the ANTHROPOLOGY of NEW MEDIA in the PHILIPPINES

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Most people are now aware of the importance of technology but very few studies have looked at how precisely technology enters into everyday life. This book examines the uses of the new communication technology and its effects on the lives of ordinary Filipinos. The mobile phone has been one of the most successfully incorporated technologies of all time. There are over 4 billion mobile subscribers worldwide (Ling and Donner 2009). Rich and poor, young and old, men and women increasingly depend on mobile connectivities. This simple, relatively inexpensive device has transformed the lives of peoples throughout the world. Rarely has technology been so quickly domesticated.

Below are comments and extracts from articles found in the mainstream Philippine press dealing with the new media. While some reports are based on the element of novelty, most simply indicate how unproblematically the new communication technology has been incorporated into people’s lives.

James Cabrillo wonders how people managed their lives before the cellphone:

How the hell did people make plans before cell phones? Did they just cleanly arrange their meetings and parties weeks in advance and stick to schedules? Now everything is so easy to find, so easy to get to, so easy to locate, and I have more friends and acquaintances than ever – Yahoo Messenger chatmates, Facebook friends, My Space chums, blogger buddies and Last. fm. pals...There is no way we could make plans without all our devices (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 15 August 2009).

It now seems ages since the days before the mobile revolution, which is barely 10 years old. While most Filipinos can no longer recall life before radio and television, their young counterparts feel the same way about mobiles.

“Filipinos get sucked into worldwide web: Internet attracts mainly young Pinoys” is now a familiar headline in the mainstream press (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 13 April 200). The writer Abigail Ho points out that access to the Internet is growing rapidly, especially among young people in urban areas (Philippine Daily Inquirer, April 13, 2009). But this access increasingly cuts across geographic, age, and income brackets. Internet café s continue to
mushroom throughout the country and older people increasingly become attracted to the use of the Internet. According to Ho: “Among Internet-related activities, staying in touch via email and instant messaging (IM) is king. The survey [Yahoo-Nielsen Net Index 2008] shows that, on a monthly basis, 63 percent access the Internet for these two activities.”

Ho continues: “Being a country of very social people, social networking is also among the key Internet functions that Filipinos use, with 51 percent of those polled saying they have visited a social networking site in the past month....By a huge margin Friendster is still the No. 1 social networking site in the country, used by 92 percent of those in the Net Index poll.”

 Barely a year later, most of the statistics above are out of date, with Facebook (2010) now the leading social networking site. The Philippines has one of the highest number of Internet social networking users in the world (8th), and the numbers are growing rapidly (Business World, 18 December 2008). Clearly this technology is responding to people’s needs. This response has been hinted at earlier with the popularity of texting. The Philippines is indeed a country of sociable people but this sociability would have remained undeveloped without the new communication technology. Moreover, apart from cultural imperatives driving sociality, the global economy, overseas work, and the new media create the conditions for an expanding sociability.

Most Filipinos now appreciate the importance of the new communication technology (computer-mediated-interactive-communication technology—CMICT). While access to the Internet is still low by global standards (25% in 2009), cellphones are readily available (80% in 2009). If necessary, people without a cellphone can easily find someone who will allow them its use. The digital age has entered the life of most Filipinos, often in unexpected ways. This book will examine how the new communication technology is affecting the lives of Filipinos, their friends and acquaintances, here and abroad.

Readers of the Philippine Star who comment in the daily’s Inbox are instructive: “people text because it’s a cheaper and faster way to communicate, maski ano-pa i text mo, chismis, balita, seryoso, komiko, atbp  [you can text anything, gossip, news, serious, comical, etc]” (Ed Alawi, Davao City). “Iba ang dating ng text kesa sa tawag,[text is different from voice calls] You can keep a message in your in box as long as you want and read it over and over again” (Julio Ibon, Laoag City). “It is the easiest way to express the things we think and do not say” (Pedro Alagano, Manila).
These prescient comments express the main advantages of this new media. Texting covers gossip, news, serious and comical matters. Unlike voice calls, texts are permanent and can be retrieved when necessary. They serve as reminders and reassurance. Finally, texts allow us to say things we often cannot say directly. They include private feelings, embarrassing disclosures, and reconciliations. These are good enough reasons for texting to be a major interest for most Filipinos.

The Internet, although less accessible, leads to equally significant effects on people who use it. As Dominc Agbisit, another reader of the *Philippine Star*, puts it:

“What, in the past was just another new technological advancement has become a necessity for me and countless others who are now part of the OFW workforce. The Internet has not only made communication more convenient, it has also helped alleviate the effects of homesickness, a condition that almost all of us experience. It has made separation from our loved ones bearable and days pass quicker too as ease of access makes it possible for us to communicate with those back home even on a daily basis.”

Manny Gamo concurs: “The Internet has revolutionised the system of communication. One can communicate or chat with someone who is anywhere else in the universe.” So does Tessy Pambuan: “I can now talk and see my boyfriend at less cost using the Internet.” Finally, Nathan Janssens says:

Let me start by saying that the Internet is truly the most amazing piece of human achievement I’ve ever seen. I am an Internet addict. I love to be in this virtual world to talk to people who are on the other end of the world. For instance, I am typing this message from my bedroom in Belgium, Europe, and yet, people in the Philippines (or anywhere else for that matter) will be reading this from their bedrooms as well. The Internet is not all positive though. As it is with everything in our lives, it’s hard to know when to stop to keep priorities straight. The Internet has made me fail school, lose friends in real everyday life and has put me in bad physical shape. On the other hand, I have learned a lot of things online. I think that the Internet offers opportunities not offered in real life. All it takes is a little discipline and awareness.

The views above sum up the advantages of the Internet. It makes life for overseas workers more bearable and passable by keeping them in touch with their families back home, simulating and mimicking quotidian life. Online communication knows no spatial limits and it
can also bring distant peoples into proximity. The virtual world collapses distance and brings the world to us in a click. But it also threatens relationships in the ‘real’ world, including our own well-being. However, the virtual world may offer opportunities not available in ‘real’ life. Like texting, the Internet, once experienced, makes an earlier world seem very limited and constraining.

CMICT is a technology appropriate for our times. Dispersed family members, lonely individuals, entrepreneurs, researchers, and anyone wishing to connect for whatever reason increasingly depend on this new technology. We live in an age in which the requirements of communication across distances, cultural borders, temporal zones, political differences, economic needs, and personal situations affect our everyday lives. Mobility, change, and other instabilities characterize our lives. CMICT answers most of the needs for remaining in touch under conditions of increasing insecurity. The new communication media responds to the spirit and need of the times (zeitgeist) and act as timely gadgets (apparatgeist) (Katz and Aakhus 2002).

But the new media does not only respond to the times but also generates new realities both virtual and actual. Online relationships are now so common that the traditional media barely mention it except when unusual things happen, such as the case of David Pollard and Amy Taylor in the U.K. (International Independent, 14 November 2008). They met in an Internet chat room and had a registry marriage two years later. They also married in Second Life (a virtual world inhabited by avatars created by members), where their respective avatars had a lavish wedding. Their double lives (actual and virtual) seem to go well until Amy discovered that David (avatar-Dave Barmy) was having an affair in Second Life. She was furious but forgave him until she saw his avatar (Dave Barmy) cuddling a woman in a sofa. This was too much for Amy so she sued for divorce. She also divorced him in Second Life. David admitted his virtual affair but justified it on the grounds that Amy spent the whole day playing World of Warcraft, instead of attending to his needs. While this case may be unusual, it shows that fantasies played out in the virtual world can have consequences in ‘real’ life. This couple are clearly unusual in merging their actual with their virtual selves but less extreme examples are provided throughout this book.

The new media does not only expedite communication but also generates new conditions of possibility. In the example above, Second Life provided David and Amy with alternatives to their actual lives that eventually ruined their relationship. While fantasies, suspicions and other distractions have characterized earlier relationships, CMICT gives them a reality that approaches and even exceeds materiality. Other cultures also cultivated states of
altered consciousness that impinged on everyday life such as shamanic trances and religious visions, but the new media allows ordinary people to experience these altered states much more easily. What we have here is not only communication but also communion. Moreover, this communion includes aspects of ourselves hitherto unrecognized. The new media allows us to recognize the stranger in us. David, Amy, and many like them can now engage in a dialogue with themselves.

The Internet is seen as an open forum where anyone can post any comments free from censorship. Sometimes these comments may cause offence and the problem becomes balancing free speech with protection against slanderous remarks. Where to draw the boundary between freedom of speech and irresponsible commentary is a matter for the law and civil society. In another chapter (1) I discuss the proliferation of scandal made possible by the new media. The spread of misinformation, propaganda, and scurrilous tattle is enormously facilitated by CMICT so guidelines for its use have to be developed.

Media Images

Jason Ivler gained notoriety in the news when he went into hiding after being accused of shooting a young man in a driving incident in 2009. Months later he was discovered hiding in his parent’s house and was injured in the ensuing armed encounter with the police. Several police officers were also injured. Media coverage of the whole affair was guaranteed by a conjunction of elements: the victim came from a politically prominent family; Jason also enjoyed social prominence as well as a musical heritage; he was a good looking young mestizo with a brief career in film and rap; the arrest was widely covered and the exchange of gunfire was climatic. Jason was wheeled into the ambulance amidst the flash of TV cameras.

Days after the shootout the Jason Ivler Facebook site was born. From a few hundred fans the site quickly attracted several thousands, many of whom expressed admiration for Jason. He had become a media star. In his Facebook account, a fan expressed his admiration: “To Jason Ivler’s haters; just shut up, you don’t know anything about his story. You have no talent in rapping.” A blogger posted: “You have to admit, not since the Vizconde massacre had there been telegenic criminals in the Philippines.” Consunji writes: “His Facebook fan page glorifies the traits that landed him in a gloomy hospital, in the first place. Thing is, the page isn’t even something he started himself – it’s the work of his ‘fans’ who egg on their idol to continue his ‘gangsta’ ways, or fail to see beyond his Amboy good looks and bad-boy vibe” (Philippine Daily
Inquirer, 30 January 2010). Fortunately other readers strongly condemn the prominence given to Jason.

Another even more prominent criminal case involving the horrendous killing of scores of journalists and others in Mindanao (Maguindanao Massacre, November 23, 2009) has not elicited the same supportive new media response. Its main accused Andal Ampatuan Jr. lacks not only telegenic looks but also rapping skills. The mediatization of the world clearly favours good looks and suave speakers. Is this the case of art imitating nature or reconstructing it to further its appeal and consumption?

The examples above should alert us to the darker possibilities of CMICT. Its benefits are clearly evident but its capacity to conflate levels of the real can undermine many of our goals and values. Nathan’s warning that the dangers of the new media can be avoided, that “all it takes is a little discipline and awareness,” may require greater scrutiny.

**Dangerous Acquaintances**

The dangers of the new media are now a regular feature of the mainstream press. Chito Aragon reports the case of an American who developed a relationship with a young woman from Zamboanga in a dating website called “Cherry Blossom” (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 27 November 2009). They made plans to marry and he sent her money for her travel and visa expenses. When she didn’t arrive on the agreed date, he reported the case to the police in Cebu and they discovered that the American was fooled. The picture she sent of herself and her local address were fakes. The dating website describes itself in the following terms: “At Cherry Blossom dating service, the ultimate goal is for every man to find the Asian woman of his dreams. The Cherry Blossom dating service has set the standard for other sites that specialize in matchmaking for men seeking an Asian friend or wife.”

Cecilia Rodriquez reports a tragic ending:

Ritchel Umadlao, 20, was excited to meet, or, in teen lingo, eyeball, with her long time text mate last Saturday. Coming out late from work as a sales girl in an ukay-ukay (surplus) store in Cogon, she asked her sister to drop her off at the Divisoria night market here, where she was supposed to meet her text mate. That was the last time she was seen alive. On Sunday police discovered Ritchel’s body in one of the dimly-lit
rooms of King Williams Inn on Capistrano Street (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 12 October 2008).

Other cases where online relationships end tragically are now a regular feature of newspapers. But we should take care not to blame CMICT for all these tragedies. People have been swindled or murdered in the past. What is different in the above cases is the novel way in which victim and predator have crossed paths. The new media does significantly increase the chances of novel encounters, some of which may end tragically, but most of which do not. The old fears about not trusting strangers have to be reassessed in the context of an increase in novel encounters and new notions of trust have to be learnt.

**Culture and the New Media**

Despite its universal features, the new communication media mirror and reproduce existing cultural orientations. This explains why Filipinos took to texting so naturally. It also explains why social networking sites such as Friendster and Facebook are so popular. They not only allow instant connectivity but provide an outlet for expressing opinions and beliefs. Collado compares the Facebook entries of her American and Filipino friends (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 24 September 2009). Her privacy settings are very restrictive and details of her latest activities are generally not published. In contrast, most of her Filipino friends allow full access to information in their Facebook account and readily share details of activities, interests and contacts. She goes on:

Now as I click on my American friends, I see their uncluttered profiles with only wall posts (messages from friends) and a sprinkling of uploaded photos adorning their page. Filipino profile pages, on the other hand, are chockfull of quizzes (need I say more), announcements of friends additions and links to comments made on other people’s photos...Filipinos are incredibly open and may be unaware of the implications of such behaviour.

This contrast in Facebook behaviour mirrors features of American and Filipino culture. The former guards the differences between the private and the public worlds, while Filipinos readily conflate them. According to Collado, Filipinos “are also more prone to publishing intimate details about their lives, particularly, their relationships. Overly cheesy status messages anyone? Or how about awkward details of a fight?”
Others have commented on how quickly Filipino online exchanges switch from the barely introductory into the intimate mode. This tendency to enter immediately into an intimate discursive exchange disconcerts many foreign visitors. On being introduced, their Filipino hosts often ask foreigners questions such as their marital status, religion and other private matters. Just as nature abhors a vacuum, Filipino culture abhors the stranger and attempts to rapidly convert them into intimates. This rapid transition from the stranger into the intimate underlies the problem regarding structures of trust mentioned above. As Collado says: “Filipinos are incredibly open and may be unaware of the implications of such behaviour….Americans seem averse to letting you know that they have been looking at your profile or reading something you have posted. This is probably because of the prevalence of Internet predators in the United States and their fear of being labelled as an Internet stalker.”

American Internet behaviour has evolved in the context of a culture that distinguishes between stranger and intimate. This distinction operates differently in the Philippines. But no cultural distinctions are a guarantee against fraud and deception. In the case mentioned earlier, it was the trusting American suitor who was fooled by his Filipino correspondent. Needless to say, the reverse could have also easily happened.

**Cognitive Gains or Cognitive Loss**

For Maria Garcia apart from cultural orientations, genetic and other physical properties may also influence our use of the new media (*Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 5 March 2009). Technology has always entered people’s lives and the latest example may be more intrusive than often realized. According to Garcia, the speed with which the new media responds to our communicative practices may influence other cognitive skills such as attention spans in children. The attraction of social networking sites such as Facebook with its instant access to an audience and other sympathetic readers is irresistible to the young. Garcia concludes her article by pointing out that genetic factors ultimately influence our practices, including technologically mediates ones.

Other commentators also point out the influence of technology on broader intellectual skills. Hamlin points out that technological devices are now routinely employed by people in everyday life such as calculators and computers (*Manila Bulletin*, 4 March 2010). These devices do not reduce but rather facilitate our access to more complex information. Hamlin continues:
Tech scholar Nicholas Carr—who initially posited the argument that the Internet is making us stupid in the Atlantic Monthly—argues that “What the Net does is shift the emphasis of our intelligence away from what might be called a meditative or contemplative intelligence and more toward what might be called a utilitarian intelligence. The price of zipping among lots of bits of information is a loss of depth in our thinking.” In Carr’s perspective, we’re becoming superficial and uninteresting as a result of the Internet.

Needless to say, other scholars disagree and point out that as people are obliged to deal with increasing amounts of information of varying complexity, intellectual skills necessarily increase as a response to this need.

Researchers at the University of California in San Diego (UCSD) found that the average American in 2008 was bombarded by 34 gigabytes per day of information, mostly video games and television. Only about 0.1% of that data flood consisted of written words. In fact, prior to the advent of the Internet, reading was on the decline. Since 1980 it has almost tripled thanks to the Internet, according to a recent report in The Economist based on UCSD research.

There’s more. In the past, reading was largely a passive activity, which makes learning difficult because readers typically get sleepy or bored after twenty or thirty minutes. Today, half of all bytes are received interactively allowing Internet users to embed and retain knowledge more easily because they are living an experience rather than acting as a data receptor. But are we learning more deeply, or just broadly and superficially nevertheless.

Arguments about the effects of new technologies are often contentious and this case is no different. However, what is inescapable is that the new communication technology is making our range of choices much broader than in the past. What ultimate effects on intelligence this broader range of choices causes is still open for debate.

Local versions of this debate regularly appear in the media. Malay writes: “While lecturing at certain colleges and universities on communication subjects, I felt there was something amiss in what I was teaching. I noticed how the world was changing so fast and things were not the same anymore in terms of technology, lifestyle, education and especially,
our social and spiritual lives. I learned most of these changes were a result of how and what we communicated to ourselves and to each other...Eventually I found that there was power in how and what we communicated” (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 4 January 2010).

Malay recognizes that the rapid changes we all experience are no longer culturally meaningful. “We as a people, have what we call a ‘damaged’ culture wherein lies most of our woes. What we have been teaching in schools is based on old beliefs, mainly kultura, that have wrought havoc instead to our country...The crisis we are experiencing in our world today is not a fault of leadership or a failure in government, but a failure to communicate a new belief system needed in this changed world.”

While Malay’s notion of a ‘damaged’ culture is debatable, his point about the need to adjust prevailing cultural expectations to experienced realities seems valid. The communication landscape today, with the new media, globalization, overseas work, religious revivals and the new politics of gender and sexuality can no longer be encompassed within traditional cultural frameworks.

**Education and the New Media**

If the new media is partly responsible for the fragmentation of cultural expectations and experiences, might it also be used to reintegrate them within new cultural orders? The views expressed by ordinary Filipinos on the role of CMICT at the beginning of this chapter indicate that the new technology helps to make their lives more meaningful. The incorporation of this new technology could be used in schools and other institutions to help reintegrate contemporary culture.

There are attempts to use the new technology to assist in teaching and learning in schools but the resources are often lacking. The case of Buenavista, a municipality in Southern Luzon, reveals the poor state of educational infrastructure in government schools. Admittedly, access to the new communication technology is available in computer café s but the costs are often prohibitive and the skills for their creative use often lacking. The mobile phone, a more common technology, is now used in some schools in the Philippines either to order prerecorded science and mathematics videos or to tap into these videos directly (Text2Teach). This project involves the private sector and government schools in several provinces. Attempts by the government to establish an ICT learning corridor throughout the country has so far not
materialized. As expected, wealthy private schools incorporate new technologies more effectively into their classes, thereby generating a digital divide alongside existing inequalities.

The New Media and the Economy

Some readers may wonder why this book is generally non-committal as far as the economic consequences of CMICT is concerned. There is hardly any need to mention the economic impact of the new technology since its supposed advantages are regularly featured and trumpeted in the mainstream media. Call centers and business process outsourcing is rapidly becoming a major source of employment and income for Filipinos with English and foreign language skills. Telecom providers are now among the biggest businesses in the country and expected to increase their profits even further. At the local level, small stores earn a sizable income selling prepaid ‘load’ for mobiles and the Internet. The growing number of computer cafés has been mentioned. Many colleges offer computer courses, matching the earlier enthusiasm for nursing degrees. All these activities point to the economic impact of CMICT.

According to the World Bank, there is a direct correlation between economic growth and investment in the Internet. Remo writes: “The World Bank estimates that, for every 10-percent increase in the number of high speed Internet connections, the economy is expected to grow 1.3 percentage points. This means that, without the contribution of IT and IT-related services sectors, the effects of the crisis on the Philippine economy would have been worse” (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 27 July 2009).

Some believers in technological determinism have even suggested that giving poor people mobile phones would eliminate poverty (The Economist, 7 July 2005). This book does not deny the important relationship between technology and development, indeed it reaffirms this link. But any simplistic connection between technology and its consequences is bound to disappoint. Some people use technology to improve their incomes whenever feasible but the majority finds other equally practical uses for it. Moreover, a technological consciousness does not always accompany the use or presence of technology. Such a technological consciousness usually depends on preconditions such as education, infrastructure, and other opportunities usually lacking in most Philippine communities. Indeed, it is this lack of congruence between technology and the technological consciousness of its users that lead to unexpected practices such as texting. For this reason, engineers, designers and manufactures are now including ordinary users as part of the production decisions (Fortunati 2005).
Anthropology of the New Media

This book’s anthropological approach does not minimize the possible links between technology and development but shows how complex and contextual such linkages are under existing conditions. Finally, the economic impact of technology is a preferred source of funding for social research whereas anthropological and sociological approaches are rarely given prominence by funding agencies. This book seeks to redress this research imbalance.

While the approach of this study is anthropological, its orientation is transdisciplinary. The world can no longer be adequately understood in narrow disciplinal categories even as these categories assist us in describing it. By anthropological, I mean that its material is often drawn from ordinary narratives of everyday life. Its concern is frequently about personal or family interests and the struggles to make sense out of an increasingly complex world. This world now extends far beyond local boundaries and includes strangers. No longer limited to familiars, far from home and exposed to new ideas, Filipinos nevertheless try to comprehend their experiences in culturally meaningful terms. One of the tasks of anthropology is to describe these attempts even if they fail to reconstruct an earlier cultural world. Understandings of the self, the family, religion and society are being reformulated as the world is transformed by forces of globalization, economic rationalization and capitalist consumption. The new media is both an agent of this transformation as well as a lifeline to earlier cultural understandings. Diaspora, nostalgia, and notions of a globalized homeland are closely associated.

Anthropology and its notion of culture developed in a much less concatenated and confluent world, where nations, peoples, and societies kept their distinctive boundaries. Culture mostly arose out of people’s experience in face-to-face encounters rather than mediated through complex technologies spanning continents. In such circumstances, the ethnography of culture must now cross local or national borders and usually involve myriads of strangers in mediated relationships. It is difficult to make sense out of such a profusion of meanings. Culture, hitherto a set of practical understandings, is now an open field of signification.

This book is an attempt to make sense of the increasingly complex experiences and relationships Filipinos encounter in daily life. Its focus is the new communication media and its consequences for cultural life. Hence this book remains within anthropology even as it frequently exceeds the traditional disciplinal borders.
The following chapters discuss in more detail many of the issues mentioned here. Chapter 1 presents a summary of the book’s main argument. Chapter 2 examines how transformative CMICT is and the claims for its consequences for social life. Chapter 3 describes the anthropological context within which CMICT operates. Chapter 4 presents a brief ethnography of Buenavista as an example of a rural municipality and its access to the new media. Chapter 5 examines former informants (interviewed in 2005) and how their lives have changed in the intervening years while deeply involved in technologically mediated relationships and practices. Chapter 6 discusses the case of migrants and overseas workers and their communicative practices. Chapter 7 examines the effects of the new media on the political process. Chapter 8 returns to a more anthropological and sociological theme as it looks at the changes in cultural practices following the new communication technology. While the book tries to develop a coherent and general perspective, each chapter has its own orientation and may be read separately. Some chapters (2 and 3) assume a basic knowledge of the social sciences, while others are more suited to the general reader. Some parts of chapters 6 and 7 have appeared elsewhere. I have tried to minimize overlapping themes but inevitably such overlaps occur. References have been kept to a minimum and the style is mostly informal.

The research for this book was made possible by a grant from the Institute of Philippine Culture and the support of the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the Ateneo de Manila University. Arjan Aguirre, Diego Maranan, Alicia Pingol, Nikos Dacanay, Lidia Pola, and Melissa Alipalo provided invaluable assistance and information. Friends and colleagues gave encouragement and stimulation. Among them were Maria Mangahas, Rosario de Santos, Badi Malay, Eduardo Ugarte, Czarina Saloma-Akpedonu, and members of the Philictresearch Network. A special intellectual debt to my daughter Anna Cristina Pertierra for her ideas on the new media. My young friends and informants in Buenavista also provided valuable information (Alex, Rr, Rogie, Jed, Nerriche, Marissa). Finally, special thanks to my Buenavista hosts Boy and Anna Reyes for providing tranquil and beautiful surroundings in which to write.

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Buenavista
April 2010
Living in an Age of Uncertainty

We live in an age of uncertainty, with wild predictions for the future. The most extreme predictions claim that we are on the verge of a major evolutionary break, while others see the future only as an extension of the industrial age. Both assume the increasing technologization of everyday life. Is computer-mediated-interactive-communication-technology (CMICT) a truly revolutionary invention? Will society and culture be fundamentally transformed by it? While the cellphone and the Internet have affected the lives of many Filipinos, it is too early to claim that the future will be fundamentally transformed.

This book discusses the significance of the new communication technology in the lives of ordinary Filipinos. It examines how the new media affects people as they go about their normal everyday lives. The new technology is employed in a wide variety of activities, from keeping in touch with relatives and friends, seeking useful information about jobs and economic prospects, to idly passing the time away. These activities have important consequences for social institutions such as the family, the economy, and even politics. Moreover, the new communication technology is only part of a broader technological revolution linking Filipinos to global structures. Overseas work, tourism, and call centers (business process outsourcing) are the most visible aspects of these global linkages, but less visible, although as significant, are the daily interactions that underpin them. It is these latter that this book mainly deals with, rather than the broader structures, since the former are the usual objects of interest in the media, the business sector, and the state.

Following an anthropological convention, this book deals mostly with stories of everyday life and the uses of the new communication technologies. It also examines the theoretical implications of these practices. Although ethnographic, its focus includes broad aspects of Philippine society and culture. Since locality is no longer spatially constrained but often accessed virtually, ethnographic description can no longer be limited to local spaces but must include global and even virtual ones.

Most of our interactions are now mediated through technology. Increasingly we interact with absent others, simulating corporeal presence. Moreover, we often interact with the
technology itself. Anthropology has to adjust its paradigms to suit these new realities. The anthropological-local is now irretrievably linked to the national, global, and virtual worlds.

The Shift from Locality to Virtuality

The Philippine context of the new technology is the shift from community to society, from a mode of life based on kinship and locality to one that centers around the stranger and the national or global. From an earlier life of similitude in community, contemporary life consists of difference in society. Virtuality is part of this difference.

Apart from the increasing drift from rural to urban areas, many Filipinos are now also going abroad for work to join their families or for a sense of adventure. Over a million depart every year and this number is not expected to decrease in the near future. Nearly a quarter of the working population is abroad. Naturally most of them retain close ties with their local families and the new media is of great assistance in maintaining relationships. Some Filipinos working or living abroad stay away for many years and maintain their ties mostly through the new technology. These technologically maintained relationships take forms that differ from normal face-to-face relationships. Children growing up without their parents or grandparents struggling to discipline grandchildren in their care have to adapt to these absences. Often on their return, relationships among family members undergo significant shifts. Inevitably, most parties feel some guilt or regret when relationships deteriorate during these absences, especially since the justification for going abroad is to help the family. Mothers working abroad rue the fact that while they take care of other people’s children, their own children sometimes feel abandoned.

National Images and Democratic Representations

These new communicative conditions give rise to cultural antinomies and the democratization of representation. Minorities join the mainstream through YouTube and even replace previously dominant sectors. Cebuano prisoners dancing to Michael Jackson’s music has one of the highest YouTube viewers. Culturally elitist and other formerly mainstream representations of Filipinos have been overtaken or overwhelmed by these new images. Populist choice rather than aesthetic standards determine who gets the greatest exposure in the media.
This democratization of representation was preceded by stories of Filipina domestic workers and mail order brides in the 1970’s and 1980’s. A delicious biscuit in Spain was called Filipino because it was brown outside but white inside. In Italy, Greece, and other European countries, the common term for domestic servant was Filipina. Many of these representations were offensive to members of the Filipino middle class who resented that their social inferiors set the image of the Filipino abroad. The careful cultivation of national images and representations so beloved of social conservatives and governments are now extremely difficult to enforce, without these efforts being seen as restricting individual freedom. This deluge of information has breached its restraining boundaries and now threatens to overwhelm all attempts to impose gatekeepers. The Internet includes all possible interests from religious conservatives, government propagandists, criminal syndicates, academic researchers, business profiteers, and porn addicts. Or at least, so it seems, even as attempts to put under surveillance and restrict this free flow of information are presently strongly advocated by both liberal and authoritarian regimes.

Informational Surplus

This surplus of information has led, ironically, to increasing uncertainty as people try to make sense of an excess of meanings. This semiotic explosion is quickly overtaking any attempts at maintaining past traditions and orderly expectations. Information overload is perhaps the most common frustration of our age. It strikes everyone: young and old, educated and uneducated, rich and poor, first world and third world. It manifests itself in diverse forms: philosophically as postmodernism, theologically as fundamentalism, economically as overproduction, politically as the rise of globalism. As a wit puts it, “Never before in human history . . . have so many been surrounded by so much that they can’t follow” (Iyer 2000, 28). No wonder that the “War on Terror,” however misapplied, aptly describes what everyone—Muslim, Christian, Jew, conservative, nonconformist, migrant, woman, gay—feels. What has brought about this condition?

As a consequence of this semiotic barrage, culture has become detached from a mode of life and instead becomes a paradigm for living. Culture isn’t just a description but also a prescription for a mode of life. And the models come from outside, always beyond our reach. The limits of the imaginable far exceed the actual and are only realized virtually. While earlier cultures also contained prescriptive norms, the postmodern condition gives representations and
images a unique autonomy. They become ‘free-floating’ signifiers of meaning independent of their context. Global branding are examples of such free-floating signifiers. Nokia, McDonalds, Nike, and other universal products create the context that gives them meaning.

An Expanded Public Sphere

The new modes of communication have made possible an expansion of the public sphere, whose members, while they have diverse interests, come together in achieving a common understanding. The Internet café has become a site for these new practices, gathering unconnected strangers with similar interests. These are obliged to develop a discourse free of localizing references in favor of global ones. Like their earlier counterparts, the London coffee shops, Internet cafes serve as sites for new discourses. Whether discussing the best gaming strategies, the most popular celebrities or the latest YouTube scandals, their members are drawn from a wide social network sharing common interests.

An expanded public sphere rests on specialized knowledge and institutionalized competence. It operates within a relatively autonomous sphere, free from the constraints of politics and the market, which themselves operate according to distinct norms. Whenever disputes arise, each sphere attempts to resolve them by applying specialized procedures.

Systemic Blockages

During the Marcos regime, a dispute arose regarding the authentic nature of a hunter-gathering group in Mindanao, the Tasadays. Normally a matter for anthropologists to decide, the discovery quickly encompassed the global media, local politicians, and the general public. Tempers flared, wild accusations were hurled, but the matter remained unresolved. The dispute could not be resolved locally because of the lack of cultural differentiation in the public sphere. It was finally resolved professionally in a meeting of the American Anthropological Society held in Washington, D. C. nearly 2 decades later, but still remains a contentious issue locally, nearly 40 years since the discovery of the group. Other, less well-defined but even more substantive disputes regularly mark Philippine public life.

This inability to settle disputes within their specific area of competence marks the lack of specialization of the public sphere. Examples provided in later chapters include
choosing national artists, appointing members of the Supreme Court, or prohibiting chemical sprays in rural areas. While formal bodies with the responsibility for deciding these issues exist, more general interests intervene, thereby preventing the public sphere from developing its specialized competences.

The Virtual World and Expanded Markets

Technologically mediated relationships are a necessary feature of the digital age. A new virtual world has opened up and sex is one of its main commodities. Asian (adult) cam models are only one element of this virtualization of sexuality but it also includes online marriages and cyber friendships. Even religion has found a new world of virtual evangelization. An interesting aspect of digitally mediated relationships is their tendency towards ideological purity, whether it is religious fundamentalism or subaltern sexuality. Global terrorists are the digital descendants of their print-based ancestors, the assassins, juramentados, and anarchists. When combined with the free-floating signifiers mentioned earlier, images, texts, and other mediated relationships are given renewed motivational powers. Death and martyrdom become meaningful practices.

Filipinos overseas increasingly maintain their relationships virtually. Mothers working abroad provide support for their families but also miss the emotional closeness with their children. Digital communication only satisfies part of this emotional need, but at times it may also frustrate and even exacerbate it. Many of these relationships are pursued at two, oftentimes separate levels: the digital and the face-to-face. When parents return from long absences abroad and are obliged to reconcile their digital experiences with new face-to-face interactions, misunderstandings and disappointments inevitably occur.

Notes from the Field

This is a typical exchange of a mother working overseas and trying to rekindle an emotional bond with her adolescent son in Ilocos.

Time: noon in the U.K.; evening in Ilocos

Mother: How are you doing?
Father: Bonding with Marlon (the son)
Mother: Can I talk to Marlon (the son)
Father: Gives cellphone to the son.
Mother: How was your day in school?
Son: My Pilipino teacher said I should bring the class to rehearsal room. Only two classmates came with me.

Mother: what did the teacher say?
Son: Try tomorrow again then.
Mother: Just be patient with teacher, huh (teacher is gay, all the other teachers regret that son (Marlon) only won Mr. Congeniality and Mr. Originality, not Mr. Intramurals. There were so many texts from teachers and classmates that night after the contest that he should have won but the title went to a fourth year student. They say a teacher texted that his motto "A Thinking Mind could be Terrifying" was interesting, which is why they thought he (Marlon) should have won.)

Son hands back cellphone to his father:

Father: we are here outside the house, we want to go to visit our grandson (who stays with the other grandparents in the village)
Mother: ok. my regards to the abalayans (co-in-laws).

Did she bond with her son during this brief exchange? The mother only felt stronger the tyranny of distance and while the communication gave her some relief it also increased her sense of isolation. She commented that mothers live through their children (Alice Pingol, personal communication).

We Become the Technology

Technologies are techniques that not only allow us to relate with the world but also map that world for us. Tools connect us directly to the natural world while machines amplify and extend our natural capacities. Both link us to the external world of nature as well as the internal world of culture. The technology of writing allows us to represent the world as well as explore aspects of our inner selves. Through writing we engage in a dialogue with ourselves.
The new media increasingly mimics and often replaces face-to-face relationships (Fortunati 2005). Digital relationships enable symbolic, ideological, and normative aspects to dominate over more pragmatic, instrumental, and contingent elements usually encountered in face-to-face relationships. Lived experience is unpredictable, pre-reflective, blurry, contextual, and tacit, whereas digital relationships tend towards order and predictability. They are less contextual, more explicit and artefactual. This is why al Qaeda and other fundamentalists are able to insist on the primacy of the image or the text over lived-experience. The former is self-contained while the latter is open to ambiguity and uncertainty.

Human relationships have always been complex, multilayered, conflictive, and ambiguous. But in the past, certain constraints such as physical separation have limited our choices in continuing them as part of everyday life. The telephone made long-distance relationships approximate quotidian ones. The new technology facilitates such ‘real-time’ relationships and makes possible hitherto unlikely ones involving strangers. Absent and often unknown others presently constitute many of our close relationships. This is best illustrated among celebrity fans. Culture is no longer limited to immediate experience but now includes the mediated, the virtual, and the postcorporeal.

The Mediatization of Everyday Life

CMICT has facilitated communication greatly. As a consequence, the orientation of relationships has shifted from a practical quotidian basis, with its inevitable adjustments, to a mainly discursive context. A consequence of this increasing role of communication is the mediatization of everyday life. Most of our information about the world (including ourselves) is derived from the media, including its interpretation and significance. Leisure activities and entertainment are media-driven, and practices of consumption are influenced by media representations. This conflation of information about ourselves, our interests, and our patterns of consumption generate who we are. While the old media has influenced our lives since the days of print, visual, electronic, and digital media are even more pervasive.

No event, however, trivial or occurring in the most remote part of the planet, fails to get quickly circulated either by the mainstream media or citizen journalists using their mobiles or video cams. An unexpected consequence of this information deluge is the increasing difficulty in sorting reliable from unreliable sources. The traditional gatekeepers are gone and the frenzy of circulation ensures that impressions, gossip, and hearsay are quickly accepted as facts.
We live in the age of the sound clip, live telecast, YouTube, and blogs, all of which discourage detailed and critical scrutiny. A paradox of our times is that there is so much information to absorb that we have little time to comprehend their significance. For example, the mediatization of war allows us to witness atrocities in Iraq, Afghanistan, or Mindanao. The media itself becomes a weapon of war, as images and representations clash with their counterparts, overwhelming the viewers and inducing a state of numbed acquiescence. Embedded journalists present their images as natural portrayals rather than ideological perspectives.

Baudrillard (1988) predicted some of these possibilities, such as the centrality of the virtual and its replacement of the hitherto actual. Newspeak and other political pronouncements telling us that the lives of Filipinos have greatly improved fail to convince many people whose experience of everyday life is otherwise. This increasing divergence between public pronouncements and individual experiences lessens the legitimacy of governments and encourages more strident demands for political change.

Earlier Informants Revisited

In an earlier study (Pertierra 2006b), I discussed the role of the new media with a range of informants. I revisited them several four years later to see what changes technology has made to their lives. Kristina, confined at home with agoraphobia, was able to establish global contacts with others who shared her medical condition or her diverse musical interests. Donna is professionally dependent on the technology but also uses it as part of her domestic family routine. She and her husband incorporate the technology as part of their relationship. Arnold has been involved in a gay relationship for many years. During this time the mobile and the Internet have played crucial roles in maintaining and expressing his relationship. All these informants now relate to their digital selves as much as to their actual ones.

Kristina

Kristina’s medical condition eventually improved and she resumed an even busier lifestyle. Paradoxically, now integrated into a more conventional lifestyle of work and leisure, Kristina continued to depend on digital communication as a primary mode of association. Her
Facebook site detailed her latest interests and experiences, which she shared with other friends equally committed to the new media. Kristina’s actual life was intimately interwoven with her cyberlife, each one informing the other. It seemed that Kristina had finally been able to realize fully what always seemed to be a promising career in music and the arts.

Tragically, Kristina (33 years old) suffered a stroke and died. But her Facebook site was continued by friends and her presence can still be felt in cyberspace. While people in the past could continue to express their grief for long periods, cyberlife gives such continued expressions a new quality. Long after her death, her Facebook site included many entries that mimicked her own writing. People responded to earlier postings as though the exchange involved Kristina. This case is an example of the virtual remaining real even after death.

**Donna**

For Donna, “the computer is not just a machine” she interacts with. As she puts it, “it is also a medium of interacting with my husband. The computer is part of our relationship with one another. It helps us interact concerning personal matters as well as about work”.

Donna works with local counterparts in three different countries, oftentimes for weeks or months before ever meeting them in the field. They use email, chat, and SKYPE online video phone. Currently, Donna is helping to design a water supply project in a secondary town in Viet Nam, from her home in the Philippines.

**Our Possessions Possess Us**

Donna’s relationship is a good example of a technologically mediated relationship. The technology is not just a medium of interaction; it is just as often the purpose for interacting. The technology is not just a passive object waiting to be used but is as often an active presence demanding its usage. Technology relates to us as much as we relate to it. Put another way, we incorporate the technology into a sense of ourselves—the machine becomes us. Our relationship to ourselves, to others, and even to objects is a dynamic and dialectical one (Miller 2009).

This objectification of self through objects and practices is what gives Kristina’s Facebook site a dynamic quality. While she may have been its original creator, others were
equally participative from the start. Their continuing participation in the site, despite Kristina’s
death, illustrates how the self is co-constituted by others. The self is a product of a mutual
ontology. We may be the authors of our lives but this authorship is always collective and
collaborative. It includes objects and other people.

**Virtual Relationships and Real Love**

Arnold and Miguel were in a relationship for several years, including periods of
physical separation. While Arnold pursued further studies abroad, he remained in close contact
with Miguel using the new media.

Miguel and Arnold ended their affair after nine years. Many of their friends were
surprised at the break up because their relationship seemed stable and balanced. It was
considered a benchmark in terms of longevity.

Arnold was initially devastated and took a job in Thailand to get away from this painful
situation. To complete the separation, Arnold deleted all of Miguel’s friends’ mobile numbers
and removed all the information in his Facebook account dealing with Miguel and common
friends. This digital erasure of Miguel’s presence initially greatly comforted Arnold. But
Miguel’s online presence also haunted him.

I cannot escape from his online presence which is readily accessible with a simple search
of his name in Google. During times when I would miss him, I would stalk Miguel
online. All these readily accessible information makes me depressed. His absence via
the mobile phone is something that I’m still trying to recover from. I initially felt very
lonely and insecure, and I consider the experience as probably the greatest feeling of loss
in my life.

There is an element of ambiguity in this last statement. Does Arnold miss Miguel’s presence or
does he miss the regular text messages Miguel sent?

When I am on Facebook, I get to monitor what my friends are doing/thinking. I
comment on their status messages, I feel happy that I’m being noticed. Many of my
friends are also experiencing relationship problems and we often console each other.
This helps me deal with my own loneliness.
Facebook may be virtual, but for Arnold it offers real therapy.

Kristina is dead but her friends still treasure and relate to memories of her. Although one can no longer relate to Kristina as a living person, one can relate to memories of her as well as share these with others. Due to the agentive nature of the new media, her Facebook site continues to mimic her presence. Memories, images, and representations are easily aroused, experienced, and shared in a virtual world such as Facebook.

Donna’s life is closely integrated with the technologies that shape her daily routines. She admits that technology often facilitates her domestic relationships but also complicates them. She home-teaches her children and the information available in the Internet proves invaluable.

Donna recently finished a documentary film working with her husband and found the experience stressful. While making the documentary film, their approaches to the technology often differed significantly. Her husband was the cameraman but Donna devised the concept for the film. The technology itself seemed to dictate distinct approaches to the project. Donna’s life is so mediated technologically that it is difficult to separate non-mediated from mediated experiences.

**Old and New Migrants**

People from Zamora (Ilocos Sur) have been settling in Toronto since the late 1970’s. Over time they were joined by family members and now have Canadian born children. These children are regularly sent back to Zamora for visits and enculturation. Before the new communication technology, Zamorans in Toronto kept in touch with village kin through letters, videos, and occasional phone calls. The practice of sharing news and circulating gifts is continued in Toronto (pauwit) among friends and kin.

While the new communication media has facilitated exchanges between villagers and their Toronto-based kin, it has not fundamental transformed their relationships. Instead the new technology has contributed to a more affirmative, nuanced, and reflective diasporic consciousness among Zamorans abroad. Diasporic ties, rather than interpersonal relationships with village kin, have benefited more significantly from the new media. Zamorans in Toronto now belong to a globalized diaspora, where notions of original and settled homelands merge
imperceptibly. Their Canadian born children share many of these diasporic interests but interpret them differently. Ignacio (2005) has written about her struggles to clarify and better understand her connection to both original and settled homelands. Discussions of overseas-based Filipinos and their foreign born children add to a rich repository of national imaginaries, no longer limited to its original territory.

**Dispersed but Digitally Connected Families**

The new media allows Ramon in Saudi Arabia, his wife Imelda in Dubai, and their children in Cavite to maintain a semblance of family unity under often difficult conditions. Ramon emails his son Paul, in addition to regular calls on the mobile. Imelda frequently sends texts messages to the boys, messages that consist mainly of greetings and banal queries. Paul is in close digital contact with his sister Stephanie in Australia.

Ramon returns annually for a months’ visit, a visit marked as much by tension as by affection, since the sons have to adjust to their father’s strict expectations. Imelda has a more relaxed relationship with her sons but seldom contributes to their maintenance. Stephanie is establishing a new life for herself abroad.

This not too atypical family appears to live two separate existences. Their members share a digital life while also individually pursuing separate interests. They get together annually for a month when the father visits. Personal rhythms are collectively adjusted during this time only to resume their separate activities a month later. Many Filipinos now find themselves in similar situations, balancing digital with lived relationships.

**Finding Christ among Muslims**

Rogie is back home after seven years in Saudi Arabia. Adjusting to life in a foreign country was a very trying experience until he discovered the power of the Christian faith. Rogie joined a community of Christian believers in Jeddah, which transformed his earlier tribulations into an evangelizing mission.
Rogie was determined to live a Christian life under trying circumstances. The mobile and the Internet proved a valuable and even an essential means to survival. They became practical tools enabling him to overcome the barriers set by Islamic society. He remains in contact with his Filipino friends and talks about returning to Saudi Arabia as part of God’s plan.

His religious epiphany abroad has transformed Rogie from being a provincial lad into a cosmopolitan Christian activist. His overseas experiences and the new communication technology have combined to give him a new sense of agency. Since his return Rogie has been active in forming youth Christian workshops in several surrounding towns.

**Buenavista**

Buenavista is a sleepy provincial town near the scenic Mt. Banahaw countryside. Despite government rhetoric about the importance of the new communication technologies, schools in Buenavista are poorly equipped in all technical areas, with rare and slow Internet connections. Buenavista, as of 2010, has 10 small computer cafés with 70 terminals offering limited Internet access at PhP 20 per hour. Most users are boys or young men who play online games, but students also use the facilities for their school work. Occasionally, older people use the cafés to contact relatives abroad and access social network sites such as Friendster and Facebook. While most people in Buenavista may not be personally familiar with the new technology, the presence of computer cafés and the regular advertisements of telecom providers ensure that the new media is part of the local landscape. Moreover, cellphones are readily available and their technical capacities are rapidly converging with many online services.

**Myrna and John**

Myrna (51 years old) is a widow of two years and has seven children all of whom are married. Several children live in the U.S. She and John, a 35-year-old black American, have been communicating via Friendster and Yahoo Messenger for about seven months now. John, a civil servant, is still single and lives with his parents. Myrna and John have quickly established a friendly relationship via Yahoo Messenger.

Myrna and John became close through the new media and shared their friendship with others in their network. Soon after their relationship became regular, John started sending
money to Myrna. These remittances became regular, although not initiated by Myrna and with the full knowledge and consent of her children. She used part of the money to pay the Internet account of her son and also paid other expenses of the family. Myrna was grateful to John for his financial assistance but was not so sure she wanted to develop the relationship further. John was scheduled to visit the Philippines last summer but due to work commitments he was unable to do so. As Myrna was unsure about the future of their relationship, she often felt embarrassed about accepting money from John. John wanted Myrna to join him in the U.S. but Myrna is not yet ready for this commitment.

Rose

Rose (19 years old) does not have an Internet connection at home and spends eight to ten hours every week at the Internet café. She has a Friendster account with over 600 friends but still seeks more members. Rose’s mother works abroad and so they both use their Friendster accounts to keep in contact. They also frequently use their mobiles but only for short conversations to save on costs. Rose is able to engage in intimate conversations and exchanges with her mother. She finds it easier to discuss intimate issues online or over the phone rather than face to face.

Rose is aware that her friends sometimes use social networking sites to look for sex partners. She admitted that she had one sexual experience with a man she met online. A group of her friends had arranged a meeting with several online acquaintances. They met at a party and engaged in considerable drinking. Rose found herself attracted to her online friend (Ace) and the evening ended with consensual sex. While these incidents are not as common as some may fear, the expanded opportunities for meeting mutually attracted partners make such events more likely than in days before the Internet and social networking sites.

Myrna and Rose are typical users of the new media in Buenavista. While Internet access is not yet as common as cellphone usage, increasing numbers of people in Buenavista are becoming aware of its possibilities. Apart from young people who naturally gravitate around new leisure activities, many people have friends and relatives overseas whom they contact regularly for assistance. Although most schools are poorly equipped in digital media, students are generally aware of its possibilities through advertisements on television and the presence of Internet cafes. ICT courses are popular among college students even if employment prospects are not as good as many expect. Recent statistics have confirmed that Filipinos are among the
highest users of social networking sites such as Friendster and Facebook. Many young people in Buenavista who use the Internet have such accounts and use them for social and employment reasons.

The Challenge of Subcultures and Marginal Interests

Culture and society always have their underside, and the new media greatly amplifies the capacity to mobilize marginal networks and connections. Print ushered in a new cultural revival throughout Europe, initially in the sphere of religion as easier access to the Bible and other religious materials became available. This revival soon included more secular interests and the spread of literacy quickened the pace of change. Inevitably print also resulted in the proliferation of salacious and subversive publications alongside religious and devotional books, political tracts, and literary works.

The development of lithographs and later photography resulted in a similar explosion of mainstream as well as marginal publications. But all these pale in comparison with the more recent media such as video, digital cams, mobile phones, and the Internet. In sheer volume, the conventional mainstream is presently outnumbered by these hitherto marginal interests, subcultures, and networks.

The age of print and later of photography converted pornography from the limited editions of aristocrats into a mass market (McNair 2002; Gelder 2007). Some estimate that up to 50% of Internet traffic is pornography (McNair 2002). From being a shameful, clandestine, and patriarchal form of interest, much contemporary porn produced for gays, feminists, and metrosexuals has become chic. Even advertisers have begun using porno-chic images for their products and mainstream pop icons such as Madonna have made successful careers from it.

Odd Affinities and Unusual Connections

The new media allow us to find other people like ourselves, no matter how unusual we may be. A physical condition which involves the voluntary removal of healthy limbs has recently drawn some attention from psychiatrists.
When an affable, middle-aged man told doctors at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Milwaukee, Wisc., that he wanted a limb amputated—and always had—they spent months trying to cure him. He then packed both his legs in dry ice for seven hours, causing severe frostbite and forcing them to chop off both legs above the knee. That done, he told the doctors, he was finally happy (Dotinga 2000).

While the desire to have healthy limbs removed appears unusual, it is part of the different understandings of self and its relationship to the body. Body modifications are an ancient human practice from tooth extraction among Australian Aborigines, circumcision and clitoridectomy in the Middle East, tattooing among the Maori, and foot binding among wealthy Chinese. Many religions impose harsh physical practices such as floggings, starvation, and even self-immolation to achieve spiritual salvation. Seeing the physical body as the carapace of the soul encourages practices to liberate it from its physical prison. In a more secular context, the body is now seen as a source of beauty and pleasure. Cosmetic surgery and obsessions with youth and health are now accepted as part of contemporary culture.

Cultural constructions of the self, religious orientations, and aesthetic preferences ensure that the relationship between the self and the body is highly variable. While psychological factors may also enter into this configuration (e.g. sexual fetishes, traumatic experiences, and mental disorders), any attempt to pathologize unusual notions of this relationship is bound to fail. Instead, what is needed is to unravel the links between the notion of the self and the physical body. These links are often expressed in ideas of pollution and purity. The self and the body are incommensurable entities and attempts to reconcile them inevitably fail. When the self is technologically mediated, this relationship to the body is further complicated. Cyber Cop, Terminator, and more recently Avatar, are popular expressions of this corporeal relationship.

Dotinga, in a Special to the World Science article on Sep. 11, 2005, relates a strange case:

Whatever the cause of the condition, Internet discussion groups for people with the condition have blossomed. So have groups for people with a related condition, known as acrotomophilia—a sexual attraction toward amputees. One discussion group for both amputee wannabes and those attracted to them has garnered more than 3,400 members since its founding just two months ago. “Without the Internet, our patient may never have met someone with similar ideas,” Berger and colleagues wrote. “The Internet helped provide a blueprint for self-amputation. Without the Internet, our patient may
never have conceived, let alone used a method to bring about, self-amputation. We anticipate that increasing Internet access will lead to more cases of self-amputation.

So far there have been no reported cases of the condition described above in the Philippines. Filipinos with physical impediments have general kept a low profile, but the new media allows them to coordinate their activities more effectively. In Chapter 3, I discuss the case of people with hearing impairments extending their social networks. The new media greatly facilitates contact with people who share similar tastes, predicaments, and interests. This includes sharing information about other peoples’ misfortunes (schadenfreude).

Sharing Scandal and Gossip

An obvious advantage of the new media is its capacity to transmit information widely, cheaply, and quickly. Gossip, rumour, and scandal are ideal uses for the new media. Unlike the older mainstream media with its gatekeepers, limited access, and unidirectional flows, the new media is more difficult to censor and more generally accessible and interactive. Moreover, the new media is oriented to individual needs, tastes, and interests. Spreading gossip, rumour, and scandal interests many Filipinos, and a new genre has responded to this interest.

Mangahas (2009) has conducted a pioneering study of this new genre known as scandal. Filipinos more than any other people in the world seem to be particularly interested in ‘scandal’ production and circulation, in both making and consuming it, as well as sharing it by means of the available ICtechnologies (3).

She further adds:

Regardless of possible explanations, the term “scandal” appears to be a keyword for Filipinos. According to Google Trends, the Philippines ranks first in the world for looking up the single search term “scandal” on the Internet using the Google search engine. The screenshot below of a Googletrends results page for “scandal” covering all years (2004-July 2009) also shows a huge gap between interest in searching the term in the Philippines (#1) and the rest of the world, where Pakistan is far behind in #2 place. This pattern also holds for a year by year search. Counting by the search page language, Tagalog also comes in as #1 for searching “scandal” (Vietnamese is a distant 2nd place).
What are all these Pinoys searching for online? Google can provide no news correlation for the sudden steep spike in search interest in “scandal” around May 2009. But Pinoys can surely come up with a hypothesis (8).

This surge in Google search for scandal coincided with the Senate investigation involving the affair between a young actress and her medical doctor lover, who himself was the paramour of a known cosmetic surgeon. This case linked the movie world with high society and medical practice, ensuring its notoriety and fascination. The only factor lacking was politics but the senate inquiry ensured its potential as scandal. Many other similar instances of scandals are readily available in digital and other forms such as videos, film, and even television.

Mangahas (2009) classifies scandals under the following categories: recordings related to sex, 2) material that demonstrate unprofessional or inappropriate conduct, 3) spoofs or parodies of scandals, or 4) non-scandals (without scandalous content).

These broad categories indicate how incorporated scandals have become in contemporary society. While the interest in sex and other unconventional behaviour may be intrinsic objects of interest resulting in gossip, rumour, and scandal, the technologies of their production, distribution, and consumption have been significantly enhanced by CMICT. Furthermore, following Mangahas (2009), scandals are “objects that are ‘made’, copied, shared, bought and sold, and ‘pirated’ in the Philippine context.” They have become commodities in the new digital economy incorporating the actual and virtual worlds of desire, pleasure, and accumulation.

Anthropologists have long studied the role of gossip in small-scale societies. Apart from ventilating normative sanctions and sharing local knowledge, gossip also serves as an indication of in-group membership. Lacking formal institutions for enforcing norms, gossip serves as a sanction for inappropriate behaviour. In cultures where most people are aware of their neighbors’ activities, secrecy is often valued and consciously developed. Gossip is a way of undermining and exposing attempts at maintaining secrets. It is also aimed at individuals who enjoy high status and are hence objects of envy. In the absence of institutions or practices that encourage open and critical discussions, gossip and rumour may be the only way to express dissent and dissatisfaction with the status quo. The absence of a culture of critical discourse encourages other forms of critique. These forms are usually personalistic and contingent rather than general and universal. Chiefs are good but ours steals; or women are virtuous but my
neighbour’s wife isn’t. While the precept is supported, its infraction is contingent. This way, infringements do not threaten the general precept.

The Philippines is not a small-scale society but many features of Filipino culture resemble village life. Most Filipinos consider family, friends, and neighbors as their primary orientation. Strangers are generally avoided, but if necessary, attempts are made to domesticate the relationship. The public sphere is weak and private interests are generally dominant.

The contexts above may explain the popularity of scandals. These private infringements become public matters of great fascination to most Filipinos. Mangahas (2009) points out that scandals are mediated events “which extend well beyond the original actions as transgressions which lie at their heart. We could describe these scandals as ‘mediated events’ because they are events which are constituted in part by mediated forms of communication. Disclosure through media and commentary in the media, are not secondary or incidental features of these forms of scandal, they are partly constitutive of them” (Mangahas quoting Thompson 2000, 61).

In other words, their production, distribution, and consumption are constitutive of their being scandals. The initial infraction sets the process in motion but does not determine it. This explains why even non-infringements may be objects of scandal. Thus a young couple holding hands in a park or a child taking his first steps may become scandal objects. Mangahas (2009) refers to these as non-scandalous scandals. There are also spoofs of scandals. These latter take the original scandal but remove its content while retaining its form.

As expected, the most common subjects of scandal deal with sexuality. These may range from the truly pornographic to the merely intimate or voyeuristic. Commercial hardcore porn is not usually seen as part of the scandal genre since the actors are paid and the actions are rehearsed. According to Mangahas (2009), “This implies that ‘sex scandals’ may have their own more socially engaged...niche somewhat distinguished from porn...For its discriminating consumers, ‘true’ ‘scandals’ (“tunay na scandal”) have value surpassing porn as conversation topics and for their emotional edge...that more than make up for the low production values” (29).

It seems then that sexual scandals have broader meanings than their immediate references. For this reason they constitute a genre different from commercial pornography whose main aim is to sexually arouse their viewers. The scandal genre may also arouse its viewers but as importantly it transgresses notions of propriety, decorum, and taste. The
reference in an earlier section about the underside of culture taking center stage is a consequence of the new economy of pleasure made possible by CMICT.

Finally, a common object of scandal refers to political misbehavior, such as cheating at elections or engaging in other inappropriate acts. Politicians are often objects of admiration but also of envy and scorn. Their actions lend themselves naturally to ambivalent meanings and responses. The scandal genre captures this ambivalence and transforms private delict into public interest.

Theoretical Reflections and Implications

Miller (2009) correctly points out that relationships are often complex orientations, containing conflicting expectations. When conducted face to face, these complexities are sorted out in particular ways. But when the relationship is conducted at a distance, other strategies come into play. Anderson (2002) makes a similar point when he argues that modern communication such as the fax machine allowed diasporic patriots to support radical programs often disapproved of by their counterparts at home. Diasporic life allows for the imaginary of the homeland to develop unhampered by practical contingencies, whereas life in the homeland requires quotidian compromises.

While Marx, Lenin, and Rizal all imagined the homeland from abroad, the new media reconnects these imaginaries to their local counterparts in real time. Condemnations from the Philippine revolutionary committee in Utrecht are quickly replicated in statements emanating from the Southern Luzon revolutionary command and as quickly disseminated in various sympathetic email lists. Attempts by the state and the military to contain subversive information are seen as censorship or propaganda in the liberal media. Pronouncements from abroad and responses on the ground are often incommensurable but the synchronic nature of the new media often masks differences.

Following the terminology of Miller (2009), we have a relationship with the homeland that can be pursued purely ideologically at a distance as opposed to one which requires contingent adjustments at home. All relationships contain both approaches since they all involve idealized or normative elements as well as actualized (and personalized) experiences. For the relationship to persist, a balance between normative expectations and practical experience is desirable. Long absences may tilt this balance one way or the other. The Philippine
revolutionary struggle is now in its fifth decade with prospects of early success unlikely. However, despite not having any formal external support, the struggle continues, fuelled not only by local discontent but also by diasporic linkages. A Philippine radical imaginary is strongly supported by Filipinos abroad.

It is of course not the case that residence overseas always radicalizes the national imaginary. Most Filipinos abroad just adjust to life overseas with its challenges and difficulties. The case of long-term migrants in Canada and other examples mentioned earlier are further discussed in Chapter 6. Most migrants maintain some links with the original homeland and the new communication technology significantly shapes these links. Nostalgia and other memories of the original homeland merge with quotidian experiences abroad. CMICT gives these memories a real-time appearance, mimicking everyday life. For those so inclined it acts as an impetus to action. The new technology blurs the boundary between original and settled societies generating what Ravindran (2007) calls a globalized homeland. This new globalized homeland conflates diasporic life with memories of the former homeland, encouraging their closer equivalence.

Parents absent overseas for long periods and their children back home often develop these mediated relationships differently, resulting in inevitable disappointments when they are reunited. Ramon has been away from his children for over a decade. But his yearly visits are marked by tension in the family. His children admire their father but miss the daily interactions that could temper his authoritarian attitude.

Many funeral homes in Manila now provide broadband services allowing relatives abroad to participate in mortuary rituals. The guilt and regret felt in not attending funeral services of close kin is reduced through this mediated but real participation in the rituals. This example also reminds us that a major function of the new media is not only to transmit information but also to instill and share emotions, values and sentiments. A new economy of the sentiments constitutes this globalized homeland.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the various ways CMICT not only enters into but also shapes our lives. This is a technology that affects our notions of self, society, and culture. Indeed we seem to be on the cusp of a new age. The old mainstream culture guarded and preserved by
conservatives and purists is unable to defend traditional boundaries. National borders are easily breached and replaced by global flows and landscapes. The sheer number of participants in the new cultural dialogues overwhelms mainstream censors. Subcultures and other previously marginal interests and networks have been given access to the mainstream and presently dominate it. Fanatics, fascists, and fashionistas indiscriminately peddle their wares side by side with salesmen, politicians, and journalists. Contemporary mainstream culture no longer has a clear center, since this has shifted to the margins. Former centers have been replaced by networks of networks, each ensuring its own field of autopoesic action.

The digitalization of culture and the mediatization of everyday life have expanded democratic representation but promises that the Internet “will crystallize participatory democracy and result in a rich symbiosis of god and man, without the compulsion of power or law but by the voluntary cooperation of citizens” (Ling 2009, 3), remain unfulfilled.

The present task of scholarship is to chart these promises, reveal their structures, and expose the prophets who have the most to gain from millennial predictions.
Are We Entering a New World Order?

We are undoubtedly experiencing an information revolution whose full consequences are yet to be known. The present millennium marked both the end of an old regime and the birth of a new one. Capitalism triumphed over communism only to be challenged by fundamentalisms of various provenances. Scientific and technological discoveries transformed ever more rapidly all areas of our lives. Many functions of the nation-state were taken up by wider coalitions as the demands of globalization required greater coordination over growing aspects of everyday life. Ironically, this growing coordination also led to the revival of the local. Diasporic communities began to cultivate their roots and renew their ties. The local was successfully globalized resulting in notions of a global homeland among widely dispersed migrants.

Human rights, economic downturns, the war on terror, the energy crises, global warming, and other problems require constant monitoring and assessment. No wonder people increasingly feel besieged and overwhelmed by this excess of information. Information overload is perhaps the most common frustration of our time. It affects everyone regardless of age, gender, class, race, or region.

Old values are replaced by new ones, causing corresponding anxieties. This state of affairs may explain why the present condition has provoked radical comments such as the end of history (Fukuyama 1992) or the end of nature (Castells 2000). We may debate which technology is affecting our lives more substantively, but there is little doubt that CMICT (computer-mediated-interactive-communication technology) is among them. This has prompted some scholars to make excessive claims about its consequences.

Is CMICT a Revolutionary Technology?

We seem to be on the cusp of a new age! Astonishing claims are being made by social theorists. As Barlow (1995) puts it:
With the development of the Internet, and with the increasing pervasiveness of communications between networked computers, we are in the middle of the most transforming technological event since the capture of fire. I used to think that it was just the biggest thing since Gutenberg, but now I think you have to go back further (36).

The printing press and literacy made the transition from feudalism to modernity possible. The easy availability of information made possible by the printing press shattered the monopoly of knowledge controlled by the Medieval Church, eventually leading to the secularization of society. Religion, hitherto part of the public sphere, retreated to the private sphere. From public truth, religion became private belief. Its place was taken by science, henceforth the arbiter of true knowledge. A sphere of mundane aesthetics, distinct from the sacred, began to develop. Secular law separated itself from canonical theology, and was presided by a group of lay specialists. A new political consciousness began to emerge throughout Europe, resulting in the replacement of the divine right of kings by the sovereignty of parliament and the people.

From Community to Society

The ideals of modernity have replaced hierarchy with equality, ascription with achievement, and community with society. These changes are interrelated. The levelling out of privileges require a more assertive self, one who charts her own life course rather than simply reproduces tradition. These new assertions of the self necessarily project themselves into wider areas of life, beyond family and locality. Modern subjects navigate their life course amidst similarly situated subjects, leading to the replacement of locality and community by society. Subjects sharing an earlier communal lifestyle produce similitude through regular consociation. Differences in life mode are muted while similarities are stressed. Strangers are anomalous since these are not consociates.

Modernity forces community to move beyond itself. Modern subjects operate in broader contexts often involving strangers. The temporal rhythms of daily consociation in community (e.g. the agricultural cycle) are replaced by abstract concepts of time (e.g. schedules and timetables) linking modern subjects. Community consists of consociates, while society includes contemporaries. While the former share a common life-mode, the latter live distinct life-modes within the same abstract time frame.
Members of a community know one another through regular and direct interaction (primary association and direct exchange). Members of society are unknown to one another except for the regular exchange of services (secondary association and indirect exchange). Members of community share a common notion of place, while societal members simply share a common space. In community, time and place are intimately interwoven in daily life, while in society time and space become abstract categories within which distinct life modes are lived. Community is lived while society, because in large part not directly experienced, is necessarily mostly imagined and abstract. The former is oral, the latter textual (Pertierra 1997).

As Heller (1990) argues, community can give rise to a philosophical awareness (e.g. classical Greece and Socrates), whereas society requires a sociological consciousness. Sociology provides partial and perspectival views of society rather than the holistic model provided by philosophy. While the other social sciences can provide added perspectives, society is too complex and heterogeneous for a comprehensive, holistic philosophical view. Notions of a good life can no longer be encompassed by a single life mode (e.g. peasant, merchant, and priest) but has to include distinct life modes (e.g. worker, owner, and student). For this reason, religion can no longer serve as a universal model of the good life and hence retreats to the private sphere. Attempts to impose a religious hegemony contradict the modern notion of individual liberty (the freedom from belief).

The West is Best?

The above are broad generalizations of the transition from feudalism to modernity in the West. They are conceptual simplifications to provide an analytic framework for examining the possible consequences of the information revolution in non-western societies such as the Philippines. These generalizations are ideal types or models rather than empirical realities. Social change and transformation often incorporate earlier elements but in new combinations. For example, the family, religion, and law as institutions have retained stable elements during these transformations. Most societies have experienced these transformations differently.

Most of the scholarship on this transition explicitly refers to Western perspectives and experiences even if these processes were equally transformative in the non-West. The domestication of technologies outside their original western contexts produces many unexpected consequences. The preference for text messages instead of voice calls in the Philippines is a typical example of unexpected consequences of technological adaptation.
The Return of the Local

CMICT has brought back elements of community under radically different conditions. The Internet makes it possible to return to a more intimate orality on a global scale, with its chat groups and informal networks. This results in virtual communities where the local, the diasporic, and the global intersect. These new intersections produce distinct hybridities embodied in transformed relationships and identities. Gay pride and other minorities can interact and generate new social perspectives. The local connects to the global to reinforce diaspora, with its yearnings for roots and origins.

While the restrictions of space no longer apply in CMICT, lived place retains its value and even increases in importance. The global is also increasingly localized. Diaspora develops and nurtures the notion of homeland, no longer merely a territory but more often a place of memory and nostalgia. A globalized homeland incorporates both the local and the diasporic. Cultures of origin inform and reinforce cultures of residence.

While the information revolution has transformed many basic features of everyday life, it has not eliminated earlier forms of inequality. Class, gender, and ethnicity retain their fundamental structures in shaping people’s lives even if they do so under different communicative conditions. The Philippines is in a state of transition into a fully modern society. Many of its structures retain their earlier orientations. Locality and community remain strong while society is often obliged to bend to older pressures. Kinship and religion continue to play significant roles in the public sphere. It is within these conditions of possibility that CMICT may be expected to transform Philippine society and culture. In a Philippine Star survey about the most important inventions, published on October 5, 2006, readers nominated the cellphone ahead of all the others, including the computer and electricity.

CMICT and Corporeal Transcendence

New technologies also bring corresponding anxieties even as they predict brighter futures. Technologies of displacement, whether spatial, temporal, or communicative, inevitably produce neurasthenia and a feeling of unease. The telephone, just like the steam locomotive before it, disrupted accepted routines and raised fears about their consequences. No wonder
that new technologies evoke antinomian and even eschatological fears. The disengagement of time from space has led to the transgression of hitherto impenetrable boundaries. The divisions between life and death, nature and culture, male and female, human and machine have to be renegotiated. The hopes and fears initially accompanying the implementation of a new technology not only tell us much about how such novel technologies are embedded in existing practices but also about how they come to be culturally constructed in a particular context, time, and place.

The relationship between technology and society has always been problematic. While technology is a product of its contextual culture it also often generates unexpected social disruption. Technology may not itself determine sociocultural transformation, but it opens new conditions of possibility hitherto unavailable (Katz and Aakhus 2002). These new possibilities, using a Weberian metaphor, act as rail switches enabling social change to proceed along new ways. According to Weber (1930/1976), changes in the inner-world brought about by the Protestant ethic ultimately created the conditions for modern capitalism. This change in attitude was the product of the wide accessibility of the Bible, made possible by mechanical printing (Eisenstein 1979). This technological revolution ushered in a new spirit of inquiry enabling a renewed spiritual awakening, as well as its eventual replacement by natural science. What started out as a new form of reflectiveness made possible by the text (Ricoeur 1971) resulted in intersubjective and objective structures known as modernity.

Who would have predicted that such a device as the typewriter—invented in 1808 by Pellegrino Turri—designed to assist a blind Italian Countess would generate employment for working class women decades later, or that the mobile would be used for writing (SMS) as much as talking? These examples make us realize that the social construction of technology is the interplay of many factors—technical design, user preferences, cultural choices, and serendipity (Fortunati 2007). This unpredictability is compounded when the technologies are adopted outside their contexts of invention.

**Celebrations of Technology**

The global condition exacerbates this tension between society and technology since technology can now rapidly spread to cultures far removed from its origins. Similar to its introduction in the West, the first steam locomotive initially unsettled the tranquillity of the Philippine countryside but quickly established itself as integral to commerce and everyday life
(Gonzalez 1979). The railway line from Manila to Dagupan was inaugurated in 1892 amidst a great celebration that included a Te Deum Mass. The event was seen as a great triumph of both the State and the Church. The telegraph, the motorcar, and other inventions were quickly introduced in the Philippines, reflecting as well as exacerbating the rapid changes of late modernity (Pertierra 2004). Colonialism and imperialism imposed alien forms of life in distant lands and a global economy brought everything into flux everywhere. No wonder that the present condition is ontologically insecure (Giddens 1990) or, as some have put it, characterized by a surplus of meaning and at the same time by a lack of sense (Markus 1997). We need anchoring structures in such shifting conditions, and perhaps the success of the mobile phone is due to its ability to meet this need (Ling 2009).

**Technological Futures**

According to Masuda (as cited in Ling 2009) the Internet “will crystallize participatory democracy and result in a rich symbiosis of god and man, without the compulsion of power or law but by the voluntary cooperation of citizens” (3). Others make equally promising claims:

The Internet is the greatest revolution since the invention of the automobile except that its growth is 40 times faster. The Internet is the greatest invention of the century, if not ever. The printing press sparked 600 years of ideology, scientific achievement, and discovery, all because it allowed for the exchange of ideas. The Internet is the printing press on souped-up steroids for superheroes. The Internet is the greatest invention since the wheel (Katz and Rice 2002, 2).

Barlow’s claim is the most ambitious, the equation of the Internet with the domestication of fire, the very beginning of human culture. The domestication of fire was the first truly revolutionary technology but its consequences were not realized for many millennia (Goulsblom 1992). The final effects of change may not take shape until much later since its consequences include unintended and unexpected elements. The control of fire, the domestication of plants and livestock, the invention of the wheel, and the discovery of writing, while truly revolutionary technologies were nevertheless relatively slow in producing significant transformations. By comparison, the electric bulb, the railway, and the telegraph achieved significant changes quickly. It is too early to predict whether the new communications technology belongs to the former category but, it is clear that its effects are being felt as quickly as the latter. What is less disputable is the fact that the mobile phone has become the most
accessible technological device in all areas of the world, among rich and poor, young and old, educated and illiterate.

**Posthumans or Post Hype**

Following Barlow, one assumes that the electronic revolution will transform the human either into the posthuman or at least into the cyborg. The seamless merging of human and machine challenges earlier understandings of culture as distinct from and opposed to nature. In the cyborg, the dialectic between culture and nature is fully established. Brute facticity and human purposiveness merge into the human-machine. The posthuman subject combines the immediacy of a tool with the effectiveness of a machine. For these reasons, social theorists (e.g. Kirby 1997) are presaging the end of the corporeal and the birth of the postcorporeal or the replacement of the human by the posthuman. Such a future is suggested even in the popular imagination (e.g. James Cameron’s *Avatar*).

A leading electronic journal advertises its orientation as follows:

The Leonardo Electronic Almanac (ISSN No: 1071-4391) is inviting papers that address the complex relationship between technology and difference. Technology is often conceived as an ability to “create,” “innovate,” “make;” all that which differentiates: ‘man’ from ‘nature’; human from animal. It is seen as a path to ‘God(s)’ and ‘community, sociality, spirituality, and consciousness. Cultural differences are enacted in differentiations of ‘technologically advanced’ from ‘technologically backward’ cultural traditions, often evidenced in statistics on use and proliferation of such technologies. There are significant differences how cultures approach this question of ‘technology’ both in art and science, albeit they are rarely presented and poorly understood.

In the past few decades, however, a new optimism has been propagated of a technology that is said to operate as a de-differentiating force: it builds bridges, it unites, it globalizes (for better or for worse), it brings us closer. It goes beyond ‘old’ differences: ethnic, sexual, cultural, animal, towards ‘new’ differences between human and (intelligent) machine, human and post-human, human and transgenic or artificial species.
The journal advocates technology not as a source of differentiation but as a force for new forms of collectivization. Others make equally astonishing claims: “We are going to be Gods, we might as well get good at it” or “In another thousand years, we will be machines or gods” (Gray 2002). These claims may sound unrealistic in the Philippines with its poor development of advanced technologies but the future is now global.

Nomadic Technologies and New Physicalities

Cyberspace is frequently regarded as utopian spaces in which users are able to project their imagination. When communities are shaped in a hybrid space, CMICT become new tools for creating novel and unpredictable imaginary spaces, re-narrating lived space (Kirby 1997). While fixed Internet users do not have the ability to move through physical space, the emergence of nomadic interfaces makes possible mobile imaginary spaces to be enacted and constructed in physical space. Hence, nomadic technologies have a role in the construction of narrative spaces. They allow virtual spaces to be mobile, bringing them into the physical world.

Location awareness embedded in mobile devices strengthens the connection to physical spaces, creating new geographies of mobility. Mobile devices and interfaces make us aware of the importance of physicality when dealing with digital spaces. It is in this sense that mobile phones can be perceived as writing devices. Writing in a broader sense (not only SMS or MMS) means the creation of narrative and imaginary spaces. Cellphones are new media devices for writing in both physical and hybrid spaces, transforming them into textographic spaces (Josgrilberg 2008). Rather than converting space into text, as did the earlier technology, the new media, including Web 2.0, reconvert the text into embodied and lived spaces.

Pingol (2006) describes how Filipina women married to Korean men use the mobile to ensure their own safety. Using their mobiles, Filipinas in Korea band together and keep track of their friends’ activities.

A Korean husband begged me to help him after learning that I was looking for Filipinas married to Koreans. He brought out his mobile and gave me his wife’s number . . . My attempts to connect with his wife went unheeded. This was not unusual, I was told by friends of battered wives. The woman in hiding makes a point of not responding . . . taking a call is always a risk. She must be with another Filipina willing to provide her a temporary home (56).
David and Mario met online a few days before David was due to leave for Canada for higher studies. In that short time they discovered many things they had in common. Once abroad they continued communicating through text messages until David returned for a short visit.

We reconnected in December. Two weeks later, I left for Canada again. When I arrived in Canada, within a few weeks, my Philippine cellphone was stolen at a coffee shop. We began to communicate over email. It was odd for me. We both carried phones that had data plans (mine provided unlimited access to the internet), so in theory we could check our emails and keep in touch at any time, from anywhere. But it wasn’t the same. For one thing, I felt like my Philippine cellphone was a tangible reminder of, and portal into, my life in Manila. I also missed the fact that SMS is a push-based system. Emails are retrieved (“pulled”) when I remember to; my phone repeatedly reminds me that I have unread SMS messages from the Philippines, impinging into my otherwise homogenously Canadian life (pers. comm.).

The loss of his mobile was more than just a technical hitch in an otherwise digitally rich context. Its ring had a visceral effect and its loss was deeply felt. The connection between mobility, spatiality, and embodiment is clearly illustrated in this example.

For the past three weeks, I haven’t received a single text from Mario; I’ve only been getting emails. It’s not the same thing. His emails may contain more detail about his thoughts, but I didn’t feel as connected. A “ping” is a special utility that can be used to test whether a remote computer is responding or not. Well, I felt like that our SMS messages were a convenient way of pinging each other...When I lost my phone, I felt like an important link to the Philippines was severed, and I felt myself kind of reintegrating into my Canadian networks in a way that was different from when I still had my phone. (I had lived for 10 years in Canada before meeting Mario.) When I realized that I felt like I was “slipping away”, I asked Mario to buy a new SIM card for me and send it my way. I can get a second-hand phone somewhere in the city, I’m sure (pers. comm.).

Local Realities
How can we assess the relevance of the claims raised above for technologically undeveloped societies such as the Philippines, with its relatively low rate of Internet penetration (25%) even if this usage is growing rapidly? Admittedly, it is the mobile, rather than the Internet, that has had more success in influencing aspects of Philippine society and culture. Text messaging has become a national obsession, and the mobile has established itself as an icon of contemporary Philippine life.

Cyberspace and virtual reality are new ontologies, often subverting the formerly lived continuum of space-time. The global merges with the local into the glocal, disrupting identities based on territoriality such as the nation-state.

Homogenous and territorialized cultures are rapidly hybridized, while diasporas are localized in chat groups and other sites. Corporeal presence is no longer a prerequisite for collectives to enjoy simultaneous interactions. Having eliminated distance, synchronicity becomes the basis for association. Temporal affinities replace spatial ones, producing their own notions of difference and alterity.

The multiple and often conflicting loyalties (class, ethnicity, gender, nationality) of the postmodern condition are often contrasted with the certainties and promises of modernity. The rationalization of social life under modernity produced a view of the self that stressed its purposive-rational orientation. The self (singular and often masculine) had clearly stated goals and appropriate values, and it used its resources to achieve them. The citizen-consumer mirrored the well-managed nation-state and the free-market.

Modernization and development theory predicted a bright future for everyone, including members of the Third World. This prediction has not only failed but it is now perceived as part of a legitimizing strategy on the part of the affluent and privileged. Narratives of economic development, the benefits of science, promises of equality, and the endless bounties of nature are now increasingly being questioned or discredited. Instead, globalization has narrowed as well as widened the differences between and even within nations, societies, and cultures.

Technology and the Culture of Everyday Life
Science and technology are among the most significant examples of areas of knowledge requiring highly developed training and skills. Activities in this area, while supported by private and commercial interests, also require public support for their full benefits to be socially beneficial.

Both modernity and postmodernity are characterized by the growth of specializations. The natural and social sciences are the contemporary heirs of earlier more socially coherent intellectually focused elites (Pertierra 1999). The needs of technology have ensured that science remains a dominant feature of contemporary society. But the social conditions for the modern production of knowledge are not universally present in all societies. In the Philippines, the social and intellectual division of labour has not yet progressed sufficiently to encourage the rise of a scientific culture.

Philippine culture readily accepts new technologies but is less interested in developing them. Science and technology are not high in the list of the country’s priorities. While technologies are quickly assimilated, their transformative potentials have been unfulfilled. In many cases, technology has served to strengthen conservative interests rather than widen social opportunities (Pertierra 2004).

Apart from the technologies themselves, cognitive changes and cultural reorientation are needed to harness the transformative capacity of science and technology. The undeveloped nature of the public sphere provides few opportunities and resources for research and development. Even when technology is accepted and its beneficial consequences are evident, the resources for its development locally are not available. Public resources are often beholden to narrow strategic interests. Furthermore, an autonomous subculture supporting the interests of science and technology is poorly developed. Philippine culture is still too monolithic and non-differentiated to allow the florescence of more specialized interests such as science and technology. The next chapter discusses further the relationship between culture and an interest in science and technology.

**Mobiles as Technological Icons**

No other technical device has spread more quickly, across so many people, than the mobile phone (4 billion by 2008) (Ling and Donner 2009). The cellphone has become the new icon of Philippine life. Filipinos of all classes, generations, and ethnicities have adopted this new
technology to reproduce traditional relationships under new conditions. Moreover, they also employ it to explore new identities and transcorporeal subjectivities. Freed from the constraints of spatial location (mobiles connect individuals rather than locations), cellphones allow perpetual interaction with absent interlocutors. Cyber or virtual communities are easily generated by CMICT. In these circumstances, notions of the social and of culture are radically transformed. Physical co-presence and direct interaction no longer constitute the primary basis for relationships. Under these conditions, an expanded role for the stranger, hitherto undeveloped in Philippine culture, is encouraged.

These conditions constitute new possibilities for the rise of a postmodern public sphere and new forms of politics. The Habermasian public sphere can now be extended into cyberspace, generating hitherto unlikely relationships and identities. While members of defined classes pursuing collective interests constituted an earlier (modern) public sphere, a postmodern public consists of a network of diasporic individuals with heterogeneous interests. The new media facilitates these networks and reinforces private interests in the public sphere. This new form of politics characterized EDSA 2, and to a lesser extent EDSA 1. Their implications for a new form of politics are explored in chapter 7.

Culture and the New Media

The global has replaced the local with the virtual, extinguishing the difference between the real and its simulacrum. These changes are not only producing significant transformations in the sphere of the social but have even more important consequences for culture. Hitherto closely attached to a form of life, postmodern culture becomes a sphere of autonomous signification. The virtualization of the local has detached culture from its sources in the routines of everyday life and instead culture becomes a product of globality. The structures of meaning provided by culture are no longer rooted in ordinary experience but are instead linked to complex and abstract systems. When abstract systems impinge on everyday life, abstraction becomes a concrete ability.

The rupture between culture and its generative structures create problems for identity. A consociational culture gives rise to community whose members share a common life-mode. Societal culture is more complex and reflects different as well as common life-modes. Globality often imposes itself on locality through the virtual. In this case, culture becomes a quest and a desire for a life-mode rather than its actual reflection. Culture becomes exemplary, a paradigm
for living, rather than a mode of life. This shift from a mode of life to a model of living characterizes modernity, with its promise of a better life (Pertierra 2002).

The social as collective is replaced by the intercalation of diverse elements combined in the networked individual. The rise of multifunctional spaces such as shopping malls and housing estates (e.g. Eastwood City) mark important aspects of the contemporary world. They usually mimic public space (which in Philippine cities is rapidly disappearing) but are often private spaces easily put under surveillance by their owners. These new spaces are often characterized by their conscious separation from local and traditional structures such as markets, plazas, and other public areas. Shopping malls and housing estates often invoke the notion of a more rational and ordered virtual world in contrast to the chaos and irrationality of the locally real. They simulate the ideal of a Western lifestyle and substitute it for the realities of Philippine society. A housing estate advertises its products as making its residents feel that they are living abroad “a house so continental, you feel like you’re in another country”. This results in a simulacrum and virtualization of everyday life. Filipinos experience a New York winter at Megamall or reproduce western chic at Eastwood City. By contrast ordinary life becomes banal and inferior, befitting the poor and the weak.

**Durkheim and Industrialism**

Many scholars point out how central Durkheim is for understanding the changes caused by the industrial revolution (Pertierra 1997; Ling 2009). New times require new relationships as well as new understandings of the sphere of the social, hitherto conflated with nature and a pre-reflective culture. Industrialism separated areas of life that were earlier confined to locality or kinship. Work and the sphere of the social expanded to include elements not covered by locality or kinship. Social sciences such as economics and politics were the earliest attempts to conceptualize the new conditions of early modernity. The market and the citizen represented hitherto unspecialized practices. New paradigms were required to understand them. Psychology soon followed as reflexivity marked the modern subject. Sociology arose to explain this new sociality, and anthropology extended this understanding to the non-Western subject.

Similar transformations are now taking place due to the rapid accumulation of information and communication. New models of the social are required to explain these changes. CMICT has significantly transformed the previous constraints of space/time as well as the virtual and the actual. Many interactions now involve interlocutors who are no longer
physically co-present. This leads to the phenomenon of an absent but an ambient presence that allows overseas relatives to micro-coordinate the daily expenses of dependents in their home villages. This coordination of everyday life from a distance generates notions of self and other, not adequately comprehended by an anthropology that assumes face-to-face interaction as the primary basis of social life. Increasing areas of life are now characterized by technologically mediated interactions. Understanding these interactions requires conceptual models not generally present in earlier anthropological paradigms.

**CMICT and New Socialities**

Ling (2009) has argued that the new media has significantly expanded social relationships. These new relationships require a new understanding of sociality. For example: What are the protocols or norms affecting friendships in cyberspace and how does one respond to intimate inquiries on the part of strangers? A common experience in the web is to access Asian cam models. These are generally adult young women who consent to pose naked and perform sexual acts according to the instructions of their customers. No physical contact takes place but this is clearly a form of sexual exploitation (Mathews 2010). Is cybersex fundamentally different from actual sex? If we treat sex work as a form of labour, what conditions can be reasonably expected by often poor, young Filipinos entering this global labour market? In later chapters we discuss relationships that are conducted purely through text messaging or the Internet, how authentic are such relationships? Are relationships that are largely technologically mediated fundamentally different from face-to-face ones? CMICT raises questions that require new understandings of relationships.

Drawing on the work of Durkheim, Ling (2009) points out that the industrial revolution generated new social relationships that henceforth became the objects of sociological investigation. One might say that sociology was the result of coming to terms with relationships no longer primarily defined by locality, kinship, or religion (Pertierra 1997).

*Gesellschaft* or society replaced *gemeinschaft* or community. Instrumental and specialized roles replaced more generalized ones that combined moral, ritual, and pragmatic authority. These roles were conducted face to face, in circumstances governed by ritual and tradition. The Roman notion of *pater potestas* combined ritual, moral, and pragmatic authority in condensed form. The father, as head of the household, held absolute power over its members. In turn, the members owed the father fealty, support, and labour services. In many societies until recently,
fathers had the power to bestow the reproductive services of their daughters to men of their choice.

The conflation of roles and their associated power became more diffuse and differentiated as society developed. This social differentiation and specialization of roles led to the rise of new organizations such as trade unions, professional associations, schools, political parties, and the media. Durkheim, Weber, Marx and Simmel recognize the significance of these changes, marked by a greater rationalization of social relations and structures. Capitalist production and mass consumption became the new engines of transformation and development. The modern city became the site and symbol of these changes. Sociology still reflects this urban bias, seeing the countryside as a repository of conservatism and tradition. Anthropology has shown a greater sensitivity to the complexities of rural and indigenous cultures. These latter are also experiencing fundamental transformations, and the communication revolution has even more significant consequences for them.

**Post-industrial Futures**

Some are arguing that a similar if not even greater revolution is taking place as a result of CMICT. They claim that this technology is bringing about fundamental changes to contemporary society. If nothing else, CMICT certainly facilitates new forms of association, with its corresponding affinities. The former spatio-temporal constraints of association have been significantly altered by the new media, and consequently new forms of sociality may be expected to arise.

According to some social theorists, we are in the threshold of a new age, whose full implications are only slowly emerging. Just like previous epochal transitions, we can expect that this new epoch will generate its own singularities. One such singularity is the rise of fundamentalisms of various provenances. In an age where everything appears to be in flux, it is understandable that some people convert their fundamental beliefs into a fundamentalist lifestyle. This is more likely to occur in societies with diverse lifestyles. Globality has made virtual and actual cosmopolitanism possible. A cosmopolitan sociality, at least one based on a sense of a simultaneous present, was not possible before the new media. It is now possible with real-time communication across the world.
That significant changes are occurring is obvious even if the final consequences remain unclear. The importance of mass media since the introduction of film, radio, and television has been extended by the new media. Traditional media disseminated information from the centre to the periphery, while mobiles and the Internet now channel peripheral information to the centre. The control of this new flow, previously guarded by gatekeepers and censors, is now virtually impossible. Free flowing, unverified, and personalized perspectives have replaced the earlier more structured and controlled but professionally assessed information. Wikipedia and YouTube are models of this new structure of information and news. Interactivity is the new buzzword, promising a new era of democratic knowledge. But like all buzzwords, interactivity often has unexpected consequences, often negating initial claims (Andrejevic 2007).

This democratization of information has implications for personal identity, hierarchical values, and collective action. The sheer amount of information now easily available has made possible new organizations and institutions, such as e-groups, global civil society collectives, social networking sites, criminal networks, as well as increased state surveillance. Andrejevic (2007) convincingly argues that those with power are more likely to benefit from this new technology. Qiu (2009) makes a similar point for China, where, despite the rapid spread of CMICT, the have-nots are still significantly disadvantaged. Finally, despite its support of certain sectors, CMICT has also destabilized institutions such as the family, the church and other conservative organizations.

While Ling (2009) is fully conversant with all these transformations, he disagrees with the radical position and instead argues, like many others (Katz and Rice 2002) that the so-called information revolution is an extension and part of the earlier industrial revolution. The rise of cities, nation-states, and global capitalism are at least as fundamental as CMICT. Perhaps, the only difference is the speed of these fundamental changes.

**Cultural Futures**

While the claims for the new media are sometimes excessive, there is little doubt that, in association with broader social trends, we are presently undergoing a transformation perhaps of greater significance than the industrial revolution. Modern technology challenges most of our assumptions regarding both the natural and cultural worlds.
Nature, previously seen as brute facticity, is now seen as having its internal telos. Culture, hitherto the sum of purposive human action, is now understood as indistinguishable from complex structures with systemic requirements (Luhmann 1998). The human is rapidly becoming a techno-formation where dacron, silicon implants, and electronic chips merge seamlessly with human flesh. No wonder that Gray predicts that ‘in another thousand years we’ll be machines or gods.” Considering the pace of technological change, this prediction even seems conservative.

Social institutions from the family to the nation will have to express these new realities if they are to remain relevant. A process of democratization is occurring at all levels of society and culture, even extending to the rights of animals and nature. Never before have we had to face such momentous changes so quickly. The use of fire and the domestication of livestock took many millennia before producing significant transformations. By comparison, the industrial revolution changed society in a little over a century. The telegraph, telephone, railway, steamboat, and air travel increased the pace of life significantly by practically cancelling distance. The motor car privatized travel, and the cinema transformed our perception of time. The mobile and the Internet have compounded these rapid transformations, and the future seems increasingly close.

Anthropology and the New Media

For the reasons above, CMICT is as much a challenge for anthropology as it is for the other social sciences. This new technology requires the social sciences to re-examine their understanding of networks, connections, hierarchies, and other organizational modes, schemas, and structures. Functionalist and empiricist approaches have to be reassessed, positivist and other methodologies re-evaluated, and actual expectations matched with virtual realities. The possibilities of imaginability have far exceeded previous boundaries. Neither space and time nor even the actual constrains or inhibits the virtual. Only technology and human interests do so. Anthropology can assist this task but only if it gives up earlier notions of the local, the real, and the possible.

The social sciences were a response to these changes. Action was increasingly seen as purposive, identificatory, and social rather than (as in the past) traditional, pre-reflective, or singular. By comparison to these earlier transformations, the spread of CMICT in the Philippines and the rest of the world have been phenomenal. The new media have become
indispensable in most people’s lives in only a little over a decade. As Di Maggio (2001) has pointed out, the Internet and associated communication technologies are reshaping and are being shaped by their users at an incredible pace. These changes are taking place as we watch them close at hand and even participate in these activities ourselves. In the Philippines, mobiles achieved in five years levels of penetration that took television 50 years (Pertierra et al. 2002).

The example of mobiles is an ideal case for studying social transformations whose major elements are observable and whose effects are revelatory of less transparent structures. How quickly will the social sciences adapt to these structural changes? The rise of postmodern theory, cultural studies, and transdisciplinary approaches are an indication of attempts to understand these new social and cultural realities. Anthropology will have to confront these questions adequately or be replaced by other paradigms and disciplinary approaches.

The New Media and Its Promises

As did earlier projects, this project seeks to understand how the new media, with its extensive communicative capacities, impacts on the lives of Filipinos. While the Internet is not yet easily accessible, the mobile phone (80%) has become a common device for most Filipinos. The mobile has penetrated all levels of society, including the poor, who, if they do not own a mobile, have access to its use. Internet access is less widespread (25%), but most cities and even small towns have Internet cafés where, for a small fee (PhP 20/hr), users can connect to the Web. The young are particularly adept at learning the technology, but even their elders are willing to use it given adequate opportunities.

Informants are mainly young Filipinos familiar with the technology but spanning a range of socio-economic and geographic categories. They mostly come from large urban centres, but include others from provincial towns and villages. This technology clearly favors the young urban consumer, but increasingly and significantly, older users are learning its advantages. The technology is becoming more accessible even in rural districts, either through Internet cafes or less reliable wireless applications. The widespread use of mobiles has definitely predisposed many Filipinos, old and young, rural and urban, wealthy and poor, to extend their communicative practices to the Internet.

The purpose of the earlier research was to determine how the use of these technologies affects notions of personhood and identity. It assumed that the new technology, with its
expanded communicative potential, affected existing relationships and encouraged new ones. Previous notions of personhood and identity were established under more constrained communicative contexts. The new media significantly expanded these constraints, making novel conceptions of personhood and relationship possible. In particular, it made contact with strangers feasible, hitherto a category normally avoided. The inclusion of the category of stranger, with its new possibilities of exploring novel contexts, is a major factor in shaping notions of selfhood and alterity.

**Communicating via Technologies**

Much of contemporary communication no longer depends primarily on unmediated body-to-body exchanges (Fortunati 2005). Conversations while watching television, reading the newspaper, listening to the radio or texting friends increasingly frame our interactions. These media affect both what we communicate and how we communicate. There are no longer any technologically unmediated relationships. Technology surrounds our everyday lives and affects us even if we remain unaware of their effects. In addition, communicative exchanges routinely transcend body co-presence. We now communicate just as often with absent as with present others. Mobile phones, email, and social networking sites are the best examples of trans-corporeal communication.

The consequence of these changes is that many relationships are now primarily discursive. An obvious example is the case of overseas workers who relate to their families using the new media. Relationships that are conducted mostly as discursive exchanges generate discrepancies between expectations and perceived realities. The examples discussed in later chapters illustrate these antinomies. Kristina’s friends still communicate with ‘her’ even if she is dead. Ramon is a responsible father but is unable to adjust to the different needs of his growing children during his annual visits. All these examples indicate that purely communicative relationships have their limitations if pursued outside the broader context of practical everyday life.

Communication technologies such as mobiles and the Internet also bring about changes in the inner world of their users that have significant social and cultural consequences. They encourage a more privatized and personalized orientation in the world. They enable a discursive intimacy hitherto difficult if not impossible in non-affluent societies such as the Philippines (where they say, if you don’t have a room get a cellphone). Moreover, private
orientations may quickly coalesce into collective actions through the rapid transmission of information. These collectivities or smart mobs easily mobilized are capable of the micro-coordination of their hitherto unconnected participants (Rheingold 2002). This has led to claims such as that President Estrada was a victim of a coup d’text (Pertierra et al. 2002). The mobile phone also encourages a greater sense of individualism, often expressed in the establishment of virtual relationships with strangers. These can be transformed into more conventional ones should the circumstance arise or they may remain virtual as a choice. Mobile phones and the Internet have resulted in an explosion of virtual relationships, many of them sexual in nature.

While the Internet is only accessible to a minor percentage (25%) of Filipinos, cellphones have taken the country by storm, exceeding the wildest predictions. Presently about 80% of Filipinos own or have direct and easy access to cellphones. There are about 60 million cellphone subscribers in a population of 90 million. No other technology has been accepted with such enthusiasm. Moreover, cellphones are not only mobile, allowing perpetual contact, but highly interactive. They connect to virtually all existing electronic services (e.g. radio, television, newspapers, Internet). Freed from the constraints of spatial location, cellphones allow perpetual interaction with absent interlocutors. They generate an ambient but absent presence. Cyber or virtual communities are easily generated by these new media.

Sensorial and Post Corporeal Extensions

The new media has also resulted in the extension of the senses. De Leon (2007) provides an example of how the Internet has expanded the world of deaf Filipinos like Flora:

Though I don’t chat with normal people, the fact that I could use the Internet the way they use it, I don’t feel neglected or isolated at all. When I’m on the net I don’t feel disabled or left out. The Internet opened doors for me. Before, I had very few people whom I can call friends. With the Internet, I was able to meet other people like me. My circle of friends widened—from everywhere in the Philippines to people abroad. I often share my problems with them since they can connect with me given the fact that we’re in the same condition (72).

The camera both mediates and is an integral part of the relationship. This mediation may increase the intensity of experience by highlighting perceived elements.
On 26 February 2004, a passenger ferry bound for Bacolod departed from Manila. Barely an hour away, the ship caught fire and sunk, with the loss of 116 passengers and crew. A member of the investigating committee described the following account about the incident:

Two families whose relatives perished in the incident reported having received text messages of a disturbing nature. One was living in the United States when she got a call that her sister was trapped in the ship’s comfort room. At the time of the alleged call, the ship had been burning continuously for the past 24 hours and was submerged on its side in Mariveles, Bataan.

The second story also reported a similar situation where the caller was trapped in the comfort room of Deck A. The relatives in Mindanao got the call some time after the ship had caught fire and had sunk (Ferdinand Flores, personal communication).

Ramon Tulfo, a well-known journalist, reported a conversation he had with his manicurist:

I was at Bruno’s Tuesday for my haircut. Domencil was doing my nails. She said she was surprised Nazareno didn’t show up for his appointment. He always came on time for his appointments, she added. When I told her that Nazareno couldn’t come as he had died the previous day, Monday, Oct. 30, she was dumbfounded. “Don’t kid me because I got two missed calls from him a while ago,” Domencil said. She then showed me two missed calls on her cellphone from General Nazareno…The ‘missed calls’ that Domencil received on Tuesday was a way of telling her that he couldn’t make it to his appointment (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 2 November 2006).

Communications with the recently dead are not an unusual phenomenon in the Philippines (Bahrendregt and Pertierra 2009) and the text messages above indicate how new technologies are quickly incorporated into traditional practices. While the new media allow us to communicate with physically absent others, it also opens the possibility of extending these communications to the supernatural realm. Filipinos are regularly exhorted to bombard the heavens with appropriate text messages instead of traditional prayers. While these practices may be encouraged by telecom providers, they nevertheless draw on pre-existing cultural beliefs.
The Fragmentation of the Mainstream— from Subcultures to Networks

The ease of global communication allows participation in subcultures whose members have easy access to specialized interests. Virtual communities are easily consolidated and developed into subgroups and subcultures. Postmodernity is characterized by the growth and significance of subcultures, some of which inevitably become established as part of the mainstream (Gelder 2007). While culture and society have always had their underside, the new media greatly amplifies the capacity to mobilize new members. A consequence of print was the proliferation of salacious and subversive publications alongside religious devotionals, political tracts, and literary works. Photography resulted in a similar explosion of diverse as well as mainstream publications. But all these pale in comparison with the more recent media such as video, digital cams and the Internet. In sheer volume, the conventional mainstream is presently outnumbered by these hitherto marginal interests. This is reflected in the revolution in tastes found in shows like American Idol and their Filipino equivalents.

Shifting Cultural Centers

The recent death of Michael Jackson (July 2009) and the ensuing media attention it received is indicative of the importance of global subcultures. Other events previously seen as more significant elements of mainstream media, such as civil unrest in China and the G-8 Summit occurring at this time, received less coverage. Moreover, as someone unkindly put it, Jackson’s death was a good career move and a shrewd way to increase the value of his media empire.

Since celebrities deal in a world of fantasy and virtuality, physical death is no major impediment for a continuing popularity. In some ways, it may even assist this popularity since the image becomes one of pure signification no longer hampered by corporeal contingencies. Michael Jackson, Elvis Presley, and Princess Diana are some of the more obvious examples. The recent death of Corazon Aquino (August 4, 2009) has transformed her from a political has-been to a potent symbol of democracy. She may yet accomplish as much in death as she did in life.

The rise of powerful subcultures may lead to the undermining of formerly mainstream cultures. In these circumstances, the notion of a mainstream culture whose members share
common values may now have to be replaced. Instead its place is shared by a multitude of networked subcultures, taking turns at receiving global attention (Castells 2001).

**Mainstreaming Porn**

An even more powerful example of a subculture taking over the mainstream is the rise of sexuality and pornography in the Internet. While sexual interests have long existed, their modes of expression had been limited. The age of print and later of photography converted sexuality from the limited editions of aristocrats into mass-market affairs (McNair 2002; Gelder 2007). Attempts to censor these expressions of sexuality are generally unsuccessful in most western democracies since they are seen as limitations of personal liberty. The expression of sexuality has undoubtedly expanded significantly given the distributive capacities of the new media. Presently, sexual images and messages pervade every aspect of life. This sexualization of everyday life is a consequence both of the need for capitalist profit and media capacity.

While it has been possible to control print and celluloid editions, the rise of videos, digitalcams, DVD, and lately the Internet has made this censorship impractical. Some estimate that up to 50% of Internet traffic is pornography (McNair 2002). The case of Asian adultcam models mentioned earlier is an example of cybersex entering the mainstream as a form of virtual labour. Since the customers are mainly foreigners (it is often difficult to access these sites from the Philippines), this is another expression of the globalization of labour (Mathews 2010). Unlike the earlier phenomenon of ‘mail-order brides’ these Filipino sex workers stay at home while offering their services virtually. They may be seen as another version of business process outsourcing (BPO) in the field of global sexual services.

**Popular Culture and Performing Skills — We Are All Stars**

The growth and dominance of popular culture since the rise of the electronic media is a major feature of the contemporary world. Popular culture has replaced an earlier aesthetic hegemony in most media (print, film, radio, television). This popularization of taste is facilitated by the electronic and digital media. The media had earlier been dominated by elitist interests but the capacity to access the mass market soon shifted its orientation to populist tastes. Cultural guardians upholding aesthetic standards are swamped by the amount of information
and the demands of access. Paradoxically, while there may be more choice, there is often less quality. Perhaps more precisely, faced by such wide choices, the ordinary user is unable to judge or assess quality.

Popular music seldom requires the rigorous training of classical performers and encourages immediate display. Karaoke and other technologies can convert private to public performances, allowing everyone to become, temporarily, a star. Presently, classical musicians have become a small subculture of the public sphere, enjoying neither the material rewards nor the general recognition they previously did. With the exception of the print media (newspapers), most other media cater mainly to popular tastes. Film, television, and radio in the Philippines rarely feature productions that aim beyond immediate amusement or that tackles socially controversial topics non-sensationally.

Admittedly, the new technology also allows for specialist tastes to develop such as the rise of independent films and alternative music. The new media and technology is often caught up in structures that discourage their more creative use. Alternative networks and structures allowing more creative performances are still to evolve.

**Generating Difference in a Postmodern World**

There seem to be two opposing tendencies in postmodernity. On the one hand, there is the global levelling and generalizing of culture via the mass media. Hip hop may have started in the backstreets of Harlem but it has now spread to Manila, Sydney, and even Kabul. While acknowledging its common sources, local versions of hip hop retain their particular flavor (Gelder 2007). This subcultural musical genre is global while remaining locally rooted. Filipino rappers and hip hoppers are easily identifiable globally, even if their particular messages are addressed to their local audiences. The inevitable McDonaldization of the world generates its own local adaptations (e.g. Jollibee).

The other tendency of postmodernity is to encourage diversity and modification (Kaviraj 2002). This differentiating tendency applies as much to specific subcultures such as hip hop and rap as to more general features such as democracy and consumption. Globalization leads to cultural convergence as much as cultural difference. Greater mobility encourages the crossing of cultures as much as it does to the reproduction and maintenance of locality. Globalization and
localization stimulate one another, resulting not only in their hybridization and glocalization, but in the emergence of new cultural forms.

While much of public culture, following the imperatives of consumption and profit, tend to become universally generalizable, other elements of postmodern society become highly specialized. Art, fashion, music, and literature continue their aesthetic evolution. Even consumption is specialized. Chic boutiques are as ubiquitous components of the cityscape as supermarkets and malls. The middle class, a main agent of globality, continually differentiates itself from general mass consumption. As Miller (2001) has argued, consumption is as much a personal as a collective activity. The latter may be globalized but the former ensures that personal idiosyncrasies stubbornly resist universalization. We consume in order to generate our own individual identities even as we do it in particular economic, social, and cultural circumstances.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has raised diverse issues. Is CMICT a truly revolutionary technology? Will society and culture be fundamentally transformed by the new technology? Is the Philippines likely to share in these revolutionary transformations? While there is little doubt that the mobile and the Internet have changed the lives of most Filipinos, it is too early to claim that the immediate future will be fundamentally transformed for the better. No single technology is capable of such comprehensive effects.

The context of the new media is the shift from community to society, from a mode of life based on kinship and locality to one centring on the stranger and the national or global. Daily consociation is replaced by interactions with contemporaries. From an earlier life of similitude in community, contemporary life consists of difference in society.

Many of these interactions are now mediated through technology. Increasingly we interact with absent others simulating corporeal presence. Moreover, as Miller (2009) has argued, we often interact with the technology itself. Later chapters discuss cases of people who interact with others primarily through the mobile or the Internet. These interactions generate new social formations and structures. Anthropology has to adjust its paradigms to better suit these new social realities.
These new communicative conditions give rise to cultural antinomies and fragmentations. Minorities join the mainstream and often even replace hitherto dominant sectors. The Internet includes all possible interests from religious fundamentalism to the endless desires of consumption.

This surplus of information has led both to globalization and a re-localization of life. The postmodern condition is characterized by the glocal and the hybrid, the universal in the singular. Culture has become detached from a mode of life and instead becomes a paradigm for living.

Just as in earlier periods of change analysed by Durkheim, the present condition has elicited a range of predictions. The most extreme claim is that we are on the verge of a major evolutionary transformation. Others, on the other hand, simply see the present as an extension of the industrial age. What is certain is that change is happening at a rate never seen before. The next chapters examine in more detail the issues raised earlier.
Chapter 3

New and Expanded Networks

Most Filipinos prefer to associate with family or friends, and more rarely with strangers. By strangers, I mean people with whom we only share a specialized interest rather than general, daily interactions. Networks that significantly include strangers require different communicative practices, often involving special topics of interest. These expanded networks consist of subgroups or subcultures with interests such as heavy metal music enthusiasts, political activists, and celebrity or sports followers. Their members know one another mainly through these common interests. People may belong to several such groups, each relatively distinct from the other.

In previous studies of mobiles (Pertierra et al. 2002), we were particularly interested in exploring notions of privacy, individualism, and cosmopolitanism among our informants. The new media opened new possibilities for an expansion of specialist interests. The project began by looking at the attitudes towards science and technology in the Philippines in order to provide a cultural background for our informants’ understanding of the possibilities of technology (Pertierra 2003).

While the users of new technologies are not necessarily acquainted with technical details, usage is also affected by cognitive predispositions. Increasingly, new technologies are as much shaped by cultural and cognitive values as they are by their designers’ assumptions (Fortunati 2007). An example is the case of mobile phones meant primarily to transmit speech but is used by most Filipinos for sending text messages. Designers assumed that talking at a distance was the primary interest of users. While this assumption is valid, the opportunity of non-confrontational exchanges using text messages proved to be equally important and structurally more significant. The former reproduced existing relationships, while the latter expanded communicative contexts. One texts what one cannot say.

New Communicative Contexts
We also extrapolated our results to make predictions and suggestions about future conditions of possibility generated by these technologies for Philippine society and culture. These possibilities are not only a function of the local and the national but include global and transnational elements. The global economy, overseas work, migration, and the new media are among the most significant elements affecting how and what people communicate. As a consequence of such communicative practices, new notions of identity are constructed and new relationships are generated.

In a generally gloomy economic outlook, call centers and other backroom support services have become major local employers of young professionals in many major Philippine cities (Hechanova 2009). English and foreign language competence has become a valuable skill. The large numbers of overseas workers, including permanent migrants (over 8 million), have generated corresponding needs for inexpensive means of communication using mobiles and the Internet. The tourism industry has required Filipinos to direct more consciously their attention to people from other societies. This attention requires a re-evaluation of local culture. Finally, the new media makes possible and imperative certain styles of communication. All these elements contribute to significantly changing the conditions for identity construction, the formation of social relationships, and corresponding collective practices.

**Familiars and Strangers**

Continuing these interests, we focused on the use of Internet social networking sites to gauge the extent of cosmopolitan ties. Filipinos are natural networkers since local culture favors establishing loose but functional ties within a wide circle of kin and acquaintances. The growing importance of overseas migrants and their communicative practices is also part of our research. The previous boundaries between local, national, and global are now largely irrelevant for increasing numbers of Filipinos with access to the new media.

The new media also expands communication across cultures and interest groups. Many of these networks inevitably involve strangers (unfamiliars), which then require interlocutors to employ new strategies of communicative engagement. Sharing a communicative network among unfamiliars generates new forms of understanding of both the self and the other, since it requires a clearer enunciation of normally assumed or tacit contexts. Local knowledge can no longer be the basis among participants in the network. Hechanova (2009) provides examples of
this expanding cultural awareness among call center workers whose clients are based abroad. They not only learn how to deal with foreigners but in the process also learn about themselves.

An Expanded Public Realm

These new communicative practices requiring finer cultural nuances may also lead to an expansion of the public realm. By public realm, we simply mean an audience whose membership includes a wide variety of subject positions, interests, and values (Hampton, Livio, and Session 2008). Heterogeneity, rather than homogeneity, characterizes these audiences and effective communication requires the recognition of difference. The contemporary western multicultural city exemplifies these heterogeneous communities. Often, even the local neighbourhood is heterogeneous. Ironically, one now has to leave the local neighbourhood in many multicultural cities to find a community of common interest, readily accessible in cyberspace. While Manila is not multicultural in the western sense, its inhabitants come from diverse rural regions, each with its own local orientation (Pinches 1999). In this context, spaces such as Internet cafés provide new venues for interaction (de Leon 2007). Like call centers, their users are exposed to a wider range of interests and backgrounds than is normally the case.

Internet Cafés

Internet cafés have become a common feature of most Philippine cities. People in Tuguegarao, a small city north of Manila, use these cafés to remain in contact with friends and family abroad, to supplement the meagre resources of local libraries, play games, search for porn, access useful information, and to meet friends. Janna is a young married woman:

I go to the Internet café to download software, music videos, games and also to play with other gamers who I now consider friends. Actually I feel more ‘free’ in Internet cafés since I could open and browse any site I wish to visit. Although my personal computer is protected with several anti-viruses, I am still very cautious, especially that all important files are stored in it. My husband and I love online or network gaming and we do it in the Internet shop. Battle Realms, DOTA, and Need for Speed Underground are a few of our favorites. We like to compete with each other and since we have only one computer at home, we go to net cafés to play. I tried playing alone, but I get bored easy. With someone to compete with (not the computer), I can really be motivated to do
well and win. One time I beat my husband, he got all boos, and hurrahs for me, he suddenly turned red because of embarrassment. I pitied him but I was too overwhelmed by the other gamers’ applauses.

From then on, everybody wanted to play with me but I never beat my husband again…it’s a matter of choice. I am actually withdrawn around people but in my constant visit to Internet cafés I eventually gained friends especially those I played with. Most of them are males and in their late teens. Considering my personality I didn’t imagine I could be friends with them. Our interest in computer/online games creased out unfriendly encounters (de Leon 2007, 68).

For Janna, the Internet café is a new domain for exploring new relationships as well as for asserting new aspects of herself. She feels more confident in the café, where she meets new friends. Her relationship with her husband takes on a more egalitarian aspect even as she continues to defer to him in important ways. But it is the capacity to form new friendships both online and on site that the café exercises generative powers. Married Filipinas are very circumspect about relationships with young men unrelated to them. That Janna feels comfortable in befriending her Internet buddies indicates a new sense of individual confidence. The important thing is to contain these relationships within their appropriate sites, in this case the Internet café. In this sense we can say that Janna’s relationships are virtual in two senses—because they occur in cyberspace and because they are limited to the Internet café.

**Extending Knowledge Networks**

An interesting feature of the new media is its capacity to allow a public sphere to expand into a wider public realm, one dominated by strangers (unfamiliars) rather than consociates (familiars). The wider networks that Internet social sites provide may be an initial step in widening the public sphere. If joined to expanding subcultures, then an emerging public realm may be the result. This provides more opportunities for specialized discourses to attain importance and demand appropriate resources.

An expanded public sphere is most clearly represented in the political realm. But this broader public sphere is also represented in the sphere of culture and society. Intellectuals, scientists, bureaucrats, and other professionals play an important function in generating a modern public sphere. Their contribution is essential for maintaining the complex structures of
modern life from education to health care, public administration and technical services, collective security and governance. Their status and relative autonomy in their areas of expertise indicate the influence and dominance of the public sphere. Among other things, the public sphere requires expanded notions of trust, where the duly accredited stranger provides essential skills.

Philippine culture still retains many of its traditional attitudes. These attitudes prevent the development of professional and specialized subcultures necessary for science and technology. There are several cultural orientations indicating these traditional attitudes. The view of nature as animated, the common acceptance of miraculous events, and a personalized attitude towards—knowledge as an individual asset to be guarded against interlopers rather than a collective good to be shared—are among the inhibitory factors. The overlapping of the private and public spheres and the low valorization of a specialized competence in favour of generalized social skills also impede the development of science and technology. The pervasive politicization of all aspects of life, including cognitive achievements, absorbs much of the country’s resources (Pertierra 2003).

The enormous success of mobile phones appears to be an exception, but its success is due to a strong cultural orientation for constant and perpetual contact (Pertierra et al. 2002). Ironically, this communication mainly reinforces the private sphere. Text messaging and voice calls are used mainly for friends and relatives. Attempts by the Philippine government to encourage people to text public agencies have not so far resulted in an improvement of governance. Despite the public response, the necessary structures to translate complaints into enacted policy are inadequate (Kuvaja 2007).

Finally, while cellphones have significantly impacted on Filipino life, the consequence for the development of science and technology is unclear. Call centers have become a mini-boom industry but their technical skills are often low-level rather than technically specialized (Saloma-Akpedonou 2006). The new communications media may well encourage an interest in technology, but resources will have to be reallocated for this interest to result in improvements in Philippine science and technology.

**Flexible Skills or Narrow Specialization**
Developments in the technology of communication will undoubtedly have significant effects in the Philippines but may not in themselves result in a greater awareness and support of science. For this support to be given, more basic changes in society and culture will have to take place. A greater appreciation of competence, seen as a skill acquired after considerable training and involving a specific attitude to knowledge, has to prevail. Philippine society and culture presently favour more general skills because they allow agents to switch from one activity to another with little preparation. Filipinos readily describe themselves as artists, performers, and writers, or as researchers, inventors, and technologists without always having a highly specialized competence but simply an aptitude or an interest in the field.

This attitude is helpful for operating in a society that favors flexibility, multitasking, and compromise rather than having a narrow focus, being single-minded or self-consistent. The former make Filipinos easily adaptable locally and abroad but less likely to achieve distinction. A culture of excellence is either nonexistent or weakly developed (Pertierra 2006a). The pursuit of excellence or distinction is weak in all areas, from sports and the arts, to science and technology (Pertierra 2003). The rare individual who achieves global excellence (e.g. Lea Salonga, Manny Pacquiao) is accorded an authority in areas even outside their field of achievement. Pacquiao has become an iconic figure widely adulated by most Filipinos. This adulation now extends to his mother, herself a media personality. Pacquiao is trying to use this general admiration in switching to specialized areas such as politics, cinema, and music, so far with only marked success. Politicians are also attempting to translate this adulation for their own success. Their political campaigns are marked more by celebrities than policies.

This tendency for general skills rather than specialized ones has been noted for overseas workers who return after spending years abroad (Arcinas and Bautista 1988; Pertierra et al. 1992). Despite acquiring specialized skills during their period overseas, Filipinos resume their more general activities on their return. This is partly attitudinal but also structural. Returned workers invest their savings in sari-sari stores, buy tricycles or jeepneys, act as money-lenders, and invest in land. None of these activities make use of their specialized experience abroad. Nurses who worked in intensive care wards or engineers in charge of repairing industrial equipment are obliged to obtain employment in less specialized fields on their return. Deskilling also occurs when teachers work as domestic workers abroad. The shift of medical doctors to nursing in order to work abroad is simply a continuation of a much earlier trend. It indicates that societal factors operate to encourage and oblige Filipinos to develop flexible skills rather than highly specialized ones.
But this cultural predisposition may also result in a resistance to specialization necessary for development. The jeepney, often cited as an example of flexible adaptation, is now more indicative of a lack of technological innovation since its basic form has not improved for over half a century. While the Range Rover and the Pajero originated from the American army jeep but have since developed into specialized vehicles, the jeepney remains technologically unspecialized (Felipe 2006).

These examples indicate that flexibility, while important in certain situations, is no substitute for genuine innovation and creativity. In a competitive global context, Filipinos need to achieve specialized competences as well as flexible skills in order to succeed. Apart from improvements in schooling, a culture more supportive of specialized interests and original knowledge is necessary. Presently, power and authority are concentrated in the political elite, whose members are not answerable to public opinion. Even questions of specialized competence are often decided on political grounds.

The Tasaday—Anthropological Puzzle, Political Scandal, or Cultural Impasse?

The Philippine media is regularly inundated with scandals from a wide range of areas, from political corruption to sexual dalliances and professional malpractices (Mangahas 2009). These scandals are of interest to many Filipinos, partly for titillation, but also as a confirmation of their mistrust of others. Because scandals cover broad and overlapping areas, their separation is necessary to allocate blame and responsibility. Political scandals often involve the misuse of public funds, personal scandals transgress moral principles, while professional scandals involve technical competence. Each of these domains has their own standards of assessment and evaluation. Unless carefully separated, attempts to allocate blame and responsibility across domains is difficult. Their separation is often problematic since most Filipinos see these areas of life as a unified symbolic field.

During the Marcos martial law period (1972-86), an interesting claim was made regarding the discovery of a Stone Age tribe in Mindanao. This claim gained global media coverage but was soon overtaken locally by charges of political corruption, sexual exploitation, and professional incompetence. It became a national as well as a global scandal. While these charges were likely linked, their conflation prevented a dispassionate analysis that lasted over two decades. The solution required a new political climate (i.e. the overthrow of Marcos), as well as an impersonal and professional tribunal. These conditions were necessary to untangle
the linkages of corruption, exploitation, and incompetence that prevented the dispute to be resolved locally.

The controversy regarding the authenticity of the Stone Age Tasaday, purportedly a matter for anthropologists, attracted a gamut of journalists, politicians, media personalities, and general members of the public, all of whom offered diverse opinions. Celebrities such as Gina Lollobrigida (a famous Hollywood star of the 60’s) and Charles Lindbergh (a pioneer American aviator), as well as reporters from National Geographic, visited the ethnological site. Oddly, and at the root of the problem, no reputable anthropologists were able to investigate the matter adequately, for a range of reasons, from personal security to logistical support. Access to the Tasaday during this period was tightly controlled. The controversy eventually subsided until the overthrow of President Marcos in 1986 allowed intrepid investigators to enter the Tasaday area. Some promptly declared it a hoax, while others supported the original claim.

The issue had earlier split the local anthropological profession, and its revival two decades later inflamed long suppressed animosities. Each camp accused the other of fraud and deception. The Tasaday issue had been thoroughly politicized and treated like any other controversial question whose resolution depended more on political force than on technical expertise. Congress held several sessions to determine the anthropological validity of the claims but only generated more controversy. The dispute was finally resolved in a special meeting of the American Anthropological Association in Washington, D.C. in 1989, away from the passionate atmosphere in Manila (Headland 1992). What began as a local anthropological dispute was blown up into a national political scandal that required a regime overthrow for its resolution. That resolution had to be pursued in neutral grounds overseas supervised by a tribunal of global experts.

Nearly 40 years later, the authenticity of the Tasaday continues to be disputed (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 1 Sep 2009) in the media, with the original informants, now in their senior years, still claiming primordialism. Questions of personal identity have been conflated with anthropological categories and political strategies. Even global factors such as the opposition to the Vietnam war, the quest for Edenic innocence, and international media hype were all part of the Tasaday question. No wonder attempts to unravel the puzzle prove impossible.

The Tasaday controversy reflects a fundamental problem in resolving local issues. The entry of political partisanship quickly overwhelms attempts to dispassionately resolve differences. In addition, issues of morality and professional competence also complicate their
resolution. When these three elements are present, it is impossible for the issue to be resolved locally. While most societies are also unable to agree on these issues, their separation is usually necessary for the dispute to proceed to a satisfactory resolution.

**Unresolved Scandals**

Philippine society is constantly racked by similar disputes, scandals, and controversies. Most never achieve a final resolution even when the political conditions seem favorable. This indicates that political partisanship is not the only factor preventing the resolution. The most notable example is the assassination of Benigno Aquino in 1983. When his wife Corazon Aquino assumed power in 1986, a judicial commission convicted the soldiers responsible for her husband’s security at the airport, but higher authorities responsible for ordering the assassination were never discovered. Many of the convicted soldiers have recently been pardoned and released but the original perpetrators remain unidentified. This is not only a failure of the judicial or political system but an indication that a cultural impasse prevents its resolution.

Despite numerous accusations of corruption against politicians and others in high positions (in many cases with incontrovertible evidence), no one of significance has been jailed or punished. The exceptions are revealing: a congressman for having sex with an under-aged girl, a provincial mayor for the murder and rape of a university student. These cases generated much controversy in the national media but apparently had little influence in the political standing of the accused. The only other major conviction was of President Estrada in 2007, convicted for plunder. He was immediately pardoned and continues to enjoy political influence.

These cases show that the sphere of politics can overshadow morals and professional competence. But the reverse may also occur in circumstances where traditional political networks break down. The major appeal of Corazon Aquino was her moral standing both as a widow of an assassinated politician and her abstemious lifestyle despite belonging to a wealthy clan. Aquino was seen as a victim of injustice who pursued her cause through her example of moral purity. More recently, in the 2007 elections, the victory of Governor Panlilio in Pampanga and Governor Padaca in Isabela over entrenched political families is evidence of the belief that the systemic corruption of traditional politics can be solved by people of outstanding morals, despite their lack of administrative or professional skills. Their victory, however, was later overturned by the Commission on Elections (Comelec).
Only if the spheres of politics, morality, and professional competence operate relatively autonomously is it possible to rationally allocate blame (or praise) since each sphere follows distinct norms and procedures. Their conflation as indicated above illustrates the difficulty of apportioning fault or assessing the likelihood of success. This dilemma reflects the fact that Philippine culture is insufficiently differentiated and generates an impasse when disputes require a finer distinction of areas of responsibility. Many areas of life still operate on the basis of key symbols whose unity is the basis for their efficacy. Whether this cultural impasse will be compounded or overcome, following the informational gains brought by the new media is a major issue for further research. In the meantime the fascination with ‘scandal’ remains.

Knowledge and the Public Sphere

The low valorization of specialized competence in the arts, humanities, and the sciences is due to a weak public sphere. It is this sphere that provides the resources and acknowledges the accomplishments of excellence. However, most Filipinos have to depend on private connections for support, effectively disenfranchising the majority from the resources required to attain global standards. The Philippines compares badly with a nation such as Cuba, equally poor but whose public resources are harnessed to support exceptional achievers in sport, the arts, or science. While the public sector in Cuba may be criticized for its lack of democratic values, its achievements indicate how effective and necessary the channeling of public resources are for global competitiveness.

In the Philippines, public resources are often bestowed on people with political connections rather than outstanding accomplishments. The public sphere is beholden to elite private interests. Accomplishments are quickly claimed by political interests and used for partisan purposes. The rare examples of global success, such as Manny Pacquiao’s boxing prowess, are quickly claimed by the political elite to serve its own interests. The popularity enjoyed by outstanding accomplishments may in turn be used to build a political base. Thus, specialized competences are ultimately converted into more generalized traits such as politics.

National Artists and Political Appointees
The declaration of national artists in 2009 was marred by protests that the list had been expanded by presidential fiat after the panel of experts had made its choice. Similar protests marked previous lists. The choice of appointees to the Supreme Court in 2009 was similarly entangled in political meddling. While political meddling occurs in all societies most of the time, the examples given illustrate the power of general political interests over narrow professional expertise. On a positive note, both examples raised enormous public controversy, indicating the growing recognition of expertise and an awareness of the importance of professional independence. Alternatively, it may be evidence of the continuing politicization of knowledge on the part of the disgruntled.

Another example of the influence of private interests over public institutions is the controversy over the consequences of aerial spraying of pesticides in banana plantations in Davao. Despite some strong local objections and the support of the Department of Health and the Department of Agriculture against indiscriminate spraying, private interests have prevailed over the technical expertise of the public sector. In this case limited economic interests prevailed over wider public concerns. But more importantly it shows, as in the earlier examples, the relative weakness of institutions mandated to provide specialized knowledge for the public sphere.

Expanding Communicative Structures: Mobiles and the Internet

Most of the informants in earlier studies (Pertierra et al. 2002; Pertierra 2006b) welcomed the advantages of mobiles and the Internet. While they also recognize some problems such as rising costs (e.g. over PhP 300 monthly for mobiles), the lures of gambling, or the dangers of seduction, they overwhelmingly support their advantages. Remaining in contact with friends and kin, extending a social network, accessing useful information, whether for spiritual or entertainment purposes, are among the most significant uses of the new technology. While mobiles have blended into the routines of everyday life, the Internet remains less accessible because of economic and technical reasons. But Internet access is readily available in most urban centers and young Filipinos quickly learn the skills needed to navigate the cyber-world. A discussion of Internet access in a rural municipality is given in chapter 4.

While class, gender, and generation are factors affecting the use of the new communications technology, generally, they are surprisingly neutral (Pertierra 2006b). However, it is too early to say whether the new technology is generally emancipative or
beneficial only to those with adequate resources. The rich make more voice calls and enjoy home Internet access, men surf for more instrumental sites, including pornography, than do women, who prefer religious sites and overseas connections. The young are more adept in all these uses than their elders and more willing to experiment with new identities and experiences. But most users quickly appreciate the advantages of greater access to the world of information.

The new technology does not eliminate existing inequalities but it offers its users access to a world beyond the local. Hitherto, confinement to the local was a major aspect of inequality. Generally, the new technology is too recent and novel for old inequalities to constrain its outcomes. Other researchers (e.g. Wacjman 1991; Saloma-Akpedenou 2002) have noted how the former disadvantages of gender have not yet imposed their constraints on the CMICT workforce. But class, gender, and race may ultimately impose themselves on these new technologies as they have in most others. Qiu (2009) has recently discussed the uses of CMICT among the Chinese working class. Digital inequality may well constitute new bases for class and other social divisions. As Qiu (2009) has argued the Information City continues to discriminate against its poorer inhabitants.

Paradoxically, poorer informants appreciate the advantages of the Internet more than their affluent counterparts. These latter, being used to their existing privileged status, saw no great advantages in the Internet. Living actually privileged lives made them less appreciative of the advantages of the cyberworld. In contrast, students attending badly equipped schools quickly realized the advantages of access to the Web. For them, the Internet provided resources lacking in schools. Qiu (2009) shows how the have-less make use of the new media to compensate for their disadvantages by allowing the pooling of information and other scarce goods. The new technology may not transform society while older structures retain their oppressive force, but it may provide a new leverage or new opportunities for the have-less (Penni 2007).

The Internet, with its more immersive capabilities, elicits more ambivalence than the mobile among our informants. Early fears that texting causes linguistic deterioration have not had much practical impact. But many of our informants express the fear that cyber-reality is replacing the real. Cyber reality not only replaces the real but reduces it to a simulacrum (Baudrillard 1988). Nevertheless, all informants recognize that access to the cyber world is necessary for contemporary life. The simulacrum is both necessary and real.
Mediated Relationships

Increasingly, most relationships are now technologically mediated, replacing face-to-face interactions with their virtual equivalents. We spend as much time interacting with absent than with present others. Physical absence no longer prevents communication and interaction. Collocation has lost its previous constraints. Physical presence has been replaced by a digitally generated ambient presence. This interaction with virtual others has redefined our notions of ourselves as well as our notion of the other. It has also, as Miller (2009) argues, changed our understanding of relationships. For many Filipinos this new basis for relationships is both threatening and liberating. Hitherto, Filipinos interacted with others on a daily basis. Practical constraints, cultural values and personal idiosyncrasies largely defined the relationship. Presently, wives interact with husbands thousands of miles away using the mobile or the Internet. This interaction is limited sensorially and subject to distinct technical constraints compared to face-to-face relationships. If the absence is temporary, the former quotidian relationship may prevail but long absences, often involving many years, create a significantly different set of expectations. Examples of these long-term digitally mediated relationships are discussed in later chapters.

Sex and Virtual Relationships

The experiences made possible by mobiles and the Internet are encouraging new forms of individualism and cosmopolitanism. Strangers are increasingly entering networks of intimacy hitherto limited to kin and close friends. These extended networks require individualizing responses and broadens outlooks, leading to more cosmopolitan orientations. Online relationships are the best expression of this new cosmopolitanism. Many Filipino women use the Internet to explore and widen prospective marriage choices (Constable 2005). They also use it to participate in an expanding sex industry (Mathews 2010).

The spread of digital pornography has provided opportunities for employment for young people unable to enter more conventional work. Asian adult cam models are only one instance of this new field of sex labour. While there are problems of exploitation and victimization, this activity provides working conditions superior to those normally associated with the sex industry. According to Mathews (2010):
Thousands of girls (and men) work as ACMs in the Philippines under labour conditions that are exploitative, serving between an acclaimed 7,000 to 17,000 viewers per day at one site alone. Subject to the influence of digital technology and cultural globalization, they may be construed as digital prostitutes. Yet we know almost nothing about them or the industry as a whole (25).

This commodification of sexuality through technology transforms the virtual into its simulacrum. Images and representations become the real objects of pleasure which transform ACM into a commodity. According to Matthews (2010)

She must not merely "surface" or disingenuously act, but must act authentically, not by pretending to be a sexual object but rather by becoming one. Through her dress, language and movements, she produces "real" acts of seduction and intimacy. Through careful communication and display work, the ACM constructs and maintains seemingly genuine relations with her customers (32).

As Mathews argues, it is ironic that cutting-edge technology in this case leads to a form of piece work reminiscent of the last century. ACMs operate in domestic contexts, selling their merchandise by the hour and on the demands of their customers.

Ann, was required by means of private shows to meet a quota of 100 minutes per month; failure to do so forfeited any income. Even if she did meet her quota, her boss would deduct room rental etc; she would then need to borrow money from her boss for food.

In any event, while the payment rate for consumers is USD$1 per minute, most ACMs receive only 25cents of that: the USA-based ISP takes 50% of each dollar, and the remaining 50% may be split "equally" between the ACM and her "boss". In effect, an ACM may labour for 4 hours but receive payment for only 23 minutes that she actually "worked" (Matthews 2010, 45).

**Cyber Spirituality**
Filipino women and men also use the Internet to access religious sites, indicating that this technology is compatible with traditional notions of spirituality. Earlier technologies such as the telephone, radio, and television have long been incorporated into religious activities. The new communication media simply makes these ritual experiences more selective and interactive. Televangelists see no contradiction in using the latest communications technology to preach biblical fundamentalism. Their interpretation of God’s word is technologically mediated and globally disseminated. The model for this transmission is face to face: preacher preaching before a congregation. But the viewer/audience may cross several time zones and cultures.

Whether this dissemination results in religious indigenization and hybridization or in the expansion of orthodoxy is difficult to predict. Earlier processes of religious conversion progressed slowly enough for local adaptation and indigenization to take place. Presently, the rapid spread of orthodoxy makes this process of hybridization less likely. Hence, the spread of religious fundamentalism is one of the apparent paradoxes of postmodernity. In the Philippines, both Christian and Islamic fundamentalism and other forms of religious revivalism are popular. The new media is an effective agent for ensuring religious orthodoxy.

Others have argued (Anderson 1992) that relationships conducted primarily through electronic means encourage a form of ideological purity. Such interactions may mimic face-to-face life but are generally determined by the interests of the more powerful party. The relationship is mostly inwardly oriented rather than part of a broader context such as the practical concerns of everyday life. Most relationships feature contradictory elements, which in everyday interactions are resolved pragmatically, including strategies of avoidance and suppression. When conducted electronically and at a distance, these contradictions manifest themselves differently. Some people become more open or alternatively can better disguise suppressed feelings. In both cases, the relationship develops according to imperatives distinct from the practical compromises of everyday encounters. Several examples of these electronically maintained long-distance relationships are discussed in later chapters.

A significant aspect of these mediated relationships is their self-sufficiency. While they mimic dialogical relationships, much of the interaction is with the self—a dialogue with oneself, where introspectivity and internal reflection constitute important elements. This contrasts with normal face-to-face interactions among Filipinos, where self-revelation is rarely present. This latter is characterized by a tendency to disguise intentions. Instances of self-revelatory discursive exchanges (nagpakitang loob) are rare except in ritual contexts such as courtship and
reconciliation. In textual exchanges, the opposite is generally the case. Frank exchanges and self-revelations are quickly encountered.

In earlier research, to give detailed substance to survey results, extensive interviews with a range of informants were conducted. They were not meant to be representative users of the new communication technology but to illustrate the incorporation of the new technology in everyday life. They are exemplary users of the technology, indicating how contemporary life is infused with its usage.

Perhaps the sector most affected is the families of overseas workers. But in their case the technology is often a secondary consequence of the primary decision to go abroad. Increasingly, however, the desire to go abroad has now also become a consequence of mediated communication among members of OFW families. Earlier research also focused on how the technology affected those who remain at home. Since these initial interviews, I have continued my investigation of the incorporation of technology in everyday life. The results have mainly confirmed earlier impressions.

Virtual Mothering

The obligation of motherhood in an Ilocano village is fairly well-prescribed, even if not always totally fulfilled (Nagasaka 2003; Pingol 2001). If mothers are obliged to remain abroad for long periods in order to provide for the material needs of the family, a major obligation is fulfilled, but an equally important one such as basic everyday care is necessarily impossible. A common response of absent mothers is to text, almost obsessively, in an attempt to fulfill this second obligation. As Miller (2009) points out, this texting activity is as much a result of unfulfilled obligations as it is of technological imperatives.

The mobile allows mothers to alleviate their sense of abandonment by remaining in contact. But another example (Pertierra 2009, 51) also shows that the need to text is elicited by the presence of the mobile. Sarah admits that she feels compelled to text whenever she has her cellphone but when her daughter borrows it, her need disappears. Some may argue that this is a case of technological determinism but I prefer Miller’s (2009) own explanation that the cellphone holds a relationship with its owner. Sarah enjoys her sense of liberation and control associated with the mobile, since it allows her to contact suitors whenever desired. She enjoys this relationship with the mobile but is clearly not dependent on it since she allows her
daughter to borrow it. People have relationships with objects as much as with people. The cellphone enjoys a particularly close relationship with its owner, often merging the object with the self.

This conflation between self and object complicates relationships since they can involve both the self and the object as elements in the relationship. Sarah enjoys her relationship with her cellphone. She also enjoys her relationships with her boyfriends. Often these two relationships are conflated. The loss of one may provoke a crisis with the other.

**Intimate Connections**

The requirement for privacy is crucial for many aspects of modernity. The modern subject is expected to cultivate interests, needs, and desires which mark him/her as a particular individual. Urban life, an expanding capitalist market, and global culture, with the stranger as its central figure, revolves around individuals negotiating private relationships. In most Asian societies, the requirements for a private individualism have only developed recently, with their experience of comparative affluence. Fashion and the accumulation of material goods has become a major concern for these affluent Asian societies. The Philippines has so far not shared a general affluence, and the scope for cultivating a private individualism has been limited. Only members of the middle class have had the luxury of sufficient domestic space and access to the telephone to cultivate a private self. Others, such as those living in rural communities, only experience these possibilities when they obtain overseas work. On their return, the display of private goods and foreign tastes celebrate and mark their new identities (Pingol 2001).

While lacking domestic space to develop private liaisons, many Filipinos have turned to mobile phones as another alternative. Texting has become the major way for most Filipinos to cultivate a network of acquaintances known only to them. Texting most often involves relatives, common friends, and associates but it also includes strangers. The latter opens possibilities for intimate and private identities. Several telecom and other services exist to cater to this need. While contacting strangers was possible in the past, texting provides the anonymity, privacy, and convenience not hitherto available.

Bored housewives, inquisitive teenagers, and men seeking sexual satisfaction increasingly use these services to contact like-minded individuals. Mario texts a 41-year-old woman from Laguna, whose husband lives away from home. They discuss their sexual needs
casually. Sherry, a young model, and Carlos arrange to meet for a date shortly after exchanging texts with one another. Rems, whose husband is also away, engages in sexual repartee via text messages with Joel, while accompanying her sister shopping. All these examples indicate the facility with which unmonitored communications can occur in texting. Dave regularly takes advantage of any opportunities for sexual experiences through texting. He readily accepts missent messages such as the one from Anna to engage in text sex.

While all these cases include explicit sexual elements, they are often as ludic as they are sensual. They are also good examples of technologically mediated relationships. Such mediated relationships increasingly characterize our lives, enriching its possibilities, but often substituting the real with its simulacrum. Previously, we only fell in love with our screen idols, now we have sex with their avatars. These technologically mediated relationships can transcend corporeality. The body becomes meat, a profound disability in cyberlife. In a recent blockbuster movie, the avatar proves to be morally and physically superior to its original owner. In the end, the owner is transformed into the avatar, the simulacrum replaces the real.

The Gift and Reciprocity

Most Filipinos readily agree to exchange text messages with strangers. Since one can terminate such exchanges readily, there seems no practical reason not to initially accept them. There is always the possibility of such requests becoming the basis for new friendships. But others are more discriminating and reject such text messages, on the ground that they are intrusive and in bad taste. The former tend to belong to the poorer classes or live in rural areas, while the latter are from affluent backgrounds. As other researchers have shown (Qiu 2009), class still exercises its power in cyberspace.

Philippine society still operates on the basis of gift exchange (Mauss 1969). This exchange applies to social equals as much as to unequals. Ideally, gifts are fully reciprocated but the exchange is often fraught with unpredictable elements. There is always the chance that one party wants more than the other is prepared to give. Between unequals, gift exchange involves either a delayed reciprocity or an acceptance of status differentials. Social inferiors recognize the superiority of givers over receivers. The imperative of the gift makes more sense for people seeking new resources than for those concerned with maintaining status.
*Pasalubong* is the most frequent expression of the gift but other instances of prestations are readily encountered, from the excessive obeisance given to superiors to the casual exchange of cigarettes among friends or the exchange of presents among acquaintances. *Pasalubong* is the obligatory presentation of gifts whenever a person returns to his/her original community after an absence. Filipinos abroad are under great pressure to ensure they have *pasalubong* for all their relatives, friends, and neighbours. A failure to carry out this obligation marks one as someone no longer entailed by earlier relationships. Many Filipinos postpone their return rather than come home with inadequate *pasalubong*. Other ancillary practices are closely associated with *pasalubong* such as the Ilocano *pauwit*, which consists of delivering other people’s goods or messages on the return home. These practices indicate a closely interactive community whose members assist one another in the absence of other structures. Before the ready availability of remittance services, many overseas workers would send money through friends visiting the village. These informal structures operate through powerful normative values expressed by the gift. While not all exchanges among Filipinos involve gifts, many of them do, at least in attenuated form.

Texting is one such expression of gift exchange. It transforms strangers into consociates and lays the basis for friendship. The prosthetic link between mobile and its owner assures that text messages become extensions of their senders. The text message connects self and other; it expresses a mutual ontology.

Already retired, Vilma misses her former colleagues. She sends over 50 text messages daily, exchanging greetings, prayers, and news. This connection maintains her sense of community and personhood. Mane and his young friends use their mobiles to keep in close touch but also to express their distinctive personalities by choosing ring tones and screen displays. As a political activist, Anthony depends on his mobile. At times constant connectivity becomes stressful but inevitable for people like him. Joan and Arnold became textmates when she saw his number in a newspaper. Sarah is frequently lonely after work and texting reduces her sense of isolation. It allows her to relive her days as an unmarried young woman. All these examples illustrate how essential the cellphone is for many Filipinos, not just to maintain their network but also to extend it beyond former limits. The gift of the text message generally ensures it return and inserts them into new cycles of reciprocity.

**Extending the Senses**
Face-to-face interactions have lost their primacy. Since presence can now be shared through the new technologies, absent and present others are equally significant. An ambient co-presence is often communicated through messages such as *have just woken up* and *eating breakfast before going to work*, or *am getting ready to go to bed*. For good measure, some may include visuals to accompany ambient co-presence. Even face-to-face interactions are technologically mediated. While talking, people are often watching TV, listening to the radio, or reading the newspaper. The topic of conversation is often obtained from the media or from its leading personalities. Although gossip, rumour, backtalk, or even mindless chatter is still common, these are enhanced by technologies of communication. In fact, the media itself employs these forms to give them a common and earthy touch. The validity of McLuhan’s (1964) comment that the medium is the message has become more significant today. Message, medium, and meaning are now so inextricably linked, it is often impossible to separate them. President Estrada’s most popular message was *Erap para sa mahirap* (*Erap for the poor*) which he delivered over radio because this medium was *tunay ang dating* (real in its reception) (Flores 1998). Language, medium, and message are conflated into a bundle, whose signification while problematic is nevertheless effective.

Technologically mediated relationships blur the lines between the real, the surreal, and the fantastic. But they may also reveal aspects of the real, hitherto concealed. Odile and Arnold reveal aspects of themselves in texting and the Internet that they otherwise find difficult. Deaf, Odile has difficulty discussing her feelings with her family because they cannot sign, so she texts them. Arnold is more truthful to his partner online about aspects of their relationship than when face to face. In both cases, the technology, by enabling communicative exchanges, re-shapes the original relationship.

Deaf Filipinos experience major communication problems because very few resources are available to them. The mobile and the Internet have mitigated some of these difficulties by improving contacts within and outside the deaf community. But the skills for their use or the expenses involved prevent many deaf people from benefiting significantly from the new media. Nevertheless, like other Filipinos, the deaf have taken to the new media with enthusiasm. It has widened their opportunities to communicate, including with strangers. Their sense of their own difference has been reinforced in the process. Their identities as deaf Filipinos, generally seen as a discriminated minority, become radicalized. Like gays, the deaf are demanding acceptance as equals, rather than tolerated as different. They see technology as enhancing sensorial abilities but not necessarily replacing them.
Relationships Online

Online relationships are becoming increasingly common. Newspapers and other media regularly report on this phenomenon, presenting it as typifying, if not the present, at least the future. Precursors such as pen pals, mail-order brides, and dating services prepared the ground for the acceptance of online relationships. While some continue to portray online relationships as a form of online shopping, others realize that contemporary relationships can no longer limit themselves to traditional or former contexts. Technologically mediated relationships are presently inevitable and the stranger is now routinely incorporated into networks of intimacy. The case of Asian adult cam models (ACM) discussed earlier is a graphic example of mediated intimacy. Viewers can exchange messages and issue instructions to models of their choice for a small fee. These models generally work at home using an ordinary PC with a broadband connection. While clearly exploitative, it provides well paid employment under relatively safe conditions for otherwise poor women. Since no physical contact takes place, this form of sexual service avoids many of the common dangers associated with this activity.

Other non-commercial websites involving consensual sexual activities are readily available. The media recently reported the results of surveys conducted on Filipino sexual behaviour. It claimed that young people working in call centers have much higher participation rates in unprotected and casual sex. While no direct links between sexual practice and employment in call centers were made, it was implied that the associated lifestyles, particularly the high wages, encouraged a more sexually adventurous life. It should come as no surprise that employment practices involving a cosmopolitan orientation may encourage a corresponding libertarian attitude.

Increased Mobilities

Over a million Filipinos leave the country every year to search for work, to pursue further studies, or to join relatives abroad. This increased mobility also often requires relationships to be conducted online if they are to be maintained. Such is the case of Arnold and Miguel, as well as many other Filipinos. While most domestic workers abroad are often limited to exchanging texts with their family, others are digitally enhanced. The Internet, web cams, chat groups, and blogs are some of the most common ways of extending an ambient co-presence with anyone, anywhere, anytime. Who knows what the immediate future holds—
electronic sensors coordinating the sense of touch at a distance, teledildonics, and other escapes from the prison of our own flesh (Rheingold 1991)?

Or perhaps technology simply allows us to resume contact with aspects of ourselves. While technologies of communication allow us to communicate with absent others, they also highlight our isolation. Judy Garland became depressed when her telephone didn’t ring. Many informants revealed similar anxieties when they ran out of load.

A more disturbing consequence of the new connectivity is its reported use for collective suicide pacts (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 13 December 2005). Internet sites openly invite readers to contact others for suicidal ends. The bizarre case of cannibalism in Germany (2004) involved soliciting voluntary victims through a website. Durkheim (1897) argued over a century ago that suicide, seen as a most private act, was in fact social. One cannot imagine a more social act than using the Internet or texting to summon companions to join a suicide pact. But it also expresses the profound isolation of contemporary life, where one needs complete strangers to witness and share one’s death. Although suicide is not uncommon in the Philippines, instances of suicide pacts involving strangers recruited through the new media have so far not been reported. But suicide pacts involving lovers have taken place, and in such cases texting may have been used for their coordination. There are also reported cases of people sending text messages before killing themselves.

Encounters and Boundaries

Most texts are formulaic or ritualistic exchanges. They enable (partly) non-intentional, ritual communication. One text message leads to another without much conscious elaboration. What might begin as can we be txt mates? usually follows a set protocol involving the exchange of basic information and quickly leads to more intimate exchanges. Neither party appears deeply involved in the exchange. Many exchanges consist of set phrases, sayings, and other unoriginal passages. It is precisely this ritualization that allows text message exchanges to proceed quickly and unproblematically. Ritual provides the structure for exchanges to proceed along predictable paths; when singing you cannot argue with the song (Bloch 1974).

Many Filipinos mark the beginning and end of the day by sending appropriate greetings to friends. This activity frames the present as a transition to the future and also as a denouement to the past. Rituals are symbolic actions that mark as well as enable the transition from one
social situation to another. We lack “grounding” in a world that increasingly escapes our comprehension, control, and security. We live in a world with an excess of meaning but a lack of sense (Markus 1997). In the past, ritual would traditionally have provided such a grounding but the speed of contemporary change prevents the symbolic consolidation essential for rituals to operate (Pertierra 1995). In this context, the mobile phone performs an equivalent function (Ling 2009).

In the Filipino diasporic imagination, locality has been reduced to nostalgia or simulacra, and less directly linked to quotidian life. The new media gives comfort and provides reassurance by filling gaps in unpredictable, liminal, or transitional social situations. Like all revolutions, the final consequences of CMICT are unpredictable and often counter-intuitive. But we may expect technology to enter even deeper into everyday life, including our sense of self. But the proclamations of the cyber future as finally emancipatory, where class, gender, race, and other inequalities will vanish have proven to be as millenarian as previous ones.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has raised a wide range of issues, most of which arise out of the new conditions of communication. Wide networks involving both familiars and strangers typify these exchanges. A possible result of this communicative expansion is the development of the public sphere, whose members while having diverse interests come together in trying to achieve a common understanding. The Internet café has become a new site for these new communicative practices, bringing together hitherto unconnected strangers with similar interests. Their specialized interests oblige them to develop a discourse free of localizing references in favor of global ones.

An expanded public sphere rests on specialized knowledge and institutionalized competence. They operate within a relatively autonomous sphere, free from the constraints of politics and the market, which operate according to distinct norms. Whenever disputes arise, each sphere attempts to resolve them by applying appropriate specialized procedures.

During the Marcos regime, a dispute arose regarding the authentic nature of a hunter-gathering group in Mindanao (Tasaday). Normally a matter for anthropologists to decide, the discovery quickly encompassed the global media, local politicians, and the general public. Tempers flared, wild accusations were hurled, but the matter remained unresolved. The dispute
could not be resolved locally because of the lack of cultural differentiation in the public sphere. It was finally resolved professionally in a meeting of the American Anthropological Society held in Washington, D.C. nearly two decades later but remains a contentious issue locally, nearly 40 years since their discovery. Other, less defined but even more substantive scandals regularly mark Philippine public life.

These expanded networks necessarily involve mediated relationships, an increasing feature of the digital age. A new virtual world has opened up, and sex is its main commodity. Asian cam models are only one element of this virtualization of sexuality but it also includes online marriages and cyber friendships. Even religion has found a new world of virtual evangelization. An interesting aspect of digitally mediated relationships is their tendency towards ideological purity, whether it be religious fundamentalism or subaltern sexuality.

The millions of overseas Filipinos are obliged to maintain and continue their relationships virtually. Mothers working abroad provide support for their families but also yearn for emotional closeness with their children. Digital communication only satisfies part of this emotional need.

Gift-giving is a normal element of Philippine culture. Text messages are new forms of gift exchange and their apparently banal messages hide a more serious need for relational stability. Text messages are ritualized exchanges that provide stability in a rapidly shifting world.
Cellphone and Internet Use in Buenavista

Buenavista is a 4th-class municipality in the province of Laguna, south of Manila. It is primarily agricultural, with some commercial enterprises such as poultries and piggeries. Its main income used to be copra, found in its extensive coconut plantations. But the falling price of copra and the gradual deforestation of the area have forced many farmers into poverty. The production of lambanog, an alcoholic beverage distilled from coconut sap provides some people with a meager but steady income. There is also a sizable migrant population in the municipality, who come largely from the Bicol region of southern Luzon. These migrants generally do not own any land and are among the poorest sector of the local population. They survive on petty trading, unskilled and often irregular labour, and subsistence agriculture. Their children rarely go beyond primary school and are therefore unable to break the cycle of poverty. This situation contrasts with other families, who at least own some land and are able to send their children to secondary and tertiary schools. They are also more likely to seek employment abroad.

Most of the informants discussed in this chapter belong to the second category. They have had access to secondary education and enjoy the advantages of the digital age. Alejandro and Marble, however, are the children of Bicol migrants. For them even the mobile represents a major investment. But their poverty does not always prevent them from acquiring the tools of the digital age. They are generally able to access Internet cafés, but without the cognitive skills and the social networks that make the technology expansive and culturally enabling, their use of it often is reduced to escapist entertainment rather than productive use. As others have argued (Qiu 2009; Kuvaaja 2007), without the necessary cognitive and social skills, the mere availability of and even access to the technology does not ensure its productive use.

Buenavista, with a population of 21,716 (2008) living in 24 barangays (villages), is located near the capital (Sta Cruz) and the more developed interior towns bordering Mount Banahaw. It offers only the most basic educational (3 elementay and 2 secondary schools), social, and commercial services. There is limited access to health services, but water and electricity are available in most barangays. Buenavista has an old Catholic church, sometimes used as a site for historic films. As in other Philippine towns, while Catholicism is its major
religion, Buenavista plays host to smaller but active congregations. The *Iglesia ni Cristo* (Church of Christ) and various independent Pentecostal groups are active, as are denominations such as the Mormons and Jehovah’s Witness. The plaza surrounding the church is the focus of activity of young people during the evenings. Its commercial center consists of small shops and a poorly supplied local market. There are no major groceries or department stores except for a small hardware shop. Manila newspapers are not readily available, but almost all small stores offer prepaid load for mobiles. Transport to nearby towns is readily available. Consequently, its inhabitants generally travel to other towns for schooling, entertainment, commerce, and medical treatment. These larger centers also offer more opportunities to interact with and share experiences of the new communication technologies. Many of the informants in this chapter often travel to these bigger centers, and their Internet practices differ from those who limit themselves to smaller cafés in Buenavista.

Despite government rhetoric about the importance of the new communication technologies, schools in Buenavista are poorly equipped in all technical areas. The Central Elementary School, with an enrollment of almost 1000 children, has no Internet connection, but the office of the District Supervisor located in the same school building has limited access. The school has one computer in the office while none of the classrooms are equipped even with television sets. The teachers admitted that some of them have private Internet access and some of the wealthier students have computers with Internet access at home.

There are two secondary public schools in Buenavista. The smaller one (Suba) has 550 students and no Internet access, even for the school principal. He claims that there is no signal available in the area. The school actually has some computers but most are not in working order. Students sometimes use the computers under the supervision of a teacher. The larger school (Buenavista) has a room with ten working computers with limited Internet access. The school subscribes to Globe, an Internet provider, but often suffers from poor signal. The major problem is the availability of qualified teachers who can supervise students interested in learning about computers and the Internet. For a while, the larger school employed a person to teach students who could afford private tuition. A major logistic problem for these schools is the absence of computer courses in the basic curriculum. They are unable to permit interested teachers to teach in this area, since their time is only available for approved courses.

There is also a small private secondary school in Buenavista (Mount Academy), and it provides limited computer classes to its students. Being a private school gives it some flexibility in designing its courses. They offer basic computer courses to all students at all levels but their
technical resources are extremely limited and students rarely get enough practical exposure to the technology. The young and recently appointed instructor is keen enough, but can only accommodate a dozen students per class. Generally, students attend a two-hour weekly period at the computer laboratory. Sometimes students are allowed access after class if the instructor is available. The use of social networking sites such as Facebook and Friendster is not allowed in school, but many of the older students admit to visiting such sites. Only those with Internet access at home are able to apply and extend the basic skills taught at school. Most young people interested in the new technology visit Internet cafés.

As of 2010, Buenavista has ten small computer cafés, with 70 terminals offering limited Internet access at PhP 20 per hour. Most users are boys or young men who play online games, but students also use the facilities for their school work. Occasionally, older people use the cafés to contact relatives abroad and access social networking sites such as Friendster and Facebook. The number of cafés is increasing quickly, even if the number of customers is only marginally higher. Like other small family-run businesses, computer cafés are seen as profitable enterprises even if their actual profitability remains low. However, even in Buenavista, the dawn of the digital age has arrived, and the young people are the exemplary users of the technology. The mobile phone has now been established as a common device and routinely assumed as an everyday technology. To be left out of the mobile network is for many teenagers one of the greatest disadvantages. Its ranks high on the list of priorities and is considered more important than clothes or shoes.

**Observations in Local Internet Cafés**

**Ted**

On my first day of observing the selected Internet café, I noticed that most of the customers were male teenagers. I stayed in the café for 5 hours; the customers were just playing online games such as Cabal online, Special Force, and Ran online. There was only one female customer, and she was doing her school project. Some of the customers were not aware about social networking sites like Friendster, and it looked as though they were using Internet technology mainly for fun.

My second day was almost the same. As I expected, there were only male customers, and they were playing the same games. It seemed that the Internet users in Buenavista were not
interested in sites like Friendster or My Space. With some exceptions, I observed the same behavior in subsequent visits.

Neryanich

In my observations of a computer café, I noted that most of them were playing online games rather than surfing the Internet. Of the total customers, 75% were boys, and all of them were playing Special Force, Ragnarok, and Cabal. The other 25% were girls, and they were playing Dota and Freestyle, while others were typing their research papers and assignments. The boys are often boisterous, happily shouting in playing computer games. In the computer café, the minimum price of renting a computer is PhP 20 an hour. The café usually has a minimum of 13 customers and a maximum of 50 customers per day. It stays open from 8:00 am to midnight. Many of the customers are known to me and readily consented to an interview. Some customers use Friendster, YouTube, and Multiply, while others type their assignments using Microsoft Word and Google for research. The computer café also always includes ‘tambays’ (unemployed youth hanging around).

Observations in an Internet Café in a Nearby Larger Town

Neryanich

There are more females than males who come to chat or use Friendster and Facebook. Customers generally stay for two hours. High school students come in groups during their lunch break or after school. The majority of these students are girls, who use social networking sites like Friendster. College students use the café during their free time, often women who also primarily use social networking sites. But this particular café is dominated by high school students. There are 14 to 16 functioning terminals with broadband connections. Male customers mostly play games like Ragnarok and Grand Theft Auto.

Occasionally these students use the Internet for research purposes. Nursing students are particularly interested in using the Internet for research since they complain that their library is often inadequate. Senior college students also use the café to research and write their final thesis.

Jam, a friend and an avid user of Friendster now, has two new textmates whom she met online. She spends a considerable amount of her free time in the café. I also met two female
college students who used the Internet to meet foreign men. They and their friends were able to cultivate a wide range of foreign friends online.

Peak hour use is from 9:30 am to 2:00 pm, and again from 4:00 to 6:00 pm. During these times, it is difficult to find a free terminal, and people often have to wait 30 minutes or more to obtain one. After 6:00 pm, most of the customers are older college students and adults who either surf the net, contact relatives and friends abroad, or work on their assignments.

The customers of this café are often regulars, and interaction occurs between them offline as well as online. The café is a meeting place as much as it is a site for online practices. Many of the regular customers chat using a web cam or expand their social networking sites such as Friendster and Facebook. Some of these regulars spend most of the day in the café, chatting both online and offline. Several female users spend many hours chatting on their web cams with friends abroad. Others do the same with their relatives and their partners. They say that these conversations are more exciting and satisfying than texting. Customers also use the Internet to follow the lives of celebrities, access popular television programs, and download their favorite music.

This last example is an indication of a more sophisticated and varied use of Internet cafés than the local café in Buenavista. Interestingly, gender seems to play a significant role in their differential usages. The local café mainly attracts boys who use the Internet to play online games while, the larger café attracts more women who use it for social networking opportunities as well as for school research. The technology and the access to it are identical, but usage reflects broader social factors such as gender, education, and personal orientations. For a technology such as the Internet or the mobile to have significant social and cultural effects, factors other than access are equally important. Social and cultural capital is critically important for the technology to reveal its full potential. Otherwise, it becomes simply another source of escapist entertainment, often reinforcing existing prejudices and orientations.

As some of the examples discussed in this chapter illustrate, the new communication technology has the capacity to significantly expand social and cultural relationships. These expanded relationships have implications for local identity as well as for notions of community and globality. These are particularly relevant for the growing Filipino Diaspora and for the increasing transnationalization of everyday life.

Ted
Ted (19 years old, single, male) has been using computers for almost five years since his high school days. Presently, he is in the last semester of a two-year computer studies course in Sta. Cruz, a nearby town and capital of the province. Ted has Friendster and My Space accounts, with slightly over 150 online friends. Ted has been using social networking sites for more than two years. He uses these sites to meet new friends, especially pretty girls, but often he discovers that many of the girls in his sites do not post their real pictures. Several times, he has arranged to meet girls only to discover them to be plainer than their pictures. However, despite these drawbacks, Ted has managed to make good friends online, some of whom he has met face to face and became close friends with. Ted does not have a computer at home and consequently spends an average of three hours a day in a computer café, mostly those found near his school in Sta Cruz. Ted’s father has encouraged him to take up computer studies in the hope that he will join his father abroad. Ted’s father has been working as an electrician in Saudi Arabia for nearly ten years now. Lately, he has promised the family to bring home a computer for their use. Ted’s family is devout and regularly engages in prayer meetings. His father acts as a pastor of his congregation when at home, and is a leader of a small group of born-again Christians in Saudi Arabia. Ted and his brothers join these religious activities with varying enthusiasm.

Ted also uses social sites to find part-time jobs, but has not had much success so far. Since his father works abroad, Ted uses Yahoo Messenger to communicate with him, but generally, both prefer to use mobile phones and texting for most of their exchanges. Their exchanges are mostly brief greetings, rather than extended conversations, and hence more suited to texting. The father mostly communicates with Ted’s mother, whom he calls several times most days. The children (four brothers, among whom Ted is the oldest) are aware of these calls but seldom participate directly. The mother retains a tight control over her children and communicates all their needs to their father abroad. Ted has other relatives abroad but seldom bothers to communicate with them using the new communications media. Perhaps when they acquire a computer with Internet connections at home Ted may develop an interest in communicating more extensively with other relatives.

Ted is aware that many of his friends use the new media to meet people for sexual purposes. Both his religious background and his fear of catching sexually transmitted diseases has so far prevented him from engaging in these activities. Ted has had sexual relations and claims not to like using condoms. Ted occasionally has sex with his girlfriend without using condoms, but eschews similar opportunities with online friends for prophylactic reasons. This is why he prefers to abstain from sexual liaisons, although he enjoys access to pornographic sites.
in the Internet. Like most of his friends, both male and female, sexually explicit sites and DVDs constitute part of their common interests. Ted’s My Space account consists mostly of foreigners, and the main topic of interest is sexuality. In contrast, most of his friends in Friendster are Filipinos, including many relatives. Ted’s father has also joined Friendster.

Ted uses the Internet to play online games such as Cabal, Special Force, and Ragnarok. These games require considerable concentration and ability, because one has to increase the power of one’s character. Ted compares the attention required by the game to the attention and care one lavishes on a valuable pet. The characters one plays compete against others, and have to be strengthened and cultivated. In the process of participating in these competitive games, other social skills such as cooperation are also learnt. Ted enjoys these activities for the socializing opportunities they present, as much as for the competitive achievements it allows him. He has made many friends among both male and female players over the years. His character’s guild name is Pentavia, and Ted has been developing it for three years. There are over 100 regular players in his group, and some of them meet often offline as well as online. These games effectively act as social networking sites, whose participants cultivate close virtual and actual relationships. Close members share other sites such as Friendster and Facebook. They are then incorporated in broader relationships online and offline. For Ted and many of his friends, these games and social networking sites provide alternatives to conventional, locally based networks and relationships. They significantly expand Ted’s social world.

Jenny

Jenny (18 years old) is one of Ted’s schoolmates. She does not have an Internet connection at home and visits an Internet shop four times a week. Jenny has a Friendster account with over 1000 members. Despite this large number of friends, Jenny uses the Internet to find new friends, and in particular, new boyfriends. She has been using the Internet for two years, but has not yet found a steady boyfriend. Undaunted, Jenny continues her search, confident that eventually she will meet the right person online.

Mary

Mary (20 years old) is also one of Ted’s schoolmates. She also does not have an Internet connection at home and visits the Internet shop six times a week. Mary has Facebook, Friendster, and My Space accounts. In each of these accounts she has over 500 friends. Mary is keen to expand her social network, which she also uses to find employment. She has had some success in finding part-time jobs through her connections with wealthy members of her social sites. Some of these members own businesses, and Mary often asks them to help her find work.
Ted suspects that Mary uses these contacts for other purposes, but is circumspect in his comments.

Rose

Rose (19 years old) does not have an Internet connection at home, and spends eight to ten hours every week at the Internet café. She has a Friendster account with over 600 friends but still seeks more members. Rose unexpectedly met her current boyfriend through Friendster. She had no intention to look for a boyfriend online and had been using social sites for almost three years. Rose uses social sites to look for work as well as textmates. She posts her cellphone number in her Friendster account so that her online friends can text her and become her textmates. While Rose enjoys interacting with her online friends, she believes that virtual friends are not as good as actual friends, with whom one has face-to-face relationships.

Rose’s mother works abroad, so they both use their Friendster accounts to keep in contact. They also frequently use their mobiles, but usually only for short conversations to save on costs. Rose is able to engage in intimate conversations and exchanges with her mother. She finds it easier to discuss intimate issues online or over the phone rather than face to face. Rose also has other relatives abroad, with whom she communicates regularly. A favorite is an aunt who works as a nurse in Canada. This aunt has informed Mary that she will assist her to migrate to Canada after Rose’s studies. They use Yahoo Messenger and often have long conversations on a wide range of subjects.

Rose, like, Ted is aware that her friends sometimes use social networking sites to look for sex partners. She admitted that she had one sexual experience with a man she met online. A group of her friends had arranged a meeting with several online acquaintances. They met at a party and engaged in considerable drinking. Rose found herself attracted to her online friend (Ace), and the evening ended with consensual sex. Fortunately, despite not taking any precautions, the experience did not result in a pregnancy. Her present boyfriend is unaware of this incident and Rose no longer expresses any interest in pursuing similar experiences. While these incidents are not as common as some may fear, the expanded opportunities for meeting mutually attracted partners make such events more likely than in days before the Internet and social networking sites.

Kevin

Kevin, a 17-year-old college boy, visits Friendster to meet new friends, especially beautiful young women. He has over 300 members, mostly young women, and the rest are his
relatives. Kevin uses the site to sell his merchandise in Ragnarok and Cabal. He also uses it to talk to his relatives abroad.

Kevin uses YouTube to watch his favorite basketball players as well as to learn to play the guitar. He also watches Hollywood movies, music videos of his favorite bands, and videos of bike tricks. He also uses Multiply to post pictures, none of which are salacious. He wants people to know him and to watch him ride his bike. Kevin also regularly writes about his life and activities. These online activities takes several hours each day.

A major interest of Kevin is Internet games. He spends much time and effort playing Ragnarok, since he is able to earn money by selling his game levels. Having a computer at home allows Kevin to spend several hours daily playing games, since this combines leisure with profit. Sometimes Kevin exchanges points for load. His skills in these games allow Kevin to justify the time and effort spent in front of the computer at home. Unfortunately, his interest sometimes prevents him from attending classes. His parents work abroad, and only his grandmother stays at home with him. She is permissive and allows him to spend whatever amount of time he wants at the computer.

Cabal is another game that interests Kevin. As in Ragnarok, Kevin earns money in this game by selling levels or points. During summer vacations, Kevin spends most of the day playing games or contacting his wide network of friends and relatives. His grandmother does not object to the time Kevin spends at the computer since this keeps him at home as well as allows him to earn his pocket money. The Internet allows Kevin to keep in touch with his parents abroad and to keep abreast of his other relatives. It also allows him to cultivate a wide network of friends.

**Myrna and John**

Myrna (51 years old) is a widow of two years and has seven children, all of whom are married. Several children live in the U.S., but Myrna decided to stay in the Philippines with her other children and relatives. She and John, 35-year-old black American, have been communicating via Friendster and Yahoo Messenger for about seven months now.

She uses Friendster to communicate with her children abroad. She has 35 friends in her account, most of whom are relatives. Through this site she met John, a 35-year-old black American. Myrna was taught how to use the computer by her sons. One of her sons has a computer with Internet broadband connection at home. Her son also taught her how to use
Yahoo Messenger. Myrna usually limits herself to the use of these two sites, Friendster and Yahoo Messenger.

John works as a civil servant and is single. He is a friend of Myrna’s son and met her through him. Myrna and John quickly established a friendly relationship using Yahoo Messenger. John knows that Myrna has several children and is a widow. John still lives with his parents.

Myrna and John became close through the new media and shared their friendship with others in their network. Soon after their relationship became regular, John started sending money to Myrna. These remittances became regular, although not initiated by Myrna, and with the full knowledge and consent of her children. She used part of the money to pay for the Internet account of her son and other expenses of the family. Myrna was grateful to John for his financial assistance, but was not so sure she wanted to develop the relationship further. John was scheduled to visit the Philippines last summer, but due to work commitments he was unable to do so. As Myrna was unsure about the future of their relationship, she often felt embarrassed about accepting money from John. But John was insistent that she would be of great help to him if they married, given her experience as a wife and mother. John wanted Myrna to join him in the U.S. even if they had not known one another for very long, but Myrna was not yet ready for this commitment.

Ryan

Ryan is in his last year of secondary school. His father has been working abroad for several years and is expected to visit next year. Ryan got his mobile a year ago with money sent by his father. He uses it mostly to keep in touch with friends at school as well as his military buddies. Ryan belongs to a civil organization with close links to the military. They hold seminars for the youth in rural areas. This activity has led him to make many friends in other municipalities throughout the province. Ryan does not always have credit for his mobile, and whenever possible, asks for pass-a-load from relatives and friends. His main expense, apart from school, is ensuring that he has credit for his mobile. Ryan often sends 20 to 30 text messages a day and receives as many replies. Ryan also recently changed his simcard because his old number became available to many people he barely knew. He often received rude messages from young men who objected to his conducting friendly text relationships with their girlfriends. He had nearly 200 stored numbers in his former simcard but now only stores 40 mobile numbers of close friends and relatives.
Alejandro

Alejandro left school early without finishing primary level. His father was killed in a brawl, and his family was left to fend for itself. Alejandro has been working since he was 12 years old. His mother had another relationship, but Alejandro did not get along with this new family. He worked as a helper for a wealthy family and managed to save money for a cheap cellphone. This was his first major expense. Like most users, Alejandro uses his mobile to contact his family and friends. Presently he has a better phone, having gained better employment. He has over 60 stored numbers in his new phone. Alejandro often sends over 100 text messages daily, whenever he can afford to buy a special load (PhP 20 valid for a day), but otherwise sends and receives about two dozen text messages. Most of these are from friends and relatives. Alejandro prefers to text new acquaintances whenever possible. He obtains their numbers from friends. But he has not yet had the opportunity to meet these new textmates face to face. Like many other informants, Alejandro has had various text messages with sexual references. While he does not actually solicit these messages, he nevertheless willingly accepts and entertains them.

Many of Alejandro’s friends and relatives have mobiles but he also shares the phone with close friends without mobiles. The latter have their own simcards and simply use Alejandro’s mobile to text. It is not unusual for several people to share the same phone, but often they keep certain messages private. As earlier studies revealed (Pertierra et al., 2003), the mobile phone allows Filipinos who normally have little opportunity for privacy to cultivate special friends. While Alejandro does not have many material possessions, the mobile phone fulfils many of the functions seen as important. It allows him to keep in touch with significant others as well as cultivate and broaden his network. Since his acquisition of a new mobile, Alejandro’s status has risen considerably because none of his immediate circle owns an equivalent phone. He often uses the camera and other functions in his mobile, including Internet access, even if the latter is generally beyond his budget. The mobile has been incorporated into Alejandro’s routine and otherwise simple lifestyle. He recently changed his simcard because it did not provide him with all the new additional services regularly added by telecom providers. Other material goods such as clothes and even shoes are not as valued as a mobile. It symbolizes the achievements of modernity while preserving the values of tradition such as family ties. Alejandro’s next step is to use the Internet more fully.

Marble

Marble comes from a poor family and cannot afford a cellphone. He left school in second year high school, and now occasionally takes on day jobs. This income is barely sufficient to
cover essential expenses and not enough to make him afford a mobile. But Marble, like many others like him, has a simcard which allows him to send and receives text messages whenever he gets access to a mobile. His friends readily allow him to insert his card into their phone whenever he requests them. Marble recently got a job and the first thing he bought was a secondhand cellphone. He is now saving to have electricity connected to their home.

Marian

Marian (32 years old) and Real (35 years old) met three years ago. They were both working in Makati, and Real got Marian’s mobile number through a friend. He and Marian exchanged text messages for several weeks before agreeing to meet. The relationship continued mostly via text messages, and after a few months they decided to marry. They now have a two-year-old daughter, Ricamay. Marian continued working while she was pregnant but decided to become a full-time housekeeper when their child was born. To save on living expenses, Marian decided to move in with her married brother in Buenavista. Her brother Edgar worked as a driver in Manila and visited Buenavista only once a month. Real also worked in Manila and visited every month. The two sisters-in-law shared living expenses and helped one another with childcare.

Marian claims that since most of their relationship was conducted via texting, their physical separation was not a problem. They remained in contact through text messages and voice calls. Marian and Real do not require frequent communicational exchanges to maintain their relationship, which average to several calls or text messages weekly. In contrast, her brother Edgar calls or texts his wife in Buenavista six to ten times every day. Marian finds this need for constant communication unnecessary.

Several months ago, Real decided to apply for work abroad. Having worked as a qualified technician for several years, he quickly found a job in Saudi Arabia. Real has now been in Jedda for five months and has begun to remit his wages regularly to Marian. She is using the money to begin the construction of their house next to her brother’s. Tension inevitably developed between the sisters-in-law, and consequently Marian decided to find alternative accommodation.

Marian and Real’s communicational exchanges have not changed significantly since he went overseas. As was the case when Real worked in Manila and visited Buenavista monthly, they exchange text messages and make voice calls only once or twice a week. Often, the communication is limited to ‘missed calls,’ an agreed code for the normal greetings. Only when
they have specific matters to discuss do they actually talk to one another. In such cases, Real sends Marian a text message for her to call him. It is cheaper for Marian to initiate the call but more expensive for her to text. These communicational exchanges are usually very brief and to the point. The most common topic of the exchange is to ensure that the remittances have been properly sent and received. Marian keeps detailed records of her expenses to assure Real that his money is well spent. Their daughter Ricamay recently fell ill, and had to be hospitalized. Marian waited until the daughter was well before informing Real. According to her, she doesn’t want to unnecessarily worry Real about problems at home.

Marian and Real seem to be unusually independent people who prefer to deal with problems themselves before involving others. In some ways, Real’s departure abroad has not made much difference to their communicational exchanges. When asked to explain the difference between their equally sparse exchanges in Manila and Jedda, Marian claimed that she is likely to be less communicative about her problems now that Real is abroad. She does not want to burden him with additional worries. Despite being naturally independent and self-contained, Marian finds not being able to share her problems with Real the most stressful aspect of their separation. When he was in Manila, she used to discuss their difficulties in his visits or through text messages. But now that he is abroad, she feels alone and unable to unburden herself. Apart from her younger brother who works in Manila, she has no relatives in Buenavista. Her relationship with her brother is usually fine, if not particularly close. But Marian has some problems with her sister-in-law and is often not comfortable living in her brother’s house. For this reason, her main priority is to finish the construction of their house.

Real’s contract terminates after two years, after which he is eligible to return home for a visit. He has a sister Edith who married a New Zealander. His sister is trying to sponsor Real and his family to migrate to New Zealand. While Real was still in the Philippines, he and Marian communicated with his sister on the Internet. Now that he is away, Marian is not sufficiently confident to use the Internet often. She has tried using Yahoo Messenger, but dies not find it satisfactory. Marian has to go to the local café to access the Internet, and finds it difficult managing the technology and her young daughter at the same time. Real has easier access to the Internet, but does not yet own a computer. In time they hope to obtain the technology to enable them to communicate more fully from home, but other priorities lie ahead.

By most accounts, the relationship between Marian and Real seems mainly instrumental. Seeing that this relationship was conducted mainly through text messages rather than through quotidian commonalities, mutual interests are what tie them together. They are both committed
to the proper upbringing of Ricamay. Marian is confident that Real will remain a responsible provider and she in turn will manage their common resources properly. For this reason it is unnecessary for them to communicate frequently as long as their common understanding is maintained. She sees their relationship as a partnership where each member contributes her proper share. Marian and Real are unusual by Filipino standards. They are not close to their families of origin, preferring to manage by themselves. Moreover, unlike most Filipinos who feel the need for constant communication, they deliberately limit their exchanges to the bare minimum. Marian misses not having Real around when she is under stress but realizes that working abroad is the only alternative to a life of hardship. Once established in their own house, they will be able to manage on a local salary, thus making it possible for Real to come home. They find the expenses of parenthood expensive and do not plan to have more children. They had planned to have a second child, but it was premature and died.

Marian is unusual in her limited interest in keeping in contact with her family. She learned to look after herself ever since her mother’s death and the imprisonment of her father due to a brawl in which he killed someone. Her younger brother went to live with his grandmother, while Marian entered domestic service at an early age. Eventually her brother joined her in Manila, and they remained in close contact until they both moved to Buenavista. The brother married a local girl and Marian returned to Manila for employment. She eventually returned to Buenavista to save on rent while her husband remained near his work but visited regularly. Recently Marian’s father, having served his time in jail, visited Buenavista to renew ties with his children. Marian and her brother are reluctant to resume paternal ties because of the long history of neglect they experienced as children. Moreover, her father has since become involved with other women and has had other children by them. Marian keeps contact with Real’s family, but they live in Mindanao, and they meet only occasionally.

The difficult circumstances of Marian’s life may explain her independence and self-reliance, but not her reluctance to engage in frenzied texting exchanges. After all, her brother Edgar has a similar background, and yet he conforms to the norm of the need for constant contact. Edgar texts his wife several times a day and insists on knowing about the family’s daily activities. Marian, in contrast, is happy with getting a text message weekly and calling Real twice a month. When asked about her relative disinterest in communication, Marian simply said she couldn’t see much point in texting or making voice calls if there is nothing substantial or important to discuss. She is aware of other people’s texting practices and finds the practice silly and unnecessary. Fortunately Real shares similar views and hence they are content with their sparse but significant exchanges.
Survey Results

We conducted a simple survey among the customers of the larger Internet cafés frequented by students in a nearby town. The respondents (26) were predominantly young (15 to 18 years old), mostly college students, half of them males, and the other half females. Most of them do not own a computer with Internet connection at home, but the small number that do still visit the Internet cafés for conviviality as much as online activity. Most users often chat with relatives and friends using Yahoo Messenger. Friendster was the social networking site most visited, with most users having over a hundred members. Friendster is used mostly to send messages to relatives and friends, but also sometimes to add information in their profiles. Most users do not yet have a blog nor do they regularly read other blogs. The great majority still claim that face-to-face discussions are preferable for dealing with personal problems. Only a minority use the Internet to read the news or to follow news about celebrities. When not online, respondents mainly stay home and watch television or join their friends. Almost all agree that, with the Internet, life is easier, in particular, remaining in touch with relatives and friends, as well as getting entertainment.

These results indicate an early use of the new media. Although some users are increasingly sophisticated in using the new media, most use it mainly to communicate with friends or to play games. Nevertheless, the exposure to the new technology is rapidly gaining ground among young users and their capacity to learn to use it improves rapidly. Moreover, there is an equivalent increase in the technical capacities of mobiles, whose interfaces with online practices are growing. But unlike their more affluent urban counterparts, young people in Buenavista live in a principally non-technologically mediated world. They interact with relatives, friends, and neighbours on a face-to-face basis rather than through technologies of communication. Their lives are centered in locality and much entertainment consists of informal street corner interaction (tambayan).

Internet Survey

In addition to the local survey above, I also conducted an online survey for comparative purposes (see appendix). There were 184 (148 English, 36 Tagalog) respondents, whose average age was 30 years old, with slightly more women (56%) than men (44%). Most respondents (70%) enjoy Internet access at home, and own laptops which presumably allows them to surf the net outside t home, since most enjoy broadband or wireless connections. It is now
increasingly common for dwellers in large urban cities to enjoy wireless connections in many commercial areas such as cafés, restaurants, and other public spaces. Unsurprisingly, most informants do not visit Internet cafés since they enjoy access at home, but a sizable minority still does. Most informants use Yahoo Messenger or Skype for chatting, and unlike local informants, prefer Facebook over Friendster. Other sites such as Multiply and Twitter are also favorites. Like their local counterparts, most informants have over a hundred members in their sites. Unlike the locals, online informants have blogs and enjoy reading other people’s blogs. They also prefer discussing their problems face to face. Unlike the locals, urban respondents depend more on online interactions for maintaining both old and new friends. In other words, technologically mediated relationships are an integral part of everyday life, including both private and public interactions. Reading (or writing) blogs and accessing the news are among the most important online activities that indicate the domestication of the new media.
Case Studies Revisited

In an earlier study (Pertierra 2006b), I described the role of the new communication technology in the lives of four major informants. While each had incorporated the technology differently, they all became increasingly dependent on its possibilities. The technology has not only penetrated most aspects of our everyday lives but also provided access to and a means of expressing ourselves. We relate to the technology and the technology relates to us. This dialectic relationship between self and technology has been a feature of human experience since the domestication of fire, crops, and livestock. Writing reinforced our memory and allowed us to reconnect with the past and interrogate aspects of ourselves dialogically. Writing allowed us to talk to ourselves. All these technologies enable us to relate to the world, to others, and to ourselves.

Metaphors of nature allow us to talk about ourselves in new ways. Expressions such as burning with desire, cold as ice, the bread of life, or lion-hearted, and strong as an ox indicate how we use nature to describe ourselves. Anthropologists have studied how societies incorporate relationships in the animal world (Levi-Strauss; crow and eagle-hawk) onto the cultural and social worlds. Differences in nature (e.g. predator/prey) are used to mark cultural differences. Filipinos also use metaphors from nature to describe themselves. Isang kahig, isang tuka (a scratch, a peck) refers to subsistence living, balat cibuyas (onion skin) to sensitive individuals, kilos pagong (turtle action) to slow movers, and tulog sisiw (chick sleep) to easily aroused sleepers.

In simple or agricultural societies (gemeinschaft) whose members basically share the same lifestyle, differences had to be culturally emphasized (e.g. castes). In complex societies (gesellschaft), whose members live distinct lives, the problem is to mark commonalities underlying the divisions. Nature often provides the language for expressing these differences and commonalities. Increasingly, technology provides us with these metaphors, such as the expression ‘illustrate your argument’. As relationships become technologically mediated, the use of technical metaphors may be expected to increase.
Technologies are techniques that not only relate us to the world, but also map out that world for us. Tools connect us directly to the natural world, while machines amplify and extend our natural capacities. Both link us to the external world of nature as well as the internal world of culture. Communication technologies have the dual function of connecting us to the physical and cultural worlds. Writing as a technique connects us to the world of material objects as well as to aspects of our selves.

Keeping a diary serves not only to record feelings, impressions, and events, but equally important, to enable us to engage in a dialogue with ourselves. This latter function is now expanded with digital recorders, cameras, and other devices capturing the routines and even banalities of everyday life. In earlier days the family trooped down to the town’s photographic shop for the annual family album. Later, with cheap Kodak cameras, people took their own photographs to compile their own personal and family albums. Presently, digital cameras allow us to capture the most trivial events. These may then not only be shared among family and friends but distributed globally through Facebook or YouTube.

Paradoxically, the distinction between significant and insignificant events is no longer relevant since the technology captures both effortlessly. Previously, weddings, deaths, or graduations marked events that called for special preservation. Taking pictures of a child taking its first step or recording its first word marked an important family record. Presently a person’s recorded life may start with ultrasound foetal images and include all the banalities of everyday life. As the examples below illustrate, they may also include our life on the screen! The actual, virtual, and real become indistinguishable.

The new communication technology encourages differences as well as commonalities. Minorities are able to build online communities easily, and diasporic members can share common memories of the homeland. This individuating and collectivizing possibility of the new technologies is illustrated among our informants.

Kristina, confined at home with agoraphobia, is able to establish global contacts with others who share her medical condition or her diverse musical interests. Donna is professionally dependent on the technology, but also uses it as part of her domestic family routine. She and her husband have incorporated the technology in their relationship. Fr. Robert is a member of a religious congregation still adjusting to all the possibilities and risks of the new technology. While it assists both personal and communal life, it also threatens traditional religious practices. Arnold has been involved in a gay relationship for many years. During this time the mobile and
the Internet have played crucial roles in mediating, maintaining, and expressing his relationship. All these informants now relate to their virtual selves as much as their actual ones. Several years later, they continue to use the new communication technology in diverse ways.

Kristina

Kristina was one of my earliest informants (Pertierra 2006b). She had been unable to leave her house for several years. Despite her condition, she managed to keep in touch with friends and events using her mobile and the Internet. Since Kristina’s interests were both global and local, her confinement was, ironically, not as devastating as it could have been. She retained a strong sense of identity, rejecting any possibility of virtuality as an alternative. Kristina incorporated the technology to maintain her busy lifestyle, which included a wide network of local and overseas friends. Kristina was a singer before the onset of her illness, and she maintained her interest in music while based at home. She composed songs and even recorded some of them, which she distributed to her global network.

Despite Kristina’s positive attitude, her marriage broke down, and she was forced to reevaluate most aspects of her life. Her daughter by an earlier partner was growing up and required greater financial resources. Kristina began exploring work opportunities and slowly ventured outside the home. Her digital networks and virtual communities provided her with the stability, support, and continuity to pursue new possibilities.

Eventually her medical condition improved and she resumed an even busier lifestyle. Kristina obtained a job as a supervisor in an advertising firm and prepared to move into a new flat with her daughter. Paradoxically, now integrated into a more conventional lifestyle of work and leisure, Kristina continued to depend on digital communication as a primary mode of association. She continued to depend on her online networks and combined it with offline activities. Her Facebook site detailed her latest interests and experiences, which she shared with other friends equally committed to the new media. Kristina’s actual life was intimately interwoven with her cyberlife, each one informing the other. Her close friends frequently communicated with her online, and her Facebook site reflected the close and often indistinguishable elements of her virtual and actual activities. Moreover, Kristina’s network often included people unknown to her but who followed her life through mutual friends. The earlier centrality of the network of virtual friends was complemented by new networks, including both virtual and actual members. Kristina was now enjoying a full and rich social life.
which included both virtual and actual elements. She met a new boyfriend who encouraged her to develop her interests in music as well as other artistic endeavours. It seemed that Kristina was finally able to fully realize what always seemed in store for her: a promising career in music and the arts.

Tragically, Kristina suffered a stroke and died at the age of 33. But her Facebook site was continued by friends, and her presence can still be felt in cyberspace. While people in the past could continue to express their grief for long periods, cyberlife gives such continued expressions a new quality. Long after her death, her Facebook site included many entries that mimicked her own writing. People responded to earlier postings as though the exchange involved Kristina. This case is an example of the virtual remaining real even after death.

People have often kept mementos of loved ones to remind them of happier days. Photographs, letters, gifts, or treasured objects serve as material reminders of a previous life. But Kristina’s Facebook entries have a more dynamic quality than these earlier passive mementos. Her virtual presence continues despite her death. Her messages and comments as representations of an actual life seem no less real than they originally were. Like persisting works of fiction, they continue to exercise their persuasive appeal. Kristina’s Facebook site, like her life, is an ongoing activity to which significant others contribute.

Donna

Donna is an expatriate who has decided to live in the Philippine with her Filipino husband. Both of them live technologically enriched lives because of their professional interests. Quotidian tasks such as finding out movie schedules or looking for cheap items are routed through the Internet. As expected, Donna regular contacts her family and friends abroad. But the technology is also an intimate part of her marital life. She and her husband often interact with the technology, sharing interests and activities, as they surf the net, for instance, to purchase their baby’s crib. As she describes her relationship with the technology: “The computer is not just a machine that I interact with; it is also a medium of interacting with my husband. The computer is part of our relationship with one another. It helps us interact concerning personal matters as well as about work.”

Since first participating in this study, Donna has found place of the Internet far more central for her and her family. Because of the access the Internet gives to global markets, her
husband resigned from the news agency where he worked for several years and put up his own production company. In the four years since the business was established, 100% of their clients came from their website. He listed his business on key industry websites that clients use to source production companies internationally. His income is more than four times what it was in the news agency. In Donna’s own career as an independent consultant, she works completely from home, apart from occasional visits to the field. Donna works with local counterparts in three different countries—oftentimes for weeks or months before ever meeting them in the field. They use email, chat, and SKYPE online video phone. Currently, Donna is helping design a water supply project in a secondary town in Viet Nam from her home in the Philippines.

Donna’s case, although rare, is a good example of how new opportunities are made available by CMICT. Whether her example can be emulated by other Filipinos is problematic. Donna comes from a technologically privileged background, and her husband’s work requires continued upgrading of technical skills. This is an unusual domestic situation for Filipinos, even as the technology becomes more accessible. Her example indicates that the ongoing influence of factors such as class and education as well as individual initiative for technology have significant economic benefits.

Our Possessions Possess Us

Donna’s relationship is a good example of a technologically mediated relationship. But it is also more than that. The technology is not just a medium of interaction; just as often the technology itself is the purpose for interacting. The technology is not just a passive object waiting to be used but is as often an active presence demanding its usage. Technology relates to us as much as we relate to it. This view does not imply an animate presence in technology but only an admission that we project our own needs outside ourselves. Put in another way, we incorporate the technology into our sense of self—the machine becomes us. Our relationship to ourselves, to others, and even to objects is a dynamic and dialectical one (Miller 2009).

This incorporation of things into ourselves is best expressed in acts of consumption. We are what we eat not only in the sense of physiological absorption but through an act of cultural constitution. Acts of consumption become forms of self constitution. Dress and adornment are part of us as much as our physical appendages. We mourn their loss with equal grief. A fallen tooth, a dislodged nail, or a clump of hair, formerly part of us, requires an appropriate ritual of separation for the reconstitution of the self. Mobiles are among the best examples of an
extension of self, and their loss is deeply felt, indicating their importance. Others may see themselves through other valued objects such as shoes, cars, or houses. Naturally, objects also exemplify others; hence our attachment to inherited heirlooms, old furniture, early photographs, and souvenirs. They all come to express previous relationships as effectively as parts of the person, such as a child’s hair cuttings.

This objectification of the self through objects and practices is what gives Kristina’s Facebook site a dynamic quality. While she may have been its original creator, others were equally participative from the start. Their continuing participation in the site, despite Kristina’s death, illustrates how the self is co-constituted by others. The self is a product of a mutual ontology. We may be the authors of our lives, but this authorship is always collective and collaborative. It includes objects and other people.

Technologies of the Soul

Fr. Robert is a senior member of a religious congregation. He has been a director of a university, in charge of seminarians, and has worked in rural parishes (Pertierra 2006b). Fr. Robert has experienced the benefits as well as the distractions of the new communication technology. Texting has become an integral part of his religious and social life. He applauds the capacity of the mobile and the Internet to depersonalize communications, facilitating hitherto awkward contexts. Dealing with lay employees or the general public often poses difficulties for priests. Pastoral care, administrative duties, and discretion complicate normal relationships between priests and the laity. The new technology facilitates these relationships by formalizing or ritualizing them.

Fr. Robert is optimistic about the effects of the technology for congregational life. Despite its obvious temptations for young seminarians, people with strong vocations can use it for positive ends. He also admits that contemporary life, including the religious, has to come to terms with the new technology. But how it is incorporated into religious life remains an open question. Less disputable are the effects of the new media on notions of personhood. Their individualizing and cosmopolitanizing influences have already been mentioned. In addition, the inclusion of the stranger into networks of intimacy may disrupt traditional attitudes, practices, and values. The new media can also be described as technologies of the soul (Roman 2005).
When initially interviewed Fr. Robert generally approved of the new communication technology:

I generally hold a positive view of technology. Some abuse it, but most use it to their advantage. It depends very much on the person. Some young seminarians initially become too dependent on CMICT, mostly games and other distractions but usually recover and resume a more appropriate life. I admit to sometimes getting hooked on recreational card games. It is an easy way to relieve the stress of everyday life. The thing is not to become dependent on it.

If seminary life is properly supervised, many of these problems are quickly resolved. In fact, young seminarians are often encouraged to teach computer skills to their superiors, creating a sense of reciprocal indebtedness and improving communal ties. However, a digital divide separates members of the congregation based on generation and location. Elderly priests are often uncomfortable with the choices available through the technology. Priests assigned to isolated parishes often complain about the lack of communication facilities. These priests relish the opportunities to go online whenever they visit Manila or other urban centres. The new technology has become a normal element of our religious life (Pertierra 2006b, 74).

Several years later, the new technology has been more fully incorporated into communal life. Many religious communities now have individualized morning prayers to spare their members the embarrassment of having missed this ritual because of oversleeping. Superiors often condone this new practice because they sympathize with the younger priests whom they know increasingly depend on the Internet. However, evening prayers and meals remain communal. Fr. Robert conceded that in some seminaries and formation houses, morning prayers are still conducted communally.

A greater tolerance is shown towards viewing DVDs in private but to encourage group viewings, seminaries often install widescreen home theatres in communal rooms. Films shown communally are usually chosen by consensus. Fr. Robert himself purchases digital films, particularly whenever he travels overseas to visit family and members of his congregation. He also makes full use of the informational resources of the Internet, such as Google. According to him, “as long as you know which site to locate, you get the information you want. That’s why students are now often ahead of their teachers”.

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Fr. Robert fondly recalls his attendance at his first international gathering of members of his congregation in 1989 in Rome. It was held near the papal summer residence, and he excitedly recounted seeing the Pope. Now he can readily access sites informing him of papal homilies as well as communications from his religious superiors. All this information is easily available and promotes a clearer understanding among congregational members. Finally, as a school administrator, Fr. Robert is often given the responsibility of supervising students whose parents live abroad. He makes full use of the new media to remain in contact both with students and their families.

The account above indicates that while the new media has affected the ritual practices of a religious congregation, overall the advantages have been greater than the disadvantages. The new media is an inevitable part of everyday life, including its religious dimension. When used prudently, access to new information can assist the religious life of communities and encourages a greater understanding of common goals and practices.

The New Media and Spirituality

The Catholic Church in the Philippines has not been slow in using the new technology. Apart from providing religious lessons on SMS (catextism), several text services provide an array of prayers, devotions, and advise. There is even a service known as Text God. The texter receives biblical quotations appropriate for the day or occasion. Apart from personal greetings, religious messages are undoubtedly the most popular SMS messages. Filipinos have also formed religious text brigades, bombarding God with SMS requests for protection. Some claimed that this is the reason the Philippines was spared the tragedy of the 2004 Indonesian tsunami. Mobiles become conveyors of spirituality―texting, like prayers, are directed to supernatural interlocutors.

While gender differences are surprisingly muted in the use of the new communication technology, the interest in accessing religious sites is significantly higher among women, while men prefer pornographic sites (Pertierra et al. 2002). But some men (other than priests and seminarians) also express an interest in religious sites. This interest often indicates membership in subcultural groups such as gays and transsexuals. A participant in a gay Filipino spiritual site describes his interest in the following terms:
Cyberspace broke through the spiral (of silence) and gave birth to countercultures of people motivated by the need to bring their own emancipation not only from oppressive structures of monolith religions but also from dualistic notions of the nature of human beings that influence our understanding of gender (Bantugan 2006, 331).

This is a good example of the capacity of the new media to provide a forum for hitherto unvoiced interests. It indicates that the new media can offer opportunities for authentic religious experiences not available in traditional sources.

**Virtual Relationships and Real Love**

Arnold and Miguel were in a relationship for several years, which included periods of physical separation. While Arnold pursued further studies abroad, he remained in close contact with Miguel using the new media.

They celebrated their 6th-year anniversary in September 2005. In 2003, Arnold went to Hong Kong to study, and their relationship continued online with occasional visits. While they were able to keep regular contact via mobile phones and the Internet, it was not enough. For a time their relationship floundered but efforts by both allowed it to continue.

In Arnold’s words:

My online relationship with Miguel has evolved from having a tightly organized routine to a more spontaneous one. During the first three months in Hong Kong, I stayed in the library everyday to wait for our chat session that started at 6 pm. In addition, we emailed each other in the morning to say “I love you” and to inform each other of the day’s activities. During our chat, we frequently vowed our love for one another, talked about what we did during the day and our plans for the next. In addition, Miguel insisted I get a mobile phone so he could call me every evening. In Manila we used to meet once or twice a week but had long daily phone conversations.

Arnold missed Miguel greatly during his time abroad, but their regular communication mitigated the sense of separation. Their exchanges consisted mainly about their times together in the past and repeated reaffirmations of their love. But eventually these exchanges became routine and unsatisfactory. Hong Kong held novel and unexplored interests as well as new
friends. Miguel’s constant questions about his activities started to annoy Arnold. The ease of communication also allowed a closer supervision of Arnold’s life by Miguel. The former began to employ strategies of avoidance by claiming not to have Internet access or by switching off his cellphone. Arnold found it easier to explain his absences to Miguel by email rather than orally. Writing allowed a more neutral medium than an oral confrontation. Miguel’s frequent need to monitor Arnold’s activities had been a source of tension even in the past. According to Arnold:

After a year, I convinced Miguel that the online setup we had was not working satisfactorily. I became less motivated to chat with him because of his constant checking on my activities, the mundane conversations we had about his life—what he ate, or where his mom or dad went, or what he watched on TV, etc. I no longer felt that daily chat sessions and text messages resolved the difficulties of our physical separation. I convinced him to accept new rules in our online relationship: chatting only three times a week, when it was convenient for both of us, and one phone call. Having a virtual relationship allowed me to deal with the old problem of excessive surveillance. It gave me the emotional distance to address the problems in our relationship and to negotiate for new rules.

In Manila, Arnold used the Internet to meet strangers for casual sex. But this had to be carried out discreetly because Miguel was constantly checking up on him. In Hong Kong, despite Miguel’s virtual presence, Arnold had more opportunities to engage in online sex and to meet other people. According to Arnold, he lied more to Miguel during their online relationship than when they were seeing each other in Manila. But in other ways, he was also more honest with Miguel online than face to face. “I was honest with him about my feelings and opinions about our relationship. I would talk to him about meeting guys and having experimental sex. I used these admissions to open the issue of sexual fidelity and my opinions about it.”

While abroad, Arnold continued his sexual liaisons and used the Internet to arrange meetings with strangers. He regularly visited websites offering personal advertisements and chat rooms. These personal sites include profiles and descriptions of persons willing to engage in sexual relationships. The chat room is a space where gay men meet other men for sex, drinks, movies, the exchange of CDs, or simply jogging.

Like other participants, Arnold employs particular strategies to attract chat members:
I lie about my age and describe my features in more flattering ways—e.g. skinhead with toned muscles, athletic, rough-looking, 27-year-old student, half Malay, half Spanish. If most chatters are young Chinese men who prefer someone of their age and race, I usually present myself as being someone of mixed race, like one fourth Chinese one fourth Spanish and one half Malay. If a chatter is looking for a pure Malay, I describe myself as one hundred percent Filipino with round eyes and full sensual lips. I tend to modify descriptions of my looks and features depending on the preference of the chatter/s. At other times, when I am not looking for sex and just passing time, I respond to a chatter who describes himself as good looking and searching for an equally good-looking man for “fun”. To see if he is telling the truth, I have a private chat session with him and send him a fake picture (usually of a good looking Asian man taken from the Internet) so that he will also show me his picture. I also use suggestive chat names such as “mossgreentrunks” or “bubblebutt” or “smoothblow” to hint about my fetishes such as swimming trunks and oral sex. Cruising for sex online is different from cruising in public places. Online one can go directly to the topic of sex, one can advertise oneself and describe in detail what one is looking for and for what sexual purpose.

Despite these difficulties and misunderstandings, Arnold and Miguel managed to continue their relationship. They email each other every day and have long chats on the weekend. They exchange pictures and even engage in online sex using their webcams. Arnold says that these sessions are sometimes better than actual ones because, while some of the senses are suspended, others are heightened. Corporeal sex often brings about sensory overload and people often close their eyes to reduce sensory experience. During online sex, the experience is concentrated visually and imaginatively. The way the camera is positioned is also significant. Usually Miguel puts his webcam on top of his computer screen, but when they have cybersex he puts it very close to his penis foregrounding his entire body so that the penis looks bigger than its actual size. This excites Arnold and they both concentrate on staring at each other’s penises and imagining having sex. According to Arnold:

I don’t think or feel that online relationships are less serious or genuine than face-to-face relationships. In whatever manifestation, textually and corporeally, Miguel is a very important person for me. But I think that virtual environments made possible by modern communication media are different from earlier traditional spaces. These virtual environments allow us to continue earlier relationships but in the process also transform them.
Breaking Up

Miguel and Arnold ended their affair after nine years. Many of their friends were surprised at the break up because their relationship seemed stable and balanced. It was considered a benchmark in terms of longevity. They even managed to survive a virtual relationship for three years while Arnold was in Hong Kong. They had plans and goals for the future, and had been working on them seriously. To have invested a lot on each other only to see their relationship fall apart was not only sad but also emotionally traumatic. The ending was both bitter and emotionally painful for Arnold (and presumably for Miguel as well).

Arnold reflected on the reasons for the break up and initially blamed himself. The main issue that strained their relationship was the desire to live together. This had long been their plan, which they identified as a major step in developing the relationship beyond the regular weekend meetings. They planned to move in together six years earlier but couldn’t afford it. This became the main issue that strained their relationship. It never materialized.

Arnold’s plans after his studies abroad was to finish his master’s degree, get a university job, move out of the family home and live with Miguel. He had made up his mind to postpone his doctoral studies in order to give more time to the relationship with Miguel. Arnold felt guilty for leaving Miguel during the period abroad. “I thought physical intimacy was important in maintaining and developing the relationship. Our time apart had taken its toll on our relationship. Although the Internet and cellphones were helpful in continuing the affair while I was away, we somehow grew apart”.

When Arnold returned, he had a hard time finding suitable work and took much longer in completing his thesis than he had expected. He eventually obtained a job as a university researcher, but the salary was not enough to maintain the lifestyle that they had anticipated. He was at a crossroad careerwise, and could not decide whether to shift careers or to stay as a poorly paid university research assistant. During this time Miguel had improved his financial position and looked forward to a comfortable future as an architect. Miguel bought a car and applied greater pressure on Arnold to seek better remuneration.

They continued their relationship for sometime as usual: via daily emails, text messages, and voice calls, and weekend dates. Eventually, this setup lost its original appeal, and both decided that the time to move in together had become critical. Miguel began insisting that
Arnold change his career and seek a higher paying job. He also strongly disapproved of Arnold’s interest in pursuing doctoral studies. The relationship had entered a critical phase, and major decisions had to be made.

They agreed to take a break up (temporarily) but remain in close contact. Both began to date other men but continued to exchange messages regularly and even meet on weekends. Arnold still felt deeply attached to Miguel and greatly valued their by now mostly virtual relationship. This setup, however, did not last long. Miguel met a man at work and soon they were making plans to move in together. Miguel’s family approved of this new friendship.

Arnold was initially devastated and took a job abroad to get away from this painful situation. He stopped answering Miguel’s calls and refused to answer his text messages. To complete this separation, Arnold deleted all of Miguel’s friends’ mobile numbers and removed all the information in his Facebook account dealing with Miguel and their common friends. This digital erasure of Miguel’s presence initially greatly comforted Arnold. But Miguel’s online presence also haunted him:

I cannot escape from his online presence which is readily accessible with a simple search of his name in Google. He can be in my computer screen in seconds if I wish to. During times when I would miss him, I would stalk Miguel online. I would read his blog or visit his Facebook and Plurk accounts since he has not restricted access to these sites. It is from these profiles that I’m able to follow his activities with his new boyfriend. I also found a lot of information about his new boyfriend online: what he looks like, where he lives, what he does for a living, etc. I saw their pictures together, sometimes with their friends, one time with Miguel’s family. All these readily accessible information makes me depressed. I blame myself for the breakdown of the relationship.

Arnold’s relationship with Miguel was mostly conducted via text messages and voice calls. These interactions framed their friendship, particularly during the time abroad. For Arnold this cessation of regular communications was difficult to adjust to.

His absence via the mobile phone is something that I’m still trying to recover from. When his text messages became infrequent and finally stopped, I had a difficult time adjusting. For nine years of my life, even when I was out of the Philippines, and through many cellphone replacements, change of ringing tones and sim cards, one thing remained constant: Miguel would text me “I love you” everyday during morning,
lunchtime, afternoon, and when I’m about to go to sleep. I have been so used to this routine that when it suddenly stopped, I found myself disoriented and out of balance. I initially felt very lonely and insecure, and I consider the experience as probably the greatest feeling of loss in my life.

One wonders whether it is Miguel’s actual absence or his missing texts that Arnold really misses. Being regularly ‘pinged’ three times every day for nine years clearly established a visceral dependence on Arnold. This dependence was also expressed by David in Chapter 2:

For the past three weeks, I haven’t received a single text from Mario; I’ve only been getting emails. It’s not the same thing. His emails may contain more detail about his thoughts, but I didn’t feel as connected. A “ping” is a special utility that can be used to test whether a remote computer is responding or not. Well, I felt like that our SMS messages were a convenient way of pinging each other...When I lost my phone, I felt like an important link to the Philippines was severed, and I felt myself kind of reintegrating into my Canadian networks in a way that was different from when I still had my phone. I had lived for 10 years in Canada before meeting Mario.

The text messages between Arnold and Miguel had established an almost conditioned physical response which Arnold found difficult to break. Accepting a job overseas was a necessary step for Arnold to distance himself from a failed relationship but it also separated him from friends and family, the normal sources of support for Filipinos. Once more Arnold resorted to the new communication media to provide much needed comfort. His Facebook site became a major form of connective therapy, enabling him to re-establish his social network.

When I am on Facebook, I get to monitor what my friends are doing/thinking. I comment on their status messages and when they reply, I feel happy that I’m being noticed. Many of my friends are also experiencing relationship problems and we often console each other. This helps me deal with my own loneliness. When these friends post status messages about their moods, I comment and share my feelings as well.

Arnold’s Facebook account serves as a site for connection and consolation. Facebook becomes a virtual therapeutic site, and it keeps Arnold informed about his extensive social network in the Philippines and elsewhere. He recently learnt that a brother of his close female college friend had been in a relationship with a university professor also known to Arnold. This case provided an example of viable relationships despite the poor salaries in the academe.
confirmed Arnold’s view that relationships needed more that physical intimacy and economic resources to survive. They also require recognition of self-worth. This is the main lesson that Arnold has learned from his failed relationship with Miguel.

What Is a Mediated Relationship?

The relationship between Arnold and Miguel is a good example of what Miller (2009) calls a ‘mobile phone relationship’. The relationship exists independently of its mediation by technology since Arnold and Miguel had met regularly. But the technology of mediation also plays a central role, particularly when they are unable to meet. When abroad, the relationship is totally dependent on this mediation. From the account above, the relationship shifts emphasis when it becomes technologically mediated. Arnold is more evasive about his sexual exploits but more honest about his feelings. A problem of their relationship (from Arnold’s perspective) was the excessive surveillance by Miguel. Arnold dealt with this surveillance differently online and offline. He was more evasive about certain things but more honest about others. It is as though the relationship occurs at different levels—when face to face and when at a distance. Increasingly, CMICT allows the latter to approximate, and at times even to substitute for the former. When Arnold’s relationship ended and he worked abroad, Facebook kept him connected with his social network.

Miller (2009) correctly points out that relationships are often complex orientations, containing conflicting expectations. When conducted face to face, these complexities are sorted out in particular ways. But when the relationship is conducted at a distance, other strategies come into play. Anderson (1992) made a similar point when he argued that modern communication such as the fax machine allowed diasporic patriots to support radical programs often disapproved of by their counterparts at home. Diasporic life allows for an imagination of the homeland to develop unhampered by practical contingencies, whereas life in the homeland requires quotidian compromises. Increasingly, as many of our relationships are technologically mediated, strategies different from face-to-face ones shape their outcomes.

Using Miller’s (2009) terminology, we have a relationship with the homeland that can be pursued purely ideologically at a distance and/or one which requires contingent adjustments at home. All relationships contain both approaches since they all involve idealized or normative elements, as well as actualized (and personalized) experiences. For the relationship to persist, a
balance between normative expectations and practical experience is desirable. Long absences may tilt this balance one way or the other.

The new media increasingly mimic and often replace face-to-face relationships with mediated ones (Fortunati 2005). These latter allow for their symbolic, ideological, and normative aspects to dominate over more pragmatic, instrumental, and contingent elements usually encountered in face-to-face relationships. In the cases mentioned above, we can see how these diverse elements of relationships actually play themselves out. Kristina is dead, but her friends still treasure and relate to memories of her. Although one can no longer relate to Kristina as a living person, one can relate to memories of her and share these with others. But Kristina’s idiosyncrasies can no longer actively shape the relationships that people have about her. In this case we can say that Kristina’s friends are relating to earlier relations they had with her. Due to the agent-like nature of the new media, her Facebook site continues to mimic her presence. Memories, images, and representations are easily aroused, experienced, and shared in a virtual world such as Facebook.

Donna’s life is closely integrated with the technologies that shape her daily routines. She remains in close contact with her family and friends abroad, but she also uses the new media to relate to her husband and her children. Donna admits that technology often facilitates her domestic relationships but also complicates them. She home teaches her children, and the information available in the Internet proves invaluable.

Donna recently finished a documentary film working with her husband and found the experience stressful. The sources of conflict stemmed both from their professional roles and their approaches to filmmaking. In her case as in most others, the intertwining of different elements of a relationship are often impossible to untangle. While making the documentary film, their approaches to the technology often differed significantly. Her husband was the cameraman, but Donna had devised the concept for the film. The technology itself seemed to dictate distinct approaches to the project. Camera angles and conceptual visualizations did not always coincide.

All relationships involve technical-normative expectations as well as practical experiences. How these actually work out depend on given contexts such as daily face-to-face interactions or technologically mediated ones. In Donna’s case, they involve both. The technology was both a means as well as an end in their relationship.
Fr. Robert confided that dealing with laypeople often posed difficulties for priests. The latter are held in high regard in the community and are generally expected to be generous and considerate. This often makes the task of administration difficult, and in such cases technologically mediated relationships are preferable. Loneliness is also a frequent problem for priests, and social networks can provide the intimacies normally unavailable. The introduction of new technologies invariably interrupts the routines of communal life. Fr. Robert remembers that when television was first introduced into the community, evening prayers had to be rescheduled because it clashed with their favourite programs. When computers became popular among seminarians, religious superiors complained that the Internet distracted their members from collective activities. Most of these problems have generally been satisfactorily resolved, and the new communication technologies have been successfully incorporated into communal life. In the context of declining religious vocations in the Philippines as elsewhere, it is too early to predict the long-term effects of the new media on religious and communal life.

In the case of Arnold and Miguel, their relationship was pursued technologically while abroad and developed according to strategies appropriate to this mode. Arnold was able to hide his sexual exploits more effectively but revealed his feelings more openly. Their relationship was formed previous to being abroad and already had certain tensions such as Miguel’s excessive need for surveillance. This tension was better resolved abroad and allowed Arnold to reveal his feelings more honestly. Their sexual relationship was also conducted differently. Onanism characterized their sexual encounters, and penile size was an important sexual imagery.

On Arnold’s return, they resumed their relationship, but financial pressures took their toll. Neither party seemed satisfied with the routine exchange of messages, calls, and weekend trysts. But unable to afford the cost of living together, Arnold and Miguel decided to interrupt their relationship while remaining in close contact. The inevitable happened; Miguel found someone else, and they moved in together with his family’s approval. Arnold was heartbroken and found work abroad, from where he followed Miguel’s life in Facebook and kept in touch with his own network. Once more Arnold’s life was conducted significantly through technological mediation. His Facebook account serves as both portal to his past and virtual therapy in the present. Technology allows him to relate both to his friends and to himself.

In all these cases, it is clear that a major effect of the new communication media is to open the channel of information and interaction significantly. These allow interlocutors to expand the fields of discourse and to explore hitherto unknown or inaccessible areas. These
include aspects of the self previously unexamined. They reveal that we are often strangers to ourselves (Kristeva 1991).

Technologically mediated relationships increasingly frame our interactions. In Kristina’s case, because she was initially confined at home; in Donna’s, simply because it was part of her professional and expatriate life. Fr. Robert had to adjust to the new technology, and Arnold depended on it during times abroad. Mediated relationships have their own focus and tempo. They allow us to adjust our activities, as much as they require us to adjust to them. Often, as opposed to face-to-face quotidian relationships, mediated ones enable and encourage us to reflect differently on the context of interaction. Ricoeur (1971) has argued that writing captures the said rather than the saying encountered in speech. The meaning of the interaction is detached from its context. Filipinos find it easier to text conciliatory or uncomfortable messages rather than risk direct confrontation (Pertierra et al. 2002).

Kristina found it easy to discuss her problems with cyber friends and continued to do so even when she re-entered public life. Her Facebook account combined intimate, professional, and practical activities. Donna’s life was so mediated technologically that it was difficult for her to separate direct from mediated experiences. Fr. Robert enjoyed the ‘distance’ provided by mediated relationships in dealing with the laity as well as the ‘intimacy’ of texts from friends. Arnold used it both for deception and self-revelation. In all these cases, mediated relationships allow us to extend, reinforce, and revise forms of interaction. They also allow us to devise and invent new strategies of interaction. We can confront and interrogate the stranger in us. The new communication technologies allow us to construct relationships at different levels, face to face and at a distance, as well as combinations of both. These relationships involve objects and people. All of our informants (Kristina, Donna, Fr. Robert, and Arnold), illustrate how deeply imbricated these relationships become, when combined with the new communication media. Kristina can be said to subsist beyond her death. For Donna, communication media is an end as much as a means for relationships. Fr. Robert seems to be the least involved with the new technology, but even he admits that new perspectives have become available as a consequence of the technology. Arnold has used it to continue and expand his relationships and continues to depend on it even after the relationship terminated. The capacity to delete as well as to access the past generates relational antinomies. Arnold is caught between wanting to divest himself of the traces of Miguel while being irresistibly drawn to following Miguel’s latest activities. Facebook is the platform for deleting Miguel’s past but also for resurrecting it.
Conclusion

Human relationships have always been complex, multilayered, conflictive, and ambiguous. But in the past, certain constraints such as physical separation have limited our choices in continuing them as aspects of everyday life. The telephone made long distance relationships approximate quotidian ones. The new technology facilitates such ‘real-time’ relationships and makes possible hitherto unlikely ones involving strangers. Absent and often unknown others presently constitute many of our close relationships. This is best illustrated among loyal fans of celebrities. The recent death of Michael Jackson provoked an enormous outpouring of grief from his fans and even from members of the general public not normally associated with his music. While earlier ages also mourned the deaths of famous leaders, interactive representations and avatars provided by the new media allow for a more vivid and active recollection. Virtual relationships are now ordinary and the mourning for them quotidian.

Objects and practices have always featured as significant elements in our relationships. Food, dress, housing and other material objects, and social practices are both constituents and expressions of self. We relate to them as much as we relate to others. Often, we relate to others through objects and practices. Modernity has significantly increased the role of material objects in constituting notions of the self and the other.

Commodification expresses not only the objectification of culture but also the means for constituting a modern identity. Shopping has become a major activity for self-construction (Miller 2001). Standardized merchandise is refashioned to suit our individual tastes even as we adopt common fashions. Mobiles are decorated, clothes redesigned, and homes refurbished as expressions of who we are. Sometimes these objects shape us; we become them. It is in this context that technology enters our lives. The commodification of everyday life is expanded by the new technology. New conditions of possibility become available, including the increasing virtualization of areas of life. No wonder that our age is described as having an excess of meaning but a lack of sense (Marcus 1997, 13-20) or as another puts it, ‘Never have so many people been confronted with so much they don’t understand (Iyer 2000, 5). Modernity has revealed the world as replete with meaning, but the problem is how to make sense out of it. Virtuality has geometrically expanded this world of meaning, revealing an infinite universe of
possibilities. The new communication technologies offer us both solace and comfort in an age of increasing anxiety.
Working abroad has always been a strategy used by Filipinos because of the poor economic opportunities in the country. Early in the 20th century, even before postwar emigration, Filipinos were already being recruited to work in Hawaii and the American mainland. By the 1920s there were thriving Filipino communities in Hawaii and in the fishing and agricultural centers in California. But racial and miscegenation laws prevented these communities from reproducing local roots, until the postwar period ushered changes in immigration laws and allowed family members to join their spouses (Pertierra et al. 1992). By then the early migrants had reached retirement age, and many had returned to their natal villages with their meagre pensions, reinforcing the view that the good life could only be achieved abroad.

The next wave of migrants was better prepared educationally and sought their futures geographically more broadly, including Hong Kong, the Middle East, Europe, as well as North America. They worked as domestic helpers, caretakers, nurses, and seamen, and in virtually every other industrial sector, including professional specialists.

Migration and Overseas Workers

The Philippine Department of Labor and Employment reports that there are more than 500,000 Filipino seafarers manning over 20% of the world’s fleet, thus constituting the largest ethnic group in the industry. These seamen are reputed to be among the best in their field (Today, 1 October 2002). In 2008, POEA statistics registered about 974,399 newly deployed land-based overseas workers. Most of the Filipinos in this second group are engaged in service activities. In the same year, 419,000 or 40% of OFWs were engaged in service-related positions, such as cooks, waiters, barbers, beauticians, hairdressers, and cleaners. In terms of gender composition, most of the service workers are females. According to the 2001 POEA Report, 92,351 newly deployed service workers were 91% females and 9% males. Asia ranks as their number one destination. The 2000 POEA Report indicates that of the 636,383 newly deployed land-based workers, about 292,067 or 46% were deployed in Asia, 283,291 or 45% in Middle East, and 39,296 or 6% in Europe. While all of these figures are at best approximative, they give us an idea of the extent, composition, and spread of Filipino workers abroad. As of 2008, POEA
estimates that there are eight to ten million Filipinos living or working abroad. They constitute over 20% of the work force and represent a significant deployment of skilled labor.

The Medical Drain

The statistics are much worse in the health sector. The increasing professionalization of overseas workers is reflected in the preference for choosing courses that facilitate employment abroad. Hence, local standards become relevant for the employability of overseas Filipinos. According to the Department of Health (Philippine Daily Inquirer, 22 October 2007), 85% of health professionals work abroad. This inevitably leads to a crisis in local health care. To compound the problem, many of these medical workers come from rural areas, already poorly served by the health profession. "The health care delivery system in the Philippines has gone critical, almost desperate" (ibid.). For every 100 health professionals, 88 have left in search of high-paying jobs outside the country, Duque, Secretary of Health, said. To make the situation worse, fewer medical graduates are passing the licensure examinations. This is undoubtedly due to the general deterioration of Philippine education. According to the Department of Health, the majority of government employed doctors who left for abroad had previously converted their medical degrees into nursing. There are more Filipino nurses abroad than in the Philippines.

Unfortunately, circumstances are unlikely to change significantly in the near future. The country will rely on the export of its workers, and their families will depend on overseas remittances. The effects of absent parents and other family members have not yet been fully examined, but perhaps the consequences may not be as bad as expected. This is because Filipino culture is highly adaptive, and kinship ties operate across wide networks. In the past, Filipino children were regularly shared across a kinship network, and this practice is employed for children whose parents work abroad (Nagasaka 2003). Nevertheless, the globalization of domestic workers creates problems not only for the home countries but also for the increasing numbers of displaced parents (Parrenas 2003)

Case Study 1: Established Migrants

In 1977, Annie, a midwife from the Ilocos province (Northern Luzon), decided to try her luck overseas. Accompanied by some friends, Annie went to Spain, where she worked for two
years. She then moved to London for a year and from there managed to obtain a visa to enter Canada. At the suggestion of a friend who had preceded her there, Annie decided to go to Toronto. Most of Annie’s decisions were made on the basis of advice offered by close friends from Zamora, her natal village. Soon after she arrived in Toronto, Annie met her future husband, Arthur, also an Ilocano who had migrated to Canada some years earlier. Annie's Zamoran friends who had accompanied her to Spain soon joined her in Toronto.

In the succeeding 30 years (1977-2007), a growing number of Annie's and her friends' relatives have settled permanently in Toronto. On arrival, many of them obtained employment through the recommendations of Annie’s group, who were working in Jewish retirement homes, hospitals, small businesses, and private homes. The network among the Jewish community in Toronto has proved an excellent strategy in providing employment for Zamorans. It has also provided them with basic accommodation as well as the necessary information regarding their rights as recent migrants. Many of these Jewish families were migrants themselves and readily appreciated the problems of settlement. Moreover, they also quickly realized the advantages of establishing relations of reciprocity with members of the growing Zamoran community. These ties primarily involved labor services whose essential components are personal trust, responsibility, and amiability. Hence, apart from working in private homes, looking after children and taking care of the aged, Zamorans who worked in small Jewish businesses often accompanied their employers on holidays or looked after their employers’ homes when they traveled abroad.

Zamorans easily relate to their Jewish employers on the basis of personal reciprocity. Jewish and Zamoran differences are commensurable. What puzzle them are the impersonal attitudes of other Canadians. Zamorans in Canada cope easily with cultural diversity but have more difficulty in accepting cultural difference. Their Jewish employers are clearly different, but they can relate to them personally. Other Canadians appear to favour impersonal relationships over personal ones. This cultural difference, Zamorans find harder to comprehend.

A younger sister and a brother joined Annie in Toronto. Her parents visited her but decided to return to Zamora when they realized that their main occupation in Toronto was to babysit. Fortunately, Annie was able to rely on her in-laws for this assistance. Her sister worked as a nanny for a young Jewish couple, and her brother, Egdon, was employed in a small Jewish owned factory. Another brother was left in Zamora and looked after the family lands. Annie and her siblings frequently recall their younger days in the village and contrast its tranquillity with the heavy and stressful demands of Canadian life. At the same time, the brother in Zamora
yearns for a life of Canadian affluence. Annie and her sister have returned home twice while her Egdon has been home more often. The sisters clearly prefer their lives in Canada, but the Egdon still talks about the possibility of returning to Zamora. He is interested in pursuing a political career, drawing on his father’s political connections. But this prospect is increasingly dim as he settles into Canadian life, with its long-term financial commitments. In the meantime, his older brother has established himself as the mayor of Zamora.

When asked why they prefer Canada, Annie and her sister point out the relative autonomy they exercise in Toronto as opposed to the close scrutiny of local Zamoran society. Annie has two children, and in the village they would fall under the disciplinary gaze and control of senior kin. In Toronto, she has almost exclusive control over their behavior. In her own house, Annie makes it clear to everyone that this is her domain, which is partly the reason why her parents did not stay too long. They complained that staying in Annie’s house was like living in a factory—chores had to be done at specific times.

Annie’s unmarried sister Victoria also prefers life in Canada. Victoria does not have to explain or justify her actions to others, something she would have to do in Zamora. Egdon, on the other hand, complains that Canadian life is highly privatized. While he enjoys his work and family life (he has a young son), he misses the intense social life of Zamora, where communal interests are frequently debated. He feels constrained at work and at home, and yearns for a public space where he can participate in the formation and enactment of collective decisions. He complains that Canadian life is highly privatized and unconcerned with communal matters.

Egdon is aware that such a public space exists in Canada but, apart from being at a disadvantage operating in it, he feels that its concerns are different from his. Not only is this a case of cultural diversity, but more importantly, one of cultural difference. It arises from the difference between a social order based on personal reciprocity and another based on generalized exchange through the application of universal rules. Egdon is the president of the Zamoran association in Toronto but compares the significance of its deliberations to children’s games.

Gendered spaces in Canada are clearly more favourable to Zamoran women than to men. Supervision over their private lives is less rigorous, and the home becomes their main field of interest. The importance of the domestic sphere allows women to exercise considerable influence. Men can find fewer spaces in which they can exercise masculine interests, particularly in the public sphere. For some men, sport becomes a major hobby, while others join
groups with religious or political interests. Filipinos abroad are well known for establishing organizations but also for engaging in factional disputes within them. Often a faction out of power establishes its own rival group rather than cooperate in the original organization. This pattern is a familiar one in Philippine local and national politics. Political parties consist of personal alliances rather than commitment to a common set of principles. Hence, alliances are frequently dissolved and party membership unstable. Members switch parties as it suits them.

Rationale for Migration

I was struck by the varied reasons informants have for migrating. Some go in search of better employment, others go to join family members, and a few confess their interest in exploring the world outside Zamora and the Philippines. While most Zamorans readily complain about the economic and other difficulties of local society, they rarely express a rejection of its main cultural form. This form involves establishing close reciprocal ties with significant others, leading to an intense local sociality. The content and substance of this reciprocity varies considerably, and may, of course, be conducted elsewhere.

When asked why they migrated to Canada, household heads usually cite the ready availability of work. Dependents express the desire to join their family, usually their parents. Elderly Zamorans cite the opportunity to help their children by contributing to the family. Finding a job is the first priority of household heads, while young dependents try to adjust to school and a new peer group, which always includes other Zamorans or at least Filipinos. Old people complain about the weather and the isolation of life in Toronto. After a period of adjustment, most Zamorans agree about the material advantages of Canadian life, but senior members often disagree. For them, the thought of an infirm future is disturbing, particularly when they hear stories from their children about the lives of aged Canadians. Many elderly Zamorans return to their village to be looked after by kin when their own health begins to fail. For them, the superior health services available do not override the isolation of Canadian life.

Annie is well established at work and at home. She shows little interest in returning to Zamora, but insists that her young children do so. In Toronto, her life revolves around her work in a Jewish hospital, her family responsibilities, and her Zamoran friends. Victoria works as a caregiver for a young Jewish family and lives with her Zamoran cousins. While she could live with Annie or Egdon, she prefers the extra privacy allowed by living with more distant kin. Being single, Victoria’s behavior is still under considerable surveillance by other Zamorans. She
strongly objects to any interference but nevertheless conforms mainly to Zamoran norms. Egdon remains ambivalent about his life in Toronto and still considers the possibility of returning to Zamora. While his sisters readily took out Canadian citizenship, he remains Filipino.

Back in Zamora, Egdon's mother, while she misses her children, shows no haste in joining them. As a teacher and senior member of Zamoran society, Estefania quickly points out the disadvantages for her in Canada. Apart from the bad weather, her life would consist of looking after children and other domestic chores in the isolation of a Canadian home. Estefania would have to earn her status instrumentally. As she puts it, children raised in Canada are wild because they are weaned on animal milk.

Except for their Jewish employers, other white Canadians are perceived as generally unfriendly and selfish. By this, Zamorans mean that Canadians do not readily enter into reciprocal relationships that bridge the private-public domains. They observe that white Canadians, even among themselves, while superficially friendly, are ungenerous and extremely protective of their private lives. Victoria was astonished when her employers, despite being Jewish, berated their own parents for interfering excessively with the children's socialization. Sometimes she complains that her own sister, Annie, at times displays the same tendencies.

Anderson (1992) has argued that modern communication not only facilitates but also often radicalizes migrants' political imaginations. They are able to keep in close touch without having to confront the practical exigencies that, in their homelands, often require compromise. Presently, Zamorans in Canada have ready access to local Philippine news through both the Internet and community TV programs. In a sense, these migrants suffer from a double imagination. They are subject to competing sets of counterfactuals, one arising from their present situation, another from past recollections.

Zamorans in Toronto often nostalgically recall their village past, but these musings are quickly brought to ground by continuing obligations to their village kin. Local Zamoran life often involves competitive feasting. Having kin abroad is seen as an important source of funds, and they are strongly lobbied to support their respective kin. These activities may range from children's contests to adults running for municipal and even provincial politics. As observed in other Philippine communities, many of whose members reside abroad, an increase in feasting and other social practices is often the main effects of overseas remittances (Griffiths 1988). Paradoxically, the effect of remittances often reinforces local practices and traditions.
Keeping in Contact

Zamorans in Toronto were able to keep close contact with their village kin even before the use of mobiles and the Internet. They did so through letters, telephone calls, and videos. Most importantly, they maintained an effective network of information through the regular visits of relatives and friends from the Philippines. On their regular visits home, they returned with letters, parcels, and videos that are circulated among all interested parties in Toronto. Special gatherings are held to bid farewell and later to welcome community members on their return from the Philippines. During these visits, people in Zamora were also informed about life in Toronto. The practice of sharing news and circulating gifts is well established traditionally (pauwit) and is extended to overseas friends and kin. Until recently, even money was sent through intermediaries to avoid the high costs of remittances. More recent banking schemes, including mobile transfers, have made these remittances cheaper and more convenient.

Despite this intense social activity, the most common complaint of Zamorans in Toronto is the lack of public feasting and other gatherings common in village life. A Zamoran sense of community depends on the frequent exchange of services and information and the familiarity with the routines of their members' everyday lives. This is easily achieved in Zamora, where locality is a practical as well as a cultural reality. Not only do people in Zamora help one another in agricultural work, but they also bury each other's dead, help out in marriage and other celebrations, assist in feuds, and in many other ways are deeply entailed with one another. In Toronto, despite efforts to reproduce the practical aspects of locality through residential propinquity, labor exchange, and other activities, the realities of Canadian life always intervene and threaten to fragment or dissolve Zamoran solidarity.

In 1992, shortly before visiting Toronto, I was in Zamora collecting genealogical data. Members of the revolutionary New People's Army had attacked a nearby village, and several Zamorans were killed. The next day I departed for Toronto intending to provide the details of this unfortunate event. To my surprise, my friends were better informed than I was. In 1995, I again visited Toronto, and for the few weeks of my stay, I was taught to do the macarena, a Latin style of dancing sweeping Canada. Some months later, back in Zamora, I commented on how well the locals danced the macarena and was informed that kin who worked in Spain had taught them. They, in turn, had passed it on to their Canadian visitors. These examples should remind us that globality is a two way process, and its direction should not be easily assumed.
Apart from passing on dance crazes from the village to the metropolis, Zamorans in Toronto eagerly awaited videos (more recently DVDs) of dubbed Mexican and Korean melodramas sent to them from Zamora (Pertierra 2002).

In 1993, following the encouragement of a former parish priest of Zamora who now works in Ecuador, Zamorans decided to form an association in Toronto. Its aims were to encourage greater solidarity among members and, as importantly, to assist their members' kin in Zamora. They also supported various projects in their respective villages, such as the building of municipal arches and other markers of locality or providing books and medicines.

A frequent comment of Zamorans in Toronto is their enjoyment of the relative freedom (i.e. privacy) of life in a metropolis, and at the same time, their fear of the loss of relationships with friends and kin because of the lack of the sharing of quotidian aspects of life. While this tension between individual freedom and collective life also exists in Zamora, it is rarely experienced as an option but rather as an aspect of an existential condition. People in Zamora who choose to live private lives are regarded with suspicion. These are usually suspected of being witches. As opposed to strangers, who pose other dangers, witches are dangerous because, being insiders, they possess valuable knowledge of their neighbors' personal affairs. An example is the series of name changes undergone through childhood following persistent illness. The illness is seen as a result of an inappropriate name. As the child matures, former names are quickly forgotten. But this information may later be used for bewitchment.

While strangers, through their ignorance, challenge and erode local values, witches reverse core values for their own malevolent ends. Unexpected and unexplained deaths are often attributed to the malevolence of witches. There are also people in Zamora who, though less eccentric than witches, are shunned by members of the community for having violated local norms such as excessive drinking, improper sexual liaisons, violence, or other misdemeanours. Zamoran disapproval is indicated by the withdrawal of sociability, a response normally sufficient to correct recalcitrance. This is why the voluntary asociality of witches is perceived as the ultimate threat to a social order based on reciprocity.

Zamorans in Toronto acknowledge that some of their friends have drifted away from the community due to the demands of work and other constraints or, just as commonly, because they have been unable to balance their individual and collective interests. When asked for the main sources of dissension, most people identify religious difference (i.e. non-Catholics), personal gossip, and factional interests as the most common causes. Non-Catholic
denominations are present in Zamora but, both practical and ritual (life-crisis rites) obligations frequently transcend these differences. Religious practice in Canada is not as integrated with general daily routines and tends to separate Zamorans. Gossip, rumor, and factional interests are also perennial elements of village life and often threaten its solidarity. However, it is political ambition that most often results in deep-seated hostilities. Either these are resolved practically, at times through feuding or the change of residence of the contending parties. These centripetal and conflictive forces, while present in Zamora and recognized as threats to collective solidarity, are resolved through the practical and cultural realities of locality. Its comparative weakness in Toronto poses a structural tendency towards individuation and the dissolution of community. Moreover, the centrifugal forces of domesticity are stronger than the centripetal forces for the collective.

The New Media

The new communications media has facilitated the flow of information about Zamora and the Philippines, but this exchange is still largely one-way. While mobiles are easily available in Zamora, access to the Internet is still limited. But it is certainly now much easier to remain in contact with relatives abroad. Zamorans in Toronto routinely follow events in the Philippines such as elections, or respond to emergencies like the recent floods that devastated Manila and the provinces. However, the greatest use of the new media is among overseas Zamorans. Many of them participate in social networking sites such as Facebook, and join virtual organizations representing ethnic, religious, or personal interests. A diasporic consciousness is deliberately cultivated where Zamora becomes a virtual homeland, most of whose participating inhabitants live abroad.

This virtual homeland provokes among its cyber members lively discussions about identity, ethnicity, and Filipino culture (Ignacio 2005). Detached from the quotidian concerns of Philippine life, they often cultivate an abstract and analytical approach rather than the embedded concreteness of similar discussions in the Philippines. Besides, the former often includes second-generation Filipinos drawn from a diverse global network, while the latter mostly consists of locals coping with the contradictions and exigencies of daily life. The former orient themselves principally through texts and communicative exchanges, while the latter include the common and experienced practicalities of living in the Philippines. While the former is primarily a universe of discourse, the latter is a discursive engagement with collective experiences.
Zamorans in Toronto are now often more concerned with their fellow overseas Zamorans than their village-based counterparts. This not only reflects their increasing integration into life abroad but also the facility of communicating with others with similar overseas experiences and interests. The gap between them and their village-based counterparts has increased, while the capacity for communication remains one-sided. This was illustrated when Annie was preparing to visit Zamora and began accumulating gifts (*pasalubong*) for her village relatives and friends. She was given a list for presents sent from Zamora and was horrified to discover that the branded items on the list were far beyond her budget. She pointed out that she would never buy these items for herself or her family much less for distant relatives in Zamora. The list was compiled from advertisements in expensive and glossy magazines that overseas visitors often take to Zamora. The locals naively assumed that these items were commonly purchased by their Toronto-based kin. The images and representations of life abroad seldom coincide with the realities of migrants’ experiences. This disjuncture is another source of misunderstanding between migrants and their village-based kin. Despite the revolution in communication, the gap remains, and is in some ways even exacerbated. Desires, fantasies, and other imaginative acts are as often exaggerated as they are realistically chronicled by the new technologies of communication.

**Case Study 2: Responsible Fathers and Supportive Mothers**

Ramon and Imelda have three children (Stephanie, Paul, and Michael). Ramon worked as a hospital orderly in the Philippines, and after some years decided to work abroad. He has now been away for 15 years. His oldest child was six years old and the youngest was one when he left. Ramon is lucky. He works for an oil corporation in Saudi Arabia and has yearly paid holidays. Imelda has herself worked as a domestic worker abroad several times but has had considerably less luck in finding a good employer. She has had to return without finishing her contract several times, incurring great expense and little savings. Imelda conceived a child outside marriage which she raised as part of the family. Ramon found out and they separated. He provides support for his 3 children, while Imelda less regularly supports her illegitimate son.

Besides visiting for a month each year, Ramon stays in touch with his children, initially through expensive telephone calls and letters, but more recently through email and the mobile. Apart from the increasing frequency of communication, the content remains basically the same.
They exchange news about daily activities and family affairs. Ramon is seen as a strict and conservative father, and the children generally avoid controversial topics. When asked what they miss most about Ramon, the children generally reply that they miss the intimacies of everyday interaction. However, his yearly visits are visibly tense, as the children avoid upsetting their strict father. He insists on being unquestionably obeyed in all matters.

Since their separation, Imelda’s relations with Ramon have been strained. When he is abroad, she regularly visits the children and is particularly close to her illegitimate son, who in turn is fully accepted by his siblings. Her relationship with her children, although less supportive financially, is emotionally closer than Ramon’s. During her periods abroad, Imelda keeps in touch using her mobile both for voice calls and text messages.

Stephanie, the oldest daughter (21 years old), recently married and now lives in Sydney. It’s been two years since she last saw her father. The three children remained close while their parents were abroad and have learnt to rely on one another. Despite having large extended families on both sides, Stephanie and her brothers have preferred to remain relatively isolated from their kin. Mostly they function as a nuclear household whose head is absent.

Stephanie and Paul (19 years old) communicate more regularly than either does with their parents. Paul is in his final year of nursing and hopes to work abroad as soon as possible. The full advantage of CMICT is best used between siblings, exchanging family news as well as personal experiences. Michael (16 years old), the younger brother does not communicate much directly with his parents or his sister, leaving it to Paul to convey the necessary news. Macmac, their half-sibling now lives in the province with his mother’s sister. He sends occasional text messages but visits during school holidays.

Ramon now has a new partner, a teacher, whom he sees during his annual visits and with whom he communicates regularly via email. The intimacy of these communications makes up for the long periods of separation. They eventually plan to marry once Ramon returns permanently to the Philippines. In the meantime, the family remains structurally, if not emotionally close. The mobile and the Internet play significant but perhaps not essential roles in maintaining family relationships, with the exception of Stephanie and Paul, who take full advantage of CMICT. This example indicates that while CMICT is significant for families with members overseas, the role this technology plays varies from really crucial to merely supplementary. Its use and importance depend on factors such as access, familiarity, and personal interest. Some young informants claim that as long as support is forthcoming, their
parent’s absence is not seen as a problem. Rather than a sign of indifference, it mainly reflects the fact that Filipinos often have parent surrogates or do not require emotional closeness as long as they are guaranteed structural support.

Ramon, like many Filipino parents, decided to work abroad, leaving his young family in the care of his wife Imelda. He returns annually for a month’s vacation. Family life is compressed during his return, with the consequent tensions as well as pleasures. On his departure, the relationship reverts to its normal mediated form, with regular emails, text messages, and voice calls. Imelda has also departed for abroad on several occasions, complicating family life even more. Eventually, Ramon decided to separate from Imelda, but ensured that his children remain under his care and support. Imelda maintains relationships with the children and visits them regularly while Ramon is abroad.

Ramon has been very responsible in fulfilling the obligations of fatherhood. But his yearly visits are marked by tension in the family. His children admire their father, but miss the daily interactions that could temper his authoritarian attitude. Imelda has been far less supportive of her children than Ramon when abroad, but her presence tilts the balance from the normative to the practical. She is not as financially reliable as Ramon when abroad, but showers the children with attention when she returns.

Ramon and Imelda relate to their children differently, each conforming to expected gender roles. Ramon is strict but responsible; Imelda is often financially unreliable but obliging and indulgent with the children. These distinct styles correspond to their mediated counterparts. Ramon communicates routinely, ensuring that the children receive their remittances and use them prudently. Imelda seldom sends money but texts often to inquire about trivial family matters. Ramon and Imelda express different forms of virtual parenting.

Ramon and his family remain in close communicative contact even if not emotionally close. Their separation is seen as temporary even if it has lasted for most of the children’s lives. CMICT has definitely facilitated communicative exchanges between family members even if it may not have transformed these relations significantly. An exception may be the case between Stephanie and Paul who maintain a close relationship despite living far apart. Their respective social lives predispose them to use this technology more fully, while their younger siblings are content to use text messages (SMS).
In the case of Stephanie and Paul, CMICT allows them to continue their previously close relationship and even encourages closer intimacies. However, with Ramon, the technology does not fundamentally alter the relationship with his children. He remains responsible but authoritarian. His annual monthly visits do not alter this behaviour towards his children. Longer stays could perhaps temper his demands, but during his monthly visit, practical arrangements, including the relationship with his new partner, require Ramon to retain tight control over his families’ actions.

Imelda has gone abroad again and, apart from sending money to her illegitimate son, does not contribute to Paul and Michael’s needs. However, she calls Paul often and clearly indicates her fondness for her sons. Stephanie remains abroad and, apart from maintaining contact with Paul, rarely contacts her parents. In this case, CMICT clearly plays a significant role in maintaining and reproducing family relationships. We can describe their relationships as digitally mediated. The technology clearly mimics quotidian relationships, particularly in the case of Imelda, who insists on being informed of everyday activities. But, at the same time, CMICT misrepresents aspects of their relationships. Imelda is solicitous in her inquiries when abroad, but offers little practical assistance to her children. Ramon is supportive and responsible, but demanding and authoritarian during his annual visits.

Another way of looking at their relationships is to separate practical, quotidian, and corporeal relationships from their digital equivalents. In this example, most members can only relate to one another digitally. Ramon sends money but remains distant, while Imelda attempts to reproduce maternal warmth through solicitous text messages and calls. Paul serves as the main conveyor of these messages to his younger brother and his older sister who is presently abroad. The brothers assist one another in quotidian matters. While they are generally self-reliant, Imelda’s sisters live nearby and occasionally provide moral and economic support. Paul has a close male friend from school who also lives with them, unknown to Ramon, and who also contributes to household expenses. The family has continued under these diverse communicative strategies for over a decade. It remains to be seen how much longer their members can reconcile emerging differences. Paul will soon finish his nursing studies and plans to work abroad, but Michael is only about to start college. Ramon is looking forward to retiring after spending nearly 15 years overseas and joining his new partner. Imelda retains a relative independence from family responsibilities but has not established an economic base. Stephanie remains in Australia, and although estranged from her husband, is determined to make her own life abroad.
While Ramon’s family may not be the most typical Filipino family, they exemplify many of the features of Filipinos with members abroad for long periods. Imelda’s frequent absences have increased the stress of separation, and her illicit liaison finally broke the unity of their domestic life. Fortunately the children have managed relatively well and prefer to be on their own in Manila than with their father’s kin in the province. Imelda provides some comfort and her sisters nearby are a useful resource. Stephanie tries to remit funds from Australia to her brothers, but her own circumstances are limited. Nevertheless she keeps the lines of communication with Paul open, but contacts Ramon and Imelda less frequently. Macmac, Imelda’s illegitimate son, is perhaps the most disadvantaged in the family, even if his siblings fully accept him. Presently he stays with his aunt, Imelda’s sister in the province, but visits Manila during school holidays.

Case Study 3: Alone in a Foreign Land and Culture among Unfamiliars

After seven years, Rogie has just returned from work in Saudi Arabia. While his contract has been renewed, Rogie is hesitant to return to his former employer. He has applied and been promised a raise several times, but the raise was insufficient. Rogie’s stay in Saudi was difficult, although unmarked by any major problems. He shared accommodation above his workplace with several other foreign workers. His main problem was loneliness because no other Filipinos were employed in his company. He worked as a personal assistant in an Arabian company, returning only to the Philippines for a month’s stay after two years.

He had just completed his commerce degree with a major in computer studies and decided to try his luck overseas. Like many Filipino overseas workers, Rogie was taken advantage of when he applied to an agency. They promised him a professional job with a good salary but his visa classification was manual worker, and his employer took advantage of this by paying him less than he should have. Rogie, having fallen into debt, had no choice but to accept the poor wages. His father had deserted the family, and Rogie found himself as the main provider. His mother had a poor-paying government job, and a younger brother wanted to study nursing. Despite all these problems, Rogie considered himself fortunate for having the chance to work abroad. Nevertheless, being alone in a foreign country, without the normal family and social support network that most Filipinos expect, made him fearful and insecure. He knew no one in Riyadh. Fortunately, the other foreign workers in his company, who shared his accommodation (Indians, Nepalis, and Sri Lankans) treated him well. But Rogie felt alone in a new job, in a foreign culture, and among unfamiliars. Forced to draw from his inner resources,
it was some time before Rogie discovered the power of faith. His epiphany occurred when his
fellow workers asked him about his life in the Philippines. He described the good times he had
in college, and in response to a question about religion, he casually mentioned that he was a
Christian. The gravity of this religious description quickly struck him. Had he been living a real
Christian life? Soon after this realization, he received a phone call from a friend of his mother
who also worked in Riyadh. It turned out that this man was a practicing Christian and
introduced Rogie to a thriving, if underground, Filipino religious culture.

Except for foreigners with special privileges, workers in Saudi Arabia are not allowed to
practice their religion unless they are Muslims. Filipinos are encouraged to convert to Islam and
are promised both financial and social advantages if they do so. Rogie knows Filipinos who
converted. These are known as Balik-Islam, a reference to the presence of Islam in the country
even before Spanish colonization. According to Rogie, a common rationale used to convert
Filipinos is to claim that the country’s original religion was Islam and that Christianity was
imposed on Filipinos by their Spanish colonizers. Rogie, however, knew from his college
studies that Filipinos were mostly animists (except for parts of Sulu-Mindanao) when the
Spanish arrived. Rogie realized that the Saudi Arabians trying to convert him knew little about
the country’s historical background. This awareness strengthened his resolve against
conversion.

Several attempts were made to convert Rogie, but he resisted the offers. Instead, he
prayed that God give him strength to maintain his Christian faith. Rogie had been active in
church activities in secondary school but gave them up during his days in college. Instead, he
enjoyed going to bars, drinking and keeping the company of women. He rediscovered his faith
in Saudi Arabia. Rogie resolved to mend his ways. But this was difficult in a country that
forbade the practice of Christianity. Fortunately, Filipinos have devised ways of circumventing
these prohibitions.

While many Filipinos like Rogie live in rooms often shared with other nationals, others
such as married couples have access to an apartment. If these apartments are large enough, the
living room is converted into a prayer room. To ensure that services are not heard outside the
apartment, great care is taken to soundproof this room. Often several layers of thick material are
pasted on the walls and over them a layer of egg cartoons act as effective sound absorbent.
Having ensured that no sound escapes the prayer room, the other concern is to prevent
outsiders from noticing the arrival of worshippers. Lookouts are placed in case unexpected
inspections are conducted, in which case the guests claim to be celebrating a birthday or other permissible event.

Worshippers arrive in pairs. After a certain interval, another pair arrives discreetly. This procedure continues until most people have arrived, often about 30 to 40, depending on the size of the room and the membership of the congregation. Thursday night is a convenient time since the streets are crowded and people move around without attracting much attention. The main service is held the following day and more people may arrive for it. The service usually lasts for several hours and consists of prayers, hymns, and biblical exegetics. It is at once a religious service as well as an occasion for Filipinos to socialize in an otherwise unsupportive society. After the service people depart discreetly, in pairs and after intervals. These services are strictly segregated except for the married couple who usually owns the apartment. Similar services are held separately for women. If the opportunity arises, Rogie asks several friends to join him in his quarters for prayers at other days of the week. On these occasions he ensures that his roommates are away.

It is in this context that the new communication media play a crucial role. The first thing a Filipino does upon arrival in Saudi Arabia is to buy a mobile phone with local and international features. A mobile is essential for obtaining even the most basic information such as directions to the shops or meeting places. Most Filipinos need to be in regular contact with friends and use their mobiles just to reassure themselves. *Nagpaparamdam* is the expression used to indicate this need for reassurance by sending greetings or other simple messages. These apparently banal messages provide the ontological security in stressful and unfamiliar situations. Their forms are highly ritualized, and while seemingly trivial, they set the stage for further interaction.

Many employers issue mobiles to their employees, since their work often involves their use. Naturally, workers take advantage of this to make private calls, especially since many service providers offer cheap rates. Rogie normally makes about 15 to 20 private local calls daily as part of his routine to stay in touch, arrange meetings, or make inquiries. He also regularly calls his family in the Philippines, particularly when special rates are offered. His normal calls only last a few minutes, but on these special occasions, he may talk for nearly an hour. Rogie rarely texts in Saudi Arabia because it costs more than voice calls.

The mobile is commonly used to monitor peoples’ movements, particularly in the case of women, where security becomes a primary concern. Filipinos routinely call when leaving a
place, update their location en route, and when approaching their destination. This is particularly important when organizing meetings such as prayer services to ensure that arrivals and departures do not attract undue attention from the religious authorities. This need for micro-coordination would be much more difficult without the aid of the new communication media.

Most Filipinos in Saudi Arabia have access to the new technology either at work or privately. Apart from mobiles with advanced features that allow Internet access, MMS, digital cameras, they also have laptops, desktops, video cameras, mp3 players, and other digital technologies. They use them to access news channels, follow sport programs and join social networking sites like Friendster and Facebook. Rogie also often uses Internet banking. Since his return, Rogie has kept in touch with his friends in Saudi by email and using social networking sites.

Apart from his religious awakening while abroad, Rogie also learned about other cultures. He had to deal not only with his Arab employers but his co-workers, who came from different countries. According to him, Nepalis were friendly and straightforward, Indians competent and ambitious, while Sri Lankans were tolerant and open-minded. But all these workers, like himself, were in Saudi Arabia to improve their standard of living. Their relationship with local Arab society was instrumental and, hopefully, temporary. Their Arab employers reciprocated by being distant and formal. Instances of genuine friendships not involving fellow Filipinos was rare, but sometimes happened. The transient nature of their stay, including the possibility of being transferred to other parts of the country, generally prevented deep friendships from developing, particularly between different ethnic groups. In contrast, the solidarity among Filipinos was high and often continued after their return from abroad.

Rogie appreciated the different cuisines encountered in Saudi Arabia and even adopted some of the recipes at home. He also became more observant about finances and the importance of ensuring good health and maintaining sociable relationships with a wide range of acquaintances. In the multicultural context of his work, Rogie learned to be more reflective about his use of language and social behaviours. He also realized the cultural limitations of his own background.

According to Rogie, like the surreptitious practice of Christianity, Filipinos in Saudi Arabia managed to cultivate proscribed sexual relationships and friendships. Apart from discrete meetings in public spaces such as malls and parks, most relationships were conducted
via mobiles or the Internet. Occasionally these relationships were legitimized through marriage and even religious conversion. Homoerotic friendships are a common topic of gossip among Filipinos in Saudi Arabia. Rogie, like most young Filipino men was advised to avoid compromising situations involving Arab men. Rogie himself never experienced sexual harassment, but he knew of other Filipino men and women who did.

Maintaining his Christian convictions and practices in such difficult circumstances became an important element of his identity. For Rogie, being a Christian, was a way of asserting his individuality as much as expressing his faith. Surrounded by unfamiliar practices and unsupportive structures, he had only himself to rely on. Becoming a born-again Christian was his way of coping in an otherwise alienating environment. Religion reconnected him to his past in a context where he felt alone, vulnerable, and often misunderstood. This self-discovery gave him the strength to persevere under often difficult circumstances.

But he also appreciated why other Filipinos succumbed to religious conversion, even as he rejected the rationale of an original Filipino Islamic identity. For most workers, being abroad was simply a way of attaining material improvement. If this end was facilitated by conversion, so be it. This step was particularly relevant for Filipinos who wished to become more integrated into Arab society. Rogie sympathized and even admired these converts if their conversion was a religiously authentic act rather than an instrumental one. The former he saw as constituting a real identity, while the latter as simply a strategic decision not reflective of one’s true self.

Rogie was impressed by the incorporation of Islam into aspects of everyday life in Saudi Arabia, even if these forbade his own religious practices. He noted the solidarity of Muslims, particularly when faced by perceived threats. Instances of such collective resistance were seen with admiration by Filipinos in Saudi Arabia.

In Rogie’s case we can see the importance of mobiles and the new media as essential for overcoming the many difficulties associated with overseas work. Not only can they keep in touch with family and friends back home but as importantly negotiate daily tasks while abroad. These tasks range from simple needs such as asking for information on bus routes to coordinating meetings and other important events. The new media also provides overseas workers with a modicum of security. Finally, it allows them to cultivate a range of relationships with fellow workers in conditions where actual contact may be difficult or dangerous. This capacity for cultivating mediated relationships extends their notion of agency. This
empowerment is in response to and contrasts with the often oppressive conditions and subservient role many Filipinos experience abroad.

For overseas Filipino workers like Rogie, the new media is essential both for maintaining home ties and for negotiating the often difficult conditions of life abroad. The former reproduces pre-existing ties, while the latter ensures that a sense of agency and empowerment prevails even in difficult conditions. In situations where face-to-face relationships are often stressful, mediated relationships serve to preserve a stable sense of identity. Religious conversion, either as Balik-Islam or a rediscovery of one’s Christian roots, is another way of asserting agency under these new conditions. In both cases the new communication technology often plays a significantly supportive role.

Rogie has now been back several months, and his employer has asked him to return to Saudi Arabia. Understandably, Rogie is ambivalent about returning but sees opportunities there to test his Christian beliefs. His purpose in returning will be mainly as an evangelizing mission, to offer religious succour to Filipinos. Rogie intends to join a small but courageous group of Filipino Christian believers who risk their own security to offer religious succour to fellow Filipinos Christians.

Case Study 4: Sarah—Overseas Dependencies

Sarah was our informant in 2005. She was working in Hong Kong when her sister informed her that the remittance she had been sending was not being used for repairs their house needed but for her husband’s drinking sprees. Furious, Sarah returned before completing her contract. Having confirmed that her remittances were improperly used, she separated from her husband and found a job in a neighboring town. Her children moved to her parents’ house. The parents themselves had just returned from a long period in Saudi Arabia. Sarah’s father had been having an affair with a woman who received an American pension. When the woman died, Sarah’s father reconciled with his wife and the couple decided to work overseas. With her parents’ help Sarah was able to go to Hong Kong.

We often encountered Sarah texting excitedly to her various friends and male suitors. She was clearly enjoying her newfound freedom as a “single” woman. Surprisingly, Sarah willingly loaned her phone to her daughter and claimed that her interest in texting vanished when her daughter was using the cellphone. But once in her possession Sarah resumed her
texting frenzy; during these times, not having load was her greatest fear. Eventually Sarah was able to leave for abroad again, but only completed one contract in Taiwan. She returned home and lived with her parents. Soon after her return Sarah initiated a relationship with a married but separated man who lived nearby. His family had all gone to the U.S. and he lived from their remittances. Soon after, Sarah moved in with him and his young son, and their relationship seems to have stabilized. Her children are still with her parents, a not uncommon family arrangement in Ilocos (Nagasaka, 2003; Pingol, 2001).

Sarah’s rather disrupted life is not too uncommon in a region with a long history of outmigration. Her own parents had unconventional relationships and she seemed to follow in their ways. Her husband turned out to be a poor provider, which is why she decided to work in Hong Kong. On her return she often commented on her realization that husbands were not always ideal providers. This insight reflected her experience as well as her father’s long dependence on his mistress’ American pension. It is therefore not surprising that mobiles and the Internet are taken up with enthusiasm in maintaining and extending what are often fragile relationships. Instead of stable hierarchical relationships, many Filipinos are now caught up in complex networks whose maintenance requires regular communications. Sarah’s family history may not be typical but many Ilocano families are caught up in a world of global mobility either for work or permanent migration to join family overseas. It is now unusual in Ilocos to find families without any overseas connections. These overseas links are self-propagating and encourage a view of life abroad as superior and necessary for obtaining an acceptable lifestyle (naragsak a panagbiag). In an age obsessed with consumption, the notion of the good life is inevitably associated with material accumulation. This can often only be achieved by going abroad (Alicia Pingol, pers. comm.).

**Concluding Comments**

The cases discussed above represent the present reality of life for Filipinos, abroad or at home. Zamorans in Toronto have escaped the limited opportunities of life in the village and have adjusted relatively successfully to life in Canada. They value the material advantages of Canadian society, even if they complain about its relative isolation. Their children are well integrated locally even as they also value their parents’ home culture. Visits to Zamora are a source of both pleasure and discomfort. The warm welcome and generous hospitality is highly appreciated, but the lack of amenities and the inevitable misunderstandings also generate tensions during these visits. On their return to Canada, the children of migrants often feel more
comfortable and proud about their ethnic background. They can more easily locate themselves within Canadian multicultural society. These visits aid in confirming their sense of being Canadian with a Filipino ethnicity. While the new technology has increased communicative exchanges between Zamorans in Toronto and their village kin, it has not fundamentally altered the imbalance of these exchanges. As significantly, this technology has also contributed to a more affirmative, nuanced, and reflective diasporic consciousness among Zamorans abroad.

The new media is a crucial component of Ramon’s family relationships. They allow Ramon, Imelda, and the children to maintain a semblance of family unity under often difficult conditions. Ramon has access to a computer which he uses to send emails to Paul, in addition to regular calls on the mobile. Imelda frequently sends the boys texts messages that consist mainly of greetings and banal queries. It is mostly Paul and Stephanie who use the full capacity of the new media to explore and develop their relationship. Paul’s tribulations about having to manage a household on a limited budget and Stephanie’s cultural adjustments abroad are the main topics of their exchanges.

Rogie is glad to be back home even if he also appreciates the lessons learned while he was abroad. Adjusting to the conditions of work and life in a foreign country without the support of relatives and friends was initially a very trying experience. But he discovered the power of faith, and this gave him a new confidence and more reason to pursue his ambitions. Any doubts about his cultural heritage, professional competence, and personal well-being were subsumed under a higher goal which was to lead a Christian life in difficult circumstances. He became attached to a community of believers which enjoined his past with the trials of life in Saudi Arabia. Rogie was greatly inconvenienced by the prohibitions on Christian religious practice, but he admired the attempts of Muslims to incorporate their religious beliefs in everyday practices. Using Islam as a model, Rogie was determined to live a Christian life under trying circumstances. The mobile and the Internet proved valuable and even essential tools for survival. He continues to use this technology both to keep in touch with former colleagues as well as to explore further possibilities. Rogie has maintained his religious orientations since his return from Saudi Arabia. He runs youth forums in several congregations in Laguna and often discusses his religious epiphany as an example of the inscrutable ways of divine providence.

This chapter has discussed the role of the new communication technology in the lives of Filipinos abroad and at home. While there is little doubt that the facility for communicative exchanges has greatly improved and is generally appreciated, the orientation of relationships has shifted to a mostly discursive context. This shift favours some interlocutors over others.
Zamorans in Toronto can choose when and how to contact their village kin, while the latter generally have less choice in controlling this communication. This new communicative context is more equitable among Zamorans abroad, all of whom enjoy its advantages. Ramon and his family have also benefited from CMICT, but his children also use it to shield themselves from excessive parental interference. No load and being offline are only some of the strategies used to prevent surveillance. Imelda communicates surreptitiously with the children, and Paul monitors and censors all the messages from Ramon. Rogie’s life in Saudi Arabia would have been much more difficult if not unbearable without his mobile and the Internet. Sarah’s life involves both physical and affective mobility. Coming from a family background with unusual connections, Sarah is able to confront life’s challenges as long as she has access to her wide network.

The new media connects, while also deepening feelings of separation. It is ironic that while distance no longer constrains communication, the new media also heightens the fears of not keeping in touch. Sarah relates how vulnerable she feels when her cellphone has no load. During these times her mobile reminds her of her isolation. This relationship with technology is complex since it is enabling but also disabling. Stories of new media addiction and abuse are now staple news items. Let us see what the future brings.
Introduction

The rapid spread of mobile phones and the increasing access to the Internet have transformed the communication landscape in the Philippines. These changes are expected to have profound consequences in all areas of life, including the economy, politics, and culture. Although it is still too early to assess these transformations, compelling evidence is emerging about likely effects. While new technologies had been introduced in the past with little significant consequence for the majority of Filipinos, the new communication technologies appear to offer more possibilities. This chapter assesses the possibilities they hold for Philippine politics and culture.

In earlier chapters we discussed the claims, in some cases millenarian, about the consequences of CMICT. Indeed, the new media technology promises significant changes, but a growing consensus is that these changes are just continuations of an earlier industrial and technological age, rather than a revolutionary break with the past. What is new is the speed of adaption to the new media. Mobiles and the Internet have certainly penetrated more areas of life for more people, including the poor and uneducated, than earlier technologies.

This increase in the capacity to communicate, in the context of overseas migration, transnational capital, business outsourcing, tourism, global brands, and other international trends, may be expected to produce significant changes. What exactly these changes are will depend on how the technology is aligned with other factors in society and culture. In this chapter we shall look at some of the political uses of the new media and assess their relevance for generating social change.

The Effects of Technology in the Philippine Context

Despite the early adaption to modern technology in the Philippines, no significant social transformation was achieved as a direct result of its usage. The steamboat arrived in 1849, the
telegraph in 1876, the railway in 1888, the telephone in 1890, the motorcar in 1900, and the electric tram in 1905 (Pertierra 2003). These technologies had only recently been invented in the West, and their effects were quickly felt in some societies that had accepted them such as Japan.

Other communication technologies such as film (1897), radio (1922), and television (1953) followed soon after. These media technologies quickly became popular in the Philippines but mainly provided escapist entertainment rather than the basis for new cultural perspectives. Indeed, the mass media became an extension of and provided support to political domination. Hence, families with political ambitions ensure that they have access to and control of media. The media is also used in religious proselytization (e.g. El Shaddai, JIL). Rarely is media used in expressing dissent and challenging established authority (Del Mundo 1986).

The Media and Political Change

A consequence of this increasing role of communication is the mediatization of everyday life. Just as all aspects of our lives are technologically mediated, the media, both old and new, are among the most important forces. Most of our information about the world is derived from the media, including their interpretation and significance. Leisure activities and entertainment are media-driven, and practices of consumption are influenced by media representations. While the old media has influenced our lives since the days of print, visual and electronic media are more recent and more pervasive.

The new media has facilitated the spread of news and information dramatically. No event, however trivial or in the most remote parts of the planet, fails to get quickly circulated either by the mainstream media or citizen journalists using their mobiles or video cams. An unexpected consequence of this information deluge is the increasing difficulty in sorting reliable from unreliable sources. The traditional gatekeepers are gone, and the frenzy of circulation ensures that impressions, gossip, and hearsay are quickly accepted as facts. The Philippines rarely makes global news apart from reports of disasters and other tragedies afflicting the nation. Exceptions are the events known as EDSA and EDSA 2. Both of these events received enormous global exposure and may even have generated similar movements elsewhere.

Surprisingly, given the reputed importance of these events and their widespread influence, there has been relatively little scholarly work examining their significance. Much has been written about EDSA and EDSA 2, but most are contemporary accounts, journalistic essays,
and other impressionistic or ideological explanations. Compared to other equally significant events in Philippine history such as the revolution against Spain and later the United States, where a whole academic industry has developed, both EDSAs have received little critical scholarship. Part of the reason is precisely their mediatization. Their widespread exposure and discussion in the media has substituted for scholarly analysis. We live in the age of the sound clip, the live telecast, YouTube, and blog commentary, all of which are not oriented toward a detailed and critical scrutiny. A paradox of our times is that there is so much information to absorb that we have little time to comprehend their significance.

Explanations of EDSA

Articles and books dealing with EDSA generally assume unproblematically the nature of the event. EDSA is seen either as a singular event or as encompassing several connected events. It was the political overthrow of a dictatorial regime, a failed coup, a people’s revolution, an expression of civil society, a middle class movement, a restoration of traditional elites, a transformation of Philippine political culture, an expression of people’s democratic sentiments, a fiesta-like celebration, a happening or paglalakuatsa, an entertaining spectacle, a global telenovela, the first television revolution, a simulacrum pretending to be real and, finally, a miracle in response to the supplication of devout Filipinos. It seems EDSA was all these and much more besides.

We could still, however, investigate whether deeper forces affected these various elements to give them a recognizable form. Whatever EDSA may have been, its participants shared a common, if unstated, idiom, within which their actions made sense. This common idiom does not imply a rational consensus on the part of participants but only a shared disposition or habitus that draws from a common cultural background.

Communitas or Spectacle

Victor Turner (1974), Pinches (1989), and other anthropologists have described gatherings and celebrations where participants either shed their normal statuses or even reverse them for the duration of the ritual. These rituals generally commemorate annual events such as harvests or special occasions such as the death or serious illness of tribal chiefs. They are generally explained as providing vital collective experiences whenever the social order has
overcome difficulties such as the threat of famine or the loss of legitimacy. A successful harvest or the deaths of leaders are events that require the community to reassert and reaffirm common ties and interests. Changes of status also often involve rites of reversal or the suspension of normal roles before neophytes are re-integrated into their new statuses. But rites of passage generally stress individual rather than collective changes. Both communitas and rites of passage emphasize the transcendence of ordinary and normal differences by regressing to the conditions of primordial equality. Ego and alter ego shed their differences by affirming their mutual ontology.

In all these cases, the community and its members reassert basic bonds which emphasize primordial ties rather than the contingent relations of everyday life. By reversing or suspending normal behaviours, members are reminded that society is also a product of symbolic actions. As Durkheim (1915) argued, the social is a reality sui generis that must be experienced periodically through the collective communion of its members. Communitas is such a condition, a temporary state where members experience a shared and basic equality before the imposition of social distinctions. Communitas does not usually turn into a revolution but instead ensures a restoration of the original structure. Nevertheless, communitas recognizes, however briefly, that social structures ultimately depend on the assent, if not the consent, of its members. This assent has to be affirmed during crises of legitimation for the social order to be reconstructed.

Although communitas is not necessarily associated with religion, it often employs a similar language, and people tend to conflate it with forms of spiritual communion. EDSA clearly used religious symbols, but not everyone was necessarily motivated by them. EDSA 2 presented a clearer example of communitas involving both religious and secular sentiments. It also exemplified the obscene and carnivalesque element present but not emphasized in EDSA.

In addition to communitas, we may also use the notion of spectacle and carnival to describe EDSA. Spectacle involves drama in a big scale as well as a simulacrum of a desired state of affairs. The display of collective effusion was overwhelming in EDSA. These effusions of public sentiment were at once spontaneous but also stage-managed. They were, after all, responses to specific political crises. It was as though the nation was both the audience and the dramatis personae. We were all on the stage, performing for ourselves as well as for a global audience. If communitas implies a collective catharsis, spectacle retains the distinction between spectator and performer even as both are essential to its success. In retrospect, spectacle inevitably loses much of its potency as it reveals itself as mere simulacrum of a reality it
purports to represent. While participants in a spectacle are convinced of its potency, once over, only debris remains as the reality.

Presently, fiestas are the best illustration of spectacle. While previously linked to the routines of everyday barrio life, fiestas are presently mainly theatrical performances for the benefit of tourists. The Philippine State, using the Department of Tourism, generates these spectacles as exhibitions for the presentation of Filipinos in a global market.

The *komedy* is a traditional example of spectacle (Pertierra 1997). An important element is the trickster figure (*bulbulagal-pusong*), who confounds the distinction between spectator and performer, past and present, fantasy and reality. Despite its mannerisms, the *komedy*, unlike many fiestas, retains its critical distinction between pretense and reality. It is aware of itself as simulacrum. But even *komedyas* are increasingly staged as spectacle with leading stars as participants as against traditional performers drawn from the community.

**Restructuring Boundaries**

What truly characterizes communitas is the simultaneous de-structuring and re-structuring of social boundaries. Durkheim (1915) stressed the element of solidarity during these occasions, with their transgression of normal boundaries between inside/outside, self/other, initiated/uninitiated, comrade/stranger. The conflation of these distinctions reveals a basic human condition expressed as communitas. Thus insider/outsider, neophyte/initiate, self/other are seen to be mere cultural artefacts over a common nature.

Communitas is the social that pre-exists society, the precondition for sociability provided by myths of origin rather than by constitutional charters. As Levi- Strauss (1978) argued, myths do not explain reality but provide the basis for its possibilities. Myths may be post-facto constructions (Bourdieu 1977) that nevertheless set the basis for a set of dispositions that generate social order.

**Serendipity or Deus Ex Machina**

EDSA was not a single event, nor did it take place at any one time or in any one place. EDSA was a plurality of events whose confluence took place in February after the 1986
elections. Its spatial focus may have been in EDSA, but its predecessors began earlier in other places. Ninoy’s assassination was part of EDSA, as were Cory’s regular mitings de avance. Enrile and his supporters had been planning EDSA years before 1986. The noise barrages that characterized opposition to Marcos’ rule was also a manifestation of EDSA as were the many examples of political theatre using a new discourse such as usapang babae (Legasto 1994). All of these events shared a recognition that society was in peril, and its members had to assert an affirmation of their collective membership. This recognition took particular political expressions in the Left as well as in other secular and religious organizations but its common element was a pre-ideological awareness of the social order.

This awareness was shared even by politically opposed camps, including the normally politically inactive. Its basis was a mythic understanding of the foundations of Filipino culture, some of whose features have been identified by Ileto (1979) and Aguilar (1997). Inang Bayan as the protective mother and kinship as the basis for social reciprocity are some historical elements of this mythic understanding. The contrast between the images of Maria and Eva or Cory and Imelda are binary oppositions familiar to Filipinos. Recto alluded to this binary in rejecting women’s suffrage in 1933 and is presently used by some Catholic clergy in warning women against tempting their pastoral leaders. These are examples of cultural idioms that are rarely explicit but are nevertheless used as rationales for action. They are instances of a prevailing heterodoxy.

Finally, EDSA was serendipitous. It was triggered by an unexpected declaration by Marcos on American television of a snap election meant to convince his American supporters of his democratic convictions and his prevailing political support.

**EDSA as Theatre of the Oppressed**

EDSA was not even an exclusively Philippine event. It was also claimed by others as theirs. This is how a foreign correspondent described it:

Try not to forget what you saw last week... Filipinos armed to the teeth with rosaries and flowers, massing in front of tanks...some of the soldiers who were the enemy embracing the people and their flowers. Call that a revolution? Where were the heads stuck on pikes? Where were the torches for the estates of the rich? The rich were in the
streets with the poor...Not since 18th century France have Americans approved so heartily of a rebellion.

Yet the events may slip away quickly, for the same reason they seem so vivid at the moment. The revolution during the past few weeks has been played on television, a serial docudrama of easily read scenes and unambiguous images. Networked anchormen went on location for the elections. The principals in the story sought news shows as their war ground. English was spoken there. Exposition was clear, continuity assured. As if to emphasize the context, the major battle was over a television station.

If peace and order continue, the show from the Philippines will be off the air in a week, and the ecstatic new government will stop dancing and stare coldly at its prosaic problems of too many insurgents and too little money. Then it may still be easy enough to recollect the plot and the cast of the revolution. But will you remember the theme? ...The theme is in fact our own: that a people released from oppression will of their natural inclinations seek humane values (Rosenblatt, Time, March 10 1986→ Rosenblatt 1986, p.).

EDSA was clearly a media event. Its protagonists struggled to produce convincing images beamed to a global audience eager for the triumph of good over evil. The global media made EDSA a world spectacle. Like all spectacles, it had to come to an end to be replaced by others.

In 1989, Solidarity in Poland and Tiananmen Square in Beijing provided similar global images. The main spectacle then was the fall of the Berlin wall in November. Since then, EDSA, better known internationally as ‘people power,’ has become a global commodity. It is a consequence of a media-saturated world where events in one part can easily be assimilated into events at a distance.

An influential conservative journalist recently wrote:

If truth be told the ‘two people power exercises of 1986 and 2001 have not brought about or achieved long-term economic sustainability, or universal peace, or substantial alleviation of poverty, or a decline in the population growth rate, or political reforms or dramatic reductions of the culture of corruption. So what’s new? (Villanueva 2009)
Most Filipinos would probably agree with this assessment, even if they differ radically in explaining the present state of affairs. But these expectations of EDSA are unrealistic and millenarian in scope. Except for members of religious cults, the New Jerusalem is unlikely to arrive soon. Even miracles are not known to bring about such complete and successful transformations. It seems that bringing down a dictator non-violently is not enough. If Corazon Aquino was seen as the angel of history, caught in the storm of progress that irresistibly propelled us into the future, she was facing backwards. A Filipino future is still only vaguely imaginable and remains captive to its conceived past.

Lessons from EDSA

Perhaps, if nothing else, EDSA may provide us with a key or vision of a possible future. One which, while drawing on elements of the past, propels us into a future whose elements are self-consciously constituted. EDSA allows us to imagine a future generated by the experience of equality in difference. It is the recognition of our differences, rather than their suppression, that generate new notions of communality. In this sense, EDSA may still be seen as a resounding success.

There are probably many lessons that Filipinos can learn from EDSA, but first we must correctly identify its essential features. What was EDSA? What features of local, national, and even global society did this event(s) express? Was its non-violent nature indicative of possibilities for a society otherwise steeped in agonistic movements? Or was EDSA just spectacle and simulacrum, a media event driven by a global audience yearning for examples of dictators being overthrown by its enraged citizens? Is there a real continuity between EDSA and EDSA 2, or does their conflation disguise fundamental differences? If EDSA was a defining moment in Philippine history as Nick Joaquin and many other commentators imply, what transformations did it signify and why is it so difficult to identify their effects? If both EDSAs were simply restorations of a status quo ante, what political and social instabilities do they reveal? Is EDSA a new form of politics which traditional institutions have been unable to incorporate? Is EDSA as communitas simply a safety valve for political unrest?

Superficial Response or Academic Irrelevance
The relative paucity of analytical explanations for EDSA was mentioned earlier, particularly if compared to equally transformative events such as the revolution of 1898. EDSA was initially lauded and celebrated by both local and global observers. As the dust settled, interest waned, and it seemed that the country had returned to its pre-EDSA (sans Marcos) problems of political instability, economic stagnation, insurgency, and corruption. The spectacle and promise of EDSA lost its sheen.

A major reason why an event such as EDSA is insufficiently examined by local commentators is their regular distraction by the daily crises that plague the nation. More pressing concerns always turn up, and the demands of relevance attract their full attention. On the other hand, foreign observers are baffled by the chameleon qualities of a Philippine reality. Why was such a historic opportunity wasted and its heroine so quickly repudiated? Explanations for the latter began by assuming appearance for reality. In other words, EDSA was as it appeared in the local and global media. A dictator is overthrown by an enraged citizenry headed by the widow of his most prominent victim. In the meantime, events elsewhere lent themselves to easy comparison with EDSA and their attention shifted from the Philippines to Poland, China, Berlin, Pakistan, and Nepal.

Events like EDSA are largely media-driven and situate scholars in a marginal position. They either have to respond quickly to explain the event or risk media disinterest should they take too long. The former favours superficiality, while the latter is seen as irrelevant and merely academic. An interesting controversy following EDSA was an article written by Fallows (1987) declaring that the Philippines suffered from a damaged culture. This was why the gains of EDSA could not be institutionalized. While earlier commentators saw culture as explaining the success of EDSA, Fallows saw it as the reason for its failure. Culture, like EDSA, proved to be an easy notion to explain otherwise complex phenomena. Filipinos were initially outraged at Fallows’ suggestion but in time seem to have accepted his explanation (Malay 2010).

EDSA 2

In contrast to EDSA, which was globally seen as an emancipatory triumph, foreign observers were wary about the legal implications of EDSA 2. President Estrada was after all legitimately elected and the only president whose election was not marred by suspicions of cheating. Admittedly, his government was quickly mired in charges of incompetence, nepotism, and corruption, but foreign observers saw the event as one of pressure politics whose future
consequences were unpredictable. While the Estrada government was portrayed negatively abroad, the importance of maintaining constitutional conformity was seen as more important. The local media disagreed with this foreign perspective and accused foreigners of not understanding Philippine realities. Could anyone who experienced EDSA 2 not see it as a desperate but peaceful expression of the people’s will and of their right to rescue the country from inevitable ruin?

Media perceptions of EDSA and EDSA 2 may have been different but observers agreed on one thing: these events exemplified the importance of images and media access for their success. They were primarily media events. As Rosenblatt (1986) wrote about EDSA, the major battle was over a television station. Its climax was indicated by the sudden interruption of Marcos Malacanang speech when opposition soldiers took over the station. Marcos had clearly lost the media war.

EDSA 2 also had its moment of glory. This is how a prominent new media scholar described it:

On January 20, 2001, President Joseph Estrada of the Philippines became the first head of state in history to lose power to a smart mob. More than 1 million Manila residents, mobilized and coordinated by waves of text messages, assembled at the site of the 1986 “People Power” peaceful demonstrations that had toppled the Marcos regime. (Rheingold 2002, 157)

Just as EDSA became a symbol of a velvet revolution, EDSA 2 symbolized the power of the cellphone. Smart mobs replace unruly crowds through the magic of person-to-person communication. Supposedly a victim of a coup d’text, a populist technology was used to oust a populist leader (Pertierra et al. 2002). Vox populi vox dei takes on new meanings in a digital age.

EDSA 2 marked the political significance of mobile phones, the only communications media not under the immediate control of elite interests. Mobile phones have been able to transform the media landscape in unexpected ways. Traditional media such as television, radio, and newspapers have become more interactive, requesting their audience to text in their opinions and interests. While traditional media provided most of the information and entertainment available to Filipinos, mobile phones and the Internet now provide alternative
sources. These new sources often bypass the censoring and filtering mechanisms used in earlier media. They also give Filipinos better access to the global information system.

However, as an earlier study indicated (Pertierra et al. 2002), the importance of the new media for political action has been exaggerated. Filipinos do not act politically mainly on the basis of information received but rather on more substantive and often pre-established grounds. Loyalties and alliances usually frame the political actions of most Filipinos and the new media, while providing new information, generally confirm existing expectations.

**New Media as Political Tools**

Recent research into the influence of the new media on political action in the Philippines is at an early stage. Aguirre (2009) has looked at the relationship between social movements and the new media. He examined their role in the context of the ouster of President Estrada and the apparent failure in forcing President Arroyo to resign. The decisive effect of the new media in Estrada’s ouster is still a contentious issue, even if most researchers appreciate the role of mobiles and the Internet during this event. Aguirre (2009) argues that structural forces favoured Estrada’s ouster, while they did not in the case of Arroyo. In the absence of a confluence of factors favouring change, new media activism is insufficient to achieve it. In other words, the new media by itself is unable to bring about fundamental political change.

Mirandilla (2009) has looked at the role of the new media in the campaign strategies of major politicians. While their use of the new media is growing in sophistication, the effects are not yet likely to be significant. Political information and practice are still based on more traditional sources or substantive grounds. As she puts it, “there is no doubt that the Internet has already started to reshape the information and communications environment of the Philippine political landscape. However, the Internet does not promise a panacea to cure a sleeping interest in politics” (Mirandilla 2009,112).

Citing other studies, Mirandilla points out that the new media mostly affects those already heavily into it rather than the average user. Politically motivated users employ the new media to extend their political practices but most people are neither as savvy nor active.

As an emerging practice, cybercampaigning in the Philippines has yet to play a transformative role...Campaign reforms can only take place with improved political
maturity of Filipinos—both politicians and the electorate...Using ICTs to make campaigns more efficient, affordable, interactive, and grassroots-oriented is just a first step toward creating a new brand of election campaigning in the Philippines, which, hopefully, will also translate to better governance in between elections (Mirandilla 2009, 114).

This is hardly a surprise since revolutions are not achieved through singular means, including the media. Nevertheless, in knowledge-based societies, the flow of information may be critical for initiating change. Castells (2002) has argued that networks operate differently from hierarchies and the new media more closely approximates the former. But since the Philippines is not yet a knowledge-based society (although networks are widely developed), the influence of media, whether new or old, is limited.

The New Media and Governmentality

There are increasing attempts at incorporating the new media as part of political activism. Anthony Cruz, a well know media activist and blogger recently organized local bloggers to resist the proposed constitutional changes suspected as a step to extend President Arroyo’s term. Using Facebook, Cruz called on Pinoy bloggers to indicate their opposition to these constitutional changes in their sites (http://tr.im/no2conass). He also organized a grand eyeball meeting on July 26, 2009 at 10 to 12 A. M. at the EDSA shrine. He suggested that on that day bloggers wear black, including badges advocating ‘real change’ not ‘charter change’ or ‘No to Conass’. His group is called Para sa Bloggers Kapihan (at sa Pilipinas Kontra ConAss na rin), indicating both a virtual and an actual political grouping. This combination of the virtual-actual link is a common feature of the new media in the Philippines.

According to news reports about 12,000 people attended the above rally. This relatively low number was, however, boosted by a much higher virtual attendance. The website supporting No to Conass quickly attracted more supporters than the eyeball meeting, and its makers claimed that number would reach 100,000 sympathizers. This prompted a well-known political commentator and blogger to propose organizing more virtual rallies in the future (Ople 2009).

There have also been instances of the new media initiating political controversies later taken up by the traditional media. A prominent cabinet member and his adult sons were
accused of manhandling a father and his young son and daughter during a confrontation at a golf course. The daughter wrote about this confrontation in her blog which was quickly picked up by other sympathetic commentators. Soon after, a political storm broke out, and the cabinet member was forced to issue an apology. Ironically, upon investigation, it seemed that both parties were equally to blame. But in the meantime, the politician family’s reputation had been smeared.

The new media is quick to capitalize on popular (mis)conceptions such as the abusive nature and rapacity of most politicians. Other cases of political scandal are regularly featured on YouTube or in blogs. On September 3, 2009, after a TV interview of Miguel Arroyo (eldest presidential son and congressman from Pampanga) discussing the sources of his acquired wealth, YouTube and bloggers angrily attacked his perceived mendacity and corruption. Despite these new and uncontrolled sources of information, their ultimate effects in transforming political structures remain untested.

Various government agencies have incorporated e-governance as part of their practice, but these services have not resulted in a significant improvement in governance. The technology is often inadequate to the task, and the resources for their implementation lacking. Most e-government services simply allow for the transmission of information, but do not translate the information into practical action. A study conducted by students at the National College of Public Administration and Governance (NCPAG-UP) concluded that most government departments either do not use e-services or use them inadequately. The potential for citizen-government interaction is available through mobiles, but the broader support structures, including attitudinal orientations, are still largely missing (Colobong et al. 2009).

New Media, Social Movements, and Civil Society

A more interesting question regarding the influence of media in initiating fundamental change relates it to civil society and social movements (Aguirre 2009). Sociologists have pointed out that democracy is a defining and central concept of modernity. Initially seen as a narrow political act (suffrage, voting), the concept of democracy is being extended across wider areas of life, from the public to the private sphere, from women and minorities to children and the disabled. The increasing democratization of wider areas of life from politics to the economy, religion, gender, and sexuality is still playing itself out. Politically, this includes the capacity to organize around issues often overlooked by the formal structures of the state.
Social movements and civil society are a direct consequence of applying democracy to areas of life outside formal political structures. The recognition that society exists beyond the state motivates people to pursue collective goals outside or even against existing political structures. An essential component of civil society and social movements is access to information, particularly if the traditional media is unable to provide it.

NGOs (non-government organizations) are a common feature of Philippine society, reflecting both the openness of political structures as well as the ineffectiveness of the state. Their efficacy varies from highly significant (e.g. community health, non-formal education) to insignificant (e.g. improving governance), with most NGOs falling in between. In the field of CMICT, several civil society groups are also active in lobbying the government and the private sector, with mixed results. In a study of their influence in shaping government ICT policy, Hecite (2009) writes:

Major hurdles to CSO participation...are the following: lack of a consumerist rights movement, lack of policy and political audience, the need for capacity building and CSO strategy, and the need to develop critical practices in engagement. [These CSOs] remarked that the constituents as consumers of ICTs such as mobile phones should be the policy audience of their advocacies and agenda. The absence of genuine consumer rights-minded citizens contribute to the absence of policy audience...The capacity to engage is another issue. Aside from the lack of financial and logistical resources, CSOs oftentimes face challenges in sustaining participation because of lack of skills and knowledge about the processes within governments. Furthermore...[one CSO] indicated the need to utilize critical practices that will ensure interventions will be people-centered and pro-marginalized.

The hurdles mentioned reflect general features of Philippine society, including the basis for consumerist activism. TXT-Power, a very successful lobby group, opposes any increase in the costs of sending text messages. They can rapidly mobilize their members to bombard politicians and media with their objections using SMS. In this case, both the interests and the technology reinforce one another. But this conflation of political interests and technology is rare in the Philippines, although the mobile phone at least promises communicative access.

Various commentators have noted the decrease in civic participation in societies such as the U.S.A. (Bellah et al. 1986). This social malaise is related to the conditions of modern life with its mobility and fast pace, changing values, consumerist practices, and transforming roles.
Under these circumstances, it is increasingly difficult to remain collectively committed or involved. But the new technology makes staying in contact with friends, places, or causes, easier. Long lost high school or college friends, previous neighbourhoods, and earlier commitments can now be recovered digitally. The loss of civic involvement may be restored and even strengthened by the rise of online communities. The recent election of Barack Obama is a good example of the power of micro-coordination made possible by the Internet. Whether this will generate new forms of civic engagement remains to be seen, but the conditions of possibility have been set.

The New Media and Democracy

The importance of access to information was dramatically illustrated in 1983, when Ninoy Aquino was assassinated on his return from exile in the U.S.A. A massive outpouring of grief accompanied his funeral with nary a mention in the mainstream Marcos-controlled press. Even before the new media existed, alternative sources of information were available such as an underground press (e.g., Mr & Ms), radio station (Veritas, Catholic), street theatre (Legasto 1994), and informal sources circulating rumours, gossip, and jokes. But these alternative media mainly relied on top-down circulation of information rather than the person-to-person character of the new media. Moreover, they were episodic, irregular, unreliable, and non-cumulative. Networking using mobiles and the Internet takes new dimensions, and it is this mobilizing capacity that opens the possibility of initiating radical change. Smart mobs (Rheingold 2002) and Tweeter are among the most effective examples of this mobilizing capacity.

Hitherto, the public sphere has been dominated and controlled by mainstream interests and discourses. The old media can be seen as an extension of elite interests into the public sphere. The new media interrupts these interests and discourses. While they also conflate private with public, they insert new political perspectives and interests. Mobiles are a good example of the personal being political—they convert private interests into political issues. In this sense, the new media open up new possibilities hitherto limited to dominant groups and interests. Ordinary Filipinos may have had political opinions in the past, but they generally communicated these only to a limited network of kin, friends, and associates. Presently, people use text messages, e-groups, YouTube, blogs, and social networking sites such as Facebook to air personal views much more widely. The effectiveness of such channels is seen in the often apologetic response of public officials to criticisms in the new media.
Key Symbols and the New Media

Anthropologists have argued that most cultures employ key symbols to signify and mobilize important aspects of society (Leach 1976). These symbols articulate social structural relationships and, in the absence of steering mechanisms, organize practices using ritual and other symbolic media. Modernity has replaced many of these symbolic structures with more rational mechanisms, but it has not altogether eliminated them. The Philippines, while possessing modern bureaucratic structures, often relies on these earlier symbolic orders for activating action and mobilizing its members.

The downside of key symbols is that they usually require the merging of distinct areas of life. Strategic-pragmatic actions, moral values, and personal competence are linked imperceptively. Symbolic efficacy relies on the unproblematic linking of these areas. This prevents their separation whenever the need arises to allocate blame or praise. Aside from adequate juridical structures, this is a major reason why attempts to prosecute public officials often fail. It also explains why former President Estrada can re-enter politics despite being convicted (and pardoned) of plunder. He may be a felon, but he retains the charisma of a movie star.

Modern polities generally limit these key symbols to the minimum to prevent such problems. A secular nation such as the United States has the flag, national monuments, or thanksgiving rites as key symbols whose efficacy require unconditional support. They provide the symbolic and normative consensus for other institutions to operate successfully. All societies require key symbols for their members to unreflectively respond to common challenges. What these symbols are and how they operate vary across societies. Ideas of national security, the integrity of the homeland, or the sanctity of borders are among the most important key symbols in modern or even postmodern societies in the West. The American gut response to the tragedy of September 11, 2001 may have been understandable, but many years later is seen as disproportionate, punitive, and counterproductive. Key symbols around security and the homeland were quickly mobilized even at the risk of committing mistakes and oversights. These myths of security often border on the comical, except for their very real and painful consequences, ironically often at the cost of the innocent.

Death as a Transformative Force
The recent expression of grief at Corazon Aquino’s funeral (August 5, 2009) indicates the mobilizing potential of powerful rituals. Aquino’s political influence had waned but her moral stature remained untarnished. While she could no longer significantly mobilize people to join her political crusades, the power of symbolism and ritual was expressed in the displays of solidarity at her funeral. Mrs. Aquino regained her political authority through the mobilizing capacity of death and has even passed it on to her son. This authority and its transfer can only be achieved through ritual since it no longer depends on strategic material alignments but on symbols generating trust. Ritual power can be stored for long periods, and Mrs. Aquino’s can be traced back to her husband’s death in 1983, in EDSA 1986, and even EDSA 2.

The declaration of candidacies of religious leaders for the 2010 elections is another indication that general cultural symbols still serve as collective motivations for political action. Like Mrs. Aquino’s, their force draws on moral capital, but its activation is inherently unpredictable since it operates on non-rational principles. Some of these religious leaders draw on more organized structures of support such as the Iglesia ni Kristo, but others depend on religious capital, whose mobilization is less predictable. The strength of Cory’s appeal is its non-sectarian but moral basis.

While Cory was seen as a devout Catholic and rightly criticized for being beholden to the Church’s teachings, her current popularity rests on the broader cultural significance of a self-transforming death. In life, Cory certainly asserted her own narrow interests (e.g. Hacienda Luisita, family planning), but she also exemplified a broader commitment to the nation. She didn’t choose to lead the nation but was obliged to so do in order to save it from further corruption. Her husband’s and her own death confirmed this self-transcendence.

Other prominent leaders such as Marcos have not achieved this transformation of self after death. His ageing followers may still idolize him, but most Filipinos perceive him as a competent but ruthless politician. Marcos represents personal and sectarian interests and ambitions. The family’s suspiciously acquired wealth and their lingering political roles are ample evidence of his heritage. While nominally similar to Marcos, Cory Aquino’s success in being transfigured in death is indicative of the transformative capacities of ritual. The funeral both constituted and confirmed her apotheosis. Her supporters are claiming that what is now happening is another EDSA event in the guise of an election (2010). Hence what is needed is a transformation of the political process. This transformation draws on key cultural symbols concerning self/other (sarili/ kapwa), sacrifice, sympathy (pakikiramay), humility (pagiging
mapagkumbaba), and forgiveness (kapatawaran). Various scholars have written extensively on these cultural symbols.

Rites of Passage and Key Symbols

Identifying what these key symbols are and how they initiate action is a major interest of anthropologists. They have generally examined the power of symbols in traditional or premodem societies. But even in modern and postmodern societies, symbols retain their capacity for action and mobilization. Rhetoric, charisma, and persuasive appeal are as important in the present as they were in the past. Modern media has extended these powers beyond their original reach. Contemporary paradoxes such as religious fundamentalism in a largely secular and technological age would not be possible without the pervasive and global dissemination of religious rhetoric.

Many key symbols are associated with ritualized events such as death, birth, marriage, and other rites of passage, or in sacred objects like the cross or the flag. They may also be found in secular and mundane objects such as food, housing, cars, jewellery, and other possessions. Objects often possess and even substitute for their owners. The objectification of culture also involves its embodiment in concrete persons. Like ancient royalty, their personhood is inseparable from its supporting symbols.

But symbolic power ultimately has to draw on material structures, and consequently key symbols are connected to central institutions such as religion, the family, the economy, or the state. The mobilizing power of these symbols derives from their close association with appropriate institutions. Events like the death of an important leader may link several institutions such as religion, the family, or the state resulting in powerful mobilizing potential. This is illustrated in the transfer of Mrs. Aquino’s symbolic capital to her son (Noynoy) as well as in the attempt by the Arroyo regime to share it by offering the Aquino family a state funeral and to construct a monument to Mrs. Aquino’s memory. This latter strategy apparently failed, but the endurance of Aquino’s symbolic capital cannot be guaranteed. Rituals are often enabling, but they also sometimes fail. As Levy-Bruhl (Pertierra 1995) argued, rituals (like the placebo effect) may assist in mending broken bones but don’t magically restore them.

Symbols of Identity
For Filipinos, rice is clearly a key symbol and is closely associated with the welfare of the family, itself a key institution. Its production and consumption constitute more than instrumental value, since it also generates a sense of identity. In many rural communities, eating rice that one has grown is an essential element of self pride. Consuming other people’s rice or having no rice to consume is synonymous to poverty and low status. In urban communities, rice may no longer be so directly connected with self-worth even if it still marks an ethnic identity. Filipinos in Daly City (California) jokingly explain the presence of fog in the evenings as the result of Pinoys simultaneously turning on their rice cookers (Vergara 2008). Like many jokes, the effect draws on complex symbolic connections. In this case, rice remains a symbol of pinoyhood, but rice cookers may also indicate the process of Americanization and consequent loss of identity. This problem of identity construction and maintenance in the diaspora is closely connected with the new media.

Mobiles as Icons

For the reasons given, we can see the mobile phone as a major icon of Philippine life. It connects the individual to significant others and allows the maintenance and reproduction of important relationships. It also involves significant economic and political institutions and interests. But its recent incorporation into local life has not yet generated the symbolic power found in older practices. One can still remember life without the cellphone, while time before radio and television has vanished into the distant past. These earlier technologies have been deeply incorporated into our lives. Ling (2009) reports that in Scandinavia the younger generation no longer have any experience prior to mobiles. This mutual ontology of mobiles and experience is fertile ground for key symbols to generate their power.

The mobile has without doubt been the most popular and significant communication tool invented since the telegraph and may even exceed the latter’s importance. While the Internet may attract more attention and certainly has produced more theoretically oriented scholarship, it is the mobile that has made it possible for billions of poor people to participate in global communication.

Rituals and the New Media
Ling (2009), drawing on the work of Durkheim, argues that social transformations are accompanied by corresponding changes in rituals. A major deficiency of the literature dealing with mobiles is its generally non-theoretical nature—most studies are mainly descriptive and lack any attempt to theorize beyond simple narratives. This is partly because the mobile has been taken up so quickly and has penetrated so many aspects of everyday life that theorists can barely catch up with its effects, let alone reflect on its significance.

As others have noted, the mobile has resulted in an explosion of banality, as people send greetings and other ordinary messages to relatives and friends (Pertierra et al. 2003). This banality has blinded us to the more profound changes that accompany these messages. Ling (2009) has correctly identified these banalities of everyday life provided by mobiles as an attempt (not always successful) to recuperate earlier intimacies, traditionally provided by ritual expressions and actions. When asked why they send trivial messages, Filipinos often say they are simply stating their presence (nagpaparamdam). This need to state one’s presence indicates important changes in social relationships. These are now often characterized by increased mobility and long absences. The mobile is a handy tool for what Malinowski refers to as ‘phatic communion,’ a form of talk emphasizing feeling and presence rather than ideas.

While mobile messages are mostly banal and apparently uninteresting, they reveal a need previously provided by ritual to enrich everyday life by connecting its practices to notions of the sacred or the numinous. Under the regimes of modernity, ritual has been debased, and the sacred consigned to the sphere of spirituality. But the practices of everyday life still have to provide meaning and purpose for most people, and the mobile is its unpretentious purveyor.

In the past, such everyday practices were embedded in corresponding cultural structures found in religion and ritual. The decreasing significance of religion in most people’s everyday life requires other embedding structures. The new media allow us to communicate meaning and purpose using the banalities of everyday life. This banalization of everyday life is found in all areas of contemporary society such as the McDonaldization of food, the popularization of culture, the instrumentalization of religion, and the mediatization of information. Meaning and purpose now have to be pursued within the new parameters of life.

**Digital Inequalities**
With the exception of class, cellphone and Internet use in the Philippines is comparatively neutral. Gender and generation certainly influence the way cellphones and the Internet are used, but similarities often transcend their differences. Hence, men may text more sexual messages or visit more sex sites on the web than women; young people may spend more time playing games than their elders; college students use more sophisticated social networking sites such as Facebook, while others prefer Friendster.

Class is the main impediment to a more equitable access to the new media, except for mobiles, which are now within access of almost everyone. As others have argued (Qiu 2009), even when the new media is widely accessible, the realities of class continue to manifest themselves. Only a structural rather than an informational revolution will mitigate these inequalities. But, despite all these significant differences, basic similarities remain. The technology itself favors open possibilities for acting. Sometimes it appears as though a device such as the cellphone has its own geist or power to cause its own effects. This ability has been illustrated in the role the cellphone played in EDSA 2. But the new media, like all other technologies, such as the telephone, radio, and television, are socially constructed and located. Their effects are only the result, even if unpredicted and unintended, of the possibilities that they make available to their human operators. There is no magic in their success or mystery in their appeal. Technologies such as the cellphone seem to capture the rhythm of our epoch. They express the zeitgeist (Katz and Aakhus 2002) or the motivating spirit of our world. They represent mobile connectivity, an increasingly important characteristic of our times.

But this connectivity may itself constitute a new basis for inequalities. Overseas workers are certainly less stressed if they can easily keep in touch with their families, but the consequence of maintaining contact may itself impel workers to work harder and for longer periods. Overseas informants often complain that much of the conversation with family members consists of complaints and demands for money. Such calls add to their already stressed condition. This is one reason why Marian in Buenavista limits her calls to her husband in Saudi Arabia. She does not want to add to his difficulties by letting him know of her problems at home.

Other workers like call center operators don’t have to physically leave the country even if they have to adopt attitudes that imply that they are abroad. While webcam sex providers can offer their services from the comfort and safety of their homes, the technology makes possible new forms of self-exploitation. Transnational labor is taking new dimensions following the communication revolution, and not all of them are always emancipatory.
Conclusion

The new media technologies are a necessity in a global world. The need for connectivity can be expected to grow not only as the world gets more complex but also as people become even more mobile in search of employment, security, or leisure. The numbers of Filipinos seeking opportunities abroad is not expected to abate in the near future. They will retain ties with family and friends left behind. In the Philippines itself, the need for closer communication can also be expected to increase for similar reasons. In an increasingly mobile and transforming world, contact with significant others remains one of life’s few constants. Just as important are the changes in identity in a postmodern world. New identities are emerging outside the traditional categories of gender, generation, ethnicity, or class. New hybridities will emerge with even greater communicative potentials. The cellphone and Internet revolution has just begun.

Like all revolutions, the final consequences are unpredictable and often counter-intuitive. But we may expect technology to permeate even more deeply our everyday life, including our sense of self and our relationship to the world. The proclamations of the cyber future as finally emancipatory, where class, gender, race, and other inequalities will vanish have proven to be as millenarian and utopian as previous ones. Baudrillard (1988) has predicted some of these possibilities, such as the centrality of the virtual and its replacement of the hitherto actual. Newspeak and other political pronouncements telling us that the near future is decisively better fails to convince many people whose experience of everyday life is otherwise. Weapons of mass destruction, freedom, democracy, and terrorism dominate the news, but all are as virtual as they are actual. The mediatization of war allows us to witness atrocities in Iraq, Afghanistan, or Mindanao. The media itself becomes a weapon of war, as images and representations clash with their counterparts, overwhelming the viewers and inducing a state of numbed acquiescence. These shifts to mediated experience will doubtless lead to new rituals and their corresponding structures. What new political orders will emerge under these conditions is uncertain, but hopefully, mediated entailment will also provide its own forms of emancipation.

The Philippines is not immune from these technological futures even if their precise shape is difficult to predict. The mobile and the Internet have made Filipinos both more individualistic and cosmopolitan. Nokia, McDonalds, and other global brands are ubiquitous in
Manila and other cities as they are abroad. Consumerist practices drive Filipino behavior as much as they do their foreign counterparts. Social networking sites, blogs, and strangers now share intimacies that earlier were limited to kin and close friends. Politics is no longer only determined by patronal or local ties but must now deal with broader societal elements. Culture is no longer limited to immediate experience but now includes the mediated, the virtual, and the postcorporeal. Mainstream values are supplemented by particularistic interests, and identities now include diasporic as well as global elements.

All these factors brought about by the new media as well as the global condition have repercussions for Philippine life. We may be a long way from becoming machines or gods as predicted by some cyber theorists (Gray 2002), but the former stabilities of life no longer hold sway. However, the future may combine the new with the old in unexpected ways.

The apparent popularity of Noynoy Aquino combines familial politics, ritual efficacy, and structures of mobilization made possible by the new media. Conrado De Quiros, a strong supporter describes this event as EDSA 3 (or EDSA 4?) masquerading as an election. In other words, it combines political strategy, spectacle, moral crusade, and social transformation. Rather than being presented simply with a strategic political choice, the 2010 election is seen as a reaffirmation of moral values and key symbols. These values and symbols provide the normative consensus for other institutions to operate successfully. They predate and make possible the political order. Their central constituent is ritual. All societies require key symbols for their members to pre-reflectively respond to common challenges. Is this example a portent of things to come? Is this a new form of politics or simply a mediatization of traditional politics? Is this a consequence of the increasing virtualization of everyday life, where direct experience is no longer the basis for action? We will have to wait and see.
NEW MEDIA, NEW CULTURE OR THE END OF KULTUR

CMICT and the Cultural Revolution

The excessive claims made for CMICT have already been discussed. Some claim that it will “crystallize participatory democracy and result in a rich symbiosis of god and man, without the compulsion of power or law but by the voluntary cooperation of citizens” (Ling 2009,3). Others have examined these claims (Katz and Rice 2002; Ling 2009) and concluded that while this technology is indeed significant, its consequences are not as revolutionary as expected. Indeed, sometimes it results in the reinforcement of existing structures rather than in their replacement. In a technologically underdeveloped society such as the Philippines, these excessive claims have little basis even if significant transformations are taking place. But it is still too early to fully assess the effects of this new communication technology since its consequences are still in their infancy.

A Reading Culture

The printing press and literacy made the transition from feudalism to western modernity possible. The easy availability of information made possible by the printing press resulted initially in a religious revival that was eventually replaced by a secular attitude. In other words, the immediate effect of a reading culture was an apparent reassertion of tradition, and only later did this new culture challenge orthodox beliefs. Among other things, reading encouraged private introspection. In the process, religion hitherto part of the public sphere, became private belief. Its place was taken by science, henceforth the arbiter of true public knowledge. A developed interiority also resulted in an autonomous sphere of aesthetics. Finally, secular law became separated from canonical theology, resulting in new forms of social awareness. A new political consciousness began to emerge throughout Europe, resulting in the replacement of the divine right of kings by the sovereignty of parliament. Deliberate and free consent became the basis of social and political life. This cultural transformation was achieved through new social structures such as compulsory education, an expanding economy, and the growth of technology.
The ideals of modernity replaced hierarchy with equality, ascription with achievement, and community with society. Members of community share a life-mode, while those in society live distinct life modes but in a common time frame. The former are consociates, the latter contemporaries. Members of community share a notion of place, serving as a locus of shared experiences, while societal members simply share a space or a territory. Community is experienced directly, while society is largely imagined and experienced in mediated ways. The former is oral, the latter textual and increasingly digital (Pertierra 1997).

Anderson (1983) has discussed some of the characteristics of a reading culture in the Philippines, citing Rizal’s novels as their best expression. But Rizal’s works could only be read by a small percentage of Filipinos, either because people were illiterate or could not read Spanish. Despite this limited readership, Filipinos could finally envisage a national community whose members were linked through complex and mediated ties. The novels generated a national imaginary. This imaginary has since been captured by the state as part of its ideological construction of nationhood.

In the Philippines as in other societies, these western distinctions often interrelate differently. Thus, community is still significant while notions of society (as an association of non-kindred) are often weakly developed despite the increasing digitalization of everyday life. Family and locality have not lost their significance in Philippine society and culture, even if their formerly central positions have shifted. Our task is to assess these effects in the context of local, national, and global culture and society.

A Texting Culture

It is in this context that the mobile phone and texting entered Philippine society. Initially a free service on the assumption that few people would bother using it, texting has since become the major income source of telecom providers. Filipinos of all ages, genders, and classes have taken to this mode of communication with extraordinary enthusiasm (Pertierra et al. 2002). It has now become a common and ordinary element of daily life, even in situations hitherto unthinkable.

Faye Siytango, a 23 year-old-airline sales representative, was not surprised when at the wake of a friend’s father she saw people bowing their heads and gazing toward folded
hands. But when their hands started beeping and their thumbs began to move, she realized to her astonishment that they were not, in fact, praying. "People were actually sitting there and texting," Siytangco said, "Filipinos don’t see it as rude anymore." (Crystal 2008, 95).

The Philippines has been dubbed the texting capital of the world because Filipinos are among the senders of the highest number of text messages daily (over 10 per subscriber, 600 million text messages daily). Only India and China, with much larger populations, send more text messages. Most of these text messages are private messages to friends and relatives and include greetings as well as inspirational messages. They may not convey much information but act as reassurances to both parties. These texts may also include strangers, in which case new and unexpected relationships may develop.

Case Study (1)

The following text message exchange (translated from Tagalog) is a typical exchange involving strangers.

Richard: A good person is hard to find, hard to lose, and impossible to forget. That’s you! (original in English) Thanks.

Gemmaly: Who’s this? You must have sent your message to the wrong number. I don’t know the number that registered in my cellphone. But it’s ok, I like your message anyway.

Richard: Really! Are you Alma?

Gemmaly: No, I am Gemmaly Israel from Subic. How about you, what is your name? Where are you from?

Richard: My name is Richard Garlon, from Antipolo City. I am 27 years old. How old are you? I’m sorry if I wrongly sent my message to you. Can you be my textmate?

Gemmaly: Ok, I don’t think there’s something wrong with having a friend through texting. I am 25 years old, my husband and I decided to part ways a few years back. I
am now working in a factory here in Subic Naval Base. Our company, Aiwa Electronics manufactures televisions.

Richard: I saw a program on t.v that was about Subic. You got a nice place there, you have dolphin shows and nice beaches. Do you live near the White Rock Beach Resort?

Gemmalyn: Yes, it is about 5 minutes from my place. We just walk if my friends and I want to go there. Aside from White Rock, we also have other nice beaches here. But your place is also beautiful. I went swimming with friends in the Hinulugang Taktak a few years back. The swimming pools were so refreshing because the water is very cold. I used to live with my brother in Marikina City, that’s why I know Antipolo. Do you also work nearby?

Richard: No, I work in Sta. Lucia as a supervisor in an appliance warehouse. I’ve been here for 3 years now. I’m inviting you to come over to buy our products. If we go on sale you can get as much as 30% discount.

Gemmalyn: Are you kidding? I won’t travel that far just to avail of your discount. I’m sorry but I have to do some things. I’ll just text you again.

Richard: Ok, so we are friends now. If I’ll receive a nice message I’ll forward it to you. Because I have many textmates, if they’ll send me sweet messages I will give it to you.

Gemmalyn: That’s good. I love to get sweet messages from friends I even saved them in my Outbox so that I can forward them to my friends. Ok, I’m running out of text load. Thanks!

Richard: Ok, thanks also. Take care.

The following day:

Richard: I feel so special everytime you remember me. I feel so complete when I know that you’re there for me. I feel so blessed because you’re so nice to me. So please stay and be my friend forever (original in English).
Gemmalyn: Your message is so nice, I’m already falling in love with you. I also have this message for you.

A friend like you is a gift that paints a smile in my heart. It gives memories that will stay in me not for a while but for a lifetime (original in English).

Richard: I was touched by your message. You must be pretty. If I may ask, what happened to your husband?

Gemmalyn: Don’t ask about it. We might both run out of battery and I am not yet done telling my story. And that’s very confidential. Just wait until we’re already very close before you ask about my personal life. Just kidding!

Richard: Okay, I’ll just text you next time. I have to go to work.

Richard and Gemmalyn continued this text relationship over several weeks. They made plans to meet but it never happened. The exchange of texts ended when Gemmalyn lost her mobile. This example indicates the facility for developing close, albeit digital, relationships with strangers. Filipinos rarely exchange intimacies face to face but readily do so through texting. But such discourses are framed by English adages or literary quotations that then allow interlocutors to broach embarrassing topics. While text messages appear spontaneous, their form usually follows a prescribed pattern. Apart from ritualistic greetings, the adages or quotations often introduce the flow of the exchange, culminating in expressions of love and sexual interest. The relationship may remain virtual or result in actual meetings (eyeball). New friendships and even marriage proposals are often initiated through texting. A recent documentary (Txt before Marriage) discussed relationships culminating in marriage conducted entirely through texting. The exchange of mobile numbers among acquaintances has now become routine and is often a way of extending a person’s network.

Texting and Discursive Innovations

Texting has generated a language of its own and facilitated problematic relationships. Expressions of affection are not generally common among Filipinos (except for young children) but texting has generated a new affective discourse. These new expressions of affection are
particularly important in long-distance relationships, such as those between overseas workers and their families left behind.

Jonas is a 24-year-old activist deeply involved in the Gay and Lesbian Legislative Advocacy network. Since most of their members are “virtual,” contact is only possible using the mobile or the Internet. While it took some time before his family accepted his sexual orientation and activism, they all now strongly support his cause.

My father was gushing with emotion. It was the first time he texted me something like that saying’ I’m proud of you’. He was more comfortable saying that in texting because our family is not emotionally expressive. It was the first time that I told him, ‘Dad, I love you’ through texting (Pertierra et al. 2002, 77).

The individualizing tendencies of the new media have been mentioned earlier. Young users of the new communication technologies appreciate the cultural differences and opportunities now available. Personal feelings and thoughts become important aspects of the cyber world.

Teenagers nowadays feel that they need to express what they... think but they cannot do so in normal circumstances. The cyber-world allows them to explore and develop their feelings and thoughts. The net is their only way to socialize with other people from different cultures around the world (Pertierra 2006b, 46).

The above comments about texting surprisingly apply to many other global contexts. A national survey among youth in the U.K. found that texting helped develop their social and communicative skills. Kate Fox (2001) concluded that:

Texting can help them to overcome their awkwardness and develop their social and communicative skills; they communicate more frequently, than they did before having access to mobile texting (cited in Crystal 2008, 171).

Crystal (2008) claims that texting is one of the most innovative linguistic phenomenon in modern times and is the reason why it has aroused so much controversy. While texting has been blamed for a host of problems, including the deterioration of writing skills of young people, the evidence does not support this conclusion. For Crystal, texting motivates and
illustrates the creativity of language use in diverse settings. It represents the evolutionary adaptability of language.

**Home Is Elsewhere**

The communication revolution is only part of a wider social and cultural transformation. Transnational capital, overseas workers, migration, and tourism are some of the other changes that increasingly impact on the lives of Filipinos. Ironically, CMICT has brought back elements of community under radically different conditions. This technology makes it possible to enjoy an intimate orality with its chat groups and informal networks but on a global scale. However, the limits of community are confounded when the local, diasporic, and global intersect. These sites produce transformed, hybrid identities. Although the restrictions of space no longer apply in CMICT, lived place continues to increase in importance. While the local is globalized, the global is also localized. Diaspora develops and nurtures the notion of homeland, no longer merely a space, but a place full of memories and nostalgia. But a major dilemma of globality is that “home” is usually elsewhere.

Ravindran (2007) has addressed this conundrum by arguing that the globalized homeland now includes its diasporic members. Distinctions between the settled and the original homeland no longer apply as relevantly as they did before CMICT. A friend describes herself as a Filipino from California, transforming a nationality into an ethnicity, or a space into a place. A growing Filipino diaspora aided by CMICT interrogates definitions of identity and home, often replacing territorial borders with cyber intimacies (Ignacio 2005).

**Uncontrolled Flows**

That significant changes are occurring is obvious even if the final consequences remain unclear. The importance of the mass media since the introduction of film, radio, and television has been reinforced and extended by the new media. Traditional media disseminated information from the center to the periphery, while mobiles and the Internet now channel peripheral information to the center. The control of this new flow, previously guarded by gatekeepers and censors, is now virtually impossible. Free-flowing, unverified, and personalized perspectives have replaced the earlier more structured, controlled, but professionally assessed information. Wikipedia and YouTube are models of this new structure of information and news.
This democratization of information has implications for personal identity, hierarchical values, and collective action. The sheer amount of information now easily available has made possible new organizations and institutions, such as e-groups, global civil society collectives, social networking sites, criminal networks, as well as increased state surveillance. But it has also destabilized institutions such as the family, the church, and other conservative organizations.

While Ling (2009) is fully conversant with all these transformations, he disagrees with the radical position and instead argues that the so-called information revolution is an extension and part of the earlier industrial revolution. What may result from this informational increase is a gradual evolution rather than a drastic revolution. We may not end up as gods or machines, as predicted by Grey (2002) but simply as multiply-related (and confused) humans.

**Glocal and Virtual Cultures**

The global has incorporated the local with the virtual, extinguishing the difference between the real and its simulacrum. Henceforth, the local, national, global, and virtual are inextricably consociated. Syncretism and hybridity become essential features of everyday life. These changes do not only produce significant social transformations, but have equally important cultural consequences. Hitherto closely attached to a life-mode (e.g. community), postmodern culture becomes a sphere of autonomous signification, detached from specific modes of life. The virtualization of the local disconnects culture from the routines of everyday life. Instead, culture becomes a product of globality. The structures of meaning provided by culture are no longer rooted in ordinary experience, but are instead linked to complex, abstract, and mediated systems. This rupture between culture and its generating structures produces multiple and hybrid identities such as Fil-Ams from California, Fil-Oz from Sydney, Tagalog rappers in Malabon, and Starbucks regulars in Cubao. In all these cases, lived place and abstract space are complexly connected with memories, desires, and mediated experiences. Increasingly this is the life that most of us live. No wonder that ontological insecurity is frequently experienced (Giddens 1990), and people strive to convert their fundamental beliefs into a fundamentalist lifestyle. But the foundations for such a lifestyle no longer exist and must therefore be generated using mediated processes that ultimately undermine it.

Terrorism, despite its clearly ideological biases (even as this ideological orientation includes all political colors), is both a response to and a reflection of this ontological insecurity. The Abu Sayaff, having given up conventional means to achieve their ends, including political
alliances with the MILF and MNLF, seek the return of a religiously pristine condition through mayhem and martyrdom. This strategy combines traditional elements such as the juramentado as part of a global jihad. Intensely local while totally global and using postmodern media, this terrorist group exemplifies the virtualization of the glocal to restore an earlier ontological security. But this venture is doomed to fail and instead morphs into hybrid forms that include criminal elements, political links, and alliances with the military (Ugarte 2009).

This condition of culture as both local and globally mediated experience makes it harder for its members to share a common understanding of everyday life. The result is a ghettoization of culture. Each group happily inhabits its own virtual world. But unlike earlier ghettos whose members were spatially confined, virtual ghettos allow their members to cross cyber boundaries. Digital mobility becomes an ordinary aspect of contemporary life. Online and offline living merge seamlessly. Everyone now lives multiple lives, both virtual and actual.

Hannerz (1993) describes how culture, hitherto collectively shared, is now individualized. “As she changes jobs, moves between places, and makes her choices in cultural consumption, one human being may turn out to construct a cultural repertoire which in its entirely is like nobody else’s” (105). While the uniqueness of individual experience is a feature of all societies and cultures, the contemporary emphasis on consumer choice and the wide variety of patterns of consumption available make this insight particularly relevant to our times. As Bauman (2005) argues, while all societies consume, only contemporary capitalist societies are explicitly organized around consumerism. Furthermore as Miller (1997) has pointed out, consumption is now an integral aspect of our identity. Added to these distinct patterns of consumption is the increasing digitalization of life.

The Explosion of Mobile Communication

No other technical device has spread more quickly than the mobile phone (4 billion by 2010; Ling and Donner 2009). The cellphone has become the new icon of Philippine life. Filipinos of all classes, generations, and ethnicities have adopted this new technology to reproduce traditional relationships under new conditions. They also employ it to explore new identities and transcorporeal subjectivities. Freed from the constraints of spatial location, cellphones allow perpetual interaction with absent interlocutors. Cyber or virtual communities are easily generated. In these circumstances, notions of the social and of culture have to be radically rethought. Physical co-presence and direct interaction no longer constitute the primary
basis for relationships. An expanded role for the stranger, hitherto undeveloped in Philippine culture, becomes easily feasible.

**New Networks, New Friends**

Until the recent past, most Filipino networks primarily involved family, friends, neighbors, and other consociates, rarely making any provisions for strangers. Presently, the new media brings strangers into these networks. Networks incorporating strangers require different communicative strategies, expand the realm of discourse, and open new possibilities for action. These expanded networks also include subgroups or subcultures with specialist interests, such as heavy metal music followers, cybergamers or hackers, political activists, religious enthusiasts, celebrity followers, and sexual fetishists. Within an increasing globalization of everyday life, the new media is a significant element affecting how and what people communicate. As a consequence, new notions of identity are constructed, and new relationships generated.

The large numbers of overseas workers, including permanent migrants (8 million), have generated corresponding needs for inexpensive means of communication using mobiles and the Internet. The development of tourism has required Filipinos to more consciously direct their attention to people from other societies. Call centers have become a boom industry. These factors require a re-evaluation of local culture. Finally, the new media makes possible and imperative certain styles of communication. All these elements significantly affect the construction of identities and the formation of social relationships and their corresponding collective practices.

**Knowing Others, Knowing Ourselves**

Filipinos are natural networkers since local culture favors establishing loose but functional ties within a wide circle of kin and acquaintances. Filipinos are among the largest users of social networking sites (e.g. Friendster, Facebook, Multiply). The previous boundaries between local, national, and global are now largely irrelevant for increasing numbers of Filipinos with access to the new media. In their place, new configurations of networks are established combining old elements such as ethnicity with special interests (e.g. Tagalog gay sites).
Moreover, the new media also expands communication across cultures and interest groups. Many of these networks inevitably involve strangers, which then require interlocutors to employ new strategies of communicative engagement. Sharing a communicative network among unfamiliars generates new forms of understanding of both the self and the other, since it requires a clearer enunciation of normally assumed or tacit contexts. Local knowledge can no longer be the basis among participants in the network. Hechanova (2009) provides examples of this expanding cultural awareness among call center workers whose clients are based abroad. They not only learn how to deal with foreigners but in the process also learn about themselves.

These new communicative practices requiring finer cultural nuances may also lead to an expansion of the public realm. By public realm, we simply mean an audience whose members occupy different subject positions and embrace a wide variety of interests and values. Heterogeneity, rather than homogeneity, characterizes these audiences, and effective communication requires the recognition of difference. The contemporary western multicultural city exemplifies these heterogeneous communities. Often, even the local neighborhood is heterogeneous. Ironically, one has to leave the local neighborhood to find a community of common interest readily accessible in cyberspace. While cities in the Philippines are not multicultural in the western sense, its inhabitants come from diverse rural regions, each with its own local orientation (Pinches 1999). In this context, spaces such as Internet cafés provide new venues for interaction (de Leon 2007). Like call centers, their users are exposed to a wider range of interests and backgrounds than is normally the case. As reported for Buenavista and other places, the Internet café is a site for both online and offline activities. It has become a common meeting place (tambayan) of regular customers who combine their actual and digital lives seamlessly. This combination of online and offline activities is reported for other countries in Asia. Son Bui (2007) reports that Vietnamese youth prefer to use the Internet in computer cafés even if they enjoy home access. The privacy and conviviality of the café is preferred over its often monitored use at home.

**A Fragmented Mainstream: From Subcultures to Networks**

The ease of global communication allows participation in subcultures whose members have easy access to specialized interests. Virtual communities are easily consolidated and developed into subgroups and subcultures. Postmodernity is characterized by the growth and significance of subcultures, some of which inevitably become established as part of the mainstream (Gelder 2007).
While culture and society have always had their underside, the new media greatly amplifies the capacity to mobilize new connections. A consequence of print was the proliferation of salacious and subversive publications alongside devotional books, political tracts, and literary works. Photography resulted in a similar explosion of diverse and mainstream publications. But all these pale in comparison with the more recent media, such as video, digital cams, mobile phones, and the Internet. In sheer volume, the conventional mainstream is presently outnumbered by these hitherto marginal interests, subcultures, and networks. This is reflected in the revolution in public tastes found in shows like Eurovision Song Contest, American Idol, and their Filipino equivalents. The overnight transformation of previously unknown performers into national and even global celebrities reflects new public tastes and aesthetics.

From the Margins to the Center

The rise of powerful networks may lead to the undermining of formerly mainstream cultures. In these circumstances, the notion of a mainstream culture whose members share common values may now have to be replaced. Instead its place is shared by a multitude of networked subcultures, taking turns at receiving global attention (Castells 2001).

An even more powerful example of a subculture taking over the mainstream is the rise of pornography in the Internet. While pornographic interests have long existed, their modes of expression had been limited. The age of print and later of photography converted pornography from the limited editions of aristocrats into a mass market (McNair 2002; Gelder 2007). The Victorians (1857) first introduced laws against obscenity to stem this growing tide, and although initially successful, libertarian attitudes have generally replaced prudish values in all western countries. The expression of sexuality has undoubtedly expanded significantly given the distributive capacities of the new media. This interest has likely always existed, given the evidence of prehistoric cave art, but the means for its distribution has always been limited. Presently, sexual images and messages pervade every aspect of life. The interest in sexuality, hitherto a private matter, is now publicly shared. Hence, the sexualization of everyday life is a product both of capitalist greed and media capacity. This combination makes it unlikely that attempts to suppress their expression will succeed.
While it has been possible to control print and celluloid editions, the rise of videos, digital cams, DVD, and the Internet has made censorship impractical. Some estimate that up to 50% of Internet traffic is pornography (McNair 2002). Formerly a shameful, clandestine, and patriarchal interest, much contemporary porn is now produced for gays, feminists, and metrosexuals. Even advertisers have begun using porno-chic images for their products and mainstream pop icons such as Madonna have made successful careers from it.

The proliferation of sexual images has produced measures to censor the Internet in order to protect vulnerable members of the public such as children. Paedophilia and other sexual interests have generated almost hysterical censorship measures in both authoritarian and liberal regimes. The earlier reference to apotemnophilia and other psychological conditions reflect the tension between allowing minorities to use the new media to coordinate their interests while preventing illegitimate uses such as the exploitation of children, the traffic of women, or terrorist activities. Unfortunately, these measures often only deal with their expression rather than their cause. Children are exploited non-sexually as much as sexually, women are forced to seek better futures away from the security of home, and the conditions for terrorism remain unaddressed. It is often easier to dampen or prevent their expression in the new media rather than deal with their original causes.

**Popular Culture**

The growth and dominance of popular culture since the rise of the electronic media are a major feature of the contemporary world. Popular culture has replaced an earlier aesthetic hegemony in most media (print, film, radio, television). This popularization of taste is facilitated by the electronic and digital media. Cultural guardians upholding aesthetic standards are swamped by the amount of information and the demands of access. Paradoxically, while there may be more choice, there is often less quality. Perhaps, more precisely, faced by such wide choices, the ordinary user is unable to judge or assess quality.

Popular music seldom requires the rigorous training of classical performers and encourages immediate display. Karaoke and other technologies can convert private performances to public ones, allowing everyone to become a star. Presently, classical musicians in the Philippines have become a small subculture of the public sphere, enjoying neither the material rewards nor the general recognition they previously did. Prior to the Second World War, Manila enjoyed preeminent status in the region as the center of western classical music.
Laconico-Buenaventura (1998) describes the opera season at the new Metropolitan Theatre in Manila:

The opera La Traviata, presented by the San Carlo Gran Opera Company...ushered the opera season for 1932. From the first up to the fifteenth of November, the company had a different opera for each night’s presentation. Tosca, Madame Butterfly, Rigoletto, Il Trovatore, Lucian di Lamarmoor, El Barbero de Sevilla, Carmen and Pagliacci (123).

No other city in Asia would have had such a rich operatic repertoire. Presently, Hong Kong and Singapore have overtaken Manila as centers of classical performance. The Cultural Center of the Philippines, previously a leader in its field, now suffers from a critical lack of resources and support.

With the exception of the print media (newspapers in English), most other media caters mainly to popular tastes. Film, television, and radio rarely feature productions that aim beyond immediate amusement or that tackle socially controversial topics non-sensationally. But the new media has also recently generated interest in independent filmmaking. Whether this interest will rejuvenate the mainstream media remains to be seen.

The Postmodern Generation of Difference

Postmodernity consists of two opposed tendencies. On the one hand, there is the global levelling of culture via the mass media. Hip-hop may have started in the backstreets of Harlem, but it has now spread to Manila, Sydney, and even Kabul. While acknowledging its common sources, local versions of hip-hop retain their particular flavor (Gelder 2007). This subcultural musical genre is global, while remaining locally rooted. The inevitable McDonaldization of the world generates its own local adaptations (e.g. Jollibee) and resistances.

The other tendency of postmodernity is to encourage diversity and modification (Kaviraj 2002). This differentiating force applies to specific subcultures such as hip-hop as much as to more general features such as democracy and consumption. Globalization leads to cultural difference as much as cultural convergence. Greater mobility encourages the crossing of cultures as much as it does the reproduction and maintenance of locality. Globalization and localization stimulate one another, resulting not only in their hybridization and glocalization, but in the emergence of new cultural forms.
While much of public culture, following the imperatives of consumption and profit, tends to become universally generalizable, other elements of postmodern society become highly specialized. In the humanities, art, fashion, music, and literature continue their aesthetic evolution. Even consumption is specialized. Chic boutiques, like supermarkets and malls, are ubiquitous components of the cityscape. Even a return to earlier consumerist practices, such as organic products, is a common element of cultural differentiation. The middle class, a main agent of globality, continually differentiates itself from general mass consumption. As Miller (2001) points out, consumption is a personal as much as a collective activity. The latter may be globalized but the former ensures that personal idiosyncrasies stubbornly resist universalization.

Expanding Communicative Structures: Mobiles and the Internet

Most of our informants welcome the advantages of mobiles and the Internet. While they also recognize some problems such as rising costs (e.g. over PhP 300 monthly for mobiles), the lures of gambling or the dangers of seduction, they overwhelmingly support its advantages (Pertierra 2009).

While class, gender, and generation are factors that generally affect the use of the new communication technologies, they are surprisingly neutral (Pertierra 2009). However, it is too early to say whether the new technology is generally emancipative or only beneficial mainly to those with adequate resources. The rich make more voice calls and enjoy home Internet access, men surf for more instrumental sites, including pornography, than do women, who prefer religious sites and overseas connections. The young are more adept in all these uses than their elders and are more willing to experiment with new identities and experiences. But most users quickly appreciate the advantages of greater access to the world of information.

While the new technology does not eliminate existing inequalities, it offers access to a world beyond the local. Hitherto, confinement to the local was a major aspect of inequality. Generally, the new technology is too recent and novel for old inequalities to determine its outcomes. Other researchers (Wacjman 1991; Saloma-Akpedenou 2006) have noted how the former disadvantages of gender have not yet imposed their constraints on the CMICT workforce. But class, gender, and race may ultimately impose themselves on these new technologies as they have in most others. Qiu (2009) has recently discussed the uses of CMICT
among the Chinese working class. Digital inequality may well constitute new bases for class and other social divisions. As Qiu has argued, the Information City continues to discriminate against its poorer inhabitants.

Paradoxically, our poorer informants appreciate the advantages of the Internet more than their affluent counterparts. These latter being used to their privileged status saw no great advantages in the Internet. Living actually privileged lives made them less appreciative of virtual privileges. In contrast, students attending badly equipped schools quickly realized the advantages of access to the Web. For them, the Internet provided resources lacking in schools. Qiu (2009) shows how the have-less make use of the new media to compensate for their disadvantages by allowing the pooling of information and other scarce goods. The new technology may not transform society while older structures retain their oppressive force, but it may provide a new leverage or new opportunities for the have-less (Peng 2007).

**CMICT-Mediated Relationships**

Increasingly, most relationships are now technologically mediated, replacing face-to-face interactions with their cyber-equivalents. We spend more time interacting with absent than with present others. Physical absence no longer prevents communication and interaction. Co-location has lost its previous constraints. Physical presence has been replaced by a digitally generated ambient presence. This interaction with virtual others has redefined our notions of ourselves as well as our notions of the other. It has also, as Miller (2009) argues, changed our understanding of relationships. For many Filipinos this new basis for relationships is both threatening and liberating.

The experiences made possible by mobiles and the Internet are encouraging new forms of individualism and cosmopolitanism. Strangers are increasingly entering networks of intimacy hitherto limited to kin and close friends. These extended networks require individualizing responses and broaden outlooks, leading to more cosmopolitan orientations. Online relationships are the best expression of this new cosmopolitanism. Many Filipino women use the Internet to explore and widen prospective marriage choices (Constable 2005). They also use it to participate in an expanding sex industry (Mathews 2009).

**Long-Distance Relationships**
Miller (2009) correctly points out that relationships are often complex orientations, containing conflicting expectations. When conducted face to face, these complexities are sorted out in particular ways. But when the relationship is conducted at a distance, other strategies come into play. Anderson (2002) made a similar point when he argued that modern communication such as the fax machine allowed diasporic patriots to support radical programs often disapproved of by their counterparts at home. Diasporic life allows for an imagination of the homeland to develop unhampered by practical contingencies, whereas life in the homeland requires quotidian compromises.

Using Miller’s (2009) terminology, we have a relationship with the homeland that can be pursued purely ideologically at a distance and/or one which requires contingent adjustments at home. All relationships contain both approaches since they all involve idealized or normative elements as well as actualized (and personalized) experiences. Zamorans abroad regularly participate in online groups discussing elements of Filipino culture that are more embedded in a diasporic setting than in everyday Philippine life. Diasporic discussion groups often focus on the qualities of what constitutes a true Filipino (Ignacio, 2005). Questions of identity are less central or have different motivations when expressed locally or nationally.

Vergara’s (2009) study of Filipinos in Daly City, California reveals these ambiguities. How can one remain a Filipino while living in the U.S.? Alternatively, how does one assimilate into American society while remaining loyal to one’s roots? These questions become central in the diasporic imagination. Answers vary, including pastiche responses:

One can say that Daly City is a Quezon City where the buses run on time, a Laoag City where every house has a two-car garage, a Davao City where its middle-class residents can acquire their wide-screen TVs and minivans, as transnationally shared symbols of middle-classness, in a manner impossible for them to achieve back home (190).

Ironically, leaving the Philippines is the only way of achieving an acceptable Filipino lifestyle. A conundrum is established: being a Filipino in the Philippines is difficult since the middle class values associated with this lifestyle are unattainable for most people. Hence people leave the country for better opportunities abroad where they can pursue the Filipino dream. The new media compounds this conundrum by facilitating contact with the homeland. One can now be as informed and as involved in Philippine affairs while residing abroad. But this involvement is mostly virtual and concerned with diasporic topics such as identity and
nostalgia. In contrast, life in the homeland has a nitty-gritty quality, lacking in overseas discussions. Instead, trying to find a job, feed the kids, and send them to school take up most of one’s energies.

**Expectations vs. Experience**

For any relationship to persist, a balance between normative expectations and practical experience is desirable. Long absences may tilt this balance one way or the other. Ramon has been away from his children for over a decade. He regularly sends them support, fulfilling the obligations of fatherhood. But his yearly visits are marked by tension in the family. His children admire their father but miss the daily interactions that could temper his authoritarian attitude. Imelda has been far less supportive of her children than Ramon has, but her presence tilts the balance from the normative to the practical. She is not as financially reliable as Ramon when abroad but showers the children with attention when she returns.

Filipinos abroad often describe their feelings about visiting the Philippines as a combination of excitement and dread. Meeting relatives and old friends and visiting former haunts fill them not only with excitement but also with a fearful anticipation, because they know that the initial pleasure is invariably followed by disappointment. Their recollections of the past rarely conform to the experience of the present. Their *pasalubong* (return gifts) is often unappreciated as villagers expect more expensive gifts. In this context virtuality seems a better alternative.

Ramos, in a *Philippine Daily Inquirer* article published on November 2, 2008, points out that many funeral homes in Manila now provide broadband service that allows relatives abroad to access mortuary rituals through a website. What better example of connectivity than this ability to connect with the dead from abroad. This example should also remind us that a major function of the new media is not only to transmit information but also to instill and share sentiments. Connectivity involves more than information. It also provides structures of sentiments, values, and power. In this sense, the new media makes a new world order possible. We are daily witnesses to these possibilities, from the shock of September 11, 2001 to the victory of Barack Obama.

**Fiction as Truth**
In an episode of the popular television series Desperate Housewives, the character of Teri Hatcher was diagnosed as entering menopause. In disbelief she exclaims: “Before we go any further, can I just check those diplomas; I’d just like to make sure they’re not from some med school in the Philippines.”

This brief remark in a fictional television series, a parody of American suburban culture, provoked outrage among many Filipino medical practitioners in the U.S. They claimed that the remark maligned their competence and soiled their reputation. In a disputatious and politically correct society such as the U.S., such a response may not seem unusual, but even by local standards, demands for compensation ($500 million) appear excessive. As often happens in such cases, the outrage quickly gathered pace among American-based Filipinos and soon enough some Philippine medical institutions joined the legal suite.

The response in the Philippines was more muted, and many commentators pointed out the weaknesses in pressing the case. Foremost among these weaknesses is the admittedly low standards of many medical schools and the recent scandal involving cheating in the nursing board exams (2008). Government board passing rates for doctors (25%) and nurses (49%) indicate the poor standards of professional training in the country.

The increasing professionalization of overseas workers is reflected in the preference for choosing courses that facilitate employment abroad. Hence local standards become relevant for the employability of overseas Filipinos. According to the Department of Health (Mayen 2007), 85% of health professionals work abroad. This has led to a crisis in local health care. To compound the problem, many of these medical workers come from rural areas, already poorly served by the health profession. ”The health care delivery system in the Philippines has gone critical, almost desperate.” According to Duque, Secretary of Health, for every 100 health professionals, 88 have left in search of high-paying jobs outside the country. To make the situation worse, fewer medical graduates are passing the licensure examinations. This is undoubtedly due to the general deterioration of Philippine education. According to the Department of Health, the majority of government employed doctors who left for abroad had previously converted their medical degrees into nursing. There are more Filipino nurses abroad than in the Philippines.

Most Americans who have had dealings with medical workers have come across Filipina nurses or doctors and sometimes even Filipino specialists. Filipinos constitute the
largest sector of foreign health practitioners in the U.S. They remain a vital and necessary element in America’s health sector. Filipinos have long wished to be part of this industry and scores of students chose to study nursing in the hope of practicing in the U.S. Because licensing to practice as a doctor in the U.S. is very restrictive, many Filipino doctors return to school to take up nursing in order to go abroad. The local health sector in the Philippines is in a state of crisis mostly because of the departure of its health professionals.

Virtual Addicts

The media is increasingly reporting cases of Internet addiction. In a Yahoo! Buzz article in 2009, Geranios reports the following:

Alexander, 19, needed help to break an addiction he calls as destructive as alcohol or drugs. He found it in this suburb of high-tech Seattle, where what claims to be the first residential treatment center for Internet addiction in the United States just opened its doors...It opened in July and for $14,000 offers a 45-day program intended to help people wean themselves from pathological computer use, which can include obsessive use of video games, texting, Facebook, eBay, Twitter and any other time-killers brought courtesy of technology.

The effects of addiction are no joke. They range from loss of a job or marriage to car accidents for those who can’t stop texting while driving. Some people have died after playing video games for days without a break, generally stemming from a blood clot associated with being sedentary.

"From what we know, many so-called 'Internet addicts' are folks who have severe depression, anxiety disorders, or social phobic symptoms that make it hard for them to live a full, balanced life and deal face-to-face with other people," said Dr. Ronald Pies, professor of psychiatry at SUNY Upstate Medical University in Syracuse, N.Y. "It may be that unless we treat their underlying problems, some new form of 'addiction' will pop up down the line," Pies said.

Similar cases have earlier been reported in China, where young people seem prone to these disorders. Whether these cases indicate a causal relationship with the technology itself or
simply reflect a deeper anxiety in both the self and society has not yet been established. However, these cases show how intimately notions of the self are linked to objects and practices.

This conflation between self and object complicates relationships since they can involve both the self and the object as elements in the relationship. Sarah enjoys her relationship with her cellphone. She also enjoys her relationships with her boyfriends. Often these two relationships are conflated. The loss of one may provoke a crisis in the other. When her daughter borrows her mobile, Sarah claims to lose interest in texting her boyfriends but quickly resumes this interest once her daughter returns her cellphone. The cellphone clearly gives Sarah a new sense of agency.

Real, Virtual, and Actual

The new media increasingly mimic and often replace face-to-face relationships with mediated ones (Fortunati 2005). These latter allow for their symbolic, ideological, and normative aspects to dominate over more pragmatic, instrumental, and contingent elements usually encountered in face-to-face relationships. In the cases mentioned in earlier chapters, we can see how these diverse elements of relationships actually play themselves out. Kristina is dead but her friends still treasure and relate to memories of her through Facebook. Although one can no longer relate to Kristina as a living person, one can relate to memories of her as well as share these with others. But Kristina’s idiosyncrasies can no longer actively shape the relationships that people have about her. In this case we can say that Kristina’s friends are relating to earlier relations they had with her. Due to the agentive nature of the new media, her Facebook site continues to mimic her presence. Memories, images, and representations are easily aroused, experienced, and shared in a virtual world such as Facebook.

Donna’s life is closely integrated with the technologies that shape her daily routines. Donna admits that technology not only facilitates but also complicates her domestic relationships. She recently finished a documentary working with her husband and found the experience stressful. The sources of stress stemmed both from their professional roles and their approaches to filmmaking. In Donna’s case as in most others, the intertwining of different elements of a relationship are often impossible to untangle. All relationships involve normative expectations as well as practical experiences. How these actually work out depend on given
contexts such as daily face-to-face interactions or technologically mediated ones. In Donna’s case, they involve both.

In the case of Arnold and Miguel, their relationship was pursued technologically while abroad and developed according to strategies appropriate to this mode. Arnold was able to hide his sexual exploits more effectively but revealed his feelings more openly. Their relationship was formed previous to going abroad and already had certain tensions such as Miguel’s excessive need for surveillance. This tension was better resolved abroad and allowed Arnold to reveal his feelings (but not his sexual liaisons) more honestly.

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the various ways CMICT has shaped contemporary culture. The new media not only expands the possibilities for culture but also affects the way we experience it. No longer limited to face-to-face encounters, culture is increasingly mediated, globalized, and includes strangers as part of everyday life. While culture remains an integral part of experience, its content includes images, practices, and representations often drawn from afar. We incorporate these distant images, practices, and representations as part of everyday life. Contemporary culture is not only lived but also aspired, imitated, and consumed. Through this process of living, aspiring, imitating, and consuming culture, we generate new identities, construct new norms, and shape new expectations. In the process, culture becomes almost individualized and less collectivized. Alternatively, the new collectivities of culture no longer share a common location or a quotidian lifestyle as culture becomes increasingly virtualized. This ghettoization of culture raises problems for a shared public sphere. As people increasingly inhabit their virtual worlds, it becomes more difficult to establish networks across these worlds. As already mentioned, these virtual worlds contain more than just information. They also contain values, sentiments, and even practical actions and strategies. These virtual worlds constitute their own habitus.

It does not seem that the movement of Filipinos for greener pastures abroad will subside soon. Prospects for significant economic growth nationally remain poor as the country continues to be ruled by its entrenched plutocracy. The hope that the information revolution will gradually replace the political elite remains unproven so far. Filipinos will continue to pursue their dreams abroad while retaining close links with the homeland.
The influence and power of this diasporic community may be expected to grow as their numbers continue to swell and as the new media becomes more accessible locally. Foreign-based Filipinos not only contribute funds but also influence connections in local and national disputes. The recent extension of dual nationality (2004) has encouraged this involvement in national affairs. The dispute calling into question, albeit in a fictional television series, the competence of Filipino doctors in the U.S. indicate how quickly diasporic ties can be activated. The concern over the plight of Filipino workers abroad has recently become a major area of government action. All these point to the growing importance of the local-national-global nexus.

The increasing significance of technologically mediated relationships has been mentioned, as well as their effects on culture. The case of Internet addiction and other unusual predispositions is an extreme illustration of the capacities of the new media to instil desires and sentiments. Moreover, the new media quickly connects people with similar interests, allowing them to develop collective dispositions and structural significance. Minorities are no longer denied a voice in an increasingly diversified public sphere.

This book has argued that CMICT not only enters into but also actively shapes our lives. This is a technology that affects our notions of self, society, and culture. Indeed, we seem to be on the cusp of a new age whose future consists of rapidly shifting horizons. No sooner is one possibility suggested than another takes its place. Speed, novelty, and the attractions of the unusual grab people’s attention. No wonder that some seek past comforts and fundamental certainties in this age of ceaseless change.

The old mainstream culture guarded and preserved by conservatives and purists is no longer able to defend traditional boundaries. The sheer number of participants in the new cultural dialogues overwhelms mainstream censors. Subcultures and other previously marginal interests and networks now have access to the mainstream and often even dominate it. The mainstream now consists of networks, subgroups, and subcultures differently located within a digitally borderless world. Niche markets have expanded just when the limits of consumption seem to have reached a peak. Celebrations of diversity and difference are anticipated by hitherto disenfranchised minorities as much as by advertisers seeking new markets. The interests of capital are well served by these new cultural formations. Consumerism has become the major concern of most people, and its limits appear boundless. Is this future the main emancipatory promise of the new media?
Contemporary mainstream culture no longer has a clear center as this center has shifted to the margins. But the structures of power, privilege, and influence have not disappeared, but simply taken on new guises. The digital divide is only one manifestation of the new structure of power. The proliferation of images, representations, and information serves to reinforce as much as to challenge existing structures. The present task of scholars is to chart these new guises, reveal its structures, expose its gaps, and explore new possibilities for emancipation.
This survey is for Filipinos who use the Internet, and is conducted by anthropologist Raul Pertierra (University of the Philippines/Atendeo de Manila), political science graduate student Arjan Aguirre (Atendeo de Manila), and new media specialist Diego Maranan (University of the Philippines). The survey is available on two languages, has 25 questions, and takes about 10 minutes to answer.

1. How old are you? (in years)

2. I am...
3. Do you have a landline?

4. Do you have a computer at home?
5. If you have a computer at home, what kind of computer? (You can select more than one answer)

6. How do you connect to the Internet from home?

7. Do you visit Internet Cafés?
8. How many hours a week do you spend doing the following activities on the Internet? Number of hours per week

9. If you have an Internet connection at home, do you still visit Internet cafés?
10. Do you chat online?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>OFTEN</th>
<th>ALL THE TIME</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I chat with family members</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I chat with friends I already have</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I chat to make new friends</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average %: 26.0% 38.6% 18.2% 17.2% 435

Total Responses: 149

11. What instant messaging service do you use for chatting? (Check all that apply)
12. Which of the following sites do you use? Check all that apply.

13. How many friends do you have in the sites you use?
14. How many friends/members do you have in each of these sites?

15. How do you spend your time in the sites above? Rank each activity. ("1" means you spend the most amount of time, "4" means you spend the least amount of time.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUMMARY</th>
<th>VALUE</th>
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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>AVERAGE RANK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Making new friends</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>69</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sending messages to friends</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looking at friends’ profiles</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editing your profile</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Responses: 134
16. Do you have a blog?

17. Do you regularly read other people’s blogs?
18. Which do you prefer for discussing personal issues?

![Pie chart showing preferences for discussing personal issues.]

19. Do you use the Internet to: ()

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read the news</td>
<td>91.2%</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow celebrities</td>
<td>57.7%</td>
<td>42.3%</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow sport events</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
<td>53.2%</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average %:</strong></td>
<td>65.7%</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>423</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Responses: 148
20. How true is each of these statements for you? ()

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Because of the Internet, it's easier to keep in contact with relatives and friends.</td>
<td>2.0% 3</td>
<td>10.7% 16</td>
<td>87.2% 130</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because of the Internet, it's easier to make new friends.</td>
<td>14.3% 21</td>
<td>40.8% 60</td>
<td>44.9% 66</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because of the Internet, it's easier to do homework and research.</td>
<td>1.4% 2</td>
<td>8.1% 12</td>
<td>90.5% 134</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Because of the Internet, it's easier to do fun activities such as games.</td>
<td>12.4% 18</td>
<td>29.0% 42</td>
<td>58.6% 85</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Average %:**  
7.5% 22.1% 70.5% 589

**Total Responses: 149**
Report: Response Summary Report
Survey: Ikaw at Web 2.0
Compiled: 08/15/2009

1. Ilan taon ka na?
2. Ano ang iyong kasarian?

- Male: 41.57%
- Female: 58.33%

3. Meron ka bang telepono (landline)?

- No: 37.14%
- Yes: 52.86%
4. Meron ka bang computer sa bahay?

5. Kung may computer ka sa bahay, anong klaseng computer meron ka? (Pwede kang pumili ng higit sa isang sagot)
6. What is your preferred method of using the internet?

Using broadband connection (e.g., DSL or cable): 20
Using a wireless service (e.g., SmartBro, WiMAX): 10
I don't connect to the internet from home: 5
Through a dial-up connection: 3

7. Do you visit an Internet Cafe?

No: 64.71%
Yes: 35.29%
8. Ilang oras sa isang linggo ka gumagamit ng internet?
Number of hours per week

9. Kung meron kang koneksyon ng internet sa bahay, bumibisita ka pa ba sa Internet Cafes?

[Pie chart showing the results of the survey]
10. Nagchachat ka ba?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>NEVER</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
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<th>ALL THE TIME</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nakikipagchat ako sa pamilya ko</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nakikipagchat ako sa mga kaibigan na kilala ko na</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>21.2%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nakikipagchat ako para makakilala ng bagong kaibigan</td>
<td>64.5%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Average %: 32.6% 30.5% 25.3% 11.6% 95

Total Responses: 33

11. Ano ang iyong ginagamit sa sa pakikipag-chat? (Puwede kang pumili ng higit sa isang sagot)

- Yahoo! Messenger
- Google Talk/GMail Chat
- Skype
- Other
12. Alin dito sa mga sumusunod ang iyong ginagamit? (Puwede kang pumili ng higit sa isang sagot.)

13. Ilang ang iyong mga kaibigan sa mga site na nabanggit mo?
14. Alin sa mga ito ang madalas mong ginagawa sa mga social networking sites na nabanggit sa itaas. (I-check mo ang 1 para sa pinakamadalas mong ginagawa, 4 para sa pinakamadalang mong ginagawa.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Making new friends</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.6</td>
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<td>Looking at friends’ profiles</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>2.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sending messages to friends</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Editing your profile</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total Responses: 29

15. Mayroon ka bang blog?

Yes 45.45%
No 54.55%
16. Madalas ka bang nagbabasa ng ibang blog?

17. Ano ang iyong pipiliin sa pakikipag-usap tungkol sa mga personal na isyu:
18. Ginagamit mo ba ang internet para:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Magbasa ng balita</td>
<td>96.9%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundan ang mga nangyayari sa mga artista</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sundan ang mga nangyayari sa palakasan</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Average %:** 72.6% 27.4% 95

Total Responses: 32


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>SOMETIMES</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dahil sa Internet, mas madali ang pagkontak sa mga kamag-anak at kaibigan.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>81.8%</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahil sa Internet, mas madali makipagkaibigan sa mga di mo kakilala.</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>38.7%</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahil sa Internet, mas madali sa paggawa ng asignatura at pananaliksik</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>84.4%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dahil sa Internet, mas madali sa mga nakakasayang gawain tulad ng mga online games atbp.</td>
<td>9.4%</td>
<td>53.1%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Average %:** 7.0% 32.0% 60.9% 128

Total Responses: 33
SURVEYS OF NEW MEDIA USE IN BUENAVIDA

Present educational level:

![Pie chart showing educational levels of respondents. 73% have high school level, 27% have college level.]

1. What is your age?

![Bar graph showing age distribution of respondents.]

Ages: 12-14 yrs old, 15-17 yrs old, 18-20 yrs old, 21-23 yrs old

Number of respondents: 0, 4, 12, 7, 1
2. What is your gender?

3. Do you have landline?
4. Do you have computer at home?

Percentage of Respondents who have computer at home

- 43% Desktop (A)
- 23% Laptop (B)
- 19% None
- 15% Both A & B

5. How do you connect to the Internet?

Connection use to the internet

- 42% A. Dial-up
- 27% B. DSI
- 8% C. Wireless
- 8% D. None

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6. Do you visit an Internet Café? How many times a week?

![Number of Respondents who visit internet cafe in a week](image)

7. How many hours a week do you spend on the Internet?

![Number of hours spend by the respondents on the internet cafe](image)
8. If you have an Internet connection at home, do you still visit Internet Cafés? Why?

Percentage of Respondents with computer connection at home and still visit internet cafe

- Yes: 38%
- No: 62%
9. Do you chat online with

Respondents chat online with

Number of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Members</th>
<th>Friends</th>
<th>To make new friends</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. What do you use for chatting?

Applications use by the respondents in chatting

Number of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yahoo Messenger</th>
<th>Skype</th>
<th>Webcam</th>
<th>All of them</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. Which of the following sites do you use?

![Sites use by the respondents in chatting](image)

12. How many friends/members do you have in each of these sites?

![Percentage of friends/members of the respondent](image)
13. Indicate which activity you spend most time in the social networking sites above:

14. Do you have blog?
15. Do you regularly read other people’s blogs? How often a week?

**Percentage of Respondents who regularly read others people’s blog**

- **YES**: 19%
- **NO**: 81%

16. Which do you prefer for discussing personal issues:

**Respondent’s preferences in discussing personal issues**

- A. face to face: 16
- B. cellphone: 8
- C. Internet: 2
17. Do you use the Internet to:

**Respondents use the internet to:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. read the news</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. follow celebrities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. follow sports events</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. others</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. What activities, interests, etc, do you do when not online?

**Respondent's activities, interests, etc., do when not online**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Texting</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Stays at home</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. Watching television</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. Hangout w/ friends</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
19. Is your life better, easier because of the Internet:

![Bar chart showing respondent's life easier because of the Internet.

- A. Its easier to keep in contact with relatives and friends
- B. Its easier to make new friends
- C. Its easier for homework and research
- D. Its easier for fun activities, such as games, etc
- All of them

Bar chart shows that All of them is the most common reason mentioned by respondents.]


Ling, R. (2009). What would Durkheim have thought?: Living in (and with) the information


ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research was supported by the Institute of Philippine Culture Merit Research Award funded by the Ford Foundation. Valuable encouragement was provided by colleagues at the University of the Philippines and the Ateneo de Manila University. Colleagues abroad such as Danny Miller, Leopoldina Fortunati, Patrick Pui-lam Law, James Katz, Itaru Nagasaka & Sakari Taipale provided important insights. Melissa Macapagal and Gino Dizon made the online version more readable.
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