Actual and Possible Uses of Cyberspace by and among States, Diasporas and Migrants.

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This paper analyzes and reflects on the actual and possible uses of cyberspace by and among states, diasporas and migrants. In particular, I analyze the use of the internet as it figures into state-diaspora and intra-migrant relations among and between Latin American sending states and their migrants, drawing mainly on the Mexican case. I analyze various uses of the internet and related technologies: how states have used and are planning to use the internet to help create or serve diasporas among their migrants, or to resolve domestic political problems or pursue a globalization strategy; how migrants and dissidents have used these technologies to circumvent the states control over public forums; and how migrants and others in home and host countries have used these technologies in their daily lives.

Part of the reason for the focus on use of the internet and related technologies within the context of diaspora-state relations is to avoid the internet=s seductive promise of a modern world of limitless possibilities. Many have already fallen prey to the image of unboundedness that the internet offers. The internet has been heralded as a force that will promote democratization and human rights, the spread of capitalism and entrepreneurship, and help create a global civil society that so effortlessly spans nation-state borders as to make them irrelevant. Similarly, some argue that the internet and the larger forces of transnationalization stemming from migration will help create a kind of Athird space@ for migrants between sending and receiving nations, enabling them to exist partly outside the nation state system. And it may well play important roles in addressing these serious global issues. But many authors assume that the internet will become part of the daily lives of migrants, enhancing their ability to stay connected to their home towns, countries and each other, or that it will enhance their ability to participate in democracy, but do not actually present evidence of such usage or how it affects other processes (Gabrial, 2001). This A>technological frame=... is passed on from scholar to scholar (without) attempt(ing) to illustrate and explain in what ways these technological underpinnings help to create, configure and sustain transnationalism, and in what way

their sues may be problematic.@ (Courtright, 2002: 4; Bijker, 1995; Orlinkowski and Gash, 1994). While the internet and related technologies, such as cell phones, videos and faxes, do create certain kinds of opportunities, the evaluation of their actual or possible impacts must be done it the local and larger contexts.

I also attempt to avoid taking the other extreme, or treating these technologies as unimportant because they are Anot alive@ and hence being unable to change our social world (see Mato, 1997). While of course technology is a tool that acquires importance only in use by humans, what that tool enables humans to do matters because it helps them transform their social and material world. What is possible with a PC and access to the net is much different than what was possible with a typewriter, though in both cases the real work of writing and analyzing is done by the human using the tool.

The paper is intended to speak to two overlapping groups: those analyzing how diasporas and the internet function, and those attempting to use them for positive ends B policy makers, non profit organizations, and activists, and other Aglobal problem solvers@.The paper proceeds in two parts. The first part lays out some dimensions of the internet infrastructure and usage in Latin America and among Latin American migrant populations in the US and Latin America, and offers brief definitions and theoretical concerns. The second part analyzes some actual and potential uses of the internet and related technologies among Mexican migrants in the US and Mexico and by the Mexican state. The conclusion reflects on the theoretical and policy implications of the analysis[1].

The Internet in Latin America and Among Migrant Diasporas: Definitions and Dimensions

For clarity, it makes sense to define which social actors or technologies I will focus on in this paper, and to say briefly how these definitions matter. The internet, as I use it, has three parts: email, chat rooms, and web sites. While I will use the covering term internet in most cases, each of these three technologies has different actual and possible uses in terms of diasporas, states and migrants, and hence I identify and discuss each separately where the analysis warrants. By cyberspace, I describe the social space and human relationships made possible by the use of the internet and related technology. These can include personal, social or political relationships between and among individuals, groups, states or other institutions.

The notion of diaspora I use in this paper is somewhat different than the classical notion of a forcibly dispersed people who maintain their sense of peoplehood in exile over a long period of time. The Jews are the classic example; the Armenians are another.The diasporas I analyze here do not result from forcible expulsion, but rather from labor migration to the US of such magnitude that it has produced a population among which significant sectors have come to think of themselves as part of a diaspora, and are seen by the sending state as a diaspora. Their settlement is understood by both sides to be permanent for most migrants and their children.Moreover, my research has discerned a pattern by which Latin American sending states, and others, are attempting to create a diasporic consciousness among their migrants for a variety of reasons, including to continue to the flow of remittances, and to create for themselves a more powerful constituency in the US, along the lines of how they envision the lobby of Israel and American Jews to function. They have done this to bolster their own domestic political fortunes, and as part of a larger effort to integrate themselves into the world economy via closer links with the US, as well as due to the pressures they have faced from migrants living abroad, typically for greater democratization (see Smith, 2003). It is within these complex state-diaspora and intra-migrant relations that I set my analysis of the usage of the internet.

The internet matters for at least three theoretical and practical reasons, both of which are related to the territoriality of the state and migrant transnational social fields. First, the internet enhances the possibilities for simultaneity and community among migrants residing in different locations, inside

and outside their country of origin. Benedict Anderson (1991) discusses how the emergence of print media helped create the national imagined communities necessary for modern nations by enabling people sitting down in distant parts of a nation-state to, for example, open a newspaper and get their understanding of the world at the same time, through the same national lens. Some have overextended in arguing that electronic capitalism B of which the net is an integral part B is necessary for transnational life (Ribeiro, 1996; see Courtright, 2002: 4). I argue that several technologies facilitate this sense of simultaneity, which fosters communal sentiment and action among migrants. These include the internet, but also and especially cell phones and the radio, and land line phones, videos and faxes. As the internet becomes more widely available, its simultaneity enhancing capacity, and its related ability to reinforce identities and attendant practices, should also increase. I also note that the communication between migrants within the host society is just as important a usage of the internet and related technologies as those between migrants and their relatives in the home state, or migrant-sending state relations.

The second two reasons have to do with the state. The internet and related technology will increase the ability of the state to act like states towards their diasporic population B to deliver services, to offer recognition and give political meaning to their activities, and to channel political, social and economic participation. Another reason the internet will matter more in the future is that it creates a public forum that the migrant sending state cannot completely control. It is precisely in this function that the error of the more extreme position B that the internet will make territoriality not matter, and make states irrelevant B becomes clear. The internet and related technologies create public forums and private means of communication over long distances that the state cannot control, and which are relatively cheap for individuals to use. The devolution of this power to create public fora matters, among other reasons, because it enables migrants to engage in two kinds of political activity. First, it enables those outside the country of origin to gain access to media and other resources and to pursue opposition politics without fear of immediate political repression by the sending state, because they reside outside it. Second, it enables those living in the sending state who can be subjected to repression by the state to access support outside the state B including not just other migrants, but also human rights organizations B to access support networks and thus raise the costs of that repression for the sending state. Weber=s (year) definition of the state is relevant here B that human community with a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence within a given territory. Being outside the state=s territory but being able to get back into it via the internet and related technologies, or being inside that territory but being able to reach back out of it, show how the reality of states and territories are two factors that give the internet and related technologies their importance.

Dimensions of Internet Infrastructure and Potential in Latin America

The internet and the cyberspace it creates are fairly recent developments, even in the developed world. From its inception in the late 1960s in restricted military and research sectors of the US government, to its growth into a Anetwork of networks@ by 1992, access to the internet was fairly limited. However, by the early 1990s, the commercial sector began to grow, and Aexploded onto the scene@with the World Wide Web in 1993-4. By 1995, the late coming commercial sector (.com) had outgrown the government (.gov), military, educational (.edu) and organizational (.org) sectors (Molloy, 2001:1). The internet has become as routine a part of many households as a phone book; primary school children use it to do their homework and for recreation. This reality for some in the developed countries hides a Adigital divide@ between those who have computers B and hence the income and class position to support them B and those who do not.

In Latin America, the web has, predictably, spread much more slowly, though it potential importance is greater than its current capacity to disseminate information. Part of the limitation is due to what

may be comparatively called the Adigital chasm@ between the haves and have nots in Latin America, which reflect chasm like income disparities greater than in the developed world. A quick sense of the magnitude of this inequality in Latin America can be gained by looking at the table below, which, alas, suffers from the incomplete data available.

Measure	Mexico	Brazil	Dominican Republic	El Salvador	Ecuador	Guatemala	Haiti	Peru
percentage of population with internet connection	1.1%							
personal computers per 1000 inhabitants	29	30.1			3.9	2.8		5.9
radios per 1000 inhabitants		444	178				55	
television per 1000 inhabitants	193	316	95	250	148	122	5	142
daily newspapers per 1000 inhabitants	113	40	52	50	72	23	3	86
cell phone subscribers per 1000 inhabitants		47	31					
internet hosts per 1000 inhabitants		1.3	0.59					
telephones per 1000 inhabitants		121	93	56	73	31	8	60
public telephones per 1000 inhabitants		3.0	0.6					
adult literacy rate	89.5%	84.5%	82.8%	71.5%	0%	55.5%	47.8%	88.5%
total number of Internet hosts, 1999				815	1,548			4,794

(Source: TILAN, Trends in Latin American Networking. http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/tilan)

These statistics of the internet=s sparse coverage of most of the population in Latin America is reflected in the analysis of business and governmental leaders assessing the region=s potential for e-commerce. According to a report from a conference on AThe Internet in Latin America: Investigating the Boom.@ (www.latinnews.com/consem_images) held during fall 2001, the stark inequalities in the region greatly restrict the Aaddressable market@ for e-commerce. First, the e-commerce market really only consists of Mexico, Brazil and Argentina, and only among the top income brackets. This converts to an estimated addressable market of some 50-60 million in 2003 people out of more than 400 million in the region, and most of this growth is

likely to come from business to business and not business to consumer transactions. Still the report notes that the number of Latin American internet users has grown strongly, from some 4.8 million in 1998 to an estimated 28 million in 2002, and 37 million in 2003.It is worth noting how far Haiti is behind the rest of the region; the lack of dispersed technology throughout the country is one indication of how far it has fallen.

These statistics indicate that the internet is far from ubiquitous in Latin America, notwithstanding popular images of it reaching everywhere, even to the rainforests of Chiapas, as a medium for subComandante Marcos to address a worldwide audience (see Delgado P.,2002; also article on Marcos, 1994?). Yet some Latin American governments are attempting to make immediate use of the internet in governance and service delivery B so called, e-government. Argentina has instituted Atransparency initiatives that enable taxpayers to monitor how their monies are being spent@ (www.cristal.gov.ar), and has begun its own fully online university that has students dispersed throughout Argentina, Latin America, the US and even Japan. Brazil has had a system for receiving income taxes on line since 1997, and expects 80% of all filings to be done this way. It has also embarked on an ambitious experiment in electronic voting, which they hope to initiate in

presidential elections this year. They also have begun a program of installing internet connections at neighborhood kiosks throughout the country, such that each county in the country will have at least one internet link. The plan is to hook these kiosks up as Avirtual merchants@ and also link up public libraries all over the country (www.latinnews.com: p. 2).

The most ambitious plan for universal access are underway in Peru through it Red Cientificia Peruano (RCP or Peruvian Scientific Network). As of 2001, it had established more than 1000 cabinas, or public kiosk internet sites, each with a few PCs, and accounts for roughly 40% of the country=s internet use. While this attempt to democratize access to the internet is worthwhile, Peruvian researchers report that the main use is Arecreational@, and mainly confined to the use of low cost email access. Yet establishing this infrastructure lays creates the possibilities of further uses. Particularly interesting is the fact that El Salvador is creating the same system with the help of the people who run the RCP (www.latinnews.com: p2; Varon Gabai, cited in Block, 2001: 25).

The Dominican Presidential elections of 1996 and subsequent use of the internet by the winner, Leonel Fernandez, are one of the first cases of the use of the internet by states and diasporas to be studied as such, as detailed in the work of Pamela Graham[2] (1998; forthcoming). Fernandez unseated the 89 year old, nearly blind, former dictator Joaquin Balaguer in the election. His was a victory for the Dominican diaspora too. Not only did he campaign in the US and have his mother in the Dominican Republic appeal to those in the US via television advertisements, he was also a migrant himself, who had attended the New York City public schools and held a US green card. His election was both the result of and a catalyst for further mobilization of Dominicans in the US. A significant development in the use of the internet was the establishment of a website by the Central Electoral Board (Junta Central Electora) or CEB. This website posted hourly results from the election, and pictures of the voting, and data from previous elections. In addition, political parties established websites, and several commercial sites for conveying news were developed. These included Hispanet, which posted digests of Dominican news, and Diario Electronico Dominico (Electronic Daily Dominican) or DEDOM.

As with other cases, different kinds of internet technologies played different roles in facilitating diasporic politics. The websites established by the Dominican state and political parties were important sources of information about elections, candidates and other developments. A second layer of interactions occurred in newsgroups, or chatrooms, which some people call the Usenet. This cyberspace functions as a public forum for the discussion of particular topics, within which conduct and postings are governed by group norms and subject to censure. In addition, mailing lists and email were used extensively. In addition, the Dominican government is discussing creating an intra-net that would create an inter-consular web not open to the general public. Graham observes that the internet helps to create public spaces that are easily accessible and that can facilitate the conduct of transnational politics, but also wane with decreased immediate interest in large political events. She found that postings to the newsgroup soc.culture.dominican-rep about the themes of political parties and citizenship or nationality newsgroup fell significantly in 1997 to 629 from 766 the year before, and then to 168 in the first five months of 1998 (Graham, 2001: 6). She notes that these spaces were interactive public spaces, where mobilized actors debated many themes, including the futures of Dominicans in the US in American and Dominican politics. She also raises two important questions. The first is about the ephemeral nature of this public space. She notes that most of the websites covering the 1994 presidential elections no longer exist, and that information can be posted to and from the internet virtually at will and without review. Second, she observes that some 85% of the Dominicans in the New York do not use the internet, and many in the Republic lack basic necessities. As one critic put it B what does it matter if the president uses email to communicate with those in the US if so many Dominicans do not have electricity?

While the internet is not as pervasive as the media=s depictions or the popular imagination would have it, the above cited example of subComandante Marcos is instructive. The internet and related technologies need not be available to a mass public for them to be important for politics and social change. Rather, other tasks also matter: they must only help create experiences of simultaneity and arenas for public debate while escaping a repressive state, or to enhance communications within the diaspora, between migrants, or between a sending state and its diaspora. While universal access would enhance the internet=s ability to help foster democracy, it is not necessary for the work of migrants, states and diasporas to matter or to be influenced by the internet. With this point in mind, I now turn to some actual and potential uses of the internet and related technology in the Mexican case.

Actual and Possible Uses of the Internet and Related Technologies in Mexico

The internet and related technologies are used quite extensively by those in the Mexican diaspora, as well as by the Mexican state in its attempts to create a diaspora among its Mexican migrants in the US and their US born children. Here I offer a quick recapping of why the Mexican state wanted to create this diaspora, and then offer an examination of how it has used internet and other technologies in doing so, and then reflect on other uses to which the web might be put in the future. Let me also post the caveat that some form of diasporic consciousness would very likely have emerged in the Mexican case regardless of what the Mexican state did, but the fact that they purposefully tried to form a diaspora has greatly increased its influence in Mexico a decade later. Mexico=s desire to create a diaspora among its migrants stemmed from several factors (Smith, 2003). First, Mexico was shocked by the long term settlement of so many of its citizens in the US when afforded the opportunity by the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act; this settlement converted the image of migrants from permanent sojourners to settlers in the mind=s of Mexico=s elite. Second, the political elite began to realize then extent of the economic contribution by migrants to the national economy. Currently, Mexico receives between 6- billion US dollars in remittances each year, making it one of the largest sectors in the economy, bigger than export agriculture and maquiladoras. Third, the PRI (Revolutionary Action Party) that had been in power continuously until it lost the presidential elections of 2000, began to increase its outreach to Mexicans in the US in part in reaction to the efforts of opposition leaders during the 1988 presidential elections. In particular, Cuahuatemoc Cardenas broke with the PRI in 1988 to run for president and form the left of center PRD (Party of the Democratic Revolution), and had campaigned to enthusiastic receptions in the US. This scared the PRI, and alerted it to both the depth of anger at it among migrants and to the great potential for organizing the opposition that the US afforded. As a result, the PRI started a project of *acercamiento*, or closer relations, with Mexicans in the US, in an attempt to quiet and neutralize the opposition in the US. This project included the Program for Mexican Communities Abroad, in addition to other programs. The other component of acercamiento was to integrate more closely economically and politically with the US, via NAFTA. The closer relations with Mexicans in the US helped quiet opposition to NAFTA by Mexican groups, for example.

Among the explicit goals of the project of acercamiento was to create a Mexican diaspora where one had not existed before.There has always been Mexican migration to the US, but starting in 1990 the Mexican state made it a policy goal to cultivate closer links with migrants in the US, and to create or reinforce a sense of belonging to the Mexican nation among them and their US born children. We can call this a diasporic policy and the state apparatus used to implement it a diasporic state agency. These terms merit a moment=s reflection because the classical notion of diaspora implies stateless dispersal. In this case, the nation is dispersed beyond the state, but the state attempts to create another layer or form of membership and belonging for them B a diasporic belonging, usually understood in terms of the relationship between American Jews and Israel. Despite these efforts,

migrants in the US continued to mobilize against the PRI, helped by the increasingly strong opposition in Mexican domestic politics, which, among other measures, forced a change in the Mexican constitution making permissible for Mexicans in the US vote (NOTE). The end result was that migrant influence in the 2000 election went heavily in favor of ultimate winner, Vicente Fox.

What are the possible and actual uses of the internet and related technologies in the history of Mexico-Mexican migrant relations? A first concrete outcome has been the increased use of the internet and related technologies by the Mexican government, and plans for further use. Mexican Consular offices throughout the US now have websites that offer instructions on the kinds of services they offer and how to secure them, and information about a variety of other things from immigration law to English classes to the Mexican Cultural Institutes. Email and other such technologies are routinely used for communication between the Consulates in the US and a variety of Mexican institutions, including schools, municipal authorities, and the police. These are especially important institutions for migrants because of the need for birth and baptismal certificates, police and military records, and the like. There are plans to create websites for the Consulates that would make many of these services more available from anywhere in the US or Mexico, and decrease wait times and otherwise improve service B a Consular intra-net. There are even discussions of creating secure websites via which migrants would be given a password and be able to sign on to get access to such documents themselves. There is also a great deal of previously hard to obtain public information available on the internet. For example, the Federal Electoral Institute in Mexico maintains a good website where one can get electoral results down to the municipal (municipality) level for the entire country.

Another kind of internet use involves that which sustains the ties of transnational communities and transnational politics. For example, among some local or regional community leaders, email and cell phones are routinely used to keep in contact with those living in Mexico. Moreover, many community of origin clubs in the US have set up their own websites, or have pressured the municipal government of their home town to set up a website. Such sites have become increasingly important because they provide public forums for recognition, declaration, and contestation, three analytically separate but related kinds of public performance. One case in point is that of the ATomato King@ Andres Bermudez, a Mexican migrant who became a wealthy tomato grower in the US and a US citizen, and then ran for and won the post of mayor of his native city of Jerez in the Mexican state of Zacatecas (Smith, forthcoming). He was encouraged to run by both the governor of the state, Ricardo Monreal, and the President of Mexico, Vicente Fox. He won the election but was stripped of his victory because he had not been resident back in Mexico for the required full year before he ran. His supporters used internet technology to organize and publicize knowledge of the case and their opposition to it. They posted websites with documents related to the case, including statements by Bermudez himself decrying his treatment as a second class citizen. They also used email and listserves extensively to disseminate awareness of what was happening and of the websites. The PRI, which opposed Bermudez, also posted articles on its websites that not only explained their support for the electoral court=s decision, but also attached Bermudez character and his previous lack of participation in politics in Mexico. Here, the internet is used an alternative public forum to dispute a decision by the Mexican state that migrants disliked; it was seen as important enough that Bermudez opponents saw it as necessary to respond directly to the message they were putting out via this medium.

The municipio of Jerez in the state of Zacatecas offers other interesting examples of how the web can be used. One is that it is possible to check on the web the progress of the public works to which one has contributed. A main activity of the community of origin clubs in the US is to contribute money to the completion of public works. These contributions help the municipio by tapping into the considerable earnings potential of US residing migrants, and helps the migrants by according them

the honor and perhaps even political influence in Mexico *and within the immigrant community in the US*, that goes with such service. It is now possible for one to log onto the Jerez website and see pictures of the progress of the work you are supporting. At the very least, the need to post pictures of progress puts pressure on those in Mexico to produce results, and more quickly. Cases abound throughout Mexico where local officials have stolen some or all of the money, and were aided in these activities by the fact that those residing in the US had little way to check the concrete progress on the public work in question.

A second activity involves the *reinas* or beauty queens in Mexico and in the US. The institution building, and gender and political work that goes on in the production of one of the certamenes or pageants is remarkable. To give a very brief example, for the last fifteen years, the governor of Zacatecas and a large number of municipal presidents have come to Los Angeles for the certamen for Miss Zacatecas of Los Angeles. This pageant is proceeded by a ten day Acampaign@ like tour of the young women throughout Zacatecas, where they and their adult chaperons meet local political and cultural officials in key towns. The proceedings from the pageant, including statements from the women, are available on the web, posted to the website of the organizing club or federation, or in some cases, that of the municipality of Jerez itself. There are other such pageants in Jerez organized by and for those living in Jerez, which are also posted on the web. That these images and messages are widely available in the US and Mexico helps to create a sense of belonging and continuity among those participating in them. That they have a website also gives their activities some measure of added public legitimacy, as if they really controlled a public space. That they have the governor and much of the state government attending their events in Los Angeles speaks to the migrants political importance, and that these things are put up on their website represents one important public representation of their power and legitimacy.

The establishment and use of the web by migrants from municipio of Tulcingo del Valle, Puebla, offer another interesting case.Here, both the creation of the website (Tulcingo.com) and its subsequent use are social and political acts. The website was funded by a migrant from Tulcingo, Jaime Lucero, who became a very successful businessman, with operations in the US and in Mexico, including in his home state of Puebla. He also sponsors an important non profit organization in New York, Casa Puebla, which has close ties to the state government of Puebla and regularly hosts high level leaders from the Mexican President=s office and others who come to the US to meet with migrants. For the inauguration of the website, there was a celebration at Casa Puebla at which this businessman welcomed a literal who=s who of migrant related leaders among Mexican politicians, including Dr. Juan Hernandez, the head of Presidents Office for Immigrant Affairs, Mario Riestra, the head of the Naitonal Coordinating Office for State Offices of Immigrant Affairs, as well as more than 100 local Mexican leaders in New York. The two developers of the web site were a Mexican immigrant who came here as a young man, and

youth who came here very young, grew up and went to college as an undocumented immigrant, finally got his residency a couple of years before. Here we have the internet as a symbolic but also functioning link between dispersed members of a community, including between those living in the host society. It also provides an alternative public sphere in which to visually and in written terms define what it means to be Mexican in New York.

The inauguration of the website served a number of purposes. It gave Casa Puebla a concrete accomplishment to show the immigrant community in New York, especially but not only those from Tulcingo. It also showed Casa Puebla as an important link between the community in New York and powerful Mexican actors, including the President=s office. And it gave, and continues to give, these powerful Mexican actors an arena for manifesting their concerns. For example, a visiting delegation of Mexican politiciansB including members from all three main parties, the PRI, PAN and PRD B and

bureaucrats came to Casa Puebla in 2001 on their way back from meeting with US lawmakers in California and negotiating how it might be possible to actually implement the right to vote from abroad in presidential elections for Mexicans in the next elections. The speeches at the inauguration, and the layout of the website, sent two messages simultaneously: we are still connected to our beloved pueblo (hometown), but we are also as modern and connected as the Big Apple. Juan Hernandez talked about how Tulcingo.com was a perfect expression of Mexican President=s feelings towards migrants B they may have had to come to the US to make their living, but they are still part of Mexico in their hearts, and in Mexico=s heart, and hence were Mexico=s heroes.

The website itself is very interesting. On its main page it has two statements that express the sentiments of its developers and founders. The first is AFor we the founders it is a proud thing to be able, through this medium, to unite our people in a community that despite the distance stays very active contributing to the progress of our land.@. The second is AWe want make Tulcingo.com to be your house in cyberspace. If you have photos, new or stories of your communities, you can send them, we will publish them with pleasure.@. On this main page there is also a menu that offers access to the history of Tulcingo and of tulcingo.com; a list of community events in New York or Tulcingo that people ask to have posted; a section for sports, including pictures of a recent match in Tulcingo between the Pumas team from Tulcingo with the Pumas of New York that traveled home and competed with their namesake in their home town; a Agallery@ of pictures that people want to post; a section for news, including both US and Puebla based news, with links to Puebla newspapers on the web and some stories from the US; a section for New York, including links to a youth group formed by US born or raised or youth migrant Tulcinguenses and a chat room that one can enter; and a section for services, including sending money back to Mexico. There is also a message posting board, on which most messages were posted by young users, both in Puebla and in New York. Many of those in Puebla were non migrants, teen agers in high school or young twenties in college, who were excited about the webpage. Those posting from New York included some members of the youth group, as well as youth who traced their roots to neighboring towns, but signed on here because their town did not have a website yet. There was even a posting from a member of a new Mexican gang formed in New York City, giving a nonworking website that had the name of their gang in it. So this particular usage of the website was mainly confined to youth.

There is an entirely different usage of other parts of the website. For example, there are pictures on the website of the new hospital in Tulcingo, to which Tulcinguenses living in the US contributed. The website showed the results of their labor. There are also shots of various ceremonies related to people and works in Tulcingo and in New York, including shots of the parade of public officials who attended the inauguration (in which I am also listed in one photo). Finally, the gallery shows lots of shots of recent events in New York, and seems oriented as much towards showing those in New York of the growing Mexican presence in the city as to keeping in touch with those in Mexico. For example, they showed pictures of huge crowds, estimated at more than 100,000, attending a Mexican independence day celebration in Queens. Here we have the internet as a virtual space that various social groups and political actors can point to. It is, on the one hand, evidence of the community B because it shows pictures of activities and the website actually exists Band a tool for creating or re-creating that community. For the leaders it is a concrete accomplishment. For youth, it is place to go and see positive images of Mexicans in New York in a space, albeit virtual, that Mexicans control, in contrast to their standing as a minority among minorities in New York, and often victimized by other groups (see Smith, 2001; 2002).

The attack on the World Trade Center fostered another use of the internet, by another Mexican organization in New York.Associacion Tepeyac is a religious, social organization run by a Jesuit Brother, Joel Magallan Reyes, who organized it in 1997. Tepeyac has often been quite critical of the Consulate, Casa Puebla, and tends to take on controversial issues that the Consulate cannot or that

other Mexican organizations do not. For example, Tepeyac organized protests and got a great deal of media attention for its charges that the INS enforcement of immigration laws was racist because it seemed to systematically focus on recent undocumented Mexican immigrants and their workplaces more so than the immigrants of other groups, especially white immigrants in other industries.Tepeyac=s use of the internet in the wake of 9-11 was creative and many have reported it provided a useful service. Of the main Mexican community organizations, Tepeyac was the one that was farthest downtown, and closest to the Towers. In the wake of 9-11, Tepeyac became an important community center that helped many immigrants, not just Mexicans, to file claims and get other kinds of assistance. It opened its cramped offices to the Red Cross too. In the immediate aftermath of the attack, Tepeyac posted a three lists on its website: those people reported killed in the attack, those missing, and those who had been missing but who were now confirmed to be alive. This last category was very important because it gave people a place to go and register themselves as being safe, so that their families and friends could look them up on the site. It was also very important because phone service was hard to get in many places in the immediate aftermath of the bombing.

Casa Puebla and the Consulate used different technologies to respond to 9-11, especially television and international cable, and telephones. They fielded a reported 6000 calls (check number from notes) from people in Mexico and in the US, and also used Spanish language television that is beamed to the US and Mexico, to do what can be described as a 36 hour telathon in which people who were looking for their relatives could come to Casa Puebla and spend a few minutes on the air asking anyone who had seen their relatives to call Casa Puebla and let them know. Staffers at Casa Puebla also read messages from Mexico to people in New York. Casa Puebla has also served as a site at which the Mexican government has dispensed small aid grants to the families of Mexican victims of the 9-11 attack.

There is one final use of the internet related to the 9-11 attack. There erupted a controversy in the wake of the attacks about several related issues: how many Mexican victims there had actually been, which organization could or should speak for the MexicanAcommunity@, and who was or was not doing effective advocacy for them. The Consulate objected to Tepeyac posting its names on the web, because it could not be confirmed who was or was not dead or missing. Instead, the Consulate demanded that Tepeyac, and all other organizations, give it the names and let it speak with one voice for everyone. Tepeyac charged that the Consulate and others were dragging their feet to control information even for this, and that the information was needed now, not later. The controversy raged over how many reported deaths of Mexicans there were B Tepeyac estimated 600, then 500, then 200, and these early high numbers were reported in the US and Mexican media, including the cable giant, Univision. The Consulate ultimately came up with 18 confirmed cases. Tepeyac further charged publicly that Casa Mexico was a PRI front, and that the Consulate was also playing at politics; these organizations rebounded that Tepeyac was playing proxy for the PRD, politicizing things at a time when unity was needed. The web was used as a site for disseminating these debates in the US and in Mexico, especially by Tepeyac.

In the wake of 9-11, there was then another usage of the internet and related technologies. Here the internet was used as a method of communicating between migrants in the US, an intra-diasporic communication in the host society, as well as communication between migrants and their families in Mexico B also intra-diaspora, but then spanning the host and sending societies. Tepeyac=s usage of the internet was outside the sanction of the state in the form of the Consulate, and hence constituted an alternative public space whose importance was greatly enhanced by dire circumstances. The usage of the internet mainly by those living abroad has been documented in other cases, such as the Tongans (Morton, 1999).

Another kind of use of the internet and related technologies can be seen in the case of indigenous community leaders in the southern Mexican state of Oaxaca. In one case, Felipe Sanchez Rojas and Moises Cruz Sanchez, the President and Coordinator, respectively, of the Center for Indigenous Regional Development in Oaxaca and several others were "disappeared" in 1997 by armed men in cars without plates. The two were ultimately freed after a concerted campaign that used several internet and other technologies and various kinds of allies, including various human rights organizations in Mexico and the US. In this case, email, telephone and fax were all used to pressure the Mexican authorities to free them. The single most important pressure, according to Besserer (1998), was the advocacy of Radio Bilingue (Bilingual Radio) in Fresno, California, headed by Hugo Morales, a indigenous leader and Harvard Law School graduate. Radio Bilingue publicly asked American and Mexican officials to pressure the Mexican state to free them. Indigenous Oaxacan organizations also put these demands to Oaxacan state officials and federal Diputados in Fresno, California (Besserrer, 1998). In a 1999 case, then Director of the FIOB, Arturo Pimentel, was threatened with death by masked gunmen, who it was assumed were hired by local caciques angered by FIOB's growing electoral success in Oaxacan. A national and international campaign to win his release was orchestrated by telephone, fax, and most importantly in this case, by email. People throughout Mexico and the US were asked to fax and call the Governor of Oaxaca and the President of Mexico, as well as officials in the US. In the end, Pimentel was released.

It is important to note in these examples above that the internet and other technology acquires force in the context of the social relations and leveraging of power that it helps to make possible. It would not be an accurate rendering to say that the technology did not do anything, because it in fact greatly enhanced the ability of FIOB leaders to, for example, Ascale up@ (Fox, 1996) and make concrete linkages with human rights organizations in the US and Mexico. They had access to a variety of technologies B including email, fax and cell phones B that enabled them to create awareness of their situation and prevent the Mexican state from squashing the event or making its version of events the only one that gets out. On the other hand, the technology itself is only a tool, and indigenous or other groups who have computers but not the relations to scale up and mobilize international support, or who are too poor to actually use most of these modern technologies, do not benefit the way the FIOB has.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper is intended as a first step into analyzing some of the issues involved in the relations between diasporas, states and the usage of the internet and related technologies. Throughout the paper, I have attempted to embed my analysis of the uses of these technologies within the their appropriate social and political contexts. More to the point, I have looked at how these technologies play out within at least three other larger relationships: those between states and diasporas, and two sets of intr-diaspora relations, those between migrants in the host country, and those between migrants and their relatives at home in the sending country. I have identified a number of specific usages of the internet by and among states, migrants and diasporas. Usage of the internet and related technology by the Mexican state comes in three forms. First, it uses the internet to sustain and develop its relations with migrants in the diaspora. Second, it currently uses it and plans to expand usage of it to deliver state related services, such as those related to migration and identification. Third, it uses it to dispute alternative accounts being posted about politics in Mexico by those outside the US or outside the centers of power in Mexico. I have also identified a number of uses of the internet and related technologies by the diaspora and migrants. They use it to create an alternative public forum that is both more under their control that can be quickly accessed and updated. They also use it to foster intra-diaspora communications within the host country, and between those in the host and home countries. Finally, they used it under tragic circumstances to communicate and pursue their respective agendas after the 9-11 tragedy.

Anchoring my analysis of internet usage in the analysis of political and social processes helps avoid the clean, modern seductive images created by other analyses B that the internet will of itself create a third space for migrants, enabling long dispersed migrants, exiles or others to easily retain or recreate community without propinquity. I should however point out that there are cases where the internet has been a key technology in creating community where it was greatly attenuated. For example, Alintas et al (2001) Acredit the internet with allowing Crimean Tartars who have been dispersed for centuries, to reinitiate contact worldwide, engage in joint projects, and lobby for their interests (see Courtright, 2001: 9). According to Courtright, their study both examines how the internet empowers these dispersed Tartars, but embeds these claims in an analysis of how the internet systems were set up, how these online activities are linked to off line ones, and how it is related to other institutions and is limited in certain ways. Morton=s (1999) study of Tongan usage of a website offers similar embedded analysis.

I also attempted to avoid the other view, expressed by Mato, that technology cannot have much effect because it is not alive.This view seems to me to lean towards the Luddite end of the spectrum. Of course the technology is not alive, but it does allow living beings to do things that they could not otherwise do. The steamship, in its day, was seen as a revolutionary technology that would make it more possible to live in two places at the same time, and indeed, it did enhance the ability of migrants and stay at homes to remain in meaningful social contact over time and long distances (Gabaccia, 1983; Ostergren, 1988).

In this spirit of specified imagination, I would like to muse briefly on two different kinds of issues related to diaspora that are currently or could be profitably addressed partly via use of the internet and related technologies. The first issue is the abandonment of women and children by their migrant husbands. This problem has many dimensions, including total abandonment by the husband, where no support is offered or further contact made, or partial abandonment, where, for example, money is periodically sent to the family, which remains in extremely difficult financial circumstances. I focus here on the more extreme cases of total or nearly total abandonment, where the main issue becomes a legal one of enforcing child support laws. There currently exists in the US the law needed to garnish the wages of men who do not pay child support; any man working in the US is subject to the enforcement of laws demanding you support your family, even if your family is in another country. Hence, getting such an order for a woman in Mexico is under the requirements of the law no more complicated than for a woman residing in another US state. The issue is complex in other ways, though. The women in Mexico do not usually know that they have this right, and if they do, they have little way of actually exercising that right.

In 1999 the Ministry of Integrated Family Development in the Mexican state of Tamaulipas was creating a pilot program in 1999 between Texas and Taumaulipas to enforce child support obligations using Texas and Taumaulipas legal mechanisms. The program should be continued and expanded. One suggestion I would make in implementing such a program would be to consider that the problem is first, one of 1) creating institutions that will disseminate the information to women in migrant sending regions and assist them in making claims against their errant spouses 2) creating a social structure of migration that makes it more explicitly shameful that one does not pay, that removes the macho dimension of male migrant culture that equates an image of masculinity with that of sexual freedom abroad. This image persists even though most men's experiences are quite the opposite and even though most men are quite responsible in their family obligations. I think that in many cases it will not be that difficult to locate the errant spouses, and to do sothrough social networks that will also put pressure on them to behave more responsibly.

It would be entirely possible to use the internet in connection with other technologies and social and political mechanisms to help to create both the mechanisms to properly enforce the law and to

create the social pressure for men to honor their obligations.Indeed, while most households in Mexico do not have access to the internet, most municipalities (municipios) do, and it would be possible for there to be created a secure website that these women could get access to via the local municipal DIF where one could register an errant spouse, seeking information about his whereabouts. It might also be possible for US and Mexican authorities to use the web as a tool for coordinating their enforcement of child support or other laws. In a concrete application like this, the web seems like it could be extremely useful. It would require a small initial investment to create the intra-net links between the relevant agencies in each country, but this hardly seems like an insuperable obstacle. If men who were not honoring their obligations knew that their conduct would be reported on the web, many would change their ways to avoid public humiliation.

A second example involves the international human rights community, what some at our conference called an international human rights diaspora, and which Sikkink and Keck (1991) described insightfully as a Atransnational issue network@. Such transnational networks stand among the groups that will be most able to make effective use of the internet, for a variety of reasons.First, these groups are committed to an abstract idea B human rights B and see themselves as allies of others like them all over the world. They are also highly linked in to the web and other technologies. They are likely to be not only using the web and related technologies, but helping to fund others to create their websites, get access to email etc etc because many of them are in large NGOs and foundations, such as the Ford or Rockefeller Foundations, or have links with these or with first world universities. Moreover, this group more than many sees the web as a potentially useful tool because oppressive states use control over information and its dissemination to keep power. Hence, prestigious foundations sponsor work on information technology, international cooperation, and global security, and specific projects. Two deserve merit here. The Martus Project is creating software that will Aarchive and disseminate information about human rights violations to international human rights organizations... (enabling access to) current, secure, and relevant information that previously has been made unavailable due to confiscation, destruction, or neglect.@APeekabooty@ the second project, is being designed by a group of hackers to enable Ahuman rights workers in countries that censure web content access to restricted websites.@. (see www.ssrc.org/programs/itic).

The point here is that different kinds of issues will point to different kinds of uses of the web and related technologies within different kinds or dimensions of relations between diasporas and states. In the case of the abandoned women, the states involved would be primary players, and would directly or through cooperation with advocacy agencies in either country, press for the rights of the abandoned women and families. In the case of human rights, some of the states in question would be deliberately cut out of the loop as they are the aggressors in the scene. Other states, like the US and Europe, would typically be expected to play supporting roles and to be the physical site at which much of this work of such transnational issue networks gets done.

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