. "Virtual Methods and the Sociology of Cyber-Social-Scientific Knowledge" In: *Virtual Methods: Issues in Social Research on the Internet*, pp. 1-16. New York: Berg Publications.
- Innis, Harold A. 1950. *Empire and Communications*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Innis, Harold A. 1951. *The Bias of Communication*. Toronto: Toronto University Press.
- International Telecommunications Union. 2009. *Measuring the Information Society: The ICT Development Index*. Geneva: International Telecommunications Union.

Jensen, Kalus Bruhn. 2002. *A Handbook of Media and Communication Research*. London and New York: Routledge.

Levinson, Paul. 1999. *Digital McLuhan: A Guide to the Information Millennium*. London: Routledge.

McLuhan, Marshall. 1951. *The Mechanical Bride*. New York: Vanguard Press.

McLuhan, Marshall. 1994. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. London: Routledge.

McLuhan, Marshall and Q. Fiore. 1967. *The Medium is the Message*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Slocum, Hanorah. 2009. In: Rachel Fershleiser and Larry Smith (editors), *Six-Word Memoirs on Love and Heartbreak*. New York: Harper Perennial.

Thornburgh, Dick and Herbert S. Lin, editors. 2002. *Youth, Pornography and the Internet*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.

Toffler, Alvin. 1980. *The Third Wave*. London: Collins.

### **Electronic Resources**

Behr, Mary. 2001. High-tech sex. *PC Magazine*, September 1, 2001.  
<http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,36076,00.asp>, Accessed April 10, 2009.

Digital cameras. [www.wikipedia.com/wiki/digital\\_camera](http://www.wikipedia.com/wiki/digital_camera). Accessed March 28, 2009.

Farley, Tom. 2007. The Cell-Phone Revolution. *American Heritage*.  
<http://www.americanheritage.com/events/articles/web/20070110-cell-phone-att-mobile-phone-motorola-federal-communications-commission-cdma-tdma-gsm.shtml>, Accessed March 28, 2009.

Gibbs, Nancy. 2009. Second Thoughts about Kids and Cell Phones. *Time*, March 9, 2009.  
<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1883376,00.html>, Accessed March 28, 2009.

History of the Internet. [www.wikipedia.com/wiki/History\\_of\\_the\\_Internet](http://www.wikipedia.com/wiki/History_of_the_Internet). Accessed March 28, 2009.

History of Mobile Phones. [www.wikipedia.com/wiki/History\\_of\\_mobile\\_phones](http://www.wikipedia.com/wiki/History_of_mobile_phones), Accessed March 28, 2009.

History of Personal Computing (Flashmedia presentation).  
<http://www.pcmag.com/article2/0,2817,35470,00.asp>, Accessed April 10, 2009

Internet Censorship in China.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet\\_censorship\\_in\\_the\\_People%27s\\_Republic\\_of\\_China](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_censorship_in_the_People%27s_Republic_of_China).

Accessed March 28, 2009.