

Reframing Southern Feminism (s)
An Information Society Perspective

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IT for Change



I am a dinosaur when it comes to new technologies. It seems to me that in the case of Pakistan, it is the religious right wing that is using new media most effectively.

Farida Shaheed, Shirkat Gah, Pakistan

The Information Society

Post human reality - dislocation of the self across diffused sites



A mobile, complex and shifting subjectivity that complicates identity

Communication and Communities - defining attributes

The Internet as a dialectical system – practices influence techno-structures and vice-versa

Back to the Basics



The intertwining of the material
and the symbolic

The new basis for

- production systems
- systems that make meaning

Political Economy of the Internet

Dystopia?

- Advanced capitalism, cyber ideology and hyper-individualism



- Media globalization, centralization of media control and intensification of ownership
- Gift economy and digital capitalism not in conflict, but in symbiosis!!
- Cultural platforms sponsored by corporate capital

- Logic of commodification rather than of citizenship – free access with commodification

Political economy of the Internet

Dystopia?



- The emerging public sphere denotes a massive private consumption in public
- Exclusion and Irrelevance
- Loss of multiplicity of perspectives

Resistance in the Information Society

- Network Logic – totalising or equalising?
 - The digital environment and countervailing forces - the accumulation of money, power, and definition capacities but also a global, decentralized, network.
 - Cooperative cuberculture
Wikipedia, critical online journalism, high-quality cyberscience, participatory cyberart as counter hegemonic forces.



Political economy of the Internet

Utopia?

- Interactivity as challenge to the autonomy deficit
 - Meaning co-constituted by use
 - Commons based peer production challenges neo-liberal theories of rationality, self-interest and individuality
- New cultures of hybridisation
- Emancipatory spaces



Challenges for Analysis

Fragmentation and segmentation of the public sphere

The confounding complexity of choice and autonomy

Expropriation of the commons

- Veneer of participation -
expropriation through the 'Net'

Normalisation of the bizarre

Trivialisation of the political



A Crisis of Categories



- How do we understand?
 - Production, reproduction and social reproduction
 - Public and private
 - Local and Global
 - Individual and Collective
 - Embedded and embodied

It seems that a cooperative society has never been more realistic in an objective sense but has never been more unrealistic in a subjective sense. The networking of the world advances the idea of bottom-up, grassroots self-organization and of a participatory society. However,under the given conditions, humans are confronted with a colonization of ever more spheres of society to an ever-larger extent by economic reason and the competitive logic of accumulation.”

Christian Fuchs

The Feminist Task

- Bringing economic and socio-political theories on a single continuum (which is what southern feminists have endeavoured to do always!!)
- Voice and political agora – theorising human agency from a neo-institutional perspective.
- Re-embedding and localizing dis-embedded social relationships – how do you use the Internet to create new solidarities with trust?

If, along with this, we also take into account the almost inevitable advent of information society from a technological perspective, a rethinking of cyber-subjectivity in relation to ideology will prove most urgent. If cyberspace today anticipates the form of society in which we will constitute our subjectivity tomorrow, placing our best hope either on the fantasy of the beyond (the postmodernist carnival without ends) or on the phantom of the past (traditional humanism) will drain the energy and vitality of (cyber-)society and its (cyber-)subjects. Therefore, the recognition of society as constituted by the active identification between split subjects and split objects (forms of ideology) may keep our serious consideration of cyberspace and its subjects within the here-and-now rather than an a-temporal nowhere, giving us the critical powers to confront cyberspace so as, not to subvert and destroy it, but to retain its creative energy in perpetual self-de/construction, always opening out to myriad re-symbolizations of its tele-socio-political networks.

Erik Chia-yi Lee

Theorising for Radical Change

- Identity and Collective as Socio Political categories

Web 3.0 – Need for public and nested information infrastructures that are free (a community Internet?)

Rethorising production as local empowerment

- Interactivity, mobility and the global public

Framing rights afresh in the new cartographies – beyond state surveillance, beyond 'structured ignorance' and addressing the logic of control and commodification - the 'enemy'

