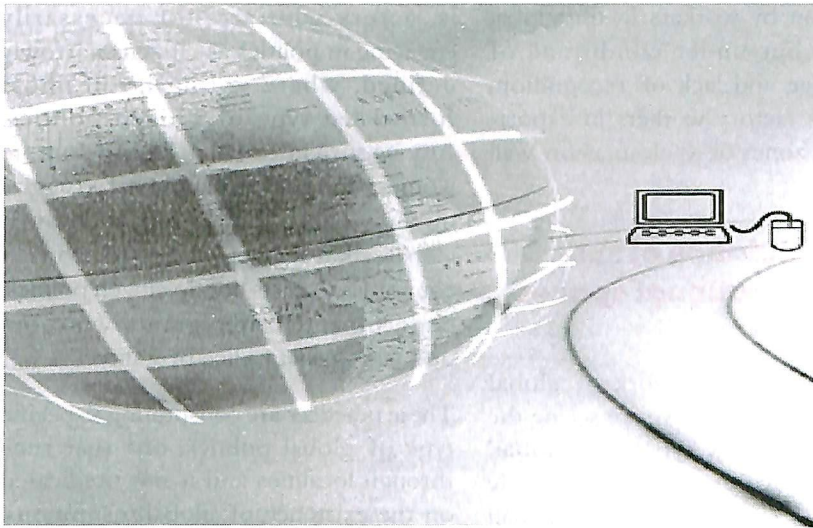# LOCAL ACTORS IN GLOBAL POLITICS

By Saskia Sassen

The infrastructure of globalisation

Globalisation

and the new information and communication technologies (ICTs) have enabled a variety of local activists and organisations to enter international arenas once exclusive to national states. Multiple types of claim-making and oppositional politics articulate these developments. Further, going global has been partly facilitated and conditioned by the infrastructure of the global economy, even as the latter is often the object of those oppositional politics.

The organisational side of the global economy materialises in a worldwide grid of strategic places, uppermost among which are major international business and financial centres—global cities. We can think of this global grid as constituting a new economic geography of centrality, one that cuts across national boundaries and increasingly across the old North-South divide. It has emerged as a transnational space for the formation of new claims by global capital but also by other types of actors, one way in which cities can become part of the live infrastructure of global civil society. The space constituted by the worldwide grid of global cities, a space with new economic and political potentialities, is perhaps the most strategic, though not the only space for the formation of transnational identities and communities (e.g., Bonilla et al., 1999; Glasius et al., 2002). An important question is whether it is also a space for a new politics, one going beyond the politics of culture and identity while likely to remain at least partly embedded in it.

Large cities in both the global South and the global North are the terrain where a multiplicity of globalisation processes assumes concrete, localised forms. A focus on cities allows us to capture,

further, not only the upper but also the lower circuits of globalisation. These localised forms are, in good part, what globalisation is about. Further, the thickening transactions that bind cities across borders signal the possibility of a new politics of traditionally disadvantaged actors operating in this new transnational economic geography. This is a politics that arises out of actual participation by workers in the global economy, but under conditions of disadvantage and lack of recognition, whether as factory workers in export-processing zones or as cleaners on Wall Street.

The ascendance of sub- and trans-national spaces and actors

The cross-border network of global cities is a space where we are seeing the formation of new types of 'global' politics of place that contest corporate globalisation, environmental and human rights abuses, and so on. The demonstrations by the alter-globalisation movement signal the potential for developing a politics centred on places understood as locations on global networks. This is a place-specific politics with global span. It is a type of political work deeply embedded in people's actions and activities but made possible partly by the existence of global digital linkages. These are mostly organisations operating through networks of cities and involving informal political actors—that is, actors who are not necessarily engaging in politics as citizens narrowly defined, where voting is the most formalised type of citizen politics. Among such informal political actors are women who engage in political struggles in their condition as mothers, anti-globalisation activists who go to a foreign country as tourists but do citizen politics, undocumented immigrants who join protests against police brutality.

These practices are constituting a specific type of global politics, one that runs through localities and is not predicated on the existence of global institutions. The engagement can be with global institutions, such as the IMF or WTO, or with local institutions, such as a particular government or local police force charged with human rights abuses. Theoretically, these types of global politics illuminate the distinction between a global network and the actual transactions that constitute it—the global character of a network does not necessarily imply that its transactions are equally global, or that it all has to happen at the global level. It shows the local to be multiscalar. Computer-centred technologies have also here made all the difference; in this case the particular form of these technologies is mostly the public access Internet.[1] The latter

Among such informal political actors are women who engage in political struggles in their condition as mothers, anti-globalisation activists who go to a foreign country as tourists but do citizen politics, undocumented immigrants who join protests against police brutality.

Key among these current conditions are globalisation and/or globality as constitutive not only of cross-border institutional spaces but also of powerful imaginaries enabling aspirations to transboundary political practice even when the actors involved are basically localised.

matters not only because of low-cost connectivity and the possibility of effective use (via e-mail that avoids Microsoft's Windows-based programs) even with low bandwidth availability, but also and most importantly, because of some of its key features. Simultaneous decentralised access can help local actors have a sense of participation in struggles that are not necessarily global but are, rather, globally distributed in that they recur in locality after locality. In so doing these technologies can also help in the formation of cross-border public spheres for these types of actors, and can do so a) without the necessity of running through global institutions,[2] and b) through forms of recognition that do not depend on much direct interaction and joint action on the ground. Among the implications of these options are the possibility of forming global networks that bypass central authority, and especially significant for resource-poor organisations, that those who may never be able to travel can nonetheless be part of global struggles and global publics.

Such forms of recognition are not historically new. Yet there are two specific matters which signal the need for empirical and theoretical work on their ICT-enabled form. One is that much of the conceptualisation of the local in the social sciences has assumed physical/ geographic proximity and thereby a sharply defined territorial boundedness, with the associated implication of closure. The other, partly a consequence of the first, is a strong tendency to conceive of the local as part of a hierarchy of nested scales, especially once there are national states. To a very large extent these conceptualisations hold for most of the instantiations of the local today, more specifically, for most of the actual practices and formations likely to constitute the local in most of the world. But there are also conditions today that contribute to destabilise these practices and formations and hence invite a reconceptualisation of the local that can accommodate a set of instances that diverge from dominant patterns. Key among these current conditions are globalisation and/or globality as constitutive not only of cross-border institutional spaces but also of powerful imaginaries enabling aspirations to transboundary political practice even when the actors involved are basically localised.

Women have become increasingly active in this world of cross-border efforts. This has often meant the potential transformation of a whole range of 'local' conditions or domestic institutional domains—such as the household, the community, or the neighbourhood, where women find

themselves confined to domestic roles—into political spaces. Women can emerge as political and civic subjects without having to step out of these domestic worlds (e.g., Chinchilla & Hamilton, 2001). From being lived or experienced as non-political or domestic, these places are transformed into micro-environments with global span (Sassen, 2003a).

> . . . the possibility of a new type of politics centred in new types of political actors. It is not simply a matter of having or not having power. These are new hybrid bases from which to act.

What I mean by the term 'micro-environment with global span' is that technical connectivity links even resource-poor organisations with other similar local entities in neighbourhoods and cities in other countries. A community of practice can emerge that creates multiple lateral, horizontal communications, collaborations, solidarities, and supports. This can enable local political or non-political actors to enter into cross-border politics.

The city is a far more concrete space for politics than the nation. It becomes a place where non-formal political actors can be part of the political scene in a way that is more difficult, though not impossible, at the national level. National politics needs to run through existing formal systems, whether the electoral political system or the judiciary (taking state agencies to court). To do this you need to be a citizen. Non-formal political actors are thereby more easily rendered invisible in the space of national politics. The space of the city accommodates a broad range of political activities—squatting, demonstrations against police brutality, fighting for the rights of immigrants and the homeless—and issues, such as the politics of culture and identity, gay and lesbian and queer politics. Much of this becomes visible on the street. Much of urban politics is concrete, enacted by people rather than dependent on massive media technologies. Street-level politics makes possible the formation of new types of political subjects that do not have to go through the formal political system.

It is in this sense that those who lack power and are "unauthorised" (i.e., unauthorised women, immigrants, those who are disadvantaged, outsiders, discriminated minorities) can gain *presence* in global cities, vis-à-vis power and vis-à-vis each other (Sassen, 2002b). A good example of this is the Europe-wide demonstrations of largely "Turkish" Kurds in response to the arrest of Ocalan—suddenly they were on the map not only as an oppressed minority but also as a diaspora in their own right, distinct from the Turks. This signals, for me, the possibility of a new type of politics centred in new types of political actors. It is not simply a matter of having or not having power. These are new hybrid bases from which to act. There are a growing number of organisations that are largely focused on a variety of grievances of powerless groups and individuals. Some are global and others national. While powerless, these

individuals and groups are acquiring presence in a broader politico-civic stage.[3]

Of central importance for gauging the socio-political implications for women of their presence in, and use of cyberspace is the potential transformation of a whole range of "local" conditions or institutional domains where women remain the key actors, into "microenvironments with global span." Among these domains are the household, the community, the neighbourhood, the local school and health care provider, and other such places. What I mean by their transformation into microenvironments with global span is that technical connectivity will create a variety of links with other similar local entities in other neighbourhoods in the same city, in other cities, and in neighbourhoods and cities in other countries. A community of practice can emerge that creates multiple lateral, horizontal communications, collaborations, solidarities, supports. It can enable women (or feminist subjects generally, i.e., including men who function as feminist subjects) to pursue projects not easily accommodated in their local, often limiting and oppressive, situation.

This brings with it a number of significant possibilities. Whereas before women's engagement in these domestic or family-related institutions reproduced their isolation from larger public spheres and cross-border social initiatives, that engagement now can emerge as the anchor for participation in a larger, including global, network of localities. Secondly, in a context where globalisation has opened up the world of international transactions to non-state actors of all sorts, women, especially through NGOs have gained a whole new ascendancy.[4] Whereas before women interested in international relations were typically confined to what was at the time a fairly invisible and hardly influential world of NGOs, today NGOs are emerging as key players and therewith propelling women into situations they rarely had access to in the past. Cyberspace makes it possible for even small and resource-poor NGOs to connect with other such NGOs and engage in global social efforts. This is an enormous advance for women engaged in certain types of struggles, particularly those concerning women's issues, whether these are fought through women's organisations or through more general NGOs, such as human rights organisations.

This is one of the key forms of critical politics that the Internet can make possible—a politics of the local with a big difference in that these are localities connected with each other across a region, a country, or the world. Although the network is global this does not mean that it all has to happen at the global level. The architecture of digital networks, primed to span the world, can actually serve to intensify transactions among

in a context where globalisation has opened up the world of international transactions to non-state actors of all sorts, women, especially through NGOs have gained a whole new ascendancy
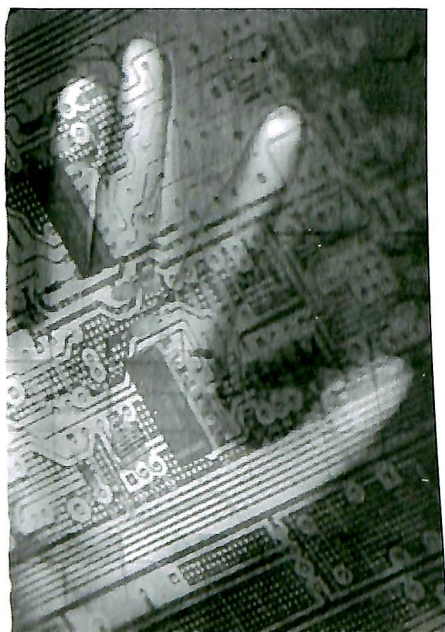
residents of a city or region, it can serve to make them aware of neighbouring communities, gain an understanding of local issues that resonate positively or negatively with communities that are right there in the same city rather than —in the name of the power of tele-communications—with those that are at the other end of the world. Or it serves to intensify transactions around the local issues of communities that <u>are</u> at opposite ends of the world. It is a peculiar mix of intense engagement with the local, with place, and an awareness of other "locals" across the globe. In brief, social activists can use digital networks for global or non-local transactions <u>and</u> for strengthening local communications and transactions inside a city or rural community. Recovering how the new digital technology can serve to support local initiatives and alliances across a city's neighbourhoods (Riemens & Lovink, 2002) is extremely important in an age where the notion of the local is often seen as losing ground to global dynamics and actors and the digital networks are typically thought of as global.

This is about the global as a multiplication of the local. These are types of sociability and struggle deeply embedded in people's actions and activities. They are also forms of institution-building work that can come from localities and networks of localities with limited resources and from informal social actors. We see here the potential transformation of women, "confined" to domestic roles, who can emerge as key actors in global networks without having to leave their work and roles in their communities. From being experienced as purely domestic, these "domestic" settings are transformed into microenvironments located on global circuits. They do not have to become cosmopolitans in this process, they may well remain domestic in their orientation and remain engaged with their households and local community struggles, and yet they are participating in emergent global social circuits.

Forging of new political subjects

Adams (1996), among others, shows us how telecommunications create new linkages across space that underline the importance of networks of relations and partly bypass older hierarchies of scale. Activists can develop networks for circulating place-based information (about local environmental, housing, political conditions) that can become part of political work and strategies addressing a global condition—the environment, growing poverty and unemployment worldwide, lack of accountability among multinationals, etc. The issue here is not so much the possibility of such political practices— they have long existed even though with other mediums and with other velocities. The issue is rather one of orders of magnitude, scope and simultaneity—the technologies, the institutions and the imaginaries that mark the current global digital context inscribe local political practice with new meanings and new potentialities.[5]

There are many examples that illustrate the fact of new possibilities and potentials for action. There is the vastly

expanded repertory of actions that can be taken when electronic activism is also an option. The "New Tactics in Human Rights Project" of the Centre for Victims of Torture has compiled a workbook with 120 anti-torture tactics, including exclusively online forms of action. (www.cvt.org/new_tactic/tools/index.html). The website of the NY-based Electronic Disturbance Theatre, a group of cyberactivists and artists, contains detailed information about electronic repertories for action (www.thing.net/-rdom/ecd/EDTECD.html). The International Campaign to Ban Landmines, officially launched in 1992 by six NGOs from USA, France, the UK and Germany, evolved into a coalition of over 1000 NGOs in 60 countries. It succeeded when 130 countries signed the Landmines Ban Treaty in 1997 (Williams, 1998). The campaign used both traditional techniques and ICTs. Internet-based media provided mass distribution better and cheaper than telephone and fax (Scott, 2001; Rutherford, 2002). Jubilee 2000 used the Internet to great effect. Its website brought together all the information on debt and campaign work considered necessary for the effort; and information was distributed via majordomo listserve, database and email address books.[6] Generally speaking pre-existing online communication networks are important for these types of actions and for e-mail alerts aiming at quick mobilisation. Distributed access is crucial—once an alert enters the network from no matter what point of access, it spreads very fast through the whole network. Amnesty's Urgent Action Alert described above is such a system. However, anonymous websites are definitely part of such communication networks—this was the case with www.S.11.org, a website that can be used for worldwide mobilisations insofar as it is part of multiple online communication networks. The Melbourne mobilisation against the regional Asian meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) (Sept 11-13, 2000) brought activist groups from around Australia together on this site to coordinate their actions, succeeding in paralysing a good part of the gathering, a first in the history of the WEF meetings (Redden, 2001). There are by now several much–studied mobilisations that were organised online, e.g., against the WTO in Seattle in 1999 and against Nike, to mention two of the best-known.[7]

An important feature of this type of multiscalar politics of the local is that it is not confined to moving through a set of nested scales from the local to the national to the international, but can directly access other such local actors whether in the same country or across borders. One Internet-based technology that reflects this possibility of escaping nested hierarchies of scale is the online workspace, often used for Internet-based collaboration. Such a space can constitute a community of practice (Sharpe, 1997) or knowledge network

There is the vastly expanded repertory of actions that can be taken when electronic activism is also an option.

(Creech & Willard, 2001). An example of an online workspace is the Sustainable Development Communications Network, also described as a knowledge space (Kuntze, Rottmann, & Symons, 2002) set up by a group of civil society organisations in 1998; it is a virtual, open, and collaborative organisation aiming at doing joint communications activities to inform broader audiences about sustainable development and build members' capacities to use ICT effectively. It has a tri-lingual sustainable development gateway to integrate and showcase members' communication efforts. It contains links to thousands of member-contributed documents, a job bank, and mailing lists on sustainable development. It is one of several NGOS whose aim is to promote civil society collaboration through ICTs; others are the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), One World International, and Bellanet.

At the same time, this possibility of exiting or avoiding hierarchies of scale does not preclude the fact that powerful actors can use the existence of different jurisdictional scales to their advantage (Morrill, 1999) and the fact that local resistance is constrained by how the state deploys scaling through jurisdictional, administrative and regulatory orders (Judd, 1998). On the contrary, it might well be that the conditions analysed, among others, by Morrill and Judd force the issue, so to speak. Why work through the power relations shaped into state-centred hierarchies of scale? Why not jump ship if this is an option? This combination of conditions and options is well-illustrated by research showing how the power of the national

government can subvert the legal claims of first-nation people (Howitt, 1998; Silvern, 1999) which has in turn led the latter increasingly to seek direct representation in international fora, bypassing the national state (Sassen, 2003b).[8] In this sense, then, my effort here is to recover a particular type of multiscalar context, one characterised by direct local-global transactions or by a multiplication of local transactions as part of global networks. Neither type is marked by nested scalings.

There are many examples of such types of cross-border political work. We can distinguish two forms of it, each capturing a specific type of scalar interaction. In one, the scale of struggle remains the locality and the object is to engage local actors, e.g., a local housing or environmental agency, but with the knowledge and explicit or tacit invocation of multiple other localities around the world engaged in similar localised struggles with similar local actors. It is this combination of multiplication and self-reflexivity that contributes to constitute a global condition out of these localised practices and rhetorics. It means, in a sense, taking Cox's notion of scaled "spaces of engagement" as constitutive of local politics and situating it in a specific type of context, not necessarily the one Cox himself might have had in mind. Beyond the fact of relations between scales as crucial to local politics, it is perhaps the social and political construction itself of scale as social action (Howitt, 1993; Swyngedouw, 1997; Brenner, 1998) that needs emphasising.[9] Finally, and crucial to my analysis, is the actual thick and particularised content of the struggle or

From struggles around human rights and the environment to workers strikes and Aids campaigns against the large pharmaceutical firms, the Internet has emerged as a powerful medium for non-elites to communicate, support each other's struggles and create the equivalent of insider groups at scales going from the local to the global.

dynamic that gets instantiated.

The second form of multiscalar interaction is one where localised struggles are aiming at engaging global actors, e.g., WTO, IMF, or multinational firms, either at the global scale or in multiple localities. Local initiatives can become part of a global network of activism without losing the focus on specific local struggles (e.g., Cleaver, 1998; Espinoza, 1999; Ronfeldt et al., 1998; Mele, 1999).[10] This is one of the key forms of critical politics that the Internet can make possible: A politics of the local with a big difference—these are localities that are connected with each other across a region, a country, or the world. From struggles around human rights and the environment to workers strikes and Aids campaigns against the large pharmaceutical firms, the Internet has emerged as a powerful medium for non-elites to communicate, support each other's struggles and create the equivalent of insider groups at scales

going from the local to the global.[11] The possibility of doing so transnationally at a time when a growing set of issues are seen as escaping the bounds of nation-states makes this even more significant.

Recovering how the new digital technology can serve to support local initiatives and alliances inside a locality is conceptually important given the almost exclusive emphasis in the representation of these technologies of their global scope and deployment.[12]

And coming back to Howitt's (1993) point about the construction of the geographical scales at which social action can occur, let me suggest that cyberspace is, like the city, a more concrete space for social struggles than that of the national political system. Individuals and groups that have historically been excluded from formal political systems and whose struggles can be partly enacted outside those systems, can find in cyberspace an enabling environment both for their emergence as non-formal political actors and for their struggles.

The mix of focused activism and local/global networks represented by the organisations described above creates conditions for the emergence of at least partly transnational identities. The possibility of identifying with larger communities of practice or membership can bring about the partial unmooring of identities. While this does not necessarily neutralise attachments to a country or national cause, it does shift this attachment to include trans-local communities of practice and/or membership. This is a crucial building block for a global politics of localised actors, that is to say, a politics that can

emerging as a consequence of this thickness of micro-politics is important for strengthening global politics, even as the risk of nationalisms and fundamentalisms is, clearly, present in these dynamics as well.

The types of political practice discussed here are not the cosmopolitan route to the global.[13] They are global through the knowing multiplication of local practices. These are types of sociability and struggle deeply embedded in people's actions and activities. They are also forms of institution-building work with global scope that can come from localities and networks of localities with limited resources and from informal social actors. They do not have to become cosmopolitan in this process, they may well remain domestic and particularistic in their orientation and remain engaged with their households and local community struggles, and yet they are participating in emergent global politics.

incorporate the micro-practices and micro-objectives of people's daily lives and the political passions that can arise out of these daily concerns and struggles. The possibility of transnational identities

---

Saskia Sassen is the Ralph Lewis Professor of Sociology at the University of Chicago, and Centennial Visiting Professor at the London School of Economics.

Her new book is Territory, Authority and Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages *(Princeton University Press 2005). Her other recent books are the edited* Global Networks, Linked Cities *(New York and London: Routledge 2002) and the co-edited* Socio-Digital Formations: New Architectures for Global Order *(Princeton University Press 2005). Her books are translated into sixteen languages*

References

Adams, P. C. (1996). "Protest and the Scale Politics of Telecommunications." Political Geography, 15, *pp. 419-441.*

Allison, J. E. (ed.) (2002). Technology, Development, and Democracy: International Conflict and Cooperation in the Information Age. *Albany, NY: SUNY.*

APCWNSP (Association for Progressive Communications Women's Networking Support Programme) (2000). "Women in Sync: Toolkit for Electronic Networking." In Acting Locally, Connecting Globally: Stories from the Regions (Vol. 3). *Available at http://www.apcwomen.org/netsupport/sync/sync3.html.*

Bellanet (2002). Report on Activities 2001-2002. *Available at http://home.bellanet.org.*

Bonilla, F., Melendez, E., Morales, R., & Torres, M. (eds.) (1999). Borderless Borders. *Philadelphia: Temple University Press.*

Brenner, N. (1998). "Global Cities, Glocal States: Global City Formation and State Territorial Restructuring in

Contemporary Europe." Review of International Political Economy, 5, *pp. 1-37.*

Calabrese, A. & Burgelman, J. (1999). Communication, Citizenship, and Social Policy: Rethinking the Limits of the Welfare State. *Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield.*

Cleaver, H. (1998). "The Zapatista Effect: The Internet and the Rise of an Alternative Political Fabric." Journal of International Affairs, 51, *pp. 621-640.*

Camacho, K. (2001). "The Internet, A Great Challenge for Civil Society Organisations in Central America." In Fundacion Acceso. *Available at http://www.acceso.or.cr/publica/challenges.shtml.*

Chinchilla, N. & Hamilton, N. (2001). Seeking Community in the Global City: Salvadoreans and Guatemalans in Los Angeles. *Philadelphia: Temple University Press.*

Cordero-Guzman, H. R., Smith, R. C., & Grosfoguel, R. (eds.) (2001). Migration, Transnationalization, and Race in a Changing New York. *Philadelphia, Pa: Temple University Press.*

Creech, H. & Willard, T. (2001). Strategic Intentions: Managing Knowledge Networks for Sustainable Development. *Winnipeg: International Institute for Sustainable Development.*

Espinoza, V. (1999). "Social Networks Among the Poor: Inequality and Integration in a Latin American City." In Wellman (ed.), Networks in the Global Village: Life in Contemporary Communities. *Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press.*

Esterhuysen, A. (2000). "Networking for a Purpose: African NGOs Using ICT." Rowing Upstream: Snapshots of Pioneers of the Information Age in Africa. *Available at http://www.piac.org/rowing_upstream/chapter1/full_chapter_1.html.*

Glasius, M., Kaldor, M. & Anheier, H. (eds.) (2002). Global Civil Society Yearbook 2002. *London: Oxford University Press.*

Howitt, R. (1998). "Recognition, Respect and Reconciliation: Steps Towards Decolonisation?" Australian Aboriginal Studies, 1, *pp. 28-34.*

Howitt, R. (1993). "'A World in a Grain of Sand': Towards a Reconceptualisation of Geographical Scale." The Australian Geographer, 24, *pp. 33-44.*

Jubilee 2000. www.oneworld.org/jubilee2000.

Judd, D. R. (1998). "The Case of the Missing Scales: A Commentary on Cox." Political Geography, 17, *pp. 29-34.*

Kuntze, M., Rottmann, S., & Symons, J. (2002). Communications Strategies for World Bank and IMF-Watchers: New Tools for Networking and Collaboration. *London: Bretton Woods Project & Ethical Media. Available at http://www.brettonwoodsproject.org/strategy/commosrpt.pdf*

Leizerov, S. (2000). "Privacy Advocacy Groups versus Intel: A Case Study of How Social Movements are Tactically Using the Internet to Fight Corporations." Social Science Computer Review, 18, *pp. 461-483.*

Mele, C. (1999). "Cyberspace and Disadvantaged Communities: The Internet as a Tool for Collective Action." In Smith & Kollock (eds.), Communities in Cyberspace, *pp. 264-289. London: Routledge.*

Morrill, R. (1999). "Inequalities of Power, Costs and Benefits Across Geographic Scales: The Future Uses of the Hanford Reservation." Political Geography, 18, *pp. 1-23.*

Nettime (1997). Net Critique. *Compiled by Geert Lovink and Pit Schultz. Berlin: Edition ID-Archive.*

Redden, G. (2001). "Networking Dissent: The Internet and the Anti-Globalisation Movement." MotsPluriels, 18. *Available at http://www.arts.uwa.edu.au/MotsPluriels/MP1801gr.html.*

Riemens, P. & Lovink, G. (2002). "Local Networks: Digital City Amsterdam." In Sassen (ed.), Global Networks, Linked Cities, *pp. 327-345. London: Routledge.*

Ronfeldt, D., Arquilla, J., Fuller, G. & Fuller, M. (1998). The Zapatista "Social Netwar" in Mexico. *Santa Monica, California: RAND, MR-994-A.*

Rutherford, K. R. (2002). "Essential Partners: Landmines-Related NGOs and Information Technologies." In Hajnal (ed.), Civil Society in the Information Age. *Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.*

Sassen, S. (2006). Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages. *(Under contract, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.)*

Sassen, S. (2003a). *"Globalisation or Denationalisation?"* Review of International Political Economy, 10*(1)*, February, *pp. 1-22.*

Sassen, S. (2003b). *"The Participation of States and Citizens in Global Governance."* Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies, 10*(1), pp. 5-28.*

Sassen, S. (2002a). *"Towards a Sociology of Information Technology."* Current Sociology. Special Issue: Sociology and Technology, 50*(3), pp. 365-388.*

Sassen, S. (2002b). *"The Repositioning of Citizenship: Emergent Subjects and Spaces for Politics."* Berkeley Journal of Sociology: A Critical Review, 46, *pp. 4-26.*

Scott, M. J.O. (2001). *"Danger-Landmines! NGO-Government Collaboration in the Ottawa Process."* In *Edwards & Gaventa (eds.),* Global Citizen Action. CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Sharp, J. (1997). *"Communities of Practice: A Review of the Literature." Available at http://www.tfriend.com/cop-lit.htm.*

Silvern, S. E. (1999). *"Scales of Justice: Law, American Indian Treaty Rights and Political Construction of Scale."* Political Geography, 18, *pp. 639-668.*

Smith, M. P. (1994). *"Can You Imagine? Transnational Migration and the Globalisation of Grassroots Politics."* Social Text, 39, *pp. 15-33.*

Smith, R. C. (1997). *"Transnational Migration, Assimilation and Political Community."* In *Crahan & Vourvoulias-Bush (eds.),* The City and the World: New York's Global Future. New York: Council of Foreign Relations.

Swyngedouw, E. (1997). *"Neither Global nor Local: 'Glocalisation' and the Politics of Scale."* In *Cox (ed.),* Spaces of Globalisation: Reasserting the Power of the Local, *pp. 137-166.* New York: Guilford.

Taylor, P. J. (2000). *"World cities and territorial states under conditions of contemporary globalisation."* Political Geography, 19*(5), pp. 5-32.*

Warf, B. & Grimes, J. (1997). *"Counterhegemonic Discourses and the Internet."* The Geographical Review, 87, *pp. 259-274.*

Wilks, A. (2001). *"A Tower of Babel on the Internet? The World Bank's Development Gateway."* Bretton Woods Project. *Available at http://www.brettonwoodsproject.org/topic/knowledgebank/k22gatewaybrief.pdf*

Williams, J. & Goose, S. (1998). *"The Internatioal Campaign to Ban Landmines."* In *Cameron, Lawson, & Tomlin (eds.),* To Walk Without Fear: The Global Movement to Ban Landmines. Ontario, CA: Oxford University Press.

WomenAction (2000). *"Alternative Assessment of Women and Media based on NGO Reviews of Section J, Beijing Platform for Action." Available at http://www.womenaction.org/csw44/altrepeng.htm*

WIO (World Information Order) (2002). World-Information Files. The Politics of the Info Sphere. *Vienna: Institute for New Culture Technologies; Berlin: Centre for Civic Education.*

Yang, G. (2003). *"Weaving a Green Web: The Internet and Environmental Activism in China."* China Environment Series, 6. Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Internatioal Centers for Scholars.

Endnotes

[1] *While the Internet is a crucial medium in these political practices, it is important to emphasize that beginning in the 1990s, particularly since the mid-1990s we have entered a new phase in the history of digital networks, one when powerful corporate actors and high performance networks are strengthening the role of private digital space and altering the structure of public-access digital space (Sassen, 2002a). Digital space has emerged not simply as a means for communicating, but as a major new theatre for capital accumulation and the operations of global capital. Yet civil society —in all its various incarnations— is also an increasingly energetic presence in cyberspace. The greater the diversity of cultures and groups, the better for this larger political and civic potential of the Internet and the more effective the resistance to the risk that the corporate world might set the standards. (For cases of ICT use by different types of groups, see e.g., APCWNSP, 2000; Allison, 2002; WomenAction, 2000; Yang, 2003; Camacho, 2001; Esterhuysen, 2000).*

[2] *For instance, in centuries past organised religions had extensive, often global networks of missionaries and clerics. But these partly depended on the existence of a central authority.*

[3] *The case of the Federation of Michoacan Clubs in Illinois (USA) illustrates this mix of dynamics. These are associations of often very poor immigrants that are beginning to engage in cross-border development projects and in that process are mobilizing additional resources and political capital in both their countries of origin and of immigration.*

[4] *For a more theorized account of these issues please see author's "Toward a feminist analytics of globalization."*

[5] *Elsewhere, I have posited that we can conceptualize these "alternative" networks as countergeographies of globalization because they are deeply implicated with some of the major dynamics and capabilities constitutive of, especially, economic globalization yet are not part of the formal apparatus or of the objectives of this apparatus, such as the formation of global markets. The existence of a global economic system and its associated institutional supports for cross-border flows of money, information and people have enabled the intensifying of transnational and trans-local networks and the development of communication technologies which can escape conventional surveillance practices (For one of the best critical and knowledgeable accounts see e.g., WIO, 2002; Nettime, 1997). These counter-geographies are dynamic and changing in their locational features. And they include a very broad range of activities, including a proliferation of criminal activities.*

[6] *But, it must be noted, that even in this campaign, centred as it was on the global South and determined as it was to communicate with global South organizations, the latter were often unable to access the sites (Kuntze, Rottman, & Symons, 2002).*

[7] *There are many other, somewhat less-known campaigns. For instance, when Intel announced that it would include a unique personal serial number in its new Pentium III processing chips, privacy advocacy groups objected to this invasion of privacy. Three groups in different locations set up a joint website called Big Brother Inside to provide an organisational space for advocacy groups operating in two different countries, thereby also enabling them to use the place-specific resources of the different localities (Leizerov, 2000). The Washington DC-based group Public Citizen put an early draft of the MAI agreement (a confidential document being negotiated by the OECD behind closed doors) on its website in 1997 launching a global campaign that brought these negotiations to a halt about eight months later. And these campaigns do not always directly engage questions of power. For instance, Reclaim the Streets started in London as a way to contest the Criminal Justice Act in England that granted the police broad powers to seize sound equipment and otherwise discipline ravers. One tactic was to hold street parties in cities across the world: through internet media participants could exchange notes, tactics about how to deal with the police and create a virtual space for coming together. Finally, perhaps one of the most significant developments is Indymedia, a broad global network of ICT-based alternative media groups located all around the world. Other such alternative media groups are MediaChannel.org, Zmag.org, Protest.net, McSpotlight.org.*

[8] *Though with other objectives in mind, a similar mix of conditions can also partly explain the growth of transnational economic and political support networks among immigrants (e.g., Smith, 1994; Smith, 1997; Cordero et al., 2000).*

[9] *Some of these issues are well-developed in Adam's (1996) study of the Tiananmen Square uprisings of 1989, the popular movement for democracy in the Philippines in the mid-1980s, and the U.S. civil rights movement in the 1950s. Protest, resistance, autonomy and consent can be constructed at scales that can escape the confines of territorially-bounded jurisdictions.*

[10] *One might distinguish a third type of political practice along these lines, one which turns a single event into a global media event which then in turn serves to mobilise individuals and organisations around the world either or both in support of that initial action or around similar such occurrences elsewhere. Among the most powerful of these actions, and now emblematic of this type of politics, are the Zapatistas' initial and several subsequent actions. The possibility of a single human rights abuse case becoming a global media event has been a powerful tool for human rights activists.*

[11] *The Internet may continue to be a space for democratic practices but it will be so partly as a form of resistance against overarching powers of the economy and of hierarchical power (e.g., Calabrese & Burgelman, 1999; see also Warf & Grimes, 1997), rather than the space of unlimited freedom that is part of its romantic representation. The images we need to bring into this representation increasingly need to deal with contestation and resistance to commercial and military interests, rather than simply freedom and interconnectivity (Sassen, 2002).*

[12] *One instance of the need to bring in the local is the issue of what data bases are available to locals. Thus the World Bank's Knowledge Bank, a development gateway aimed at spurring ICT use and applications to build knowledge, is too large according to some (Wilks, 2001). A good example of a type and size of data base is Kubatana.net, an NGO in Zimbabwe that provides website content and ICT services to national NGOs. It focuses on national information in Zimbabwe rather than going global.*

[13] *This has become an issue in my current work: the possibility of forms of globality that are not cosmopolitan. It stems partly from my critique of the largely unexamined assumption that forms of politics, thinking, and consciousness that are global are ipso facto cosmopolitan (see Sassen, 2006).*