

**INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION
TECHNOLOGIES (ICTs) AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN
AN 'IT CITY': EXPERIENCES OF CIVIC AND
POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IN BANGALORE**

ANURADHA RAO

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

2014

**INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION
TECHNOLOGIES (ICTs) AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN
AN 'IT CITY': EXPERIENCES OF CIVIC AND
POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT IN BANGALORE**

ANURADHA RAO

(M.A. (Political Science), Jawaharlal Nehru
University, Delhi)

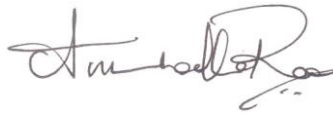
A THESIS SUBMITTED
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATIONS AND
NEW MEDIA
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

2014

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is my original work and it has been written by me in its entirety. I have duly acknowledged all the sources of information which have been used in the thesis.

This thesis has also not been submitted for any degree in any university previously.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anuradha Rao', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Anuradha Rao

28 November, 2014

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It's finally time to thank everyone who made this possible, and to move on from this gruelling, yet rewarding, phase of my life. First of all, none of this would be possible without the love and support of my family, who encouraged me to weather all the storms that the PhD process brought. And of course, my Communications and New Media (CNM) family at NUS, especially my supervisor, Prof. Mohan Dutta, who ensured that the dissertation was signed, sealed and delivered. But let's start from the beginning.

I'd like to sincerely thank all my respondents, for giving me their valuable time, for patiently answering a barrage of questions, and members of *Hasiru Usiru* and *Praja* for agreeing to follow-up interviews as well. I would also like to thank all those in Bangalore who helped me with my inquiries, spoke to me informally, arranged for interviews with hard-to-reach individuals and groups, invited me to attend events, conferences and workshops, referred me to relevant literature, and generally made my research so much more fruitful. Special thanks to Dr. M.V. Rajeev Gowda and Dr. Smita Srinivas, who provided critical inputs during my Bangalore visits, and supported me in both personal and professional capacities. I would also like to acknowledge past and present colleagues of Public Affairs Centre, notably Dr. Samuel Paul, Dr. Gopakumar Thampi, Dr. Sita Sekhar, Dr. Manjunath Sadashiva, and Sheila Premkumar for providing me the intellectual and practical experiences that allowed me to prepare for the PhD. Thanks also to Dr.

Srikant Patibandla who provided me moral and academic support during my fieldwork.

At CNM, I benefitted from the support of many professors, staff and colleagues over the years. Prof. T.T. Sreekumar's critical reflections made me think in a more academic manner, rather than purely as an activist. He had the confidence in my academic abilities when I did not, convinced me to undertake the PhD, and patiently guided me during the initial rough stages. I am truly grateful for his insights and inspired thinking, and his support as the thesis moved forward. I would like to thank my qualifying examination committee members, Dr. Ingrid Hoofd, and particularly Prof. Rahul Mukherjee, who provided critical inputs as the thesis proposal was taking shape. Special thanks to Dr. Milagros (Millie) Rivera who helped hone my journal article writing skills, and whose positivity created a constructive working environment at CNM, and Dr. Sun Sun Lim, for her encouragement throughout the candidature. The CMN admin staff—Adeline, Suriati, Sumi, Rajam, Malathi, Norizan, Joethy, Jen—have helped me immeasurably over the years, and none more so than Retna. Retna has chased, scared, encouraged, and most of all helped me, all these years, and I am truly thankful for her support above and beyond the call of duty.

I am extremely grateful to my thesis examination committee members, including Dr. Rebecca de Souza and Dr. Weiyu Zhang, who provided constructive feedback in finalizing the dissertation, and shaping it into a document that I am proud of. Of course, none of this would be possible without the guidance and mentorship of my supervisor, Prof. Mohan

Dutta, who came into my PhD life at a difficult juncture. His support, optimism, and guidance were critical to the completion of the thesis, and his combination of intellectual-activism and clarity of purpose motivated and inspired me. I would especially like to thank him for really listening when I spoke, for thrashing out ideas with me, and most of all, for believing in the value of my work.

I couldn't have survived the PhD without my CNM seniors and fellow graduate students, who provided me comfort, intellectual and moral support, fun and laughter during this intense time. A special shout-out to Ganga, Carol, and especially my guru, Cheryll, for their advice and helpful tips on how to survive the PhD; to Kund—my comrade-in-arms, Rong, Kintu, Dazzie, Rachel, John, Mary, and Kai Chong for all the great times and the struggles we had together. These and other CNM peeps (so many of you lovely people, you know who you are!) made student life rewarding and enjoyable, and I couldn't have got through it without them.

I would also like to acknowledge the scholarship and generous travel grants from the National University of Singapore, which allowed me to conduct fieldwork, and make conference presentations in various parts of the world.

To my dear friends, especially in Singapore and India, thank you for putting up with my absences, for taking care of my kids, for arranging desperately needed fun and relaxation opportunities, and for being there for me and the family. There are too many of you to name, but you know who you are and how much you mean to me.

Finally, I have saved the best for last. My family, including my extended family in India, has provided unconditional love and support in this journey. I would like to especially thank my grandparents and parents, who laid the foundation for academic enquiry early on in my life. My parents have provided me boundless opportunities for learning as we travelled the world, and I am forever grateful for their love, knowledge and open-mindedness. Many thanks to my mother-in-law, who has always encouraged me, and been there physically to help out with running the household, whenever the need arose. And thanks to Bhuvan, who has helped so much during my fieldwork, and providing endless fun and games to keep the kids occupied in Bangalore. My sister, Nitya, and my brother-in-law, Angelo, have provided much-needed relief from academic life, and taken care of my children, taking them on play dates and outings, allowing me to write. Special thanks to my super helper, Jocelyn, in whose capable and loving hands I confidently left my children, in order to focus on my studies. My two lovely daughters, Myra and Harika, and my canine baby, Milky, have added new meaning to my life, and reminded me of the simple pleasures of the outside world as I wrote. Finally, I could not have done it without the “tough love” shown by husband, Uthpal, who constantly reminded me that I was capable of completing the thesis, despite the intermittent setbacks. He had to be without me so often and on so many occasions, but ensured I got enough breaks, and I am grateful for his patience and love. It is due to the love and blessings everyone

mentioned here, and so many other well wishers, that this dissertation has materialised. Thank you all!

Anuradha Rao
June 2015

Table of Contents

SUMMARY	X
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Defining Key Terms	2
Establishing the Context: The ICT Landscape and Civic Activism in India	4
Relevance of the Study	6
Research Focus and Objectives: ICT–Civil Society Relationships in an ‘IT City’	8
A Snapshot of the Case Studies	9
Thesis Structure	12
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	14
ICTs and Civil Society for Democratic Engagement.....	14
ICTs and Social Movements, Networked Communities, Protests and Activism .	14
ICTs and Civic and Political Engagement	19
Civil Society: Old and New, the Middle Classes, and ICTs in India	22
Historical Evolution of Civil Society in India.....	23
Diversity, Uncivil Society, and the Civil Society-Political Society Dichotomy	32
The New Middle Classes, New Technologies, and Democratic Engagement	35
New Citizen Activism & Emergence of a “New Civil Society”	38
The Relationship between ICTs and Cities.....	42
Setting the Context: Bangalore City	45
Historical Evolution of Bangalore.....	47
Being an ‘IT City’: Boon and Banes of the New Metropolis	58
Civil Society, Middle Class Modes of Engagement, and Techno-Elites in Bangalore.....	62
Research Questions.....	65
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	69
A Qualitative Research Paradigm.....	69
Case Study	72
Interviews	75
Mediated Interviews	77
Audio Recording.....	78
Sampling	79
Privacy, Confidentiality & Other Ethical Issues	83

Observation: Online and Offline	87
Secondary Data: Filling in the Blanks	89
Data Analysis.....	90
Validity, Verification & Credibility.....	93
CHAPTER 4: CONTEXT OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN BANGALORE.....	96
Civil Society in Bangalore.....	97
Social Innovation and Citizen Participation	97
Critique of Apathy and ‘Elite’ Civil Society.....	100
Bangalore as IT City: Ecosystem, Knowledge and Innovation	102
Civil Society: Leveraging the City’s IT/Knowledge Base.....	107
Civil Society and ICT-based Innovations: The Case of <i>Janaagraha</i>	108
Networks, Community & Expertise	112
Civil Society in the IT Ecosystem: Globality and Cosmopolitanism	113
The IT Industry and Cosmopolitanism.....	115
Limits of Cosmopolitanism: ‘Outsiders’, and the Dichotomy between ‘Old’ & ‘New’ Bangalore	117
The Controversy over Task Forces	119
Cosmopolitanism and the IT City: A Chicken and Egg Situation	121
“Not an IT City”: Exclusion, Invisibility and Contestations	123
Weaknesses in ICT-Civil Society Relationship	128
Limited Urban Decentralisation and the Value of Internet Spaces of Engagement	132
Conclusion	134
CHAPTER 5: <i>HASIRU USIRU</i>—A CASE STUDY	135
Introduction: History and Evolution.....	135
Participants and Motivations.....	140
Structure and Functioning	143
Focal Interest Issues	146
Attitudes Towards and Use of the Internet for Democratic Engagement	148
The Internet as Exclusionary.....	152
The Internet as Amplifier.....	155
The Internet and Civil Society-Political Society Dichotomies	157
The Internet as Space of Ideas, but not Action	159
IT Professionals and Lack of Engagement.....	163

Relationship between the Core Group and E-Group	168
E-group Attitudes: Sceptical, yet Optimistic	172
Factors Influencing ICT Use/Non-Use by the Core Group	175
Expressions of Ideology	179
Implications of Ideology: Contestations, Rigidity, and (Incompatibilities of)	
Traditional Methods of Activism	184
Conclusion	194
CHAPTER 6: PRAJA—A CASE STUDY	196
Introduction: History and Evolution of <i>Praja</i>	196
Participants and Motivations.....	204
Features and Functioning of the Platform.....	208
Space for Public Participation and Citizen-Government Engagement.....	211
Collaborative Space for Citizen Participation.....	211
Extended Space for (Middle Class) Citizen Engagement	213
A “Constructive” Space for Citizen-Government Engagement.....	215
Attitudes Towards and Use of the Internet for Democratic Engagement	220
The Praja Platform: A New Model for Civic Engagement	221
Strengths and Limitations of the Platform	223
On the Ground: Government and Civil Society Connections	233
“Tactical Linkages” with Government	233
Civil Society Connections: Successes and Limitations	236
Relationship with Government and Old Civil Society: Strengths and Limitations	239
Experiences of Engagement with Government	239
Challenges of Engagement with Old Civil Society	246
Distinction between <i>Praja</i> and Old Civil Society.....	252
Engagement vs. Activism.....	252
Different Expressions of Ideology	254
Attitudes towards the Internet: Refuting the Elitist Argument	257
Conclusion	263
CHAPTER 7: COMPARING THE CASE STUDIES	266
Experiences of Structural Advantages and Constraints	266
Attitudes towards Middle-classness, Elitism and Civic Engagement	271
Incompatibilities regarding the Internet and Ideology	272
Incompatible Modes of Claim-Making	276

Nature of Online Discourse	279
Relationship between Structural Design and Deliberation	283
Conclusion	290
CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION	292
Theoretical and Practical Contributions	292
Limitations and Future Research Directions.....	297
REFERENCES	300
APPENDICES	340
Appendix A: Sample Invitation Letter to Resource Persons	340
Appendix B: Sample Participant Information Sheet & Consent Form	341
Participant Information Sheet & Consent Form	341
Appendix C: Sample interview guide for experts/resource persons.....	344
Appendix D: Sample Interview Guide for Case Study (Praja)	345
Appendix E: Examples of Coding and Memos	346
Appendix F: Diagrammatic Representation of Main Categories	348
Appendix G: Images (Website Screenshots).....	349

SUMMARY

This thesis examines the relationship between urban civil society actors and information and communication technologies (ICTs) in the technologising and globalising city of Bangalore, India. Recent academic work on ICTs and civil society has focused on the “spectacle” of urban protests and social movements around the world, including India. These collective actions, amplified by the interconnectedness of digital and mainstream media, have often dominated the discourse on ICTs for democratic engagement. The thesis moves away from a study of protests and activism to focus on the more routine—but equally important—use of ICTs for civic and political engagement. Highlighting the rise of a new set of civil society actors in urban centres that leverage ICTs for various engagement activities, the thesis notes the relevance of examining motivations and interactions of these actors with new technologies.

Employing a qualitative research framework, the thesis uses multiple methods of data collection, including case study research, in-depth semi structured interviews, and online and offline observation, to understand the emerging relationship between ICTs and civil society in Bangalore. Bangalore was chosen as the site of the study due to its status as a preeminent information technology (IT) hub. The city is known as the “Silicon Valley/Plateau” or the “information capital” of India, due to its large concentration of telecommunications and high-technology industries. Moreover, its vibrant civil society, an increased role of the middle classes in civic engagement activities, its global connections and ambitions, and the resultant divisions within the city, make it a fitting location for a study of ICT–civil society connections. The two case studies chosen for in-depth examination are: (a) environmental network and email discussion group, *Hasiru Usiru*, and (b) blog-based citizen-interaction platform, *Praja.in* (*Praja*), and its advocacy arm, Research, Analysis and Advocacy Group (RAAG).

These case studies, as well as interviews conducted with a wide range of government and non-government actors, examine the perceptions and use of ICTs for democratic engagement, particularly within the “IT City” context. This ethnographic representation highlights the social innovations currently underway in Bangalore, and the impacts of the city's IT base on civil society initiatives and activity. At the same time, it dispels notions that ICTs are value neutral, and that civil society actors willingly and unproblematically embrace ICTs in their activities. It shows that access to ICTs does not translate automatically into a willingness or ability to engage deeply with new technologies by civil society, despite being in a media-rich environment. Moreover, by discussing ruptures between traditional and new, ICT-enabled civil society, the thesis highlights complexities arising from intersections between the online and offline spaces of civic engagement. By highlighting strengths and limitations of ICT-enabled civic and political engagement in Bangalore, the thesis provides a grounded account of the role of ICTs in the lives of urban civic actors in a developing “high-tech” city.

Finally, the thesis identifies the emergence of a “new civil society” in India, whose members are largely from new economy industries and corporate backgrounds, and who emphasise information- and technology-based solutions to civic and political issues. As the variety of ICT-based civil society initiatives in Bangalore demonstrate, new civil society members are either tech-savvy or believe in the potential of ICTs for change. This new civil society consists of new brand of ICT-enabled civic activism, as witnessed in the anti-corruption and anti-rape protests that occurred across the country in 2011 and 2012. However, it is also characterised by a “techno-middle class”, which comprises tech-savvy actors engaged in the more routine aspects of civic and political engagement. This new civil society is distinguished from “developmental” or “old civil society” by dint of its emphasis on middle-class priorities and ICT-enabled action. In defining and clarifying differences between these civil society categories, the thesis sheds light on the changing landscape of civil society in India and the significant role of new technologies in this

evolution. By placing the middle classes at the centre of new ICT-enabled engagement efforts, this study contributes to the emerging literature on ICTs and civic and political engagement in India, and it paves the way for future research in this area in other Asian contexts.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

As information and communication technologies (ICTs) have become more accessible to individuals and communities the world over, there has been an extraordinary surge in ICT use for greater civic and political engagement. Nowhere has this trend been more evident than in cities, particularly those embedded in the global system, which are shaped by interactions among technology, society, and space (see Castells, 1989). The torrent of protests and mass movements from 2010 onwards have two elements in common: they are intricately connected and facilitated by the Internet, but often also occupy politically potent spaces in the city, where they gain political leverage for pursuing reform (Marolt, 2014; Padawangi, Marolt, & Douglass, 2014). The “spectacle” of urban protests and social movements, amplified by the interconnectedness of digital and mainstream media (Lynch, 2011; Nanabhay & Farmanfarmaian, 2011), have produced images that often dominate mainstream discourse on ICTs and democratic engagement. However, away from the glare of the media spotlight, a new set of civil society actors in urban centres has been leveraging ICTs for more routine—but no less important—matters of civic and political engagement. As in protests, in these activities as well, “traditional” political actors, such as politicians, activists, journalists, and academics have been joined by ordinary citizens and a wide range of civil society actors to affect change.

This thesis examines synergies between such civil society actors and ICTs, particularly the Internet, in Bangalore City, India, focusing on dynamics of this interaction from the point of view of the shaping forces or actors themselves. The emphasis, therefore, is on how actors view the role of ICTs in their civic activities, including ICTs’ strengths and limitations; how those actors understand their digital experiences; motivations/philosophical orientations directing their technology use (or non-use); and ways in which new technologies feature in discourses on participatory democracy and civic and political engagement. Bangalore was chosen as the site of the study due to its status as a preeminent information technology (IT) hub: the city is known as the “Silicon Valley/Plateau”

or the “information capital” of India, due to its large concentration of telecommunications and high-technology industries. Moreover, its global connections and ambitions, its vibrant civil society, and an increased role of its tech-savvy middle classes in urban governance make it a fitting location for a study of ICT–civil society connections. Moreover, as Bangalore has nurtured greater global aspirations, it has struggled with important consequences of increased internal contradictions and tensions as a result of its participation in the global information economy, precipitating citizen action in physical and virtual spaces. These, and other reasons, for choosing Bangalore as the site of study are discussed in the literature review chapter.

Defining Key Terms

Before proceeding any further, key terms are defined, and distinctions between certain concepts are highlighted.

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs): Defining this term has proved to be a challenging task, given its diverse applications, and the multiplicity of its meanings in various contexts and disciplines.¹ To narrow the task, I first undertook a preliminary review of literature related to ICTs and civic and political participation, democratic engagement, and social work. In many cases, ICTs were not defined at all or were referred to vaguely, which further complicated matters. I finally settled on a comprehensive but simplistic definition, which seemed to resemble closely the idea that civil society actors had of ICTs during fieldwork—and matched the description that I had provided to those who were unaware of the term. Here, *ICTs* are broadly defined as technologies that are used to record, store, and communicate data/information by electronic means, including the Internet, e-mail, short message service (SMS) text messaging, video chat, and social media. ICTs also include all the various computing devices (e.g., laptop computers and smart phones) that carry out a wide range of

¹For instance, Zuppo (2012) found that although there was some degree of commonality, ICTs were understood very differently in relation to socioeconomic development, as an economic sector, in the fields of education and business, and by professional knowledge bodies.

communication and information functions (IGI Global, n.d.; Perron, Taylor, Glass, & Margerum-Leys, 2010).

Civic and political engagement: *Civic and political engagement* refers to citizen participation in civic and political affairs, with the aim of enhancing accountability and democratic decision making by political actors. In democratic societies, such as India, the tradition of citizen–government engagement and citizen involvement in public affairs has been given a boost by the introduction of ICTs. In the specific context of ICT-enabled engagement, political engagement includes activities related traditionally to the political sphere, such as voting and elections, advocating for human rights, and influencing legislation and public policy. Civic engagement is seen as being broader than political engagement, involving information dissemination and participation in a wider range of spheres of activity, such as the environment, transportation and mobility, and identity politics (Banaji & Buckingham, 2013; Foth, Forlano, Satchell, & Gibbs, 2011). The distinction between civic and political engagement is not always clear-cut, an issue that is discussed further in the literature review.

Social movements and activism: ICT-enabled civic and political engagement is distinguished from activism, social movements, and grassroots cultural politics, with the former largely being more mundane and less spectacular than the latter (Banaji & Buckingham, 2013). *Social movements* involve spontaneous or planned protest activities, with ICTs playing a critical role in the mobilization of participants and resources, and in internal and external communication strategies (Garrett, 2006; Van De Donk, Loader, Nixon, & Rucht, 2004). Whereas urban social movements originated in popular uprisings and insurrections against authority in the city (Castells, 1983; Leontidou, 2006), newer social movements are characterized by the creation of broad global coalitions, with transnational networks that, simultaneously, are local and global, and whose movements overlap and coincide in the city (Leontidou, 2006; Mayer, 2006). *Activism* is a key component of social movements, and it is also associated with certain forms of civil society modes of claim making.

Civil society: Foley & Edwards (1996) pointed out several versions of the “civil society argument”, and noted that these versions and definitions are reflective of the particular contexts to which they have been applied. In light of these versions, *civil society* is understood as a sphere of power autonomous from, but intricately connected to, both state and market, enabling citizen engagement for a more robust democratic polity and as a counterweight to excessive state and corporate power. In the Indian context, civil society traditionally has comprised non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and activist and other groups working with poor and excluded populations. This sphere, generally, is associated with the tradition of voluntary action, is seen as contributing towards the public good, operating within the framework of the country’s constitution, and has tended to revolve around institutions of representative democracy (Goswami, Tandon, & Bandhopadhyay, 2012; Singh, 2014a). Social movements and activist networks constitute a prominent face of this civil society, which Singh (2014a) has referred to as “developmental civil society”. In the thesis, developmental civil society is used interchangeably with “old civil society”, and refers to groups and projects that work on issues of democracy and rights, and whose primary modes of claim-making include activism and collective action. This old civil society is distinguished from the “new civil society” that is characterised by the rise of new ICT-enabled citizen action/activism of the (mainly) urban middle class (Singh, 2013; Singh, 2014a). In practice, these categories are not always entirely indistinguishable from each other but this working definition provides a way to distinguish between the wide range of formations within the overarching sphere of civil society.

Establishing the Context: The ICT Landscape and Civic Activism in India

In Asia, where rapid urbanisation and technologisation have gone hand-in-hand, producing new fissures and reproducing old ones, new types of activism and engagement have emerged in digital and urban spaces. The increased use of ICTs among conventional and newer civic and political actors in Asia, including

elite and marginalised groups, has become the subject of much recent scholarly work. In India, Internet-based activism is a recent phenomenon, surging in the mid-2000s, and restricted initially to the predominantly English-speaking urban middle classes. Whereas the mobile phone revolution has since enabled greater inclusion of the urban and rural poor in collective actions, Internet-based activity and social media in particular, still are skewed toward relatively affluent and English-educated middle classes located in the cities. It is unsurprising, then, that the rapidly evolving Internet landscape in India has impacted the largely middle-class dominated realm of civil society in several ways.² The most obvious ways are the changing forms of civil society organisations (CSOs), with a wide range of formations, including networks of associations, facilitated by the Internet; changing composition, with the entry of a wide range of actors who are not allied traditionally to conventional or developmental civil society; increased networking and virtual interactions among CSOs and entities; and greater interactivity and negotiation with mainstream media for news and agenda setting.³

India has the third-largest Internet population in the world at about 243 million users, accounting for 19% of the country's population (Internet live stats, 2014; We are social, 2014). Although the overall penetration is low and Internet speeds are still slow (Akamai, 2014), the rising number of mobile Internet users is rapidly altering the Internet landscape in the country. With an estimated 185 million mobile Internet users in June 2014, urban India continues to lead the way in mobile Internet usage (an estimated 153 million users), with rural India making late, but significant progress in this regard, with 32 million users (IAMAI, 2014). Given that mobile phones are poised to become the primary access channel for a majority of Internet users across the world, including India (Aventus, 2013), increasingly mobile media will be an important means of political participation

²The middle class nature of “civil society” in India—and Chatterjee’s (2001) famous distinction between it and the ‘political society’ of the masses—is discussed in the literature review.

³These statements are based on observations and personal experiences in the field, as well as general literature related to changing civil society in India (Goswami, Tandon, & Bandhopadhyay, 2012; Singh, 2014), which highlights the lack of a unified approach to the question of the Internet’s impact on civil society structure and functioning in India.

(Martin, 2014). The crucial role of mobile phones was evident during the Arab Spring revolutions, and, closer to home, in the new wave of protests and collective action in India (Bute, 2014; Parashar, 2012).⁴ In recent times, the two most prominent examples of ICT-enabled citizen activism in India have been the Anna Hazare-led anti-corruption/Lokpal Bill campaign in 2011, and the anti-rape protests that occurred in several metropolitan cities simultaneously in 2012. These protests have been referred to as a new type of citizen activism, with urban middle class constituents participating in the political arena outside the space of State and conventional/developmental civil society (Singh, 2014a). This new citizen activism in India, notably in its most spectacular and visible form of new protest movements, has been able to forge alliances and plan modalities of social action via the connective power of ICTs (Ahmed & Jaidka, 2013; Bute, 2014; Singh, 2014a). Desai & Joshi (2012) have noted that these protests were motivated by a confluence of three major stresses facing contemporary India: crime, government ineffectiveness and gender inequality. They also pointed out that the crowds bore more than a passing resemblance to Arab Spring protestors, being comprised predominantly of urban middle class youth, mobilised through social media, whose collective anger was being directed at various targets all at once (see also Ahmed & Jaidka, 2013; Zakaria, 2013). These campaigns are discussed further in the literature review chapter, in the section on “new civil society” in India.

Relevance of the Study

Not unexpectedly, given the vast digital divide that still exists, critics have highlighted the exclusionary nature of ICT-based civil society activities, including new protest movements, whose campaign strategies and tactics have catered largely to urban, middle class youth, and have excluded the urban and rural poor (Harindranath & Khorana, 2014; Sitapati, 2011). Moreover, given that social

⁴ Bute (2014) also highlights the ways in which mobile phones and social media were used to spread rumours and misinformation, and to create panic and chaos in India, noting that in the absence of a mature and discerning audience, new technologies can easily be used in destructive ways.

media-based information and action are skewed toward the opinions of a narrow demographic, online platforms run the real risk of marginalising the voices of the vast majority of unconnected citizens (Belair-Gagnon, Mishra, & Agur, 2013). Although acknowledging that Internet-based citizen action is largely still the preserve of urban middle-class actors, I argue that its potential for communication, collaboration, and coordinated action suggest that its study holds value for a more nuanced understanding of changing civil society in India. In particular, there is a real need to highlight the creative use of ICTs for civic and political engagement by civil society groups outside the arena of activism and protests.

While India in general, and Bangalore in particular, is replete with examples of ICT-led innovations by civil society, academic research in this area has lagged behind actual developments. Goswami et. al. (2012) alluded to a similar problem when they pointed out the double-edged role of the media in bringing civil society into the public discourse from the time of the anti-corruption movement. They notes that although media have played a considerable role in bringing the world of CSOs into public currency, the greater focus on protest activities had sidelined the creative and innovative work of CSOs, which gained only limited visibility. It is against this background that this thesis gains relevance, by examining interactions between ICTs and civil society actors—old and new—who are engaged in the more ‘routine’ matters of socio-political reform. By mapping attitudes, experiences, and practices of these civil society actors, this thesis contributes to the growing body of literature on the role of ICTs in the lives of urban civic actors in a developing country context. In particular, the thesis examines attitudes of actors toward the democratic potential of ICTs in the first place, and then maps their ICT use and experiences. Although ICTs are lauded for their democratic potential and play an increasingly central role in public life, an important factor influencing ICT adoption is how actors perceive new technologies, and how they use them in their specific contexts. Raman (2006, 2008) adopted a similar approach in her study of the adoption of ICTs by the local government and citizens’ groups in Bangalore, noting that such a lens was

crucial to understanding the importance of ICTs vis-à-vis citizen engagement and democratic deepening. She pointed out that citizen participation and engagement was not driven deterministically by adoption of IT; rather, it was contingent upon individual resources, capacities, and predispositions, and on how collective action organisations and other groups used the greater access to information now available to them to influence and mobilise people. Additionally, effective deployment of ICTs rests on a complex interplay of factors, such as government and corporate investment priorities, market conditions, and the way that governments use ICTs for better governance, and sociocultural values. Although Raman (2006, 2008) focused on ICT use within the physical spaces of institutionalised CSOs and government offices, this study examines the nature and activities of CSOs as they adopt or operate increasingly on ICT-based platforms and spaces.

Research Focus and Objectives: ICT–Civil Society Relationships in an ‘IT City’

The focus of this thesis always has been the interactions between civil society and new technologies in Bangalore, India’s “IT City”. The initial research topic centered on investigating the rising influence of technology-enabled elites in Bangalore, a group that has been labelled positively as the “new barbarians” (Angell & Ezer, 2006), and critically as the “new techno-class” (Sreekumar, 2010) and “new civil society” (Benjamin, 2010). An early study direction was to examine the influence of this group on urban governance priorities, and the subsequent imaginations of the city, particularly the aspiration to make Bangalore a “global” or “world-class” city. The study of the rise of new political entities, such as expert-led task forces, and their influence on urban policy, was to be an extension of research on Bangalore’s role in the global information economy or “information society”. Another aspect of the planned research was the resistance by civil society groups to elite-led imaginations of the city, and the socioeconomic-spatial fallout of Bangalore’s global aspirations. However, upon commencement of fieldwork, interactions, formal and informal, with civil society actors and

academics, and observations convinced me to modify the research focus, for several reasons. First, I became aware that others already were conducting such research, particularly with respect to the role of the IT industry and other elites in the State government-appointed task forces, BATF (Bangalore Agenda Task Force) and its successor, ABIDe (Agenda for Bengaluru Infrastructure and Development Task Force).⁵ Second, in light of the extensive literature on the role of elites, including individuals and NGOs, informants and interviewees encouraged me to undertake research on other, less-researched aspects of Bangalore's IT paradigm.

A Snapshot of the Case Studies

As I grappled with potential research directions, preliminary interviews with a variety of key government and non-government actors pointed me in the direction of ICT-enabled civic and political engagement by civil society. Because I had decided to employ a case study approach—which is suitable for an exploratory investigation of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, *Case study research: Design and methods*, 2014)—the next step was to establish criteria and to identify cases that fit these criteria. The two chosen case studies emerged gradually in response to Internet searches, literature reviews, data gathered during fieldwork, and preliminary data analysis. The environmental network *Hasiru Usiru* was the first case to be shortlisted, as it already had been identified as an activist civil society group that had emerged to tackle challenges associated with haphazard IT-led growth, including the emphasis on “global” or “world-class” infrastructure priorities at the cost of lives, livelihoods, public spaces, and greenery (Benjamin, 2010; Goldman & Longhofer, 2009; see also Enqvist, Tengo, & Bodin, 2014). Because that network functioned largely through a mailing list of almost 900 members, was characterised by a high level of online activity, and occupied a prominent space in the public sphere, it also met the requisite case study criteria. The blog-based discussion platform

⁵Sami (2013) undertakes a detailed examination of how elite groups of urban actors have exercised power by participating in city planning and policy processes under the aegis of these task forces.

Praja.in (*Praja*), with its social media presence and rising public profile, emerged as the second case that would make for a comparable case study. The table below provides a brief description of both cases.

Case Study	Description
<p><i>Hasiru Usiru</i> (meaning “greenery is life”)</p>	<p>A network of individuals and city-based community organisations working to protect public spaces, public commons, and urban greens in and around Bangalore. Members interact through a yahoo discussion group (HasiruUsiru@yahoogroups.com), which has been a real-time source of information and collaboration, particularly during protests and demonstrations</p>
<p><i>Praja</i> (http://praja.in) (meaning “citizen” or “public”)</p>	<p>A networking platform for active and concerned citizens, which aims to act as a bridge between such responsible citizens and the government. Towards that end, it has established an Internet-driven community to make the connection at local levels. With the creation of its advocacy arm, Research, Analysis and Advocacy Group (RAAG), in 2011, <i>Praja</i> has moved from the online to offline realm by taking crowd-sourced ideas from the platform towards execution on the ground.</p>

Both cases shared certain defining characteristics: they were highly visible in online and offline public spheres, both were primarily comprised of middle class actors, and both were closely involved in urban transport and mobility-related issues, which dominated the online discussion at the time of data collection. *Hasiru Usiru* was a more established civil society entity, having emerged as a collaborative effort among established conventional CSOs in the early 2000s. The network’s core mandate was environmental protection, with a thrust on preservation of urban commons, such as street trees, lakes, and other public spaces. *Hasiru Usiru*’s more current focus on sustainable public transport and mobility, while related to the network’s ‘green’ objectives, was also reflective of its concern for the urban poor and other marginalized groups, as well as its critique of the city’s existing developmental model. *Hasiru Usiru* functions

primarily through a moderated Yahoo mailing group that provides a common platform for discussion and enabled the sharing of archival, human and other resources.

Praja, founded in 2007, was designed as a platform to enable greater citizen engagement and citizen-government interaction in Bangalore. Co-created by three software professionals, it was originally conceived of as a purely Internet-based platform for members to discuss issues of mutual interest and to address local civic problems. Posts cover a wide variety of topics, including garbage management, lake preservation, political reforms, public hygiene, community events, solar power, pedestrian safety, and sustainable public transportation. At the time of fieldwork, conversations on the site pertaining to transportation and mobility appeared at regular intervals and often dominated discussions, which allowed for comparisons with *Hasiru Usiru*. From 2009 onwards, key members began to initiate the move toward greater lobbying and advocacy activities on the ground, and undertook important advocacy projects in the areas of public transportation, such as rail, bus, and cycling.

Although further examination of the case studies revealed salient differences in agendas and modes of claim making, their interests converged around the common theme of sustainable development. Towards this end, both groups were advocating for sustainable public transportation as the key to the city's sustainable development. *Hasiru Usiru's* activities in this regard included protest and advocacy campaigns against road widening projects and the proposed elevated rail system, the Metro. A study of the public bus system was also undertaken with the objective of making it a more user-friendly, comfortable, and affordable mode of transportation, particularly for the city's vulnerable groups, who often had no other means to commute. *Praja's* efforts in this area focused on non-motorized transport (NMT) advocacy, including cycling, the bus priority system to speed up public buses, and the suburban train service that was approved by the Central government in 2013 after sustained lobbying by RAAG. The corresponding thrust on sustainable development and emphasis on transportation and mobility issues provided another useful starting point to

compare the two Internet-based civil society entities. The criteria for selecting the case studies and the process of identifying these cases are explained in the methodology chapter.

Once the case studies were identified, initial interviews suggested that issues that generally were considered unproblematic, such as attitudes toward and perceptions of ICTs for democratic engagement, needed to be explored further. Additionally, questions regarding strengths and limitations of ICT use, particularly within the IT City context, raised several unexpected and interesting themes. These early findings, and the limited literature in this area, convinced me that the study was both timely and relevant.

Thesis Structure

Chapter 2 provides a literature review of the following research areas/theories: (1) ICTs and civil society, including literature on ICTs and social movements, protests and activism, and ICTs and civic and political engagement; (2) ICTs, civil society and democratic engagement in India, including the evolution of civil society, distinction between civil society and political society, and the rise of “new” civil society in India; and (3) the relationship between new technologies and cities in the age of globalisation and informatisation. The chapter also includes a section on Bangalore, with a detailed description of the city's historical evolution relating to technological/IT context and its civil society sphere, which explains its significance as the site of the study. These various approaches are combined to create a framework within which the attitudes and uses of ICTs by civil society actors for civic and political engagement in Bangalore can be examined. Chapter 3 presents the research methodology, including methods of data collection and analysis, and it describes ethical issues that cropped up at various stages of the research. Chapter 4 presents the findings related to the civil society context in Bangalore, which focuses on the contextual factors that emerged as important in the worldview of participants with regard to the ICT–civil society relationship in the city. This provides a detailed framework within which to consider the case study findings. Chapters 5 and 6 are

detailed case studies of *Hasiru Usiru* and *Praja* respectively, and Chapter 7 undertakes a comparison of the two case studies. Chapter 8 sums up the discussion of the previous chapters, presents the conclusions for the study, discusses its theoretical and practical contributions, and identifies some of its limitations.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a basic framework for understanding the findings that emanate from this study, which is at the intersections of the relationship between ICTs and civic and political engagement, civil society and democratic activity, and between ICTs and cities in the contemporary knowledge or information economy. Secondly, this chapter also includes a section on Bangalore, with a description of the city's IT/technological context and its civil society sphere, which explains its significance as the site of the study. The literature review and description of Bangalore also serve to highlight the research gaps regarding ICTs for civic and political engagement, particularly in the Indian context, which provide the basis for the research questions that are presented at the end of the chapter.

ICTs and Civil Society for Democratic Engagement

ICTs and Social Movements, Networked Communities, Protests and Activism

Literature on civil society is increasingly focused on its mobilisations through new technologies, particularly in the form of new social movements and new forms of activism. In fact, the increased access to, and use of, new ICTs for social and political activism by citizens' groups, civil society movements, and NGOs is often cited as an important step towards effective action in their relevant fields. The unprecedented popularity of the Internet has resulted in a new wave of studies focused on its impact on civil society, mostly in relation to community associations and contentious democratic politics (Carty, 2010; Ester & Vinken, 2003; Jensen et. al, 2007; Wellman, 2010). The role of the Internet as a temporal space for political and communicative action, participation, and mobilisation has also been described in terms of a 'bottom up' approach of self-initiated civic activism that is active elsewhere than the traditional sphere of institutionally organised participation (Häyhtiö and Rinne, 2008). The thesis reviews literature that has examined how the Internet has impacted the "extra-institutional sphere

of ‘politics’” (Van De Donk et al., 2004, p. 2), in which social movements, networked communities, and other loosely structured civil society groups play an important role. In particular, this section focuses on ICT-enabled, social movements, communities and activism, focusing on their contributions to enhancing democratic engagement.

A vast array of academic scholarship has examined the impacts of ICTs on social movements, where political activity and political struggle have been re-conceptualised. Castells (2007) has noted that social movements, which are a permanent feature of society, act on the global network structure that is currently prevalent, and enter the battle over minds by intervening in the global communication process. Social movements and new forms of political mobilisation of the information age, while rooted in offline spaces, are evolving towards a new organisational model built around the networked and mediated communication realm of the Internet (ibid).⁶ Pointing to the proliferation of studies and the diversity of perspectives examining the relationship between ICTs and social movement, Garrett (2006) organised existing scholarship within a common framework, to provide a coherent overview of the field at a glance.

The study of what people do online is important, and one aspect of social movement and contentious politics research involves empirical examination of prevalent forms and tactics of online activism (see Van De Donk et al., 2004). Earl (2006) examined four protest tactics on the Internet, viz., petitions, letter-writing and email campaigns, and boycotts, and pointed to the reappropriations, or repurposing, of classic social movement tactics. Although the Internet can

⁶ Castells (2001) had earlier identified three reasons for the indispensability of the Internet for social movements emerging in the network society: firstly, where communication of values and mobilisation around meaning become fundamental, movements can reach out to those who would adhere to their values, and from there affect the consciousness of society as a whole. Secondly, with the decline of vertically integrated organisations inherited from the industrial era, loose coalitions, semi-spontaneous mobilisations, and ad hoc movements of the neo-anarchist brand substitute for permanent, structured, formal organisations. Emotional movements, often triggered by a media event, or by a major crisis, seem often to be more important sources of social change than the day-to-day routine of dutiful NGOs. The third factor is the increasing globalisation of social movements, while simultaneously being rooted in their local context and aiming at a global impact.

replicate and complement current collective action repertoires, there are also perceptible differences between the two mediums. For instance, Postmes & Brunsting (2002) have noted that motivations and forms may differ for online and offline collective action. Their study showed that cognitive calculations, rather than movement identification, drove online action, and that the Internet affected the nature of collective action and social movements, due to the influx of peripheral members and traditional non-activists. Similarly, Van Laer & Van Aelst (2010) have distinguished between 'old' and 'new' forms of collective action, and describe the former as 'Internet-supported' actions, i.e. traditional tools of social movements that have become easier to organise and coordinate with the advent of the Internet. New forms, on the other hand, are called 'Internet-based', as they exist only because of the Internet. However, they also recognise that this distinction is often blurred, since the online and offline spheres are heavily interdependent, with action groups drawing on a myriad of tactics at a time (ibid, p. 234). Carty (2010, 2011) critically examined the ways in which novel repertoires of grassroots mobilisation have been applied to institutional politics, thereby reconceptualising political struggle and the public sphere. She has highlighted that e-experiments in mobilisation and fundraising by social movement and grassroots organisations have enabled net activism to be combined with meaningful political engagement.

Central to the success of networked social movement activity has been the rise of new types of online communities, and linkages between online and offline communities in the pursuance of democratic goals. The Internet has created two types of online communities that may facilitate a public sphere: (1) physically based online communities, and (2) geographically dispersed online communities (Nah, 2010). In recent years, there has been a re-conceptualisation of the concept based on online and/or offline social network ties rather than just shared geography (Haythornthwaite, 2007; Haythornthwaite & Kendell, 2010), as well as in terms of networks (Bennet, 2003; Wellman, Boase, & Chen, 2002). As a growing body of research is addressing the synergies between online and offline worlds (Haythornthwaite & Kendell, 2010), the relationship between online

and offline communities is increasingly described in terms of 'networked communities' (Biddix & Park, 2008; Nah, 2010). In general, the term 'networked community', which evolved from Castells' (2000) 'network society', Rheingold's (2000) 'virtual community', and Wellman's (2001) 'networked individualism', refers to the use of ICTs by groups with converging interests to achieve social and development goals. These networked communities of interest can, in themselves, be considered a form of collective action, and have a potentially important role as democratic agents, within and as civil society (see Rao, 2012).

More recently, academic research has focused on the strengths and limitations of the wave of public protests and collective actions that have swept large parts of the world since 2009. This includes the pro-democracy protests in Iran, the Arab Spring protests and 'revolutions', the various Occupy protests, the anti-corruption and anti-rape protests in India, and countless other forms of activism and demonstrations, both civil and the less democratic or 'uncivil' forms. Castells (2012) explored the role of Facebook, Twitter, and the Internet in general, during the political crises and uprisings that took place across the world in 2011, and the subsequent impacts on the movements themselves. He also identified some common, emerging patterns of these protest movements: they were networked simultaneously in various ways, including mobile and personal networks; they had the hybrid ability to connect via online networks and to occupy important urban public spaces; they were spontaneous and viral, which triggered fear, outrage and hope; their horizontal nature undercut the need for leadership, which also promoted flexibility of goals and demands; and that they were political in essence, espousing democracy and public participation. Although the Internet has undoubtedly played a central role in the upsurge of global protests and activism in recent years, it is important to move beyond entirely optimistic or sceptical accounts, and to maintain a critical, contextualized perspective on the relation between technology and politics at the local, national, and transnational levels (Christensen, 2011). Axford (2011) attempted to move beyond reductionist accounts by re-examining the role of social media in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) uprisings through a focus on five factors.

These were the different local conditions within the MENA countries; the extent to which 'old' media, such as print and broadcast journalism, were displaced or downgraded as forums for public talk; the relative prominence of different technologies and formats in the uprisings; variations among the actual players (activists and the audience), including their composition and motivations; and the varied effects of social media on the conduct and impact of the uprisings. Similarly, noting the limited range of studies that provided a holistic blend of social and political movement theory and media and communication theory and practices, Cammaerts, Mattoni, & McCurdy (2013) have examined protest movements from the point of view of the processes and practices of interacting with and through media, and the communication practices of activists. The tensions and challenges in the relationship between protest movements and mediation point to the continued relevance of offline media and face-to-face communication, and the need for scholars to focus on the interactions and interfaces between online and offline environments during mobilisations (Rucht, 2013).

Although much of the literature discussed in this section has originated in and is about ICTs, civil society and socio-political change in the North American and European contexts, there is a plethora of scholarship emerging from other parts of the world as well. In recent years, the increased penetration of the Internet has also been associated with a spurt of social action in Asia, producing rich literature on the relationship between ICTs and civil society in the Asian context. Nowhere is this more apparent than in China, which, with the largest number of Internet users in the world, has seen an explosion of literature on the social, cultural, and political implications of China's ICT revolution (Yang, 2003; Zhang & Zheng, 2009). More recently, the role of new media technologies in fuelling Hong Kong's "Umbrella Revolution", and its challenge to China's authority, including its control of the Internet, has been widely discussed in the mainstream and alternative media (Fang, 2014; Parker, 2014). In India, in recent years, ICT-enabled protests in urban centres, such as the anti-corruption campaign, the anti-rape protests and other protests have generated intense

academic and mainstream media interest (Ahmed & Jaidka, 2013; Barn, 2013; Bute, 2014; Harindranath & Khorana, 2014).

In general, a defining feature of new ICT-enabled protests has been the visuals emerging from them, which has provided immediate publicity and galvanised support for their myriad causes (Axford, 2011). Images and videos taken by protestors or passers-by using mobile phones have become the *modus operandi* (MO) for street protests, and the interplay of mainstream and social media turning them to grand spectacles (ibid; Lynch, 2014; Nanabhay & Farmanfarman, 2011). The spectacle of these collective actions have tended to dominate academic and media attention, and shaped the discourse on ICTs and democratic activity. It is for this reason—as I mentioned in the introduction—that the thesis focuses, instead, on acts of ICT-enabled civic and political engagement that often occur away from the media spotlight.

ICTs and Civic and Political Engagement

Banaji & Buckingham (2013, p. 1-2) have noted that civic activism and new social movements, which have generated a considerable amount of academic commentary, “need to be set within the wider context of civic and political uses of new media, many of which are more mundane and less spectacular”. Civic and political engagement can be defined in relation to “civic culture”, which Banaji & Buckingham (2013) saw as a continuum, ranging from organised public activities and associations of various kinds, through “parapolitical” activities such as campaigning, volunteering, and community activism, to politics in the more formal, official sense of parties and governments. In their usage, political engagement implies an adversarial relationship, and involves solidarity with certain groups, while civic engagement is a broader concept, involving some form of involvement in the public sphere. They highlighted various forms and degrees of ICT-enabled participation, noting that some experiences may be well sustained and profound while others could be brief and episodic (such as signing a petition), some could be frustrating, while other experiences warranted nonparticipation (disengagement). Rogers (2012)

has noted that civic engagement via social media, in particular, urban media, includes grassroots and institutional participation on a wide range of issues, from crisis management to issues of food, gardening, and environment conservation. Such concerns, including sustainability, have been at the forefront of political agendas in cities, technology-enabled forms of organising have great potential to contribute to healthier and more sustainable cultural practices (Foth, Forlano, Satchell, & Gibbs, 2011).

An area in which there is growing interest is the study of how young people use the Internet for civic and political engagement (Banaji & Buckingham, 2013; Loader, 2007; Loader, Vromen, & Xenos, 2014; Olsson & Dahlgren, 2010), including in developing countries of South and Southeast Asia (David, 2013; Ilavarasan, 2013; Zhang & Lallana, 2013). These studies report on the variety of ways in which ICTs enable youth to (re-)engage with political and social issues, outside the formal arena of politics, and in a manner that they are comfortable with. Banaji & Buckingham (2013) have focused on how young people use and interpret a range of youth-oriented civic sites. David's (2013) study investigated how already engaged Filipino youth used ICTs to bolster their advocacy and lobbying activities. Loader's edited volume (2007) has provided several empirical analyses of young people's online activities, as well as initiatives designed to engage young people in democratic politics. This scholarship notes that ICTs, particularly social media technologies such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, provide a channel for youth to voice their opinions and connect with other like-minded individuals and groups, often through networks that they had a part in creating and sustaining. At the same time, there is a recognition of the complexities and limitations of such engagement, such as the continued persistence of digital divides, chaotic information gluts that overwhelm and isolate users, the promotion of extremist or anti-democratic discourse, and a tendency for dominant voices to shape discussions, which could alienate users and further disengage them political and civic issues and processes (Banaji & Buckingham, 2013). Further, the offline context plays an important role in predicating youth engagement: Ilavarasan (2013) has noted that Indian youth in

his study lacked motivation to participate in political affairs, due to reasons such as corruption, and a perceived inability to effect political change. While the community service (engagement) dimension was greater than the political activism dimension, he did not rule out the possibility of political engagement, citing the capabilities and opportunities available to Indian youth.

The role of ICTs in fuelling instances of civic and political engagement in Asia has been another area of scholarly interest in recent years. In China, state surveillance, censorship, intervention and intimidation has not stemmed the rising tide of civic engagement and collective action, particularly on environmental, livelihood and civil rights issues (Hassid, 2012). Noting that most studies have examined digital activism in China, Chen (2014) has highlighted the importance of conducting research on civic and political engagement, and pointed to recent studies that serve as useful examples in this endeavour. In Singapore, a South East Asian nation with a limited democratic set-up, the Internet has played a dual role in civil society and politics. On the one hand, alternative news sites, bulletin boards, discussion groups, and political blogs have mushroomed, emboldened by the government's lighter touch approach to new media use (Baber, 2002; Soon & Cho, 2014). In addition, political parties and the ruling elite have begun to adopt a variety of e-engagement measures, including personal blogs, Facebook, and Twitter, to bridge the gap between them and an increasingly IT-savvy and critical electorate (Soon & Soh, 2014). These initiatives point to the gradual blooming of civil society and the expansion of the public sphere in Singapore. On the other hand, increased surveillance, auto control or self-censorship by citizens, and recent convictions of bloggers point to the limitations of the Internet for free speech and civic and political engagement in the city-state (Baber, 2002; Lee, 2005, 2013; The Online Citizen, 2015). In democratically robust South Korea, the rapid pace of informatisation and spread of the Internet have contributed to an active civil society, which, supported by 'digital citizens', has challenged the state in various ways (Kim, Kim, & Kim, 2014). In South Asia, civil society within the democratically fragile state of Pakistan has benefitted immensely from the Internet, helping to inform and activate partisan public, and

use hacking as a disruptive political communication tool (Hussain & Howard, 2012). In addition, mainstream political parties have also been able to read and respond to public opinion online, helping them to activate large networks of voters (ibid).

India is home to wide range of ICT-enabled initiatives that have aimed to address growing socio-economic inequities and the digital divide, to revitalise governance and public policy, disrupt existing gender relations, with varying degrees of success (Saith, Vijayabaskar, & Gayathri, 2008; Sreekumar, 2011). There has also been a proliferation of online communities, e-forums, mailing groups, and other e-civil society forms collaborating with local and global actors to network and build solidarity on a wide range of issues, such as health, environmental protection, transparency and good governance, among others (Desouza & Dutta, 2008; Enqvist, Tengo, & Bodin, 2014; Rao, 2012). However, despite the plethora of initiatives that have emerged in recent years that leverage ICTs for civic and political engagement, a combined and sustained effort is yet to be made to document and analyse these. As the introduction has made clear, there is a growing body of evidence that charts the relationship between ICTs and activism, (new) social movements and protests in India. However, as my fieldwork and data collection efforts have revealed, accounts of civic and political engagement initiatives are often anecdotal, confined to organisational reports that are not easily accessible, and whose existence is made known primarily through personal contacts, social networks and word-of-mouth, rather than existing (academic) literature. This requires some level of immersion in civil society activity, and acquaintance with civil society groups and networks. The complexities of changing civil society in India, and its relationship to ICTs, is explained in the following section.

Civil Society: Old and New, the Middle Classes, and ICTs in India

While the concept of 'civil society' has a long history in European and American thought, an upsurge of global interest in civil society in modern times is ascribed to the proliferation of NGOs after the Second World War, and to the

growth of democracies in the post-Cold War era (Cox, 1999; Hajnal, 2002; Tandon & Mohanty, 2003). More recently, the pervasiveness of ICTs has precipitated a revival of interest in civil society, with the possibilities and impacts of new technologies on civil society's democratic activity and credentials being endlessly debated. Civil society is defined and understood in various ways, which Foley and Edwards (1996) point out, are reflective of the particular contexts to which they have been applied. Two prominent versions of the 'civil society argument' include firstly, the positive effects of associational life in fostering patterns of civility in the actions of citizens in a democratic polity. The second version emphasises the importance of civil society as independent of—and therefore, as an effective counterweight to—the (non-democratic) state (ibid). In the Indian context, civil society comprises a variety of organisations and institutions that occupy the space between state and market, such as protest movements, developmental NGOs, religious organisations, and lobbies for different market-based actors such as chambers of commerce, and social and cultural clubs (Sreekumar, 2011). The relationship between the state and these entities is characterised by continuous vicissitudes, and varies according to place/region, nature of the state, and whether interests converge or diverge at a particular point in time (ibid; Goswami et. al., 2012). This section begins with a brief historical outline of the development of civil society in India, with an emphasis on the distinction between “old” and “new” civil society, and the intertwining relationship between civil society and the middle classes in India. This section also examines the role of the middle classes in increasingly leveraging ICTs for democratic engagement, and points to the rise of a new “techno-middle class” in the context of the knowledge/information society.

Historical Evolution of Civil Society in India

Civil Society in the Colonial State

In the Indian context, the history of civil society is usually traced back to the colonial period, which witnessed extensive civil activities and a wide spectrum of key players. Behar & Prakash (2004) have pointed to three

categories of civil society activity during the mid-to-late colonial period, the first being the philanthropy of Christian missionaries, who built schools, colleges, dispensaries, and colleges. The second category was initiated by an Indian bourgeoisie that had become well versed in English literature, culture, associational life, liberal politics and associated practical orientations (see also Chatterjee, 2001; Kaviraj, 2001; Sahoo, 2013).⁷ Roy (1993) has pointed out that the introduction of English produced urban elites, as well as an aspiring urban middle class that adopted English for the resultant social and economic gains. This middle class, with its access to European worldviews, also became concerned with age-old practices and customs that were deemed counter to human rights and social justice (Behar & Prakash, 2004; Sahoo, 2013). This period saw the establishment of voluntary and social reformist organisations, and from the late nineteenth century, political associations that began to demand inclusion of Indians in the governing structure and access to civil and political rights (ibid). English and vernacular papers that mushroomed during this period provided socio-political spaces for critical discussion, and mobilised public opinion against the British rule (Ahojja-Patel, 2001). Although the British introduced English to maintain and consolidate British economic and political power, it was, paradoxically, the English educated who led the nationalist movement from its inception (Roy, 1993). Although the Indian National Congress (INC) had been established in 1885 to facilitate greater share in government for educated Indians, the entry of M.K. Gandhi transformed the Congress from an elite organisation into a mass-based party that was at the forefront of the freedom struggle (Sahoo, 2013; Varshney, 1998). Gandhi gave impetus to the third kind of civil society activity, based on voluntary action and constructive work leading to the self-reliance of villages (Behar & Prakash, 2004). During this time, several organisations for the welfare of women, lower castes and tribals, and generally for the rural poor came into existence, which drew these hitherto excluded sections of society into the national movement, as well as into the

⁷ For a perspective on civil society and public communication in pre-British India see (Hasan, 2005)

growing voluntary sector (Sheth & Sethi, 1991). As a result of the efforts by Gandhi and the Congress party, voluntary civil society organisations began to flourish in the 1920s and 1930s, and by the time of independence, the entire civil society space was occupied by the party and affiliate organisations inspired by Gandhian ideals (ibid; Sahoo, 2013).

Civil Society in Post-Colonial India: Development NGOs and the Era of “Old Civil Society” (1947-1989)

Religious and Gandhian organisations working on a variety of welfare and development issues, such as health, education, village industries, handicrafts, training of government officials, famine relief, etc., continued to dominate the civil society landscape after independence. The early decades also saw the rise of a new strain of civil society actors, who preferred to distance themselves from their parent political parties, and undertake issues considered unimportant from an electoral point of view (Sheth & Sethi, 1991). A concern about the exploitation of the poor became the central agenda item for these activists, who focused on social and economic justice rights, land reforms, tenancy rights, minimum wages for landless labour, removal of bondage and slavery, tribal rights, and the rights of slum dwellers and destitutes (ibid). The development of civil society during the tenure of Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister (1947-1964) was inspired by his vision of an ideal socialist state, centralised planning and modernisation (Sahoo, 2013). Nehru's belief in a scientific consideration of the problem of social welfare resulted in the state morphing into a “developmental state”, directly intervening in the voluntary sector, with an emphasis on professional expertise, science, technology, and planning for economic development (ibid; Watt, 2011).⁸ Accordingly, as Nehru's visions of state-led capital-intensive development and poverty reduction gained precedence, NGOs largely served to provide *welfare and relief* (Kudva, 2005). Thus, during the Nehruvian period, voluntary groups and activities, particularly Gandhian NGOs, were promoted and funded by the

⁸ Watt (2007) notes that voluntary and social service organisations were critical of government interference in the voluntary sector. Nehru's new Indian state, however, justified the marginalisation of existing NGOs in the 1950s on the basis of the state's claims to better organisation as well as its rationality and use of scientific planning.

state's welfare budget. As the NGOs moved closer to the state and their reliance on government funds increased, they were incorporated as "silent partners" into the state structure, and acted as its implementing agencies (ibid; Sheth & Sethi, 1991; Sahoo, 2013). The state also launched community development and *panchayati raj* (PR) institutions in 1959 to create self-governing village structures, and to encourage people's involvement in planned development (ibid; Sahoo, 2013; Sheth & Sethi, 1991). Gandhi's vision of self-sufficient and self-governing villages, and the new Indian state's commitment to the reduction of poverty, greatly influenced the thrust on decentralisation in rural areas (Johnson, 2003; Singh, 1994). Accordingly, a three-tier PR system was introduced: *gram panchayat* (GP) at the village level, *panchayat samiti* at the block level, and *zilla parishad* at the district level. Members of all three units were elected by residents of the village they represented, and were responsible for all the planning and development work in their jurisdictions (Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004; Singh, 1994). Over a period of time, as it became clear that the PR system had failed to achieve the objectives of people's participation and self-government, various committees and commissions were set up to revitalise its institutions (Johnson, 2003; Singh, 1994). These efforts were instrumental in the drive to give *panchayats* constitutional status in the 73rd Amendment to the Indian Constitution in 1993, which established the framework of a three-tiered *panchayat* system with regular elections throughout India (ibid; Chattopadhyay & Duflo, 2004). The 73rd Amendment Act gave the GP primary responsibility for implementing development programmes, as well as identifying the needs of villages under its jurisdiction. The Act also provided for reservations for weaker segments of the population, notably women, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes, in proportion to their population in a *panchayat* area. The actual impacts of the PR system on decentralisation, rural development, and the empowerment of marginalised groups is a much debated issue, and several studies, including the ones cited above, have highlighted a myriad of factors undermining the power and autonomy of PR institutions. The relative merits and demerits of reservations in the urban context are discussed later in the two case study chapters.

The period of the first Indira Gandhi government (1967-1977) witnessed the emergence of a mass-based civil society in response to the failures of the conventional institutions of planning, politics and development. Although the increasingly authoritarian government restricted civil society activity, factors such as growing populist policies, increasing corruption scandals, and the worsening economic situation resulted in a spate of anti-government agitations and political violence (Kaviraj, 1986; Sahoo, 2013). During Mrs. Gandhi's imposition of a state of emergency (1975-1977) citizens' civil and political rights were suspended, political activities were banned, free associationalism was cancelled, and press censorship was enforced. Ironically, the emergency also gave rise to thousands of grassroots movements protesting various acts of government-sponsored repression, and expanded the sphere of civil society to include rural and other marginalised populations (ibid). These new micro-movements were led by young men and women, many of whom left their professional careers to take up issues and constituencies that were abandoned or ill-represented by political parties, trade unions, and the bureaucracy (Sheth, 2004). These social movements of the 1970s and 1980s highlighted issues of environmental sustainability and social justice, and were united in their opposition to the dominant ideology of development, which was identified as the root cause of persistent poverty and increasing inequalities in Indian society (see also Nilsen, 2007) In this way, the emergency played a fundamental role in the resurgence of the civil society discourse, and human rights movements grew rapidly during this period (Jobert, 2011).

The excesses of the emergency resulted in Mrs. Gandhi's electoral defeat at the hands of the political opposition, which went on to form the government under the aegis of the *Janata* (meaning "people") party. As part of the *Janata* government's (1977-1979) emphasis on rural improvement, voluntary agencies assumed an important role in citizenship training, health education, family planning, upgrading of vocational skills, physical education and cultural activities in the countryside (Sahoo, 2013). The vastly increased funding and bureaucratic support for NGOs resulted in the growth of a variety of voluntary organisations in

India, including Hindu nationalists (ibid). While participatory policies were boosted, the new government disappointed those hoping for an alternative model for civil society involvement in the political sphere (Jobert, 2011). Ultimately, the infighting among various factions of the *Janata* government, ideological differences over secularism, and the lack of a clear and dominant leadership paved the way for the return of a resurgent Indira Gandhi (ibid; Hewitt, 2008). During this tenure (1980-1984) as well, Mrs. Gandhi began to restrict the functioning of the NGO/voluntary sector, which became increasingly confined to welfare service delivery and apolitical development activities (Sahoo, 2013). This, however, did not stem the resurgence of thousands of informal grassroots organisations and people's movements as a response to the failure of the state and political parties (ibid). The assassination of Mrs. Gandhi brought her son, Rajiv, to power with a massive electoral victory, and during his tenure as Prime Minister (1984-1991) assistance to the voluntary sector, particularly in social development, was significantly increased (Sahoo, 2013; Sinha, 2013). In order to improve service delivery to combat rural poverty, NGOs were actively promoted as service delivery agents, active partners in development, and as watchdogs. During this period, there was a shift from the state-centred, top-down approach to a civil society-oriented participatory approach towards development (Sahoo, 2013). Detection of frauds and misuse of funds led to a suspicious of NGO activity, and necessitating that NGOs look for funding from abroad. While some did not want to seek foreign funding on account of their principles, others changed their ways to survive. This gave rise to a new form of NGO action—the Government Organised NGOs (or GONGOs!)—resulting in flourishing partnerships between governments and NGOs across the country for capacity development, advocacy, community action, and service delivery to remote regions (Sinha, 2013). Despite Rajiv Gandhi's untimely demise in 1991, successive governments continued to recognise the role of NGOs as partners in development, in the belief that NGOs would be effective and efficient public service contractors (Sahoo, 2013).

Liberalisation, and the Changing Face of the “Old Civil Society” from the 1990s

With the implementation of liberalisation policies in the 1990s, there was a redefinition of the role of the state and the opening up of various sectors of governance to non-state actors, including CSOs. Economic liberalisation also effected an acceleration of state and foreign donor funding, as well as an increasing diversification among NGOs (Kudva, 2005). Goswami & Tandon (2013) have identified the changes in composition, roles and relationships in civil society as a result of the socio-political and economic changes the country has undergone since the 1990s. They noted that the mushrooming of voluntary organisations produced a variety of civil society forms, including religious organisations, societies formed by the central and the state governments, registered groups of micro-entrepreneurs, popularly known as self-help groups (SHGs), and corporate social responsibility (CSR) promoted by the burgeoning private sector, among others. Chandhoke (2011) has noted that in the 1990s, a striking shift from the vocabulary of social service and reform to that of empowerment, rights, development, governance, and accountability heralded the advent of new forms of civil society organising and activism. Consequently, a large number of CSOs became involved in development, and the field came to be increasingly dominated by professionalised NGOs, often sponsored and funded by donor agencies in the West, and more than willing to partner with the state in the delivery of social goods. This “professionalization” of civil society in India brought a qualitatively different way of doing things, with campaigns replacing social movements, lobbying government officials replacing politicising the population, working through networks rather than civic activism, and a high degree of reliance on the media and the judiciary rather than on direct action (ibid). The changed nature of NGOs is also highlighted by Jayal (2001), who had described them as modern, bureaucratically structured organisations working in a wide range of areas, the most significant of these being development NGOs, through which international donors channel development aid for poverty reduction. She also pointed to the increasing tendency of the government to

hand over development tasks and of multilateral funding agencies to channel funds directly to NGOs. While such a system is lauded for the ability and willingness of NGOs to reach poor and marginalised communities, the NGO sector is also dogged by questions of accountability to its members and publics, particularly in terms of reporting its decision-making and utilisation of funds (see also Biswas, 2009).

Social movement activism, which has been traced back to the time of independence, also underwent a transformation in the 1990s, with the emergence of the twin forces of liberalisation and Hindu nationalism (Ray & Katzenstein, 2005). During the rule of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party or BJP (1998-2004), civil society became fragmented along religious lines, and minorities were subject to marginalisation and violence (Behar & Prakash, 2004; Sahoo, 2013). With the ascendance of the BJP and majoritarian Hindu politics, its associated organisations—known collectively as the *Sangh parivar* (family)—reigned as the most powerful and energised social movements. These movements became stronger by substituting religious populism for class politics, drawing in segments of the middle classes who wished for an escape from the failed development politics of the Nehruvian State (Ray & Katzenstein, 2005). The ideological swing towards markets and the dismantling of state subsidies and guarantees influenced social movement activity, resulting in a reconstitution of claims, changing alliances with the state and the poor, the involvement of transnational actors, and other adaptations to the twin pressures of Hindu nationalism and neo-liberal globalisation (ibid). In the urban context, Kumar (2008) pointed to a shift in the nature and objectives of social movements and mobilisations owing to the radical transformation of urban space after liberalisation in the early 1990s. He termed this as a shift towards NGO-oriented, multiple mobilisations, which profess to be non-political and non-partisan, and comprise mainly middle-class actors. The multiple forms of collective actions and mobilisations, working on a broad spectrum of issues in urban India are sometimes referred to in terms of 'new social movements' (NSMs). While this is a much contested term, NSMs are most often used to describe movements that

are neither class based, unconcerned with state power, raising issues that cut across class interests (see also Shah, 2004). This includes women's, peace, environmental, identity, human rights movements, newer mobilisations in cities around housing, transport and other amenities, as well as movements that are anti-establishment and/or advocate greater democracy (Singh, 2014).

The 1990s saw community-based organisations (CBOs) gain prominence in urban areas, notable among them Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs), Neighbourhood Associations, and Apartments Associations, which represent the interests of residents of a specific urban or suburban locality. These associations are overwhelmingly middle class, with large numbers using the language of consumer-citizenship, and engaging with the government to principally address the interests of middle class citizens (Harris, 2007; Nair, 2005). In the specific context of urban India, the involvement of CSOs in city governance was further facilitated by constitutional changes like the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA) in 1992, which emphasised decentralisation and public participation in urban local bodies (ULBs). By conferring constitutional changes on ULBs, transferring to them the responsibility of urban development, and by allowing for the participation of women and other weaker sections through reservation, the 74th amendment was a crucial reform in urban governance (Dhar Chakrabarti; Dupont, 2007). The Act also provided for the formation of ward committees (WCs) to deal with local issues. These were committees at the level of municipal constituencies consisting of elected representatives, municipal officers, and from civil society. In this way, the Act was significant in releasing city governments from the shackles of state (provincial) governments, and in encouraging CSOs to participate more fully in the governance of the city (ibid). Civil society participation in urban governance was further bolstered by the good governance discourse propounded by international agencies like the World Bank, contemporary urban reforms envisaged in government programmes like the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM), and a series of significant legislation, such as the Right to Information Act (Singh, 2013).

Thus, the changed political scenario of the 1990s precipitated participation by middle-class civil society formations across urban centres, and spawned the rise of a new type of civil society. Binti Singh (2013) had outlined certain characteristics of this “new civil society”, such as the propagation of the principles of efficiency in governance, the bypassing of elected representatives and electoral mechanisms, and the employment of new, ‘non-political’ strategies, such as partnerships and media visibility, to stake claims to urban space and influence political action. The rising influence of this new kind of civil society in Indian metros has been viewed with alarm by critics who see them as elitist, and increasingly active partners in neoliberal frames of action (Benjamin, 2010). The shift to a new civil society, and the role of the technology-enabled middle classes in this transition, is examined after a discussion of the limitations and ambiguities of the “civil society” concept in India (below).

Diversity, Uncivil Society, and the Civil Society-Political Society Dichotomy

The thesis deems civil society an indispensable element of democratic polity, particularly in established democracies such as India, where it has kept power holders in check, and performed a wide range of developmental, community and other voluntary activities for the public good (Haynes, 2013; Sahoo, 2013). At the same time, is it important to acknowledge the limitations and ambiguities that riddle this sphere, such as its fractured nature, and the fact it is *not* an inherently virtuous space (Chandhoke, 2003; Sahoo, 2013; Tandon & Mohanty, 2003). The weaknesses of civil society include the various types of ‘incivility’ inherent in associational forms comprising citizens who enjoy political rights, but are not constrained by the norms of civil society (Whitehead, 1997).⁹ Kopecky (2003) has noted that much of the literature distinguishes between ‘civil’ and ‘uncivil’ society mainly on the basis of the use of violence, the ideals of the

⁹ Whitehead (1997) creates the category of ‘uncivil citizens’, located between civil society and political society, such as the mafia, whose effects are particularly evident in post-authoritarian and post-communist democracies.

organisations involved, and the internal organisation of groups.¹⁰ In the Indian context, “uncivil society” includes closed associations that are organised around the principles of primordial and ascriptive identities, such as caste, religion, and ethnicity, and which single-mindedly pursue an interest at the expense of others (Chandhoke, 2003; 2011). Examples of uncivil society include Hindu nationalist groups that have propagated the vision of a Hindu nation at the cost of minority groups (Chandhoke, 2011; Jayal, 2007). Another weakness is that the civil society sphere is not easily receptive to the voices of the excluded, and hence must be recognised as an exclusive and exclusionary sphere. Jayal (2007) has alerted us to the upper class and urban bias of the leadership of many CSOs, and the limited access of poor people to these organisations. Such problematisation of the civil society concept is necessary, and at the same time, becomes complicated in the context of developing countries such as India, which are characterised by a complex relationship between state and society that is influenced by their own post-colonial trajectories. Kaviraj & Khilnani (2001) have suggested that the ambiguities of ‘civil society’ in the ‘Third World’ or ‘South’ arise due to the variations within that entity, as well as the lack of a singular idea of civil society in the history of Western thought itself. Pointing to the advent of colonialism as the entry point of the colonial civil society discourses into non-Western political discourse, they noted the mismatch between the (near-uniform) language of civil society in the developing world and the varied actual political processes vis-à-vis the West (ibid). Kaviraj (2001) has pointed to the extreme diversity in regimes produced by European colonialism, and highlighted India as an interesting case, comprising high levels of political ‘civility’ that were relatively rare in the generally violent history of colonial empires, as well as the generally orderly transfer of power. Nonetheless, even in India, this civil society’s tacit acceptance of liberal individualist premises of social existence was partial and limited, as was the restricted nature of the colonial civil society (ibid). These

¹⁰ Kopecky (2003) also notes the problems of comparing ‘uncivil’ societies to civil societies that are defined in a restrictive way, based on their association with and support of democratic values and institutions.

developments proved consequential in shaping the nature and composition of civil society in post-colonial India.

According to Partha Chatterjee (2001), an important distinction in the study of state-civil society relations in post-colonial countries such as India is the restricted domain of civil society institutions to a fairly small section of 'citizens'. He, therefore, makes a distinction between institutions of 'civil society' that embody the (Western) ideas and desires of nationalist elites, and 'political society' as an alternative site of the Indian nationalist movement, built around the framework of modern nationalist political associations, such as political parties. In this categorisation, the modes of protest by 'political society' are not consistent with the associational principles of civil society, often assuming forms that are neither 'progressive' nor 'legal' (ibid, see also Gudavarthy & Vijay, 2007). Chatterjee's famous distinction is valuable in understanding the historical evolution of civil society in post-colonial India, as well as in emphasising the exclusionary (middle class) nature of civil society. This dichotomy, however, has come in for some scrutiny in the face of recent empirical studies. Gudavarthy & Vijay (2007), for example, noted the potentially radical idea of 'political society' in identifying subaltern populations that are neither agents of the state nor civil society, but point to the fallacies of assuming that this alternative site is homogenous and united. Another critique of the dualistic conception of civil and political society comes from Fernandes, (2007, as cited in Kamath & Vijayabaskar, 2009), who argued that one cannot assume, firstly, a naturalised identification between civil society and middle class interests, and secondly, that Chatterjee ignores the highly differentiated groups that constitute the middle class in India, and their varied interests.¹¹ The sharply stratified nature of civil society in Indian metropolises is clearly seen in Harris' (2006, 2007) ethnographic studies of associational spaces in Bangalore and Chennai. However, as Ranganathan (2011) pointed out, his portrayal of the middle class/elite as law-abiding rights-bearing, technocratic-oriented 'civil society', and the mapping of

¹¹Harris' (2006) ethnographic study of the associational space in Bangalore and Chennai is useful in understanding the sharply stratified nature of civil society in Indian metropolises.

the poor/vernacular subaltern classes onto the legally ambiguous, politically manipulable realm of 'political society' is problematic. Such portrayals leave little room for hybrid variations of the two, such as RWAs in peri-urban Bangalore, which, as her study shows, reveals characteristics of both civil and political society.

The New Middle Classes, New Technologies, and Democratic Engagement

The shift from an 'old' to a series of 'new' Indian middle classes, as a result of the policies of economic liberalisation in the late 1980s and early 1990s, has been the subject of much academic interest and debate. Mazzarella (2005) noted that this shift is most generally explained as a move "away from an older, relatively coherent understanding of what 'middle class' connoted—classically, a Nehruvian civil service-oriented salariat, short on money but long on institutional perks—to a bewildering (and, to some, distasteful) array of new, often markedly entrepreneurial pretenders to the title". He pointed out that the significance of the category as an important marker of identification, aspiration and critique in contemporary Indian public culture has generated "an obsessive public concern with the category "middle class" in post-liberalisation India. Research on the emerging middle classes has encompassed a wide range of topics, including how to define the middle class (Sridharan, 2004); its relation to liberalisation, including its contradictory effects (Fernandes, 2000a); consumption, including the moral and cultural effects of consumerism (Lakha, 1999); and the role of the media in propagating certain images of the middle class (Fernandes, 2000). Pointing to the conceptual ambiguity about the new middle classes (NMCs), Sridharan (2004) adopted a definition that combined income levels with non-manual occupational status. Accordingly, he estimated the size of the middle class (depending on how it is defined in income terms) in 1998-1999 to be either 55 million people (the "elite" category), 115 million (the "expanded" category), or

248 million people (the “broadest” middle class).¹² The McKinsey Global Institute report calculated that in 2010 the urban middle class, defined as households with disposable incomes from 200,000 to 1,000,000 rupees a year, comprised 50 million, or roughly 5% of the population (Beinhocker, Farrel, & Zainulbhai, 2007). It predicted that by 2025 a continuing rise in personal incomes will spur a tenfold increase, enlarging the middle class to about 583 million people, or 41% of the population.

Fernandes (2000) pointed out that the growing visibility of the NMCs is based on two parallel trends in recent years: a shift in public political discourse away from a focus on poverty reduction, and a growing public culture of consumption, particularly of goods ‘from abroad’. Therefore, the visual representations of wealth that was earlier deemed contradictory to Indian values (such as the “vulgar” display of wealth) now represent the new symbols of national progress. This image of the Indian nation, based on an idealised depiction of the urban middle classes and new patterns of commodity consumption, is reproduced in a wide array of public cultural forms such as advertisements, publications in the print media, and television programming. She also described the rise of the “new” middle class as an “invention”, pointing out that the “newness” involved a discursive production of a new image of the middle class, rather than the entry of a new social group into this class (Fernandes, 2000a). Further, this invention rested on the portrayal of the NMC as the social group that is able to negotiate India’s new relationship with the global economy in both cultural (a new cultural standard based on consumption) and economic terms (ibid). Lakha (1999) similarly argued that the middle class identity was constructed through the consumption of global commodities, and highlighted the following factors that have resulted in the creation of such an identity: the Western/global influences of economic liberalisation; the Western/English

¹² Sridharan (2004) also divided the income slabs into sectoral occupational categories such as the public sector middle class, the non-agricultural private sector middle class (including its self-employed components), and the agricultural middle class, which is not be equated with the rural middle class, which is disproportionately non-agricultural.

education of this class that predisposes them to foreign influences; a higher purchasing power that enables the possession of status symbols; and the transnational character of this class, and its relation to diasporic Indians, who are regarded as reference points by many middle class Indians. However, he also notes that the rise of global consumer icons and Western-style consumerism is not entirely at the exclusion of local style and cultural sensibilities, and middle class cultural identity, therefore, is a curious blend of global and local affiliations.

Another area of great interest—which is also a central concern of the thesis—is the role of the NMCs in relation to democracy, and its commitment to democratic deepening. The question of whether this class is a democratising force or merely concerned with its own rising economic fortunes has both intrigued and divided scholars and social commentators. In his seminal work on the evolution and future of the middle class in India, Varma (1998) lamented the decline of civic responsibility and rising apathy towards political life by an increasingly consumerist middle class. He noted that ‘democracy fatigue’ and the perception that the electoral system no longer serves its interests had reduced middle class support for democratic politics. His critique rested on the notion that the overarching focus on self-gratification of the middle class made it impervious to the palpable suffering of the poor and vulnerable in the “other India”. Fernandes & Heller (2006) highlighted the “hegemonic aspirations” of the NMC, whose “politics of reaction” blends market liberalism and political and social illiberalism. This contradiction of middle class politics arises from the projection of a dominant fraction as a central agent in India’s drive to open and modernise its market economy, whereas on the other hand, significant segments of the NMC have played a key role in the rise of Hindu nationalism. Further, the strong ideological affinity of the urban middle classes to the corporate capitalist sector has moved it away from political society to civil society modes of activism, aided by increasingly influential print and visual media, the judiciary, and other independent regulatory bodies (Chatterjee, 2008).

By the early 2000s, rising civic and political engagement practices, as evident in the formation of RWAs and fledgling instances of activism in

metropolitan cities, prompted social critics to take note of the changing role of the NMCs vis-à-vis democracy (Varma, *The great Indian middle class*, 2007). As mentioned earlier, RWAs and other associations that represented the interests of residents of a specific urban or suburban locality were overwhelmingly middle class, with large numbers using the language of consumer-citizenship, and engaging with the government to principally address the interests of middle class citizens (Harris, 2007; Nair, 2005). Varma (2007) contended that the realisation by some middle class sections that they would have to engage with other constituencies to further their own interests precipitated the rise of middle class activism. Prominent cases of activism in the mid-2000s were campaigns for justice for Jessica Lal, Priyadarshini Matoo and Nitish Katara. Given wide publicity by the English-language media, these campaigns sought justice for the three young people that were allegedly murdered by the sons of politicians and bureaucrats. These campaigns were critiqued as being essentially for and by the middle classes, and for the undue influence of the (English-)media power (Ganesh & Ganesh, 2013; Varma, 2007). Nonetheless, they were successful in bringing the famously apathetic urban middle classes onto the streets (Sanghvi, 2006; Singh, 2014). Through these protests, the urban NMCs were able to highlight and mount pressure on the authorities to repair the country's faulty systems, and became the precursors of the new citizen activism being witnessed today. In the early instances of middle class activism, the communications revolution—particularly SMS and electronic media—was a valuable ally in conveying middle class anger and galvanising it into collective action (Pathiyan, 2006; Varma, 2007). This brings us to a discussion of the relationship of the NMCs to new technologies, and their role in influencing new forms of civic and political engagement.

New Citizen Activism & Emergence of a “New Civil Society”

Lakha (1999) noted that the influx and circulation of businessmen and middle-class professionals between India and developed countries contributed to a globalisation of technology, business practices and leisure habits. He illustrated

this point with the example of late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's collaboration with former non-resident Indian (NRI) engineer and entrepreneur, Sam Pitroda, in sponsoring the 'computer revolution' in India in the late 1980s. This collaboration, he said, "symbolised the aspirations of India's middle class through their identification with modern technological development" (p. 256). The push for technological modernisation that began under Rajiv Gandhi's regime created a corporate technology culture, with the urban, educated middle class at its core (Sarkar, 2008; Upadhy & Vasavi, 2008). From the early 1990s, with the advent of what has alternatively been called the "information age", "knowledge-based economy" or simply "knowledge economy" (KE), characterised by the centrality of ICT networks, the new Indian middle class became associated with knowledge intensive work (ibid). The KE is characterised by the recognition of knowledge as a source of competitiveness, the increasing importance of science, research, technology and innovation in knowledge creation, and the use of computers and the Internet to generate, share and apply knowledge, and for the purposes of producing economic benefits (Banerjee, 2005; Rooney, Hearn, & Ninan, 2005).

In the Indian information or knowledge economy, one of the most prominent sections of the new middle class are professionals employed in the information technology (IT) and IT-enabled services (ITeS) industries. This has produced an expansive literature on IT professionals in India, and the social, political and cultural implications of the globalisation of the software industry. Salient areas of research include cultural practices within the IT industry, health and socio-economic implications of industry labour practices and working conditions, social mobility generated by the sector, and issues of self, identity, gender relations and the nature of women's agency, among others (D'Mello, 2006; Lakha, 2003; Nadeem, 2009; Upadhy & Vasavi, 2006). Another area of increasing importance to scholars relates to the forms of engagement of IT professionals in civic life (Nair, 2005; Sarkar, 2008; Upadhy, 2009b). The rise of a knowledge-based professional middle class in the 'knowledge economy', and its increased participation and influence in social and political life, has already been studied in the context of developed countries, such as the United States

(Brint, 1994, 2001). In India, where this is a relatively new area of research, some studies have emphasised the conflicts between the interests and practices of IT professionals and subaltern publics, such as the urban poor (Nair, 2005; Upadhyaya, 2009b). On the other hand, while Angell & Ezer (2006) acknowledged the limitations of the philanthropic work of the IT-enabled middle class, including IT professionals, they did not see this as a weakness or limitation. Noting that concern for the less fortunate was often overlooked in the rush to amass fortune and success in the information age, these “New Barbarians” were viewed positively as reflective of a new entrepreneurial spirit emerging in the country (ibid).

The advent of the information age has re-energised discussions on the role of tech-enabled NMCs in civil society and urban governance. Recent surges of ICT-enabled collective action, notably the anti-corruption and anti-rape campaigns, as well as the swell of support for the *Aam Aadmi* (“common man”) party, have brought a “new civil society” into focus. Comprising mainly urban, young, middle class citizens, with no specific political affiliation, and driven by a sense of morality (rather than ideology), this new civil society is stirred to action via visual and social media (Singh, 2014a). In defining the “new civil society”, the thesis combines Binti Singh’s (2013) “new civil society” that was discussed earlier with the new citizen activism highlighted by Richa Singh (2014a). This new civil society includes CSOs whose members are drawn from the urban, English-speaking, upper and middle classes, that seek re-engagement with civic and political life, although in ways that often exclude existing government and political systems (Jodhka & Prakash, 2011; Singh, 2013). This follows an increasing pivot of these classes towards a “new politics” centred on organisations in civil society, rather than political parties or trade unions (Jodhka & Prakash, 2011). Accordingly, new civil society groups are often—but not always—distant from developmental or “old” civil society, comprising NGOs, activist groups and other CBOs that have been traditionally associated with the civil society space in India. Gowda & Gupta (2010) have suggested that the middle and upper classes are once again becoming active in Indian politics, but

are doing so in a non-traditional way, using ICTs to mobilise politically, influence policy and regain some measure of control over a changing political sphere.

Both old and new civil societies in India are comprised primarily of segments that are urban, young, middle- and upper class, and English-speaking. NGO actors of the development era were drawn to civil society because it provided idealistic young professionals a means to express their commitment to the poor, and was also reflective of a lack of jobs among the educated youth, as well as a growing dissatisfaction with existing institutional arrangements in the country (Sheth, 2004; Sen, 1993). The professionalisation of the voluntary sector in the 1970s and 1980s attracted highly educated, qualified and cosmopolitan professionals, particularly to specialised and sometimes technical NGOs (Singh, n.d.) This changed the nature of the voluntary sector, which expanded to include working educated people from middle income groups, who earned a modest living out of the sector, although less than what they would have earned from work elsewhere (ibid). From the 1990s, with the maturing of the NGO sector, young professionals that entered the scene were motivated more by job prospects than by the commitment to social change (Sen, 1999). The difference, then, between the “old” and “new” civil society is not one of socio-economic distinction, or class. Rather, the thesis posits that what distinguishes the new civil society is: (a) activism by the new middle classes on issues of middle class significance, rather than for the poor and marginalised sections of society, as was the case historically, and (b) new civil society engagement is enabled by ICTs, as many of its actors either belong to technology-related professions, or are comfortable with new technologies. The popularity of Internet spaces for discussion, planning and mobilisation assumes greater significance with the almost total absence of mechanism for participatory involvement of citizens and accountability of local self-governance structures in cities (see Ramanathan, 2007). This is explained further in the chapter “Civil Society Context in Bangalore”. Before moving on to explain this, however, it is imperative to first highlight the relationship between ICTs and cities in the knowledge or information age.

The Relationship between ICTs and Cities

The condition of cities that are deeply embedded in the global economy has occupied much scholarly attention since the ascendance of global capital in the 1980s. Economic globalisation and related processes, particularly the revolution in new technologies, have resulted in the weakening of the nation-state, and the subsequent rise of sub-national spatial units, particularly at the level of the urban (Sassen, 1991; Scott, 2001). These new urban entities have been referred to variously as world cities (Friedmann, 1986), global cities (Sassen, 2000, 2001), and informational cities (Castells, 1989), to name a few. The restructuring of cities based on economic globalisation has close links with the growth of information technologies and high-technology information centres, wherein the technological and information 'revolution' has served to intensify globalisation and vice-versa (Castells, 1989). More recently, Sassen (2010) noted the resurgence of the city as a key research site due to the complex interactions of major new trends that reconfigure the urban order. She has pointed out that globalisation and ICTs undermine a key traditional duality in the social sciences, viz., that of the national and the non-national. In the changed global scenario, the city does not fit neatly into the scalar hierarchy that puts it beneath the national, regional and global. Instead, major cities comprise the spaces of the global, engaging the global directly, often by-passing the national. In this regard, Spivak (2000) referred to Bangalore's "siliconization", noting that its role in 'electronic capitalism' meant that "Bangalore is not in India, it is the open end that goes way out of a national left argument" (p. 13). She noted the "virtual" nature of software production that connects the city directly to the circuits of global capital, and points to the primacy of globalisation over the nation-state in shaping the city.

Authors have also highlighted the contradictions that arise in cities directly connected to the world economy, such as skewed income and occupational distribution (economic); a new class alignment, reflected in increased class cleavages between the new high-income urban elites and other categories of labour (class); a physical reordering of the city that favours the valorised and

over-valorised sectors of the economy, i.e. the corporate economy, and their main beneficiaries (spatial); and increasing struggles between groups for their social reproduction needs, and the role of the state in these conflicts (political) (Castells, 1989, 1999; Friedmann, 1986; Sassen, 2000). While globalisation and related processes are not the sole factors in polarisations within the city, they have undoubtedly exacerbated existing divides, resulting in the rise of new socio-economic and spatial structures.¹³ Castells (1989) pointed to a new form of urban dualism that arises as a result of the impact of high-technology industries on labour and the city, and the distinctly different usages of urban space that privilege the new professional-managerial class at the cost of lower-level labour. Hence, the informational city is by and large a “dual city”, characterised by social and spatial polarisation. This polarisation induces increasing integration of the social and spatial core of the urban system at the same time that it fragments devalued spaces and groups, and threatens them with social irrelevance (Castells, 1989, 1999).¹⁴ Such divisions are apparent in the downgrading/displacement of neighbourhood shops and businesses, the rise of gated communities and privatised public spaces kept under constant surveillance, the displacement and dispossession of poor and marginalised communities, rising job insecurity and the downward spiral of working and wage conditions, the loss of a sense of space among communities, etc. (ibid; Harvey, 2008; Sassen, 2000).

In the developing world, this situation is exacerbated by the new, influential role of local tech-savvy elites in setting the urban agenda, which involves the perpetuation of ideals and images that further marginalise disadvantaged city groups. One such near-homogenous imaginary being promoted around the world is that of the “global city”, which is used to promote

¹³ An important process that impacts the shaping of urban space is neo-liberal urbanisation, which, critics argue, moulds urban spaces in ways that enhance the city’s image at the cost of marginalised groups. See Brenner & Theodore (2002), Harvey (2008), and Jessop (2002) for more on the implications of the neo-liberal turn on the form of cities and the sites of resistance from embattled communities and sub-cultures.

¹⁴ Castells (1999) notes that new informational technologies enhance the power relations that underlie pre-existing inequalities that have prevailed as a result of the politics of capitalist restructuring in most [developed] countries since the 1980s.

and justify all manner of policies and programs (Dupont, 2011; Ellis, 2011; Goldman, 2010; Short, 2012). In India, the initiation of global/world city-oriented solutions and projects has resulted in development priorities shifts that have triggered mass displacements and mounting inequality. However, groups that arise to challenge prevailing development trajectories contest the hegemony of such visions in urban planning and practice. *Hasiru Usiru* and its affiliated groups are examples of sites of resistance in Bangalore, who struggle to reclaim city space from the on-going restructuring (Benjamin, 2010; Enqvist, 2012; Enqvist et. al., 2014; Goldman & Longhofer, 2009). Often, actors struggling for recognition and entitlement resort to political violence, but their claims lack the *de facto* legitimacy enjoyed by the new "city users" (Sassen, 2000, 2010). In emerging as a site for new claims by global capital and disadvantaged sections of the urban population, the city becomes a strategic terrain for a whole series of struggles and contradictions (Sassen, 2000; Harvey, 2008).

As discussed in the Introduction, cities are also important as sites for protests and other types of collective action. As cities provide the basic elements for contention to develop, social movements and protests usually express themselves in public spaces of cities, particularly in capital and other 'global' cities (Therborn & Ho, 2009; Uitermark, Nicholls & Loopmans, 2012). Loopmans (2012) has maintained that cities must be viewed as constitutive of social movements, rather than as a blank canvas on which social movement activity unfolds. Pink (2009) notes that much of the literature on urban social movements has thus far focused on their manifestation in big cities, which are financial and political power centres.¹⁵ As cities are also sites of symbolic and social power, it is no coincidence that protests and other systemic challenges have claimed public space exactly where economic and political power concentrates (Uitermark, Nicholls, & Loopmans, 2012). Recent protest sites, such as Tahrir Square in Cairo, Puerta del Sol in Madrid, and Wall Street in New York are

¹⁵ She highlights the limited nature of such studies, noting the need to expand the literature on urban social movements to include smaller urban contexts as sites of activism.

reflective of this strategy. Further, while contention and mobilisations emanate from cities, they also stretch outwards to other geographical areas, linked by ideological and technological connections (Loopmans, 2012). Increasingly, the role of new media and ICTs are an additional dimension with which to analyse urban 'insurgencies' in Asia, particularly in mega-urban regions where social discontent has been fuelled by rapid and often haphazard transition to urban societies (Padawangi et. al., 2014). The Arab Spring protests, and street protests in Malaysia and India have started and been most visible in megacities, "acquiring a 'dazzling', larger-than-life image" (Singh, 2014a), with the support of old and new media channels. Lim (2014) has noted that as digital media and physical urban spaces have become interdependent dimensions of social and protest movements, more research is needed on the various inter-linkages between the two. She makes the association between urban space, digital media space and movements in terms of networks, which increasingly take the form of digital networks with the decline of traditional ways of social networking. With digital media, especially social media, integrally linked to the rhythms of daily sociality, digital urban networks can be potentially translated into social movement participation, as well as civic and political engagement (ibid).

Setting the Context: Bangalore City

In November 2006, Bangalore, the capital of Karnataka state in southern India, officially reverted to its pre-colonial and original city name, Bengaluru. Litterateurs and historians have pointed out that those speaking and writing in Kannada, the regional language of Karnataka, have always referred to the city in this way. Among other things, this section highlights the imagination of Bengaluru and Bangalore through the times, and the role of technology in these imaginations. With an estimated population of over 10 million in its urban area, Bangalore is the 18th most populous city in the world, and is one of the fastest-growing cities in India (Francis, 2013; World Population Review, 2014). Along with population growth, the city's boundaries have expanded as well. In 2007, the city's administrative area was increased by combining 100 administrative sub-

divisions or wards of the city's municipal administration, the Bangalore Mahanagara Palike (BMP), with surrounding municipal and town councils, and villages to form a single administrative area. The newly formed Greater Bangalore Metropolitan Area covered an area of 741 km², consisted of 198 wards, and was governed by the BMP's successor, the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike or BBMP (Nagendra, Nagendran, Paul, & Pareeth, 2012). Bangalore is significant as the site of the study for several reasons; the foremost being that the city has gained international recognition by virtue of the role its information technology (IT) industry has played in the global information economy. It is variously known as the "Silicon Valley/Plateau", "IT City", or the "information capital" of the country, due to its large concentration of IT (and other high technology) companies.¹⁶ This has made it an important focal point for software development in the Asian region and also the global arena. Management consultant Zinnov's report on soft infrastructure in Bangalore (Zinnov, 2011) highlighted the following factors as crucial to the city's leading edge in software, IT and R&D: its talent pool, R&D centres, cost arbitrage, its position as a hub for technical education, a hospitable start up landscape, and strong focus on innovation and research, among other factors.

Often referred to as a "megacity" (Spivak, 2008) or modern "metropolis" (Nair, 2005), the city has built its software and high-tech industrial and research base upon its public sector and defence moorings (Heitzman, 1999, 2004; Nair, 2005). Public sector undertakings (PSUs), such as Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), were established in the 1950s and 1960s as part of Jawaharlal Nehru's plan to turn Bangalore into India's city of the future. Together, with national defence laboratories and the Indian Institute of Science, these PSUs formed the crux of Bangalore's scientific foundations (Basant, 2006; Yahya, 2008). For these reasons, the promise of

¹⁶While there are several definitions of "high technology" industries, it is generally taken to mean the production of IT devices. A useful definition is provided by Markusen, Hall, & Glasmeier (1986), who identify high-technology industries on the basis of a greater-than-average proportion of engineers and scientists in the sector's labour force (as cited in Castells, 1989).

Bangalore as a model for modern India, implicit in the concentration of science, technology and public sector industries, has loomed large in the national imagination since independence in 1947 (Heitzman, 2004; Nair, 2005). The city once again attained national and scholarly attention since the late 1980s, this time with regard to its role in the global information society via the IT industry, and subsequent impacts on the city. In addition, the development of the biotechnology (BT) industry¹⁷, and the crucial role of education and research institutes in its technological success, placed IT and software at the centre of debates on Bangalore.

Historical Evolution of Bangalore

Bangalore's evolution as an IT hub, and its relationship to civil society, can only be fully understood in relation to its past. Accordingly, key turning points in the city's history are divided into three broad eras: (i) Origins as a fortress town, and the city's fortunes as a princely State and under British rule (1537-1947), (ii) Post-independence (1950s-1980s), and (iii) Post-liberalisation (1990s-present). By highlighting the continuities and ruptures between the past and present, this section provides the context within which to understand the emergence of Bangalore as a cosmopolitan and IT city. This section also provides insights into the dominant imaginations of Bangalore at various times, their influence on the city's development, and the contested nature of these imaginations. Bangalore's history, including the origins of its name and imaginations of the city at various times, has been well documented by scholars and historians. In providing an overview of the city's historical, cultural and political evolution relevant to the objectives of this thesis, this section relies primarily on the works of Heitzman (2004), Srinivas (2004), Nair (2005), and Pani, Radhakrishna, & Bhat (2010).

Bengaluru, the Princely State and the Colonial Legacy (1537-1947)

¹⁷In 2009, Bangalore was the country's largest bio-technology cluster, with 200 of India's 370 biotech companies having set up shop in the city (Mazumdar-Shaw, 2009). While Mumbai overtook Bangalore to become India's top biotech city in terms of revenue in 2010, Bangalore-based bio pharmaceuticals major Biocon earned the highest revenue (The Economic Times , 2010).

“Bengaluru” was founded in 1537 by Kempe Gowda, a local military chief who owed allegiance to the Vijayanagar empire in south India. While historical evidence shows human habitation long before Kempe Gowda built and named this fortress town, this period is significant as the commencement of Bangalore's political history (Chandramouli, 2002). Kempe Gowda's rule is also linked to the development of a new urban form: a fortified settlement linked to a network of temples and tanks, later attracting many merchants and artisans who took up residence there. The fall of the Vijayanagar empire in 1565 saw the old settlement, also called the “City” or *Pete* (market), change hands in quick succession, as different kings granted the city to favoured generals (see also Raman, 2006). The changing fortunes of the city led to the in-migration of various cultural groups, including Tamil and Marathi speakers from neighbouring regions and new Muslim communities. The *Pete* has always been marked by ethnic, linguistic, regional and national diversity; communities, religions and economies have coexisted here—although not without tensions (see also Rajagopal, 2008). The area also developed commercially, and the settlement was divided into zones for trade by specific communities in various goods, many of which continue till date (ibid). Under Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan, Bengaluru occupied a central role as the commercial and manufacturing capital of Mysore state. The city was famous for its textiles manufactures, including fine and coarse cotton, silks, and wool. The fall of Tipu in 1799 to the British, who handed the city over to the Wodeyar kings of Mysore, was the first phase of indirect colonial rule.

In 1809, the British moved to Bangalore, and set up a military base of their own, the “Cantonment”, which was to be completely under British control. The new center was built around Halasur Lake, a few miles from the *Pete*, and grew by absorbing several villages in the area. It had its own municipal and administrative apparatus, although it was technically a British enclave within the territory of the Wodeyar kings. Care was taken to limit the possibility of people-to-people contact between the Cantonment and the *Pete*, and the rough terrain physically constrained access to the former. Divisions between the two entities were heightened by cultural differences: bulk of the population brought in to

provide services for the army were Hindus from outside Mysore, as well as Tamil-speaking populations and Urdu-speaking Muslims. The aspiration to be accepted by the British also contributed to the Cantonment residents distancing themselves from the *Pete*, which they rarely saw or experienced. In the initial years, the Cantonment grew very rapidly as European and Indian pensioners settled within its boundaries. The close proximity of these two races saw the emergence of a mixed race—the Eurasians—who are now better known as Anglo-Indians. Experiments in education in the early 1850s resulted in a spike in attendance at schools among boys and girls. By the late nineteenth century, English education, instead of being the preserve of the elite, was accessible to children of all classes in several Cantonment schools. In the nineteenth century, the Cantonment grew steadily and placidly, and by 1891 it dominated Bangalore.

During this time, the *Pete* was marked by several transitions and transformations: in 1831, the British took over the administration of Mysore State, believing that the king was leading the state into an economic and social crisis. From this time until 1881—when the British agreed to return power to the king in return for complete control of the Cantonment—the British fundamentally altered the functioning of the system while retaining old nomenclature and individuals. Under British commissioners, state government offices were relocated to Bangalore, administration was streamlined, departments specializing in revenue administration functioned under British heads and the city became an important node within a colonial information network (see also Raman, 2006). Other important changes during this period included the shift in administrative language of state documents and official interactions towards a single state language, Kannada, alongside English; the establishment of an extensive postal system; inauguration of the first railway line in the state; and the electrification of the city—the first in India—in 1900. A reorganisation of public spaces and services also took place under the commissioners, who expanded the tank system that was used for garden irrigation and drinking, and introduced a new model of town planning that saw layouts more strictly 'zoned', so that space was designed and used for single uses, and residence and workplace were strictly separated. The

city's mostly non-built environment at that time, replete with horticultural plots (*tota*) filled with vegetables and groves alternated with open fields, virgin forests, Lal Bagh botanical gardens, and well-tended compounds of bungalows set the stage for Bangalore's reputation as 'Garden City'.

When Bangalore City/*Pete* was handed back to the Wodeyar king in 1881, the new government strove to promote industry, particularly textiles and manufacturing that could tap the city's traditional economic strengths. From 1880 to 1940, the Wodeyar kings appointed prime ministers (diwans) to conduct the administrative business of the State. Their interest in modernization led to an accumulation of administrative and technological prowess. The thrust toward industrialisation received the greatest boost from M. Visvesvaraya, who was diwan from 1912–1918. Visvesvaraya's emphasis on technology and higher education paved the way for the establishment of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in the northern suburbs of the city. The IISc, along with other higher education institutions, helped develop the technical education base of the city upon which the future 'science city' was premised. Bangalore's industrial profile also expanded with the outbreak of World War II, when the British need for an aeronautics station resulted in the creation of Hindustan Aircraft Pvt. Ltd. (HAL) in 1940. Former diwans Mirza Ismail and Visvesvaraya played an important role in the establishment of HAL, especially the latter, who arranged for the land required for the company. HAL became the first of many public sector enterprises that were to be established in Bangalore, which would give the city a crucial advantage in independent India's economic policy. The interest of the Mysore kings and diwans in modernisation gave the kingdom a reputation as a 'model' princely state during the late colonial period.

By the early twentieth century, the City/*Pete* and Cantonment had developed as independent entities, with their own central markets, railway stations, hospitals, and wholesale and retail areas. These entities were merged together in 1949 under a single municipal administration, the Bangalore City Corporation (BCC), which later came to be known as the *Bangalore Mahanagara Palike* (BMP). Despite this merger, the complete integration of these two cities

remains an unfulfilled task, and in many ways Bangalore continues as a 'divided city', with some divisions continuing between its eastern and western parts. The tensions emanating from the deep divisions between the City and Cantonment, and the resultant conflicts in the post-colonial period, are discussed in the next section.

Bangalore in Independent India: Growth and Contestations (1950s-1980s)

In the immediate post-independence phase, Bangalore's growth was influenced by the national government's policy emphasis on public sector institutions for research and production. The government supported the establishment of four large public sector units in the city, viz., HAL, Indian Telephone Industries (ITI), Bharat Electronics Ltd. (BEL), and Hindustan Machine Tools (HMT), whose units attracted workers of varying skill levels, and in whose self-contained townships children had access to English based technical education. Bangalore proved to be an attractive location for these units due to the tradition of state-sponsored industrialisation, a pleasant climate—commonly referred to as 'salubrious', the presence of the IISc and other engineering colleges that provided an educated workforce, and the availability of cheap electric power. In addition, placing important military and technology facilities out of the range of potential Pakistani air raids was an important contributing factor. The period from 1950-1980, when the public sector dominated Bangalore's political economy, also saw the intensification of employment in government bureaucracy, growth in educational and research institutions, and electrical and small-scale industries. The textile industry continued to be important to the city, as was the informal economy, which employed more people than all the formal sectors combined.

The 1980s witnessed the emergence of a vibrant private sector, with the development of local microelectronics, information-based and software industries, such as Infosys Consultants and Informatics. Among multi-national companies (MNCs), one of the first to set up base in Bangalore was Texas

Instruments (TI) in 1985, paving the way for the forthcoming IT 'revolution'.¹⁸ TI's success in software services resulted in Bangalore becoming an attractive destination for foreign and Indian companies engaged in software development. Heitzman (2004) provides a detailed account of the emergence of the information technology (IT) industry in Bangalore within the larger political economy of the Indian State (see also Parthasarathy, 2005). Buoyed by Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's personal interest in microelectronics, private enterprises responded to, and benefited from, new policies that paved the way for the liberalisation of the electronics sector. Wipro Infotech became the first IT success story in Bangalore, followed by a number of other firms, such as Infosys, which leveraged the lower wages earned by Indian professionals to tap into the software outsourcing business. The success in software, along with the Karnataka state government's thrust on high-technology industries, enabled Bangalore to earn an international reputation in IT. In addition to software and IT, the 1980s also saw several large private sector units, notably manufacturing, textiles, automobiles, electronic and electrical units, matching the public sector in size and employment. The burgeoning number of industrial units—public and private—produced a comparable growth of workers in the city, and the city's growing informal sector attracted an increasing stream of migrants, intensifying the city's cosmopolitan mix. Such population surges, as discussed below, provided fertile ground for simmering contestations over competing interests, ideologies, and identities, which often spilt over into public spaces.

After 1951, Bangalore witnessed a phenomenal increase in population as a result of the migration of a number of new social groups, which added to the city's existing linguistic and religious diversity. The second major spurt in population growth occurred during the 1970s, particularly among the middle classes associated with the formal sector industries, national research organisations, scientific establishments, and state bureaucracy. While different communities have lived cohesively for the most part, linguistic and communal

¹⁸The first satellite dish in the country that helped TI set up round-the-clock communication link with its US offices arrived on a bullock-driven cart (Arun, 2010; Roye, 2013).

riots and agitations have broken out at sporadic intervals (see also Engineer, 1994; Nair, 2000b). Tensions between Kannadigas and Tamils have existed since the colonial period, but were largely confined to the politics of the bureaucracy at that time (Pani, Resource cities across phases of globalization: Evidence from Bangalore, 2009). The complete isolation of the City and Cantonment in the colonial period produced a noticeable distinction between Tamilians in the City and Tamilians in the Cantonment. While the former were comfortable with the Kannada language and local culture, and functioned within a bureaucracy in which Kannada had a prominent place, Tamilians in the Cantonment were more familiar with English, having little or no knowledge of Kannada. In the post-independence period, as the Cantonment was still perceived as largely Tamil-speaking vis-à-vis a Kannada-speaking City, language was central to the challenges of integration. This was especially so as the Kannada culture of the City came into direct and daily conflict with the Tamil-dominated culture of the Cantonment with the integration of the two areas in the post-colonial period (ibid). The issue of language burst to the surface with the Gokak agitation of 1982, which crystallised an identity based on language for the first time. The cultural concerns soon gave way to a more militant and exclusive form of Kannada nationalism, which focused on Kannada as the language of employment, and identified its enemies among the subaltern classes. This new belligerent Kannada activism became associated with the occupation of public spaces: poles sporting the Kannada flag dominated established Tamil localities, while newer Tamil-dominated slums were targets of rioters and looting. Thereafter, Kannada-Tamil tensions, always simmering beneath the surface, flared up on several occasions, the most notable being: (a) widespread anti-Tamil violence during the Cauvery river water-sharing dispute between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu in 1991, (b) vociferous protests against the proposed installation of a statue honouring Tamil poet and cultural hero, Thiruvalluvar, in the city in 1991, and (c) violence that followed the kidnapping of actor Rajkumar in 2000 by forest brigand Veerapan, which was staged as a dramatic encounter between Kannada and Tamil nationalisms.

The other contentious—if less visible—language issue was the division between Kannada and English, with the former, like all Indian languages, sidelined during the colonial period. Under British rule, English acquired a hegemonic status as the language of science, technology and capitalism, while Kannada strove to make its presence felt in the politico-cultural sphere. Although nationalist intellectuals made few isolated efforts, the English hegemony gradually grew in private life, becoming the administrative language and the language of power. In the post-independence phase, there was widespread growth of English in areas traditionally dominated by Kannada in the city. The international hegemony of English and the requirements of the global marketplace resulted in the burgeoning of English-medium schools in the city. In both urban and rural districts of Bangalore, families who could afford to began to avoid the Kannada-language government school system in favour of private institutions. Kannada protagonists' attempts to stall the forward march of English have usually been through appeals for state intervention. The issue of reasserting Kannada as the medium of education in all schools in Karnataka can be traced back to the Gokak committee's recommendation to this effect in 1981. Subsequent efforts by the Karnataka state government to give primacy to Kannada in primary education were challenged in the courts by an association of private and unaided English-medium schools. This association argued that as private entities they were exempt from the state's policy (see also Sonntag, 2009). In May 2014, the Indian Supreme Court decided in favour of the private schools, saying that imposition of a mother tongue as the medium of instruction violated the fundamental rights of parents and children (Bangalore Mirror, 2014; CNN-IBN, 2014). However, in an indication of the emotive nature of the issue, the Karnataka government in January 2015 restated its intention to make Kannada compulsory in all primary schools, reviving the decades-old conflict between the languages (News Karnataka, 2015). Sonntag (2009) noted that this language conflict, particularly in its current form, is indicative of the issues and controversies surrounding linguistic globalisation, characterised by the increasing spread and domination of the English language ('global English'). She described

the English-Kannada controversy as tussle between two main competing narratives. The first comprises those who see English as the language of technology and modernity, crucial for Bangalore's success in the global information economy. The contrasting narrative projects Kannada as crucial tool to build political community and invest it with a moral content, with the recognition of mother tongue as identity. Sonntag differentiates this inclusive politics from the particularistic, xenophobic strains of some pro-Kannada groups, although it is the latter that often dominates the media discourse.

Another pattern of violence that emerged during the colonial period and surfaced time and again in post-independence Bangalore is Hindu-Muslim conflict. The Bangalore Disturbances of 1928, which were a series of clashes over a Ganesha idol, considered sacred to Hindus, recast the old city as a zone of contention between the two communities. Nair (2005) has noted that the Bangalore Disturbances were significant in revealing the fragility of the ties that bound the two communities together. Further, although the socio-economic and cultural differences between the City and Cantonment Muslims were well-known, the discourse on the Bangalore Disturbances cast them as unified by religion—with profound consequences for years to come. Muslim alienation was reinforced when the more militant and exclusive Kannada nationalism that emerged in the 1980s began defining Kannada identity in ways that excluded Muslim (and Tamil) residents of the city. The politics of space and ethnicity erupted on several occasions in the form of property disputes during the 1980s and 1990s, with Muslims, as citizens-in-the-making (ibid), particularly vulnerable during moments of crisis. This was apparent during the riots of October 1994, triggered by the introduction of a 10-minute Urdu bulletin on *Doordarshan*, the national public service broadcaster, during the prime time slot. The toxic combination of Kannada and Hindu chauvinism unleashed mob fury and communal frenzy that resulted in extensive loss of life and property in Muslim areas of (mainly) south Bangalore (see also Engineer, 1994).

From the 1990s onwards, Bangalore's rapid rise as an IT centre was accompanied by a new wave of immigration, and a new set of contestations

between 'locals' and 'outsiders'. Engineer (1994) has noted that the cosmopolitan nature of big cities results in the loss of ethnic identity of the city, making the dominant ethnic group defensive about its language and culture. In Bangalore, Hindi and English have overtaken Kannada as the favoured language (The Economist, 2012), providing fertile ground for societal antagonisms that created new divisions or exacerbated existing ones. This is discussed further in the section below, as well as in Chapter 4, 'The Context of Civil Society in Bangalore'.

Post-liberalisation: Becoming the 'IT City' (The 1990s onwards)

The take-off of Bangalore as an IT hub was the combined result of favourable liberalisation policies, access to multiple information systems as a result of global liberalisation and the ICT revolution, the combined efforts of transnational and Indian businesses, and the presence of a qualified workforce that could be readily tapped into (Heitzman, 2004).¹⁹ Upadhyya (2009) has noted that economic reforms ushered in the opening up of the economy, which allowed the nascent software outsourcing industry to take full advantage of the dismantling of state controls. In the initial stages, leading companies like Infosys concentrated on 'body shopping', and then 'offshore' production of software, which allowed them to exploit the relatively cheap labour available in the city.²⁰ Bangalore became a leading site for companies specialising in technology-based and mediated work for clients located in advanced post-industrial countries (see also Upadhyya & Vasavi, 2008). Companies like Wipro benefitted from the Central government's reformed electronics policy, which enabled hardware imports, allowing it to compete effectively with public sector units, and to branch out into software and consulting. Simultaneously, small-scale enterprises began to offer a wide range of products and services for other organisations that utilised

¹⁹ For a detailed examination of the history, economics and structure of Bangalore's software industry see Parthasarathy (2004, 2005), Basant (2006), and Saxenian (2007).

²⁰ Bodyshopping is the practice of providing inexpensive on-site (i.e. at customer locations overseas) labour on an hourly basis, for low value-added programming services such as coding and testing. Offshore services is service provision from India, instead of having to work at customer sites overseas. For more on these practices and the organisation of production in Bangalore's IT industry see Parthasarathy (2004).

telematics technology for their core businesses. The exponential increase in IT jobs produced training companies that vied with engineering schools in churning out thousands of trained workers for the growing IT and IT-enabled services (ITeS) industry. By the late 1990s, IT and ITeS accounted for close to 60,000 jobs distributed over 1,400 firms, which expanded to nearly 3,000 firms at the beginning of the new millennium (Nair, 2005).

While banking and engineering MNCs had been present in Bangalore, the 1990s saw the emergence of new MNCs that built on a local, vibrant, high-technology sector as well as the older, largely public, engineering-electronic base. Initially, many hi-tech companies had offices located in the central business district (CBD). Towards the end of the decade, most began moving to the fringes of the city, because of inexpensive land and government encouragement. In 2000-1, the 25 km long 'IT corridor', stretching from the International Tech Park in Whitefield on the east side of the city to Electronic City to the south-east, was designed as a self-contained project, with its own infrastructure, including schools and colleges, and a 'world class' environment (see also The Hindu, 2001). Within these tech parks, which together employed around 26,000 people in 2003 (Nair, 2005), employees work in swanky glass and steel structures, "corralled in comfort" (ibid, p. 86), and with workplaces defined as lifestyle.²¹ A significant number of smaller firms situated themselves in low-rise structures in residential localities, often in violation of zoning and building laws. In addition to such enclaves that spilt beyond the designated 'IT corridor', new IT/ITeS corridors developed in the city, such as the Outer Ring Road (ORR) spanning from Hebbal to the Silk Board Junction. ORR's IT corridor growth commenced in early 2000s, and gained importance with the inauguration of the new international airport in 2008 in Devanahalli, serving as the main artery between the airport and the major IT hubs of Whitefield and Electronic City. BY 2010, the ORR IT corridor accounted for almost 25 per cent of Bangalore's total

²¹ Upadhyaya and Vasavi (2008) note how work is promoted as entertainment, as education and as empowerment in the Indian call centre industry—techniques that are an attempt to mask the panoptic and Taylorist elements of the work.

IT space, making it one of India's fastest growing IT/ITeS growth corridors (Business Standard, 2010).

While the sudden influx of IT companies into Bangalore in the 1990s gave the city its "Silicon Valley" reputation, Heitzman (2004) pointed out that the hype surrounding this image was due to aggressive marketing techniques, rather than any true display of information society characteristics. The propagation of an IT City was in line with the imagination of Bangalore as a city of the future, where technology, industry, and planning could propel the city forward as a model for a modern India. A decade later, however, Bangalore had come closer to achieving its vision of becoming Silicon Valley, although comparisons between the two were still premature.²² By 2005, Bangalore alone accounted for about one-third of India's software exports, and, with 265,000 workers, nearly one-third of total employment in ITeS-business process outsourcing (BPO) services (The Economist, 2005). However, by then it had also become apparent that the dramatic growth of the metropolitan region had created social and economic problems that exceeded managerial capability.

Being an 'IT City': Boon and Banes of the New Metropolis

High-tech and knowledge industries have greatly influenced Bangalore's economic growth through direct employment and the export revenue generated by these workers. At the same time—for better or worse—these industries have significantly influenced the city's social, urban, cultural and political landscape. Consequently, several studies have examined the planning, contested politics, and fallouts of the informational/network/IT city project in Bangalore (Chakravartty, 2008; Dittrich, 2007; Heitzman, 2004; Madon, 1997; Saxenian, 2007). Proponents have hailed the industry as a leveller, enabling Indian intellectual expertise to compete on a global level, and integrating the country successfully with the global market (see Dasgupta, 2008; Friedman, 2006; Upadhyaya, 2009). These arguments also tended to represent IT as symbolising a

²² Saxenian (2007) provides a detailed explanation of why comparisons between Bangalore and Silicon Valley are misleading and harmful, and suggests ways by which the Indian IT industry can overcome existing limitations.

new and resurgent India, free from corruption, and moving the country in the direction of a desired “global” status (ibid). However, these narratives were also contested by a wide range of groups that pointed to the industry’s deleterious effects on the city, which are explained a little later in this section. Meanwhile, one of the less controversial effects of the IT industry has been the growth of a “cyber culture”, particularly among young people, who access the Internet from “cybercafes” and salons that have mushroomed across the city (Srinivas, 2004).²³ Nisbett (2006, 2009) has pointed to the role of these cybercafes, with their relatively low prices, in widening Internet access to the urban, educated middle classes in the city. Particularly for young, middle-class males, cybercafes were social spaces that allowed them to hang out and build social relationships away from the parental gaze. Cybercafes were described as ideal places to do this, and their association with modernity, progress, and global networks of technology, made them sites of middle-class status (ibid).

The IT industry—and associated IT/cyber culture—captured the imagination of the middle classes, particularly in its representation as a middle class success story (Dasgupta, 2008). Nisbett (2009) has noted that the knowledge society discourse, and accompanying excitement over the production and consumption of new media, is inextricably linked to the rise of the middle classes in the popular imagination. The IT industry also resonated closely with the middle classes for another reason: as the prime beneficiaries of the IT boom, they experienced unprecedented levels of social mobility (Lakha, 2003). The substantial purchasing power of IT professionals allowed them to engage in high levels of consumption, spawning a new consumerist lifestyle. Clothing, consumer goods, real estate, and private vehicles were major consumption items, and consumer industries, local and international, responded to this demand (Upadhyya, 2009b). This manifested itself in the mushrooming of malls and upmarket shops, pubs and bars, expensive real estate properties, including gated communities, and glass and chrome business towers in various parts of

²³While this is a less contentious issue, questions have been raised about changing social norms, pornography, surveillance, and other undesired consequences of cybercafés and cyber culture in India (see Panda, 2007)

the city. Consequently, the growth of the IT industry produced massive urban restructuring, which profoundly impacted city spaces, including architecture, public places, and city form (Aranya, 2003; Shankar, 2012).²⁴ The impact of the IT industry on the urban form was particularly evident in the creation of enclaves with exclusive facilities for ICT businesses, domination of the real estate and construction industry for IT industry purposes, marginalisation of local planning and local bodies in the spatial decisions for the city, and involvement of the private sector in civic and infrastructure works (ibid).

One of the most significant consequences of rapid urbanisation has been haphazard development, and the infrastructural bottlenecks arising from the steady stream of migrants into the city. Bangalore's rapid population growth rate—from 5.7 million in 2001 to 8.4 million in 2011—is indicative of the large inflow of migrants, both from within and outside Karnataka State (DNA, 2011). With rapid population growth and unplanned urban sprawl, great pressure was placed on infrastructure and resources, like water supply, electricity, public transportation, sanitation, land, etc. The inability of planning institutions to limit unplanned growth and inefficient land use patterns, the jurisdictional confusion arising from the existence of many parastatal organisations created to manage various services, and the resulting lack of coordinated effort on the part of these agencies, compounded existing infrastructural constraints (Sastry, 2008; Sudhira, 2008). In Bangalore, infrastructural deficits continue to be most visible in the city's notoriously clogged traffic, with frequent traffic jams, road accidents, and air and noise pollution rising to alarming levels. In addition to urban sprawl and ineffective planning and implementation mechanisms, traffic congestion worsened due to inadequate public transport systems, shortage of road space, and absence of disincentives for personal vehicle use (see Pangotra & Sharma, 2006). Further, the growth of household and personal incomes precipitated the growth of personal vehicles in the city: with an estimated vehicular population of

²⁴Shopping malls and self-contained gated communities—associated with the rise of global information nodes—are critiqued for, among other things, their high levels of social control, restricted public access, and infringement of public spaces (Aranya, 2003; Shankar, 2012).

2.6 million in 2007, Bangalore had the highest vehicle to person ratio in the country (ibid; Sudhira, Ramachandra, & Bala Subrahmanya, 2007). By 2010, Bangalore's traffic problem had impinged on its residents' quality of life and dented its clean and green reputation. In 2011, the city was named as the sixth most painful city in the world for commuting (Prashanth, 2011a), and the fourth most polluted city in India (The Indian Express, 2011).²⁵ With the deteriorating air quality contributing to rising levels of asthma and respiratory diseases among adults and children, Bangalore has been dubbed the "asthma capital" of the country (Charan, 2004; Vyas, 2012). The situation was made worse by the depleting tree cover and loss of green spaces, particularly in the city's periphery (Nagendra & Gopal, 2010; Nagendra et al., 2012). Ironically, while migrants came to the city for its balanced climate and greenery, the demands of a fast growing metropolis denuded the city's street trees and vegetation, precipitating rising temperatures and air pollution (ibid; see also Vailshery, Jaganmohan, & Nagendra, 2013).

With Bangalore's rapid transition to a metropolis accompanied by an array of structural, institutional, and environmental problems, a wide range of CSOs emerged to tackle these issues. *Hasiru Usiru* and *Praja*—the two cases chosen for this study—are among a spectrum of organisations and communities that focused on sustainable development solutions for the city. In the case of the city's disappearing street trees, groups like *Hasiru Usiru* joined hands with various CSOs and citizens' groups to organise protests and other advocacy activities, and file public interest litigations (PILs) against tree felling. As the *Hasiru Usiru* chapter explains, the network expanded its activities to expound sustainable development, including sustainable public transportation, which was also a focal area of *Praja's* activities. The influential role of civil society in enhancing citizen participation in urban affairs, and the rise of a new class of techno-elites is described in the next section.

²⁵ It is estimated that in Indian cities, including Bangalore, vehicular emissions contribute to 60-80 percent of total environmental pollution (Murthy C. , Sitharam, Hebbani, & Kumar, 2013; Francis & Prasad, 2014).

Civil Society, Middle Class Modes of Engagement, and Techno-Elites in Bangalore

Bangalore is often lauded for a proactive and networked civil society that has emerged as an important actor in the urban agenda, working to make the state more accountable to its citizens (Madon & Sahay, 2000; Nair, 2005; Sudhira et. al., 2007). Sudhira et. al. (2007) have noted that Bangalore's vibrant civil society sector comprises NGOs working on a spectrum of activities ranging from literacy and green brigades to urban governance, as well as RWAs, trade and commercial organisations, and professional organisations that have played a major role in some local body activities and influenced their decision-making. While Bangalore has a rich history of associational life and public activism dating from the early post-Independence years (Nair, 2005), the 1990s saw increasing visibility of NGOs and CBOs in developmental and urban governance processes on an unprecedented scale (see also Heitzman, 2004). At the turn of the twentieth century there was also a corresponding change in the nature of citizens' participation in city affairs, reflected in rising middle-class modes of civic activism. Nair (2005) has noted that this change is reflected in the emergence of citizens' groups and NGOs that increasingly turned into owners of rights or 'stakeholders', participating in the city's management. CSOs that emerged on the scene during that time introduced an array of tools to enhance citizen participation and government accountability (Heitzman, 2004; Nair, 2005; Paul, 2002). *Swabhimana* (meaning self-respect), a state-sponsored forum of NGOs and concerned citizens, was one of the most important experiments to link representative citizens' groups with bureaucrats to deal with problems of service delivery (Heitzman, 2004). Launched by progressive bureaucrat A. Ravindra in 1995, *Swabhimana* spurred the development of new non-government institutional forms to enhance citizen participation in their (middle-class) localities (Nair, 2005). Another notable initiative was the NGO CIVIC (Citizens' Voluntary Initiative for the City), which played a key role in governance debates, with an emphasis on devolution in local urban governance, as specified in the 74th Constitutional Amendment. Madon & Sahay (2000) highlighted these, and other

prominent initiatives, established to forge closer linkages with key government and bureaucratic actors, described in terms of a local 'network' of stakeholders involved and the information flows between them. Public Affairs Centre (PAC) was another key civil society actor during this period, known for its 'citizen report cards' on the assessment of service agencies, its participatory budgeting activities, and its efforts to galvanise citizens' groups on transparency issues (Ackerman, 2005; Ravindra, 2004). Nair (2005) noted that these 'stakeholders'—reflective of middle-class interests—preferred to manage the city in ways that differed from modes of civic mobilisation in the past, which involved modes of mass agitation. Thus, a new kind of 'non-political' civic engagement was emphasised by this civil society segment, which contrasted itself with the civic activism that was more closely tied to electoral politics.

The civil society space in Bangalore is also marked by the rise of a new class of techno-elites, whose power, critics argue, is apparent in the shaping of public policy through networks of influence, and in the allocation of resources and services to mega-projects that favour corporate interests (Benjamin, 2000, 2010; Dasgupta, 2008; Scoones, 2007). Nair (2005) has argued that the rise of middle-class modes of engagement, as discussed above, the gradual abdication by the state of its developmentalist roles and redistributive functions, the ascendance of the market—and, I add, the emergence of the knowledge economy—gave rise to a new parastatal managerial elite, embodied in institutional innovations such as the Bangalore Agenda Task Force (BATF) and NGOs such as *Janaagraha*. The now-defunct BATF was a public-private partnership constituted in 2000 to play an advisory role for improving the city. Championed by then Chief Minister, S.M. Krishna, whose primary ambition was to make Bangalore the best city in India, the task force was constituted as an advisory body with enormous executive powers, with members drawn from the IT industry, corporate world, and middle- and upper-class NGOs, including PAC and *Janaagraha*. Powered through by Krishna, the BATF originated from the idea that corporate entities had a role in urban governance, and could benefit the city through sharing ideas and best practices, and by bringing in an efficient management approach (Nair, 2005;

Raman, 2006; Sami, 2013). Closely connected to the BATF was *Janaagraha*, a “citizens’ movement” founded in late 2001 by Ramesh and Swati Ramanathan.²⁶ *Janaagraha* gained widespread attention for its efforts to energise citizen participation in urban local self-governance, community-led participatory budgeting, and innovative ways of tackling corruption (Klitgaard, 2012; Raman, 2008; Ramanathan, 2007). The task force soon ran into trouble when it began to replace conventional spaces of the traditional civil society in Bangalore in dictating directions for urban governance, bringing it into conflict with representatives of traditional civil society of the urban poor and subaltern groups (Benjamin, 2010; Ghosh, 2005). While the BATF was effectively disbanded following Krishna’s electoral defeat in 2004, the influence of its individual members continued at the state and national levels, resulting in what Benjamin (2010, p. 94) called a “morphing of the elite’s circuit of power” (see also Ghosh, 2005).

The role of the new techno-elites, including in the creation of an IT-NGO nexus in governance—such as the *Janaagraha*-Infosys partnership (Benjamin, 2005; Dasgupta, 2008)—is hotly debated. Proponents have highlighted the benefits of such unique partnerships between political leaders, services providers, private sector entrepreneurs and civil society leaders and thinkers in improving government performance and contributing to a more liveable city (Manor, 2009; Paul, 2007). On the other hand, critics have pointed to the detrimental effects of such initiatives, including the hegemony of the capitalist class (Nair, 2005); the creation of an ‘exclusive citizenry’ that bypasses political systems and excludes elected representatives (Ghosh, 2005, 2006; Nair, 2000a); and an institutionalised form of ‘middle class activism’ that serves as a “Trojan horse” to de-politicise and dilute claim making by poorer groups (Benjamin, 2005). This new techno-class is also criticised for supporting visions of the city as

²⁶ The story of the Ramanathans, successful non-resident Indians (NRIs) who returned to Bangalore to establish *Janaagraha*, is often cited in the media as examples of ‘ordinary’ citizens giving back to their homeland. In fact, the critically acclaimed Hindi movie, *Swades* (2004), starring superstar actor Shah Rukh Khan is inspired, to a degree, by the life of Ramesh Ramanathan.

'global' or 'world-class', which were then translated into reality via public policy emphasis on sectors that fit into the imaginary of IT as ushering in a 'modern and resurgent' India.²⁷ The ideological success of IT and a new globalised English-based imagination of Bangalore produced an aspiration for a new identity for the city, which reached a peak during the BATF's tenure.²⁸

Research Questions

The role of civil society in Bangalore, then, assumes significance not only because of its vibrant participation in the urban agenda, but also because of criticisms levelled against the mainly middle-class politics of civil society. Bangalore has often been at the forefront of innovative online initiatives for social and political change (see Gowda & Gupta, 2010), reflecting its history of active citizenry as well as the leveraging of ICTs for democratic engagement. The thesis posits the rise of a new ICT-enabled civil society in Bangalore, distinguished from developmental or old civil society by virtue of the non-political nature of its goals and claim-making modes. An informal conversation with Prabhat, a director of a research NPO, introduced me to the notion of "IT as a paradigm" in Bangalore, where IT perpetually impacts the city, in visible and invisible ways (personal communication, June 8, 2011). The thesis works within this notion of 'IT as paradigm' in Bangalore, arguing that one of the outcomes of Bangalore's unprecedented growth as an "IT hub" has been the extension of IT, and subsequently ICTs, from the preserve of the IT industry into other realms of urban life. This "technologisation" of the city, and its impact upon various information/technology ecologies (connected as well as unconnected to the IT industry), is an under-researched aspect of the IT phenomenon in Bangalore.

²⁷See Benjamin (2010) for a critique of this narrative, which, he claims, 'naturally' posits Bangalore as a progressive modernism of India's IT story.

²⁸ In the quest to project Bangalore as a global city, a series of models have powered imaginations of the city, with Singapore exerting a powerful hold on the imagination of town planner, CEO, politician, and citizen alike (Nair, 2000a, 2005). More recently, Sreekumar (2010) points out that "Singapore is no longer Bangalore's destiny—it is New York", which is a reference to the attempts of members of the new techno-elite to construct an imagined city, which for them is within the realm of the possible.

A preliminary review of policy documents and pronouncements reveal the prominence accorded to capitalising on the existing IT 'ecosystem': Bangalore is being simultaneously promoted as a destination for the development of biotechnology (BT), nano science/nano technology, animation and gaming, as well as the premier knowledge and innovation hub in India²⁹. Hence, in working within the concept of 'IT as paradigm', the thesis moves beyond equating IT with the industry or in terms of its much-touted extension into governance, via mechanisms of e-governance. Rather, the attempt is to delve into the other ways in which IT has impacted the urban fabric of Bangalore, viz., in terms of civic and political engagement. In describing the rise of the 'IT city', the literature review has acknowledged the negative or unintended consequences of IT-led development. However, the thesis also argues that this IT base has played a critical, albeit indirect, role in the mushrooming of ICT-based and -driven civic and social entrepreneurial initiatives in Bangalore city³⁰. While civic and activist groups across the country are increasingly leveraging ICTs in their activities, the sheer number of ICT-driven social entrepreneurial activities in Bangalore makes it a question worth exploring in greater depth. Bangalore is the ideal setting for this type of study for another reason: the cosmopolitan composition of the city has made it an exemplar for "New India"³¹, a city driven by pioneering personalities who are either familiar or proficient with new technologies. The thesis traces the efforts of this new ICT-enabled civil society in creating new spaces for citizen participation in local urban affairs. This holds particular significance in light of the lack of formalised structures of participation in urban

²⁹The website of the state government's Department of Information Technology, Biotechnology and Science and Technology provides policy pronouncements and event-related information to this effect - <http://www.bangaloreitbt.in/>

³⁰Prominent examples include, but are not limited to Citizen Matters (<http://bangalore.citizenmatters.in/>), eGovernments Foundation (<http://www.egovernments.org/>), India Together (<http://www.indiatogether.org/>), Mapunity (<http://mapunity.in/>), and Praja (<http://praja.in/>). In addition, non-government organizations such as Janaagraha (<http://janaagraha.org/>) and citizens' initiatives are increasingly incorporating IT into their work for greater outreach and mobilization of their core constituents (see Gowda & Gupta, 2010).

³¹For a critical look at the perceptions and realities of the "new India", and its relation to the aspiring middle classes see D'Costa (2010) and Upadhyaya (2011).

India, which, in tandem with the generally apathetic middle classes, serves to disenfranchise a large section of the urban citizenry. Against this backdrop, the rise of new ICT-based initiatives, as an unintended consequence of Bangalore's IT base, are examined in terms of their attempts to foster greater civic and political engagement.

The overarching research question, then, is: what are the ways in which the 'IT Paradigm' in Bangalore influences civic and political engagement activities by civil society?

This overarching research problem is divided into three specific research questions:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What practices, forms and styles of ICT-enabled civic and political engagement are being practiced?

- RQ1a: In what ways do online and offline spaces of civic and political engagement interact and intersect?

As the literature review has shown, there is an increased interest in empirically examining what people do online, including forms and tactics, styles and strategies of engagement and activism (Earl, 2006; Van De Donk et al., 2004; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010). Recent literature has also pointed to the significance of examining the communication practices, interactions with media, and the interfaces between online and offline spaces of action (Cammaerts, Mattoni, & McCurdy, 2013; Rucht, 2013). Accordingly, the thesis examines these aspects of civic and political engagement within the techno-social context of Bangalore.

Research Question 2 (RQ2): What are the attitudes towards ICTs for democratic engagement expressed by middle class civil society actors?

- RQ2a: What are the benefits (real and perceived) of ICT use?
- RQ2b: What concerns are expressed about ICT use?

These questions are based on what has been discussed in the literature review section, and to fill the gap in the literature on the ways in which civil society actors interpret and grapple with new technologies in their civic and political engagement efforts. In framing questions about the relationship of civil

society actors to ICTs, I relied on studies that examined civil society attitudes and use of ICTs. One such study was by Dilevko (2002), in which Southern NGOs were asked about their use of and opinions about ICTs, and how they managed and defined their relationship to ICTs and international NGOs. Additionally, Ganesh and Stohl's (2010) study, which traced experiences and attitudes of global justice activists in New Zealand regarding their use of ICTs, was another useful starting point. Accordingly, in examining civil society actors' reflections on and interpretations of ICT use, the thesis gave primacy to personal narratives and stories, and was open to new and under-explored perspectives that emerged from the interviewees themselves.

Research Question 3: Which factors influence the ways in which ICTs are/are not used for civic and political engagement?

As preliminary fieldwork indicated ambivalence and scepticism about the Internet for democratic engagement among a portion of interviewees, this also prompted questions about what factors influenced non-use of ICTs. This led me to literature on technology non-use, media avoidance, refusal and ambivalence in an increasingly wired world (Portwood-Stacer, 2012; Reisdorf, Axelsson, & Söderholm, 2012; Ribak & Rosenthal, 2011). This third line of investigation, therefore, aimed to uncover the various factors that influenced ICT use and non-use among civil society actors, thereby providing an account of the real and imagined barriers to ICT use.

The findings for these research questions are detailed in chapters 4 to 7. The methods used to answer these questions are discussed in the next chapter on Methodology.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

A Qualitative Research Paradigm

The study employs a qualitative research framework, using multiple methods of qualitative data collection to understand the emerging relationship between civil society and the Internet in Bangalore. Given the paucity of research in this area, qualitative research was deemed best suited to unearth the multi-dimensionality and complexity of the topic, through the experiences and imaginings of the research participants (Mason, 2002; Richards & Morse, 2007). As Bangalore is a city that I am familiar with, having both lived and worked there in the early–mid 2000s, qualitative research methods were considered ideal to build upon this contextual and experiential knowledge. In particular, the advantages of qualitative research in this regard were in terms of capturing the point of view of the actors' themselves, embedding the findings within the constraints of their social world, and securing rich descriptions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

Qualitative research is particularly useful to understand groups and organisations, relationships, and virtual and mediated contexts, which are the foci of this research (Tracy, 2013). Further, qualitative research was selected due to the active and engaged role of the researcher, including the flexibility to make decisions on the basis of changing research contexts and situations (Mason, 2002; Patton, 2002). This was particularly important due to the open-ended nature of the study, which, as discussed in the introduction, resulted in the pursuit of new areas of enquiry based on emerging data. Overall, therefore, the study followed an inductive approach to qualitative research, where the final research focus emerged after a certain amount of data collection and analysis (Fox, 2008; Maxwell, 2013)).

Data collection in Bangalore occurred in two phases: phase 1 (May–August 2011) focused on a deeper understanding of the context and the identification of possible case studies, while phase 2 (December 2011–January 2012) investigated the two selected case studies in detail. In both phases, in-

depth qualitative interviews were the main source of data, supplemented by online and offline observation, and secondary data. The first round of fieldwork (phase 1) was spent re-familiarising myself with the city and its civil society and political scene, as well as gathering data towards finalising case studies. The general direction of the data collection was based on the results of an exploratory visit to Bangalore in June 2010, during which I informally spoke to seven resource persons, mainly prominent academic and/or civil society actors in the city. This preliminary field visit achieved the following: it helped to identify critical issues involving technology, civil society, and governance in the city; provided a better understanding of the realities (policies and issues) on the ground; provided access to relevant literature on the city, and highlighted literature gaps; and, through networking, enabled the identification of potential respondents for the actual fieldwork that was to follow.

During phase 1, a total of 30 formal, in-depth interviews, most of which lasted at least an hour, were conducted with various government and non-government actors in the city, including key policy actors. These included members of the ABIDe (Agenda for Bengaluru Infrastructure and Development) task force, urban planners, high-ranking IT and BT industry executives, senior government officials and journalists, and a cross-section of civil society actors. In addition to the formal interviews, I had informal discussions with academics, people connected with the IT industry, retired government officials, and members of CSOs. These conversations provided a rich source of information on the current ground realities and policy environment in the city. I was also able to attend conferences and meetings organised by the IT industry and civil society³², which provided avenues for discussions with participants and opportunities for snowballing.

³² As a result of my old and new networking contacts I was able to attend the India Against Corruption (IAC) Bangalore public consultation meeting held on May 27, 2011, and IT industry-oriented Globalization Summit 2011 (<http://zinnov.com/globalization/index.php>) on July 7, 2011, both of which were invitation-only events.

As the literature review has shown, civil society in India is neither a homogeneous nor a cohesive sphere—a condition that became clear during the fieldwork as well. Among the interviewees, traditional or old civil society actors, such as members of RWAs, NGOs, and activist groups could be distinguished from the newer, often new media-based, civil society forms such as e-magazines and -newspapers, citizen interaction platforms, sites for crowd-sourced solutions, etc. This, however, was not a clear-cut distinction, as the more conventional civil society actors varied greatly in their use of and attitude towards new technologies, including the use of the Internet, for civil society activity. These observations on the intersections between civil society and ICTs in Bangalore provided preliminary insights for an emerging research agenda, and developed into a critical aspect of the research.

The choice of case studies for the research emerged from an analysis of data collected during the first phase of fieldwork. Thereafter, phase 2 (December 2011-January 2012) was focused on bolstering the description of the two cases that were chosen, viz., (1) environmental network and email discussion group, *Hasiru Usiru* and (2) blog-based citizen-interaction platform, *Praja.in* (or *Praja*). During this period, I conducted 22 in-depth interviews, of which four were follow-up interviews with key actors from both organisations. Majority of interviews during both rounds of fieldwork were conducted face-to-face, with email, Skype and telephone interviews conducted with interviewees I was unable to meet in Bangalore, or as a follow-up when preliminary data analysis revealed gaps or required clarifications. Between field visits and after the last round of physical data gathering, I continued to be in touch with interviewees via email, which helped to quickly clarify doubts or gain access to relevant information or secondary data. Such contact also helped to consolidate trust among interviewees, which in turn helped facilitate three new interviews and three follow-up interviews via telephone during 2012-2013. I also corresponded with key respondents interested in the research progress via email, which helped to fill in data gaps and facilitated member checking of the cases. Throughout, a qualitative approach was used to map the intersections between ICTs and civil

society in an IT/media-rich city. The methods of data generation and analysis are described below, beginning with a discussion of the case study method.

Case Study

The thesis involves a case study research design to explore the experiences and ICT practices of civil society actors in India's 'IT City', Bangalore. Here, a case study research method is taken to mean an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context over which the investigator has little or no control, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used (Yin, 2014). Stake (2009) defined a case as a 'bounded system' that is of interest to the researcher, which can be an individual, institution, a programme, an event, a collection or a population. He notes that in the social science literature, most case studies involve complex and holistic description, contain data that are gathered at least partly by personalistic observation, and a writing style that is informal, perhaps narrative, with quotations and illustrations. These qualities are best suited to adding to existing experience and humanistic understanding, and allow for "naturalistic generalizations", which develop within a person as product of experience, and guide expectations and actions (ibid, p. 25). Gerring (2006) has described case study research design as constructing its observations from the intensive study of a single case (or a small set of cases), to shed light on a broader class of similar cases. Stake (2006) pointed out that even a single case study is meaningful, to some extent, in terms of other cases, and cannot be developed entirely in isolation. Nonetheless, depending on the objectives of the research, the qualitative researcher must decide whether to conduct a single or a multicase study.

The double case design of the thesis was chosen to enable an exploration of similarities and differences between the cases, which would provide a better understanding of the phenomenon under study (Baxter & Jack, 2008). The double case study design was not predetermined at the start of data collection but emerged gradually in response to Internet searches, literature reviews, data

gathered during fieldwork, and preliminary analysis.³³ To begin with, I determined that potential case studies would need to fulfil the following basic criteria:

- High ICT use: Actors that actively use ICTs, including the Internet
- Focus on local issues: Actors that engage in issues pertaining either to specific areas in Bangalore or issues affecting the city as a whole (rather than state or national-level issues)
- Emphasis on participatory democracy/governance: Actors that stress the centrality of citizen participation in a functioning democracy
- Prominence: Actors who dominate the public and media discourse of the city

Based on these criteria, environmental network *Hasiru Usiru* was the first case study to be selected after a preliminary online review and a first round of fieldwork. As a precursor to the first round of fieldwork, I had conducted Internet searches on CSOs in Bangalore with active online spaces as potential case studies. *Hasiru Usiru* featured prominently during these searches, due its activism on sustainable development, particularly mobility and transportation, which were (and continue to be) hot-button issues due to the city's infamous traffic jams and pollution. During the first round of fieldwork, interviews with respondents associated with *Hasiru Usiru* revealed interesting connections between the network and the Internet for activism. This, combined with the network's prominence in the public sphere, the high level of online activity in its email discussion group, and the willingness of members to participate in the research, made it an ideal case for the research.

The choice of the second case study, in turn, emerged in relation to data gathered during fieldwork, rather than as a predetermined choice. As I was shortlisting possible cases I was advised by those knowledgeable in the field, including academics and civil society actors, to avoid the more obvious initiatives and organisations, like *Janaagraha*, whose activities had already been scrutinised to a great extent. Instead, they encouraged me to focus on a newer or

³³ See Lloyd-Jones' (2003) argument about making more explicit the arguments and decision-making processes that contribute to a qualitative case study design.

under-researched case that would highlight the emerging linkages between the Internet and civic and political engagement in Bangalore. Further, after selecting *Hasiru Usiru* as the first case, I needed to identify a second case that would make for a comparable study. *Praja* emerged as the obvious choice for several reasons: firstly, like *Hasiru Usiru*, *Praja* was a central player in the discussion on sustainable transport in the city, with online discussions and several offline projects focused on improving mobility. This had raised *Praja*'s public profile, making it a prominent actor in the online and offline public spheres, and brought both organisations into intersecting spheres of activism. Secondly, during round 1 of fieldwork, some interviewees juxtaposed the two entities, and a further line of questioning during round 2 highlighted salient disjunctures in attitudes towards and use of the Internet, despite what appeared to be overlapping goals. Thereafter, interviews, along with observation of the platform's activities and discussions, served to reinforce the choice of *Praja*, fitting the criteria that I had identified for *Hasiru Usiru* as a case study. Further, in addition to the high level of online activity on the platform, *Praja* used a variety of new media to increase its online and offline base, including Facebook and Twitter, which made it an ideal case for new media research.

While both cases occupy a prominent place in the online and offline public sphere in Bangalore, there is a dearth of publicly available records regarding their origins and evolution. My experience of having worked in the civil society sector in Bangalore suggests that this is a common problem for organisations in this sector in India, due to the limitations of manpower and financial resources. This situation is particularly dire for organisations operating on an informal basis such as *Hasiru Usiru*, whose founder members, by and large, were not actively involved in its daily activities. In this situation, as I was unable to access the proper documentation, interviews and online observation (of mailing list archives and discussions) played a crucial role in building up the case study. In the case of *Praja*, a co-founder generously provided me access to records that he had meticulously created and archived, making the task of writing up the *Praja* case study much easier. However, here too, interviews played a crucial role, providing

information on alternative viewpoints between and among members and non-members.

Interviews

In-depth, semi-structured qualitative interviews were employed with the intention of describing and interpreting the meanings of central themes in the life world of the subjects (Kvale, 1996). In this study, interviews were conducted to gain a deeper insight into individuals' experiences with the two-fold objective of understanding their narratives on: (1) issues confronting them as citizens of a technologising and media-rich city, and (2) how civil society and the Internet interacted and intersected within the online and offline spaces of action. The emphasis on qualitative interviewing follows the rationale that as online engagement entails multi-site communications, what is communicated online may be different from what is communicated offline by the same person or organisation (Soriano, 2012).

Potential interviewees were initially identified through purposive sampling from research papers, online newspapers, NGO reports and information available on CSO websites, as well as personal contacts. Thereafter, once initial contact was established and interviews underway, most respondents were identified through snowball sampling, which proved to be the most effective means of locating interviewees in an online setting. Expert interviewees, too, were initially chosen from personal contacts, which are discussed further in the section on 'Sampling'.

Potential interviewees were initially contacted via email, with an introductory letter attached that explained the study's broad research goals and invited them to participate (see Appendix A for sample invitation letter to resource persons). Once a potential respondent had indicated s/he would participate, a Participant Information Sheet & Consent Form was sent via email, which detailed the purpose of the study, the participant's role in the research, and the ways in which his/her data would be kept confidential (see Appendix B for sample Participant Information Sheet & Consent Form). Thereafter, with follow-up emails

and/or telephone calls, respondents were interviewed at their place of work, or home or a mutually convenient location decided by both of us in advance. Interviewees were also sent a copy of the tentative interview guide to help prepare them for the interview (see Appendix C for sample interview guide for resource persons). All documents were in English, as it was anticipated that translation into Kannada was not needed due to the middle-class demographic of the interviewees. Having worked in the civil society space, I was, by and large, aware of the socio-economic profile of interviewees, either through my personal interactions with them or by conducting basic profile checks on the Internet as part of the interviewee identification process. Three different prototypes of interview guides and invitation letters were designed keeping in mind the three main sets of interviewees, viz., (i) resource persons, (ii) *Hasiru Usiru*-related respondents, and (iii) *Praja*-related respondents (see Appendix D for sample interview guide for the case studies). For the first round of fieldwork, the interview protocols developed were largely based on the literature review, guided by the initial research questions, and open-ended and exploratory in nature. Interview guides for the second round of interviews were much more focused, with an emphasis on collecting data relating to the two case studies, as well as filling data gaps from the previous round of data collection.

Although interview guides were made available to participants, the questions were tentative and semi-structured, allowing for the appearance of new and unexpected information. Accordingly, the interviewing followed an inductive frame, wherein questions were initially broad and open-ended, and then narrowed down once I got a sense of emerging themes. I realised, during the first round of fieldwork, that some of my initial ideas did not fit with the reality on the ground. For instance, it soon became clear that the global/world city influences were waning in the public discourse, and no longer had quite the hold on the way the city was imagined by politicians and corporates. While the negative effects and subtle hold of these imaginations persisted, it was an important, but not a burning issue. Similarly, an investigation of ABIDe (Agenda for Bengaluru Infrastructure and Development Task Force), including the role of techno-elites in

ABIDe in shaping urban governance priorities, the task force's relationship with civil society, its role in 'worlding' the city, etc. was discontinued in subsequent rounds of fieldwork. This was due to the weakened position of the beleaguered task force, which no longer made it an influential player in city affairs. Accordingly, questions were amended to suit this new knowledge and understanding of the context. Consequently, as greater time spent on the ground enabled greater clarity regarding the research focus, interviews became more focused.³⁴ This was particularly the case for the follow-up and later interviews, most of which were conducted via email, telephone or Skype.

Mediated Interviews

As already indicated, after each round of data collection, email, Skype and telephone interviews were conducted with interviewees who were unavailable during the fieldwork or to conduct follow-up questioning. Email interviews enable the conduct of asynchronous individual interviews, overcoming issues of time zone differences, and are suitable for persons with time constraints (Meho, 2006). However, it was the least preferred method among interviewees, with only one interview conducted in this manner. Several participants expressed apprehension about typing out answers, particularly as the questionnaire consisted of semi-structured, open-ended questions that required detailed responses. It also proved to be the least information-rich source of data collection, as the lone email interviewee provided cursory answers, which could not be probed due to the absence of real-time interaction. Despite these limitations, the email interview allowed me to obtain the views of a senior government official who may not have otherwise had the time to meet me.

Most of the remote interviewing was done through Skype and telephone, with Skype proving to be an excellent tool for data collection. Skype allowed for in-depth conversation, and the video facility provided a sense of intimacy with the interviewee, akin to trust established during face-to-face interviews. However,

³⁴ Elliot & Higgins (2012) provide a useful account of how graduate students can overcome the challenges of using grounded theory in an academic environment.

there were certain difficulties associated with Skype that compelled me to conduct the remaining mediated interviews via telephone: firstly, interviewees did not always have access to the internet, but could be easily reached through their mobile phones. Secondly, technical issues such as poor sound quality and slow Internet speed made telephone interviews a more suitable alternative. Telephone interviews were a convenient source of data collection as respondents were easily accessible on their mobile phones, and interviewees were comfortable on this medium. However, on a few occasions, issues of poor sound quality made interviewing very difficult, and forced me to reduce the interview time. Overall, of the three types of technology-mediated interview, Skype proved to be the most valuable medium, providing the greatest opportunities for rapport building and eliciting rich replies from participants.³⁵

Audio Recording

Respondents were informed beforehand that the interview would be audio-recorded, and that recorded conversations would be strictly confidential, with audio data managed in accordance with prescribed university guidelines (this is discussed in detail in the Ethics section). As none of the participants objected to this, all interviews were recorded, initially by a digital mini tape recorder, and later through the voice memo feature of my iPhone, both of which allowed audio files to be uploaded directly to a computer, making transcribing easier. I tried my best to make recording unobtrusive, so that the focus was on the actual interviewing process, rather than the recording that was happening simultaneously. However, this was not always possible, and some interviewees took a longer time to warm up to the idea that the conversation was being recorded.³⁶ Some interviewees asked for certain portions of their interview to be “off the record”, and while I transcribed these portions, they were not included in the data analysis. By and large, recording went smoothly, although it required

³⁵ See Tracy (2013, chapter 8) for a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of computer-mediated communication in qualitative research.

³⁶ King & Horrocks (2010, p. 44-46) provide helpful tips on maximising the benefits of recording interviews

practice sessions, and it was only after several initial interviews that I was comfortable with the process. Note-taking was an essential part of the process, and served me in good stead in cases of poor recording, and in the one or two cases when recording stopped (when the tape recorder's batteries needed to be replaced and I had not thought to bring along a spare set of batteries!), and in the singular case when the interviewee mistakenly deleted the recording while checking the audio quality! Notes were also useful in highlighting main points that I thought needed to be followed up at a later time, either during the interview or at a later date.

Sampling

During the first round of fieldwork, interviewees were initially identified through purposeful sampling from literature reviews, online newspapers, NGO reports and information available on CSO websites, as well as personal contacts. Sampling in qualitative research is almost always purposeful, with the sample intentionally selected according to the needs of a study (Coyne, 1997; Patton, 2002). Similarly, King & Horrocks (2010) noted that purposive or targeted sampling is crucial in qualitative research, where the sample needs to relate in some systematic manner to the social world and phenomena that a study seeks to research. Patton (2002) noted that a few key names or incidents that are mentioned repeatedly take on special importance, as they are recommended as valuable by a number of different informants. This process, he said, produces key or core actors or cases that are “information rich”, i.e. good examples for study or good interview participants.

Accordingly, as the research got underway, snowball sampling became an important means of recruiting participants, as interviewees were asked or offered to locate more participants. Here, personal contacts—professional and private—played an important role in gaining access to new participants directly, or to new acquaintances who helped connect me with potential participants. In the early 2000s, during the course of my employment with a prominent CSO, I had the opportunity to interact with a wide variety of civil society actors, and senior civil

servants and bureaucrats. Upon re-establishing contact, many of them took the time and effort to talk to me during fieldwork, while others referred me to contacts they considered useful for my emerging research. My professional background, my knowledge of the city and my familiarity with civil society issues, along with referrals from known sources, provided credibility to my research, which was crucial for the success of snowball sampling. Additionally, in terms of personal networks, friends and family members connected me with persons in government and non-government circles, resulting in a growing set of potential contacts. By taking advantage of my own social networks and those of participants, snowball sampling was especially useful in connecting with the movers and shakers in the city, who are often difficult to contact. This is akin to Atkinson & Flint's (2004) observations that snowball sampling offered advantages for accessing populations that were difficult to reach, including the elite.

Snowball sampling also proved to be the most effective means of locating interviewees in an online setting, who are hard to reach because of anonymity or pseudonymity of online spaces, and who are therefore 'invisible' or 'hidden' to some extent (Baltar & Brunet, 2012; Browne, 2005). This was the case for both *Hasiru Usiru* and *Praja*, as their online spaces revealed limited information about members, and only partially identified who the key actors were. Additionally, in *Hasiru Usiru*, it was a challenge to identify important members, as (I found out later) many were less active on the online spaces, whereas in *Praja*, the high level of activity by different members on the platform made it difficult to identify who the key actors were. Snowball sampling, therefore, made access to potential interviewees less cumbersome, and helped in identifying the government officials to interview. Interviewees from both groups referred to, and sometimes connected me with, senior officials. Not surprisingly, these names overlapped, as the officials concerned interacted with a range of CSOs on urban issues, including transportation and mobility. These experiences showed that the usefulness of snowball sampling to locate hard-to-find groups (Atkinson & Flint, 2004; Coyne, 1997) also applied to anonymous or pseudonymous individuals

and groups on the Internet, elite actors, and government officials, where higher levels of trust may be required to initiate contact.³⁷

At the same time, it is also important to consider the limitations of snowball sampling in general, and for Internet research in particular. The most common criticism of this sampling strategy is sample bias, as participants tend to recommend people who share their point of view (King & Horrocks, 2010), or because samples are not representative enough of the population under study (Browne, 2005). Another potential limitation is the bias that stems from a higher participation of individuals with huge networks and strong ties (Baltar & Brunet, 2012). In this study, as I did not intend to use my sample for statistical generalisation, the range of people included was not exhaustive of the populations I was studying. The smaller number of respondents, however, made the inclusion of alternative viewpoints among participants even more crucial, and efforts were made to incorporate a variety of opinions, to reduce sampling bias. Towards this end, I attempted to follow King and Horrock's (2010) advice to "recruit participants who represent a variety of positions in relation to the research topic, of a kind that might be expected to throw light on meaningful differences in experience" (p. 29). I went about doing this by interviewing a wide spectrum of civil society, academic, corporate, bureaucratic and political actors, with varying goals, methods, motivations, composition, expertise, and perspectives. Finally, as the section on sample size (below) shows, given the practical constraints such as time, geographical distance, and available resources, in-depth focus with a smaller group of participants was considered ideal to investigate the emerging topic.

Sample Size

Patton (2002) has noted that there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry, which depends on "what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what

³⁷ See Baltar & Brunet (2012) and Bhutta's (2012) articles on the use of web-based snowballing methods, particularly Facebook, to reach elusive and hard-to-reach populations.

can be done with available time and resources” (p. 244). In deciding the sample size, therefore, a researcher has to make trade-offs between breadth and depth, with the final choice of sample size depending on the research goals and practical considerations. In determining the sample size I was guided by the principle of data saturation (also called informational redundancy), which, in qualitative research, is reached when data collection does not contribute to any new or relevant data (Saumure & Given, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data saturation depends on a number of factors, such as the scope of the study, the nature of the topic, the quality of data, the study design, cohesiveness of the sample, as well as the ability, experience and knowledge of the researcher, among other things (Mason, 2010; Morse, 2000; Saumure & Given, 2008; Thomson, 2011). The factors mentioned above played an important role in guiding the choice of sample size in this study, and are discussed below.

While heterogeneous populations require greater data collection, due to the need to incorporate variability in experiences and worldviews of sub-groups, homogeneous sampling reduces variation, which is inevitable in purposive sampling, as participants are chosen according to some common criteria (Baker & Edwards, 2012; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). With regard to both case studies, saturation was achieved relatively quickly (13 interviews for *Hasiru Usiru* and 15 for *Praja*) since the sample was cohesive, with participants sharing socio-economic characteristics, and with roughly comparable experiences of participating in civil society activities. The sample size was also influenced by the quality of information obtained in the interviews, which was rich and experiential, as most respondents were willing to talk at length and reflect on issues. In addition to the amount of useful information derived from each participant, key actors were interviewed more than once, to clarify doubts, as well as to gain further insights on emerging issues. (Morse, 1991, 2000) has emphasised that quality of data and number of interviews per participant play a key role, particularly as a small number of rich responses by “good informants” requires fewer participants to reach saturation. In addition, Thomson (2011) has noted that prior knowledge of a given area may provide insights to the researcher that

allows him/her to bypass unnecessary data and formulate questions to guide the interview more effectively. In this regard, my familiarity with the context provided sufficient background data that was able to guide the initial interviews. While this prior knowledge was useful during the early stages of data collection, I tried to be mindful to let the emerging data guide me in the field. Overall, while the small sample size (vis-à-vis actual membership of the organisations) could affect results by limiting the ability to generalise, the attempt was to provide a rich description and analysis of the cases, which required depth rather than breadth.

Privacy, Confidentiality & Other Ethical Issues

Before fieldwork could begin, the research proposal and supporting documents had to be approved by the university's ethics review committee, the Institutional Review Board (IRB)³⁸, only after which formal contact could be made with potential respondents. Tracy (2013, p. 243) has referred to the ethical actions that are prescribed by organisational review boards as procedural ethics, which are necessary to protect research participants. As per the IRB's procedures, interviewees were informed in advance about how their privacy would be protected, and the ways in which confidentiality of research records would be maintained. The research protocol made all identities confidential, and at the time of signing the consent form, interviewees had the choice to be identified by their designation/department/organisation name or no personal identifiers at all. While this seemed relatively straightforward at the start of the research, once actual fieldwork began, I had to battle with issues of interviewee and organisation confidentiality at several stages. The tensions arising out of the ethical considerations of privacy and anonymisation are discussed below.

To begin with, prior to the start of the interview I reviewed the information sheet and consent form details with participants before they signed the form. All interviewees were agreeable with the terms of the form, and some stressed that their employing company not be named, as they were speaking in their capacity as volunteers of a CSO. A few participants requested their identity be revealed

³⁸ NUS-IRB Approval Certificate No. 1304

while presenting results, which I declined, as I wanted to be certain that our discussions were not aimed at publicity. I was also worried, as Thomson, Bzdel, Golden-Biddle, Reay, & Estabrooks (2005) pointed out, that failure to protect identities could raise several challenges in the future, such as the welfare of participants vis-à-vis their own community. Such situations could arise, as many spoke to me on a personal level, discussing in detail other persons and organisations that could affect their relationships with those entities (see Guenther, 2009). In addition to concealing real identities from outsiders, I began to realise that participants' identities needed to be concealed from each other, to avoid jeopardising existing relationships (ibid). Moreover, participant welfare was also of the utmost importance in order to maintain bridges with the organisations and actors under study, without which the research could not be undertaken with the required level of rigour.

As I began to write up the research findings I was confronted by another aspect, viz., how much information to disclose about interviewees, as personal identifiers, such as age, gender and organisation could sometimes easily reveal identities. This aspect worried me as Bangalore was a small city, and civil society actors (and the government officials they interacted with) were well known to each other. This, in effect, meant that being negligent about confidentiality could easily compromise the identity of respondents. Being allowed into, and interacting with them in, their life-world built relationship of trust between myself and interviewees, and I slowly began to realise the imperative of not betraying this trust while writing their stories. One way I tried to avoid inadvertently identifying people was to exclude parts of quotations that could reveal their identity, even though this would often water down the impact of the quote. Another way was to try, as far as possible, to avoid mentioning personal identifiers that could give away identities. However, this process came with its own share of stresses and complications, as I had to review interviewee descriptions a few times in case I had been lax in this area. In cases where identification would have proved easy, identifying information such as gender has

been removed or changed, while reference to age has been, by and large, removed.

A related issue is what Guenther (2009) termed “the politics of naming” individuals, places and organizations, which she noted is a complex and problematic issue that “is rife with overlapping ethical, political, methodological, and personal dilemmas” (p. 412). I grappled with the issue of naming as well, beginning with how to choose pseudonyms for respondents, and whether to hide or reveal the identities of the organisations chosen as case studies. The issue of naming location (city) was a straightforward one, with Bangalore as the context being a crucial aspect of the research, and could not be concealed *per se*. In choosing names for individuals, I was guided by Guenther’s (2009) advice that names should be chosen with courtesy and empathy. Towards this end, I tried to choose names that were reflective of participants’ religious identities, but which would simultaneously avoid any inadvertent identity disclosure. For example, majority of the respondents were Hindus, and I chose Hindu names as pseudonyms for these participants. However, in the case of participants from other religious denominations, such as Muslims and Christians, I selected names that were representative of these religions but could also be Hindu names—thereby preventing any accidental exposure. With regard to government and public officials, I was initially undecided about how to proceed. While Guenther (2009) pointed out that in the social sciences public officials were often identified by their real names, I finally decided to keep their names concealed, revealing only selective information about them. The decision to anonymise arose from the fact that many officials spoke frankly to me about the government and civil society in the city, and I did not want to jeopardise their relationships with others or with me, nor did I wish to draw what may be construed as undue or negative publicity to them. I applied the same rationale for keeping experts’ identities confidential.

The next dilemma appeared in the form of whether to hide or reveal organisations’ identities, which had not appeared to be a problem before I left for fieldwork, as I automatically assumed real names would be used here. As the

IRB guidelines did not mention anything about organisation confidentiality, and the issue did not arise during fieldwork, I was only confronted by this issue when I returned to Singapore and started writing up the case studies. I decided to resolve this issue by re-contacting the key members of *Hasiru Usiru* and *Praja* that I had interacted with, and asked their opinion. In *Hasiru Usiru's* case, majority of its core group either preferred the actual name or did not mind either way. Some members pointed out that the prominence of the network would make it difficult to conceal its identity anyway, while others mentioned that since it was an open network, revealing its identity might be beneficial to its cause. Only one member preferred a pseudonym, out of concern for negative publicity in the mainstream media. I assured her that my writings would be disseminated in the academic field, and explained the reasons (above) for choosing to name the network. This issue was not a concern in the case of *Praja*, as members were comfortable with being identified, particularly as they were keen to publicise their efforts. Upon careful consideration, I decided not to reveal the identity of other CSOs, as members had spoken frankly and entrusted me with information that would not ordinarily be made available to an outsider. To avoid any unpleasant publicity or repercussions, I kept these organisations anonymous, providing pseudonyms wherever necessary.

An additional ethical issue that arose at the time of writing concerned the ethics of what to include and what could be avoided to prevent conflict with and among respondents. This was particularly so as I was either in close proximity to key collaborators and/or developed a sense of mutual trust with interviewees over a period of time. Interviewees often told me their personal stories and trajectories, and commented on other individuals and organisations, as well as on issues that were of a sensitive nature. This was more so in the case of *Praja*, where I had the opportunity to attend events, and interactions became more personal, rather in terms of a researcher-subject relationship. I have tried not to include such personal and potentially awkward information in the results/findings, guided by considerations of what would be best for my research subjects, as well as for me, in terms of continued trust and access to the organisations. Tracy

(2013, p. 243-245) has referred to these decisions in terms of situational and relational ethics—while the former refers to ethical issues that arise in specific contexts or sample populations, relational ethics involves treating participants with care and respect as whole people, rather than as subjects from which to wrench a good story. Thus, in choosing to highlight some aspects and withholding other pieces of information, I had to make a trade-off between all that could be written about the organisation or individual versus their interests.

Observation: Online and Offline

Most of the observation was conducted online, which involved observation of the interactions between members in the online spaces at regular intervals, as well as review of archived content. This was supplemented by offline observation of events and activities, mostly related to the *Praja* case, but which involved other civil society actors, including *Hasiru Usiru*. Observation of the online spaces of the two cases was deemed necessary to interpret the communicative behaviours of its members within the context of its natural 'setting', as well as to better understand the setting itself (see Mason, 2002). By undertaking observation of the online spaces, I tried to enhance my experiential knowledge of the setting, familiarise myself with actors' perspectives, as well as to better understand actors' motivations by being more aware of their social world.³⁹ Observation was also a more 'neutral' or impartial way to compare participants' accounts, as discussed in interviews, and actual proceedings or behaviour (see McKechnie, 2008), to see patterns of convergence or divergence between the two types of data.

With regard to the online setting, I did not participate in any discussions or activities being observed, thereby assuming the role of a non-participant observer (see Liu & Maitlis, 2010). While observation was unobtrusive, it was not covert, as key interviewees/collaborators had been informed that observing the online spaces would form a central part of my research. This was an important ethical consideration, arising out of both a procedural obligation (as per IRB

³⁹ See Mason (2002) for the strengths and limitations of observational methods.

requirements) to make participants aware that I was observing the proceedings, as well as a personal compulsion to do so. As both were closed groups, requiring moderator action to include me in the list, I clearly stated my intentions to observe the online spaces at the outset.

I similarly conducted non-participant observation of *Praja's* activities offline, which involved attending events (workshops, symposiums, etc.) and joined participants in on-the-ground projects, which allowed me to observe a range of actions, behaviours and interactions, and to establish contact with potential interviewees. Along the way, being in close proximity to my informants or collaborators, and having developed a mutual sense of affinity and trust, changed the equation to a certain extent, making me a less passive participant in the observation process. This resulted in a move from non-participant to a degree of participant observation (see Spradley, 1980), wherein I interacted with and shared in the participants' activities. For the most part, however, observation was conducted on the sidelines, and always with full knowledge of the interviewees.

As my research design was inductive, based on a bottom-up approach, unstructured observation was considered ideal to gain as much information about the setting and the actors in it, in order to determine the foci of interest. In unstructured observation, researchers usually enter the field with some general ideas of what may be salient, but no predetermined notions about the discrete behaviours they might observe (McKechnie, 2008; Mulhall, 2003; Nørskov & Rask, 2011). Unstructured observation differs from structured observation in that what is considered salient may change over time as the researcher gathers data and gains experience in the particular setting (McKechnie, 2008; Mulhall, 2003). Unstructured observation was also considered suitable for this study as it is not constrained by checklists and coding schemes, thereby allowing the researcher substantial flexibility and freedom regarding data collection and recording (ibid; Nørskov & Rask, 2011). These advantages were magnified by the fact that observational data existed in a recorded/written format, minimising the risk of misinterpretation, as well as being available at all times via the archive and

search functions. On the other hand, the disadvantages of online observation generated from the reduced social presence and cues (see Nørskov & Rask, 2011), were minimised through offline data collection, such as interviews.

Overall, the combination of online and offline observation (and interviews) provided a more rounded or complete understanding of the cases under investigation, including their structure and functioning, roles of the online and offline entities, organisation aims and objectives, and their (perceived and actual) civil society role and position in the city. Further, observation also enabled greater familiarity with the main and peripheral actors in the organisations, their roles, perspectives and contributions, making it easier to identify similarities and/or disjunctures between interviewees' assertions and their online words and actions. Observations were noted down in field notes, which were either hastily scribbled notes on a note-pad or on my iPhone, which enabled instant documentation and recall. While field notes did not form a major aspect of my analysis, they helped in making comparisons before and after interviews, and in instances where major themes were emerging, but I did not quite know what to make of those ideas. Field notes were also important in providing some sort of chronological sequencing of my fieldwork, and to see which ideas appeared during what point of the data collection.

Secondary Data: Filling in the Blanks

Primary information was supplemented by various sources of secondary data, such as academic papers, NGO reports, census statistics, and newspaper articles. Digital sources, such as civil society e-magazines or newsletters, blogs, CSO website archives, and policy data on government websites, were crucial sources of information that threw greater light on the context within which the study was situated. Secondary data was also useful in piecing together the history and origins of the cases, particularly as neither had any comprehensive document that detailed the evolution of the cases. As I was unable to obtain historical records regarding *Hasiru Usiru's* origins, secondary data played a key role in building up the case study, along with interviews. In the case of *Praja*,

historical records were readily available, and I was provided access to internal newsletters and other documents by one of the co-founders, which greatly helped in enhancing the descriptive nature of the case study. In this way, various data sources, including *Hasiru Usiru* and *Praja* archives, enriched data collected through interviews and observation, and helped fill in numerous information gaps.

Data Analysis

The primary objective of (the many approaches to) qualitative data analysis is the imposition of some form of organisation and ordering of one's data, comprising multi-faceted data records, and personal accounts of experience and interaction (Mason, 2002; Richards, 2005). In this study, data was analysed using qualitative data analysis methods underpinned by an inductive approach in general, and incorporating elements of Grounded Theory. Like other qualitative analysis approaches, a general inductive approach is suitable for research that aims to develop a model or theory about the underlying structure of experiences or processes which are evident in the text or raw data (Thomas, 2003). This involved an emphasis on various rounds of coding and memoing to identify categories, the relationship between categories, and emerging themes, and thereafter to finalise the categories that were most salient for the main research objectives.

The process of data analysis began with the manual transcription of interview data, wherein entire data sessions were transcribed. Words were transcribed verbatim, and non-verbal cues such as pauses, laughter, and gestures were also included in transcriptions. Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2006) have recommended that transcribing data should be an interactive process, which engages the researcher in the process of deep listening, analysis, and interpretation. In this way, transcription was not just a passive act. Moreover, as the transcription was done manually, the process allowed greater familiarity with the research material, which helped in generating rough ideas of categories and inter-related patterns as the data collection continued. In all, transcripts of all the

interviews ran close to 500 pages, and 54 transcripts were studied in their entirety and coded line by line, as described below.

The next stage in analysis was coding, or assigning tags or labels to the data, both during and after the transcription of interviews. Coding has been identified as a core physical activity of developing analysis, as it allows for the labelling, separation, and organisation of raw data into relevant categories (Lofland & Lofland, 1995). By alerting the researcher to certain patterns, and by creating linkages between the data and ideas, coding enables data simplification, data retention, and data complication (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Richards, 2005; Richards & Morse, 2007).⁴⁰ The coding process combined and adapted various approaches to qualitative data analysis, and involved initial, intermediate, and focused coding cycles.

The initial or first cycle of coding, based upon the researcher's expertise and relevant topic and aspect considerations, is the process of remaining open to discovering whatever theoretical possibilities can be discerned in the data (Charmaz, 2006; Lofland & Lofland, 2006). For this study, initial coding (sometimes called "open coding") comprised descriptive, topic, *in vivo*, and sociologically constructed codes. Descriptive coding involves storing information (characteristics or attributes) about the case being studied, while topic coding involves allocating passages to topics, thereby enabling later retrieval and description, categorisation, or reflection (Richards, 2005; Richards & Morse, 2007). *In vivo* codes refer to codes that derive from the terms and language used by social actors in the field or in the course of interviews, and sociologically (or any other academic discipline-) constructed codes are a combination of the researcher's scholarly knowledge and the field under study (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss, 1987). Once this initial coding was done, I created a table whereby similarly coded data was grouped together, which enabled the identification of broader categories or "families" because they shared some characteristics (Saldana, 2009). In this way, the initial cycle of coding enabled the identification

⁴⁰ Saldana's (2009) coding manual provides a good starting point for novice researchers to familiarize themselves with the various aspects of coding for qualitative research.

of emerging patterns of thought and actions, similarities and differences in these patterns, as well as preliminary categories and themes.

During this phase of data exploration and data reduction (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006) I began writing memos, reflecting on the participants' experiences and motivations, my choice of codes, identifying the linkages between codes, linking data excerpts to existing theories and literature, and highlighting the emerging patterns and/or themes. Memos, which are written records of the researcher, along with diagrams, are part of the analytic process, and are an integral part of Grounded Theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). While I was not using Grounded Theory *per se*, I found the process of memoing useful to organise my thoughts and to move towards some initial analytical thought. Memoing also alerted me to gaps in the data, enabling me to prepare for subsequent data collection and analysis, which fed into the next cycle of coding— which is referred to as intermediate coding (Birks & Mills, 2011). Thereafter, during the subsequent cycle of coding and memoing, memos shifted from a focus on various aspects of individual interviews to comparing and linking these memos and developing a storyline, as well as further review and refinement of categories.⁴¹ Following Coffee and Atkinson's (1996) advice about ensuring data display and easy data retrieval, data bits that were assigned the same code or category were brought together in a word document. This allowed greater exploration of a category, easier identification of relationships among and between categories, and the emergence of significant themes.

The final stage of coding involved the process of focused coding, which Saldana (2009) has described as a second cycle coding method that builds upon the data coded in the initial and intermediate phases. Focused coding involves searching for the most frequent or significant codes to develop the most salient categories in the data corpus (Charmaz, 2006; Saldana, 2009). By enabling the separation, sorting, and synthesis of large amounts of data, focused coding allows for the building and clarifying of concepts (Charmaz, 2006; Hesse-Biber &

⁴¹ Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006) point out that qualitative coding is a dynamic process, consisting of cycles of coding, memoing, and coding.

Leavy, 2006). This process involved the re-organisation and categorisation of data, following Rubin & Rubin's (1995, as cited in Saldana, 2009) recommendation of simple organisational outlining of categories and subcategories. This process also involved the subsequent identification of properties (characteristics or attributes) of a category.⁴² Thereafter, by applying Saldana's (2009) focusing strategy of identifying a study's "trinity" (in what he describes as the post-coding and pre-writing stage, p. 186), I identified three main categories and/or themes and how they interacted with each other. This became the starting point for the presentation of the findings, although data analysis never really stopped, nor were categories entirely final while the writing process was ongoing. See Appendix E for an example of coding and memos.

Validity, Verification & Credibility

Finally, in addressing qualitative work, it is important to consider notions of validity and credibility, which are not related to methods alone, but refer to ways in which the correctness of an account can be assessed (Maxwell, *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*, 1996). While validity is a contested concept in the social sciences, particularly between quantitative and qualitative researchers, there has been increasing recognition that the same labels of validity need not apply for both kinds of research.⁴³ For instance, Janesick (2000) has pointed to the limitations of assessing the rigour of qualitative work through a quantitative lens, pointing out that reliability, validity and generalizability should be replaced with qualitative referents. She pointed to arguments that highlighted how traditional thinking of generalisability falls short in individual cases, where value stems from their uniqueness, and whose results cannot be replicated or generalised (*ibid*). A variety of techniques to assess the validity and quality of

⁴² The identification of properties (characteristics or attributes) of a category, along with its dimensions (the location of a property along a continuum or range), is central to the process of axial coding (see Charmaz, 2006). While the thesis did not employ axial coding *per se*, I used the concept of properties to organise codes during the final cycle of coding.

⁴³ See Winter (2000) for a comparison of the notion of validity in qualitative and quantitative research.

qualitative research can be found in academic literature of which this study employs but a few. The first technique is member validation or member checks, which is a process whereby the researcher solicits feedback about her/his research from the people being studied (Bloor, 1997; Maxwell, 1996; Patton, 2002). Despite the weaknesses of member validation (see Bloor, 1997), review by inquiry participants is relevant to the issue of validity, to the extent that if participants can relate to and confirm the analysis and results of a study, its credibility is greatly enhanced. With regard to the case studies, key actors of both cases were interested in knowing the main findings, particularly as they wished to see how a neutral third party viewed their organisation. A few participants were interested in vetting the research before it was formalised in order to verify that their opinions were being accurately portrayed. Accordingly, the first drafts of the case studies were sent to a small group of key actors in *Hasiru Usiru* and *Praja* for their feedback. The four *Praja* members who reviewed the study said it correctly portrayed their viewpoints, and that it helped to understand themselves better, and to review their future actions. One member took the effort to provide comments on various aspects of the document, related to definitions, factual clarifications, and editorial aspects that reflected his academic credentials. He had worked for several years in a US university after obtaining his PhD there, and was happy to share his expertise while reading the case thoroughly. In *Hasiru Usiru's* case, while several core group members had expressed an interest in vetting the document, and despite several reminders, no feedback was provided. This was probably due to the severe time constraints within which key members functioned, although a condensed version of the thesis (in the form of a journal article) was also sent for comments.

The thesis has attempted to be credible or valid in other ways as well, such as by the provision of “rich” data (Maxwell, 1996), which is data that is detailed and complete enough to provide a comprehensive picture of the context and participants’ meaning-making within it. A description that is complete, rich and accurate counters threats to validity that arise from inaccurate or incomplete data (Maxwell, 1996). Finally, I also implemented a process of double coding,

whereby I coded a set of data, and returned to re-code it after a period of time, in order to compare the results. Krefting (1991) has noted that this code-recode procedure is one means for a qualitative researcher to enhance the dependability of the study, which in turn enhances its rigour. While I was not aware that this process was related to validity while I was coding, I intuitively performed double coding as a means of verifying that existing codes were 'accurate', or as a means to fine-tune codes.

This chapter has described the various methods for data collection and analysis employed in this research, the strategies adopted to inject rigour in qualitative research (Krefting, 1991), as well as the ethical considerations required of such research. The results appear in the following chapters: chapter 4 is an examination of the context of civil society in Bangalore, and interviewees' perceptions of the 'IT City' environment with regard to civic and political engagement. Chapters 5 and 6 are detailed case studies of *Hasiru Usiru* and *Praja* respectively, followed by a comparison of the two cases in chapter 7, and discussion and conclusions in chapter 8. Findings of the cases are presented in a manner that allows for a meaningful comparative analysis between cases, and addresses the key research questions of the thesis.

CHAPTER 4: CONTEXT OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN BANGALORE

This chapter deals with the worldview of participants as they consider the possibilities and implications of ICT use by civil society within the larger context of Bangalore as an “IT City”. This relates to the significance of context in qualitative research, as it attempts to understand human attitudes and behaviour in relation to the research participants’ social, cultural, economic and political environments (Hentschel, 1999; Holloway, 2005). As discussed in the Introduction, the context of this study is Bangalore’s techno-social environment, which derives from the city’s historical role as a knowledge and science hub, and its more recent avatar as an ‘IT city’ with global aspirations. Bangalore’s descriptions as a ‘network city’ (Heitzman, 2004) and ‘virtual megacity’ (Spivak, 2000) are reflective of a new and emerging techno-social paradigm (Gurumurthy, 2008). In this paradigm, associated with an information society, the technological/informational and social aspects of life are interwoven in new and complex ways (ibid; see also Fuchs, 2008; Webster, 2006). In exploring how interviewees view the city in relation to its IT context, and the implications for civil society activity, I was introduced to a multitude of viewpoints, which reinforced the notion of ‘multiple realities’ in qualitative research (see Yin, 2011). These various perspectives alerted me to the numerous ways in which interviewees situated themselves within the larger context, and how these positions influenced their beliefs and actions.

Findings in this section are based on informal conversations and formal interviews conducted with government and non-government actors in the city, including key policy actors, over several rounds of data-collection from June 2011-January 2013. Interviewees included prominent civil society actors, senior IT-BT industry officials, urban planners, government officials, a Member of Parliament, academics, and a senior journalist. Data from 38 formal interviews, including *Praja* and *Hasiru Usiru* members, was compiled and coded, and qualitatively analysed, as explained in the Methodology chapter. With regard to relationship between the IT City context and civil society engagement, data

analysis revealed three main perspectives: (1) a positive view of Bangalore as an IT City, and optimism about its benefits for civil society, (2) a consideration of both positive and negative consequences of the IT thrust on the city, and (3) a denunciation of the notion of Bangalore as IT City, and critique of its detrimental effects on civil society and governance. This variety of viewpoints was expected, as I had interviewed a wide range of people to try and acquire a deeper understanding of the spectrum of opinions surrounding this issue. The chapter begins with a discussion on civil society itself, viz., how interviewees perceive civil society in Bangalore, its complex and fractured nature, and an examination of the underlying reasons for the contrasting attitudes towards and use of ICTs for civil society activity.

Civil Society in Bangalore

Social Innovation and Citizen Participation

Bangalore's civil society is known for its vibrant community participation, and has been described as an important stakeholder in the urban agenda (Nair, 2005; Sudhira et. al., 2007; Sudhira, 2008). Almost all interviewees described civil society in Bangalore as active, committed, and integral part of its liberal, cosmopolitan identity. Some pointed out that a sense of ownership of the city was high among its residents, as evident in the mushrooming of civic initiatives. Others pointed to the commitment of citizens' groups and organisations, whose members devoted considerable time and energy to improving the city. Senior journalist Meenakshi noted that CSOs in Bangalore played a crucial role in highlighting issues such as good governance and accountability, and engaging with the government on critical issues. She highlighted several examples, and noted that newer, informal groups had energised the civil society space. One such initiative singled out for praise was "The Ugly Indians", a Bangalore-based group of anonymous volunteers who cleaned up the city's streets and fixed filthy spots (Hariprakash, 2011; Rediff.com, 2014).⁴⁴ She added that The Ugly Indians

⁴⁴ <http://www.theuglyindian.com>

was one of many examples of how ordinary citizens across the country were galvanising themselves into action, translating their love for their cities into concrete initiatives. In Bangalore, where civic interest and activity was already high, new technologies had spurred the entry of more actors into civic affairs, and energised existing initiatives. A prominent civil society actor highlighted the high level of civic activity and “social entrepreneurial energy” emanating from Bangalore over the years, which matched my observations:

I don't know whether anybody has studied this—I suspect that Bangalore's social entrepreneurial energy is a lot higher than many other cities. And there's a lot more social innovation happening in Bangalore, and I don't mean only with respect to urban issues: if you look at *Akshaya Patra*, what they are doing on mid-day meal programmes, it's all over the country and they've started in Bangalore; you look at what's happening with Devi Shetty and the heart work; you look at urban education issues with Akshara Foundation, there's a whole range of – there's Solomon who's doing fascinating work on Labour Net, which is bringing blue collar workers together and giving them collective bargaining platforms. So there's—I don't know what it is about Bangalore—but there certainly seems to me, anecdotally at least, more social innovation taking place in Bangalore than in many other cities. (Prakash, male, Skype interview, August 1, 2011)

In the above excerpt, the interviewee referred to “social innovation” as a hallmark of Bangalore, an idea, which along with the term “social entrepreneurship”, has captured the imagination of citizens and netizens alike (see Krishnamurthy, 2012; Norohna, 2007). Increasingly, “the flat, hot and crowded social entrepreneurial space in India” (Prasad, n.d.) has been the subject of academic scrutiny as well, with an exploration of the history, approaches, theories and concepts, and case studies of social innovation in the country (Datta, 2011).⁴⁵ A cursory Internet search revealed the presence of a large number of dynamic and active social innovation forums and organisations in the city, lending some evidence to the descriptions of Bangalore as a hub of social innovation. The blogosphere, too, has indicated positive references to social innovation in Bangalore, particularly the harnessing of entrepreneurial

⁴⁵ See Villgro research papers for more on social innovation and entrepreneurship in India - <http://www.villgro.org/research-papers>

energy to tackle “the miseries and injustices of the old India” (Krishnamurthy, 2012). Prakash’s claims that Bangalore had a leading edge in social innovation were buttressed by Rao (2012a), who noted that the city’s ecosystem (along with Mumbai’s) was most amenable to testing new models of social innovation in India.

A factor that works in Bangalore’s favour is the high level of citizen engagement with public affairs, which Simon & Davies (2013) have cited as critical to the development and implementation of social innovation. Interviewees put forth several explanations for the vibrancy of civil society in Bangalore, such as the largely tolerant atmosphere within which civil society operated. Former IT executive Vishal (personal interview, August 15, 2011) noted that the threat of retaliation or violence, or limits to free speech, seen in other parts of India were largely absent in Bangalore. He attributed this conducive environment to a combination of factors, including the soft-spoken nature of local Kannadigas, and a cosmopolitan culture that was enhanced by the arrival of the IT industry. The argument that the city’s relatively open culture reduced violence and made civil society a safe space was echoed during informal conversations with academics and civil society professionals, who noted that a comparison of Bangalore with other Indian megacities made this point sufficiently clear.

Corporate leaders who were actively involved in public affairs also echoed the idea that citizens in Bangalore were proactive in civic life. These interviewees noted that their appointment to government committees and task forces was controversial, but described their involvement in terms of contributing to the city through the provision of expertise, networks, funding, etc. Another argument put forth was that they represented a mediating class in urban governance, which was indispensable due to the gulf between new economy citizens and the political class. As Eshwar, an active RWA member explained (personal interview, May 26, 2011), the lack of political will or inability to tap into the wealth of available citizen expertise had facilitated the rise of task forces and elite CSOs to fill this void. He explained that while Bangalore had a highly educated and socially conscious middle-class, engagement efforts couldn’t be translated into

action because of the disconnect between them and the political class. In such a situation, new civil society initiatives like *Janaagraha* and Public Affairs Centre (PAC) were lauded for providing interested citizens the opportunity to participate in public affairs. Whereas these and other 'high-powered' initiatives were praised for invigorating the civil society space in the city, another section of interviewees expressed opposition to these organisations, describing them as elitist and exclusionary.

Critique of Apathy and 'Elite' Civil Society

Among those critical of middle and upper class CSOs was Vinayak, secretary of a non-profit organisation (NPO), who distinguished elitist, pro-(World Bank-initiated) reform organisations from the grassroots initiatives that prioritised decentralisation over middle class participation (male, personal interview, May 24, 2011). Harris (2006) and Nair (2005) have pointed out that the class composition and claim-making strategies separate elite CSOs from those focused on the informal working class, which further marginalises weaker groups in the city. As a network championing the cause of marginalised groups in the city, the *Hasiru Usiru* core group was critical of middle- and upper class oriented modes of civil society activity. The group's efforts to provide its 'political society' constituents access to consultative spaces is discussed in the case study chapter. The dominance of upper-middle class CSOs, RWAs, think-tanks, task forces, etc., in urban governance, and the limited interactions between these and 'political society' organisations deeply alarmed the core group. The core group's close involvement with the local administrative bodies, including its active participation in *Bengaluru Janara Vedike*⁴⁶ campaigns, stemmed from the concern that very few CSOs actually engaged with the urban local body to improve urban governance. *Hasiru Usiru* core group members also lamented what they viewed as limited citizen engagement in the city, with some members refuting the notion that Bangalore was characterised by an active civil society at

⁴⁶ The *Bengaluru Janara Vedike* (Bangalore People's Forum) is a forum of progressive voluntary organisations whose activities focus on devolution of political power and grassroots public participation.

all. Instead, the lack of support for their causes, and the limited response to mobilisations prompted some members to lament about the general apathy they witnessed in the city.

The varied responses to civil society and its influence as a force for good in Bangalore is unsurprising, given the vast spectrum of civil society actors, institutions and organisations in the city. Academics and civil society actors I spoke to pointed out the need to be aware of the heterogeneity within Indian civil society, and to avoid a superficial or one-dimensional discussion of the concept. Srinivas, a researcher in a prominent NGO, encouraged me to undertake a more nuanced understanding of civil society in Bangalore, which was possible only with a deeper examination of the motivations, composition, claim-making tactics, etc. of the various actors that the research was concerned with. Understanding this would also help me move beyond my middle-class bias, and my largely middle-class experience and knowledge of civil society. In this research, while interviewees were predominantly middle and upper-middle class, they included individuals who were actively working with or advocating for the rights of the working-class and urban poor. In this way, the understanding of civil society includes organisations and institutions representing an array of interests and stakeholders in the city. The complexities of civil society in India, including the presence of 'uncivil' actors, the lack of unified and homogeneous 'political society' or 'civil society' categories, and the increasing role of middle-class groups in urban governance has already been discussed in the Literature Review.

The diversity of civil society also explained the contrasting responses to issues of middle-class participation in civic life, the role of experts in urban governance, attitudes towards new technologies, and varying ideological motivations. During an informal conversation, a researcher pointed out that the diversity of perspectives in a vibrant civil society had its benefits and drawbacks. She noted that while the diversity was crucial to represent a plurality of interests, it was hard, if not impossible, for civil society to converge on a common vision on policy matters. Another interviewee explained that this fractured mandate served

the interests of the government, as civil society groups were pitted against each other for limited resources, influence—and for ideological reasons. As I discovered, the experiences of using ICTs, and the ability and willingness to leverage new technologies varied depending on which civil society category interviewees most closely identified themselves with. Another important aspect of the relationship with ICTs was how interviewees defined themselves in relation to the techno-social context of the city, and the extent to which it impacted their activities. In order to better understand these relationships, interviewees were asked how the IT City context affected their organisation and its activities, and their experiences of being a civic organisation in an IT city. As mentioned earlier, the three main perspectives among interviewees were: (1) a positive view of Bangalore as an IT City, and optimism about its benefits for civil society, (2) a recognition of both positive and negative consequences of the IT thrust on the city, and (3) a denunciation of the notion of Bangalore as IT City, and critique of its detrimental effects on civil society and governance. The rest of the chapter is focused on these main responses, beginning with the positive associations between the city's IT paradigm and civil society activity.

Bangalore as IT City: Ecosystem, Knowledge and Innovation

Those who expressed the opinion that Bangalore was an IT City attributed this identity to the industry's global success, the positive effects on the city's development, and the subsequent international recognition it brought to the city. Unsurprisingly, strong supporters of this view included IT-BT industry executives and a senior government official at the IT-BT department, who described Bangalore as the premier IT and innovation city in the country. They pointed to several factors that indicated Bangalore's position as India's IT capital, including the critical mass of talent and R&D firms, number of expatriates, and global technology companies headquartered in Bangalore. Other interviewees, including key *Praja* members, cited Bangalore's "ecosystem" as a prime factor in attracting and retaining talent, and in encouraging investment in the technology and R&D sectors. As the word 'ecosystem' has gained traction in the business

world, several commentators and business leaders have attempted to understand and define this new buzzword (Hwang, 2014; Siewert, 2013). Simply put, an ecosystem is about the dynamic interactions between business components, and how various strengths and collaborations determine prosperity and economic growth for companies within the ecosystem (ibid; Harvard Magazine, 2012). Silicon Valley is touted as a prime example of an innovation and start-up ecosystem, where innovators and leaders collaborate with their competitors to improve not just products, but provide opportunities for participatory innovation (Harvard Magazine, 2012; Schrage, 2014). Over the years, the 'Silicon Valley model', based on networks and a 'deconstructed' or distributed model of innovation, has become an inspiration for innovation ecosystems around the world, including India (Maira, 2011).

The Silicon Valley model had a huge impact on Bangalore, and played an extremely influential role in imagining the city and shaping its identity. Heitzman (2001, 2004) pointed out that in the early days leading to the IT boom, as the "informational city" began to be seen as the ideal template and Silicon Valley as the ideal type, the city began to be aggressively marketed as the Silicon Valley of India/Asia. Other researchers have similarly noted how the promotion of such an image was misleading, as Bangalore in the early 1990s did not possess the characteristics that had made Silicon Valley a successful software centre (Parthasarathy, 2004; Saxenian, 2007).⁴⁷ The lack of a technical community that fostered innovation through interactions, the emphasis on low costs, questionable working conditions, and employees' routine and repetitive tasks spurred critics to describe the city's software industry as glorified sweatshops (Ferus-Comelo, 2008; Parthasarathy, 2004; Rao, 2007; Sandhu, 2006).⁴⁸ Over a period of time, however, as the critical mass of companies and talent built up in

⁴⁷ Further, as Saxenian (2007) noted, such comparisons were also harmful, as replication of the US experience in India without adequate consideration of the variation in context could have deleterious effects.

⁴⁸ See D'Cruz & Noronha (2007) for an alternative viewpoint, based on their qualitative study of technical call centres in Mumbai and India. The authors reject the perspective that call centres are electronic sweatshops, and argue instead that they are high commitment service organizations, which promote employee well-being and satisfaction.

Bangalore, a new thrust on innovation added greater value to the ecosystem, and marked a new phase in the city's technological evolution (interviews; (Knowledge@Wharton, 2011; Viswanath, 2009; Yeung, 2013). While clearly inspired by the Silicon Valley model, Bangalore has begun to gain recognition as an innovation hub in its own right, emerging as one of the world's top technology innovation clusters and start-up ecosystems in recent years (CXOtoday News Desk, 2013; John & Phadnis, 2013). The presence of well-established educational and research institutions, an existing technological base, a critical mass of talent and companies, IT-BT finishing schools, government-entrepreneur networks, and good weather have contributed to the creation of a successful ecosystem for technology enterprises (interviews; see also John & Phadnis, 2013; Mazumdar-Shaw, 2009; Yeung, 2013). Manohar, a senior technologist at a leading multinational technology firm, had worked in Silicon Valley for 15 years before relocating to Bangalore in 2010. He explained that as Bangalore had become a tech hub with a critical mass of talent, multinational companies were increasingly choosing the city as the leading site for innovation in India (personal interview, July 1, 2011). While noting that Silicon Valley was unique and unmatched by similar hubs across the world, he acknowledged that certain similarities between it and Bangalore had favoured the latter's IT thrust. Such factors included the city's education and research base, supported by a large number of technical and engineering colleges, a history of technology dating to the city's colonial days, and its pleasant climate, which attracted foreign companies and foreigners to live and work in the city. The first three factors were also cited by interviewees as crucial in the development of Bangalore's historically cosmopolitan base, which is discussed in the section on 'Cosmopolitanism'.

Shiv, director of a prominent management company, explained the composition of Bangalore's ecosystem and the state of the R&D landscape on

the sidelines of a global summit (personal communication, July 7, 2011).⁴⁹ He concurred that while Bangalore was the leading IT hub in India, there was growing recognition that more needed to be done in terms of innovation. He highlighted several initiatives that were being seeded towards this end, and noted that companies were beginning to leverage their presence in the ecosystem to innovate. Shiv also pointed to the greater efforts by the state and local governments to increase Bangalore's competitiveness by focusing on innovation, particularly in light of increasing competition from within and outside India. Rakesh, an urban affairs expert, explained that the evolution of the technological hub had paved the way for an emphasis on innovation and knowledge industries in Bangalore (personal interview, July 5, 2011). He explained that the IT industry was more than just the presence of IT companies; its multiplier effect was felt on the economy, the standard of living, and a subsequent emphasis on knowledge and innovation in Karnataka state. Rakesh and Manohar both pointed out that corporate businesses had been investing heavily in these areas for some time, and the government had more recently begun to play an active role in promoting these industries. The thrust on innovation and knowledge was evident in the mainstream media and public discourse during the time of fieldwork, particularly with the establishment of the Karnataka Innovation Council in June 2011 (The Times of India, 2011).⁵⁰ A high-powered commission, the Karnataka Knowledge Commission, had been functioning since 2008, with the mission of transforming the state into a vibrant knowledge society (Singh, Gurumurthy, & Nandini, 2012).⁵¹ The reconstitution of these two institutions in December 2013 is reflective of their significance in the current climate of innovation and knowledge

⁴⁹ In simple terms, Bangalore's ecosystem was defined as comprising: (1) MNCs doing research & development (R&D) work, such as Microsoft, Google, Cisco, Intel, etc. (2) Indian companies doing R&D or Indian start-ups, such as Infosys or Subex, and (3) IT service providers, such as Wipro, Mindtree and Accenture (Shiv, personal communication, July 7, 2011).

⁵⁰ The Government Order constituting the Karnataka State Innovation Council is available on the Council's website at http://www.innovationcouncil.gov.in/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=65&Itemid=44

⁵¹ See the Commission's website at <http://jnanaayoga.in>

production (Times New Network, 2013). A preliminary review of policy documents and pronouncements also revealed the prominence accorded to cashing in on the existing IT ecosystem. This was made evident during my meeting with Manjunath, a senior official of the IT-BT department (personal interview, July 11). He discussed Bangalore's IT-BT achievements at length, and highlighted that the city was being simultaneously promoted as a destination for the development of BT, nano technology, animation and gaming, as well as the premier knowledge and innovation hub in India. He echoed Rakesh's opinion that the government's emphasis on nano technology, and animation and gaming, where "everything's related to IT", was indicative of the city's move from its IT/software focus, to an expanding array of knowledge-based expertise. Overall, what the interviewees and the secondary data seemed to suggest was that while innovation was a buzzword across India, the internal and external threats to Bangalore's status as a prominent tech hub made the drive for innovation and knowledge critical.

In general, interviewees who concurred that Bangalore could be equated with "IT City" referred to the emphasis on knowledge and innovation as stemming from its technological base. While they were describing the influence of the city's IT environment mainly in terms of corporate and government agendas, this was a starting point for my investigation into the impact of technologisation on other aspects of city life. As mentioned earlier, an informal conversation with Prabhat, a director of a research NPO, introduced me to the notion of "IT as a paradigm" in Bangalore, where IT perpetually impacts the city, in visible and invisible ways (personal communication, June 8, 2011). This was an intriguing perspective, and was suited to my research goal of investigating how the city's technology-enabled environment influenced civil society activity. While the case study chapters discuss civil society actors' attitudes towards and use of the Internet within the IT context of Bangalore, the next section specifically considers the role of enabling factors within the IT city ecosystem that are conducive to civil society activity.

Civil Society: Leveraging the City's IT/Knowledge Base

The positive impact of Bangalore's IT base on civil society initiatives was first highlighted by a key member of *Janaagraha*, who described this in terms of “tapping into the technological competence of the city”:

Look at the amount of social entrepreneurial initiatives that have come up in Bangalore which are driven by IT, which are harnessing the IT knowledge base, either in terms of technology or in terms of the volunteer base of the people in the IT sector. And that's not an insignificant thing; there are lots of people who have, there are lots of IT-based initiatives that have started up in Bangalore. There's e-Government's Foundation, there's Mapunity, we ourselves in *Janaagraha* use a lot of technology for what we do, and we certainly couldn't do it if we were in any other city, because we're tapping into the technological competence of the city. So there are things that are positive, which are unintended positive consequences of having an IT base in Bangalore. (Prakash, Skype interview, August 1, 2011)

Prakash described the rise of IT-driven social entrepreneurial initiatives in Bangalore as “unintended positive consequences” of the city's IT base. He observed that the sheer number of CSOs in the city leveraging ICTs was reflective of the technological expertise of its knowledge workers, who either founded new civic organisations and programmes, or volunteered with existing ones. Prakash highlighted prominent tech-based initiatives, such as the e-Government's Foundation, an NPO that uses scalable and replicable technology solutions to help local governments improve their municipal operations.⁵² He also cited the example of Mapunity, an organisation that uses and develops a range of ICTs to tackle social problems and development challenges, in collaboration with government and other CSOs.⁵³ These initiatives, while seeded in Bangalore, have expanded their operations, and gained national recognition for their innovative application of ICTs for improved governance and social change (Mishra, 2009; Shrikumar, 2012). Prakash also explained that *Janaagraha*'s positive experience of using ICTs during the 2008 *Jaago Re* campaign—which encouraged urban residents to register themselves to be eligible to vote—was a

⁵² <http://egovernments.org/>

⁵³ <http://mapunity.in/>

turning point for the organisation wr.t. ICT use. His emphasis on the positive outcomes of the technological environment in Bangalore was a rebuttal of the anti-development language propagated by a vocal section of civil society and academia. Equating technological progress in such starkly negative terms, he stressed, stifled meaningful conversation about change and development in the city. While he acknowledged the harmful consequences of the IT paradigm, he opined that this aspect was disproportionately highlighted by researchers and activists, and encouraged me to consider the positive effects of the city's technologisation.

His ideas lent credence to my early postulations that the city's IT base positively influenced civil society activity, although there was little or no academic literature to support this. One of the few documented cases of CSO use of ICTs was by *Janaagraha*, and I had shortlisted it as a case study at the start of the research. However, I decided against this when informants pointed out that *Janaagraha's* activities were already well-publicised, and that I should choose cases that had yet to be explored in detail. However, as *Janaagraha's* experiences of using ICTs to promote participatory democracy are important to the research, they are briefly described below.

Civil Society and ICT-based Innovations: The Case of *Janaagraha*

Raman (2006, 2008) examined *Janaagraha's* efforts as part of a larger study of how civic groups in Bangalore used ICTs and participated in governance, despite pervasive digital divides. She came to the conclusion that while ICTs did not play a major role in citizen-government interactions at that time, the PROOF and Ward Works initiatives spearheaded by *Janaagraha* and partner NGOs benefitted from ICT use by the city corporation (Raman, 2006).⁵⁴ As the BCC's new computerised fund based accounting system (FBAS) made

⁵⁴ While PROOF or Public Record Of Operations and Finance was a campaign initiated in 2002 for public financial disclosure (InfoChange, 2003; Raman, 2006), Ward Works involved citizens' following up on public works occurring in their wards, relying on the same accounting and information management system that made PROOF possible (Raman, 2008).

information sharing easier, campaign members could track public works projects and expenditure, which enabled them to participate in the decision making process.⁵⁵ In this way, the use of IT by the local government empowered *Janaagraha* and its campaign partners to engage with the government in an informed way, fundamentally altering citizen-government relations (ibid). Over the years, *Janaagraha's* efforts have evolved from an incidental use of ICTs to a more concerted effort to integrate them into its activities. One of its most widely discussed initiatives was *Jaago Re!* (meaning “wake up”), in which it partnered with corporate house Tata Tea in a nation-wide campaign to motivate and enable India’s youth to participate in the electoral process (Gowda, 2011; Tata, 2008).⁵⁶ By creating a website that allowed voters to register online, the campaign aimed to overcome the hurdles associated with physical process of voter registration (Sanjukta, 2009; Tata, 2008). The campaign was well-publicised on old and new media channels, with the latter especially geared towards encouraging the youth to register, and to spread the word to their friends via social media (Sanjukta, 2009; Tewari, 2009). The website received over 16 million visitors and 5 million registrations, prompting some commentators to term the campaign a success (Gowda, 2011).

Since then, *Janaagraha* has increasingly leveraged ICTs for its various projects, such as the ‘I Paid a Bribe’ (IPAB) initiative, which enables citizens to report and analyse acts of corruption on the portal in real-time.⁵⁷ Implemented in August 2010, the program has been hailed for transforming data into knowledge to inform the government about gaps in public transactions, and for strengthening citizen engagement to improve the quality of service delivery (Lahiri, 2010; OneWorld Foundation India, 2011; Pain, 2011; Strom, 2012). The site provides an opportunity for citizens to share their experiences, which in turn enables the organisation to get a sense of the cost of corruption, and influence processes to reduce opportunities for bribe giving and taking (see image 7.1 in Appendix G).

⁵⁵ See (Rao, 2010) for a case study of FBAS, and the strengths and limitations of techno-centric initiatives in a developing city like Bangalore.

⁵⁶ <http://www.jaagore.com/vote/main.php>

⁵⁷ <http://www.ipaidabribe.com>.

Another creative example of ICT use is the 'I Change My City' (ICMC) platform, which connects citizens locally, and scales up collaborative efforts through the Internet, social media, mobile and geographic information systems or GIS (Jha, 2013; Times News Network, 2012).⁵⁸ The platform allows users to post complaints related to civic issues, mobilise the community to prioritise the complaint online, and to liaise with civic authorities and elected representatives to get the complaint resolved (see image 7.2 in Appendix G). In 2013, *Janaagraha* was awarded the Google Global Impact award for this initiative, which a co-founder described as a validation of its '[inter]net plus roots' strategy (The Hindu, 2013; Times News Network, 2013).

However, the organisation was not always so savvy about or inclined to use the Internet and other new technologies to effect grassroots-level changes. Prakash described how the *Jaago Re* campaign reversed their formerly negative or sceptical attitudes about the possibilities of using ICTs for civil society action:

We did not [use new technologies] when we started. We ourselves, frankly, did not understand the power of technology until three or four years ago, when we did the campaign with Tata Tea for *Jaago Re*. And that was the first time we really used a web-based approach for our community outreach work. But then, that was an eye opener for us, because we always felt that people on the ground, in grassroots work, where's technology? Only 20% of the people are enabled, and so on. So we actually turned our back on technology for the first five or six years of our work. But that was from a community outreach standpoint. We did try to use GIS and so on, but more for working on our own internal programmes, not mass mobilisation. But over the last two or three years, we're certainly using new technologies, we're learning to use technology more from a public outreach standpoint. (Prakash, Skype interview, August 1, 2011)

Noting that the organisation had only recently begun to appreciate the value of using ICTs for its outreach activities, Prakash referred to the factors that had inhibited early ICT use for mobilisation-related activities. This included an inadequate appreciation of the power of ICTs for public outreach, due to the belief that ICTs could not be used to connect to the grassroots. Hence, until the

⁵⁸ www.ichangemycity.com

Jaago Re campaign, *Janaagraha* had used ICTs for its internal programmes, but had shied away from its use for mass mobilisation. While the overwhelming response to the campaign resulted in a shift in attitude among *Janaagraha*'s key members, several barriers to successful ICT use have persisted. The limitations faced by CSOs in effectively leveraging the Internet in Bangalore are discussed in the section 'Weaknesses in the ICT-civil society relationship'.

Interviewees that I spoke to were divided about *Janaagraha*'s impact on the city, with some hailing its success in harnessing the power of new media, while others were critical of its "elitist" character and urban focus. Discussions about *Janaagraha* arose in conversations with key actors and informants during the preliminary stage of data collection, when I was establishing the research context and (re-)familiarising myself with the key players in the city's urban governance sphere. Supporters of *Janaagraha* that I spoke to included members of an RWA in the southeast of the city who had participated in its activities. They cited the crucial need for such spaces that bridged the gulf between citizens and the political class, and also spoke of skills accrued during their association with *Janaagraha* (personal interview, May 26, 2011). Others praised its technology-driven efforts to air alternative voices and its efforts to reform governance systems. As majority of the interviews were conducted prior to the initiation of IPAB and ICMC initiatives, interviewees were referring to the *Jaago Re* campaign, as well the use of ICTs for coordination and networking. Only one interviewee, a prominent civil society actor, made a direct reference to the new initiatives, saying he disagreed with the model, and critiqued the creation of the ICMC platform as "a third party", and questioned its need "just to communicate with the government" (Bhaskar, telephone interview, October 1, 2013).

This section on *Janaagraha* has focused on its use of ICTs for civic engagement, and highlighted how the organisation has been a trend-setter in this area. The next section continues to investigate the viewpoint expressed by some interviewees that civil society in Bangalore has benefitted from the "IT-isation" of the city (personal communication with Prabhat, June 8, 2011).

Networks, Community & Expertise

The IT paradigm was referred to by some interviewees in terms of boosting civil society activities through the enhanced connections and networking opportunities provided by ICTs. Vishal (personal interview, August 15, 2011), a former senior IT executive currently active in social issues, noted that ICTs provided citizens a means to express opinions, obtain and exchange news and information, and enhance connections among similarly inclined groups and individuals. He cited the example of the India Against Corruption (IAC) campaign, which was largely social media-driven and supported by the IT industry, as a successful case of creating pressure groups through the Internet. In a similar vein, software professional Vineet highlighted the positive attributes of civil society networks in the city, and related them to the IT City background in two ways. Firstly, he said, people initiating and participating in networked initiatives were often software professionals or ‘techies’, who were exposed to global best practices when they travelled, and were keen to incorporate these practices in Bangalore. Secondly, as techies comprised a large portion of the audience online, efforts were made to reach out them in ways they were familiar and comfortable with. Pointing to the slew of Internet-enabled civil society initiatives in Bangalore, including e-magazines like *India Together* and *Citizen Matters*, and email discussion groups and social media-based communities, Vineet argued that their success rested on a large Internet-enabled membership/audience, including IT and ITeS workers. Civil society networks were described as crucial in providing competing points of view on current issues, building connections and trust between citizens interested in social issues, and facilitating offline participation. Vineet’s comments and enthusiasm about the prospects of civil society networks stemmed from his personal experience. He narrated how he had returned from his IT travel abroad with ideas that he had sought to replicate in Bangalore, particularly with regard to cycling, waste management, and tree planting. He noted that being an active member of several e-civil society networks and communities was crucial to the success of these initiatives, as they provided data, and logistical and collegial support. While he acknowledged the

limitations of such networks and communities, he was confident that the advantages of Internet-enabled civil society far outweighed the disadvantages.

Another—and more controversial—perspective centred around the rise of new actors, including a new IT-NGO nexus, in urban governance (see Dasgupta, 2008; Ghosh, 2005; Scoones, 2007). Senior IT-BT figures, who were deeply involved in civic affairs, stressed that the rise of IT had presented alternative voices in the public sphere. Referring to the example of the BATF, Vishal (personal interview, August 15, 2011) opined that the IT industry had facilitated “greater *democratisation*”, as new actors were enabled to participate in public affairs. Similarly, senior BT executive Rajni (personal interview, July 8, 2011) noted that the collegial relationship between the government and IT-BT companies in Bangalore allowed for entrepreneurs to participate in governance, and provide viable solutions to civic issues. However, this was a contentious issue, with interviewees divided over the increasing role of corporates and ‘experts’ in urban governance. The arguments for and against task forces as means to incorporate corporate/tech expertise into governing the city, is discussed in the section ‘The Controversy Over Task Forces’. While opinions on certain issues, such as the role of ‘elite’ actors in urban governance and the value of ICTs for civil society activity, varied greatly among interviewees, most extolled the value of civil society and its special role in Bangalore. The next section continues to highlight the perspective that the city’s technological environment bolsters civil society activity, focusing on the themes of globality and cosmopolitanism.

Civil Society in the IT Ecosystem: Globality and Cosmopolitanism

Other respondents who believed that Bangalore’s technological environment was important for civil society activity were some *Praja* members, who viewed the NPO as benefitting from the advantages that the IT ecosystem afforded. Of seven *Praja* interviewees, five categorically pointed to the benefits of operating within the ecosystem of the IT City:

I think the ecosystem plays a role in everything that we do. All the incubation that you do, all the ideas that float around, it's a perspective you live off of. And if you have that buzz—you know Bangalore has that buzz of being able to start your own thing— we've all done that. We've created this small start-up, we want to do more of these things; that plays a very big role... (Murthy, *Praja* RAAG, interview, December 16, 2011).

Being a software professional, Murthy was familiar with the IT ecosystem, and noted that the city's reputation as a supportive place for tech start-ups and a centre of innovation had been crucial in *Praja's* founding and expansion. He explained that by providing a supportive environment, where ideas could be circulated and new technological solutions developed, the IT ecosystem facilitated the emergence of new ICT-based experiments, including *Praja*. As explained earlier in the chapter, the importance of a dynamic ecosystem to foster innovation is crucial for the success of companies within it. This concept is expanded to highlight the importance of a nurturing ecosystem for innovation in the realm of civil society as well. Like other tech start-ups, *Praja* benefited from the interactions and collaborations among like-minded software and other professionals. *Praja* gained in several ways from having IT professionals as members, whose tech-savviness kept the platform up-to-date and relevant in terms of software and moderation practices. Moreover, as the IT industry provided its employees vast opportunities to travel around the world, techies were able to incorporate the knowledge of global best practices into the platform's discussions. Interviewees equated *Praja's* discussions with a type of *globality*, as discussions were based on what members saw first-hand as best practices in other parts of the world, and whether and how to incorporate these in Bangalore.

The IT ecosystem, therefore, contributed in direct and indirect ways to *Praja's* activities through structures and networks that facilitated innovation, the provision of technical skills to fuel and manage social start-ups, and global exposure that encouraged techies to discuss and work to implement global best practices in Bangalore. Murthy also added that the type of people who resided in Bangalore played an important role, and linked this to the idea of

cosmopolitanism. By 'cosmopolitan', he meant that as that people from all over India and the world lived and worked in Bangalore, particularly in the IT and related industries, it provided a sizeable pool of talent that *Praja* benefitted from. RAAG member Yogesh (personal interview, December 16, 2011), also a software professional, was more sceptical of the idea that the IT ecosystem had contributed to *Praja's* growth. However, he recognised that it was important insofar as it provided a large Internet audience, which played a key role in making *Praja* work. While interviewees spoke of cosmopolitanism largely in terms of the IT crowd, my personal experiences suggest that the diversity in the city's population also accrued from its education and R&D institutions, its thriving theatre and arts scene, and other new economy industries. These attributes meant that a section of the city's residents were well-educated, connected to the outside world, had access to various types of knowledge, and could contribute some part of their time and skills to civil society activity.

The IT Industry and Cosmopolitanism

Cosmopolitanism was a recurring theme in interviews, with 12 respondents (of which two were *Praja* members) describing Bangalore with this term—in both positive and negative ways. Overall, however, the label of being a cosmopolitan city, perhaps the most cosmopolitan city in the country, was a source of pride to most interviewees who portrayed it in this way. One section of interviewees noted that the IT-ITeS industries had played a key role in shaping the city's cosmopolitan character. The emigration of large numbers of young persons to Bangalore's IT and related industries gave Bangalore the image of being a 'young city' (Bijoor, 2014; Kodkani, 2011). The presence of these young, upwardly mobile men and women from all parts of India, and a large number of expats, has resulted in changing patterns of cultural consumption and lifestyles, as evidenced in the mushrooming of pubs, malls, multiplexes, upscale apartment complexes and gated communities, a diverse array of food joints, multiplication of motor vehicles, and growth in foreign travel and other leisure activities (Shobha et. al., 2013; Srinivas, 2007; Sudhira et. al., 2007; Upadhya, 2009). Interviewees

pointed out that the diverse array of cultures, languages, activities, and the opportunity to live an international lifestyle were key factors that differentiated Bangalore from other IT cities in India:

There is [a difference between Bangalore and other IT hubs]—I think Chennai is more into auto related, and Hyderabad is a combination of software products and R&D. Microsoft has a huge base there. But Bangalore's by far the most cosmopolitan. People prefer to come here because, from abroad, because they find climate very conducive, they find the people far more friendly, and there is no language barrier. Like there is in Chennai, so they have a much easier time here. Schooling, education available is *terrific*. You have all options from IB to ICSE to SSC to anything, you can choose.⁵⁹ You have international schools, you have day boarding schools, you have everything you can possibly choose from. You have international schools as well, for the expatriate kids. So I think Bangalore is kind of becoming more like a New York. About 15 years ago, if you saw a white man on M.G. Road, you would stop by and give him a second look. Today nobody bothers, because you not only have Chinese nationals, you have Vietnamese, you have Koreans, nobody's surprised these days— one expects it. (Meenakshi, senior journalist, personal interview, July 16, 2011)

Meenakshi explained that Bangalore differed from other IT hubs in the country due to its cosmopolitan environment, which provided a variety of lifestyle choices to residents. The multiplicity of languages, entertainment options, educational systems, and above all, the pleasant weather, attracted migrants from other parts of India and expats in large droves. The ease of living in Bangalore was compared to another IT hub, Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu state, where locals are known to not accommodate other language speakers. She also underlined the relationship between Bangalore's cosmopolitanism and the IT-ITeS boom, which had resulted in the city's evolution from an R&D hub and pensioner's paradise to India's leading innovation and knowledge hub, and favoured location for global retail companies and gastronomic activity. Manoj, a former corporate leader who was now active in public affairs, noted that the large number of expats and Indians who had returned from abroad to settle in Bangalore, and the services geared towards this group, gave the city an

⁵⁹ These are various boards of education offered in Indian schools

international feel (personal interview, June 21, 2011). He added that while this still held true today, the city's heydays were undoubtedly in the late 1990s and early 2000s, after which urban planning failed to keep up with the city's requirements. The failing infrastructure, rising pollution, increased social tensions, and other limitations of cosmopolitanism are discussed in the next section.

Limits of Cosmopolitanism: 'Outsiders', and the Dichotomy between 'Old' & 'New' Bangalore

The deteriorating quality of life was a common notion among interviewees, and even those who equated the IT industry with the cosmopolitan face of the city rued its drawbacks. ABIDe member Rakesh (personal interview, July 5, 2011) noted that imaginations of Bangalore varied due to its cosmopolitan composition, resulting in multiple—and competing—notions of the city's development among residents, which could not be easily resolved. Two RWA members lamented that the influx of new economy-related immigrants had strained the city's infrastructure, exacerbated rich-poor divides, and changed the city's cultural character for the worse (personal interview, May 26, 2011). Their colleague, who was reluctant to label all 'outsiders' as responsible for the city's deteriorating conditions, pointed out that the lack of participation in local affairs was a serious by-product of the quickened pace of cosmopolitanism. For these, and other interviewees who played an active role in civic affairs, the lack of political engagement of new economy populations was an indication of their disinterest in the city's welfare. The three RWA members agreed that the IT sector employees had benefitted immensely from the city, but that they did not contribute to it in a proportional manner. Eshwar argued that outsiders should make a greater effort to participate in local politics, but acknowledged that the quality of local representatives was a substantial barrier:

Madhav: And these outsiders, the main thing is they want to work. I strongly object that they never go out and vote on the voting day.

Eshwar: They don't have long-term interests, you know? There is a problem for them also, they are all very intelligent, but how will they talk to (Mayor) Sharadamma, who knows only Kannada? Most of the corporators are semi-literate, they can speak only Kannada. So there is no communication at all. (RWA members, personal interview, July 5, 2011)

Whereas Madhav saw the disengagement of migrant professionals in stark black and white terms, as representative of a lack of interest in improving the city, Eshwar offered a more nuanced explanation. While apathy, lack of connection and commitment to the city was definitely part of the reason for disengagement, another major reason was the lack of communication between political representatives and a large portion of the city's working population. This was attributed to, among other things, the language and cultural barriers between the two groups. This schism can be traced to the reservation of seats in ULBs, which was intended to provide political opportunities for historically oppressed societal groups, such as women, and persons belonging to backward classes, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.⁶⁰ While such reservation has undoubtedly empowered women and other disadvantaged groups, it has also raised misgivings on the quality of governance. This was a divisive issue that stirred emotions, and resulted in heated exchanges between proponents and opponents of reservations in the city council. While no one questioned the guiding principles behind reservations, critics pointed out that such policies often produced women councillors who stood in as proxies for their husbands, and that council members' intentions were often questionable (interviews; Angad, 2012; Kumar, 2014). Others pointed out that the previous mayor's limited English, lack of technical knowledge of the BBMP's functioning, and poor general knowledge skills were serious liabilities, which diluted the spirit of decentralisation (see also Angad, 2012). In addition, these elected representatives were seen as poor flag bearers of, and incongruent with, Bangalore's cosmopolitan and high-tech image in the global arena.

⁶⁰ See Laxmikanth (2011) for a detailed explanation of the history, composition and powers of ULBs in India.

These weaknesses were evident to even staunch proponents of reservations in ULBs, such as the *Hasiru Usiru* core group, whose members were part of a broader coalition spearheading greater decentralisation in urban governance. While their priority was to prevent erosion of the legitimacy of ULBs, interviewees acknowledged the limitations of these bodies in planning for the city. Limitations included the narrow capabilities and vision of local officials and politicians, and the prioritisation of commercial and self-interest over public interest. These weaknesses, coupled with the lack of technical know-how, and the desire of the state government to control Bangalore's coffers, were cited as reasons for the pre-eminence accorded to external bodies, such as task forces, in making decisions for the city.

The Controversy over Task Forces

The dichotomy between “old Bangalore”, represented by local, Kannada-speaking politicians, and “new Bangalore”, represented by new-age industries and a cosmopolitan population, came up in conversations with several interviewees, including ABIDe members. Vinod, a prominent civil society actor and ABIDe member, highlighted that the rupture between the city's political class and the new, cosmopolitan sections lay at the heart of the inevitability of expert-led task forces in Bangalore:

The city is—and this is the controversial part—the city is run by politicians from [a] specific background. The political leadership is overwhelmingly Kannadiga, even though the city is not. The political leadership is overwhelmingly old Bangalore, even though the city is overwhelmingly new Bangalore. So you have the structural imbalance; now how does the political leadership, which doesn't have cache in most of the city, deal with that portion of the city? Who in the BBMP Corporation can go and talk in Electronic City? They need this bridge layer. So they appoint the bridge layer, to say: “you guys should be able to talk to these other people, and you are already able to talk to us, therefore you are the bridge”. (Vinod, personal interview, June 22, 2011)

Vinod highlighted that the gulf between old and new Bangalore was problematic for governing the city, and that new governance forms, such as task

forces, arose in the in the absence of formal mediating structures. The value of task forces such as ABIDe and the BATF, in acting as go-betweens lay in the fact that their members were comfortable with representatives of both old and new Bangalore. While there was opposition to the constitution of task forces or similar bodies, he argued that the divided nature of the city ensured that such structures would persist. He noted that as the influx into the “IT City” had made it more diverse than most metropolitan cities in the country, “Bangalore [had] to struggle with a lot of new Bangalore within Bangalore”. This presented a complex situation that did not exist to the same extent in other metropolises, where the political class was on a comparatively firmer footing with the local population. Hence, the unwieldy nature of governance in a vastly expanded Bangalore metropolitan area, as well as the fact that “IT is dominated by non-Kannadigas” were cited as factors for the continued reliance on task forces in the city. Past and present task force members highlighted their important role in providing expertise to political representatives, as coordinating bodies among various disparate agencies, as well as to propose ideas that local agencies may not have considered or have the expertise to implement. Prasanna, a former BATF member, also noted that the task force had provided technical assistance, galvanised media support, and raised resources for local agencies when necessary (personal interview, May 23, 2011).

However, as discussed earlier, the issue of task forces and other non-elected consultative bodies was a contentious one among interviewees, with some objecting to their increasing decision-making power, and the subsequent eroding of power of local bodies. Among this category were *Hasiru Usiru* core group members, who viewed task forces as ‘extra-constitutional’ bodies that enabled a technocratic elite to appropriate decision-making from the city’s legitimate stakeholders. They rejected the notion that IT expertise could be unproblematically applied to running the city, and worried about the lack of accountability of new urban governance bodies:

You need technical skills. I’m not saying you don’t need technical skills, but you don’t need technical skills to run the city. Why will Nandan

Nilekani know how to run Bangalore?⁶¹ Because you run a software company, because you run any corporate [organisation], it doesn't mean you know how to run the city, because the city is something else, right?...The idea that you run your company well, or you use your technology well, hence you can run your city well, that's where I fail to see how will they make that jump. (Deepak, *Hasiru Usiru* core group, personal interview, June 15, 2011)

The excerpt reveals Deepak's concerns about the rising influence of IT and other corporate leaders in the city's governance—a sentiment that was subsequently reiterated by other core group members. As the *Hasiru Usiru* chapter shows, core group members were alarmed about several aspects of the IT paradigm, including the notion that expertise could be unproblematically translated from the corporate/IT to the governance domain. Deepak went on to explain that Nilekani's prominent position in the BATF, and the subsequent inclusion of middle and upper-class NGOs in decision-making, had eroded local democratic processes. Moreover, the lack of accountability of such structures, and the propagation of the idea that corporate success could serve as a blueprint for governing the city were other problematic aspects of the task force style of governance. Such critical views on the connections between the IT-BT industries and elite civil society in influencing public policy echoed critical perspectives that have been examined in the Literature Review. As these issues are discussed in the *Hasiru Usiru* chapter, they will not be repeated here. Instead, this section has highlighted the schisms arising from the city's IT base in the realm of urban governance, notably the debate over the dominance of task forces in a cosmopolitan city.

Cosmopolitanism and the IT City: A Chicken and Egg Situation

The English-language mainstream media often describes Bangalore as 'cosmopolitan', where residents imbue a variety of languages and cultures, and

⁶¹ The BATF was headed by 'IT czar' Nandan Nilekani until the task force was disbanded. He was later appointed Chairman of the Unique Identification Authority of India until March 2014, and began a career in politics, contesting the 2014 Parliamentary elections as a Congress candidate from the Bangalore South constituency, which he subsequently lost (NDTV, 2014)

are at ease with their local and global identities (Dutt, 2012; Prashanth, 2011b; see also (Sreekumar, 2010). The multiplicity of languages spoken in Bangalore, which is a key aspect of its cosmopolitan nature, can be traced in part to its location—as state capital of Karnataka, but located on the border of two other South Indian states, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, and not far from a third, Kerala (Benjamin, 2000; Taeube, 2004). Taeube (2004) noted that being a ‘border city’ meant that Bangalore’s population consisted of more than 50% of residents who were not originally from the city. While some interviewees highlighted the multitude of languages and cultures in a tolerant city as indicative of cosmopolitanism, others mentioned its historical evolution, which has been discussed in the section on Bangalore in the Literature Review. The climate, which drew the British to Bangalore in the early 1800s, continued to be a crucial factor in attracting local and foreign talent to the city’s R&D, technological, and software industries (Dittrich, 2007; Taeube, 2004). Another factor that enhanced the city’s cosmopolitan character was the central government’s push to locate national institutions there in the early 1950s, which brought researchers, IAS officers, and Indians from other parts of the country to Bangalore (Taeube, 2004; see also Heitzman, 2004). The historical and traditional openness towards outsiders has given Bangalore an image of openness and acceptance of global influences, paving the way for its place in the current global market-place (Taeube, 2004; Saldanha, 2002). Member of Parliament (MP) Girish noted that the IT industry had built upon the city’s historical cosmopolitanism, and not vice-versa:

Bangalore is *not* an IT city, in my view—and I have been a resident of Bangalore for many, many years. Bangalore is essentially a city with a very, very rich heritage, rich history, it is a city of great character, in the sense that unlike most conventional cities, which are either on the coast, or by river, Bangalore is one of those unique cities in India that have actually developed in the middle of nowhere. And so it is a city, in my opinion, primarily a city of great history, great character, and has always been a city very different from other cities in that it has been very cosmopolitan. And it is only that cosmopolitan nature of the city that’s allowed it to absorb these various influences of IT, BPO, and therefore, completely brand new transient population that have come in

and made Bangalore their home. (Girish, MP, personal interview, June 21, 2011)

In highlighting the city's history, heritage, and character, Girish described it as a historically cosmopolitan city, which made it open to new influences and new migratory populations. He explained that until the 1990s, Bangalore was reputed for a variety of things, such as its public sector units, weather, laid-back environment, and local culture. The entry of the IT industry into this "quaint" and "relaxed" city, he noted, was possible due to its pre-existing cosmopolitan identity, which was accepting of new ideas and people. Taeube (2004) noted that his interviews with representatives of IT firms, universities and public sector entities in Bangalore revealed a similar notion, viz., that the city's openness towards newcomers had a high impact on the IT industry, as it created a friendly investment climate for foreign companies. In the excerpt above, Girish also stressed that to him Bangalore represented a cosmopolitan city, rather than an IT City. Some interviewees expressed a similar view, arguing against the IT City label on the grounds that the data proved otherwise. Others pointed out that IT had not percolated down to citizens, and that civil society had yet to substantially benefit from the IT paradigm. These perceptions are discussed in the next section.

"Not an IT City": Exclusion, Invisibility and Contestations

Among interviewees who expressed a negative attitude about Bangalore's IT City status, there were three broad strands of thought, viz.: (i) those who were opposed the excessive focus on the IT industry as unjustifiable, for various reasons; (ii) those who argued that the limited impact on civil society, and citizen-government interactions dispelled notions of an enabling technological environment; and (iii) those who highlighted the rise of new claims and contestations, and critiqued the entry of new elite and tech-enabled actors in urban governance. As the third category has been discussed earlier and will be touched upon in the *Hasiru Usiru* chapter, it shall not be discussed here.

Among advocates of the first category, some interviewees expressed the opinion that the excessive emphasis on the IT City status by government and industry was unjustified, as the evidence proved that other industries were equally—if not more—important to the city’s economy. Some interviewees referred to the garment industry as the city’s largest industry, but noted that it remained in the shadows of the more glamorous and prestigious IT industry. The garment industry, which emerged as a successful exporter in the 1970s, boomed once again in the late 90s/early 2000s, demonstrating its continued linkages with the global economy (Benjamin, 2000; Pani, 2009; RoyChowdhury, 2011). The garment industry is numerically strong in the Bangalore region, employing around 450,000-500,000 workers, whose work accounts for 30% of the country’s apparel exports (TCLab , 2012). However, unlike the IT industry, the garment industry draws upon a labour pool that is low wage, fairly low skill, and primarily female dominated (ibid; Chaturvedi, 2014). These characteristics have rendered garment workers powerless, with little or no voice, or bargaining power as voters, making them prone to labour law violations and other forms of abuse (ibid; Bageshree, 2014; RoyChowdhury, 2011). This situation was exacerbated by the excessive spotlight on IT and other ‘global city’ industries, which rendered such informal economy workers invisible (Benjamin, 2000; RoyChowdhury, 2011).

Interviewees pointed to various ways in which the excessive focus on the IT industry made other aspects of the city invisible: for example, researcher Prabhat (personal communication, June 8, 2011) noted how blue-collar workers, although indispensable, were often invisible in narratives of the IT City. Others pointed to how the focus on IT had rendered other industries invisible in terms of public policy priorities, resulting in a skewed development policy. Some opined that the association of ‘Brand Bangalore’ with IT was so strong that it automatically dominated the way the city was imagined:

...from an *economic* perspective, IT was a technology, and call it old generation technology, with HAL and BEL, but it's always been that, so *that* [association with technology] is a very strong thing. So even though Chennai in numbers might come close to Bangalore— let's say it does, it's not there yet—but still it's a much bigger city, with textile and automobile, that it will always have that component to it. So it's

hard to shake that off. Bombay's another example; even if IT becomes big in Bombay, it's such a big finance [centre], and Bollywood, that it's not going to be known for IT...So these are the things that are tied to the image, something gets tagged to the city as being the main thing. So even if Chennai, in terms of numbers comes close to Bangalore, it has other things going for it to be just recognised as IT City; Bangalore has captured that, so that's not going to be shaken off, for at least generations. (Manohar, technologist, personal interview, July 1, 2011)

Manohar noted that as Bangalore's association with technology pre-dated IT, and the city was known for its technical and research prowess, its image naturally veered towards that of an 'IT City'. This was in contrast to other IT centres such as Chennai and Bombay (also known as Mumbai), whose economies were associated with other dominant industries, such as textiles and automobiles, and finance and Bollywood respectively. His observations about dominant imaginations of the city rendering certain industries visible and powerful, while forcing others to remain invisible and powerless tie in with Sassen's (2000) accounts of the 'global city'. Yet another negative aspect of the IT City identity identified by interviewees was that of contestations arising from Bangalore's bid to remain relevant in the global economy. Such contestations, and the "implications of maintaining an imagery of Bangalore as an 'IT city'" (Ghosh, 2005), have been well documented. Critics have pointed to how funding has been diverted from basic needs to mega-projects, the widening of urban-rural disparities, the further deterioration of the bargaining power of the urban poor, as well as the rise of assertions of particularity in response to global homogenisation (Benjamin, 2005; Dittrich, 2007; Ghosh, 2005; Heitzman, 2004; Kamath, 2006; Madon, 1997; Nair, 2000a, 2005). Similarly, some interviewees highlighted contestations that had bubbled up to the surface due to the rise of new and competing claims from 'above', i.e. elites and white collar professionals in IT and urban governance, and 'below', viz., localised movements centred around Kannada language and culture:

...there is lot of influx of people from other states, especially from the North—IT, and other side migrant workers are there because construction and all that, there is also increased presence of these

resident welfare associations, technological people, i.e. designers, architects, IT, BT and all that. At the same time there is also localised kind of a movement which began, like *Karnataka Rakshana Vedike* kind of a thing, it is also a response to I think, the present situation. Of course, they have not gone to the extent of like in Maharashtra...somehow this has brought in a new dimension of claims or demands, and you'll find various forms after *Karnataka Rakshana Vedike*, you have *Jai Karnataka*, you have *Vijaya Karnataka*, you have various forms.⁶² (Vinayak, personal interview, May 24, 2011)

Vinayak, secretary of an NPO, noted that the changing composition of the city since the IT boom, the increased presence of migrant white and blue collar workers, and the greater role of new civic actors and “technological people” in urban governance had heightened social divisions in the city. The tensions between certain section of local Kannadigas and the ‘cosmos’ (short for cosmopolitans) of the new knowledge industries added a new dimension of claims and claim-making to long-existing cultural, social and economic conflicts and demands (David, 2005; Upadhyaya, 2009). The recent resurgence of pro-Kannada groups, such as *Karnataka Rakshana Vedike*, were described as a response to the new forms of deprivation, and the perceived side-lining of Kannada identity associated with the rise of the IT industry in Bangalore. Researcher Srinivas (personal interview, May 23, 2011) similarly noted that the backlash against the industry reflected the anxieties of the original inhabitants of the city, who felt they were sidelined in favour of newer city residents. While interviewees were optimistic that Bangalore’s peaceful reputation would prevent Kannada nationalism from adopting an extreme identity, such as that of the *Shiv Sena* in Mumbai, they acknowledged that the issue continued to simmer, and could boil over into urban violence, as in the past (Gowda, 2010; Upadhyaya, 2006).

Another perspective among interviewees who argued against the IT City label was that IT was an incidental—rather than an essential—part of the city’s

⁶² See (Rao, 2010a) and Nair (2005) for a comprehensive history of Kannada nationalism and evolution into its current avatar, which Rao describes as ‘shrill’, ‘exclusivist’, ‘violent in its discourse’ and increasingly saffron/Hindu in identity.

character. Within this group, some viewed Bangalore more as a knowledge economy, which served as a fitting base for the IT industry to function. Among this group, the city was viewed more in terms of knowledge and information, rather than as just an IT centre. The IT phase was described as a temporal one, which benefitted from the large pool of human talent that had developed from successive governments' emphasis on education, training, and R&D. These sentiments were a corollary of the view mentioned earlier, viz., that Bangalore's historical cosmopolitanism provided an enabling environment for high-tech industries to establish and expand their operations. Another segment argued against the notion that Bangalore was an IT City due to the lack of innovation that had thus far characterised the industry. For instance, former IT professional Ajay, who had worked in the industry for more than a decade, noted that cost—rather than innovation—had thus far defined Bangalore's relation to IT (personal interview, December 26, 2011). While the business models of local IT giants had been successful, and central, to putting Bangalore on the global map, he described IT as being an incidental part of their services. Thus, for the most part, Bangalore could not be compared to truly innovative ecosystems like Silicon Valley. Social critics lamented that the repetitive nature of coding had produced a generation who were akin to “cyber coolies”, which had corroded Bangalore's intellectual spirit (Bidwai, 2003; Srivastava, 2008).⁶³ The comparison of the industry to a glorified sweatshop has been discussed earlier, with such concerns often swept under the rug in favour of the enthusiastic proclamations of Bangalore's 'information superpower' and 'knowledge society' appellations (Bidwai, 2003; Heitzman, 2004).

This section has thus far described the various objections raised by interviewees in relation to the notion of Bangalore as IT City. In proclaiming their distaste for defining the city in this way, interviewees pointed to the negative effects associated with the industry, including the rise of new claims and contestations, the greater invisibility of certain industries and workers, the rising

⁶³ In India, a coolie is used to refer to someone who carries baggage, usually in railways stations. See (Gandhi, 2013) for an explanation of the origins and racially charged history of the term.

influence of new, elite actors in urban governance, and the lack of innovation emerging from the industry. The final argument negating the IT City label was related to the limited impact of ICTs on civil society activity and citizen-government interactions. Such observations dispelled notions of an enabling technological environment for civil society activity. While these interviewees viewed ICTs as important tools for public participation and engagement in civic affairs, they highlighted that the benefits of ICTs for civil society had yet to fully materialise.

Weaknesses in ICT-Civil Society Relationship

As the next chapter shows, *Hasiru Usiru* core group members displayed pessimism about the civil society-Internet relationship in Bangalore, citing the Internet's limited penetration, its middle-class bias, and the lack of collective action as key factors. A combination of ideological objections and disillusionment with the limited success in leveraging the Internet for collective action resulted in the inability or disinterest in using the Internet for civic engagement. Interviews with non-*Hasiru Usiru* interviewees shed further light on the barriers to effective Internet use by civil society in Bangalore, including limited funds and access to new technologies, and the lack of an institutional space for citizens to participate in urban governance in the first place. While some of the concerns overlapped with the *Hasiru Usiru* core group, this section highlights the non-*Hasiru Usiru* voices, which were not prompted to the same extent by the ideological of the core group. The weaknesses in the Internet-civil society relationship in Bangalore, as perceived by civil society actors, are discussed below.

As expected, access to ICTs and the limited percolation to the grassroots was cited by some interviewees as one of the key limitations of ICT use by civil society. They noted that new technologies could potentially boost civil society's activities, but that low Internet penetration rates severely inhibited their usefulness. Similarly, Jaya, a senior associate in a prominent NGO, highlighted how limited access to ICTs among the general public lowered the value of government-initiated ICT-based projects (personal interview, June 13, 2011).

Jaya and independent researcher Harsha (personal interview, May 30, 2011) directed me to examples of ICT-based initiatives that had sought to improve transparency and facilitate grievance redressal online, such as the Web-Based Global Project Management System (GPMS)⁶⁴ to track BBMP's projects online, Bangalore-one, and the Nemmadi and Bhoomi e-governance programmes through which various government services are made available to citizens (Aundhe & Narasimhan, 2012; Naik, Basavaraj, Sultana, & Prasanna, 2010). Referring to these examples, they stressed that new technologies needed to be easily accessible to the intended beneficiaries, particularly the urban and rural poor, to fully reap their benefits.

Raman & Bawa (2011) also highlighted this aspect in their study of citizen-engagement interaction through an analysis of *Nemmadi Kendras* (kiosks) in rural parts of Karnataka. They have pointed out that the introduction of ICTs added more layers, in terms of bureaucracy and middle-men, which rural citizens had to navigate *before* they could actually access services. This, in turn, adversely affected state-citizen relations. Researcher Srinivas (personal interview, May 23, 2011) spoke at length about the ramifications of incorporating ICTs into routine governance practices, particularly the subsequent inconvenience to, and exclusion of, marginalised groups. He provided examples of how new technologies were making urban governance impersonal and inaccessible by reducing opportunities for physical citizen-government interaction, which was crucial for the average Indian. He also pointed out that without the requisite educational and technical skills, and lack of access to new technologies, citizens faced substantial barriers to participate in basic governance processes, echoing Raman & Bawa's (2011) findings.

Another category of interviewees included civil society actors who were not averse to incorporating ICTs into their activities, but were limited by the various barriers to effective ICT use. One of these limitations included scarce financial resources, which afflicted informal, and/or small to medium CSOs. Members of these CSOs spoke of the difficulties of using new technologies

⁶⁴ <http://bbmp.gov.in/web-based-project-management-system>

efficiently due to the infrastructural and resource constraints within which they worked:

Basically infrastructure resources—see we are a small group, we are a registered society, eight people have formed this, I'm the chief executive, I'm the secretary. From the beginning we are a very low key kind of organisation, even fundraising and all that. We feel that there is a lot of money with the government or private organisations, but we do not want to compromise on what we want to do, otherwise you know, you can always get projects to work. So right now, even the first time we had a website was in 2008, for 1 year, 1½ years it ran, am now trying again to look for people who can help us do it on a voluntary basis. And from last five years we have no funding, no funded projects. (Vinayak, personal interview, May 24, 2011)

The interviewee explained that his CSO did not have adequate resources to fund a fully-functional website, and that the office-bearers were hesitant to accept funding from government or private sources that could jeopardise their independence. Under such circumstances, when existing funds dried they had to rely on volunteers to manage the website, which was an ad-hoc way of maintaining the organisation's Internet presence. These difficulties were voiced by other civil society actors, such as Ramesh, who was deeply involved with a CSO that promoted cycling in the city (personal interview, December 26, 2011). He explained that the lack of time, and financial and human resources prevented meaningful and creative Internet use to promote the organisations objectives and activities. He also noted that with up-to-the-minute information defining the current information age, it was increasingly time-consuming to remain updated on news and information to share on a website. It also required time and resources that he or his civil society group did not possess, and the information overload inevitably associated with information-intensive activities online sapped him of energy. Such experiences can be contrasted to more professional CSOs, which often have dedicated funds and personnel to manage their image, activities, and correspondence online (personal observations). However, even among the latter, those who achieved success with ICT-enabled campaigns had

to contend with translating event-based gains to a more sustained relationship with new technologies:

I think there's two forms of how people engage with IT: what has worked with us in the *Jaago Re* campaign was a very transactional engagement, that: "you have to go and register to vote". Now that's a very important thing from a democracy standpoint, but it's an easy thing to do, you just have to go and register. But if you flip that and said: "you got to go and engage with your political system, you've got to participate in your neighbourhood, and fix your garbage and fix your roads, etc.", that's a much more complex, it's more process oriented rather than *event* oriented. And I don't think that the urban citizen in India feels empowered enough to do that. We've completely lost ownership of our public spaces in our cities, and so, technology by itself is not going to reawaken or rekindle that ownership. You need to do a bunch of other things to really get people to walk out of their home onto the street, and feel that they own that space. And technology can enable it but it certainly can't either be the driver of it or be the only thing that can make that happen. (Prakash, *Janaagraha*, Skype interview, August 1, 2011)

While the *Jaago Re* campaign was significant as a civil society experiment in ICT use, Prakash noted that part of its success lay in encouraging a relatively simple aspect of democratic action, viz., to get out and vote. However, while ICTs could be used successfully for events, the more difficult task was to leverage the technology for sustained citizen action. He pointed out that *Janaagraha's* efforts to move from ICT use for a transactional (one-time) engagement to process-oriented involvement of citizens in public affairs was a very gradual process. However, he acknowledged that in the absence of spaces of citizen participation in cities, and the lack of a culture of participation, new technologies could only be of limited use. Once citizens understood how to participate in public life, and were truly empowered to do so, ICTs could be used more effectively for engagement. As the use of ICTs for systemic change would take time, he advocated that the ICT-civil society relationship be strengthened, starting with a focus on harnessing ICTs for better civil society-citizen networking among CSOs within the city. The reasons for the lack of a participatory culture in India's cities,

and the potential for ICT-enabled civil society to provide and participate in much-needed spaces of engagement are briefly explained below.

Limited Urban Decentralisation and the Value of Internet Spaces of Engagement

The slow pace of translating sustained civic engagement via ICTs stems from the more fundamental issue vexing civil society groups, viz., the lack of formal venues for citizen participation in urban local government. The thesis has already referred to the landmark 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (or Nagarpalika Act) of 1992, which identified a set of reforms that would see improved civic participation in Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), including the formation of ward committees (WCs) in municipal corporations (Chamaraj & Rao, 2006; Rani & Roy, 2009). In practice, however, ULBs face a wide range of problems that severely hamper the true spirit of decentralisation. Problems range from cases of maladministration, corruption, conflict among governing institutions of urban governance, to ineffective and unequal participation in decision-making, poor revenue sources, and lack of empowerment of WCs (Mathur, 2007; Sharma, 2011). In Karnataka, WCs were practically not functional, except in Bangalore, where committee meetings were infrequent, and the functioning ineffective (Mathur, 2007). WCs in Bangalore were also severely hampered by a debatable nomination process, limited citizen representation, and an ambiguous mandate (Ramanathan, 2007). It was only in 2013, after a series of fits and starts that the process of creating WCs began to truly get underway in Bangalore, largely due to the litigative and advocacy efforts of several CSOs (Malusare, 2013a; The Times of India, 2013). Ramanathan (2007) has noted that the governance vacuum in Bangalore was indicative of the lopsided approach to devolution in the country, which had favoured rural over urban decentralisation. The absence of champions of urban self government, the lack of debate about the issue, and the urgency of the drafting and passing of the 74th amendment had created a situation where cities and towns did not have bottom-up structures that engendered more proximity between citizens and local government (ibid).

In the absence of this “political kindergarten”, the urban voter is not only disconnected from government, but also illiterate about the politics of change, producing the apathy and cynicism that s/he is normally associated with (ibid, p. 675). Reflecting on *Janaagraha*’s experiences—which reflect those of many other civil society and community-based organisations across the country—Ramanathan (2007) noted that the urban citizens (including the poor) cared deeply about their city and wished to participate. If appropriate structures and forums were made available to them, the social energy witnessed in the variety of CSOs across urban India could be channelled toward this end. In the current situation, however, given the absence of grassroots forum for participation, urban citizens were unaware of what participation entailed. Prakash highlighted this aspect in the preceding excerpt, when he referred to urban citizens not being empowered in terms of civic and political engagement. Without the necessary structures to practice engagement, critical skills for participation, such as listening, negotiating, compromising, etc. were in short supply among urban citizens. In such a situation, *Janaagraha* had been more successful in engaging citizens in campaigns that were transaction and event based, rather than process-oriented, which involved long-term commitment. Whereas ICTs played an important role in terms of awareness and mobilisation, the real gains for ICT-enabled engagement would accrue when urban citizens had formal opportunities to practice and participate in civic life.

Although I concur with the above sentiments regarding the necessity of fostering political socialisation among urban citizens, I do not necessarily agree that ICT-enabled initiatives should appear at a later stage in the participation process. Instead, the value of Internet-enabled spaces of engagement lies in the fact that urban citizens, who are ordinarily apathetic and disenfranchised, have the opportunity to participate in civic life. As the case studies show, for middle class city dwellers, especially the vast numbers that have migrated to live and work in cities other than their birthplace, Internet spaces of engagement foster interest and participation in local affairs. Factors contributing to this phenomenon include the greater access to ICTs among the middle classes, the ubiquity of

social media in cities, and the increased interest of tech professionals in social issues. Internet spaces of engagement have risen in cities to supplement the offline efforts of CSOs working to plug the gap in urban decentralisation, performing a critical—but as yet relatively unrecognised—role in city governance. These issues are central to the thesis, and are deliberated upon in greater detail in the case studies, as well as in the Discussion and Conclusion chapters.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown the various ways in which Bangalore's IT City status, and the IT paradigm that it has fostered, influences ICTs-civil society interactions. The chapter has highlighted instances of positive ICT use, and identified other contextual factors that have contributed to the creation of an enabling environment for civil society in the city. At the other end of the spectrum lie CSOs and actors that decry the IT City status, and point to the considerable barriers for effective ICT use in a technologising city. Notable among the latter category is environmental network, *Hasiru Usiru*, whose core group demonstrated a pessimistic attitude towards the use of ICTs for civic engagement, and questioned the value of the IT City in their activities. These, and other salient findings related to *Hasiru Usiru*, are discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5: *HASIRU USIRU*—A CASE STUDY

Introduction: History and Evolution

Hasiru Usiru, which means “greenery is life” in the Kannada language, is an Internet-based network working to protect urban greenery, public spaces and other urban commons in Bangalore city (Yahoo Group description, mailing list archives, interviews). The Yahoo mailing group (<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/HasiruUsiru/>) was created in 2005 to connect interested persons via a common platform, and to enable access to a shared database of archival, human, and other resources (ibid). While *Hasiru Usiru* occupies a prominent place in the online and offline public sphere in Bangalore, there is a paucity of records regarding its origins and its evolution as an important civic actor. My experience of having worked in a civil society organisation in Bangalore suggests that this is a common problem for organisations in this sector in India, particularly those operating on an informal basis. In the absence of proper documentation, interviews and the mailing list archives played a crucial role in building up this case study. This was supplemented by observation, as well as secondary data in the form of academic papers, NGO reports and newspaper articles. As information on *Hasiru Usiru* emerged primarily from the mailing list archives and interviews, only information from sources other than these are specifically cited.

The Yahoo group built upon the efforts of the informal *Hasiru Usiru* group founded in 2003 to save street trees from being felled for proposed road widening projects across the city. While the network comprised interested groups and citizens, three organisations were particularly involved in its activities and provided it various types of support: Environment Support Group (ESG), a not-for-profit trust working on environmental and social justice issues, Alternative Law Forum (ALF), a collective of lawyers advocating an alternative law practice centred on issues of social and economic injustice, and CIVIC (Citizen’s Voluntary Initiative for the City), a citizen’s initiative working on urban issues such as corruption, social equity and good governance (Enqvist, 2012). In 2005, when

city authorities announced plans to widen several prominent roads, the network initiated a campaign to gather media and public support against indiscriminate tree cutting. Campaigners were worried that road widening—ostensibly for smoother vehicular movement—would be at a high environmental cost. Moreover, there was concern over the lack of public participation in decision-making, as well as the privileging of private vehicle ownership over public transportation, cyclists and pedestrians. The campaign comprised a variety of publicity and advocacy-related activities and collective actions, including signature campaigns in neighbourhoods, awareness-raising events in colleges, as well as seminars, workshops, and public meetings to facilitate citizen input on sustainable traffic management solutions. Some members liaised with the print and electronic media to keep the issue in the public eye, while others wrote articles and letters to the editor of major newspapers, to ensure that their voices were not drowned out by the more powerful official view. Signatures collected were put together in the format of a spiral bound book and submitted to the Karnataka Governor⁶⁵, and members continued to meet and lobby with local authorities and public representatives. A cycle rally was organised to highlight the struggles faced by cyclists and pedestrians in the city, and to generate support for the campaign. In addition, e-petitions were circulated, and signatories of the online and offline signature campaigns were asked to join the newly-formed mailing list, which became the lead player in the campaign to save Bangalore's trees and green spaces. ESG also filed a public interest litigation (PIL) in the Karnataka High Court questioning the city corporation's decision to cut over 700 trees for the road widening various (Writ Petition No. 14104/2005 (GM-PIL)). In response, in December 2005 the High Court directed that any felling of trees must be done as per the provisions of the Karnataka Preservation of Trees Act 1976, and that an opportunity should be given to representatives of *Hasiru Usiru* to inspect the area prior to any tree felling (The Hindu, 2006). In this way, bolstered by the court's judgement and the support of an active and energised

⁶⁵ A Governor is the Constitutional head of a State (province), whose duties and powers resemble the President, who is the head of the Indian Republic at the Centre (Kashyap, 1994).

citizenry, *Hasiru Usiru* emerged at the forefront of the battle to conserve trees, parks, and other open spaces in Bangalore.

From 2005-2008, the network, in collaboration with partner groups, was involved in a wide range of activities aimed at preserving Bangalore's famous tree cover, including its overarching "Campaign to Reclaim Bangalore's Commons" (ESG website).⁶⁶ As in the past, this included workshops, walks, research and information dissemination activities, peaceful public protests, and advocacy with public officials to highlight citizens' opposition to projects considered environmentally unsustainable. In particular, the campaign was directed against road widening projects and the proposed elevated rail system, the Metro, which were being "aggressively promoted as solutions to traffic congestion" by city authorities (*Namme Raste* campaign flyer, November 2008; Hasire Usiru, 2008). It was during its anti-Metro campaign in 2008-09 that *Hasiru Usiru* achieved mainstream recognition from both media and citizens. The Metro, envisioned as a mass rapid system, was at the heart of impassioned debates about the rail system's feasibility and appropriateness for the city. *Hasiru Usiru* members argued against the Metro, citing its overwhelming costs, devastating environmental effects, the disregard for alternative transport solutions, as well as the existing lop-sidedness in transport options in the city. During this period, the network was active in organising a series of awareness and protest campaigns against the adverse effects of the Metro on lives, livelihoods, greenery, and public spaces in the city (Hasire Usiru, 2009). Interviewees pointed out that their objections to the Metro arose from the adverse socio-spatial implications of this project, as well as the absence of public consultation or consideration for the environment in decision-making. Under the aegis of *Hasiru Usiru*, affected groups, such as traders, shopkeepers, cyclists, informal workers, residents, environmentalists, advocates of the poor, and concerned citizens congregated to voice their concerns and demand citizen-centric development (*Hasire Usiru* campaign, 2009; see also Goldman & Longhofer, 2009).

⁶⁶<http://www.esgindia.org/campaigns/hasire-usiru/resources/hasire-usiru-campaign-reclaim-bangalores.html-6>

In particular, the campaign against the proposed construction of the Metro inside Bangalore's famous botanical garden, Lalbagh, and another green boulevard, the Lakshman Rao Park, significantly raised the network's prominence in the public sphere—both offline and in cyberspace. In April 2009, the campaign witnessed hundreds gathering at several disputed sites to register their protest, forming human chains, holding candlelight vigils, interacting with government representatives, and a host of other protest and advocacy activities (Iyer, 2009; The Hindu, 2011). Protesters that gathered in Lalbagh and Lakshman Rao parks included regular walkers and runners, concerned citizens, college students, passers-by, as well as several city-based NGOs and citizens' groups. In this campaign, the Yahoo group (hereby known as the 'e-group') played an important role in information dissemination, collaboration, and mobilising citizens to action. During the campaign, hundreds of new members were added to the list, thereby stimulating the online discussion and precipitating offline activity. Through a series of coordinated online and offline activities, and by informing citizens who were interested in the issue, but unsure of how to participate, the campaign witnessed a significant turnout.

While there had been several anti-Metro protests organised since 2007, the series of events undertaken during this period, and the wider publicity and mobilisation via the e-group and other Internet channels, thrust the issue into the spotlight. These anti-Metro protests were described as the pinnacle of *Hasiru Usiru's* activism efforts by interviewees, and their significance was acknowledged by a founding-member on the e-group:

The past week has changed Bangalore so much, it is difficult to comprehend. The protests have garnered so much support for people centred planning, that this is truly unprecedented. (Message #6376, April 26, 2009)

The presence of large numbers of people on the streets, the spectacle of the protests, and the publicity generated by social networking had generated unprecedented support for the issue. However, these efforts resulted in only minor modifications to the Metro project, and the subsequent collective action

gains from the campaign could not be translated into a sustained, large-scale movement (see also Enqvist, 2012). The lukewarm response from the larger online community to subsequent calls for collective action was partly a result of the onset of 'fatigue' due to the non-achievement of goals. The limited involvement of the majority of e-group members precipitated the rise of the present network structure, dominated by a smaller set of active actors, called the 'core group'. Subsequently, the waning response to calls for protest led to a shift in strategy from organising protests to conducting audits, undertaking public consultations, assisting legal actions, greater media coverage, and networking.

Despite the lack of protest activities, the network has still been able to facilitate some positive instances of collaboration—both planned and spontaneous. This includes the "Come, Cross the Road" events held at various city junctions from July 2011 to highlight problems faced by pedestrians and cyclists on the city's roads. Volunteers attempted to cross the road at major traffic junctions, observed time taken for pedestrians to cross the road, surveyed the amount of waiting time before pedestrians could cross, and noted the behaviour of motorists when pedestrians attempted to cross the road. Through a series of such events during the year, the organisers collected data with the intention of presenting it to the BBMP and traffic authorities to improve pedestrian safety in Bangalore (The New Indian Express, 2011; The Hindu, 2011a). A successful example of small-scale collective action occurred in November 2011 with the halting of the dredging of Yediyur Lake by a local corporator, who intended to build a statue in the lake centre. Upon being alerted of dredging activity on the e-group, some members rushed to the spot, halted the dredging, and cleaned the lake. Thereafter, while some members pitched in to fill the breach, others liaised with the corporator, and urged him to revert his decision to dredge the lake (e-group messages; Deccan Herald, 2011). More recently, in November-December 2012, quick action by members was able to counter the proposal to build a nine-lane car park inside Lalbagh (ibid). These examples show that despite not being able to build on the momentum generated by the anti-Metro protests in 2009, the collaborative nature of the effort produced unifying goals and strong partnerships

that encouraged smaller-scale collaborative efforts (see also Enqvist, 2012). The pre-eminence of *Hasiru Usiru* in the public sphere is also reflected in the High Court's directive to the BBMP in December 2011 to involve the network in all instances where trees would be felled for road-widening (ESG website; The Hindu, 2006).

Participants and Motivations

From the interviews, I was able to ascertain that the network was divided into an informal “core group” of eight active individuals at that time and the remaining e-group members connected primarily through the online medium.⁶⁷ Enqvist (2012) similarly identified the core and peripheral members based on interviews and social network analysis. He has described the core group as comprising active and well-connected members, and the peripheral group as heterogeneous actors with some links to the core but few among themselves. Interviews revealed that while the core group comprised the most active members in the network, ‘active’ referred to offline—rather than online—activity. I interviewed six core group members—three male and three female—all in their late twenties and early thirties. Of these, four consented to repeat interviews, enabling me to explore certain crucial or emerging issues in-depth over a period of time. During the first round of interviews, I was able to ascertain that in addition to age, the core group shared other demographic and attitudinal attributes. For instance, they could all be described as belonging to the middle class, proficient in English and one or more regional languages, and familiar with, and having easy access to, the Internet. Each member had one or more formal education degree, with five members having a background in some branch of engineering. While one participant was employed in the software industry, the other five were employed in the social/development sector. Of these five, three pointed out that they had quit their jobs in the software industry for the social/development sector. Subsequent interviews revealed that core group

⁶⁷This was an ad-hoc core group that functioned prior to the formal core group/committee that was formed in April 2012.

members were also close friends, whose strong, personal ties motivated each other to join the network. Interviewees also shared broadly left-leaning or socialist political philosophies, which connected them with each other as well as to *Hasiru Usiru's* larger goals.

Core group members referred to this shared political thought as their “ideology”, and this ideological connect contributed to the development of a shared worldview. This included a preference for physical interaction, and a more traditional or ‘old civil society’ type of activism that emphasised inclusivity and participation of marginalised groups. The central role of ideology in influencing the core group’s worldview, including its attitudes toward the Internet, is discussed in the section ‘Expressions of Ideology’. The composition of e-group interviewees was more diverse, which was not surprising, given the size of the network. Seven e-group members interviewed (six male and one female) ranged in age from mid-twenties to mid-forties, and encompassed diverse educational and professional credentials. However, there were some shared characteristics, such as education and work attributes associated with a middle class profile, and a desire to participate in public affairs. This corroborates Enqvist’s (2012) observation of the predominantly middle-class—and therefore, largely homogeneous—nature of the network. As all e-group members were or had been involved in *Hasiru Usiru's* physical activities, they were able to talk about the network with some sense of authority. This familiarity provided insights regarding the functioning of the network and the core group that were not evident in the mailing list discussions, and could be contrasted with opinions and observations of core group members.

The reasons or motivations to join the network clustered around the main reasons of personal fulfilment and social ties, interest in the causes *Hasiru Usiru* was involved in, a commitment to the democratic ideals of participatory decision-making, the importance attached to protests as a method of claim-making, and the opportunity to challenge the dominant imaginations of the city. As each of these reasons is discussed in greater depth in the section ‘Expressions of Ideology’, these are explained in brief here.

Interviewees were drawn to *Hasiru Usiru* due to its commitment to promote greater public participation in democratic decision-making. Interviewees noted that the lack of consultation by government and political authorities with marginalised groups and communities was contrary to the essence of democratic practice. Hence, one of the motivations for joining the network was to facilitate the working of democracy in actual practice. Interviewees said they also joined to lend support to causes that *Hasiru Usiru* was engaged in at that time, including campaign and protests to save lakes and trees, which focus on the protection of urban commons. Interviewees also expressed solidarity with other causes, such as the improvement of public transportation, and the protection of the rights of marginalised groups, such as public bus users, street vendors, disabled persons, etc.

With specific regard to the core group, interviewees said they were drawn into contributing to *Hasiru Usiru* for a variety of personal reasons, including individual experiences, characteristics, and inspirations, which motivated one to participate in the rigorous—and yet unpaid and often unrecognised—activities of the civil society sector. For some former IT professionals, the disillusionment with the corporate sector and its lifestyle, the helplessness they felt as individuals in tackling societal problems, coupled with the inclination to contribute to society, and their youthful enthusiasm, played a role in drawing them towards *Hasiru Usiru*:

See, the thing is, personally I was feeling quite a bit disillusioned with the IT sector. Now, that was a personal thing, of course, and I was being part of the corporate thing, I was having a very difficult corporate job, I would leave at 6.45 in the morning, get into the office bus, stay back at work till 10 in the night, came back home, and I had no life. But, yeah, I was feeling disenchanted and disillusioned with that kind of lifestyle, and personally I was inclined more towards *doing* something, to contribute towards society, though I know it sounds like a cliché, but it really was that. So there was this general feeling in mind that, “Oh God, I’m actually wasting my life, that I could be doing something much more useful”—which was a personal thing. And there were all these things that were happening around me, which was *Hasiru Usiru* gathering momentum, there were all these huge protests which came up—left, right and centre. (Anand, male, core group. Telephone interview, January 14, 2013)

Anand explained that life in the IT sector left him burnt out and disillusioned, and as he already had an inclination towards social issues, he felt that he no longer wanted to continue life in this meaningless way. These ideas combined with other factors, such as peer influence, to move him in the direction of *Hasiru Usiru*. As core group members were close friends, their strong ties motivated each other to join the group. As he met other core group members who had left their corporate jobs to join the development sector, he was inclined to do so as well. Another factor was their largely similar philosophical and ideological leanings, which matched those of the *Hasiru Usiru* leadership at that time. Meeting and learning from *Hasiru Usiru* members sharpened existing dormant ideological affiliations, and the collegial environment within which they honed their skills and knowledge encouraged a longer-term commitment with the network. Along with these personal factors, the charged atmosphere of social change and protest activity in the late 2000s caught the fancy of these idealistic youth, and drew them to *Hasiru Usiru*. Some interviewees also joined due to their conviction that protests were an essential component of democracy and a legitimate method of claim-making. For these members, the opportunity to participate in protests was seen as a way to engage in democratic processes. Core group members also noted that they were drawn to *Hasiru Usiru* as it provided an opportunity for them to challenge the dominant imaginations of the city. This included the imaginations of Bangalore as ‘global’ or ‘world-class’, or as an ‘IT City’, as well as the related development paradigm that focused on infrastructure development and mega-projects at the cost of social development. *Hasiru Usiru* activities that contested such imaginations, providing the opportunity to reclaim the city and make it more liveable for all socio-economic groups, was a prime motivating factor for some core group members as well.

Structure and Functioning

Hasiru Usiru was unanimously described as a “network” by interviewees, encompassing both physical (offline) and online components. To the core group,

“network” comprised the physical group and activities, with an emphasis on informality and openness, based on voluntary contributions by members. To most e-group members, however, “network” referred to the Internet base, i.e. the e-group through which they were connected to *Hasiru Usiru*. The networked structure was described mostly in terms of being “informal”, “flexible”, and “loose”, sustained and shaped by voluntary participation. The decision to not register the network as a formal organisation or society was taken in the interests of remaining open and accessible, while creating an informal core group for decision-making purposes. While there was no formal organisational leadership, ESG provided logistical and other assistance, which supported the core group in its planning and execution of activities. This informal structure was described as enabling broad-based participation, thereby remaining rooted to the group’s democratic ideals of openness and public participation. The network’s transparency—wherein important decisions were either taken or shared collectively on the e-group—were cited as key strengths by interviewees. Respondents were forthcoming in their assessment of the strengths and limitations of *Hasiru Usiru*’s networked structure, and the core group was hopeful that this study could help it to identify and overcome existing weaknesses.

With regard to structural strengths, the core group noted that the element of informality had the advantage of allowing the network to be broad-based, thereby avoiding the tag of being ‘elitist’. A few cited the ability to mobilise members at short notice as a key strength of the structure—but this was mostly with reference to the anti-Metro and other protests in the past. Members were also cognisant of the shortcomings of a loosely organised structure, particularly in terms of efficiency. Enqvist (2012) noted that this ‘looseness’ is a dilemma, because it attracted new members and ideas, but the absence of governance structures made it difficult to use either of them. The reluctance to change the operational and organisational aspects of the model meant that many of the vexing aspects of being a network continued without being addressed. Additionally, amongst the core group, there was some discomfort with its steering role, particularly with regard to issues of composition and legitimacy:

If we're going to create this small coterie of five or six of us—which at some level is happening—but we are not very *comfortable* with that. It can't be this way. We're constantly questioning that: why has it become the eight of us? All of whom can speak English, all of whom have two degrees, all of whom are middle class: so, trying to move beyond that. (Sheela, female, 30s, core group. Personal interview, December 21, 2011)

Sheela explained that one aspect of concern was that in the absence of formal procedures, some core group members questioned whether, in fact, they had the right to steer the network. While e-group members were convinced of the appropriateness and dedication of the core group, this issue was one that vexed the core group itself. Another reason for the core group's discomfort lay in its composition, particularly its middle-class nature, which reflected a lack of diversity. This concern extended to the e-group's composition, particularly as the absence of the lower-middle and poorer classes ran contrary to the group's shared principles of inclusion and equality. Another problem that arose from the network's structural limitations was the limited connection with the grassroots, particularly as the lack of popular support restricted its overall effectiveness. Although the core group had begun to involve itself in grassroots activities, the lack of a strong membership base and the informal structure continued to limit the core group to a handful of active individuals. Such issues made the core group keenly aware of the need to "re-imagine" *Hasiru Usiru*, resulting in efforts to incorporate a common vision, bring some structure into its activities, and streamline decision-making. Accordingly, a more formal, expanded core group was created in April 2012 (e-group message #15862, May 18, 2012; interviews), which divided tasks strategically among members to be more effective on the ground, and to increase and reinvigorate its membership base. The new core group also initiated a series of activities aimed at raising awareness of *Hasiru Usiru* and its work, and increasing physical interaction among members.

Interviews revealed some major schisms between core and peripheral (e-group) members regarding various aspects of the network's structure and functioning, particularly with regard to its Internet base. For instance, core group members expressed dissatisfaction with the limited participation of e-group

members in network activities, and unease with its expanding and largely anonymous composition. Further, the core group viewed the e-group as impeding its activities due to the lack of deliberation and limited participation by majority of members. For e-group members, however, connected solely through the Internet medium, the platform provided a crucial space for them to be connected with and participate in civic affairs. This disconnect between the core group and e-group both reflected and perpetuated the structural weaknesses of the network, and is discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

Focal Interest Issues

Hasiru Usiru's initial thrust was on environmental issues, such as preserving the city's depleting tree cover from rapid and unplanned urbanisation, and countering city authorities' brazen attitudes towards the environment in their quest for 'development'. In recent years, the network has continued to focus on the environment, while expanding its mandate to include issues of participatory planning, decentralised local urban governance, and sustainable public transport (see also Enqvist, 2012). As *Hasiru Usiru* was a loose network, its priorities shifted according to those who were at its helm. Nonetheless, the core group worked within a shared set of objectives and norms based on a largely left-leaning or socialist political thought, which they informally referred to as their "ideology". The components of their ideology, the varying interpretations of the term between the core and e-groups, and the implications—both positive and negative—of the focus on ideology are discussed in the section 'Expressions of Ideology'. Ideology, as a defining feature of the core group's actions, guided the choice of focal areas and modes of engagement, which are described below.

The network was largely a 'green' group until the anti-Metro protests brought forth the issue of lack of consideration for the environment and lack of public consultation in the government's drive for 'development'. This resulted in an expansion of its mandate and focus areas to include greater democratic decision-making, and a thrust on inclusion, particularly of marginalised groups, in matters that affected their lives and livelihoods. The analysis of the bus public

transport system in Bangalore undertaken in 2011 is an example of the thrust on public service users, particularly disadvantaged groups. Core group members, in conjunction with CBOs and NGOs, undertook the study of the bus system from the lens of access and equity (e-group message #13227, March 29, 2011). The study, perhaps the first of its kind in the city, focused on making public transport equitable and accessible to all, regardless of socio-economic status. Core group member Neha (female, personal interview, June 25, 2011) highlighted the inequities in public transport in Bangalore, whereby users of regular buses were constrained to travel in crowded and uncomfortable conditions. By focusing on making bus travel pleasant for all commuters—not just those who could afford to travel in air-conditioned buses—the study was directed at poorer urban populations in the city. Activities that emphasised public transport, such as anti-road widening campaigns, focused on discouraging the indiscriminate use of private vehicles. Incentivising public transport was recommended as a more sustainable and long-term solution over cutting trees to widen roads for more private vehicles.

In these activities, the core group was also guided by an overarching concern for the just use of the “urban commons”, a term that encompassed ecological/environmental as well as mobility/transport-related commons. In the case of the former, the emphasis was on preserving the commons that were being destroyed in the name of ‘development’, as well as making commons accessible to all sections of society. Mobility related commons were viewed in a similar way; improving the bus system was considered a means to protect the environment while simultaneously enabling all sections of society access to an improved transportation system. The extension of the notion of the ‘commons’ was related to the effort to connect with the grassroots in ways that would resonate with them. Further, by moving away from a purely environmental focus—which was often considered a middle-class or niche issue—the core group hoped to motivate and mobilise different groups of people to participate in *Hasiru Usiru*.

At the crux of *Hasiru Usiru's* activities lay a critique of the developmental paradigm of the city, with its thrust on infrastructure building at the cost of social development and welfare. The “hyper-capitalist” style of development that Bangalore, Karnataka, and India, in general, had embarked upon was critiqued as an imitation of developmental patterns seen in the West or the Tiger economies of East Asia. Such ‘modelling’ (Ong, 2011) or imitation was also attributed to global or world-city imaginations that had guided Bangalore’s development as an IT hub during the late 1990s/early 2000s. The fallouts of the “information society project” in Bangalore and current developments made the core group wary of the perils of reproducing other city’s imaginations in Bangalore. Global or world-class city imaginations were critiqued for promoting (transportation) infrastructure that was seen as wasteful and exclusionary, such as highways and skywalks that wouldn’t benefit majority of the city’s non-private vehicle using population, and for ‘cleansing’ urban spaces by clearing ‘unwanted citizens’ (such as roadside vendors, beggars, stray animals) from the public gaze (Saldanha, 2012; Sreenivasa, 2011). The core group perceived the pursuit of these imaginations as detrimental to the city and majority of its residents, and conducted activities aimed at countering such imaginations. For instance, the thrust on prioritising buses, and the rights of pedestrians and cyclists aimed to dispel notions that a global city was characterised by mega-infrastructure projects, such as the Metro or monorail, or signal-free corridors seen in the West.

The chapter thus far has described the origins, composition, structure and functioning, as well as the core areas and modes of engagement of *Hasiru Usiru*. The next section answers the central research questions, i.e. how ICTs are used and their role in the network’s activities, and attitudes towards and ICT use by its members.

Attitudes Towards and Use of the Internet for Democratic Engagement

The objective of this case study was to explore attitudes towards and use of ICTs for civic and political engagement by *Hasiru Usiru* members in India’s ‘IT

City'. Initial interviews on attitudes towards ICTs revealed new—and unexpected—perspectives, which compelled me to change the focus of my research in the direction of emerging narratives. As I have discussed earlier, Bangalore's high-tech reputation and the mushrooming of Internet-based civil society initiatives had led me to posit the emergence of new type of wired urban civil society actor. By using ICTs to create new spaces for citizen participation in local urban affairs, the assumption was that these actors embraced new technologies to further their causes. These assumptions were also based on studies that presumed that the intertwining of online and offline activity furthers democratic goals (Carty, 2010; Hayhtio & Rinne, 2008; Jensen, Danziger, & Venkatesh, 2007). A second set of assumptions was the willingness of civil society actors to adopt an increasingly affordable and accessible Internet in pursuance of these goals (see Dilevko, 2002). However, as I have explained below, initial interviews with core group members revealed scepticism towards, and refusal to engage deeply with, the Internet for activism. These perspectives forced me to re-examine certain taken-for-granted notions regarding the ICT-civil society relationship. While this disrupted my original notion of the Internet as a thriving site for engagement in an IT-rich city, it simultaneously brought to light other new and fascinating insights. As interviews progressed, novel concepts such as *ideology* and *space* emerged, which had not appeared in any secondary data or on the email list discussions. As new themes emerged, I followed Saldanha's (2009) advice about diagrammatically representing main categories, and reflecting on the interconnectedness between them (see Appendix F for this diagrammatic representation). Finally, in shortlisting themes and categories for further analysis, I was guided by the research questions, which necessitated a focus on certain themes and issues at the cost of other (equally interesting) ones.

In uncovering how ICTs were being leveraged by civil society, I had predicted that wired actors in Bangalore would make use of a variety of new technologies at their disposal, particularly mobile telephony, to achieve their goals. However, upon interviewing core group members, it soon became clear that ICT-related activity was mainly restricted to mailing list and emailing

activities, and that there was no intensive use of other ICT tools. Despite the relatively high mobile phone penetration rate in the city,⁶⁸ the core group highlighted several problems that prevented them from using mobile phones more intensively:

Yeah, SMS definitely would work much better [than the Internet], you can reach many more people than you can with it. But then also, I'm not very phone savvy, and there is the issue of charges associated with SMS. It also requires somebody to be *doing* that stuff, I mean, if we are there on the streets, who's going to be sitting at their computer and sending some SMSs? Who's going to enter all those numbers? So, it's definitely much more accessible [than the Internet], but...if I don't have free SMS, why will I SMS you if I don't have that much charge on my phone? Those kinds of things also, we need to look at that. (Sheela, female, 30s, core group. Personal interview, December 21, 2011)

The interviewee explained that as mobile phones could hypothetically connect to a larger audience, they were considered the more accessible ICTs for democratic engagement. However, even large-scale mobile phone usage presented challenges that the core group was unable to resolve, such as high costs and administrative difficulties involved in one-to-many communications. This was particularly so as the network did not possess extra financial resources and personnel for these activities. There was also the technical issue of using vernacular scripts to reach out to their main stakeholders. Although a vast majority of mobile users in India are primarily regional language speakers, there are not enough local language fonts, nor can all mobile phones support vernacular scripts for messaging, although this is slowly changing (Gupta & Sornlertlamvanich, 2007; Nair, 2013). Hence, due to the variety of issues to be considered before mobile phones could be used widely and efficiently, the Yahoo group remained the main communicating medium for members. For this reason, the Internet became the central focus of this study, and therein emerged two main areas of investigation: (1) attitudes towards and use of the Internet in

⁶⁸ Vadlamani (2009) explained that as Bangalore does not get metro status, it comes under the Karnataka telecom circle, which makes it difficult to arrive at its tele-density. However, estimates have it at 80%.

general for civic and political and engagement, and (2) role and function of the Yahoo group (e-group), and attitude of core group members towards the e-group.

In terms of attitude towards, and use of, the Internet for *Hasiru Usiru's* activities, the interviews revealed a schism between core group and the larger e-group members. Although the core group recognised the importance of the Internet for its activities, it was evident from the outset that this was not a focal aspect. The core group displayed considerable anxiety that its Internet-based activities were dominated by the middle-classes, and frustration over the lack of active participation by majority of e-group members. Strains of pessimism were evident in the downplaying of the Internet's role in its activities, despite the network's online base. This largely negative attitude towards the Internet ranged from unease with to staunch opposition to extensive Internet use in its activities. A qualitative thematic analysis of the interview data, which enabled the identification of recurring themes and salient issues across the dataset (Boyatzis, 1998; Howitt & Cramer, 2005; Ryan & Bernard, 2003), revealed that these negative attitudes clustered around four main themes. These are categorised as: (1) Internet as exclusionary, (2) Internet as amplifier, and (3) Internet as a space of ideas, not action. Among e-group members, attitudes towards the Internet were less uniform, with interviewees expressing both enthusiasm and uncertainty regarding the potential of networked engagement.

These attitudes can be understood better when viewed in terms of Pippa Norris' (2001, p. 11) tripartite framework of the various predictions surrounding the democratic potential of the Internet. Norris categorised attitudes towards the Internet in terms of cyber-optimism, cyber-pessimism, and cyber-scepticism. Cyber-optimists are those who hope that in affluent industrial societies, at least, the digital divide will eventually succumb to the combined forces of technological innovations, markets, and the state. Cyber-pessimists, on the other hand, emphasise the deep-seated patterns of social stratification and the growth of an unskilled underclass in technological access. Cyber-sceptics believe that technologies adapt to society and not vice-versa, and that societal divides will stay much the same as they are and have been (see also Harrington, 2001). The

thesis explains attitudes of *Hasiru Usiru* members based on this framework, with the results of the data analysis discussed below:

The Internet as Exclusionary

Interviews revealed that the core group viewed the Internet as a limited or exclusionary realm, which worked in the interests of those with greater access to it, viz., middle and higher-income classes. By communicating mainly through e-groups, they were limiting themselves to the middle classes, which they felt, distanced them from their real stakeholders at the grassroots. In this way, as Internet-based activities inhibited them in their overall work, interviewees discussed the need to move beyond Internet use. Interviews revealed the salience attached to physical spaces by the core group, demonstrating a perceptible preference for physical interaction and a more traditional style of grassroots activism. Core group references to physical or offline spaces of engagement were categorised into four broad activities, viz., monthly meetings where the larger Internet community could meet and establish a sense of familiarity; workshops and other public events informing citizens about pertinent civic issues and eliciting their involvement; public discussion series involving talks on pertinent city issues, as well as walks to familiarise citizens with Bangalore's urban commons and public spaces; and engagement/consultations with public service users and groups impacted by government policies and decisions.

Monthly meetings were initiated with the aim of forging a sense of kinship among members, and providing non-members an opportunity to attend, regardless of their personal or professional affiliations. Monthly meetings also afforded a way for the core group to compensate for its Internet reliance, particularly as it worked with vulnerable groups that had limited or no access to the Internet:

And also, it's always been important for us that we can't be this Internet dependent...to some extent I believe that ICTs are empowering—but you also have to work with what you have today. Today, everybody's not on the Internet. I mean, I'm Internet savvy and

I don't like using it, so there are also people like that. Let alone people who don't even have access to that. What about children, what about migrants, what about people who wake up at 7.30 am and get home at 8 pm and have to cook and feed their kids? Are they going to be engaged on the Internet? No! So then, where do you find spaces for them to engage? (Sheela, personal interview, December 21, 2011)

Sheela noted that ICTs were empowering—but only up to a certain point, given the large numbers in the city who were on the wrong side of the digital divide. Even among those with access, like her, there was a preference for physical activity. Offline spaces of engagement became even more critical when one considered that the more vulnerable groups in the city, such as women, children, and migrants, had little or no Internet access. Thus, one of the core group priorities was to find other spaces of engagement, which would allow for face-to-face communication and greater inclusivity. These considerations influenced the choice of centrally located parks and other open and accessible public spaces. The emphasis on public spaces was also reflected in the monthly series of conversations/walks about the city, which began in May 2013 (#17392, June 19, 2013). While the public discussion series focused on conversations among members regarding pertinent city-specific issues, other events such as tree walks organised in the city's botanical gardens and lakes served to reconnect people with nature—and each other. The value accorded to physical spaces was often contrasted with the Internet base of the network, which core group members critiqued as restricting physical interactions among people, particularly within spaces of the urban commons.

However, despite these efforts, sustaining the momentum of physical meetings and forums proved to be a serious challenge. The limited success is attributed to a combination of factors stemming from the structural limitations of the network. The initiative of holding regular monthly meetings, for example, faltered due to the lack of active contributors and limited instances of networking among civil society groups. The limited physical base of the network, which had thwarted collective action efforts, once again came into play here. Core group members were disappointed when monthly meetings yielded only a handful of

new participants each time, with no sustained follow-up actions by these new actors. The reluctance to impose directives to members to attend, as well as voluntary nature of the network, became problematic in this regard. For these reasons, despite efforts to the contrary, the Internet was still the primary source for publicity and coordination. This reliance on the Internet posed a dilemma to the core group, as its widespread use conflicted with the socialistic ideals of equity and accessibility:

See, it is a privileged few who have access to these [new] technologies, and so, while it is easy for people in our strata and our communities to connect on this, we are not very gung-ho on using technology because there is a huge set of people, like regular users of public transport, who don't have access to these technologies. If you use these technologies for coordinating, and for whatever action, then you're reaching out to a very limited audience. (Neha, personal interview, June 25, 2011)

As a large part of their communication efforts consisted of raising awareness about the rights and entitlements of marginalised groups, such as street vendors, public transport users, and slum dwellers, it was imperative that communication channels used were accessible to these groups. By communicating via the Internet, the core group was cognisant that they were excluding groups that could not access this medium, particularly those already at the fringes of urban society. Internet usage statistics indicate that the core group's concerns were valid: in 2011, Bangalore had the least number of Internet users (2.2 million claimed users and 1.7 million active users) among the country's metropolises (Business Standard, 2011). According to the 2011 Census, only 18 per cent of households in the 'IT City' had Internet access, barely a third of households owned a computer, and of them, only 15.1 per cent had Internet access (Kurup, 2011). Such concerns about the digital divide, and its impacts on civic engagement, lay at the heart of the exclusionary or 'elitist' portrayal of the Internet by the core group, as well as some e-group members. A related area of concern was that this unequal digital playing field could exacerbate existing divides between the (information) rich and poor, particularly with regard to public

participation in policy-making, and other aspects of civic and political engagement.

The Internet as Amplifier

Interviews revealed that negative attitudes towards the Internet were further perpetuated by the core group's assumption that the Internet worked as an "amplifier" (Agre, 2002). The amplification model discussed by Agre (2002) and Toyama (2011) posits that technology can have both positive and negative impacts, as it merely magnifies or amplifies underlying human and institutional intent and capacity, which can be either positive or negative. Expounding on this, Toyama (2011) suggested that technology cannot substitute for human intent or capacity where it is lacking, and when technology does have positive effect, it is only to the extent that people are willing and capable of putting it to positive use. Similarly, in analysing the Internet's role in politics, Agre (2002) stressed that the Internet did not amplify all forces equally, and that its effect depended on the way it was appropriated, which existing forces were amplified, and which of these forces could then bring about some "change". While the positive implication is that technology-as-amplifier can support local activist groups in their functions, the darker implication is the realisation that the Internet is dominated by the same interest groups that currently utilise other mediums, and that the Internet is of less value to those with less capacity (Rao, 2012). E-group members, who saw value in a networked civil society, confirmed the positive aspect:

It [the Internet] is definitely potentially a great medium for people who are looking for that kind of thing [social issues]. Because if I had not come across *Hasiru Usiru* through a cross-post [on another e-group], I would have come across it in some other way. Because that is part of what interests me. I would have found it. (Ajay, male, e-group. Personal interview, December 26, 2011)

As the amplifier model states, Ajay's experiences suggested that those with greater capacity, reflected in education, social skills, and connections, and those with the motivation and interest (in this case, in civic and political issues) stood to benefit most from the technologies they had access to. This was the

general sentiment of e-group members, who noted that the Internet provided them additional venues with which to engage in social issues that they were already interested in. Toward this end, the Internet was viewed as a convenient site of activity, and an indispensable means of connectivity, information sharing and dissemination. To the core group, however, the Internet largely functioned as an amplifier in a negative way, by perpetuating the prominence of Internet-based voices in public affairs. While the information imbalance had thus far benefitted *Hasiru Usiru* due to its strong online presence and English-base, the core group was uncomfortable with the primacy accorded to Internet and English-based groups in civic affairs. To counter this imbalance within civil society, it had intensified efforts to reach out to the non-Internet and non-English speaking sections of the population through various activities. These included holding public meetings in areas that were free and accessible, conducting surveys among groups affected by development projects, translation of all reports into Kannada, as well as incorporating visuals in their reports:

If you're going to participate, then we're going to do it the right way; we're doing it in a way in which the *most* vulnerable can participate. So if we create that structure—it's difficult to create that structure, that structure is a very intensive process, it takes time...because of that [our structural limitations] it's much more feasible to come up with a study and put it up on the HU list. But then [for] everything we insist on translating into Kannada, on having visuals, on having children appreciate these, so then the informing—which for many people is just putting on the e-group— *that* itself takes so much more time. At least make the outside communication [more accessible and universal], otherwise why are we in this city? (Sheela, personal interview, December 21, 2011)

The above excerpt is reflective of the core group's concern with overcoming the amplifier effect by making information more readily accessible in the public domain, and in a form easily understood by all stakeholder groups. This involved more than releasing a report in English on the e-group. Instead, the process included translating documents into Kannada, and simplifying the content so that children and illiterate persons could still be informed of their activities. By strengthening and diversifying its communication processes to

include people who had little or no access to the Internet, the core group aimed to enable participation among groups traditionally excluded from consultative and participatory processes in the city. This imperative also stemmed from battling what the core group described as the skewed nature of public consultation in the city, with consultative processes amplifying online civil society voices. The group saw itself as providing alternative inclusionary spaces for engagement, consultation and participation, which the thesis discusses in terms of civil society and political society dichotomies.

The Internet and Civil Society-Political Society Dichotomies

The core group stressed that existing processes of participation and consultation were stacked up against marginalised groups, in favour of English-speaking and Internet-connected groups and individuals. Interviewees felt that while discussions on public issues were limited in general, the more active debates happened mostly on the Internet, which was a limited or exclusionary space. Some interviewees also pointed to the wide schism between the English/Internet groups and the largely vernacular, marginalised groups, and shared their concerns about the former's attempt (unknowingly or otherwise) to exclude the latter from consultative processes:

But also, when you talk about participation, you think of groups which are traditionally neglected. Because a lot of times, what RWAs and other civil society groups are doing, they are having participatory consultations and meetings—who is attending them? People who have access to the Internet, people who drive in cars primarily, and people who can speak English. Or maybe at best, are bilingual. And they are also, you know, civilised, the ways they have an answer, they don't get angry and agitated. So there's this "let's not have people who don't fit into our nice, little boxes, which make us uncomfortable". That's not participation. (Sheela, personal interview, December 21, 2011)

Sheela's assertions that 'cultured', English-speaking civil society actors were dominating participatory processes, to the exclusion of poor and marginalised city groups, were echoed by other core group members. They noted that meetings convened by middle class CSOs tended to include groups

that adopted similar methods of engagement and claim-making as them. This 'polite' civil society excluded groups that did not fit these criteria, which diluted notions of equity and participation within civil society. Such sentiments are reminiscent of Partha Chatterjee's (2001) civil society-political society dichotomy, which has been discussed in the Literature Review. The core group expressed concern about the exclusionary tendencies of civil society institutions, as well as the incompatibilities between civil and political societies in the city. An additional component fuelled this civil society-political society dichotomy—the Internet, which was viewed by the core group as a tool for continued civil society dominance.

The anxiety regarding the Internet and (elite) civil society relationship lay in the core group's fundamental critique of the civil society style of functioning. Main objections included the lack of internal democracy of institutions such as RWAs, the elitist nature of think-tanks and other 'closed' institutions, and the usurping of civil society by NGOs. The core group was critical of CSOs that bypassed constitutionally sanctioned spaces of participation in order to get work done quicker, by working with expert-constituted task forces and committees. While they were keenly aware of the lacunae in current systems of local governance, the lack of respect among some groups for the democratic process frustrated them. These sentiments are indicative of the complex—and unresolved—issues emanating from the rise of middle class CSOs in Indian cities, and their increasingly prominent role in civic and political life. As the Internet further pronounced the 'elite' character of civil society, portrayed as 'civilised', 'car-driving', and 'English-speaking', the core group became more conscious of distancing itself from this civil society. This involved some movement away from members' own positions of privilege to focus on improving systems that would benefit political society constituents of the city. This included supplementing the government's limited efforts at public engagement consultation, which was described as shallow and inadequate. The local government often took decisions arbitrarily, and even in cases where public input was invoked, consultations were inadequate, or held at locations inaccessible to

affected communities. Often, consultations were held in affluent localities that were attended by middle class and elite CSO members, rather than in spaces where poorer groups resided. The core group attempted to overcome these shortcomings through an emphasis on giving 'voice' to groups that were otherwise powerless, such as slum dwellers, migrant workers, the urban poor, etc. This was done by interacting directly with these groups at their workplace or residence, conducting meetings and surveys, collecting their opinion on civic issues, and distributing these findings via reports and papers to the government, media, and civil society (e-group archives). For example, the project to document problems faced by pedestrians was an attempt to give voice to a large but powerless section of the population. Likewise, the bus study aimed to generate inputs from neglected groups, such as garment workers and women, in order to improve their user experiences. In these ways, the core group's activities were efforts to reverse the imbalance in consultative and decision-making processes, which tended to amplify Internet-based voices.

The Internet as Space of Ideas, but not Action

Another recurring theme w.r.t core group attitudes towards the Internet was the notion that the Internet facilitated the exchange of ideas, but not action. This opinion was also expressed by some e-groups members, who praised the Internet as a site for information dissemination, but highlighted its limitations in generating collective actions. All interviewees concurred that the Internet played a crucial role as a repository of information, and as a source of alternative news that may not be covered by the mainstream media. By providing access to information that was closely guarded by corporations and governments, the Internet was lauded for spurring interested citizens into action. Interviewees viewed the Internet as a prime site for facilitating new ideas, sharing and learning, for circulating opinions and for building consensus (i.e. public sphere discourse), which were crucial for civil society action. The combination of information circulation, the ability to reach out and involve people on a mass scale, and the mushrooming of online initiatives was thought to have enabled

greater connectedness between like-minded people and groups. While some e-group members were convinced that such a networked civil society could lay the foundation for informed collective action, most interviewees opined that, by itself, the Internet could not facilitate meaningful actions. Rather, what was needed was face-to-face communication and physical contact, which produced greater bonding and a sense of intimacy, thereby facilitating collective actions. However, the pressures of modern city life, and the subsequent disconnect of (mainly well-off) urban citizens from their social realities, often prevented such collaborations from taking place. E-group members noted that the paucity of time and other stresses of a metropolitan city were key obstacles to translating online ideas into offline actions:

The group hasn't discussed it in length why it [sustained collective action] hasn't happened, but I'm sure everybody has their idea...the thing is, we're so tied up in our own work that there's no time for anything else. We don't spend time for other things. We're so tied up in work, family, our duties to our family—you don't look at the bigger picture. So we don't participate, which is the biggest problem, which is probably an Indian issue, which may change, I don't know. (Ajay, personal interview, December 26, 2011)

Interviewees such as Ajay pointed out that the precarious work-life balance in Indian cities, including arduous daily commutes and long working hours, were detrimental to collective action efforts. Moreover, in the Indian context, the notion of duty to family meant that busy professionals preferred to spend time with their families over the weekend and holidays, rather than engage in protest activities. Under such circumstances, with people being physically unable to participate due to personal and work constraints, the Internet provided a convenient means for e-group members to participate in online discussions, and keep abreast of civic affairs. In this way, the Internet undoubtedly facilitated the rise of an informed citizenry, who could engage in civic affairs via the connective medium of ICTs.

However, other participants opined that the notion of ‘action’ being equivalent to an online act like sending an email, or signing an e-petition, impeded actual action on the ground:

There is a mind set, that if you put it on the Internet it’s there, that’s the end. But that is what is limiting our thinking capacity, our ability to execute. I think the biggest thing in our country is the lack of execution of all the initiatives. So what this Internet is doing today is that, I sit in front of my laptop or whatever, hand-held device, and I will just plug in, do a few things and assume it’s done. Unfortunately, the back-end system has to kick in, it has to set up that thing, it has to make it work. That thing, that linkage, is not there today. (Sriram, male personal interview, January 7, 2012)

E-group member Sriram noted that e-activism without the requisite offline follow up plagued civic activism today, as citizens mistakenly assumed that expedient online actions were sufficient in taking causes forward. He added that contributing on the Internet should be an initial— rather than last—step, and ideas and comments generously shared online should be taken forward as projects or initiatives on the ground. A related drawback of the Internet as a space of ideas was the circulation of ideas and opinions without adequate consideration of their actual implementation. In this regard, doubts about the ability of online action to produce change were also related to the concern that minimum-level engagement on the Internet could subvert real efforts to initiate change. E-group member Ramesh (male personal interview, December 26, 2011) noted that by providing “a way to escape from action”, the Internet produced a shallow sense of engagement, enabling people to feel that once they sent an e-mail, they had done their job. This sentiment is akin to Van Laer and Van Aelst’s (2010) concern that this type of limited action, known variously as ‘clicktivism’, ‘slacktivism’ or ‘keyboard activism’ (see Rotman et al., 2011) ran the risk of making collective action too easy, reducing actual commitment to social change, and thereby damaging the policy impact of civil society.

The core group’s pessimistic outlook of the Internet a space of ideas, and not action, was reinforced by its limited success in achieving a conversion from online to offline collective action, particularly with regard to street protests. Core

group members spoke of their frustration with the substitution of online for offline activity by the majority of e-group members. This lack of conversion to offline action was considered a key limitation of the *Hasiru Usiru* network, and a factor that significantly influenced the core group's pessimistic opinion of the Internet:

...there are *many* people who are happy to contribute through email, are happy to engage in online discussion, so that they don't have to, I mean, it just means that they don't have to leave their *desk*, and they can just keep contributing. But when it comes to doing things on the ground, it's much more difficult for people to come, much more difficult for people to get actively involved. So in some sense, the Internet has also been its [the network's] limitation. Again, I'm pretty sure that other members you spoke to would have mentioned it—it's very frustrating for them—because we keep thinking, there are 1000 members on the yahoo group, so if we call for a protest we would think, ok, *at least* we'll get 300 people, you know, one-third of 1000. But it hardly ever happens like that. (Anand, telephone interview, January 14, 2013)

Anand referred to the ease with which e-members participated online, and noted that this did not often translate into offline actions. This frustrated the core group, whose primary mode of engagement involved collective actions, such as street protests, as a show of solidarity. The expectation that the large e-group numbers would translate into offline actors stemmed from the success of the anti-Metro protests in 2009. However, after the protests had died down there was a steady decline in the number of members gathering to protest, despite repeated calls to action. Interviews with *Hasiru Usiru* members, as well as informal discussions with academics and other civil society actors, yielded several explanations for this lack of collective action. A few core group members suggested that the deficiency in active citizenry could be attributed to the absence of a sense of belonging to the city among its sizeable migrant population, who did not have a direct stake in the city. Among this category, the limited participation of IT professionals, in particular, disappointed the core group, as these and other affluent citizens could take the time off to participate in events. On the other hand, less well-off city residents, such as those who working for minimal wages, were consumed with issues of survival and could not

be expected to participate on the same scale. The possible reasons for the lack of engagement among internet-enabled citizens are discussed below.

IT Professionals and Lack of Engagement

Although IT professionals comprised a relatively small portion of the migrant population in Bangalore⁶⁹, their role in the city drew much attention from the media, civil society, as well as long-time residents. Some *Hasiru Usiru* members suggested that migrants did not really consider themselves as having a stake in the city, and thus preferred to abstain from engaging in civic activities:

I think Bangalore's problem is also a huge number of migrants have come in the last ten years, and I have a feeling—I mean, I am also one of them—but I have a feeling that may be a lot of them do not consider this as home, actually, feel like [they have] no stake in the city, that's sort of more like my sense of it. Maybe it's not fair to say that. But, I think there is a lot of apathy in Bangalore. (Shalini, female, core group. Personal interview, December 23, 2011)

Shalini explained that although she too was a migrant, having arrived in Bangalore several years ago for higher studies, her path differed from those uninvolved in civic affairs. Over the years, having made Bangalore her home, she had become an active civil society member, dedicating herself to a range of social change issues. However, this was not the case with the vast majority of migrants, particularly IT professionals, whose general apathy prevented any meaningful engagement. Whereas one problem facing *Hasiru Usiru* was the non-acceptance of its ideology and modes of claim-making among city residents, the bigger problem, she explained, was the lack of involvement among a huge chunk of the population. While they could engage with those opposed to their ideas and actions, the greater challenge lay in engaging those who had little or no awareness of civic issues, nor any inclination to initiate themselves in these matters. Tackling this apathy was problematic for a number of reasons, such as the nature of work in the IT and BPO industries in India, which involved long

⁶⁹In 2008, it was estimated that employees in IT and BPO industries constituted just 10 percent of the total population of Bangalore (SiliconIndia, 2008).

hours, an intense work pace, night shifts, and other “time arbitrage” processes (Nadeem, 2009), which depleted employees’ personal time and space, and took a considerable toll on their health and social relationships (see also Kesavachandran C, Rastogi, Das, & Khan, 2006). Core group member Anand (telephone interview, January 14, 2013) discussed in detail the difficulties of working in the IT sector, and how he, and some fellow core group members, had quit their jobs due to the negative impact on their personal and social lives. Other interviewees pointed out that the absence of work-life balance and the stressful working conditions in the IT sector gave its employees limited time and energy to think about social issues.

A related explanation for the possible alienation of this group from civic activities was that the IT culture of living in one’s “cocoon” cut this group off from the city’s material practices:

And what do the IT people do after they finish the day’s job? [Either go home or go out]. Basically they are consumers. After they finish their job they are consumers in one way or the other, either its TV or consuming something else. So *Hasiru Usiru* can’t reach out to them, because they are in a cocoon. I mean, a lot of us IT guys, it’s more like a cocoon. You go into Infosys campus, it’s no longer India. You pass the gate, people around you are Indian, but it’s no longer India. Then you come out, you go into your house. Their incomes are quite good, so they don’t *meet* reality that much—even I was like that. So it gives you a sort of shield against realising what’s happening. So when you say protest, they really don’t bother. They slog a lot, they work hard, so probably they don’t have the energies also. But it’s a sort of barrier between them [and *Hasiru Usiru*], at least for the IT workers. (Ajay, personal interview, December 26, 2011)

E-group member Ajay, a former IT professional, discussed the possible reasons for the lack of civic engagement among IT employees sector, based on his own experiences. He depicted IT professionals as essentially ‘consumers’, who neither had the time nor energy to engage with civic issues. He described them as living in a “cocoon”, which neither *Hasiru Usiru* nor the grim reality of India could penetrate. NGO director Prabhat (personal communication, June 8, 2011) discussed this in terms of “bubble spaces”, of travel, leisure, consumption

and so on, which alienated people from the material practices of the city. Moving between their “bubbles” of home and campus, the IT crowd was often shielded from the outside world, making them oblivious to the reasons for civic action. There is a great deal of literature on the bubble spaces of IT campuses, where superior images of work and vibrant ambience of the workplace serve to portray work as ‘fun’ and ‘trendy’, and as an extension of college life into the workplace (Upadhyaya & Vasavi, 2006, 2008). While such a portrayal of the workplace helped to recruit educated and fun-loving youngsters from the urban middle-class (ibid; Remesh, 2008), tech companies also went to great lengths to retain employees. The impetus to retain talent is most visible in the case of Google, which provides a long list of perks to employees, and thrives on a work culture that tries to optimise its people, in terms of personal development and happiness, and professional performance (Stewart, 2013; Levy, 2011). A senior technologist in Cisco Systems also highlighted this aspect as he took me on a tour of the networking giant’s Bangalore campus (personal interview, July 6, 2011). He explained that the campus, inaugurated in 2007, was built at a cost of around USD 1 billion and was the only Cisco campus outside the US. The Bangalore campus, called the Cisco Globalisation Centre East, was touted to be bigger and better than its US counterpart, with state-of-the-art amenities and technologies, including its multiple Telepresence facilities and an advanced Global Briefing Centre. As we walked through the campus, with its landscaping and well-manicured lawns comparable to a five-star hotel, he pointed out various recreation and leisure facilities spread across the campus. Indoor amenities included a clubhouse, a state-of-the-art gymnasium, golf simulators, and a contemporary cafeteria serving cuisines from all over India and the world, which was bustling with activity as lunchtime approached. In addition to leisure areas in each building, there were also a wide array of outdoor sports facilities, including cricket and basketball. My host informed me that such facilities were built specifically to appeal to the youth, and formed an important part of the strategy to recruit and retain workers. The wide array of perks also served to encourage employees, especially those who were single or unattached, to remain within the

campus and avail of all facilities, thereby interspersing their work and personal lives.

Another reason forwarded for the apathy of IT employees was that their cocoon-like existence could have been exacerbated by the limited access to information on social issues. Recalling his unsuccessful efforts to mobilise volunteers at his former workplace, a local IT giant, he noted that IT companies could be wary of being seen as opposing the government. It was possible, he said, that IT companies filtered information related to protests or opposition to government policies—which could explain why his efforts at disseminating information within the company failed. In this context, therefore, it was suggested that the restricted or limited access of IT professionals to protest-related information could have contributed to their apathy. Yet another reason posited was that the lack of participation by the IT community in *Hasiru Usiru's* activities could be due the absence of any incentive to participate, as it was supposedly benefitting from the government's policies:

And it also may be, because if you take IT, it is a migrant section, which is actually, from their point of view, they are benefitting, supposedly benefitting, from all these projects. So there is really no need for them to oppose, I mean, like they are not going to worry about what is happening. So, considering their salaries, each one of them is going to have two to three cars, so for them, they want wider roads for them to take their car. So, they are not going feel the pinch. The pinch they feel is a traffic jam; ok: "No, we want a wider road", that's a typical knee-jerk reaction from them. That's the reason why, they are supposedly being helped, so they may not participate in what we feel. (Venkat, male, core group. Personal interview, December 23, 2011)

Citing the example of the campaign to prevent road-widening, Venkat suggested that IT workers would prefer wider roads, as their higher purchasing power allowed them to buy cars relatively easily. With the ability to own a car or two, their primary concern would be to escape the perennial traffic jams plaguing the city. In this situation, they were likely to support the government's road widening drive, rather than *Hasiru Usiru's* anti-road widening campaigns, which offered no short-term solutions to the issue. A related example was the elevated

tollway leading to Electronic City, a major technology hub, which was inaugurated in 2010 to provide IT workers a smooth journey to their workplace by avoiding the congested road below (Business Standard, 2010a; Sastry & Shastri, 2012).⁷⁰ *Hasiru Usiru* members described the flyover as an example of wasteful expenditure on an exclusionary space, which underscored how policies and infrastructure were skewed towards the IT sector as well as private vehicle ownership. In this case as well, IT groups that benefited from the flyover would have little or no reason to support *Hasiru Usiru's* views. These examples highlight how *Hasiru Usiru's* interpretations of government policies and projects varied significantly from IT employees, who would ostensibly stand to benefit. In such situations, interviewees noted, the IT community would naturally choose to support the government, rather than *Hasiru Usiru*, which could explain their lack of active participation in protests and other events.

Some interviewees also pointed out that citizens' apathy was exacerbated by a system wherein urban citizens were yet to find a formal voice in the city's governance. The lack of experience in participating in urban governance was an additional impediment to the core group's efforts to energise and mobilise Bangalore's citizenry. As this issue has been discussed in the section 'Limited Urban Decentralisation and the Value of Internet Spaces of Engagement' in Chapter 4, it will not be repeated here.

An entirely different explanation for the lack of participation by the e-community related to the changed nature of the *Hasiru Usiru* network itself, and the resultant disconnect between the core group and the larger e-group. An investigation into the relationship between the core and e-group, which revealed contrasting understandings of the notions of membership and participation, is discussed below.

⁷⁰ <http://www.blrelevated.co.in/>

Relationship between the Core Group and E-Group

The changed nature of the mailing list was a result of its rapid expansion during the Metro protests in 2009, which drastically altered the character and nature of the group and its interactions:

So initially how *Hasiru Usiru* (HU) was expanding was that I know you, you might be interested in this. But between that time [Metro protests], the numbers suddenly went [up], and we were handing out flyers in Lalbagh, and everybody was joining in. So different sorts of people came on; maybe people who didn't believe in similar things, maybe some who did but believed in different nuances of the same thing. Then after that point, so suppose if [a core group member] wanted to speak at a conference then we would put it on HU, but nobody really responded. And why should they? Because people signed up thinking it was a listserv; we are considering them also as members of HU in that sense, so there is that *disconnect* with HU... (Sheela, personal interview, December 21, 2011)

Sheela explained that the sudden influx of new members had transformed the network from a relatively close-knit group, which shared the same philosophical and political leanings, to a more heterogeneous and scattered entity. The absence of a common ideology, including the idea of protest as a legitimate means of dissent, was posited as a possible explanation for the lack of offline collective action. A related issue was that of differing notions of membership and belonging, which produced divergent understandings of organisational roles and responsibilities. Initially, the core group considered e-group participants as equal "members", and expected a degree of participation and a sense of ownership towards causes from them. To e-group members, however, the pressures of work and family often constrained physical participation, and the mailing list provided a space for them to be involved in ways and means expedient to them. Overall, the mailing list was described by peripheral members as a convenient means to connect with other members, to participate in and be privy to discussions, thereby overcoming time and space constraints in an effort to contribute, as and when possible. Here, participation

and contribution were described in relation to the relative flexibility that the Internet provided:

[The internet] has helped *Hasiru Usiru* a lot, because it's such a movement where you want you can apply your mind or subscribe, if you don't want you can unsubscribe. Nobody forces you to come there, if you want to go, you go, otherwise you leave. If you want, you post, otherwise you don't post. If you want, you come, otherwise you don't come. So if there's a call for a demonstration, everybody comes for that demonstration, if they don't come, they *don't come*. (Sandeep, male, e-group. Personal interview, December 12, 2011)

Sandeep referred to the 'voluntary' nature of e-group participation several times, noting that members were not forced to participate, but did so as and when they could. Like him, other members were often unable to participate due to other commitments; in which case, there was no compulsion to do so. In such a situation, as the mailing list often remained the only connection to *Hasiru Usiru's* activities, e-group members noted the utility of the Internet in enabling some level of involvement in, or at least knowledge of, the group's activities. Such notions of membership and participation contrasted sharply with those of the core group, which insisted that such participation was limited or passive in the absence of more formalised or committed actions. As the core group viewed purely online contributions as meaningless without the corresponding offline actions, the e-group was conceived of as a space for online discussions rather than physical action:

Actually, frankly I don't think our online discussions are very active. I think online, what happens in our e-group is very informative. I mean, once in six months you probably have a discussion— whether or not the discussion is useful or substantial is a different issue. Even having a discussion is very rare. People just keep sending lot of mails. So I don't think, I think I wouldn't consider *Hasiru Usiru* as an e-platform or somebody that uses that internet a lot, because I don't think we do. (Shalini, personal interview, December 23, 2011)

Other core group members shared this critique of the e-group as a site for information sharing and conversations, rather than for deliberative discussions

that could produce meaningful actions. Shalini described *Hasiru Usiru* as a “failed” internet group, due to its inability to leverage the Internet effectively to meet its objectives. Like her, some core group members indicated that the lack of deliberative discussion had steered them away from participating in online discussions, and that they preferred to communicate within the core group, either via telephone, email, or face-to-face, where action items were discussed and definitive plans chalked out. Some expressed a desire to see the deliberative character of the e-group enhanced, and rued that limited participation had severely dented *Hasiru Usiru’s* usefulness as an Internet forum. For these reasons and more, the core group viewed the potential of the mailing list to effect collective actions with scepticism, and began to distance itself from the e-group.

By the second round of fieldwork, I noticed a change in the way the core group thought of and engaged with the e-group. Initially, the core group considered e-group participants as equal “members”, and expected a degree of participation and a sense of ownership towards causes from them. However, the disappointing response made it realise that e-group membership did not necessarily equate to active contribution or a sense of belonging to the network. Over a period of time, the core group identified that the poor online response was due to the very nature of mailing lists or listservs, which serve primarily as information dissemination spaces, and where moderators often undertook decision-making responsibilities. Thereafter, as the core group gradually began to realise that expectations and experiences of participation were different online, it accommodated its style of functioning to suit this reality. A new and more formal core group was constituted in April 2012 with the purpose of strengthening and taking common agendas forward, thereby resolving the ambiguity in terms of doing work on the ground. From then onwards, the e-group was made privy to all decisions taken by the new core group, without the expectation that duties would be undertaken by it. Further, by streamlining its decision-making process, the core group was able to involve the e-group without compromising on its pace and efficiency. This, however, did not resolve the issue of the lack of collective

actions, which impelled the core group to shift from protest activities to other advocacy and networking strategies.

The Issue of Language and Structural Limitations

A recurring theme with regard to the Internet and collective action was that of language, with a distinction made between Internet users as primarily English-speaking versus non-Internet users as mainly vernacular speakers. Between the two categories, the vernacular group was described as being easier to motivate to action, as local groups and communities were intimately connected to their physical environment, rather than the virtual spaces that consumed the English-speaking middle and upper classes:

We are trying to do some things in the local language, Kannada. That is effective. We get real people there. Something happens. If you see, if you go for English-speaking, a thousand people will say: "I will come", but nobody will come. Here only 20 people will say: "I will come", and they will come. (Ramesh, personal interview, December 26, 2011)

E-group member Ramesh, who was associated with several civil society groups in the city, noted that local communities and grassroots groups were far more responsive to calls to action than Internet communities. The positive response of vernacular groups, bound by linguistic and cultural affinities, encouraged him to move from online to offline activities. He framed this in terms of a local (i.e. Kannada-speaking)/non-Internet versus English-speaking/Internet dichotomy, with groups belonging to the former category most likely to engage in civic and political activities. Similar experiences prompted the core group to engage with communities on the ground, rather than Internet communities. To do this, it was necessary for *Hasiru Usiru* to expand its offline membership base, which, however, was proving difficult in light of various structural limitations, including financial and human resources. In this regard, the shortcomings of Internet use vis-à-vis collective action were also symptomatic of a more

fundamental problem confronting the network—its structural weaknesses. In particular, resource constraints, lack of volunteers, the absence of a formal mechanism to engage members, and the lack of incentives to participate were cited as key impediments in mobilising people. In the absence of a formal structure, the core group felt it was not in a position to enforce participation, and neither did it wish to. In order to overcome such limitations, and to reduce its Internet dependency, the core group initiated efforts to expand the network's offline membership base and garner grassroots support. However, in doing so, it almost entirely neglected the online aspect, which, coupled with pessimistic attitude towards the Internet, diminished the potential for creative and strategic ICT use. This aspect is discussed in the section 'Factors Influencing ICT Use/Non-Use by the Core Group'.

E-group Attitudes: Sceptical, yet Optimistic

Before discussing the factors that influenced how the core group used ICTs for their engagement activities, this section briefly examines the attitude of e-group members towards the Internet as a democratic engagement. There was some variation in the perception of the Internet's utility for civic engagement between core and non-core group members. Attitudes among the e-group ranged from cyber-scepticism to –optimism, with a cautious recognition of strengths and weaknesses of networked activism. Some interviewees explained that the desire to use the Internet creatively to advance their pet causes were inhibited by the lack of time, and financial and human resources. Cycling enthusiast Ramesh (personal interview, December 26, 2011) added that keeping up with the up-to-the-minute information online was stressful, and required energy and resources that his CSO did not possess. Although he recognised the benefits of online spaces for civic engagement, such as a website, he was limited by the need to manage and update it. Further, using the Internet effectively was described as being a great 'strain', as it involved keeping up to date with ever-changing information. He also pointed out that using the Internet was time-consuming, as it involved having to navigate through reams of non-essential data

before finding useful information. As information on the Internet was characterised by information redundancy and information overload, which required time, energy and resources that he or his civil society group did not possess, he was sceptical about how to leverage the Internet in a beneficial way.

However, such limitations were overshadowed by the fact that the Internet provided a convenient—and sometimes the only—means for members to connect and participate. Vinita, who worked from home, described the Internet “an everyday necessity, as necessary as food and water” (female, personal interview, December 19, 2011), and refuted the idea that it was an elitist medium. Rather, ICTs were described as being part of a new reality, which required one to adopt and embrace in order to move ahead professionally. Like Vinita, other e-group members with positive attitudes to the Internet were either connected to ICTs by virtue of their profession and/or intrinsically connected to the Internet in their personal lives. Vinita opined that as Indians were rapidly discovering the advantages of ICTs, their utilisation had quickly become a pan-India aspect, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas. Against this background, the proliferation of Internet-based civil society initiatives, such as *Hasiru Usiru*, was also seen as a sign of the Internet’s potential for greater outreach and coordination of civic actions.

Amongst e-group interviewees, such optimism was tempered, to some extent, by the knowledge that there were several barriers to effective civil society use of the Internet. Interviewees pointed to the limited synergies between e-groups due to conflicting egos and priorities, the omission of local (vernacular) groups from such initiatives, and the lack of political support in translating initiatives into actual offline projects. Overall, however, e-group members were optimistic, with a strain of scepticism, as they understood the limitations of Internet use in the country. The core group’s idea of an exclusionary and elitist Internet was refuted for a variety of reasons, notably the increasing Internet penetration in the country:

No, that’s not very accurate, because although that perception is there that it [the Internet] is elitist, but still I see a lot of youngsters, lot of people even in rural areas, you know this mobile phone, it has got the

Internet enabled on it, so the penetration is increasing. So, although it was perceived as elitist in the beginning, maybe five years back, today that's going away...And I see a lot of rural initiatives which are really helping people; and that's where it's going away from the elitist domain (Sriram, personal interview, January 9, 2013).

Despite the limitations of the Internet in the Indian context, the interviewee was quick to dismiss the suggestion that the Internet was elitist, due to rising internet penetration, particularly among youth and via mobile phones, as well as the number of rural internet Initiatives. Even interviewees who conceded that the Internet did have elitist or exclusionary tendencies, noted that such limitations could be overcome by leveraging it strategically. Rahul, a young environmental activist, noted that with careful and creative planning, the Internet could be leveraged for effective collective action (male, personal interview, December 20, 2011). With certain "basic precautions", such as planning protests in accessible locations on Sundays, the Internet's reach and instantaneity could be maximised.

IT professional Vineet was optimistic about the future of online initiatives in Bangalore due to the relatively high concentration of techies in the city (personal interview, December 21, 2011). He pointed out that Bangalore's online space was characterised by a large number of initiatives that encompassed a diverse range of social issues. These included the environment, theatre, cycling, waste management, as well as locality-specific groups and initiatives, which benefitted from online networking and information sharing. Other members were similarly optimistic about the potential of networked civil society, pointing to the mushrooming of online initiatives in the city, which had boosted connectedness between like-minded people and groups. What these e-group members were pointing out was that the way the Internet was *used* determined its usefulness or otherwise to (civil) society. Rather than focusing on its inherent limitations, they were interested in the ways the Internet could be leveraged for more meaningful individual and collective actions. Like older media such as television or radio, the Internet's value lay in how it could be leveraged for the greater good. Thus, among e-group interviewees, there was recognition of the Internet's limitations in the Indian context, and implications for civil society activity. At the same time, this

was accompanied by a guarded optimism that such weaknesses could be overcome with a more purposeful and innovative Internet use by civic organisations.

Factors Influencing ICT Use/Non-Use by the Core Group

While the core group was pessimistic about the Internet's ability to bolster democratic engagement, it is important to differentiate these negative attitudes from the more extreme reactions towards new technologies, such as Luddism or techno-phobia. For instance, some of the core group members were active on social media such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as on various e-groups related to *Hasiru Usiru's* interest areas, such as the environment and urban mobility. All of them were also regular users of email in their personal, professional and civil society activities. Almost all my coordination for interviews was done via email, to which core group members responded promptly and positively. Further, the core group was not averse to incorporating new technologies to further its research and activities, and had discussed the possibility of using SMS for conducting surveys, and GIS mapping to gather data on pavements. There was also talk of using ICTs for data gathering and storage, as well for physical representation of data in a format amenable to various kinds of uses, such as maps, databases, blogs, etc. There was also an acknowledgment of the benefits of the network's Internet base, notably with regard to mobilisation, information and guidance, as well as greater publicity of its efforts. While the Internet base may not have facilitated collective action to the extent envisioned by the core group, it played an important role in enabling small-scale activities, both planned and spontaneous. The latter was mostly reactionary, in response to real-time issues like tree cutting or other actions with harmful environmental repercussions, such as the Yediyur Lake dredging case. In such circumstances, the Internet was used successfully to provide updates and guidance, as well as to aid small-scale and short-term collaborations. Despite these successes, by and large, the Internet did not play a central role in

core group decision-making and strategizing, the reasons for which are examined below.

During the later stages of interviewing, as I became more familiar with the case, another aspect of ICT use stood out, viz., the limited creative or strategic use of the Internet by the core group. Once interviewees became more comfortable and forthright with me, particularly during repeat interviews, I began investigating aspects of Internet use by the core group. With greater probing, conversations shifted from the limitations of the Internet to the fact that there had also been limited effort to utilise it more effectively, particularly after the failures of mobilisation attempts. Interviewees also acknowledged that there had been no focused discussions about ways to leverage the Internet, despite recognition of the need to do so. While all core group members were Internet-savvy, only those inclined to access various Internet platforms for *Hasiru Usiru's* activities did so. For instance, core group member Sheela used email regularly, and had Facebook and LinkedIn accounts, yet she told me she was not keen on using the Internet for *Hasiru Usiru* activities. On the other hand, Deepak and Neha actively participated in e-group discussions, publicised the group's activities on Twitter and Facebook, and strengthened networks and collaborations online. However, the core group as a whole accorded it low priority in planning and strategizing, due to the perception of the Internet being an elitist space. Instead, the focus was on fostering physical spaces and types of engagement and action. This emphasis on the offline stemmed from the core group's focus on the poor and other disadvantaged groups in the city, which had limited or no access to the Internet. With core group members conscious of not being exclusionary, activities that demanded physical participation and proximity were prioritised over Internet-based activities.

Another reason for the limited use of the Internet, was its "taken for granted" acceptance by the core group:

Nowadays, Internet is a given. Again, for a person who is privileged enough to be living in Bangalore, a person who's privileged enough to have access to the Internet. I think the people who have the privilege to have access to the Internet just don't understand how good it is. I

mean, it's just taken for granted.... Yeah, there are a lot of us who have access, but just take it for granted, and everything happens on email, and everyone has laptops, and BlackBerry phones and iPads, so that you're connected all the time. So yeah, it's a *huge* privilege. (Anand, telephone interview, January 14, 2013)

The explanation of the Internet as taken for granted reflected its assimilation into the daily lives and activities of core group members. Given their middle class profiles, the Internet was easily accessible to them via a variety of mediums, and its use was accepted without deeper consideration. Additionally, the fact that *Hasiru Usiru* had always been an Internet-based group created a situation where the role of the Internet in its activities had not been comprehensively considered. Anand explained that as membership in *Hasiru Usiru* had always been equated to membership on the Yahoo group, the Internet aspect was just assumed as part of the process:

And it's just another aspect of work, and it's not really a *core* aspect. But yeah, maybe it's something that we should do, I don't know? Maybe it's something we should think collectively doing a little deeper engagement with. At the least, are we actively utilising the power of the Internet correctly or adequately enough, or should we do something more? So as far as I can recall, we've not really had discussions, in-depth discussions about the *role* the Internet has played in *Hasiru Usiru*. It's just been assumed that we have the Yahoo group, we keep sending out email, people respond to emails, and some decisions are taken. When we have to give out media releases, we give it out [via the Internet], it's just been like that. (Anand, telephone interview, January 14, 2013)

Whereas the Internet had always been part of the network's activities, it was never a core focal aspect, as members had not actually discussed how to integrate it effectively in its activities. As Anand explained in the first excerpt, the tacit acceptance of the Internet's role also lay in their positions of privilege, wherein it was always available as a tool for engagement. Living in Bangalore is also considered a privilege, and is related to the notion of the various "information ecologies mediated by technologies" in the 'IT City'. This was another valuable concept put forth by Prabhat (personal communication, June 8, 2011), whose notion of Bangalore as representative of "IT as a paradigm"

suggested that the Internet was subsumed into all daily activities of the city. His view was that in the effort to transform Bangalore into an 'IT City', all aspects of city life—birth, death, education, employment, food, and even recycling trash—were now intimately connected to information technologies. This often became so routinized that the Internet's role was taken for granted, which in the case of *Hasiru Usiru* was one of the reasons that inhibited its strategic use

Another reason for the reluctance to strategically engage with the Internet has already been discussed earlier, viz., the structural limitations of the network. Surman and Reilly (2003) have pointed to the opportunity confronting civil society regarding use of the Internet and other emerging network technologies to support its quest for social justice and other goals. With access no longer being quite the stumbling block it used to be for CSOs in urban centres, they have noted that the next—and pressing—step was for organisations to learn how to effectively appropriate new technologies. Many CSOs in the global South had “not yet dipped their toe into the pool of cultural and organizational change that comes when a group molds networked technologies in its own image, making these technologies a part of their very fabric and being” (ibid, p. 4). *Hasiru Usiru* fit this description: although there was increasing recognition that the Internet should be leveraged in a more productive way, there was no consensus amongst the core group regarding how to take this forward. Part of the reason for the lack of consensus lay in the structural limitations of the network itself, which compelled a small committed group to undertake a multitude of issues simultaneously. Core group member Deepak described this in terms of being in a “fire-fighting mode” all the time, as the state “continuously engages you in small, small battles” (personal interview, June 15, 2011). Under such circumstances, the core group had been hard-pressed to discuss issues other than the immediate agenda item(s) at hand, which entailed that many of their campaigns and activities were reactionary in nature, compelling them to put less immediate concerns, such as strategizing Internet use, on the backburner. This, combined with the pessimistic attitudes towards the Internet discussed earlier, combined to steer the core group's focus towards offline activities.

This section has shown that the interplay of a variety of factors resulted in the limited Internet use by the core group. These factors included the structural and organisational limitations of the network, the taken-for-granted nature of the Internet in the city, and pessimistic attitudes of the Internet's role as a democratic agent. These factors, combined with the pressing requirements of day-to-day activism, steered the core group away from frank and constructive discussions of how to use the Internet "strategically, politically, creatively" (Surman, 2003, p. 4). Another factor that came up repeatedly with reference to Internet use was ideology, which is described as a separate section, due to its pervasive influence on the core group's activities and actions, and its attitude towards the Internet.

Expressions of Ideology

Ideology, which was the second key category to emerge from the data analysis, came up quite unexpectedly during the first interview, and was used by a core group member as a key reason for the disconnect with the e-group:

Lot of people in the Yahoo group are not people who share our ideology, there are researchers who are just there to see what's going on, there are people who are just interested to see what's going on, people who want to counter [our ideology]... (Deepak, personal interview, June 15, 2011)

This was a new element in my research on the network, as the term had not appeared during observation of the e-group discussions. As the centrality of ideology to the core group actions became apparent in successive interviews, I decided to include it as key category, and conducted follow-up interviews on this topic. Based on in-depth interviews with core group members, 'ideology' is defined as the shared set of objectives and norms, based on a largely left-leaning or socialist political thought, which guided members' activities in the absence of a formal mandate. The shared understandings of ideology and its principal components are described later in this section.

Three core group members expressed surprise that the others had used the term "ideology" in the same way, noting that there had been no formal

discussions in this regard. In the absence of any formally stipulated ideology, members worked based on an implicit understanding of this aspect, based on their initial association or first impressions of interacting with *Hasiru Usiru*. Sheela (telephone interview, February 16, 2013) noted that the motivation to engage with *Hasiru Usiru* stemmed from a felt affinity with the network's ideological orientation in the first place. Without this sense of larger ideological connect with her colleagues, she said, she would not have been able to work within the network. With further investigation, it became clear that the consensus regarding ideology was also the result of strong personal ties between core group members, who were close friends, and had similar philosophical orientations. I refer to this connection as an “ideological connect”, as it bound the group together. The main components of this ideology are discussed below.

The inspiration behind the common worldview that the core group referred to as its “ideology” was a left-leaning or socialist philosophy that emphasised bottom-up democracy, public participation in decision-making, and inclusive planning. Another source of inspiration were the ideals enshrined in the Indian Constitution, particularly principles relating to social welfare and democratic engagement. Broad components of this ideology identified through data analysis are: enhancing democracy; the idea of development, including protection of urban commons; and the primacy of rights, including the right to peaceful protest. As these have already emerged in the course of the case study, and have been discussed at length, they are only described briefly here.

Enhancing Democracy: *Hasiru Usiru* activities in this regard were focused on enabling greater public participation and decision-making of urban citizens. For example, the campaign to establish and operationalise ward committees in Bangalore was aimed at promoting genuine decentralisation and participation in local self-governance. Another aspect of the thrust on democratic engagement concerned the marginalised and vulnerable populations in the city, who were often referred to as “invisible” due to their exclusion in consultative processes. The core group opined that the welfare of these groups was paramount in a democratic system, particularly when consultative processes in the city currently

favoured people with Internet access. Accordingly, one of the central concerns related to the creation of more accessible spaces of consultation, whereby all stakeholders could be included in democratic processes.

Inclusive and Sustainable Development: The core group was united in its opposition to the current pattern of development in Bangalore, which it felt was representative of a type of “uber-capitalist” form that favoured corporates, government and other elites at the cost of the common man or the environment. In addition, such development did not consider the cost of mammoth projects on the environment, ignoring questions of long-term environmental sustainability. The core group was critical of the equation of “development” with excessive infrastructure building, prioritising physical over social development, and the transfer of excessive governance powers to experts and other non-elected bodies in the process. An example of the skewed developmental model was the emphasis on roads and other transport projects leading to the international airport, which contributed to the neglect of bus terminals. This was objected to the core group on the grounds that buses were the dominant means of transportation for majority of the city’s population. Such “developmental” policies were criticised as being geared towards the corporate sector, and in their promotion of global or world city imaginations, to the detriment of poorer socio-economic sections of the city. The core group described one of its priorities as challenging such dominant imaginations through an emphasis on the protection of the urban commons, both environmental as well as in terms of sustainable public transportation.

Sustainable Public Transport: The emphasis on the protection of the urban commons extended from ecological to transportation commons, made evident in the prominence accorded to promoting sustainable public transport solutions. Here, expressions of ideology centred on the creation of a system that was universal, accessible, affordable, and comfortable for all residents of the city, regardless of their socio-economic status. Guided by the belief that “access to and use of public transport is a basic right”, promoting accessible and equitable public transportation was a cornerstone of the core group’s ideology (Draft Terms

of Reference for Bus Study, e-group message #13227, March 29, 2011). As large sections of commuters dependent on (regular blue) buses were from lower socio-economic classes, they were often excluded from policy related discussions. Further, as buses formed the backbone of Bangalore's public transport system, *Hasiru Usiru's* partnered with CBOs and NGOs working in various fields, such as the garment workers union, slum groups, and sexual minorities, to incorporate their viewpoints (ibid; interviews).

Hasiru Usiru also joined the *Bangalore Bus Prayaanikara Vedike* (Bangalore Bus Commuters' Forum) or BBPV that was formed in 2013 in response to steep price hikes by the Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation (BMTTC). Since then, *Hasiru Usiru* has actively supported BBPV campaigns to roll back fare hikes (message #17418, June 27, 2013), campaigns against sexual harassment of women in BMTTC buses (message #17644, September 3, 2013), and the recent "50Paise Campaign" urging a shift from a profit-oriented model of public transport to a service-oriented model (message #18200, February 17, 2014). The commitment to public transport was also deeply ingrained in the thoughts and actions of the core group members, most of whom did not own cars and used public transport for their travel needs. In this way, public transport emerged as one of the core issues of concern around which there was a sense of ideological unity among the core group, due to its underlying emphasis on equity and access.

Primacy of Rights: Anand (telephone interview, January 14, 2013) described the group's ideology as being "rights-based" as opposed to a "charity-based" approach, which was considered ideology-neutral. The emphasis on rights and equality, such as an equal opportunity to life and livelihood, equal use of urban commons, and the right to participate in democratic processes, among others, was juxtaposed to welfare. The charity-based approach, he stressed, was unsustainable in the long run, due to the incremental benefits of the trickle-down approach. The primacy of rights involved the right of citizens to actively participate in democratic governance through a variety of channels for engagement. One prominent right in this regard was the right to peaceful protest,

which was considered a legitimate means of claim-making in a democratic system. The significance of protest in making one's voice heard by the city's decision-makers was explained by an e-group member who had participated in several protest-related activities:

See, the main thing was, what I thought was: see, democracy is not just going and voting once in five years, so you have to basically get involved. So, I thought the way to make [a] change is [to] get involved, through protest. Protest is the main thing, still I believe that's the main thing which will help, which will get our voice heard. (Ajay, personal interview, December 26, 2011)

Ajay noted that protest was important in facilitating active participation among citizens, beyond the mere democratic formality of voting once in five years. Through the aggregation of large numbers of citizens, protest could play an important role in making the government listen to the public. This is was a critical function in the Indian context, where public opinion was often sidelined, until the swell of protests made it difficult for public authorities to ignore. Protest was cited by core group and several e-group members as an important means of dissent, and appeared as a fundamental component of *Hasiru Usiru's* ideology.

While ideology formed the cornerstone of its activities, core group members emphasised that it was an informal or unstated one, for several reasons: firstly, as I have already explained, the informal and networked structure gave rise to a sense of fluidity and uncertainty regarding the network's objectives and mandate. The diverse and anonymous character of the e-group resulted in an inability to claim an overarching ideology, as the core group did not wish to exclude members on this basis. Moreover, efforts to forge a common identity and universal ideology were defeated by the silence and inactivity of e-group members, resulting in a sort of identity crisis for the core group. As the core group was reluctant to impose its ideology on others, it kept ideological discussions out of the public (i.e. online) realm, and instead emphasised goals and principles shared by the Internet community. By keeping its ideology informal, the network aimed to be more inclusive and broad-based:

There is also the sense that we want to keep it broad; we want to have some basic principles in place, [but] we don't want it to be only such and such a person, you know, a feminist, a socialist, or whatever, to work with us. We don't want to limit it like that. (Sheela, telephone interview, February 16, 2013)

Sheela explained that whereas the network functioned according to certain basic principles and shared concerns, it was conscious of the need to downplay ideology in the interests of a remaining an inclusive space for citizen engagement. By allowing membership and participation irrespective of ideological affiliation the core group wished to distinguish itself from elite organisations such as think-tanks, as well as other forms of 'closed' civil society, such as Hindu nationalists, who propounded exclusive notions of belonging and identity. The imperative to remain accessible was particularly important given that greater public participation in civic affairs was one of *Hasiru Usiru's* key mandates.

A third, and more practical, reason for the lack of emphasis on ideology on a day-to-day basis was the limited time and resources at the core group's disposal. As there was a general consensus on ideology, the core group preferred to spend its energies on pressing issues, a number of which confronted it simultaneously. As they were often resigned to act in a "fire-fighting mode", members did not have the time or inclination to formalise their expressions of ideology—although some interviewees did consider that it might be a good idea to do so.

Implications of Ideology: Contestations, Rigidity, and (Incompatibilities of) Traditional Methods of Activism

This section has highlighted the centrality of ideology to the core group's functioning, which, despite its informality, guided its activities in a fundamental way. As was expected, there was greater variation among the e-group regarding expressions of the network's 'ideology' and its role in its activities. While those closely associated with the core group were cognisant and mostly supportive of

its ideology, the more peripheral members were either unaware of its influence, or believed that there was no ideology at all, and that the group functioned solely to save the environment. Yet others were critical of the core group's socialist leanings, arguing that its rigid adherence to ideology was akin to a groupthink that was often dismissive of other viewpoints. Interviews revealed that varied interpretations among e-group members was indicative of the lack of debate and discussion regarding this aspect. When queried about this variance, some core group members noted 'ideology' was often frowned upon on e-groups in general, and that its negative connotations made them wary of using it in their online discussions:

...sometimes on the e-group, as it stands, the word 'ideology' is like a bad word; [if] you have an ideology, you're a zealot or something. (Sheela, personal interview, December 21, 2011)

As the quote above reveals, one of the negative associations of 'ideology' was the link to being a zealot or some sort of fanatic, which made some e-members uncomfortable. In addition, online observation revealed that an overt ideological emphasis was frowned upon by some e-members due to the association of ideology with politics and political philosophies. As politically charged discussions were often time-consuming and emotionally draining, some members wished to steer clear of these types of discussions altogether and focus their energies on collective actions. Sheela similarly explained that a section of the e-group preferred to focus on actions rather than their underlying ideological motivations that the core group emphasised. Such differences in viewpoints were inevitable in light of the diverse composition of the network, and necessitated a consensus regarding action items. In doing so, the core group was often compelled to downplay its ideological considerations while keeping in mind the larger objective of getting the work done. Echoing similar sentiments, core group member Anand pointed out that ideology was "obviously, a bit of a taboo on all the Internet groups, on the Yahoo group" (telephone interview, January 14, 2013), suggesting some sort of incompatibility between Internet groups and the idea of ideology. Interviews with peripheral members and other

civil society actors revealed that when adherence to ideological principles was taken to the extreme, overshadowing other considerations, it was deemed impractical and made people uncomfortable. It was for these reasons that the core group largely focused on doable action items rather than ideology *per se*, which accounted for the absence of ideology-related discussions on the e-group during the period of online observation.

However, while the emphasis on ideology was downplayed in the interests of enhancing collective action efforts, it did not contribute to greater cohesion on the mailing list. This was, in part, due to the ideological “clashes” arising from the heterogeneous nature of the network, which produced tensions on the e-group, and had serious ramifications on collective action and collective identity. The open nature of the network often contributed to the airing of, and debate over, opposing ideologies. Online observation corroborated interviewees’ remarks about the existence of competing ideologies on the e-group. Two issues that regularly cropped up and evoked impassioned debates were that of privatisation and the role of ‘elites’ in decision-making. The core group and its supporters adhered to their anti-privatisation and anti-elitist views, while other members offered contrasting viewpoints. In interviews, the core group emphasised the importance of allowing dissenting viewpoints, despite the costs in terms of ideological unity and collective action. An e-group member closely associated with the core group told me that while expressing contrarian viewpoints *per se* was not discouraged, such ideas needed to be backed by facts in order to be considered acceptable. The core group stressed that debates arising from conflicting opinions were also useful in understanding different viewpoints, which could help them to hone their own arguments better:

I think in terms of the bigger group, there are some really vocal opposers of what all we do. Personally I’m not against it because it gives you the sense that there is this point of view as well, and it also gives you an idea of, these are the things we need to be prepared for, we need to have our facts, arguments right so that these kinds of questions and doubts can be answered. So I’m not very against those kinds of things. Yeah, probably the *tone* or the boorish nature of some of the arguments can be irritating, but that is a very temporary thing. (Venkat, telephone interview, February 16, 2013)

Venkat pointed to the value of having access to opposing viewpoints on the e-group, particularly in terms of expanding the core group's knowledge on issues of concern, and helping them prepare informed counter-arguments. He added that it was not the ideological positions that caused friction online; rather, the tone, behaviour and etiquette involved in disagreements was the sticking point. Core group members insisted that the Yahoo group provided a valuable space for debate and expression of ideologically diverse viewpoints. However, several e-group members, both in interviews and on the mailing list archives, did not share this opinion—exposing divergent interpretations of such conflicts. Some e-group interviewees pointed to the intransigence among the core group regarding its ideological positions, as well as scepticism concerning new ideas, which left them feeling isolated. Observation of mailing list discussions also revealed a tendency rebuke ideas not entirely congruent with the core group's ideology. The resultant online friction would be heightened when emotions and sentiment came into play, including the battle of egos associated with authors' ideological positions.

However, core group members were not aware of their propensity to insist on a certain viewpoint, nor did they recognise the level of disaffection that such actions caused. Instead, they believed that the e-group allowed for “healthy discussion”, without them having to “trumpet over certain other set of people” (Anand, telephone interview, January 14, 2013). However, the occurrence of tension became apparent when some members surfaced to express their reservations about conflicting ideologies affecting the network's common goals:

Off late, I'm getting the feeling that there's room only for one “kind” of person on this list. The reason that I joined this group was to see if I can do anything to save Bangalore's greenery. However, I now get the feeling that if I'm basically not a “left-leaning” intellectual, I'm basically persona non grata on this list. Sad.

I find it very silly that we let our ideologies get in the way when what is needed are essentially practical solutions. This is given fact that I agree with most of the viewpoints expressed here. (#15624, Mon Apr 2, 2012).

In the excerpt, the e-member discussed feeling alienated if s/he didn't adhere to certain criteria that seemed to outweigh others on the list, viz., being "a 'left-leaning' intellectual". The emphasis on ideology at the cost of practical solutions was deemed pointless, as it tended to isolate, rather than unite, diverse components of the network. By privileging one type of viewpoint, it was pointed out that the network stood to lose choosing ideological considerations over the common objective of saving Bangalore's greenery. This limitation was discussed in terms of a rigid adherence to ideology, which had both positive and negative repercussions.

Core group member Shalini (personal interview, December 23, 2011) explained that its ideology had become more complex over the years, moving from a sole focus on street trees to issues of participatory democracy and urban governance. It had also become more "rigid", which she explained in terms of the core group's increased insistence on participatory planning and consultation prior to announcing government projects and proposals. A crucial way in which ideology influenced the core group was in its relationship with other civil society groups:

I don't remember having had a discussion to specifically discuss "what is our ideology?" But we have had discussions on who are the kinds of other groups we want to work with, why don't we want to work with this person, why *do* we want to work with this person? And there, issues of ideology *have* been discussed, although we may not have used that word. (Sheela, personal interview, December 21, 2011)

Sheela noted that the core group had never formally discussed its ideology, but operated within an informal understanding of it, which influenced decisions about which civil society groups to engage with (or not). For instance, the refusal to engage deeply with *Praja* stemmed from perceived contrasting worldviews, and well as objections of its heavy reliance on the Internet. *Hasiru Usiru* members appreciated *Praja's* role as a repository of useful information and the presence of qualified members, who provided useful technical information via the platform. However, core group members viewed the platform's discussions

as lacking an emphasis on inclusivity, and noted a tendency to disregard local level governance processes. Moreover, attitudes towards the Internet as an exclusionary and limited domain extended to a similar perception of *Praja* as an elitist organisation.

Such ideological incompatibilities were acknowledged by e-group members familiar with the core group, and confirmed by some *Praja* members, who highlighted the difficulties of collaborating with *Hasiru Usiru*. Some e-group interviewees pointed out that the rigid stance on issues, coupled with an “aggressive” style of activism, tended to dissuade individuals and groups from working with *Hasiru Usiru*. This included other civil society groups as well as the network’s own e-group members, for whom the emphasis on protests, instead of collaborative efforts with the government, proved to be a bone of contention:

Actually, I was a very integral part of *Hasiru Usiru*, when we were protesting against a lot of government policies. But at the end of the day after I went home, there was no real solution, so it’s everybody complaining and cribbing. So it takes away your energy. So we said lets work on solutions rather than cribbing...So we [the CSO he is part of] don’t enter into conflict with any other power centres. Because only another power centre can challenge another power centre. Because we are powerless, we cannot challenge any other power centre. So the better thing is transform that power and make them understand. (Ramesh, personal interview, December 26, 2011)

The interviewee noted that he was actively involved in *Hasiru Usiru*’s activities around the time of the anti-Metro protests, which generated much enthusiasm and support. However, when protests did not yield workable solutions, he broke away from the network’s activities, and focused on working with the government, rather than against it. His experiences pointed to the limited utility of protest and confrontational activism as a method of claim-making in the city. Whereas even critics readily conceded to the benefits of this style of activism, such as the pressure it placed on local authorities to act, locking horns with “power centres” with no real solution in sight was deemed counter-productive. Instead, Ramesh channelled his energy into a CSO that collaborated with the government, citing several successful examples of this cooperation. The

system of engaging with, rather than challenging, the government was a fundamental schism between his and *Hasiru Usiru's* style of activism.

Other e-group members expressed admiration for the core group's methods, but also acknowledged that they were difficult to emulate:

I tried being active, I went for their protests, but what I noticed was, you need to be very persistent; you need to keep going to a lot of court hearing[s]. That method, their methods are very oriented by ... what do you say, going to the court, following up with the court, lodging a PIL [Public Interest Litigation]. They have saved a lot of lakes that way. I am totally uneducated in these matters; I have never been to the court, not even once. So, what I realised was, I am not as effective with the group, I am not good enough for this route, where you go for protests... (Vineet, personal interview, December 21, 2011)

E-group member Vineet noted that he had tried to keep up with *Hasiru Usiru's* activities, but that they were unsuitable for him in the long term. As the network's activities involved more traditional styles of activism, such as street protests and court litigations, peripheral members struggled to keep up with the demands of such activities. In particular, as he was an IT professional, he could not take leave from work to attend protests and court hearings on a regular basis. The long and arduous nature of activism often put off well meaning individuals like him, for whom *Hasiru Usiru's* modes of engagement were often unsuitable. Not only could part-time civic actors not participate as it interfered with their professional commitments, *Hasiru Usiru* activities could not tap into their existing skills due to the focus on a more traditional civil society style of activism. This was a mismatch for the contemporary breed of civic actors, who had newer skills to contribute, such as ideas from around the world, IT expertise, and social contacts, which older activism forms could not or did not use adequately. While the network's methods were incompatible with his way of working, Vineet was keen to continue to association with *Hasiru Usiru*, which he described as comprising knowledgeable and dedicated members. Like Ramesh, this dilemma was resolved by reducing his physical interactions with the group, while remaining active on the e-group—which enabled him to work on green issues of his choice and in a manner agreeable to him.

E-group member Rahul (personal interview, December 20, 2011) pointed out that *Hasiru Usiru's* methods differed substantially from other environmental groups that he had worked with. Several groups viewed *Hasiru Usiru* as confrontationalist, whose provocation of government officials was seen as detrimental to the larger cause. Another aspect that deterred him from participating actively was that differing opinions were not always respected, and that these often became shouting matches due to recalcitrant positions taken by members. The opinion that personal differences and ideological differences smothered good initiatives and dissuaded members from participating was intermittently mentioned on the e-group as well:

Alas, the kind of infighting that I see on this group is one of the main reasons I have withdrawn from any active participation in *Hasiru Usiru*, and why I feel that nothing will get done. While we argue and scrap amongst ourselves, our appointed representatives exploit our weakness and go ahead with their agenda.

I've wanted to say this for a long time, but desisted because every person on this group is deeply dedicated to the cause. But unless we have some unity of thought...the best of intentions can never be translated into any meaningful action. We will keep winning small skirmishes, and losing the wars. (#15502, March 21, 2012)

The post pointed to the fact that infighting had forced members to withdraw from active participation on the mailing list, and if personal differences could not be left aside, it inhibited collective action. A quick look at the archives attested to the existence of such tensions since the groups' inception, with periods of intense tension and discord, followed by a lull, until the next set of conflicts. This often boiled down to ego clashes among members, especially senior activists, some of whom were disinclined to back down or make concessions towards a meaningful debate. These ego clashes scared off peripheral members, who were disinclined to engage closely with *Hasiru Usiru*.

E-group members overcame the incompatibility with *Hasiru Usiru's* ideology and methods of activism, to some extent, by reducing physical participation and connecting to the network largely via the e-group. Some members viewed this as a way to stay connected to the network without being

confined by any groupthink. Others referred to the advantages of remaining connected to the mailing list, such as using the information and knowledge generated in the online space to inform their own (related) activities and vice-versa. All e-group interviewees, with the exception of one member, were also members of other email groups related to *Hasiru Usiru*'s interest areas, such as the environment, social movements, participatory democracy, etc. This enabled exchange of information and views across groups with similar interests, as well as bolstered possibilities of collaborative actions. In this regard, an e-group member noted that creating linkages between *Hasiru Usiru* and related civil society e-groups was important, as it could promote greater networking among citizens interested in city affairs. Being part of several groups was also cited as crucial to gaining exposure to various perspectives, and enhancing knowledge of civic issues.

However, despite this inter-connectedness, interviewees noted that it was often difficult to convince other e-groups to collaborate with *Hasiru Usiru* due to perceptions of its activist style and ideological focus. In addition, issues such as lack of time, rules regarding cross-postings, and ego tussles constrained networking possibilities. While ideology emerged as a key factor limiting networking opportunities among civil society groups, some e-group members noted that the fault did not lie entirely with *Hasiru Usiru*:

But there are strong fanatics even in that [biking] group. So, biking group also discusses [road widening] because the road affects them, right, and they are totally ok with road widening. So it's difficult to get even their mentality changed or think about it in the right way. So I know the challenges, I know both sides of [the situation]. I know why it is difficult for *Hasiru Usiru* to be less aggressive. Because it gets *frustrating* when somebody says, "my car doesn't have space to go on the road". So you don't feel like talking to those people, you get very aggressive and annoyed. (Vineet, personal interview, December 21, 2011)

E-group member Vineet suggested that all e-groups had their share of moderates and "fanatics", which sometimes constrained meaningful interaction between them. In his example of the cycling e-group he discussed how a section

of its members had staunchly believed that road widening was in their best interests. It had taken a great deal of time and effort before they could be persuaded to see the core group's point of view, which reflected their intransigent position as well. Being part of both groups, Vineet said he understood why *Hasiru Usiru* came across as aggressive, as it was frustrating for members to deal with individuals and groups that refused to consider alternative viewpoints.

Despite the limitations of the core group's ideological rigidity, interviewees noted that it was often necessary, particularly in the context of unwavering opposition to its objectives, by both public and private individuals and entities. For instance, in the early days of its activism, *Hasiru Usiru* was often described as 'anti-development' by its detractors, due to its 'extreme' views on saving trees at the cost of 'development' projects. Core group members dismissed such allegations, with some pointing out that historically, movements in India that attempted to involve the poor and vulnerable sections of the population in the decision-making processes of large projects were often labelled this way. The core group took inspiration from large-scale people's movements, such as the *Narmada Bachao Andolan* (the social movement against the Sardar Sarovar Dam being built across the Narmada River in Gujarat state) and the anti-POSCO struggle (the struggle against the South Korean steel corporation in Orissa state) that critics decried as 'anti-development'. These social movements motivated *Hasiru Usiru* members in their objectives of inclusionary and environmentally conscious development in Bangalore. The core group's passion and conviction was appreciated by e-group members, even those who did not necessarily agree with its methods or ideology:

One thing I find is that there is lot of consistency in their approach. Although people may say that they are anti-development or the guys who are *jholawallahs*⁷¹, but I think that's not necessarily true. I have

⁷¹According to the BRF Dictionary, a *jholawala* is a hippie communist. The term comes from two Hindi words, "*jhola*" which is the Hindi word for a particular type of sling bag and "*wala*" which is the Hindi word for "person". Therefore, the term actually means "Sling bag (bearing) person". Typical hippie communists in India are often seen with a sling bag on one shoulder, often consider themselves as "intellectuals", and are often associated with Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), Delhi. For a tongue-in-cheek look at the "jholawala phenomenon" see (Bhargava & Bhargava, 1989).

met a lot of them personally, they are not left-wing or Marxist or anything like that. They are normal people, who have some rigid ideas, so they think that we have to build the city around those concepts... (Sriram, personal interview, January 7, 2012)

Supporters such as Sriram, who had worked with the core group closely in the past, noted that labels that were used to describe *Hasiru Usiru* were not always accurate. He described *Hasiru Usiru* as “consistent”, as the group had crystallised its ideas and approach, and conducted its activities based on these convictions. This had paid off to some extent, as some of the network’s ideas, such as opposition to blanket tree felling for road-widening, had gained acceptance among other civil society groups. Interviewees pointed to the network’s role in changing the discourse regarding the city’s development, and gradually bringing concepts that were once considered extreme into the mainstream. For example, ideas such as congestion fees in the central business district (CBD), bus prioritisation, greater consideration for trees and the environment while planning infrastructure projects, and space for pedestrians were increasingly being accepted and incorporated by city planners and residents. In such circumstances, with *Hasiru Usiru*’s ideas gaining greater traction in the city, its discourse could no longer be considered entirely “radical” or “extremist”.

Conclusion

The case study has shown that Internet use by civil society is hardly straightforward or simple, revealing a complex interplay of factors underlying an organisation’s decision on how (and how much) to leverage new technologies for civil society activity. In the case of *Hasiru Usiru*, the core group members viewed the Internet and its democratic potential with a pessimistic lens. This negative attitude towards the Internet was described in terms of three main themes, viz., the Internet as exclusionary, the Internet as amplifier, and the Internet as a realm of ideas, but not action. This negative attitude towards the Internet was both due to, and responsible for, the emphasis on physical participation and a sense of

offline community vis-à-vis online actions. In attempting to overcome the network's Internet dependence, however, there had been little or no effort to utilise the Internet in a more strategic and creative manner. The limited consideration of how to integrate the Internet into its daily activities stemmed from the structural weaknesses of the network, including the inability to broad base its offline membership, limited volunteers and financial resources, and the 'fire-fighting' nature of its activities. Another explanation for the limited utilisation of the Internet was its taken-for-granted nature in the city, wherein the "privilege" of Internet access inhibited its strategic use. To sum up, the pessimistic attitude towards the Internet as a tool for democratic engagement, combined with the other factors steered the core group away from using the Internet strategically, politically, or creatively.

This case study has shown that access to ICTs does not automatically translate into a willingness or ability to engage deeply with new technologies by civil society. Hence, even within the context of a technologising city, where everyday life is pervaded by new media use, middle class and tech-savvy actors have refused to fully leverage the potential of the Internet. The rejection or refusal of the Internet by civil society actors, based on sceptical and pessimistic perceptions of the medium, challenges earlier assumptions of the civil society-Internet relationship, and has implications for future studies of civil society in an information age. The significance of these findings and implications for theory and practice are discussed in detail in Chapter 8.

CHAPTER 6: *PRAJA*—A CASE STUDY

Introduction: History and Evolution of *Praja*

Praja.in (henceforth known as *Praja*) is a citizen collaboration website created in 2007 to enable citizen participation, and the non-profit organisation (NPO) that operates around it (see image 4.1 in Appendix G).⁷² *Praja*, which means “citizen” or “political subject” in Sanskrit, was designed to be a bridge between democratic leaders/appointed administrators and citizens who knew and cared enough to participate in city-level issues (ibid). The platform, which is a blog-based discussion board, encourages a collaborative approach towards discussion and problem solving (Prajā, 2009a). Based on the core theme of “know, care, participate”, *Praja*’s founders aimed to use the Internet to overcome the limitations of, and create an alternative to, traditional forms of citizen activism (Prajā, 2008). To do this, weaknesses of traditional or old civil society that deterred citizens, particularly the youth, from participating in civic affairs were first identified, and Internet-based solutions proposed to overcome them. Analysis of interview data revealed that the following were deemed the main weaknesses of civil society, viz., the tendency to focus on narrow interests or causes, closed door lobbying, the personality-driven nature of the sector, and the perception that such activities were time consuming. By using the Internet to facilitate collaboration among activist citizens on local civic participatory projects, the platform was seen as a way to overcome some of the constraints of traditional civil society activity, particularly regarding citizen-government engagement, and to involve more citizens in matters of local governance (Prajā, 2009a, b).

Praja was originally conceived of as a purely Internet-based platform for members to discuss issues of mutual interest and to address civic problems (interviews). The site was co-founded by three IT professionals, who were keen to use their technical expertise to make civic engagement easier for citizens. The platform was—and continues to be—highly analytical in nature, with emphasis on the quality of content and data-driven interactions, achieved, in part, through

⁷² See <http://praja.in/en/about-praja> for the genesis and description of *Praja.in*

strict moderation for language and tone of discussions (interviews; observation of online discussions; Praja, 2009c). For instance, Praja’s posting guidelines for comments state: “No foul language, hate mongering or personal attacks. If criticizing third person or an authority, you must be **fact based**, as **constructive** as possible, and use gentle words. Avoid going off-topic no matter how nice your comment is. Moderators reserve the right to either edit or simply delete comments that don't meet these guidelines. If you are nice enough to realize you violated the guidelines, please save Moderators some time by editing and fixing yourself. Thanks!” (emphasis in original)⁷³.

Moving Beyond the Internet

By 2009, there was a growing recognition of the need to move beyond the Internet and focus on translating online discussion into action (interviews; Praja, 2009c). Towards this end, prominent users came together to “help evolve the website into a community” (Praja, 2010). As the platform gained more traction, these members took discussions further and collaborated to create and run projects or events (Praja, 2009b). Before a project—roughly defined as “anything that goes beyond just discussions”—could be undertaken, it had to be based on discussions and a general consensus among the *Praja* Internet community (interviews; Praja, 2009c). A project that successfully moved *Praja* from the online to the offline domain was ‘BMTc Engagements-2009’, which aimed to facilitate interaction and engagement with the BMTc (Bangalore Metropolitan Transport Corporation), in order to understand its operations, and to relay citizen feedback (BMTc Engagements-2009 group page)⁷⁴. The project, which opened on the site on May 1, 2009, allowed interested members to brainstorm, virtually and face-to-face, and plan activities to track BMTc’s initiatives, initiated regular interaction with BMTc officials, and provided a channel for constructive feedback to improve the transport corporation’s services (ibid). When the project was officially closed by the site’s admin on April 5, 2010, it was deemed a “landmark” project, having culminated in the much-publicised

⁷³ <http://praja.in/en/search/node/posting%20guidelines>

⁷⁴ <http://praja.in/en/projects/2009/05/01/bmtc-engagements-2009>

Mobilicity and Bus Day initiatives, the significance of which is described in the section on 'Projects'. Planned as an 'unconference', Mobilicity initiated dialogues between citizens, city planners and administrators on sustainable transportation solutions for Bangalore, including *Praja's* Bus Day proposal to the BMTC (interviews; *ibid*). Mobilicity developed into an almost annual event, and the Bus Day concept, under the aegis of BMTC became a monthly event in Bangalore, and has been replicated in other cities. Both events have come to symbolise *Praja's* effort to move beyond the Internet and successfully engage with stakeholders on the ground.

The *Praja* Society

As the Mobilicity and Bus Day projects raised *Praja's* profile among the public and media, members began to consider how to capitalise on this greater awareness (Prajā, 2009c). Broadly, two main action areas were identified in this regard: (i) enhancing the website: by making it more user-friendly, organising discussions and information better, and presenting richer information in a less complex manner, and (ii) strengthening offline presence: through connections and partnerships with NGOs and other civil society groups, administrators, politicians, and academia. By early 2010, *Praja's* key actors began to realise that the technology aspect, while still the defining feature of the initiative, would not be enough to create a cadre of civic issue enthusiasts (Prajā, 2010a, 2010b). They decided to focus, instead, on undertaking a few projects, rather than on the platform *per se*, as projects were deemed to be "better retainers, have more loyalty value, and generate quality content on the website" (Prajā, 2010a, p. 5; 2010b). In other words, the new focus on projects arose from the realisation that offline activities would generate greater activity and commitment among members, which in turn, would produce greater quality content on the site. Post-Mobilicity, the need for an advocacy group was felt, to complete the *Praja* "ecosystem". Towards this end a society⁷⁵ was created to build credentials via lobbying in the areas of urban civic issues, projects and campaigns (interviews;

⁷⁵ Under Indian law (there are federal and state cooperative laws), a group of persons can form a cooperative society if they have a common objective (Business.Gov.In. , n.d.)

Praja, 2010c, d). The “*Praja Society*”, which comprised 20 people from the website, was the “do-er” entity, which picked and promoted certain causes from the website, and was tasked with engaging with public authorities to bring projects to fruition. By the end of 2010, while the Society had evolved to function according to unique self-governing rules and an operating structure, it remained unregistered (interviews; Praja, 2010d). A key member highlighted that after several unsuccessful attempts at creating a formal structure, they decided to function as an informal group operating as per clearly stipulated formal rules.

Advocacy by RAAG

In October 2011, the *Praja Society* was re-named *Praja RAAG* (Research, Analysis and Advocacy Group), and the group undertook advocacy projects in the areas of public transportation, such as rail, bus, and cycling (interviews; Praja 2011)⁷⁶. A clear distinction was made between the Internet platform and the advocacy group, with their separate roles described in relation to a “funnel” (see image 4.2 in Appendix G):

And this is how we see the full system to be; this is our Praja ecosystem. This is the picture that everybody connects with. It’s like the website is a funnel, and we, which is now RAAG, pick things from the funnel—whatever we like—and take projects forward. And we have partners, like CiSTUP, so [we] get on board partners, because we ourselves will not be able to do everything, and we prepare proposals. So this is one picture which defines us well. (Yogesh, male, 30s, RAAG. Personal interview, December 16, 2011).

The funnel represented an open and virtual community to connect, communicate and collaborate, viz., the website, which was anchored around an advocacy group to evolve constructive proposals and undertake advocacy projects, viz., RAAG (interviews; Praja, 2010e, 2012). Within the *Praja* ecosystem, therefore, the website, website users, and RAAG members were envisioned as interacting and engaging with one another to further “analysis

⁷⁶ Praja was officially registered as a society under the ambit of the Karnataka Societies Registration Act of 1960 on April 2, 2013 (Yogesh, personal communication, January 13, 2014)

based advocacy for urban local causes” (Prajā, 2012). One of the most notable projects undertaken by the Society/RAAG has been *Namma Railu*, the commuter rail project that is inching towards completion (interviews; blog posts; Francis, 2012; Murthy, personal communication, January 9, 2014).

Key Projects

At the time of writing, although discussions on the site spanned a vast range of topics on urban issues in Bangalore and Karnataka, most active projects on the ground were related to transportation and mobility⁷⁷. Key projects mentioned by interviewees were Mobilicity, Bus Day and *Namma Railu*, which are described briefly below:

Mobilicity: *Praja*’s maiden project was the first edition of Mobilicity organised in collaboration with the Center for infrastructure, Sustainable Transport and Urban Planning (CiSTUP), of the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore, in November 2009 (interviews; Mobilicity 2009 group page).⁷⁸ Envisioned as a sustainable transportation ‘unconference’, *Praja* volunteers worked with CiSTUP to organise solution-focused workshops on public transportation. Designed in a loosely structured and people-driven format, the workshops covered a gamut of urban transportation issues, including crowdsourcing geo-data for public transportation information, urban planning, multimodal transportation, and road design standards, among others. Through its unconference format, urban planners, decision-makers, academia, civil society actors, and interested citizens were brought together to discuss urban mobility issues of relevance to them.

Bus Day: One of the key tangible outcomes of Mobilicity 2009 was the idea of ‘Bus Day’ that was seeded during the event, and taken forward with the active support of public transport enthusiasts, including *Praja* members (Prajā

⁷⁷ As of January 10, 2014 As of January 10, 2014 non-transport related discussions included saving lakes, improving the condition of footpaths in the city, use of solar energy, town planning, and active projects included The Cycle Day campaign, Intermodal Bicycle Connectivity, Support for Pedestrian Safety, and Disciplined Driver’s Club. See <http://praja.in/en/projects> for a list of all active projects.

⁷⁸ <http://praja.in/en/projects/2009/09/15/mobilicity-sustainable-transportation-workshop-bangalore>

Bus Day home page).⁷⁹ These volunteers helped the BMTC to conceptualise, plan and market a Bus Day event with the objective of encouraging more people to take the bus for their daily commute, instead of private vehicles. Since the first Bus Day in February 2010, the BMTC has observed Bus Day on the fourth day of every month, and the concept has been embraced by other organisations in the city (Praja.in, 2011). Encouraged by these results and the generally positive response to the event, Mobilicity has become a more or less regular affair, organised in conjunction with CiSTUP and the Department of Urban Land Transport (DULT).

Namma Railu (Commuter Rail Service): Another successful project was the *Namma railu* (meaning “our railway” in Kannada) or the Bengaluru Commuter Rail Service (CRS), the local train service proposed by *Praja* as a solution to the shortage of viable public transportation options in the city (*Namma Railu* project page)⁸⁰. Also referred to as the 'suburban' train service, the CRS idea was launched during Mobilicity 2010, with a proposal to run the local train service on existing railway lines, passing through city centres and connecting suburbs and towns around Bangalore. Spearheaded by RAAG, and with the support of the DULT, the advocacy efforts resulted in a feasibility study undertaken by consultancy organisation RITES.⁸¹ In June 2012, RITES submitted a draft report on the feasibility of the project to DULT, making a strong case for CRS, noting that it was essential for Bangalore's growing needs (<http://praja.in/en/qyan/summary-june-212-rites-draft-report-crs>). On July 5, 2013, with sustained lobbying, the project got primary approval from the Karnataka government (Malusare, 2013; Ramani, 2013), which asked the Central

⁷⁹ <http://praja.in/en/busday>

⁸⁰ <http://praja.in/en/nammarailu>

⁸¹ RITES Ltd., a Government of India Enterprise is a multi-disciplinary consultancy organization in the fields of transport, infrastructure and related technologies - <http://new.rites.com/>

railway ministry to approve the CRS and to be an active partner in the newly-created Bangalore Suburban Railway Company Ltd. (Sastry A. , 2013).⁸²

Other important projects seeded during subsequent editions of Mobilicity include non-motorised transport (NMT) advocacy, including cycling, and the bus priority system to speed up public buses (interviews; Mobilicity 2013 Brief). While Mobilicity has changed in format over the years, moving from the original unconference/bar camp format to a single round table-type event, the focus of the project has remained the same, viz., to propose solutions for sustainable development in Bangalore (ibid; blog discussions).

Active projects include a pilot bus priority system, a program to enable city residents to use bicycles for last mile and intermodal connectivity, and a proposal to restrain traffic growth through parking/congestion charges in the CBD area, to name a few (Praja RAAG home page).⁸³ While the focus has been city-wide solutions for sustainable growth, RAAG has also participated in smaller-scale activities, like proposing solutions to ease the traffic congestion around Mantri Mall in Malleswaram neighbourhood⁸⁴, and reviewing designs by Tender SURE, an initiative that is about “getting the urban road right” (Tender SURE webpage)⁸⁵ (Murthy, personal communication, January 9, 2014).

Partnerships and Awards

A key factor that enabled *Praja* to sustain, scale up and expand its activities over the years was the emphasis on building partnerships and collaborations (interviews). Key members expounded the significance of building and maintaining partnerships to expand their area of operations, as well as to gain greater credibility and acceptance by civil society and government actors.

⁸² At the time of writing (January 2014), the progress made on the project had slowed down due to a lack of coordination among the various government agencies, which prompted the city's Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) to submit a petition to the union railways ministry urging it to prioritize the project (Ray, 2014; Upadhye, 2014)

⁸³ A list of projects initiated by Praja RAAG is available at <http://praja.in/en/groups/praja-raag>

⁸⁴ See the Traffic Study @ Mantri Square Mall, Malleshwaram by CiSTUP (2011)

⁸⁵ TENDER S.U.R.E (<http://www.janausp.org/tendersure.php>) is an initiative of the Jana Urban Space Foundation <http://www.janausp.org/>

Therefore, partnerships with academic institutions, citizens' groups, Internet-based civic actors, and the government became an essential part of the *Praja* ecosystem, enabling it to build on the resources of these partners, and vice-versa. In particular, the association with CiSTUP, which began with the first Mobilicity event in 2009, was described positively in terms of shoring up *Praja's* credentials, and distinguishing it from other civil society actors that may not be as data-driven in their arguments. The proposed alliance was thought to benefit both partners: while *Praja* would benefit from CiSTUP's technical expertise and strong academic reputation, the institute would gain from greater creative inputs, networks and publicity. This tie-up with CiSTUP gradually developed into a long-term relationship, with collaborations on a variety of projects, including academic reports and the annual Mobilicity event. As and when necessary, *Praja* also collaborated with other academic/research institutions to vet or ratify its reports, among other activities. Interviewees emphasised that these affiliations lent greater credibility to their actions, and were useful in expediting the acceptance of proposals by the government. As strategic partnerships were crucial in positioning *Praja* as a serious civil society actor, key actors undertook serious efforts to enhance partnerships with government, civil society, new media-based initiatives, and technical/research institutions.

While trying to accrue more partners, *Praja's* prominence continued to increase in the public sphere, culminating in several awards over the years. In 2010, *Praja* won the best social media initiative of the year award by eGov Magazine (Egov, 2010; idontspam, 2010). In 2011, *Praja* received special recognition from Volvo at the Volvo Sustainable Mobility Award 2011 (Doraiswami, 2011; silkboard, 2011), and in 2012, *Praja's Namma Railu* project was declared runner up for the same award (kbsyed61, 2012; Volvo Buses, 2012). These awards boosted *Praja's* image in the local and national media, highlighted its activities in the mainstream and alternative media, increased members' morale and sense of accomplishment, and placed *Praja* as a serious civil society actor in Bangalore (website analysis; interviews).

Participants and Motivations

The ten *Praja* members I interviewed were all males, ranging in age from 26 to 65+ years, and shared the common characteristics of belonging to the middle class and being actively involved in civic affairs. Of these, eight had an educational and occupational profile associated with either some branch of engineering, computer science, and/or software. The six RAAG members, who varied in age from 35-55+ years, were actively involved in on-the-ground projects and played a steering role in the organisation's activities. They were also considered "stakeholders", having contributed monetarily towards maintaining a common account in case the need for funds arose (although this resource pool had never been utilised). The four website members varied in age from 26 to 60 years old. These interviewees were more than just bloggers on the site; three members were also involved with *Praja*'s offline projects and activities, whereas the fourth member had been intimately associated with its activities during the platform's early days. Hence, they were able to speak with authority on issues relating to both the online and offline spheres of activity, while at the same time speaking with a measure of objectivity, due to their position outside the "inner circle" of RAAG membership.

Two civil society actors (one male and one female) interviewed were senior members of a well-known NPO, which served as an umbrella group for some of the city's RWAs. Both were prominent activists and had collaborated with *Praja* on a few projects, with activities mostly conducted offline. I was directed to these actors as my main RAAG collaborators were keen to understand the reluctance of these traditional or old civil society actors to participate on the *Praja* platform. Some RAAG members were worried about the lack of success in getting the NPO to use the site, as it impeded their efforts to synergise online and offline engagement. Discussions with these interviewees, therefore, focused primarily on the reasons for the lack of collaboration, which included an investigation on attitudes towards and use of the Internet for civic activity by these actors.

The RAAG collaborators were also keen to know how their associates in government viewed them, and put me in touch with interviewed three senior government officials (one female and two males) who had interacted with *Praja*. The officials were in their thirties to late forties, and were generally considered to be open to engaging with citizens, reform-oriented, proactive and responsive (interviews). Two officials were senior members of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), the highest cadre of civil service in the country, and one was a senior member of the Indian Police Service (IPS), another All India Service of the federal government. Despite their busy schedules, they consented to meet me, and were forthcoming about their experiences of interacting with *Praja*, highlighting both the benefits and limitations of *Praja*'s civic engagement activities. In the interests of interviewee confidentiality, I have removed identifying information as and when necessary when presenting findings or results.

Participants were asked about how they came to be involved with *Praja*, and what the motivations were for their continued engagement. Given the diversity of membership, there were a variety of motivations for joining or engaging with *Praja*, which are briefly described below:

For those members who already had a history of civic engagement and were open to adopting new technologies, the *Praja* platform provided an additional medium. It also introduced a new style of engagement, which aimed to overcome some of the limitations of old civil society activism, which enthused and encouraged members. A RAAG member, who was also an avid blogger, noted that the greater reach of the platform vis-à-vis an individual blog had motivated him to join when *Praja* will still a new experiment in engagement. For those who were already on the Internet, the site enabled a smooth transition from a passive to active participant:

How I got involved with *Praja* is that I used to sit and read those blogs as part of my surfing routine, silently (laughs) for a while. And then I started posting some comments; on some issue you'd get really riled up, you'd want to satisfy the itch, you say something. And I don't even know how I got involved, all of a sudden I was doing *stuff*. (Ashok, male, RAAG. Personal interview, July 5, 2011)

Ashok noted how he had begun to access *Praja* to make the shift back to Bangalore easier, and how, over a period of time, he unknowingly transitioned from a passive member to an active participant on the site. For those who already had access to the Internet, and were accustomed to the medium, the *Praja* platform was the natural medium of choice with which to engage on civic issues. For former non-resident Indians (NRIs), the motivation to engage with *Praja* was two-fold: firstly, after stints abroad, their return to India had revealed the large information gaps regarding public amenities and utilities in Indian cities. Some former NRIs began to participate on *Praja* as a means to overcome this lack of information in the public domain, which was crucial for a structured and meaningful urban life. What started as individual needs for information gradually extended to efforts to make government data available and easily accessible to other citizens. Another aspect was that upon their return to India, *Praja* provided NRIs a space that allowed their experiences of living overseas, including best practices in cities, to be shared and discussed, and translated into practical knowledge and action items for Bangalore.

As individuals began to get more deeply involved with *Praja*, they described their engagement as relating to their role as active citizens in a democracy, as making the city more liveable, or as contributing to society. One interviewee talked in length about how his disillusionment with life as a software engineer spurred him on to look beyond the corporate sector to find fulfilment in civic activities. Overall, members expressed the view that they were working to help other citizens and to advocate for society as a whole. Several interviewees cited *Praja's* information and research-based activities, and the focus on solutions as key reasons for their continued participation. Website member Uday (male, personal interview, July 5, 2011) noted that *Praja* was different from other sites as it emphasised collective problem-solving, rather than merely “cribbing” about city problems.

Some interviewees highlighted that the online discussions were in contrast to the disorderly and often highly personalised nature of talk in other civil society

forums, which *Praja* strived to avoid through strict moderation for content and tone. Hence, discussions on the platform were described as being ‘neutral’, and steering clear of inflammatory or personal attacks. My observation of blog posts confirmed this view, with posts focusing on the issue at hand, rather than unsubstantiated critiques of individuals or personal philosophies. Discussion threads I observed were typically positive in nature, with members encouraging one another, and *Praja*’s achievements being shared as a source of collective pride. Further, members offered analysis, data, personal experiences, or other information towards solving problems, with the intention of taking forward projects on the ground. On certain issues diverse and opposing views were expressed, with some topics (such as privatisation of public utilities) eliciting an outpouring of varied and conflicting opinions. Such discussions, while fast-paced and intense, were, by and large, courteous and fact-based, despite the impassioned nature of the posts.

Another factor that appealed to interviewees was the composition of members, who were described as being both committed and knowledgeable. In addition, the younger demographic of members was considered an advantage, as it distinguished *Praja* from the usual civil society actors, comprising RWAs and NGOs, who were overwhelmingly middle-aged and senior citizens:

Let me put it differently: my interest with *Praja* was, there was this set of people who are highly knowledgeable—I’m talking about the *Praja* community at large—and a younger profile, definitely a younger profile. That aspect really attracted me, one doesn’t expect them to be activist, and being able to go out, and knock on the doors of Chief Ministers, and other [important decision-makers]. (Bhaskar, male, RAAG. Telephone interview, October 1, 2013)

As the excerpt has shown, for some of the older members, the relatively youthful profile of the *Praja* community, and its ability to reach out and connect with decision-makers was a new and exciting aspect of civic engagement. The ability to foster public participation and citizen-government interaction was a critical factor in motivating members to participate in *Praja*’s activities. The

structure and functioning of *Praja*, and its role as a space that somewhat plugged the gap in citizens' participation in urban affairs are discussed below.

Features and Functioning of the Platform

RAAG member Yogesh (male, personal interview, December 16, 2011) explained that the impetus to create *Praja* stemmed from the idea of using technological solutions to make engagement easier for citizens. The site was described as providing a space for participation in local affairs, as well as a space where members could provide feedback to the authorities in a 'safe' environment. *Praja* took great pains to guarantee member's privacy through anonymity or pseudonymity, if so desired. Through the adoption of online identities, members could involve themselves in debates and discussions without having to divulge their real identities. Key players stressed that privacy of members was paramount, and that only a handful of administrators had access to the member database. Members could choose how much to reveal about themselves, and there was a 'culture' of not using real names on the site. Such anonymity was described as providing a voice to people who were otherwise more comfortable being on the sidelines, and was crucial to the creation of a participatory culture.

While anonymity was crucial during *Praja's* early days, the shift from online to offline activities highlighted the limits of purely anonymous online engagement. This shift was particularly salient given the government's preference for offline or physical engagement. In a follow-up interview, a key RAAG member pointed to the late realisation that offline activism necessitated physical contact, with government as well as other civil society actors. In this respect, a shift from complete anonymity became inevitable, at least for members who were running projects on the ground. As a senior government official explained, this face-to-face connect boosted *Praja's* credibility as a serious civil society player, an aspect that is explained later in the chapter. As members could contribute asynchronously, as and when they had time, the site did not lose out on ideas of members who had the interest but no time to participate in offline

activities. The flexibility afforded to members, and the asynchronicity of the medium were described as site features that could help overcome the limitations of physical participation.

To ensure genuine and deep engagement, the website was designed to foster participation on issues that were considered important to members themselves. As majority of discussions on the site at the time of fieldwork were related to traffic and transportation, I enquired as to how discussion topics were selected. Interviewees noted that they chose to work on issues for a variety of reasons, such as whether the issue was of personal or professional interest to them, whether it affected them directly, or whether they had a sufficient level of expertise on the issue. The latter aspect was particularly important, due to the site's reputation for serious and deliberate talk. This also ensured that members conducted adequate research prior to posting on the site, as they were reluctant to speak carelessly on issues. Moreover, as most members did not have time or energy to work on more than one issue at a time, they preferred to devote their time to issues of personal importance, particularly those issues that were under-represented on the site.

Issues chosen were demand-driven, and based on public opinion on the site, which RAAG member Yogesh described as a “democratic” way of functioning. Sanjeev attributed the focus on traffic-related issues to the primarily middle-and upper-middle class composition of members, whose primary concerns were quality-of-life issues, such as mobility within the city:

...there are very specific issues that get people get excited about in *Praja*, I mean, general civic issues—if there is an umbrella term like that—related to transportation, water and electricity, stuff like that, stuff which bothers people in their day-to-day living, quality of life. So, if you think about it, *Praja* is essentially a community of people who can think, but they have full-time jobs outside of *Praja*. So inevitably the issues that if you see hog most of the *Praja* community are issues that would impact people like you and me. So, *education* or livelihoods, other areas which seem to be issues in the developmental sector, are not really discussed here. It's kind of a natural phenomena, you can't really do anything about it, because the kind of people who come on *Praja* are like that. (Sanjeev, male, *Praja* member. Skype interview, January 7, 2012)

As the site operated on the notion of member-driven initiatives, members tended to focus on issues that immediately impacted them, and for which there was a major, visible need for solutions. Sanjeev pointed out that the emphasis on quality-of-life issues was a natural corollary of the middle and upper-middle class nature of membership. Traffic and transportation issues were of prime importance to these members, as the lack of mobility was one of the biggest hindrances to quality of life in Bangalore. In a similar vein, RAAG member Yogesh (personal interview, June 28, 2011) pointed out that the focus on mobility also arose due to the inability of the middle classes to buy their way out of this problem—unlike with other infrastructure limitations that could be overcome with additional resources. While the more affluent groups could buy water from water tankers or bottled mineral water, install solar panels, or use generators to power their homes and offices, they could not buy their way out of traffic grid-locks. Further, the visibility of the issue, and the fact that a large percentage of the population encountered it on a daily basis, suggested that members were likely to discuss it the most. It was for all these reasons that *Praja's* focus was often on general “civic issues” of the middle classes, which differed greatly from the human rights, environment, and livelihood concerns of the traditional or development civil society. Despite this middle class bias, *Praja's* value lay in generating discussions on issues of significance to members, thereby inspiring citizens to participate in public life in ways that were meaningful to them.

In deciding the research focus of the case chapter, I was guided by the research objectives of the thesis, as well as the need to choose categories and themes that could be compared and contrasted with those of *Hasiru Usiru*. By applying Saldana's (2009, p. 186) focusing strategy of identifying a study's “trinity” in the final stages of data analysis, I distinguished the following as the three main themes that merited further investigation:

- 1) *Praja* as a space for public participation and citizen-government engagement
- 2) Attitude towards and use of the Internet: the *Praja* model

3) Distinctions between Praja and traditional or old forms of civil society

Space for Public Participation and Citizen-Government Engagement

With regard to this first overarching category, three main aspects stood out during the post-coding and pre-writing stage (Saldana, 2009), which are discussed below:

- (a) *Praja* as a collaborative and interactive space for citizen participation in public affairs, facilitating the creation of an active, informed and involved citizenry
- (b) *Praja* as a space for fostering broader citizen engagement, involving urban citizens traditionally absent from such discussions, such as the youth and middle classes
- (c) *Praja* as a “constructive” space for citizen-government engagement, through the creation of a “non-coercive” and “non-threatening” environment

Collaborative Space for Citizen Participation

As a space for citizen participation in public affairs, *Praja* provided a framework within which concerted action among members could occur. The platform was a common space that allowed members to connect and discuss issues of mutual concern, and thereafter convert these to action items on the ground. *Praja* was also described as “collaborative”, due to website features that produced a multiplier effect, allowing each member to build upon another’s contribution in some way:

[*Praja*’s] an enabler, it enables collaboration, it helps to *leverage*, is the word I would use, in the sense, my little effort, along with other people’s get multiplied, and you can have some *distinct* impact. Which ultimately, we all crave that we do, putting all this effort and getting *some* impact out of it. And I think, majority of people don’t care for the credit. (Ashok, personal interview, July 5, 2011)

The success of the multiplier effect described by Ashok and others lay in the ability and willingness of members to build on each other’s efforts, without expecting recognition for the same. Although members were motivated by the

success or impacts of their actions, they reiterated that the final outcome, rather than credit for individual contributors, was what they strove for. As teamwork was emphasised over individual efforts, *Praja* members were happy to contribute in any way to projects that others were steering. With the focus being on collective achievements and not individual roles, no contribution was considered too small. At the same time, to acknowledge these efforts, each contributor was acknowledged in a project report.

This collaborative aspect was enhanced by what some members referred to as the “crowd-sourced” nature of the site, which involved collating members’ suggestions to resolve local problems. This process was considered by key members as a highly effective, and expeditious, way of providing feedback to the authorities. RAAG members Yogesh and Murthy (personal interview, June 28, 2011) noted that in many cases, this “collective intelligence of citizens” matched the solutions suggested by independent researchers and experts. In situations where *Praja*’s collective solutions were consistent with expert recommendations, members experienced greater confidence in the efficacy of the *Praja* model. On the other hand, some members noted that the very value of *Praja* lay in solutions and design inputs that emanated from citizens, which need not always be consistent with ‘experts’, who may not be always highly trained in their area of expertise (Ashok, RAAG, personal communication, July 27, 2014). In this way, by collecting citizen feedback on local issues and passing it on to the relevant authorities, *Praja* provided active and concerned citizens a channel for their voices to reach the government.

Active citizenry was cited as important to build connections with the government—an aspect that Chapter 4 has shown was sorely missing at the local levels of urban government. The role of active and informed citizens also became decidedly crucial in a context where the local government was ill-equipped to handle the demands of a globally connected city. Murthy (personal interview, June 28, 2011) described how RAAG’s information-seeking activities, such as filing requests under the Right to Information law, had exposed how the government often functioned without the necessary data, making ad-hoc and

unreliable decisions in the process. Increasingly, this lack of coherence in government activities was becoming visible to the general public as well, he noted, which greatly impacted citizen confidence in the government. To remedy this situation, *Praja* members worked with government agencies to understand the rationale behind decision-making, to convince authorities to adopt optimal decisions, and to push it to involve citizens in decision-making. *Praja* operated with the understanding that an informed citizenry could put the necessary pressure on the government to improve its functioning. This was done in two main ways, firstly by engaging with government actors directly and providing them data-based options and holistic solutions. The second aspect involved supplying the relevant information they accessed and generated to civil society groups, which would then inform their engagement activities. By providing technical and other expertise to citizens' groups and activists on the ground, such as during protests against the proposed widening of Sankey Tank road, *Praja* connected and informed citizens in both the online and offline spaces of civic engagement.

Extended Space for (Middle Class) Citizen Engagement

Praja was also described as a space where segments of urban society that were usually absent from civic issue discussions, such as the youth and the middle classes, could participate. RAAG member Krishna highlighted the potential of *Praja* to engage the youth in civic affairs, through the advantages afforded by the Internet:

But, in *all* of these [RWA and industry meetings] you will find oldies and baldies. Invariably many of them don't have the energy to take things forward...So, for *any* action you need the youth. These persons say those youth are not interested in such kind of things, they don't come for such things. I say, [this is] not true at all. As many percentage of the people who are of the elderly, who are interested in these kind of things, same, similar or even higher number of youth are interested in the goings on of the city. And it is happening more. Because now they are finding there are no avenues for jobs or any future in the US, UK or anywhere, it's *all* happening here, and because of which now they want to get into the thick of the action, ok? And so, you give them the right kind of a platform, if you call them for a physical meeting there is

a problem of mobility, they have other pursuits and things like that. But you give them the right kind of a platform and they can do it all from home and they are there, and that is what *Praja* is all about. (Krishna, male, personal interview, December 20, 2011)

Citing the need to enhance youth engagement in civic affairs, Krishna was convinced that the right kind of platforms would play an important role in this regard. This was crucial for vibrant democratic participation, as middle-aged or senior citizens dominated current spaces of civic engagement. Although these actors had a wealth of ideas and experience, the interviewee (also a senior citizen) cited the need for youthful energy, which was abundantly available in Indian cities, to be properly channelled. He refuted the notion that the youth were not interested in civic affairs, arguing that new methods and practices of engagement were necessary to involve them. In this regard, he saw the value of *Praja* as providing a space for youth in civic affairs, by enabling engagement from remote locations, thereby overcoming mobility problems and other constraints that prevented meaningful engagement. He noted that *Praja's* suitability as a platform for engaging the youth and young adults was evident in the fact that majority of its members were below 40 years old, and the average age was 30-35 years. To broad base its appeal among the youth, *Praja* had begun to reach out to younger audiences in colleges, youth fests, youth clubs, and via social media. Providing them the opportunity to access civil society spaces and information via the Internet, Krishna felt, would help revive and energise civil society practices that were currently dominated by the older generation.

Some interviewees also described *Praja* as a space for enabling greater middle class engagement. While the urban middle classes in India were usually considered apathetic and disinterested in public affairs, the lack of formal systems of participation in cities compounded this problem.⁸⁶ In this context, its

⁸⁶ The lack of a formal or vibrant participatory culture in urban India is described in detail in the chapter on *Hasiru Usiru*

members viewed *Praja* as a political medium for the middle classes, a space wherein their voice could be organised and heard:

I would argue that, in urban India, middle class is the most disenfranchised. People...don't go to vote. It's their own fault, I'm not condoning this [behaviour]. People just don't go to vote, people don't *participate* enough, and they have to participate, they're a big chunk of, they consume a lot of resources, they don't get their voices heard, how can they expect to get their stuff done? So in that sense I feel this [*Praja*] is the, generally, educated middle class bunch. They're just trying to get their [voice heard]. (Ashok, personal interview, December 27, 2011)

By providing this a platform to engage and express its concerns and opinions on significant public issues, the platform included the usually indifferent middle classes in participatory processes. Ashok acknowledged that the fault lay in this class' disengagement with the political process, which was exacerbated by the absence of a bottom-up participatory culture in cities. Although the middle class was a crucial consumer and producer class, its voice had yet to be really reach political actors, in the absence of which their demands and concerns would remain unfulfilled and unresolved. Within this context, the *Praja* platform was described a good space for middle class experiments with engagement. Other members were quick to stress that despite its middle class composition, *Praja* was more than just a platform for middle class voice, as members worked on issues that would benefit the city as a whole. The idea that educated and tech-savvy *Praja* members used the Internet not for personal gain, but to advocate for society as a whole, is discussed in the section 'Attitude towards the Internet: Refuting the Elitist Argument'.

A “Constructive” Space for Citizen-Government Engagement

The third important theme in this section is the idea of *Praja* as a space for facilitating greater government-citizen engagement. By enabling such interaction in a structured and orderly environment, *Praja* was described as having the potential to overcome the limitations of traditional methods of feedback and engagement. It was suggested by some RAAG members that the problems of

direct engagement experienced by government agencies could be overcome by the asynchronous engagement opportunities provided by *Praja*. It was pointed out that the tendency for public interactions to get “crowded” with people and suggestions often made it difficult for authorities to undertake any meaningful follow-up actions. Instead, asynchronous engagement—either online or offline—was thought to be a better option, as it enabled officials to sift through information provided by *Praja* members, and decide on a reasoned course of action thereafter. The site also provided government officers the advantage of anonymity, whereby they could engage with crowd-sourced suggestions, without revealing their identity. This element of cover also allowed government ‘insiders’ to play an important role in facilitating action by their respective departments. It was pointed out that on several occasions government insiders had helped expedite the resolution of complaints, provided information requested by members, or directed members to action taken by the government department. While such success was not always guaranteed, members were optimistic that member involvement and discussions on a consistent basis could increase the likelihood of government action.

Members also described Praja as a “constructive” space, where the government could channel the expertise of citizens, while avoiding the pitfalls of direct engagement. Existing participatory mechanisms of government departments were described as ineffective, due to a variety of reasons. These included the existence of polarised opinions among civil society actors and their unwillingness to work together due to competing professional interests and philosophies, lack of incentives to participate, as well as the disorganised nature of such interactions, which often resulted in “shouting matches”, causing the government to beat a hasty retreat. One example was the Bangalore Electricity Supply Company’s (BESCOM) Chairman’s proposal to establish a citizen participatory council, which although well-intentioned, was not equipped to deal with citizens’ demands and expectations:

So what happens is that government struggles. You don’t know who’s constructive, who’s not constructive. You don’t know how to incentivise. The moment you open the doors all sorts of guys come in,

and then you close the doors saying: “I don’t want to interact”. That’s the problem with all the government folks. So a structured way of interaction, where you don’t have to sit in a hall, and take questions from 1000 people, and you get all kinds of questions—that is a *gap* that we’re trying to fill. (Yogesh, personal interview, June 28, 2011)

Yogesh noted that the BESCO Managing Director’s (MD) idea of creating the council stemmed from well-intentioned notions of harnessing citizens’ knowledge to improve the company’s functioning. However, due to the problems described earlier, including the chaotic nature of the initial meeting, and the lack of cooperation among civil society actors, the idea did not gain traction. Faced with such hindrances, and in the absence of alternative spaces of engagement, the government often backtracked from public interactions. *Praja* was seen as filling the gap in such instances, by providing a structured form of interaction on a platform that did not jeopardize the good intentions of government and civil society actors. This was deemed all the more important in light of the absence of meaningful and inclusive opportunities for public participation in the city, which has been discussed in previous chapters.

Praja also acquired significance due to the mismatch between the city’s fabled position in IT and telecommunications and the lack of know-how of city administrators. Interviewees rued that those responsible for managing the city did not have the requisite resources, tools, or know-how to do so effectively, making the need for citizen input even more crucial. Several interviewees stressed that the lack of expertise within government was an anomaly in a city that had built a global reputation based on its IT, science and knowledge capabilities. Some interviewees also referred to the glaring deficiencies of local politics and politicians, due, in part, to the special political representation accorded to disadvantaged groups. These aspects have already been discussed in the *Hasiru Usiru* chapter. In fact, there were intense debates on both *Praja* and the *Hasiru Usiru* mailing list in April 2011 on the issue of reservations in the local council. Arguments in these online spaces were not much different from those made for and against the Mandal Commission Report in 1989-1990 (see Kumar, 1992). Among other things, proponents referred to the need for such affirmative action

to redress the current and past injustices of lower castes and other historically suppressed groups, while opponents pointed to a decline in the quality of government and political institutions as political appointments were based on reservations rather than merit.⁸⁷ In this situation, RAAG member Krishna envisioned *Praja* as an invisible yet crucial “platform of the upper house”, akin to the upper house of the legislature, playing a crucial role in improving the quality of democratic debate:

That is the upper house, platform of the upper house. Because...the quality of people who get elected to the lower house, we saw enough of them, including the Mayor. When she was going to New York for some conference or something, some newspaper reporter asked her: “What are you going for?” She said she doesn’t know (laughs)! That’s the level. So, the elected representatives, till such time as, you know, evolves, is going to take little time before we get quality *people* into it, and till then, or even beyond, then at that stage this will get upgraded to our upper house. This will be the virtual upper house. It is not recognised, doesn’t exist. But this is the platform of the upper house. And we discuss things here and now; *eventually* we expect many of these people in the lower house, we will be able to convince them. (Krishna, personal interview, December 20, 2011)

The interviewee noted how a reform-oriented IAS officer described *Praja* through the analogy of the ‘upper house’, and went on to elaborate why this was an apt comparison. He noted the similarities between the upper house and *Praja*, comprised of non-elected members who were knowledgeable, had access to information, and arrived at decisions based on consensus. Further, like the upper house of the legislature in India, He *Praja* served as a space for reasoned debate, and applied pressure on the government to make rational choices. Another similarity, according to Krishna, was the *Praja*, like the upper house, played a crucial role by compensating, to some extent, for the low calibre of people elected to the city council’s lower house. As discussed above, the current electoral system, based on reservations, is designed to empower historically marginalised communities in the political sphere. However, the system is also criticised for sacrificing quality, due to the entry of groups into the lower houses

⁸⁷ See <http://praja.in/en/blog/murali772/2011/04/29/worshipful-sslc-pass>

of city and state legislatures with no prior political experience, or educational or other qualifications to participate in the complex arena of politics. The position of city Mayor was one such reserved post, and the controversy surrounding reservation of seats in ULBs is discussed in part two of the Discussion chapter. Until this system evolved or improved, he envisioned *Praja* playing the important role of providing expertise to government, in its role as “the virtual upper house”. While *Praja* was just making inroads in this direction, there was hope that, over time, there could be greater synergy between the organisation and council members, which could translate into efficient and judicious policy-making.

Overall, *Praja* as a space for public participation and citizen-government engagement was seen as providing an alternative to flawed existing models and practices of engagement. By creating an interacting platform for generating citizen expertise and inputs, allowing groups in the city that usually shunned engagement, and by facilitating greater citizen-government collaboration, *Praja* was seen as an Internet-enabled solution to improving existing administrative and political systems in the city. Interviewees pointed to several advantages of the Internet-based platform in encouraging public participation. These included the ability to get majority of preparatory work done online, overcoming time and space constraints; the flexibility to contribute according to members’ personal schedules, which lowered the entry barrier for participation; anonymity or pseudonymity reduced anxieties about personal attacks or retribution by disgruntled government officials; and the creation of a community that could guide and support members, who could then collaborate and leverage off each other’s efforts. Another advantage of an Internet-based platform was that individuals situated outside Bangalore could still contribute expertise and ideas regarding the city’s development. Although the Internet played a crucial role in enabling this new form of civic engagement, key members stressed that it was not just ICTs *per se*, but what I term the “*Praja* model” that made it a unique and potentially powerful tool. These, and other attitudes towards and use of the Internet for democratic engagement, are discussed in the next section.

Attitudes Towards and Use of the Internet for Democratic Engagement

Praja was praised for its ability to promote citizen participation, despite members' busy personal and professional lives:

The thing that it does, in an Internet-based model, the beauty is that you can actually, practically contribute part-time and do something. We have not had to leave our jobs. Four years we've been doing it, while doing our jobs, and it fits in really well. And we can get more people in. So what happens is, we have full-time things, on ground, it deters a lot of people. *This* lowers entry barrier. Twenty minutes a day is good enough. Or two hours a week is good enough. And we've had plenty of people contribute, without expecting anything, simply because it enables them. I think it's a very powerful medium. Not Internet as such, this way of collaboration is very powerful. We have just scratched the surface of it. (Yogesh, personal interview, June 28, 2011)

Yogesh noted that the online platform fit in with members' work routines and their lifestyles, and that this flexibility had lowered the entry barrier to participation. He and RAAG member Murthy, both IT professionals, had been able to fit *Praja* activities into their hectic schedules for the past few years, without compromising on either. The option to contribute part-time and in ways that were convenient to members, without compelling them to participate, were described as the reasons why *Praja* appealed to its members. While describing the benefits of an Internet-based model, however, he hastened to add that was not just the Internet itself, but *Praja's* unique approach to engagement that had made it an interesting civil society case, with great potential. Interviewees highlighted ways in which *Praja's* activities blended online and offline synergies and skills, and how its processes were designed to facilitate logical thinking and concerted efforts. In-depth conversations with members provided a comprehensive picture of the *Praja* model, and the culture within which members operated.

The Praja Platform: A New Model for Civic Engagement

At the crux of the model was the idea of facilitating engagement in a structured manner by collecting citizen feedback, collating various viewpoints and workable suggestions, and presenting this to the government as a report and other follow-up actions. Information played a key role in this model, in different ways and at different stages of a project or activity: in the initial stages, online members were responsible for gathering information from disparate sources on a particular topic, analysing the compiled data, and presenting it on the platform in a systematic and simplified manner. Thereafter, discussions would be facilitated on a topic based on this data, with other members weighing in on the issue or the project. Once discussions had gained enough traction, the person(s) in charge would create a report based on workable suggestions received, with the objective of providing the best possible recommendations to the government. In this way, inputs provided were described as ‘data-driven’, ‘collaborative’, and ‘rational’, indicating the seriousness with which activities were undertaken.

Information also played a crucial role at the time of interacting with the government, which was referred to as informed activism or “information-based activism”. Interviewees referred to early interactions with public authorities, where they were told to prepare more detailed reports and return to the discussion table—a tactic that would inevitably delay their progress. The frustration at such delays resulted in revised procedures within the organisation, which included generating extremely detailed reports, and attending meetings armed with the most up-to-date information. Such extensive preparation and attention to detail effectively reduced opportunities for delay, as in the case of the Commuter Rail report, where authorities could find no ground to refute their recommendations. This approach was described as ‘information-based activism’, which involved empowering citizens with information, providing them a rational basis for their engagement.

In enabling informed engagement, key members were also mindful of the need to balance the requisites of transparency with participation. This was attempted by collecting “public input” at the outset, at ‘public’ meetings (virtual,

and, if possible, offline) to encourage greater participation and the generation of new ideas. Later, if a government body invited *Praja* to provide its recommendations, inputs from the respective blog(s) were collected and organised, with a few lead members taking the issue forward, based on collective suggestions. By the time of physical meetings with government officials, participation was narrowed down to a smaller group of interested persons. The outcomes of these meetings would be posted on the site later, in the spirit of full disclosure, and members were encouraged to comment on the same, thereby creating a cycle of participation. By providing opportunities to contribute at different stages of a project, the *Praja* process generated a sense of ownership of an issue among members, and was deemed an inclusive model.

Another aspect of participation that the model promoted was the empowerment of civic groups on the ground, who could take forward the preliminary work done on the site. Members reiterated that as they were not unduly concerned about publicity, the model encouraged citizen stakeholders to unite and carry an issue forward, with or without *Praja*. The emphasis on creating and placing quality content in the public domain was to facilitate participation by additional actors in the public sphere. The notion that any member of the public could use the content created was an extension of the platform's role as an extended space for citizen engagement. RAAG members emphasised that the structured interaction promoted by the model encouraged collaboration among members and non-members, which helped civic actors to overcome the isolation they normally felt:

If you look at how RWAs normally work, they are totally isolated, they don't have the empowerment to go up and talk to certain people; there are people from RWAs today coming on [the *Praja* platform] and talking about things, posting photographs, identifying issues in their area, and they have started making reports of their area, the drain covers have gone, and then there are advices and comments on this, then they go and speak with people: they get a platform to express themselves. (Murthy, personal interview, June 28, 2011)

Murthy and few other members spoke of how the platform, by enabling civic actors to converge, express themselves, and gather information and advice, helped them overcome the isolation they often felt while undertaking civic activities. They noted how RWA members and other old civil society actors, who were usually overlooked by the administrative and political establishment, were now energised by the multiplier effect of the *Praja* platform. Other ‘ignored’ civic actors that joined *Praja* included “Letters to the Editor-kind-of-guys” (Yogesh, personal interview on June 28, 2011) and concerned citizens, who realised the potential of this new means of engagement to make their voices heard. These and other strengths, and limitations, of the platform, as perceived by the participants, are discussed below.

Strengths and Limitations of the Platform

Plugging the Participation Gap in the City

Conversations with interviewees revealed their perceptions about the strengths and weaknesses of *Praja*, including, the platform, its structure and decision-making, and its offline processes. With regard to the platform, a crucial role appeared to be the provision of a space where issues could be discussed and taken forward, which was lacking in big cities in India:

...if you look at a village—my parents live in a smaller town, almost a village—so there, people know each other. They live in [a province], which has decent local governance, *panchayats* are empowered and all that. So, people have to get together, *panchayat* elections are a big deal, there is money, to get things done. There, the good thing is that everybody knows each other. So if you want something, you know whom to go catch. In a city, so if you want to influence policy-makers, one thing you will notice in the city is that the number of people per representative [is huge]... In a city, I think the challenge is to be able to get together. You need to have a critical mass, if you need to influence anything. So, in this I think, *Praja’s* main role is a platform, it’s a space where it is easier to get together with people. (Ashok, RAAG, personal interview, December 27, 2011)

As the excerpt has highlighted, one of *Praja’s* key strengths lay in the creation of a common space where urban citizens could congregate and

advocate on issues collectively. The ability to bring people together was especially important due to the complex nature of representation in cities, in which a single corporator could represent tens of thousands of residents, and where the considerable distances constrained people from the same constituencies from physically coming together as lobby groups. The proximity to decision-makers in villages was contrasted with the difficulties of getting a critical mass to influence policies in cities, a situation that was exacerbated by the absence of public participation mechanisms in urban areas. In a small way, *Praja* helped to fill this gap through the creation of a virtual meeting space, which connected people, allowed them to share experiences, and provided avenues for offline participation and advocacy. *Praja* also played a key role as an information repository, helping to overcome the lack of readily available information in the city. Ashok added that the provision of such public and accessible data on the platform was essential, particularly as people in cities tended to go online and look for solutions.

Another strength lay in the ability to connect geographically dispersed city residents, whose “collective intelligence” could be channelled to provide city-specific solutions. This notion of “collective wisdom” was referred to frequently by RAAG members, who viewed it as a critical element in determining the city’s future, with *Praja* paving the way for such collaborative actions. A co-founder explained that by enabling citizens to share their ideas and information, the aim was to trigger a shift in mindset from individual to collective thinking, which would ultimately benefit the entire city. Such collective wisdom was enhanced by making expertise freely available on the platform, which distinguished *Praja* from other spaces where expertise was treated as “closely guarded IP [intellectual property]” (personal interview with Murthy, RAAG, on June 28, 2011).

These aspects played a crucial role in facilitating greater public awareness and participation in local affairs, and were described as enhancing participatory aspects of democracy in the city. Other advantages of the *Praja* model were discussed in terms of the structured nature of participation, benefits of anonymity, flexibility for members, and the ability to bypass the chaos of direct engagement

with government. As mentioned earlier, the involvement of government officers was another strength of the platform, and members were buoyed by online interactions, and offline impacts of this engagement. Interviewees expressed the sentiment that government officials engaged with *Praja* in different ways, and that there was a genuine effort to listen and implement practical solutions. In the absence of immediate results, this type of engagement bolstered members' confidence about the potential success of the initiative.

Site Design/User Interface

With regard to site design, members concurred that one of the strengths was that it allowed only constructive and data-driven discussions, which invoked a sense of responsibility for what one wrote, and fostered a collective approach. This was often distinguished from the finger pointing and “cribbing” associated with online civic groups. Senior citizen Raghavan (male, personal interview, December 13, 2011), was appreciative of the site's features and affordances, describing it as “a very good platform”, and that he was “totally impressed” when he accessed it for the first time. While it provided a good outlet for discussion, and was a “social website”, he was grateful that it was not for personal or trivial issues, like Facebook. Interviewees also concurred that the benefits of the platform accrued from the management of the site, notably in terms of software and content. Although the software needed improvement, Raghavan noted that given the voluntary nature of the activity, the people in charge were doing their best to handle it. The management of content by an efficient team was also considered a strength of the platform. Raghavan noted that while there were no restrictions on topics introduced, moderators deleted posts unrelated to issues of concern or unproductive posts. This had happened to him in the past, and he considered such moderation “a good thing”, as it contributed to a well-managed site. He contrasted the platform with examples of badly managed online spaces, and noted that *Praja's* strength lay in managing content by moving discussions towards tangible outcomes and steering clear of unproductive talk.

Beyond the commonly agreed upon strengths of the site described above, differences cropped up regarding whether other aspects of the site were a

strength or limitation. For example, while some described the site design as easy to use, other members described it as complex and inhibiting participation. Contrary to my expectations, the senior citizens I spoke to had experienced no major difficulties in navigating the platform, nor were they constrained by the rules of online engagement. Senior citizen Shashi (male, personal interview, December 13, 2011), who had relatively little experience of computers and the Internet before he joined *Praja*, pointed out that the site allowed for easy discussion and information sharing. While he noted that *Praja* was a place for knowledgeable people and the exchange of practical ideas, he did not think that the high quality of discussions deterred participation. Other senior citizens too described the site as being relatively effortless to manoeuvre, with easy procedures fostering a feeling of inclusion. Website member Uday (male, personal interview, July 5, 2011) noted that two elderly members would initially participate on the platform with the help of others, until they slowly learnt how to use the website independently and confidently. Their experiences, he said, indicated that, with time and effort, exclusion of digitally disconnected groups could be overcome. In this way, while a certain amount of Internet savviness was required to navigate the site, this did not automatically restrict participation.

However, while technical expertise *per se* was unnecessary to participate, some members noted that the user interface was not very user-friendly, and that the site had never been 'easy' to use. Website member Sanjeev, who was a computer engineering degree holder, noted that the platform was daunting for new members, which often discouraged people from joining:

None of the other guys in the group are usability experts, so I don't think there was ever a point where it was brilliant in terms of usability. This website has never been easy to use...

I mean, this is a problem we have been facing for the last three years, and we still haven't got out of it...There is some sort of learning curve that is associated with becoming part of the community, and that's just how it is...

I guess the point that I'm trying to make is that it requires some sort of commitment, to get used to the way things work on *Praja*. I won't be that: "Ok, let's just start", and I started posting. (Sanjeev, Skype interview, January 7, 2012)

Sanjeev noted that as usability experts had not designed the site, it had never been very user-friendly, thereby requiring some “commitment” in order to understand how to use it effectively. While this did not involve being technologically proficient, it required some time and patience in learning how to navigate the site, understand its rules, and contribute meaningfully. Likewise, RAAG member Yogesh noted that one of the site’s limitations was its design, which “is very good for guys who are *regulars*, but it’s very bad for new guys. It’s *hostile* to new people” (personal interview on December 16, 2011). He explained that he had wanted to change the design, but since a majority was already comfortable with the existing interface, they had voted against doing so. This aspect was reflective of the participatory nature of the platform, where decisions were taken via majority vote, and which, like any other democratic process, had its strengths and limitations.

‘Democratic’ System of Functioning

The majoritarian principle of the platform, wherein a discussion post or a project was initiated based on majority consensus, was both a source of pride and concern to members. As a source of pride, this system gelled well with *Praja’s* larger democratic goals, and was considered indicative of the ‘democratic’ nature of the platform. RAAG member Aman described himself as often being in the minority, as his views differed from the majority on a variety of issues. Nonetheless, he compared *Praja’s* style of functioning to India’s democratic system, which provided a conducive atmosphere for diverse opinions to flourish, and operated on the basis of majority vote:

See this is what the strength of India is, *diversity* actually makes you stronger. But you need to have an environment where people can express views, but somewhere we need to draw a line which views become dominant or the official view. For example, in democracy we always agree that majority rules. So, most of the time I’m in a minority—my views are a little bit different—I can’t expect to be the majority view, so my views will remain minority, however good, or rational, or right they are. So even if the majority is wrong, their views will become dominant. The danger will be when minority tends to

impose [its views]—this is the problem with the Lok Pal bill. (Aman, Skype interview, January 21, 2012)

Aman noted that despite being in the minority, he considered the diversity of opinion, reflective of various people's experiences, as a core strength of the site. The real danger, he noted, was when the minority undemocratically enforced its view—which he saw as the fundamental flaw of the Anna Hazare-led anti-corruption campaign. Aman's critique of the campaign was reflective of concerns voiced by prominent individuals about Hazare's efforts to centralise power, and his insistence that his version of the Lokpal Bill be accepted. Critics charged such tactics with sending a "you are either with us or against us" message that was denounced as anti-democratic (Daigle, 2011; Patnaik, 2011; Roy, 2011).⁸⁸ *Praja* members who criticised the anti-corruption campaign often extended this argument to include traditional civil society in general, arguing that activism and protests often embodied similar ills. *Praja* was different, Aman said, because members tried to convince—but did not impose—their views on others, emphasising consensus over an enforced obedience. On the contrary, diversity of views and opinions on *Praja*, emanating from the diversity of membership (in terms of socio-economic background and geographic dispersal of members), was described as generating new ideas and binding members together in a non-coercive manner. The multiple viewpoints aired on the platform were also described as a counterbalance to the dominant voice of the mainstream media, which often subdued alternative voices and perspectives.

Alienation and Isolation

A contrasting viewpoint to above sentiments was that the diversity of opinion was often quashed by the majoritarian principle of functioning, which sidelined certain opinions or action agendas. For instance, the emphasis on

⁸⁸ Other criticisms of the campaign include its unrepresentative nature, Hazare's authoritarian past, and un-Gandhian methods, including 'messianism' (Patnaik, 2011; Roy, 2011; Sengupta, 2012; Sitapati, 2011).

mobility at the cost of other pressing issues in the city, was disconcerting to some members:

...town planning is most important but it is very surprising, though it is so evident to *me*, that town planning is more important than just discussing buses. Because buses are there in a wrong plan, what is the use? People don't realise this... So that is how I write radical town planning, and see how many reads I got? Point [ratings by other members] is only very less, because people are saying, "what is he talking?" (laughs). (Raghavan, personal interview, December 13, 2011)

Website member Raghavan spoke of the alienation he felt when issues that he thought were crucial, such as town planning, did not gain traction due to the majority's concern with traffic and transportation. He pointed out that the lack of support for his ideas and concepts resulted in feelings of isolation, as evinced in the matter-of-fact statement: "in *Praja* a lot of people are not with me, [only] few of them". RAAG members acknowledged this imbalance in choosing topics, with some expressing the desire to deviate from the mobility-centric nature of discussions. However, they were also hard-pressed to balance between issues of personal interest and what majority of the members wanted to discuss. Yogesh (personal interview, December 16, 2011) noted that choosing an issue was "a balance between what will *sell* and what we want to do", and that they often had to concede to the majority demand, else they would lose out on writers/members. He noted how they had tried to introduce less popular—but no less significant—issues, such as water, which did not gain enough traction on the site. As the success of the site depended on people's contributions, choice of issue was often decided by what people liked to talk about. This was then balanced out by issues that RAAG members considered noteworthy or of social importance. This often resulted in the more immediate, visible issues such as transportation taking centre-stage, at the cost of pressing, long-term issues such as urban planning. In this way, while the consensus-based approach was critical in moving forward based on public demand, topics on which there was no consensus were put on hold, which demoralised some members.

Another aspect of isolation was the lack of follow-up and support, particularly if a member was working alone on a project. Senior citizen Raghavan (personal interview, December 13, 2011) described how he had received little support from members, and had to conduct most of his activities alone, which severely dented his morale and enthusiasm. In addition to the difficulties of engaging with the relevant authorities (such as catching hold of officials, delays due to being given the runaround, and the involvement of multiple agencies), the absence of relevant information, and the lack of companionship or support during such offline activities made the process more daunting. While he knew that key members were busy, he opined that if they reached out and supported lone crusaders like him, it would encourage more members to participate offline. In the absence of such joint efforts, he was sceptical of the outcomes, noting that action on the ground was “a big journey”. The isolation was more acute as he was often the only person working on his interest issue, and though he received inputs from others, the lack of offline support, such as when he did his fieldwork or to meet government officials, was weakened his efforts considerably. In this instance, *Praja* failed to live up to the expectations of its key members in helping traditional civic actors to overcome the isolation they normally experienced in the course of their activities.

High Quality Discussions, the Invisible Barrier and Lack of Public Participation

Another aspect that was seen as both a strength and a limitation was *Praja*'s role as a limited or specialised domain for “high-level discussion”. As the intention was to create a site for intelligent discussions, the bar was set high in terms of quality of content. An unintentional corollary of the emphasis on reasoned debate was that it excluded the general public, who may not have the time or wherewithal to participate according to its rules. The resultant challenge, therefore, was to get more people involved without compromising *Praja*'s reputation as a brand for reasoned debate:

So what has happened is, which is also, in a way, a challenge is that, it's become a place where there's a brand saying: “Only when you talk at this level you can get in”. But nobody has set the bar. It's not like,

you know, [we] are saying: “You're not allowed to come”. You're allowed to come, but naturally it has become a self-selecting place, for guys who are a little more aware, where they have collected [data], and nobody has set any bars. So nobody can say: “You guys, you don't allow me”; nobody can say that. At the same time, the quality of content that is there, you can see for yourself. It's actually of very good quality. So this means that, our audience is those people. So we're not a 'for-everybody' kind of site. So if guys actually start that, if they come in and start that, cribbing about the drain next to my house, then they quickly realise: “Oh, I'm at the wrong place”. So we have a lot of cases of the guys, they'll start, they'll come, and if they don't have that perspective [they don't fit in]. So the bar is in a way, sometimes we get this complaint, the bar is set too high. That's a challenge that we have: how do we get more people *in*. (Yogesh, personal interview, June 28, 2011)

Yogesh noted that as a constructive attitude was paramount on the site, it often restrained casual visitors and members of the general public from engaging, which limited membership. Although the co-founders had intended to make the site open and accessible, over the years, *Praja* had developed a reputation as a site for serious talk. This prevented people with frivolous complaints from participating, as they soon realised the nature of involvement. In this sense, *Praja* was a limited domain, restricted to committed members that were more predisposed to serious discussion. While this was not intentional, *Praja's* reputation as a site specialising in quality debate meant that key members had to retain the level of discussions and content, while faced with the challenge of getting more people to participate on the site.

Lack of public participation was a frequent complaint among civil society interviewees in general, who noted that public apathy was detrimental to the overall efficacy of civil society.⁸⁹ RAAG member Bhaskar (telephone interview, October 1, 2013) pointed out that the low percentage of citizens active in civic issues vis-à-vis the general population was a “global phenomenon” and part of “human nature”. In such a situation, interviewees, noted, it was only natural that

⁸⁹ Plausible causes for such lacklustre participation in civil society affairs by the general public have been discussed in detail in the *Hasiru Usiru* case study in the sub-section: *Lack of Conversion from Online to Offline Collective Action*.

civil society activities in the city were dominated by a small group of actors that contributed to various causes simultaneously. The limited number citizens active in the civil society sphere, while not a new problem, continues to be a cause of concern due to the changing context within which civil society sector operates, and the various challenges facing it (see Goswami and Tandon, 2013). The challenges involved in increasing participation were evident during my working stint in this sector, where efforts to drum up public support and action were met with limited success. Although media-led initiatives succeeded, to some extent, in encouraging participation, such activity was mostly transient, falling short of the committed and regular attendance and participation that CSOs hoped for in the long run. Such problems plagued *Praja* as well, with more readers than actual contributors on the site, and key members had begun to discuss how to scale up operations without compromising on the quality of discussion. While one dimension involved greater participation among existing members, another challenge was to involve people who were not yet exposed to or active in public life, which was the bigger challenge. Discussions were on-going within RAAG about ways to increase membership as well to encourage greater participation among existing members. Some ideas under consideration included creating a version of the site for mobile phones for easier access, as well as to generate more publicity, especially among the youth, to encourage greater participation among this tech-savvy audience.

A challenge with respect to its existing membership was that members who were accustomed to traditional modes of civic activity often found it difficult to adapt to *Praja's* rules of engagement. RAAG member Ashok (personal interview, December 27, 2011) discussed this issue in detail, and pointed out some prerequisites for members to successfully leverage the platform. These included accepting the egalitarian nature of the platform, wherein an idea, and not a person, was afforded priority. This was difficult for older members, who were used to being given respect on account of their age and experience. Ashok acknowledged the value of expertise and reputation, but noted that everyone was treated as a peer on the platform. In this way, participating on *Praja* was easier

for people who didn't "care for respect or deference", and those who did needed to work within this new reality.

Members also needed to learn how to structure online talk to the best effect, as unstructured talk risked alienating potential supporters, particularly those who had time constraints. Ashok suggested that contributors must learn to make a point succinctly, and in a clear and simple language, in order to facilitate productive discussions. This was not an easy adjustment, as this type of engagement would take time and effort, as it compelled members to be more focused in thought and word. Another new rule of engagement was to be a team player; as discussed earlier, *Praja* members valued a sense of teamwork and community, and group over individual recognition. Hence, it was crucial that members appreciated divergent viewpoints, and collaborated with other members. This involved a change in mind-set for members accustomed to working independently or garnering individual media or other attention.

Although the online platform continued to be central to RAAG's activities, in mid-2013 the group made a conscious decision to dedicate more time to offline projects than the website (Yogesh, personal communication, February 26, 2014). This change in direction emanated from the growing recognition of the need to move beyond the Internet, if *Praja* was to be considered a serious civil society actor in the city. To this end, attempts were made to connect with government and civil society actors working on related issues or having similar concerns. The development of these on-the-ground connections as part of the expanded *Praja* model is described in the next section.

On the Ground: Government and Civil Society Connections

"Tactical Linkages" with Government

RAAG members described engagement with government authorities in terms of finding the right organisation to work with, which depended, to a great extent, on the head of the establishment, and the personal rapport built with him/her over a period of time. Fundamental attributes of such agencies included

easy accessibility and a spirit of openness and cooperation in considering outsider involvement. In the beginning, locating such public authorities was mostly a matter of trial and error, until they found an agency within which there was some acceptance for their efforts by the top brass. Over a period of time, they realised that it was more expedient to work with officials willing to engage with them, and that projects could be created or tweaked to facilitate this buy-in. One of the key factors influencing the acceptance of *Praja*'s proposals was the attitude of the head of a government department, and its organisational culture. To build fruitful relationships with the necessary government authorities, therefore, it was imperative that members identified and tapped into responsive and proactive officials. The experiences of engaging with the government revealed several types of government officials, among whom they connected well with particular type. These were officials with a clean (uncorrupted) image, who were knowledgeable, and open to interaction with citizens. Only a small segment of government officers belonged to this category, and in working with this 'right type' of government official, a good rapport was identified as playing a critical role. By establishing a buy-in from these officials, *Praja* could count on some level of official support for its activities. RAAG member Aman noted the importance of engaging the government, but also highlighted the limitations of this strategy, particularly in the absence of risk-averse leadership (Aman, male, Skype interview, January 21, 2012). He discussed the difficulties of engaging with the BMTC, and noted that, in the Indian system, the limited incentives for government officers to participate in civil society initiatives was to blame for their lacklustre involvement.

Experiences such as these convinced RAAG of the importance of finding the right officials to work with, and only agencies where officers identified with *Praja*'s goals and actions were approached to collaborate. While linkages with government was an important aspect of their work, over a period of time key members made a strategic decision to forge relationships with government only if the need arose. Hence, they turned to prospective contacts in government when a project necessitated interactions, but otherwise saw no point in cementing

relationships without context, as this was considered a waste of time for both parties:

We have learnt that [there is] no point in trying to make our relationships without context. So, per-project basis, for a larger project, you get more time, you get to build lasting relationships. Like [Mr. A] is one such case. I don't know what he saw, but here and there, he sees some value, and he connects. Like [Mr. B] connected, but there was nothing we could offer to him. We met him three, four times, still he's open. But we didn't invest in him, because we didn't have any specific project to connect with...So why waste your time? And when you're objective, it works better. So more deep in your areas than [wide]... (Yogesh, personal interview, December 16, 2011)

Yogesh noted the utility of establishing contact on a per-project basis, "investing" in government officers only if there was potential for either party. This was preferred to maintaining linkages on a permanent basis, which involved time and energy that both sides not have. In cultivating relationships with government, therefore, they preferred to engage on a deeper level and strengthen ties selectively, rather than build superficial contacts in a large number of departments. In this way, RAAG member Murthy added, the linkages with government authorities were "extremely tactical", and there was no obligation to continue the alliance beyond the mandate of that particular activity (personal interview, December 16, 2011). He contrasted *Praja's* tactical linkages to government with NGOs, who usually created institutional linkages with, and were aligned to, particular government departments. These, and other distinctions from old civil society actors are discussed in the section "Distinction between *Praja* and Old Civil Society".

Despite the absence of formal methods of engagement, and the relatively small number of government officials, the fact that there was some government response was a source of motivation to members. Additionally, any tangible outcomes of such engagement were further inspiration to members to continue their efforts, despite the slow pace of progress. Website member Uday (male, personal interview, July 5, 2011) noted that the knowledge that posts were being read and responded to by government officials was encouraging. He identified

some offline actions that arose from issues aired on the site, including the improvement and upkeep of public utilities such as parks. These outcomes convinced him that despite *Praja's* relative invisibility in the public sphere, the government was considering its suggestions. The notion that *Praja* was somehow making a difference in the city encouraged him to continue participating, despite the limitations within which they worked.

Civil Society Connections: Successes and Limitations

In the shift from purely online to offline activities, building connections with individuals and groups on the ground was recognised as critical to extending *Praja's* network, as well as to the empowerment of the civic groups themselves. Civil society connections were viewed in two main ways, the first being to help groups on the ground, and the second aspect was to get more groups to participate on the platform. In the first approach, *Praja's* involvement included connecting disparate groups working on similar issues, and assisting them through the provision of information or any other strategic support, such as preparing reports, advocacy actions, etc. The idea was to create small teams to provide solutions and assistance, without getting unduly involved in how the other civic actors took the issue forward:

So either way, we don't care; it works well, we produce—there could be parallel effort, there could be duplication, there could be people building on what we build, but that seems to be working well so far. We have had *enough* examples, things we have produced and talked, they have been done the same way or taken forward...its ok with us. We *know* people come and read, and we don't want people to *tell* us that they're coming and reading, it works beautifully well for us. (Yogesh, personal interview, June 28, 2011)

Yogesh noted that in contributing to the city, *Praja* was keen to enable other groups and individuals to build on its work. Although members were aware of examples where their work had been taken forward—by both government and civil society—they were not concerned if *Praja* was acknowledged or not. Instead, he was satisfied with *Praja's* role as a producer of content, and

welcomed citizens and government using this data in any way they liked. In these matters, he noted that *Praja's* contentment with being on the sidelines and not wanting to claim publicity or glory seemed to have worked well for them. An example of this first type of civil society connection is Cycle Day, which was launched in October 2013 in conjunction with the DULT, citizens groups and cycling communities (srinidhi, 2013; see also *Praja's* Bangalore Cycle Day home page).⁹⁰ The initiative aimed to encourage cycling and walking as part of residents' daily lives, and to ensure that cyclists and pedestrians—and not just motor vehicles—enjoyed the streets (dvsquare, 2013). As more individuals and organisations joined as partners, they took the initiative forward to make it the biggest sustained cycling promotion campaign in Bangalore, with monthly editions in different parts of the city (The Times of India, 2014; Yogesh, personal communication, May 23, 2014).

The second aspect of collaborating with civil society involved convincing old civil society actors, in particular, members of a prominent NPO, Citizens for Bangalore (CFB)⁹¹, to use the site to facilitate seamless interaction between the online and offline realms of civic activity. During the first round of interviews, this plan was in its preliminary phase, and RAAG members Yogesh and Murthy were enthusiastic about the prospect of getting CFB, which acted as an umbrella group for RWAs in Bangalore, onto the website. The rationale behind providing CFB a separate space on the site was to scale up *Praja's* activities by creating additional linkages with the group's various members on- and offline. The project was envisaged as simultaneously benefitting CFB by providing its members the technical and data support that would inform their engagement activities. This was to be a more formalised approach to *Praja's* existing connections with CFB and similar groups on the ground, which included providing technical and other expertise for ongoing activities, such as the Sankey Tank road widening issue. CFB stood to gain through access to relevant information, supporting and contrary viewpoints, and other types of assistance that would help it to

⁹⁰ <http://praja.in/en/blrcycleday>. See also the Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/blrcycleday>

⁹¹ Not the organisation's real name.

confidently approach the concerned authorities. As for *Praja*, it stood to gain by moving closer to its goal of creating networks of groups working in tandem on local issues. RAAG members also expressed the hope that the initiative would provide a common space for CFB to work on issues that its members cared about, making it a relevant space for citizen engagement.

When I returned to Bangalore for the second round of interviews, I enquired about the progress of this project, as I had not seen any such activity on the site. Interviews revealed that the project had not materialised due to the reluctance or inability of CFB members to migrate onto the *Praja* platform. While there had been no frank discussions between the two parties regarding the failure of this project, RAAG members put forward several possible reasons, including the non-tech savvy nature of CFB's members, who were mainly senior citizens. Secondly, the lack of progress was attributed to the fact that CFB was a dispersed group, comprising of different sub-groups that worked on various issues in different parts of the city. In such a scenario, critical decisions such as embracing new technologies and adapting to new systems of citizen activism would take time, effort, and a certain degree of readiness, to be reconciled. Another suggested reason was that while CFB members were appreciative of *Praja*, they could be hesitant to interact on the platform due to the fear of losing their own identity. As both parties had avoided pursuing the matter further, RAAG members could only hypothesise about reasons for the project's failure, despite collaborations continuing on the ground. As they were keen to understand why this project did not take off, they connected me with CFB members so that I could investigate this aspect. As expected, interviews with CFB members revealed that attitudes towards new technologies for activism, and a combination of other factors, made them reluctant to migrate onto the platform. This put a dent in *Praja's* offline expansion plans, and was a serious challenge to its efficacy, which is discussed in the next section on the strengths and limitations of *Praja's* relationship with civil society and government.

Relationship with Government and Old Civil Society: Strengths and Limitations

Experiences of Engagement with Government

As the previous section has shown, RAAG members built expedient connections with government officers only if both parties saw mutual value in such alliances. More important than connecting with government for the sake of doing so was whether their proposal interested the government. Over a period of time, RAAG had come to realise that if the other party was not interested, it would be a waste of time and energy to try and build a partnership without mutual interest. This sentiment was also expressed by government officials I spoke to, who found *Praja* a useful vehicle to disseminate information to the public, engage with citizens and explain their intentions and views, obtain feedback and gain greater insights into public opinion, and enhance transparency within their organisations. A senior official explained that he interacted with *Praja* due to a shared commitment to open data, empowerment of citizens with such data, and more participatory governance. Rajeev (personal interview, December 28, 2011) noted that in interacting with *Praja*, he was guided by the belief that sharing information was the best way of involving citizens in governance. He highlighted how he had provided information to *Praja* members that would ordinarily be denied by the guarded Indian bureaucracy. He also encouraged government-citizen interaction in the belief that it would dispel misconceptions among both sides, and bring them together in productive ways:

...as happens with any civil society groups, when they came in contact with me they have their own suspicious, they had their own reservations, they had their own stereotypes about government functioning. So by interacting with them I have been able to open the system to them, throw open the system to them, and remove some of the stereotypes—*some* of the stereotypes, not all—make them, in a way, a partner in the task which we are doing. (Rajeev, personal interview, December 28, 2011)

Rajeev recalled that during his period of engagement with *Praja*, members would initially come in with certain stereotypical ideas of government, which he endeavoured to correct. He explained that he did this by involving them in the system within which he operated, and encouraged them to understand its strengths and weaknesses. He was convinced that greater citizen-government interaction was the key to removing the stereotypes and prejudices that constrained mutual efforts. By opening up the system to *Praja* members, the police officer said he was able to create a partnership that was based on a more grounded understanding of how action items could be taken forward. As physical interactions were crucial to engender such an understanding, government officials preferred to engage with *Praja* offline, although they did check the site at regular intervals. Senior government official Sita noted that while the site performed a useful function, it was the real, not virtual, engagement that government valued:

...if *Praja* was just an Internet community, it would definitely, as I have mentioned earlier also, its impact would have been quite limited. *Praja* as an Internet community, extending *beyond* the Internet and *actually* engaging with us, is what actually [is] giving value to it. If it is only anonymous number of people there I wouldn't know. But if I *know* [them] and these people, with these names, they come, and I interact with them, and therefore, I warm up to the idea. But if you really say there may be so many other groups also, even in Bangalore, which are just Internet-based, then what kind of impact can they have? (Sita, female, personal interview, 30 December, 2011)

Like the other government officials, Sita noted that she was comfortable with the Internet and open to learning new technologies. However, more than this personal affinity to technology, what drew her to engage with *Praja* were its offline activities. Rather than interacting with anonymous people online, she valued *Praja's* efforts to extend outside the Internet and engage her in face-to-face meetings. While acknowledging that the platform played a useful role in eliciting public opinion and involving citizens in civic affairs, the follow-up on the ground differentiated *Praja* from "just an Internet community", and was a crucial factor in bolstering civil society-government relations. Overall, *Praja* was

appreciated as a vibrant civil society group, comprising educated members that were concerned about the city, and whose site enabled citizens to converge and voice opinions easily or with little effort. Government officers were also appreciative of the efforts made to move from online to offline advocacy, which distinguished *Praja* from a purely Internet-based civil society entity, such as a mailing list or discussion board.

At the same time, having worked with *Praja* at close range, these officials were also able to objectively highlight certain limitations. For instance, Rajeev pointed out that *Praja* members sometimes insisted on implementation of their ideas, which they deemed superior to those of the government. Government officials suggested that the low regard for their ideas stemmed from the opinion that corporate or private views were qualitatively better, as well as from suspicions regarding government motives, which tended to put off even supportive officials. Another limitation of *Praja* was that some members were impatient for quick results, without understanding the constraints within which government functioned:

And the other thing is that ideas travel ten times faster than the actual implementation of ideas, not ten times, but hundred times, or thousand times faster. Telling a solution how to solve a problem is a five-minute or ten-minute, or one hour job; actually executing it may take ten years or one year or depending upon.... So there comes the intolerance. And that intolerance sometimes *alienates* the people, like *me*, who with good intention become a part of it and who are a part of government, but with good intentions. (Rajeev, personal interview, December 28, 2011)

Rajeev described the impatience of *Praja* members as a type of “intolerance”, which arose from an unfamiliarity of the ground realities of the government machinery. The insistence that ideas be implemented at a certain pace, which was unreasonable by government standards, had sometimes alienated well-intentioned officers like him. He pointed out how ideas travelled much faster than their implementation by the government—a discrepancy that was starker in the virtual world, where ideas constantly travelled across space and time. It was even easier, therefore, for online citizens—particularly those in

the corporate world, who were used to a faster pace of policy implementation—to overlook the complexities of the government sector. He added, however, that while these were typical civil society fallacies, not all *Praja* members displayed such characteristics. In fact, the more discerning members counselled their less experienced colleagues in this aspect.

The official's narrative pointed to the baggage that civil society actors carried into their interactions with the government, which were referred to by some *Praja* members as well. For instance, in the early days, meetings with officials were often unproductive due to aggressive attitudes of some members. Thereafter, procedures were changed to make interactions with officials more streamlined, less crowded, and based on facts rather than emotions. Some members also highlighted that through *Praja*'s activities they had come to realise that government officers were indeed intelligent and agreeable, with knowledge resources at their disposal, and interested and involved in civic issues. To further improve the relationship with government, officials suggested that *Praja* members make greater efforts to connect with government agencies offline. It was thought that a more grounded understanding of government strengths and limitations would inform *Praja*'s activities and bolster the relationship. Another senior civil servant, Chandrasekhar, said he was concerned that most members were not experts in areas they were active in, and stressed that they needed to be aware of this fact:

Next [limitation] is the knowledge base they have. It is limited, and *half-knowledge is dangerous*. They should clearly put a disclaimer informing about their qualification to deal with the issues. A software engineer knows little about [department-specific technical] issues! (Chandrasekhar, male, email interview, December 30, 2011)

The interviewee had been closely involved with *Praja*, and described his interaction as a fruitful one, noting that it allowed him to interact with an informed public. Although he praised the people driving it as “committed” to the public interest, he highlighted that they often lacked the necessary qualifications to deal with department-specific issues. This was a significant lacuna, as *Praja* members

worked on prominent public infrastructure projects. A limited knowledge of the system and of the issues they worked on put them at a disadvantage, and was also dangerous, given the critical issues they worked on. He highlighted that members should work within an understanding of this limitation, and state it clearly on their website too. While Sita also raised this issue, mentioning that *Praja* members were not “technically competent”, this was not seen as a problem, because as citizen contributors, they were not expected to be. Although she hoped to see a greater cross-representation of members, as new people could inject greater vigour and novelty into interactions, she was aware that this was difficult, considering the constraints within which members worked. In this regard, she was truly appreciative of *Praja*’s endeavours in the public sphere, noting that members spent much time and effort in areas that were unrelated to their professional lives:

First of all, I must say, considering that they are all engaged in some other work and I find it quite, you know, I must appreciate, that they are spending some time in something, which is *not* in the line of their work. It’s not that they are consultants or something in [this field], etc.; they are people with some jobs, in some other thing. So it is out of their interest, they are contributing to this sphere of work. I find that very *good*. (Sita, personal interview, December 30, 2011)

For the interviewee, the dedication of *Praja* members was especially remarkable given that they had full-time jobs or were otherwise occupied, and that there were no tangible benefits for them. These factors served to reinforce the point that despite *Praja*’s shortcomings, government officials engaged with it due to members’ contribution towards the public good. While *Praja* had made progress in connecting with and enhancing collaboration with some government agencies, interviewees pointed out that developing such linkages was a challenging task. The problems of engaging with government agencies, as described below, guided RAAG’s decision to limit its interactions to select agencies on a project-basis only.

While *Praja* was initially keen to expand its online and offline linkages with the government, several issues plagued these efforts, notably organisational

limitations of government agencies, such as the lack of an Internet culture, which was mentioned earlier. As RAAG member Krishna explained, in the absence of institutional linkages with government, members relied on their personal rapport with senior officials to push projects forward. Often, responses from agencies to issues raised on the platform were only on the prompting of these senior officials. This limitation was exacerbated by the fact that mid- and lower-level government officials are not trained to interact with civil society. Further, officials that did respond (on the prompting of senior officials) did so via email, rather than post on the *Praja* site. This was noted as a problematic area of engagement that needed to be addressed, as it limited the utility of the site. Another drawback was the limited number of senior level officials engaging online: while officials accessed the platform on a regular basis, they were reluctant to participate on it. One possible reason was a fear that engaging openly would be akin to opening up a Pandora's Box. Krishna (personal interview, December 20, 2011) explained that their efforts to engage with the head of the BBMP had failed, possibly due to the unpreparedness of the agency to deal with public scrutiny. With an increasingly vigilant civil society, encouraged by the progressive Right to Information law, officials were concerned about the domino effect of allowing citizens access to their department's inner workings. This explained why the head of the BBMP, with its reputation for large-scale corruption, non-transparent and inefficient functioning, was reluctant to engage with *Praja*.

Adding to these concerns was what government official Rajeev referred to as the lack of maturity in public discussions in the country, where a frustrated public often indulged in unproductive language and hostile behaviour. The risk of encountering such talk prevented him from engaging with the public on the Internet:

I don't interact online, for the simple reason that I tell you if I was to interact online, the kind of reactions [that] would come would *hurt*, tremendously. Because not everyone is responsible, not everyone understands the issues. [A] lot of them understand, but I have never interacted online, and most of my interactions had been face to face. They had a number of meetings with me, and we could solve many problems, *collectively*. But never online, because then you will become

like a beating boy, it's very difficult. The stereotypes are too strong. (Rajeev, personal interview, December 28, 2011)

Rajeev noted that even on a well-moderated online space like *Praja*, not everybody posted sensibly, and he was afraid to become a whipping boy or a scapegoat. He, therefore, preferred to communicate with *Praja* offline, pointing out that issues had been resolved amicably in this way. While *Praja* was a good example of a responsible site due to its strict moderation, he stressed that unmoderated or poorly moderated online communication in general was dangerous, and limited productive citizen-government engagement. When asked what constrained online engagement, officer Chandrasekhar added that he limited his posts as colleagues and peers thought that such interactions were for publicity. Moreover, he was aware that he had to be careful of what he said, as his online footprint could not be erased.

This section has shown that while *Praja* had succeeded, to a certain extent, in engaging with government, it faced—and continues to face—several hurdles. RAAG understood that for government, the risks of such engagement often outweighed the benefits, and hence, did not mind when some agencies took undue credit for outcomes in which *Praja* had played a key role. However, what concerned them the distortion of their concepts and ideas by agencies, which was an unresolved peril of associating with government:

That is *fine*, we're not trying to make money out of it. I would be very happy if somebody takes things and improves things, and the net improvement is seen. I don't really care for the credit. And I think most people [on *Praja*] don't really care for the credit. Where the issue becomes complicated is where your concepts get distorted so much that you don't recognise it anymore. The BPS [BMTTC's Bus Priority System], in trying to make it different from *Praja*'s, I think they have distorted it so much they've just thrown out all the good parts (laughs). They have stripped out so many elements; we really don't know what it is anymore. So that's an unfortunate side-effect... (Ashok, personal interview, December 27, 2011)

In the BMTTC example mentioned in the excerpt, what rankled members was not the lack of recognition, but the distortion of the concept that *Praja*

members had painstakingly worked on. As discussed earlier, while government agencies were keen to be recognised for the translation of ideas into successful projects, most *Praja* members did not care as much for the credit. Rather, there was a sense of satisfaction that their ideas were usefully converted into practicable concepts and plans. However, there was considerable concern when their concepts were distorted, which was an unavoidable consequence of engaging with the government. On the whole, however, *Praja* had met with considerable success in the projects in which it collaborated with government, and government interviewees appreciated its efforts, particularly its move from the online to offline spaces for advocacy. This, however, was in contrast to civil society interviewees, including members of CFB and *Hasiru Usiru*, who considered *Praja's* limited offline presence as its main liability, and preferred to stay away from it for this reason. These and other weaknesses of the relationship with old civil society is discussed in the following section.

Challenges of Engagement with Old Civil Society

A serious challenge to the engagement with traditional civil society actors was their reluctance to engage with ICTs and participate on the *Praja* platform. RAAG member Krishna (personal interview, December 20, 2011) hypothesised that the reluctance of CSOs, such as Citizens For Bangalore (CFB), to participate on the platform could be either due to the unfounded notion that individual or group identities would get diluted, technical difficulties that arose as a result of discomfort with new technologies, or an unclear understanding of the mechanics of posting on the site. Lakshmi, a prominent civil society actor and CFB member, acknowledged that there was a reluctance to engage deeply with ICTs within organisations that she was closely involved with:

There is still the reluctance to go computer savvy. The old guard, they don't want to do it. Though they are all email savvy, and SMS savvy, and all that. [But] they still like to hold on to some of their old [ways of doing] things, so therefore it hasn't moved forward. But otherwise, *all* of us are at least email savvy, if not Facebook, and Twitter, and whatever else. It's just a question of integrating the whole thing. (Lakshmi, female, personal interview, January 10, 2012)

Lakshmi noted that although members of the CFB used email and other ICTs to connect and network, they were reluctant to fundamentally change their methods of engagement. The unwillingness of the “old guard” to fully embrace ICTs is partly explained by the composition of NPOs, which are dominated by retirees and senior citizens. While Lakshmi recognised the importance of integrating the online and offline spheres of activity, she noted that such seamless interaction would only happen once there was some consensus on this aspect among decision-makers—political, administrative, and in civil society. This point was also emphasised by her CFB colleague, Shailesh (male, telephone interview, September 26, 2013), who noted that the limitations of interacting with the government via ICTs discouraged Internet use among activists. He highlighted two types of problems, the first being the lack of facilities in government offices, and the second being the absence of an established Internet culture within the government. Often, Internet responsiveness was based on individual officers who used their personal email IDs to communicate with citizens. While this was useful to communicate personally with an officer, this posed serious problems when s/he left the organisation, as there could be no one to fill the vacuum, due to the absence of an official email ID. Even in cases where email IDs existed, they were either non-functional, or officials did not respond to emails, leaving citizens frustrated. Shailesh insisted that the lack of both Internet culture and facilities boiled down to a non-IT savvy government, which did not encourage Internet use for government-citizen engagement. In such a situation, he and his colleagues used the Internet and email to connect with each other, other activists, and the media, but were reluctant to use ICTs, including the *Praja* platform, to interact with the government.

Related to old civil society attitudes towards the Internet was the emphasis on offline presence and action, which was distinguished from *Praja*’s new style of Internet-based engagement. CFB member Shailesh noted the potential of civic activity via the Internet, but stressed that it “should not be an academic exercise” (telephone interview, September 26, 2013). Although he commended *Praja* for its

efforts, the crucial factor in the success of Internet-based civil society was whether online actions were being “translated into reality”. In this regard, the relatively limited follow-up action on the ground was considered a serious weakness, a limitation also recognised by RAAG member Bhaskar, who described himself as an “activist” who worked “with RAAG at a distance” (telephone interview, October 1, 2013). Bhaskar was keenly aware of the online-offline dichotomy, and described his role as integrating *Praja* with offline spaces of activism in the city. Towards this end, his main objective was to get RAAG involved in issues that he was fighting for on the ground, and to make the *Praja* community at large more sensitised to those issues. Although he described *Praja*’s work as “activism at some level”, he stressed that his main objection was its lack of action at the ground level:

My difference of opinion with *Praja* is that it became a debate society, more than anything else. I have nothing against it, I have nothing against blogging, talking about issues; it is still activism at some level. You spread the word, so that more and more people know about it, people talk about it. But the reality is that the community needs to take some hard action, and hard actions on the ground are necessary, otherwise we don’t get exposed to that society. That is my fundamental issue with *Praja*... (Bhaskar, telephone interview, October 1, 2013)

Bhaskar explained that while *Praja* did engage in offline activities, these were mainly related to transportation issues, and that majority of the action was conducted on the platform. He emphasised that online activity was a limited type of civil society action, as firstly, participants did not get to see what society was really like on the ground, as the Internet provided only a one-dimensional view. Secondly, since government largely functioned offline, there was a real need to connect with it on the ground in order to have a larger impact. While RAAG was created with this intention, he felt that more needed to be done to forge sustainable connections with government, the absence of which he considered to be its “Achilles’ heel”. More real life actions, such as communicating via the telephone or meeting face to face were considered key factors in influencing and partnering with the government in India. To old civil society actors, therefore,

Praja's lack of connect with government on the ground prevented it from pursuing issues thoroughly, and was considered an ineffective means of citizen engagement.

Key RAAG members noted that obstacle to greater collaboration included the divergent understandings of “action” and “engagement” by *Praja* and traditional CSO actors, and the latter’s insistence that action be judged according to its own criteria. Yogesh explained that he had spent much effort trying to convince CSOs to participate on the platform, and was particularly keen to get *Hasiru Usiru* on board due to their intersecting interests. However, he realised that some of the unfeasible expectations of *Hasiru Usiru* core group members during these interactions made collaboration problematic:

But there are some thoughts on his [a *Hasiru Usiru* core group member] side, which are a little unrealistic, like he would say, “You go to all the slums and ask them”. And my thing is: “Who do you talk to, just 10-15 people?” And my response is: “Look, anyway, we’re not good at talking to a lot of people and taking their opinion; let’s do the best of where we can actually *reach*. So these 1000, 2000, or whatever, 10,000 people who are elitist, or what-not, at least *them* lets reach first”. (Yogesh, personal interview, December 16, 2011)

In the excerpt, Yogesh pointed out that he considered some of *Hasiru Usiru's* expectations unrealistic and impractical, particularly as *Praja's* identity and stakeholders were different from the activist network. Whereas both entities discussed their primary goal in terms of enhancing public participation in civic affairs, *Hasiru Usiru's* focus was on marginalised groups in the city. On the other hand, *Praja* catered primarily to the Internet-enabled sections of society, and considered its forte in terms of reaching out to this segment. In this context, as *Hasiru Usiru's* insistence of reaching out to slum dwellers was not within *Praja's* mandate nor did it cater to its strengths, Yogesh expressed doubts about the efficacy of such a plan. Although *Praja's* offline activities were increasing in frequency, they were necessarily limited by the organisation’s structure and objectives. RAAG members noted that old civil society actors did not consider these aspects in their critiques of *Praja*:

The platform thing hasn't sunk in basically, they are all looking at us as an activist organisation; that is the *typical* mistake people make. What we are trying to say is that we are an enabling platform, and we advocate...So what we're trying to do is advocate certain things...so when people come and say: "You should have an ideology, you have to do this, you have to do that. Ideologies keep you going, if you're an activist organisation. You *need* it to keep the goal. We have a goal as well, we want to be the platform which will *advocate* sustainable concepts, which will increase your quality of living—very broad goals, many things can fit in that. (Murthy, personal interview, December 16, 2011)

Murthy noted that *Praja's* detractors compared it to a traditional CSO, expecting it to function with an overarching ideology, and a commitment to offline action. However, as *Praja* was an "advocacy"—and not an "activist"—organisation, critics overlooked that it was not beholden to activist ways of functioning. RAAG members distinguished *Praja* from traditional CSOs by virtue of its focus on advocacy instead of activism, and an emphasis on goals instead of ideologies. These and other distinctions are discussed in the section 'Distinction between *Praja* and Old Civil Society'.

CFB member Shailesh also brought up an unanticipated reason for the reluctance to engage with *Praja*, viz., issues of language and localness. He noted that CFB members preferred to meet and debate among themselves in the local language, Kannada, whereas *Praja* activities were conducted in English, which was a source of discomfort:

Yeah, what has happened is that people who are more information gathering, we debate among ourselves. Because they [*Praja*] are not used to local: see we are all born and, I'll tell you very openly, most of us are local Kannadigas or local Bangaloreans. We communicate to people in our own language, civic activists and other things. *Praja* is more towards migrant population. And, they are good people, they also do, but unlike us, we get to the bottom of the problem, they don't go to the bottom, we interact with the government. Compared to us. I'm not saying they are not doing a bad job, but they are more towards the IT savvy, more intellectual also. (Shailesh, telephone interview, September 26, 2013)

Shailesh noted that members of the NPO were ‘locals’, who preferred to communicate with each other and the government in Kannada. On the other hand, the cosmopolitan membership of *Praja* was viewed as catering to the migrant sections of the city, notably those in the IT industry. He acknowledged *Praja*’s contributions to civil society and social change, but noted that there was a tendency to work at a superficial level, rather than resolve an issue at the grassroots, which involved engaging with government. To engage with the local government, Kannada was essential—and in the absence of the widespread use of the local language, *Praja*’s work was seen as deficient. In fact, the ability to speak in Kannada and the issue of language has re-emerged as a sensitive issue in Bangalore in recent years, particularly with the influx of migrant workers from all over the country. As explained in the section on Bangalore, language politics, while not new in Karnataka, has assumed a new prominence due to the city’s increased importance in the global economy. The increased cosmopolitan mix of the city has fuelled discontent among Kannada activists and some long-time residents over the erosion of local culture and identity, and the issue of language has been a by-product of these tensions, with hardliners calling for greater use of Kannada in Bangalore (Satish, 2008; Vittalamurthy, 2011). My own experiences corroborated what interviewees expressed with regard to language and government engagement, viz., that fluency in Kannada provided a greater sense of connectedness when liaising with government officials, and could ensure a greater buy-in from old civil society.

The preference to communicate with one another in the local language and a shared sense of localness among old civil society actors separated them from *Praja* in other ways as well. One was the perception that *Praja* catered to the migrant population of the city—which could be due to the fact that several prominent members were from the IT industry and resided in Bangalore, but were not originally from the city. Secondly, the rules of engagement and level of discussion gave the impression that *Praja* was geared towards people who were both IT-savvy as well as more “intellectually” inclined. A combination of these factors and the lack of publicity restricted the general public from joining the

platform, which in turn discouraged CFB from engaging with what seemed a restricted domain of participation. In addition, the view that *Praja* did not have much influence over government and could not effectively change the latter's perspectives or outcomes dissuaded traditional CSO members from engaging deeply with *Praja*. Further probing revealed fundamental ruptures between old civil society and *Praja's* Internet-based new civil society, which are described in the next section.

Distinction between *Praja* and Old Civil Society

Praja was created with the aim of using the Internet to overcome the limitations of, and thereby create an alternative to, traditional or old civil society forms such as NGOs, RWAs, and activist groups. While key members were keen to forge alliances with old civil society, they also clearly distinguished themselves from these actors in several ways. For example, *Praja's* systematic model of research-driven advocacy was considered distinct from the cacophony of traditional forms of engagement. RAAG members explained how *Praja's* solution-driven advocacy differed from activism that was ideologically driven, which made the latter more inflexible. Further, *Praja's* collaborative approach towards government was contrasted with the confrontational approach preferred by some old civil society actors. These, and other differences, are explained in detail below.

Engagement vs. Activism

Members' described *Praja's* interactions with the government as "constructive", in which they let data speak for itself, and provided detailed options that government could choose from. This, members stressed, was different from providing final solutions, and insisting that government adopt the same, as in the case of traditional activism. *Praja's* style of civic engagement emanated from members' understanding of their limited role as civic actors, and the notion that government had to take the lead in public affairs, being the only actor that could effect change. It was for this reason that they preferred

collaboration, rather than conflict, with the government. Interviewees often referred to the Anna Hazare-led anti-bribery campaign as an example of confrontational old civil society, noting that campaigns that made little or no effort to cooperate with government could not fully achieve their goals. *Praja* members worked with the conviction that getting government buy-in and support was crucial to move projects forward, and that, conversely, antagonising government was detrimental to its cause. Interviewees highlighted the futility of traditional forms of activism such as protest, which were often subverted or ignored by the state, forcing activists to “yell and scream, and be a nutcase” (personal interview with Ashok, July 5, 2011). In contrast, *Praja*’s collaborative approach was considered successful, as it did not threaten government actors. Interviewees highlighted that a key factor in this style of engagement was the tone of voice that *Praja* members used, which was low, balanced and neutral:

Lot of activists, and a lot of people who volunteer tend to get into a situation where the people who are listening to us become defensive about what they did. But one thing that’s common amongst all the *Praja* guys is that that is *not* our goal. We understand, we try to understand, where the other guys are coming from, and as opposed to just judging them, we would want to work with them. (Sanjeev, Skype interview, January 7, 2012)

By eschewing an aggressive voice, *Praja* tried to avoid making the government defensive, focusing instead on understanding the other party’s point of view. In this way, members preferred to build trust by working with government actors, whom they described as more intelligent and well informed than citizens often assumed. This type of engagement, which was described as “constructive”, made them realise that there was comfort in knowing that government comprised knowledgeable and committed individuals. Overall, *Praja*’s constructive advocacy was contrasted with the aggressive and confrontational activism of old civil society. One of the reasons put forward for the latter’s inflexible and non-conciliatory tone was the emphasis on ideology, which *Praja* members depicted as being at the cost of flexibility and improvisation. Ideology, then, became another distinguishing feature separating traditional civil society and *Praja*.

Different Expressions of Ideology

RAAG members distinguished between themselves and activist groups in the city, notably *Hasiru Usiru*, by dint of the influence of ideology on their activities.⁹² In the first round of interviews, references to ideology centred on its limited influence in *Praja's* activities and discussions, and how this differentiated it from other civil society actors. The second round delved deeper into this aspect, particularly with regard to its impact on *Praja's* relationships with traditional CSOs, especially *Hasiru Usiru*. A key member explained that ideology did not figure in *Praja's* genesis; instead the motivating factor was to use the Internet to enable greater participation in civic affairs:

What I saw with us running it together was that, ok, this group was built not on the basis of any ideology, saying: “we all love trees”, or “we all love cars”. It was a just a bunch of guys through Internet, and the common thing probably was either to do something and to buy into this Internet base, talking, meeting, virtual kind of concepts. (Yogesh, personal interview, December 16, 2011)

The mention of trees and cars in the excerpt was likely to be with reference to *Hasiru Usiru*, whose core mandate was environmental protection, with an emphasis on saving street trees and eschewing private modes of transportation. While ideology was not an overarching consideration in *Praja's* activities, interviewees clarified that it was not ideology neutral, but pluralistic, as the model balanced between members' ideologies in providing data-driven solutions to civic issues. Key actors realised that members could not entirely be separated from their ideologies. Hence, although the platform was data-driven, members could discuss ideologies or philosophies, as long as discussions were logical and fact-based. However, as the emphasis was on optimal solutions, members had to make compromises while working together to generate consensus-based options. Members often shed their ideological baggage in this process, as ideas were debated on their merits rather than ideological underpinnings:

⁹² I have also explained this in an earlier paper (Rao, 2013)

We don't go there as an ideology, overtly speak, saying this is what it is. But we try to be as logical as possible. If data points don't support a certain ideology, then there is no point clinging on to the ideology, because we want to move away from ideology. (Murthy, personal interview, June 28, 2011).

Murthy noted that while members could be guided by ideology in introducing and discussing topics, the ideological focus was shed if it was not supported by data. As the process of gathering member feedback to the government was based on data rather than ideology, the process was described as “logical”, rather than “ideological”. Hence, *Praja* members described their work as rational, based on facts and data, and citizen feedback, and therefore, subject to change, based on changing realities on the ground. This was contrasted with activist groups that ‘clung’ to their ideological moorings, which limited the scope of their activities to ideologically sanctioned projects and actions.

Another way that *Praja* distinguished itself from old civil society was its focus on optimal, research-based solutions rather than ideology-driven ones. Interviewees pointed out that while *Praja* did incorporate values expressed by members, this was different from the activism that was often distinguished by a more rigid adherence to ideological perspectives. An advantage of the limited role of ideology was the flexibility afforded to members in their activities, which was contrasted with the rigidity of old civil society. With ideology not being a primary concern, members could work faster and better, rather than ensuring solutions fit in with their ideological framework. RAAG member Krishna criticised the rigid adherence to ideology of old civil society, stating that it often clashed with pragmatic solutions to pressing social issues. He was particularly critical of *Hasiru Usiru's* inflexible positions on several issues, which prevented its core group from collaborating with *Praja*. Other members, too, critiqued *Hasiru Usiru's* ideological rigidity for restricting potential collaborative actions. RAAG member Yogesh described some of his interactions with *Hasiru Usiru* core group members, which served to cement his belief that ideology in these cases was “false attempts to justify what one does”, as well as a convenient excuse to not work with others. The emphasis on ideology, rather than goal accomplishment,

that was seen as characteristic of activist groups in general inhibited the mutual cooperation that *Praja* desired.

A related issue highlighted by some RAAG members was that the emphasis on ideology and a 'consistent' viewpoint by activists groups prevented them from considering dissonant opinions. RAAG members Yogesh and Murthy noted that another key difference between *Praja* and traditional civic actors was the former's emphasis on flexibility, including the ability to change one's stance or opinions depending on which provided the best solution. They considered one of *Praja's* key strengths to be the option it provided members to change their viewpoints, based on the learning and information exchanges that occurred during interactions. They noted that as *Praja* was not rooted in any particular ideology, the dissemination of different viewpoints could influence changes in attitudes and behaviour among members. Over a period of time, they said, most RAAG members had learnt to accept contrarian arguments based on their merits, and were open to shifting attitudes towards issues and causes. This was contrasted with activists, who "look for more support for what they always believe in", making it difficult for RAAG to connect with them (Yogesh, personal interview, December 16, 2011).

Yogesh explained that he had experienced such changes in perspective during his interactions with *Hasiru Usiru*, causing him to reconsider some of his initial views on privatisation, for instance. Such flexibility, he said, was testimony to their belief that "the more you know, you change!" However, as activists could not understand this type of evolution in thought and action, they tended to dismiss such flexibility as being inconsistent. In a similar vein, Murthy discussed *Praja's* "agility" or "flexibility" with pride, noting that it allowed members to tailor their goals and methods to suit different audiences. This allowed *Praja* to advocate a multiplicity of citizen-advocated concepts and follow a variety of actions to achieve its goals—which distinguished it from activist and other traditional CSOs.

Attitudes towards the Internet: Refuting the Elitist Argument

As the *Hasiru Usiru* chapter has shown, civil society actors' perceptions and ideologies influenced, to a great extent, whether and how the Internet was used, even in an information/new media-rich environment like Bangalore. The core group viewed the Internet as an exclusionary medium that further alienated marginalised populations in the city. In this context, *Praja* was seen as an elitist organisation, catering to the middle and upper-middle classes, due to its large-scale Internet use and engagement activities. Moreover, the core group and closely allied members viewed *Praja* as undertaking activities in areas of the city that they resided or worked in, which included more affluent neighbourhoods and gated communities. These reasons and the perceived ideological incompatibilities combined to make the core group wary of *Praja's* actions and intentions, which prevented meaningful engagement between them.

Praja's key members were aware of these frictions, but disputed the notion that using the Internet was elitist, arguing that their activities were for the benefit of the whole city, rather than the middle and upper class groups that the organisation was largely comprised of. Members refuted the notion that activities were conducted only in affluent neighbourhoods, arguing that they worked with any group and community that approached them for assistance. In fact, all interviewees with whom I discussed this issue, including RAAG members, website members, and government officers, shared the view that disadvantaged groups and communities also stood to benefit from *Praja's* activities. Thus, while interviewees acknowledged the digital divide in the city, they pointed out that *Praja's* activities tried to represent the interests of those who did not have the time or resources to participate in civic affairs:

So you can take things up on behalf [of others]. The thing is, the good thing about the Internet is, guys who can afford to have Internet, are probably at a level where they can afford to give you some time. Some people say: "Hey, you can't go the masses." The masses, the poor that you want to go to, they don't have time. If a guy has ten minutes free he'll go and try to make ten more rupees. Guys who are on the Internet, *thankfully*, can spare that time. They can't give you two hours,

but they can give 25 minutes. It's a perfect medium, according to my mind. (Yogesh, RAAG, personal interview, June 28, 2011)

As the above excerpt indicates, the idea that *Praja* was an elitist medium was dispelled by noting that members undertook activities on behalf of groups and individuals in the city who did not have the time or resources to do so. Yogesh decried criticisms that the platform did not reach out to “the masses”, noting that the urban poor did not have the time to deal with issues of governance and reform, since they were faced with pressing concerns of livelihood and survival. On the other hand, he was grateful that people who accessed the Internet usually had some spare time to engage with civic issues. Several members referred to the commuter rail project (*Namma Railu*) as a prime example of the non-elitist nature of *Praja*'s activities. Both supporters and detractors of *Praja* considered *Namma Railu*—which would greatly benefit commuters in a city choked by traffic jams and pollution—a landmark project. RAAG members pointed out that this crucial project would not benefit the project leaders *per se* (who commuted by their private vehicles), but would benefit all users of the rail system. In this way, their work was also described as a type of “philanthropy”, where issues were taken up on behalf of other city residents, with the objective being systemic reforms and not personal gain. Retirees and website members Raghavan and Shashi (personal interview, December 13, 2011) similarly pointed out that members dedicated personal resources, time and energy to make a difference to city affairs. In particular, they were appreciative of the role of younger members, who contributed to *Praja* amidst their frenetic daily schedules. They praised members' contributions towards improving urban systems, which, they stressed, should not be downplayed by attaching labels such as ‘elite’ or ‘exclusionary’. Hence, although interviewees acknowledged *Praja*'s limited access to (middle class) civil society and citizens, the elitist argument was refuted on the grounds that members were working for the benefit of society as a whole.

With regard to its composition, RAAG member Ashok acknowledged that the platform largely represented the middle classes, but denied that it was elitist, as members tried to find sustainable development solutions for the whole city:

I think if I were to characterise whatever I've seen on *Praja* so far; people, *in general*, if there's a theme, people want a more sustainable [development], the vision seems to be something which is more sustainable: generally, people like public transport, generally people want to see less pollution, people want better quality of life. That's something which everybody wants. Somebody says: "I want parks". They don't say: "I want parks for middle class people"...maybe there's some skew, but this is just a bunch of people trying to do the best they can, there's no intentional stuff [bias], I'm fine with it. (Ashok, personal interview, July 5, 2011)

Ashok noted that, overall, *Praja* members pushed for changes that would benefit the city as a whole, based on an overarching vision for sustainable development. And whereas some discussions concerned issues that were reflective of middle/upper class priorities, such as neighbourhood parks, this did not detract from members' concerns for the city's less affluent residents. Moreover, as the platform was not intentionally an exclusionary medium, and members were genuinely driven to effect sustainable change, interviewees believed that the elitist label was unfounded. Further, in terms of composition, the site was described as being "inclusive, no doubt about it" (Raghavan), as it comprised members from different backgrounds, who combined their expertise to tackle civic and political issues. Raghavan was referring to the mix of old and new civil society actors in *Praja*, who blended traditional civil society expertise with technical know-how, as well as other personal and professional skills. To bolster his argument that *Praja* was not an elitist space, he made the distinction between experts and *aam aadmi* (the common man), and reiterated this distinction several times:

For example, this is a tool, I have a car, you have a car, a small car but how much of the car do you know? Have you designed it? No, you are using it. So, this is a vehicle, and those people here, people are fortunate to have these kind who people here, and who works on the ground is different...

...So don't confuse with this and *aam aadmi*; no, this is done for the *aam aadmi*. And the professionals have to do it... (Raghavan, personal interview, December 13, 2011)

Experts who designed tools, such as cars, were to be distinguished from the *aam aadmi*, or the common person, with little or no technical know-how, and for whom the car was fashioned. In a similar manner, in *Praja*, technical expertise was necessary to leverage the Internet effectively, which in turn enabled users to participate in activities that would benefit a variety of social groups and communities. In this way, professionals had an important role to play in the creation and maintenance of the platform, which then enabled activists and others on the ground to take issues forward. By pointing out the distinction between creators and users of a technology, and the fact that the technology professionals created a medium that regular civil society actors could use, Raghavan contested the notion that *Praja* was an elitist medium. Similarly, Shashi acknowledged the limited Internet use among grassroots workers, but noted that *Praja* members tried to help them by providing data, technical expertise, and any other assistance that was requested. Further, several civil society actors, such as NGO members/volunteers, RWA members, etc. who were *Praja* members served as useful liaisons between online and offline activities. In these ways, by helping grassroots workers make use of expertise available on *Praja*, Internet-enabled action could not be seen as entirely elitist.

Yet others challenged the notion that the Internet in India was a very limited domain, highlighting the country's recent strides in new technologies. RAAG member Aman (Skype interview, January 21, 2012) acknowledged that a certain amount of resources was necessary to use the Internet effectively, but pointed out that the higher mobile phone uptake and increased literacy, particularly among the youth, meant that new technologies were increasingly more accessible.⁹³ He argued that although the majority of the population was

⁹³ As per the 2011 Population Census, India's literacy rate was 74.04% - an increase of 9% in the last ten years (<http://www.indiaonlinepages.com/population/literacy-rate-in-india.html>)

not yet connected to the Internet, the vast potential of new technologies to effect change meant that it was not a purely elitist medium either. Government officials I spoke to also rejected the view that *Praja* was an elitist group on account of its Internet base, as new technologies were increasingly available to ordinary citizens across the country:

See, today everybody is using technology. If a person, like a vegetable vendor, is using a cell phone, do you say he is elitist? So, there is a platform available, as long as the platform is kept alive by provoking debate and on various issues that *concern* citizens, I feel that's a good thing. And, as I said earlier you really cannot, ok, see, you may say you are not really working at the grassroots level...But we also require somebody working together to promote, to force the government to come out with some *policies*, or translating or taking government policies and giving them wider reach and *publicity*. So, to that extent I really don't think using technology can be considered as elitist, in any *manner*. (Sita, personal interview, December 30, 2011).

Government official Sita argued against terming technology use or the *Praja* platform as 'elitist' for the following reasons: firstly, with increasing access to new technologies, the Internet could no longer be seen as an elitist domain. Secondly, the productive way in which *Praja* used the Internet, to provoke debate and participation on citizen-related matters, served the public interest. She added that while *Praja* may not actually work at the grassroots level, it played an extremely important role in the area of urban transport as a lobby group. Greater computerisation and the increasing use of ICTs within government was also a positive factor, and government officers and personnel were slowly learning to accept and adjust to new technologies in their work. Here, it is important to note that the government interviewees emphasised that despite Bangalore's 'IT City' label, most government and civil society actors still preferred physical interactions and activities, and it was in this respect that *Praja's* offline activities were all the more crucial.

Another set of arguments rejecting the elitist angle was propounded by interviewees who reasoned that Internet-enabled initiatives were more realistic than elitist, given the rising Internet penetration in India. Describing *Praja* as “investing in the future”, website member Sanjeev (Skype interview, January 7, 2012) opined that while the Internet may be elitist in India at the moment, this would not be the case in the near future. He thereby refuted the elitist notion, arguing that *Praja*’s value would be understood once the Internet became more routinised in the Indian context. Ignoring the Internet on the grounds that it was exclusionary or elitist was considered a short-sighted strategy for civil society, particularly in light of the benefits accrued in terms of public participation, information sharing, citizen-government engagement, etc. *Praja*’s short-term successes in this regard prompted RAAG member Yogesh to defend the online medium, decrying the notion that an Internet-based space was automatically elitist as a “myth”. In a similar vein, RAAG member Murthy criticised the ‘Internet-as-elitist’ angle as “rhetoric”, noting that those who “think that anything done on the Internet is elitist” were imprudent (personal interview, June 28, 2011). He noted that people who made such claims often belonged to old civil society, and like *Praja* members, represented a higher socio-economic segment of the population that could “afford to think about others”. In this way, he pointed to the irony of the elitist argument made by traditional civil society actors, who were reasonably well off themselves and had access to new technologies as well.

RAAG members were aware that the Internet was a sticky point in establishing and cementing connections with old civil society, as it was guided by ideological and other considerations:

In fact, everything is people’s perceptions, convictions, and what their worldview is. In the past, we have spoken to many people, but somehow, we have not been able to convince them, they think this will not work. So, for some reason, they have not taken the approach that *Praja* has. But we’re fine, because people do come (laughs) with prior convictions. (Aman, Skype interview, January 21, 2012)

Aman pointed out that as civil society actors’ perceptions, convictions and worldviews influenced, to a great extent, whether and how they used the Internet,

they had remained unconvinced by *Praja's* arguments. Such incompatibilities effectively stymied collaborative efforts, and created ruptures between older and newer forms of civil and political engagement. In such a situation, the creative and strategic use of the Internet to meet common civil society goals, viz., to facilitate greater public participation and citizen-government interaction, was impeded by the lack of cooperation from within civil society itself. While key *Praja* members were keenly aware of the limitations of traditional civil society, they recognised its crucial role in democratic engagement. This led to efforts on *Praja's* part to engage with old civil society groups, online and offline. However, the inability to connect the two spaces of engagement proved to be a serious limitation. In the absence of large-scale civil society buy-in, *Praja* had been unable to execute its ambitious expansion plans—which included creating a network of offline actors, involving more CSOs in its activities, and building partnerships with like-minded actors that believed in them. The limited synergies between *Praja* and old civil society highlighted the challenges facing *Praja*, and the complexities arising from the intersections between older and newer, Internet-enabled spaces of engagement.

Conclusion

The case study of *Praja* reveals both the successes and challenges confronting civil society actors as they leverage the Internet to create new spaces for citizen engagement. By using the Internet in a creative and strategic way, *Praja* provides interested citizens an alternative channel to engage with each other and the government. This common space allows citizens to participate in an environment that is safe, as members need not reveal their identity or participate on the ground, if they so wish. Moreover, this common space is always accessible via an Internet connection, and members can participate based on their convenience. Such flexibility is particularly important in cities such as Bangalore, where large distances and busy schedules constrain people from physically coming together as lobby groups. Where *Praja* has been most successful has been the ability to move from the online to offline realm, by taking

crowd-sourced ideas from the platform towards implementation on the ground. In ensuring that projects move towards this stage, strategic tie-ups with various government and non-government actors have been crucial. A recent example is the petition submitted to the Union Railways Minister on June 29, 2014 for the speedy implementation of *Namma Railu* by *Praja* RAAG, in association with its various project partners, including NGOs, apartment associations, and academic institutes, among others (kbsyed61, 2014). Such efforts ensured that the Minister highlighted the issue in his budget speech for 2014-2015, along with measures that would move in the direction of the suburban rail service envisioned by the project's proponents.⁹⁴ Another example of a collaborative effort advancing *Praja's* initial work is the Street Meet, wherein members met at busy intersections to observe and record various—often-dangerous—hindrances faced by pedestrians on a daily basis (observation; silkboard (2011a, 2011b). Notes taken at these observation exercises were submitted to a task force working to improve major junctions for commuters and pedestrians who change buses (Yogesh, personal communication, April 11, 2014). Comprised of various civil society actors, the task force collated citizen feedback and was in the process of preparing a comprehensive report on junction safety in the city (Murthy, personal communication, April 12, 2014). While the platform operated as a repository of information and producer of content (which was available online for anyone to use in any manner), RAAG was the advocacy arm, which operated more like a “regular NGO” on the ground.

However, the case study has also shown that *Praja* faced notable setbacks in its efforts to liaise with traditional civic actors, highlighting disjunctures between newer and older civil society actors and methods. While *Praja* members were keen to establish and reinforce connections on the ground, divergent attitudes regarding the role of ideology and the Internet in activism undermined collective efforts. Whereas *Praja* members tended to adopt a more conciliatory approach when liaising with other civil society actors, the lack of

⁹⁴ <https://www.change.org/p/shri-d-v-sadananda-gowda-union-railway-minister-government-of-india-implement-the-much-delayed-suburban-rail-for-bengaluru-on-top-priority-2/u/53bd76ad84aec80783bdabe6>

reciprocity effectively stymied meaningful engagement. The stereotypical depiction of *Praja* as an elitist organisation was a serious setback, which exposed the limitations of *Praja's* ambitious expansion plans. It also convinced key members that they would need to channel their energies towards groups that appreciated their work and methods of engagement. This changing attitude towards partnerships began to guide future plans, which focused on partnering with like-minded civic groups, and with government agencies outside Bangalore that did not usually get much attention from civil society and the media.

While *Praja* had made great strides in its information and advocacy efforts, members rued the limited participation on the platform, despite Bangalore's relatively large Internet-connected population. In this regard, many interviewees noted that Bangalore's promise as 'IT City' had not entirely extended to the realm of civil society, despite the existence of factors conducive to a fruitful civil society-Internet relationship. The case of *Praja* has shown that even creative and strategic Internet use by civil society in a media-rich city such as Bangalore is constrained by several factors. Among these, the incompatibilities between older and newer forms of civic and political engagement and newer, Internet-enabled forms have been a serious limitation. However, *Praja's* recent successful efforts in liaising with civil society groups, such as Cycle Day, point out that it has been able to overcome these limitations, to a certain extent. By avoiding past mistakes, and learning how to navigate the complex civil society field, *Praja* provides an example of how new, Internet-based entities can create niche spaces of engagement in urban civil society, over a period of time. Moreover, *Praja's* increased acceptance by civil society and government actors also points to its evolution as a serious civil society player in the city. In this way, while but one case, *Praja's* experiences raise important and exciting questions about the possibilities of online and offline civil society synergies, and the role of Internet-based CSOs in Bangalore city. Further, its experiences and challenges hold value in light of the spread of ICT-driven social initiatives in Bangalore, providing possible approaches and explanations to reconciling civil society methods and actors in a media/IT-rich city.

CHAPTER 7: COMPARING THE CASE STUDIES

Chapters 5 and 6 explored the interactions between the Internet and civil society actors in *Hasiru Usiru* and *Praja*, respectively. This chapter continues this line of investigation, providing a comparison of the two case studies based on their relationship with and use of the Internet. The salient differences that emerge between the cases point to the utility of conducting qualitative case study research to investigate hidden or invisible complex social phenomena.

In exploring the relationship between ICTs and civil society, *Hasiru Usiru* and *Praja* were chosen as case studies due to the perceived similarities between the two, viz., their Internet-based structure and activity, a focus on providing spaces for greater public participation and citizen-government engagement, and the emphasis on traffic and transportation (mobility) issues, which made them visible actors in the online and offline public spheres. However, as the case study chapters have revealed, while the cases were similar in some ways, the value of comparison lies in investigating the stark differences between the two, in terms of their attitudes towards and use of the Internet for civic engagement. The following aspects of the cases are discussed in this section: structure (organisation), attitude towards and use of the Internet, the role of ideology, attitudes towards middle-classness, elitism and civic activity, modes of claim-making, nature of online discourse, and structural design and deliberation.

Experiences of Structural Advantages and Constraints

In terms of structure, both organisations have a large number of peripheral members that participate mainly online, and smaller groups working on specific projects on the ground. Both *Hasiru Usiru* and *Praja* have a core of active and well-connected members, who function online and offline to create linkages with citizens and government, and to manage overall operations. As both groups function on the premise that citizen participation is a crucial aspect of democracy, their online spaces are open and accessible to all. Whereas *Praja* allows its discussions and information to be visible to anyone, login (via moderator approval) is required to contribute or participate on the site. This is to ensure that

users adhere to strict site usage guidelines to make discussions constructive, fact-based, and congenial. Membership to the *Hasiru Usiru* e-group requires approval to access the group's information and participate in discussions. However, this is just a formality, due to the group's belief in universal access and participation.

At the time of fieldwork, both groups were struggling with the strengths and limitations of their respective Internet-based structures, albeit in different ways. *Hasiru Usiru* faced a dilemma over how to reconcile its online and offline dimensions, in particular how to make its online space more effective and more aligned to the sentiments of its core group. As the case study has shown, interviews revealed contradictory expectations of membership from core and non-core group members, with confusion arising due to the open nature of the network. To peripheral members, the e-group provided a platform to connect them to the network, thereby overcoming physical and time constraints. E-group members referred to the "voluntary" nature of the network, citing the flexibility it provided in terms of participation as one of its core strengths. The e-group presented peripheral members an alternative space of participation and connectivity, overcoming, to some extent, the disconnect felt when physical participation proved challenging. However, core group members decried these 'benefits' of flexibility as a convenient substitute for actual participation, revealing deep schisms regarding notions of participation, membership and identity. In this situation, the core group's expectations of a more committed membership were at odds with its requirements of an open and informal networked structure. As the core group was reluctant to formalise the network, the absence of a formal structure inhibited commitment due to the lack of enforceable guidelines regarding participation. In the absence of accountability, rules and/or incentives to participate, some peripheral members said they could not commit to the physical demands of *Hasiru Usiru's* activities while being employed full-time. Core group members acknowledged that the lack of participation and involvement by the e-group had created a divide between the two types of

members (core and e-group), and that the issue would remain unresolved while the network's structure remained the same:

Yeah, that has been the *biggest* stumbling block, and there's simply not much we can do, other than what we are trying to do....I personally strongly feel that the network should remain a network. And it should *not* be institutionalised, or it should not be made into an NGO, where few people are taking decisions, and other people just listen to the people who make the decisions. So, in the absence of wanting to do something like that, the frustrating aspects of being part of this network, for now, continues. I think we've not been able to crack it. It has been a big stumbling block; it has been in many ways our failure. But we just have to move forward, we just have to keep doing things. At least that's the way I see it, we just have to keep doing things the way we have been. (Anand, telephone interview, January 14, 2013)

Despite the disconnect some members felt with the e-group, the core group did not wish to compromise on its ideal of collective decision-making, and hence resigned itself to working within the Internet-based networked structure. Another explanation for this detachment was the growth trajectory and changing composition of the mailing list from a close-knit and ideologically homogenous group to a large and diverse crowd of newcomers who joined during and after the Metro protests of 2009. The lack of ideological unity, impersonal character, as well as the lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities of members in an informal set-up made the core group uncomfortable. The reference to the e-group as "a beast, which is not very clear..." (Sheela, personal interview, December 21, 2011) indicated uncertainty about the e-group's role with regard to *Hasiru Usiru's* mandate. At the same time, the core group was also faced with the challenge of scaling up its offline operations, in which it was constrained by the absence of a dedicated pool of members, as well as organisational limitations. These factors generated a deep-seated concern among the core group regarding the network's structure and who and what it actually represented. Such concerns regarding the network's structure and functioning were all the more relevant in light of *Hasiru Usiru's* increasing prominence in the mainstream discourse and public consciousness.

Praja was originally conceived of as being limited to an online platform, to make engagement easier for citizens. However, the realisation by key actors that true engagement could occur only with a combination of online and offline actions was the impetus for the creation of RAAG. Like *Hasiru Usiru*, RAAG members too grappled with the issue of whether to continue with an informal set-up or to formalise their activities. Key actors spoke of the attempts made to function as a regular organisation, including appointing office-bearers, raising funds, conducting monthly status reviews, and setting goals. They also attempted to work within a set of formal rules, including how to raise and spend money, use of *Praja's* name on a written document, how to remove a member, etc. However, as several attempts at registering *Praja* as a formal organisation did not succeed, members decided to abandon that plan, but continued to work within a set of formal rules. A key RAAG member noted how, after a series of discussions, it was decided to retain the existing informal set-up, as members were apprehensive of a formal structure. After attempting to convince them, he too gave in, conceding that the Internet base and its premise of flexibility, was not amendable to a set structure:

The moment you have a *formal* group, it's a little more serious. So I saw some hesitancy, saying, why do we have to get into a formal structure? So I tried to push saying: "No, if we want to do more lets be serious, with some roles, like, we'll have a President, we'll have a Treasurer". [But] that's not what everyone wanted. Because of the nature of the group itself, the promise on which was built, is not amenable to a set structure as well. (Yogesh, personal interview, December 16, 2011)

Thus, key members had to alter their expectations regarding formalisation, based on the majority's apprehension that a formal structure would contravene the flexibility and informality that the Internet afforded. Similarly, over a period of time, they also came to the conclusion that working towards one small goal at a time, rather than a long-term vision, would be more suitable for an Internet-based and diverse group. Interviewees noted that working with short-term goals, such a particular project or event, helped to attract more volunteers, who converged around tangible outcomes. It also helped to reduce conflict that inevitably arose

over conflicting ideologies, as short-term plans were result—and not ideology—oriented. Moreover, as members worked on a voluntary basis, with limited time to contribute to *Praja*, it was thought that long-term goals would be “overkill”, scaring away potential contributors. For these reasons, *Praja* continued to operate as an informal entity for six years, before finally registering itself as a society in 2013.⁹⁵

In recent years, the emphasis has been on expanding its offline activities, and RAAG has undertaken several projects on the ground, in conjunction with government and other civil society actors. From mid-2013 onwards, there was a conscious decision to invest more of RAAG's time on projects than the website, resulting in a slight decline in posts from RAAG members (Yogesh, personal communication, February 26, 2014). As the focus shifted to offline activities, it became essential that the level of online activity be maintained, if not increased. However, *Praja* had to deal with a situation wherein the number of writers (contributors) was disproportionately smaller than the readers, who were akin to passive members (Murthy, personal interview, June 28, 2011). As explained earlier, this was attributed to the unintentional entry barrier created by the emphasis on a high standard of debate and discussion. While the online medium provided greater flexibility to participate, the unofficial yardstick for discussions dissuaded persons who were less inclined or able to devote time and energy to the research and preparation that participation on *Praja* mandated. This, combined with the general apathy towards civic issues displayed by citizens, impeded efforts to encourage existing readers to contribute more, as well to get new members on to the site. To try and overcome this situation, RAAG members strove to “market themselves” and increase their profile among IT savvy audiences, hoping to encourage them to participate in civic affairs. The apathy of the middle class, Internet audiences posed a great problem for *Hasiru Usiru* as well, whose core group decried such inertia. This resulted in the core group's shift in activities to non-Internet enabled populations, from whom it could expect

⁹⁵ Under the ambit of the Karnataka Societies Registration Act of 1960

a degree of commitment and participation, rather than what they viewed as self-serving 'Internet people'.

Attitudes towards Middle-classness, Elitism and Civic Engagement

While both organisations are comprised of predominantly English-speaking middle class members, core members in each respond to this identity in different ways. RAAG members were relatively comfortable with this identity, as *Praja's* mandate and Internet-based structure did not permit deep engagement with the city's less well-off sections. As *Praja* catered to the Internet-enabled sections of society, its efforts to liaise with CSOs on the ground, including *Hasiru Usiru*, were an effort to overcome its limitations in this aspect. On the other hand, *Hasiru Usiru's* discomfort with its Internet-based structure arose as its ideological beliefs clash with this limited character. Hence, while *Praja* had no objection to involving more Internet-connected, middle class citizens, noting that this was their forte, *Hasiru Usiru* was trying to overcome its middle class nature through greater grassroots engagement. *Hasiru Usiru's* negative perception of *Praja* as elitist therefore, arose partly from what it considers the latter's unhealthy dependence on the Internet, which made it a limited space for civic activity.

However, even *Hasiru Usiru's* attempts to broad-base its offline activities were hindered by the general lack of involvement of the general population in civic affairs. As some interviewees pointed out, *Hasiru Usiru's* stakeholders, in general, did not have time to participate in protests and other civil society activities, being preoccupied with issues of survival. It was argued by several interviewees that the poorer classes were less concerned with governance-related issues, such as accountability, transparency, etc., which were mostly intangible benefits. This was more so as politicians provided them tangible benefits, such as money, cooking items, clothes, (even alcohol!) in the run up to elections. The issue of the environment, too, was often considered a niche or

elitist issue, for the same reason that the poorer classes often did not have the wherewithal to participate. As Mawdsley (2004) showed, the middle classes in India have been closely intertwined with environmental issues in the country, with recent attention focused on their role in urban areas. Whereas *Hasiru Usiru's* strategy was to counter the middle class dominance of environmental and other socio-political issues through greater involvement of poorer groups, *Praja's* strategy was to use the Internet to reach out and involve the middle classes in sustainable development issues. The emphasis on changing the city for the better, *Praja* members argued, was proof that it was not an elitist organisation. Members highlighted examples wherein Internet-enabled middle class citizens had effected systemic changes, such as the launch of the commuter rail, which would benefit less well-to-do groups in the city. Similarly, by taking up issues such as the Public Distribution System (PDS)⁹⁶, pedestrian safety, Bus Day, etc., which represented the interests of the less affluent social groups, *Praja* members countered notions of the Internet and Internet use as elitist. The divergent attitude towards the Internet and its use for civic activity was a source of friction between the groups, and the incompatibilities with respect to the Internet, ideology, and modes of engagement are discussed below.

Incompatibilities regarding the Internet and Ideology

As the *Hasiru Usiru* core group viewed the Internet in terms of an exclusionary and limited space, Internet-based CSOs were seen as perpetuating existing societal divisions by limiting access to groups on the wrong side of the digital divide. To some core group members, *Praja's* "excessive" use of the Internet was a key factor in their decision to dissociate from it. To others, *Praja's* 'elitist' nature was also on account of its composition, wherein its main actors

⁹⁶PDS is a government-sponsored chain of fair price shops that distribute basic food and non-food commodities to the needy sections of society at very cheap prices. Beneficiaries can obtain these supplies through ration cards provided to them to the government after a process of verification (<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/definition/Public-distribution-system>)

were perceived to be a group of affluent, middle/upper-class individuals who worked on issues that were in their own interests:

Yes, there are very qualified transportation people [in *Praja*], so they have done lot of stuff on commuter rail, beautiful, there's lot of information there. Some of them now even check *Hasiru Usiru* regularly, so there is some sort of cross-linkages. But they look at *Hasiru Usiru* as *Hasiru Usiru* is too leftist, or they are too *extreme* (laughs). And most of the *Hasiru Usiru* people feel the same way about *Praja*. Because they are too elitist—that's the word. That's what I feel, I don't know how true it is. (Ajay, e-group, personal interview, December 26, 2011)

While *Praja* was commended for its technical expertise and data-driven arguments, it was considered a restricted group working on members' interest areas, rather than the common good. Ajay pointed out that there were cross-linkages between the two groups, but that there was also a type of perceived incompatibility between them. Whereas *Hasiru Usiru* gave the impression of being too "extreme", *Praja* was considered "elitist"—which Ajay admits was a perception, rather than an objective fact. *Praja's* arguments were also described as being too "intellectual", thereby excluding a large segment of the citizenry. Such incompatibilities prevented meaningful collaboration, despite the affordances that the *Praja* platform provided, and the groups' intersecting interests. *Praja* members, too, were aware of the limitations of their platform, particularly in terms of enabling ordinary citizens to participate, which prompted them to identify ways to lower the entry barrier: both intellectually, and technically, by making it easier to use. This proved to be a difficult quandary to resolve, as they did not wish to compromise on the quality of discussion while increasing participation. While they recognised this limitation of the platform, they countered the notion that it was elitist by mere virtue of being Internet-based. Rather, by enabling members to take forward issues on behalf of others and in ways convenient for them to participate in civic affairs, *Praja's* work was described as a type of "philanthropy, at a basic level" (Yogesh, RAAG, personal interview, June 28, 2011). The notion of Internet as elitist was refuted as a "myth" and a type of "rhetoric", and the ideological objections posed by civil society groups, including *Hasiru Usiru*, were cited as pretexts to avoid working together.

Unsurprisingly, differing attitudes towards the Internet produced divergent way in which the Internet was used for civic engagement. While describing the benefits of an Internet-based model, *Praja*'s core members were quick to note that it was not just the technology *per se*, but the organisation's unique approach to engagement, and its method of collaboration that made it a useful model. The core members highlighted that ICTs by themselves were not empowering, but tools whose value derived from how and for what they are used. In this way, *Praja* avoided a hard technologically deterministic approach⁹⁷, as it acknowledged the role of the people in shaping technology and making it work for them. Conversely, this stance can be applied in *Hasiru Usiru*'s case too, as its limited success in using its online spaces could be traced to, among other things, the core group's inability or disinclination to understand and leverage the Internet to a great extent.

The two groups significantly diverged with regard to the role of ideology in their activities, which produced friction and limited avenues for interaction. As discussed in the case study chapters, key *Praja* actors described the platform as ideology plural, and not ideology neutral. Although they believed that members' ideological leanings play an important role in influencing actions, the emphasis was on generating practical solutions, rather than satisfying members' ideological imperatives. The decision to sacrifice ideology was considered suitable in light of the benefits accrued in terms of 'flexibility', 'agility', and efficiency. The disquiet about the rigidity of mooring one's actions around unchanging ideological beliefs, as traditional civil society actors were wont to do, arose from the focus on data-driven solutions. Through this approach, *Praja* preferred to let the data take centre-stage, emphasising the "logical"—rather than "ideological"—in its activities. Moreover, in light of the Internet-based structure, with its large and diverse audience, short-term goals, rather than a long-term, ideologically centred vision, was deemed appropriate to mobilise and retain members.

⁹⁷ Marx & Marx (1994) pointed out that technological determinism takes several forms, which occupy spaces along a spectrum between "hard" and "soft" extremes, depending on whether agency is attributed to the technology itself or to the larger social and cultural structure, respectively.

In a similar way, the *Hasiru Usiru* core group had come to recognise that it was constrained by its Internet-based structure to underplay its ideological focus online. The heterogeneous nature of the e-group, where members were united by a common cause, viz., preservation of trees, rather than any ideological motivation *per se*, meant that the core group could not, and did not, want to impose its ideology on other members. In this situation, in order to retain the inclusive and collaborative nature of the network, ideology was downplayed in favour of collective approaches to problem solving. While this was considered expedient, some core group members expressed dissatisfaction that the negative connotations of ideology online compelled them to side-line their political inspirations:

I don't think it [ideology] is a bad word, but every time you bring up the word or talk about it there is a group of people who very strongly oppose it... there is this *sense* that, because e-group is so large and varied, there is a sense that, "why do you want to talk about ideology? Why do you want to talk about all this? Let's just make sure the work gets done. That's it." So they think that the means are not as important as the ends. And there have been several discussions, several people have come up and said: "let's not get into these discussions on ideology, it's not worth it, we need to focus on the issue". I mean, for people like me, it's like: "what issue are you focusing on if you're not thinking about your politics?" Everything is political. (Sheela, core group, personal interview, December 21, 2011)

As a section of e-group members preferred to focus on actions rather than grapple with the underlying ideology, which was deemed a time-consuming and sensitive issue, the core group refrained from ideological discussions online. However, as Sheela pointed out, to the core group, the means was of utmost importance, and she questioned how people could undertake actions without having an internal politics guiding them. The staunch belief that each civic actor must work with an internal politics or overarching ideology was also one of the basic objections that the core group had about *Praja*. This difference in orientation became clearer as I spoke to key actors regarding the reasons for their emphasis on public transportation. In *Hasiru Usiru's* case, the issue was viewed primarily through a social equity lens, and activities undertaken to bridge the gap in public transport options for the more vulnerable sections of the

population. Alternatively, on the *Praja* site, the focus on traffic issues was discussed as arising from popular demand, as it was a pressing and visible middle-class concern that affected members' quality of life. In this way, the focus on resolving transportation problems emanated from very different lens, and while both groups were working towards sustainable transportation solutions for the city, the basic philosophical differences rendered cooperation improbable.

Incompatible Modes of Claim-Making

Another related area where the two case study organisations differed substantially was their methods of engagement, which I present in terms of 'modes of claim-making'. Claim-making by civil society is the means by which civic actors pursue shared interests, by presenting claims before governments, businesses or other actors, from which there will likely arise conflicts (Dörner & List, 2012; Tilly & Tarrow, 2007). A variety of claim-making repertoires exist, which vary based on place, time, structure of the political system, and nature of the actors involved, to name a few (see also Haunss, 2007). The case study chapters have shown that *Hasiru Usiru* and *Praja* varied greatly in their modes of claim-making, with the former employing forms of action and self-presentation common to social movements, while the latter chose a newer style of Internet-based engagement. Interviews and observation pointed to significant differences in the ways key actors from both organisations conducted their activities, and differentiated themselves from the other's modes of claim-making. *Praja*, for instance, took pride in what members called its "constructive" approach to engaging with government (and other CSOs), which was differentiated from the more aggressive activism of groups such as *Hasiru Usiru*. Constructive engagement meant a conscious effort to keep the "tone down" or neutral when talking to government officials, to let the information presented speak for itself, and to provide detailed options/alternatives, without pressuring the government to choose a final solution. This was distinguished from conventional civil society actors who tried to impose their viewpoints on the government, thereby escalating tensions. As noted in the *Praja* chapter, interviewees often referred to

the Anna Hazare-led anti-corruption campaign, which was at its peak during the second round of fieldwork, as an example of a flawed, antagonistic civil society. Their concern about the campaign's increasingly aggressive approach was reflective of a sentiment voiced by a section of prominent civil society actors, who viewed Hazare's tactics as unproductive and even 'undemocratic' (see Daigle, 2011; Roy, 2011).

Some RAAG members also noted that their methods enabled citizens to participate in a safe environment, where they would not be physically or psychologically threatened:

The idea is, how do you get citizens to participate? First thing, give them the ability, give them the space. That has been provided. Space is there, you give them a space where they don't feel threatened, which is through anonymity, and online identities, things like that, that is also there. And, the participatory nature is also there; you get to discuss, you get to talk, without having any commitment to come and do anything. We never force people to come and say, stand there holding a placard. (Murthy, personal interview, June 28, 2011)

By ensuring members' privacy, *Praja* was thought to be a conducive environment for participation in civic affairs, without the obligation of physical involvement. This non-coercive space, where members would not be "forced" to hold placards and endanger themselves was distinguished from the methods of activist groups. Such a comparison was possibly related to the collective action of citizens and civic groups, including *Hasiru Usiru*, protesting road-widening and tree cutting on Sankey Tank road, which had reached a crescendo during the period of fieldwork. In July 2011, police forcibly evicted, and in some cases manhandled, and arrested protesters, including women and eminent citizens, with no plausible charges against them (The Hindu, 2011, Vincent, 2011). In a move that was widely condemned, protesters were physically dragged away from the protest site and held in police stations until the evening, with charges against them dropped only after sustained intervention by prominent civil society activists (Mudalgi, 2011). In such a situation, key *Praja* members were wary of being drawn into such confrontational situations, which could endanger members'

safety, as well as compromise existing relations with the government. While some members viewed their role as representatives of citizens' 'voice' as clearly distinguished from those on the 'frontline' of activism, others *Praja* noted that in some situations protest was clearly necessary:

I don't know what a typical NGO is, but people tend to take a more confrontational stand, in general: "Oh, you're cutting down trees". Maybe it's the way to do something, because once people cut the tree down you can't bring it back. But in *Praja* you won't find too much support for this: "Oh, let's go protest". But I think for some things you have to protest. (Ashok, RAAG. Personal interview, December 27, 2011)

Overall, while members were appreciative of the benefits of *Praja's* collaborative approach, they did acknowledge that protest was necessary at certain times. As Ashok noted above, sometimes confrontation prevented the authorities from bulldozing their way through disputed activities, such as indiscriminate tree felling. And although there was not much support within *Praja* for such protest action, members did see why other groups were forced to take to the streets and prevent illogical government actions. Some *Praja* members opined that the absence of collective action had diluted its activities. For instance, website member Sanjeev pointed out that the reluctance to protest had resulted in the lack of a strong collective voice, which limited *Praja's* ability to generate the required impact in city affairs. Here, *Hasiru Usiru's* methods, despite their limitations, were considered vital to create "noise", and use it as a "stick" to prod the government into action:

And also, I feel that, I may be wrong on this, but I feel that over a period of time *Praja* has created, like the point that I said about not being aggressive, but being constructive – so with whoever *Praja* has actually interacted, *Praja* has been successful in doing that. I am not so sure about other groups like *Hasiru Usiru*, or whether *they* have managed to do that. [But] the other thing is, that I think in the current system there *is* a place for *Hasiru Usiru* as well. It is (laughs) because they create so much of noise that people get scared about doing wrong things. I mean, they have kind of a stick, but that stick is also needed right now. (Sanjeev, Skype interview, January 7, 2012)

Sanjeev noted that by creating noise and demanding government action in full public and media view, groups like *Hasiru Usiru* put the government on the defensive, goading it to action. This sentiment was also expressed by some *Hasiru Usiru's* e-group members, who expressed admiration for its methods of claim-making but found they were unable to work within this framework. While the emphasis on protests and court cases had proved effective in bringing lake and tree protection to the mainstream consciousness, interviewees told me that such methods were often incompatible with their own strengths and inclinations. Interviews and observation also revealed that *Hasiru Usiru's* emphasis on protest as a legitimate means of dissent had alienated it from some civil society groups and actors who believed cooperation would be more advantageous than confrontation. *Hasiru Usiru* e-member Vineet (personal interview, December 21, 2011) strove to provide a balanced view of the two groups, describing both roles as important, and attributed their distinctive working styles to different underlying philosophies. As both groups embraced different modes of claim-making, which produced varied strategies of public participation, each played a different, but important, role in the city. While *Hasiru Usiru's* methods tended to question the underlying power structures and their decision-making rationale in the interests of a more equitable system, *Praja's* activities focused on working within its own and the government's limitations to advocate concepts in a collaborative manner. These divergent approaches, and their underlying influences are also visible in the nature of interactions on their online spaces.

Nature of Online Discourse

Both groups are moderated to ensure that spam, and abusive or other detrimental posts do not overwhelm the online space, and to ensure that only topics relevant to the groups' mandate are discussed. In this way, moderation was more of a light or invisible type, designed to create a conducive environment for discussion, rather than to curtail free speech. During the period of observation, discussions on *Praja* were conducted largely in the absence of conflicts or personal remarks, where a variety of opinions were discussed with

little or no personal animosity among members. While this could be due to the fact that ideology was not the platform's driving force, it could also be attributed to the clearly stipulated policy on language and decorum. Under this policy, which was cemented over a period of time, antagonising or acrimonious posts could be edited or deleted entirely. An examination of the archives revealed that in its initial stages, tensions began to emerge over the nature and language of posts, and how to fairly and reasonably monitor comments. To resolve such issues, a moderation system was launched on August 6, 2009, which enabled the community to participate to 'flag' content deemed unfit for publishing (tech, Moderation launched on Praja [Blog post], 2009). In this way, the moderation system was designed to work in a democratic and transparent way, and to retain the "no-nonsense flavour of *Praja*" (ibid). When more tensions became apparent as it expanded, the moderation system was updated, with members' inputs, to stem the "flood of opinionated, offtopic, philosophical and ideological preaching type posts on Praja":

Clearly, such hassles are to be expected. But it will be great to hear from members, especially the ones who do not write as often (mostly readers) on what they would like to see implemented.

Remember, we wish to stay as open as possible. But we want to avoid becoming an "anything goes" place, our wish is to attract smart and constructive citizens, and the "influencers" of the society, like netas⁹⁸, babus⁹⁹, journalists and activists.

Essentially, it would be good to put some systems in place before things get worse. (tech, July 27, 2009)

In this way, moderation on *Praja* was designed to keep the site relevant and interesting, with self-moderation encouraged to avoid wasting moderators' time. Thereafter, moderation evolved to include a spam control feature, in light of the deluge of spam posts, wherein posts by new users had to be approved by admin first (tech, Spam Control Feature [Blog post], 2010). In the early stages, this feature, in conjunction with the institution of a panel to decide the suitability

⁹⁸ Slang for politicians

⁹⁹ Slang for bureaucrats

of posts, gave rise to frictions along the way. Such frictions occurred when users questioned the rationale of moderation with regard to their posts, or were unable to self-moderate to the extent that the moderators or admin envisioned. RAAG member Ashok noted the difficulties faced by members, especially those accustomed to conventional modes of civic activity, as they adjusted to new rules of engagement on the platform. In particular, getting “old-timers” to structure their online talk, to make it relevant to other members, and to introduce topics relevant to *Praja’s* mandate, were some areas where conflicts arose. Over a period of time, however, as members understood the rules of engagement on the platform, and became accustomed to working within this framework, there were fewer occasions for strife. This could be the reason that moderation did not appear as a contentious issue on *Praja* during the observation period, as there was already an established convention within which members participated.

The *Hasiru Usiru* e-group also functioned largely with a light touch moderation policy, which was intended to screen for spam, and to filter out offensive posts, as well as posts not related to the network’s mandate. As there was no formal policy document available on the site, features of its moderation policy were identified based on an examination of messages on the forum. Messages revealed that policy elements were derived through a process of collective brainstorming, and that the policy developed in a consensual manner. The main task of moderators included approving membership so that bots, etc. did not get in, and to ensure that posts were not offensive in nature, with the objective of preventing flaming, which had happened for brief periods in 2011 and 2012, before moderators intervened. Moderators were also involved when the form of posts was deemed “offensive”, like posting a link, without an explanation of the issue, or cc-ing to multiple lists (unless the situation was grave enough to warrant the attention of several groups simultaneously), or when a member’s digital signature was far longer than the content of the post, to name a few. Moderators would display their comments at the end of the offending post in square brackets to notify the member and advise him/her not to repeat the mistake. In particular, tensions arose several times when a member posted links

to discussions on other e-groups of which he was a member, including *Praja*. Core members opined that such actions diverted members' attention to other e-groups, without an adequate discussion of the topic on *Hasiru Usiru* itself. Although the purported intention of the offending member was to link debates relevant to both groups, to make *Hasiru Usiru* members understand other points of view, and to avoid cluttering the e-group with too much information from other sites (interviews, observation), the disregard for the moderation policy—rather than the topic or content of the message—incensed the core group, which placed the member on “moderation watch” (#17212, May 7, 2013). As has been discussed in the *Hasiru Usiru* case study, core group members asserted that content was not moderated, and that the discussion of ideologically opposed viewpoints was accepted. In cases, including the one above, what had irked core members was the disregard for the group's posting etiquette, and the disparaging, or condescending tone of the author(s).

While abusive or unproductive content was prohibited, members were expected to self-moderate in this regard, which often resulted in acrimonious exchanges and name-calling on the mailing list. Friction on the group regarding the tone and language of mails arose as content was not moderated (that is, mails were not edited or deleted by moderators), resulting in unproductive posts that often produced a chain of rancorous messages, before the issue was resolved or died down. While messages contrary to the core group's ideological orientations did appear in discussions, observation revealed that there appeared to be less tolerance for viewpoints that challenged the core group's assumptions. On several occasions, disaffected members pointed out that views critical of or in contrast to the core group were not well received, and that proponents of such views were subject to verbal attacks. An e-group member noted that in the past, “a lot of forcing of opinion used to happen”, which changed with the influx of new members, whose new ideas broadened the scope of the network's discourse beyond the core group's ideology (Vineet, personal interview, December 21, 2011). Overall, interactions on *Hasiru Usiru* were more fraught with tensions than *Praja*, with the network's activist orientation and style apparent in its online

interactions. On the other hand, *Praja*'s emphasis on cooperation, in conjunction with its strict moderation system, created an online environment that was more positive and conducive to collaboration. In this way, I have argued that the groups' respective modes of claim-making influenced, to a certain extent, the nature of their online discourse. Another factor that could account for the difference in the nature of deliberation and discussions was the structural design of the online spaces themselves, which is explained below.

Relationship between Structural Design and Deliberation

Praja member Sanjeev, who had also been a *Hasiru Usiru* e-member in the past, suggested that structural design played a role in influencing the nature of online discussion. His experiences allowed him to make a more informed comparative assessment of both online spaces, including how structural design influenced interactions. He noted that whereas *Praja*'s open-access platform made members more responsible for what they said, this was not always the case in *Hasiru Usiru*, where email-based communication provided the freedom to say things that "should not be said on a public forum":

And I think since it's an open forum, *Praja*, one has to be lot more responsible towards what they are writing. So there is a lot of respect for what the other person has to say. I also have been a part of *Hasiru Usiru*, and I sometimes feel that's not the case. I mean, email as a platform gives full liberty to say things which should not be said on a public forum. (Sanjeev, Skype interview, January 7, 2012)

Sanjeev's observations pointed me to arguments contending that the structural design of online spaces significantly affected the type and quality of discussions taking place within them. Authors such as Wright & Street (2007), Zhang (2007), and Black (2011) have pointed out that the structural characteristics controlled by creators, such as forms (bulletin boards vs. email lists), openness (with/without registration), diversity (homogeneous vs. heterogeneous participants), regulation (with/without moderators), and so on, influenced the deliberative aspects of an online group. Black (2011) noted that careful design choices that matched features with the goals of a forum, while

creating an environment in which participants felt safe, respected, and listened to, would be the most productive choice. In *Praja's* case, the platform was designed to facilitate structured public participation by uniting disparate actors, and providing them a safe and convenient space for civic engagement. Here, the three co-creators, with their technological/software backgrounds, played a critical role in designing the system towards these ends. This is what Wright & Street (2007) have referred to as the “politics of technology” (p. 855), wherein the political choice in the creation of technologies plays a key role in the deliberative potential of Internet spaces. As the *Praja* platform’s strengths and limitations have already been discussed in detail in the case study, they are briefly revisited here with reference to the role of design in fostering deliberation.

A key feature that influenced the quality of discussions was the element of anonymity, wherein members could choose whether to remain anonymous or to adopt pseudonyms in their interactions on the platform. A co-founder noted that the choice to remain anonymous was significant as it gave members a “voice” in public affairs, without the accompanying fear of possible repercussions by government or civil society. Moreover, in the absence of time and other physical constraints, members could practice reasoned deliberation, bolstered by the group’s policy of promoting group over individual recognition, which gave members less impetus to say or do things for publicity or personal gain. Members also had the choice to use real names and identities, which became common in due course as they interacted with and became more familiar with one another in the physical world, and developed a sense of camaraderie. Key members also revealed their identities over a period of time as they moved towards a greater offline presence, where advocacy mandated real interactions with government. A combination of offline collaborations and morning meetings (which were discontinued), allowed greater interaction among active members, and produced a sense of “community”:

Benefits are in terms of community, that is our USP, and over a period of time that will become our, umm, like, if there is competition from any other kind of a platform, this community will become our, umm, I mean, they can create a platform, but they can’t create a community. That,

and it kind of becomes a snowballing problem, so suppose if you want to be part of a community, where would you want to start a community? You would rather be a part of a community that is already effective. I think community is one of the *biggest* assets that we have right now. We are still trying to leverage it in some way or the other. (Sanjeev, *Praja* e-member, Skype interview, January 7, 2012)

For Sanjeev, therefore, one of *Praja*'s biggest successes was the creation of a "community", which he described as its USP (Unique Selling Point). The attempts to foster community, and the benefits derived from being part of the *Praja* community were also referred to by some other interviewees. The site was described variously as a community for learning, sharing, and problem solving, which allowed like-minded people to connect and collaborate on issues of mutual interest. *Praja* was also described as a platform wherein one could interact with a variety of perspectives, thereby building tolerance for other viewpoints and ideologies. RAAG member Aman (Skype interview, January 21, 2012) noted that the diversity of opinion on *Praja* encouraged members to consider and respect others' points of view, rather than a type of enforced obedience to a dominant viewpoint. The sense of community, diversity of participants, acceptance of competing perspectives, and the personal connections between members, contributed to the overall orderly nature of discussions on the site, despite the occurrence of regular disagreements. In these ways, online and offline methods and tools combined to create design features that encouraged deliberation and decisions based on some sort of mutual consensus.

Above all, however, there was one key design factor that influenced the quality and nature of discussions, viz., the moderated (regulated) nature of the site, which weeded out unproductive posts or posts that did not adhere to its strict and detailed content policy. Members appreciated this aspect, pointing out that there was a healthy respect on the site for other's opinions due to the constructive environment conscientiously created by the moderators. E-member Shashi (personal interview, December 13, 2011) noted that while moderation played a key role, there were overall very few instances of people deviating from the online decorum, as "everybody realizes their own responsibilities". This type of moderation was also praised by government official Rajeev (personal

interview, December 28, 2011), who noted that only well-moderated online groups could enhance citizen-government engagement.

On the other hand, the *Praja* platform also suffered from some design flaws that inhibited deliberation, such as the site's user interface, which required a certain amount of time to adjust to. Learning to use the site effectively, and adjusting to its data-driven style of discussions, required some level of commitment, which could deter interested readers from contributing to discussions. Government official Chandrasekhar (email interview, December 30, 2011) suggested that *Praja* consider using Facebook to encourage greater public participation in its activities. The positive experiences of Facebook use by some local government departments, such as the Bangalore Traffic Police¹⁰⁰ (Dev, 2011; Saxena, 2011) and Bangalore Electricity Supply Company or BESCOM¹⁰¹ (Laveena, 2013; Mohan, 2013), prompted officials to consider Facebook, with its user-friendly features, for citizen engagement. This issue was discussed on *Praja* as well, with the need for department-specific Facebook pages cited due to Facebook's 'cool' factor among the youth, its greater reach among cyber audiences, its agenda-setting role for mainstream media, and the ability for citizens to interact with government in real-time (murali772, 2011). In addition, as the BESCOM head explained on the platform, a shift to Facebook was necessary as:

There are so many civic websites, and it's not possible for anybody in BESCOM to keep searching the sites and responding to the issues raised.

So, we have Facebook page and website. (namma bescom or md bescom manivannan) Kindly post in that. (mani1972, July 19, 2012)¹⁰²

As it would be unfeasible for civic agencies to visit various public forums (both online and offline), a Facebook page provided the optimum solution to interact with the public and generate feedback. Studies have shown that

¹⁰⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/BangaloreTrafficPolice>

¹⁰¹ <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Bescom/669321596427980>

¹⁰² <http://praja.in/en/blog/psaram42/2012/07/13/bescom-website-experience>

government agencies adopt Facebook to “be where the users are”, and for the opportunities the social networking service provides for rapid dissemination of information and dialogue with the public, which traditional communication channels do not provide (Hofmann, Beverungen, Räckers & Becker, 2013; Magnusson, Bellström, & Thoren, 2012). However, as *Praja* was designed to engineer serious and analytical discussions, this limited its appeal to a smaller group of committed people. Its user interface was distinct, therefore, from the Facebook interface, which is more conducive to one-off contributions, as well as for online and offline mobilisations, rather than sustained discussion. *Praja* co-founder Yogesh (personal interview, December 16, 2011) explained that as the weakness of the interface became clearer, he had attempted to change the site layout. However, other members, who were already comfortable with the site design, resisted these efforts. Overall, despite the limitations of the user interface, other structural features of the platform, notably its structured discussion format, the option of anonymity, diversity of viewpoints and participants, and its strict moderation policy fostered a climate favourable to online deliberation.

In *Hasiru Usiru*'s case, the expansion of the mailing list from a smaller, ideologically homogeneous group to a large and scattered heterogeneous entity proved problematic for deliberation. As explained in the case study chapter, due to its diverse composition, the mailing list was no longer representative of the larger ideology within which the core group operated. Not wishing to alienate interested members, the core group endeavoured to steer clear of explicitly ideological discussions on the mailing list. Moreover, as some e-members had expressed reservations about ideological discussions on the group, discussions tended to revolve around practical, actionable items. In recent years, the e-group has functioned more as a space for information sharing, posting of news articles and event-related information, rather than debates or discussions. This irked some core group members, who opined that in the absence of meaningful debate and follow-up action, the mailing list had ceased to be of value to the larger *Hasiru Usiru* cause. Additionally, the non-participation of majority of e-group

members further stripped it of a deliberative character. The consequent lack of a robust online forum prompted some core group members to reduce their engagement on the e-group, and focus on discussing important issues within smaller groups:

Maybe because the nature of the e-group, is more become just information sharing, so I feel that maybe I [can be] involved in something else. So I'm not so active in terms of posting information. Even engaging in debates only if something really makes me angry. That's really when I usually respond otherwise just I speak about it with people I know. (Sheela, core group, personal interview, December 21, 2011)

Unfortunately, the reduced participation on the mailing list by core group members further limited its deliberative character, as it lowered opportunities for interaction and informed discussions. Alpay (2005) has noted that for email groups to successfully produce an outcome, the following conditions are expected to exist: (i) members share common aims, goals or objectives, (ii) group members openly perceive themselves as being a group, and (iii) group members expect to interact to reach an effective decision. In the *Hasiru Usiru* e-mail group, however, limited interactions between members, including in face-to-face situations, and the absence of shared goals and shared group identity negatively affected group dynamics. This, in turn, hindered the quality of discussions, reducing the effectiveness of the group and its decision-making processes.

While discussions were generally amiable, an impolite or provocative comment by a member could quickly descend into a flurry of heated exchanges. Discussions on opposing ideas and ideologies often turned into impassioned debates, accompanied by a burst of repartees and verbal jousting. Several posts also reflected that “ego battles” accompanied staunch positions during debates, with the result that issues could not be resolved in an amicable manner. In such cases, as highlighted by an e-member below, the absence of a definitive moderation policy or guidelines precipitated the deterioration of online discussions:

So the debate in front of this group is straightforward: What is the standard for accountability that we want to maintain on this list? After all, writing emails to Hasiru Usiru is a privilege but it is less of a privilege than public office. So perhaps we would want to have more relaxed standards of accountability than the Parliamentary standard. I ask this question genuinely with no predetermined answer to offer. But it might be a good way to go about drawing the line of what is an acceptable argument and what is a personal attack. (#15633, April 3, 2012)

This post was in response to a series of sharp exchanges between two members; while both agreed that robust disagreements were integral to intellectual freedom, it highlighted the need to clarify the kind of language that would pass muster on the forum. This distinction is important for email groups due to the absence of certain communication methods, such as non-verbal cues, delayed or incoherent discussions, and the lowered sense of social presence, which increased dissenting views online (Alpay, 2005; Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009). The presence of disagreement and heated debate online in itself is not necessarily a bad thing, with proponents pointing to its advantages as a productive tool for robust analysis and free speech (see also Papacharissi, 2004; Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009). This sentiment was also raised by an e-member, whose participation often provoked others to confront and debate issues:

Firstly, I fully subscribe to what Salman Rushdie has stated as *"Freedom of thought is not a tea-party, not a place where people sit about politely and make gentle, inoffensive, tedious chit-chat. True intellectual freedom, from which artistic freedom derives, is a rough and tumble thing, and strongly argued disagreement is its hallmark, not meek agreement or acquiescence"*. (#15640, April 4, 2012)

Although the mailing list did allow for uninhibited and diverse discussion, the lack of clear guidelines to distinguish between heated talk and uncivility (Papacharissi, 2004), the lack of respect for collective values by some members, and the tendency to stick to one's entrenched positions dampened the discourse. I also observed that viewpoints that conflicted with the core group were often rebuffed, followed by discussions becoming more personal and less objective. In

these situations, the opportunity that an online discussion group provided its members to understand others' views and to re-evaluate their preconceived opinions (Wojcieszak & Mutz, 2009) was lost. To sum up, the lack of a cogent moderation system, the core group's rather perfunctory engagement with the mailing list, and the limited consideration for its design features combined to reduce deliberation opportunities on the *Hasiru Usiru* e-group.

Conclusion

This section has undertaken a comparative look at how two prominent Internet-based CSOs in Bangalore, *Hasiru Usiru* and *Praja*, approach and use the Internet for civic engagement activities. The two cases vary significantly in their practices and priorities of ICT use, which are both influenced by, and in turn influence, their attitude towards the Internet as a tool for democratic engagement. The comparative analysis has revealed that the attitude towards the Internet or ICTs by key actors subsequently impacts the structure and design of online spaces. For instance, the positive attitude to the Internet displayed by *Praja's* key actors is visible in the attention paid to the platform's design as an interactive space for public participation. On the other hand, the *Hasiru Usiru* core group's pessimistic view of the Internet as exclusionary, as an amplifier, and as a realm of ideas rather than action, precluded meaningful consideration of its online space. Along with ideology or the basic underlying motivations of actors, design influenced civic actors' modes of claim-making, which in turn influenced the nature of online discourse. Hence, the *Hasiru Usiru* core group's primarily socialist leanings, and its negative view of the Internet as exacerbating social divisions, produced an emphasis on offline activities. Further, its assertive modes of claim-making, combined with a limited consideration of the email group's design features, resulted in reduced opportunities for online deliberation. In contrast, *Praja's* emphasis on collaborative modes of claim-making, in conjunction with a measured consideration of platform design features, fostered a more favourable climate for deliberation, consensus, and decision-making.

Notwithstanding the challenges facing *Hasiru Usiru* and *Praja* in their relationship with the Internet, and despite their structural and contextual constraints, they have persisted in their quest for a more participatory society and polity. The sincerity of both groups to their stakeholders and target audience, and to the larger goal of democratic engagement is without question. Both occupy an important role in Bangalore's public sphere, contributing to the public good by propagating ideas of sustainable, citizen-oriented development. Their significance in the city's civil society space, and the impact of their activities on the urban fabric renders an examination of their activities, and the Internet's role in them, important and timely. The Internet's role in influencing social change becomes all the more significant due to the technology-rich context within which these organisations operate. With increased access and usage of ICTs by civic actors in the global South, appropriating technology strategically involves moulding the freely available technologies to suit their goals (Surman & Reilly, 2003). Given the vast potential of ICTs to contribute to a CSO's goals, if used properly and in tandem with local needs (see Dilevko, 2002), strategic use of technology "is amongst the most pressing [issue] that civil society faces in the information society" (Surman & Reilly, 2003, p. 10). The larger significance of this comparative analysis, theoretical and practical implications of the thesis, and future research directions are discussed in the next and final chapter.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

Theoretical and Practical Contributions

This study is among the first of its kind to undertake an in-depth and grounded examination of ICT-enabled civic engagement in the Indian context, particularly from the point of view of the actors themselves. The intersections between ICTs and civil society—excluding the recent surge of interest in new citizen activism and protests—is a relatively under-researched area in India. In particular, there is a dearth of grounded, ethnographic research on how civil society actors interpret and grapple with new technologies in their civic and political engagement efforts. In giving primacy to personal narratives and stories, the study follows Ganesh & Stohl's (2010) detailed qualitative enquiry of activists' reflections on and interpretations of ICT use. In doing so, they focused on the ways in which activists' experiences conformed with or departed from universalised or normalised expectations that have become embedded in scholarly accounts of contemporary collective action and technology (ibid, p. 53). In a similar manner, through detailed examination of two civil society cases, this thesis has critically re-examined some assumptions associated with the Internet-civil society relationship, and its democratic potential in Bangalore.

The cases vary significantly in their practices and priorities of ICT use and attitudes towards the Internet for civic engagement. This indicates that an interplay of various, complex factors decide how and whether the Internet is successfully leveraged for civic engagement, even in a media/IT-rich environment such as Bangalore. The case of *Hasiru Usiru* (and experiences of other old civil society actors) has shown that access does not automatically translate into a willingness or ability to engage deeply with new technologies by civil society. Pessimistic attitudes towards the Internet prevented the tech-savvy core group from fully leveraging the email group's potential. In *Hasiru Usiru's* case, the advantages of being positioned in India's premier 'IT City' are undone by the network's structural deficiencies, its ideological orientations, and pessimistic attitudes towards the Internet for civic engagement. These findings

are relevant in light of the commonly held belief that new technologies are uncritically and automatically embraced by civil society in its democratic quest.

In *Praja's* case, the innovative and strategic use of the Internet, combined with increased advocacy activities on the ground, has rendered several successful instances of online-offline collaboration. Through a combination of the platform and its advocacy arm, RAAG, *Praja* has been able to overcome some of the limitations that afflict old civil society, while simultaneously attempting to build bridges with these actors. However, the case study reveals that *Praja* also faces considerable obstacles in its efforts to liaise with traditional civic actors, who are resistant to new ways of engagement. The difficulties of adapting to new rules of engagement online, particularly among active old civil society actors, who are generally middle-aged and above, and the preference to communicate in the local language, rather than English, have produced significant fissures between older and newer, Internet-based civil society actors. In addition, *Praja's* limited connections with government and at the grassroots deterred several old civil society actors from participating in its activities. Moreover, the limited participation on the platform, despite Bangalore's relatively large Internet-connected population, reveals the challenges faced by new civil society, even in a networked and media-rich city.

In terms of theoretical contributions, the thesis highlights the prominence of class, particularly the role of the new middle classes, in the current ICT-civil society relationship in India. It does so by charting the emergence of a 'new civil society' in India, and distinguishes it from older civil society forms by dint of its middle-class priorities and ICT use. This 'new civil society' is overwhelmingly comprised of educated, urban, English-speaking middle class citizens, who are drawn to action via ICTs (Singh, 2013; Singh, 2014a). New civil society actors also prefer to engage in civic and political life in ways that often exclude existing systems of politics and government, and which are expressed in ideology-neutral terms (Jodhka & Prakash, 2011; Singh, 2013; Singh, 2014a). However, this new civil society is not an entirely homogeneous category, and distinctions can be made between different sub-categories within its emergent and fluid spaces. This

includes a new type of citizen activism, with urban middle class constituents participating in the political arena outside the space of state and old/developmental civil society (Singh, 2014a). This new citizen activism in India, notably in its most spectacular and visible form of new protest movements, has been able to forge alliances and plan modalities of social action via the connective power of ICTs (Ahmed & Jaidka, 2013; Bute, 2014; Singh, 2014a). The anti-corruption protests in 2011-2012, and the anti-rape protests in 2012, which were led by middle-class citizen activists, are the most prominent among various examples of ICT-enabled middle class activism in the 2000s and 2010s. As the variety of ICT-based civil society initiatives in Bangalore demonstrate, new civil society includes members who are either tech-savvy or believe in the potential of ICTs for change.

Through the course of the case study analyses and comparisons, the thesis also identifies another component of the new civil society, viz., a set of techno-middle class actors that uses ICTs to engage in the more 'routine' aspects of civic and political engagement. Shying away from engaging in protest activities, for a variety of reasons, this "techno-middle class" prefers democratic engagement in ways that are different from new citizen activists as well as old civil society actors and methods. *Praja*, with its emphasis on using ICTs for making information more accessible to the public, improving government data management practices, and facilitating greater citizen-government engagement, is representative of this new techno-middle class. *Praja's* key members are largely from new economy industries and corporate backgrounds, and emphasise information- and technology-based solutions to civic and political issues. As part of new civil society, the new techno-middle class leverages ICTs for the more routine matters of citizen engagement, while working offline simultaneously to achieve its goals.

New civil society actors are also evident in the *Hasiru Usiru* e-group, in the form of young (20s-30s), tech-savvy members interested in social and political reform. Although engaged with issues that often fall into the realm of traditional civil society, these peripheral members belong to multiple civil society e-groups

and networks, and prefer methods of engagement that are deemed apolitical and collaborative. On the other hand, the *Hasiru Usiru* core group comprises members from old civil society, including those focused on human rights, environmental and social justice, and accountability and good governance, which Singh (2014a) refers to as 'developmental civil society'. Interviews with members of this civil society category revealed a reliance on modes of claim-making common to activists and social movements, with an emphasis on questioning the underlying power structures and their decision-making rationale. Among this group there was also a deep scepticism of the Internet as a democratic agent, and a preference for physical spaces of citizen deliberation and engagement. This echoes the observations made by Gurumurthy (2008) that traditional development activity has taken place at some distance from the information and communication technologies for development (ICTD) discourse and action.¹⁰³ Hence, although comprised of tech-savvy members and mediated by the Internet, the *Hasiru Usiru* network emerges as an example of old civil society that is struggling to make sense of its role and identity in an information society context.

By defining and elucidating the differences between developmental or old civil society and variants of new civil society, the thesis sheds light on the changing landscape of civil society in India, and the significant role of new technologies in this evolution. Another theoretical implication of this study relates to the use of ICTs for political engagement, and the changing nature of political activism in India, evidenced in the rise of the *Aam Aadmi Party* (AAP) in Delhi, with pan-India ambitions. The party originated in the non-party anti-corruption movement that burst onto the national scene in 2011, reflecting an outpouring of (mainly) middle class anger at endemic corruption, and fuelled by alternative and social media, mainstream media, and increased citizen access to information. In September 2012, the campaign split into the parent non-party movement led by

¹⁰³ Gurumurthy (2008) has noted that this separation has slowed the process of appropriation of ICTs in positive and meaningful ways, including the movement towards repositioning marginalised groups and communities from passive 'users' to active co-creators of technologies.

Anna Hazare, and AAP led Arvind Kejriwal—the latter created as a vehicle of alternative politics, reflecting the younger cohorts desire to enter and reform the political arena (Singh, 2014). In the evolution from a civil society movement into a full-fledged political party, with resounding victories in the Delhi state elections in 2013 and 2015, AAP has changed the political landscape, and the relationship between the middle classes and the political system. Critical to AAP's success has been growing proportion of young middle class voters, and their increasing ability to influence their peers and public discourse through social media and the Internet (Advani, 2014). Although this is a spillover from the anti-corruption campaign's middle class youth base (Singh, 2014a), the youthful profiles of AAP's candidates, and the various online and offline platforms used to recruit and retain young members, reflects the strategic importance of youth voters to the party (Advani, 2014; Dhapola, 2013). The growing interest of middle class youth in political affairs is a reflection of its politicisation by the new citizen activism of the anti-corruption and anti-rape campaigns. Bouyed by the promises of AAP's alternative politics and its easy access via social media, urban youth are transforming the uneasy relationship between the middle classes and electoral politics in India. This has exciting implications for both theory and practice relating to the use of ICTs by tech-savvy middle classes for political engagement, and the potential impacts on democratic politics.

In terms of practical implications, the thesis underlines the necessity, rather than the option, of the effective appropriation of ICTs by civil society organisations (CSOs) in their engagement and advocacy efforts. In the case of traditional civil society, this involves becoming ICT-literate, which involves, firstly, an acknowledgement of the unease with ICTs, and the subsequent transformation in organisational culture to overcome this discomfort (see Michelson, 2006). Once there is an internal shift in thinking, CSOs can move on to the next step, which is identifying the means by which ICT use can achieve organisational goals and objectives, in ways that align with their underlying ideological motivations. This also involves identifying existing barriers to effective ICT use, and in tandem with not-for-profit capacity-building organisations,

undertaking training in strategic ICT use actions. This involves being aware of the range of technology options available, and updating knowledge and skills in areas that most benefit these organisations, such as running online campaigns, collaborative project management, data protection, and secure online communications (United Nations, n.d.). In light of the relative ease of Internet availability in Bangalore, CSOs can also tap into the vast range of civil society networks that impart technical know-how, and can give them the confidence to learn and experiment with new skills and ideas. This could also serve to build new alliances and strengthen existing ones, which could generate new ideas and activities, as well as a deeper consideration of the implications of technology use for groups and their struggles. On the other hand, new civil society groups, who are already closer to the goal of strategic ICT use, should aim to make their online spaces and platforms more accessible, inclusive, and aligned to the needs of old civil society as well. This involves moving beyond English-only communications, and developing platforms that works for local groups and communities. Further, given the technical skills possessed by new civil society members, they could participate in imparting such skills to old civil society, through formal or informal partnerships with government, businesses, and other civil society actors. These initiatives could create additional linkages between old and new civil society, bring newer and alternate voices and actors into the online public sphere, thereby strengthening public discourse. Through these recommendations, it is hoped that civil society can understand, reflect on, and overcome barriers—internal and external—to deploy ICTs creatively and strategically, and in ways that are both equitable and sustainable.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

While the thesis is written with the authority that comes with an insider's perspective and familiarity with the context, having worked in the civil society sphere in Bangalore, it has its limitations. Firstly, the study has a middle-class bias, which stems from the fact the online spaces studied are English-based, but also due to the middle class composition of civil society. I tried to overcome this

limitation by interviewing civil society actors who worked with or for poorer and marginalised groups, in order to obtain a more comprehensive perspective of the context. However, due to the constraints of time and finances, the focus was on a middle class demographic that could be easily contacted via email, or personal contacts, and who were proficient in English. Moreover, this was also a demographic that I was more familiar with, and I followed a senior researcher's advice about recognising my limitations (in this case, with regard to language), and choosing a demographic that I could talk to extensively. Future research could overcome this limitation by exploring the use of ICTs among the 'digital fringes', as these are often invisible and innovative at the same time (Shah & Jansen, 2011). These are individuals and groups who are invisible to most actors within government and the NGO sector, and whose marginality is based on a series of socio-economic disempowerment, such as caste, class, gender, language, and location. Scholars have begun to explore the connections between digital technologies and citizen action such as tribal activists, slum dwellers, youth with disabilities, and children, among others (Cortesi & Gasser, 2015). Future research by groups on the fringes in Bangalore city would shed light on such hitherto underexplored groups, and would be a step towards overcoming the urban and middle-class bias of the thesis.

Second, while the political system plays a crucial role in civil society activities, I could interview only senior government officials, but was unable to interview any elected representatives. I was able to meet the former through personal contacts and snowball sampling. Moreover, they also fell into the middle-class category, which allowed for some kind of connect and familiarity of circumstance, etc. However, in the case of elected representatives, despite repeated efforts, I was unable to meet the handful I had set out to interview. This can be attributed to the fact that elected representatives are notoriously difficult to approach and meet in Indian cities, but also due to the lack of connectors. For a more comprehensive understanding of the ICT-civil society relationship, future research will also have to consider the perspectives and role of government officials and the local political class.

A third limitation is that this study took place in a single location, and it remains unknown whether the findings can be generalised to other countries in the region or elsewhere in the world. It is important to note that the theoretical discussions and implications of the study are conditioned by the historical and socio-political conditions within which the ICT-civil society relationship developed in the Indian context. Further, as cities respond differently to globalisation trends according to local circumstances, the experiences of civil society within Bangalore's techno-social environment need not be reflective of those in other contexts. Nonetheless, although confined to a single city, this study is a critical extension of literature that is typically North America and Euro-centric, and limitations of context can be overcome by studying other techno-cities in India and developing Asia for a better understanding of the phenomena in different contexts.

To sum up, the thesis has employed a grounded, qualitative approach to map the experiences and practices of civil society actors in relation to ICT use in Bangalore city, India. It has focused on the attitudes towards and use of ICTs by these actors, as well as considered the benefits and limitations of ICT use in a developing city context. The thesis has placed the middle classes at the centre of new ICT-enabled efforts to renew civic and political engagement, and has termed this demographic as the 'techno middle-class within a 'new civil society'. Further, it has examined the techno-social and political conditions that shape ICT-enabled civil society activity in Bangalore, thereby highlighting the importance of context in civic and political engagement. This study has contributed to the emerging literature on ICTs and civic and political engagement in India, and paves the way for future research in this area in other Asian contexts.

REFERENCES

- Ackerman, J. (2005, May). *Human rights and social accountability*. Retrieved September 30, 2014, from Social Development Papers: Participation and Civic Engagement, 86: <http://portals.wi.wur.nl/files/docs/gouvernance/HumanRightsandSocialOAccountabilityFINAL.pdf>
- Advani, R. (2014, March 28). *Youth and Aam Aadmi Party*. Retrieved April 26, 2015, from http://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/Attachments/PublisherAttachment/ISAS_Insights_245_-_Youth_and_Aam_Aadmi_Party_07042014113036.pdf
- Ahmed, S., & Jaidka, K. (2013). Protests against #delhigangrape on Twitter: Analyzing India's Arab Spring. *JeDEM - eJournal of eDemocracy and Open Government*, 1(5), 28-58.
- Ahooja-Patel, K. (2001). Introduction . In A. Iyengar, *Role of press and Indian freedom struggle: All through the Gandhian era* (pp. xv-xxiv). New Delhi: A.P.H. Publishing Corporation .
- Akamai . (2014). *The state of the Internet report*. Retrieved September 6, 2014, from <http://www.akamai.com/dl/akamai/akamai-soti-q114-infographic.pdf>
- Alpay, E. (2005). Group dynamic processes in email groups. *Active Learning in Higher Education*, 6(1), 7–16.
- Angad, A. (2012, May 17). *Will 50% women councillor in BBMP help Bengaluru?* Retrieved July 21, 2014, from Citizen Matters: <http://bangalore.citizenmatters.in/articles/4162-will-50-women-councillors-in-bbmp-help-bengaluru->
- Angell, I., & Ezer, J. (2006). New barbarians at the gate: The new spirit emerging in India. *The Information Society*, 22(3), 165-176.
- Aranya, R. (2003). Globalisation and urban restructuring of Bangalore, India: Growth of the IT industry, its spatial dynamics and local planning responses. *39th ISOCARP Congress, Cairo*. Retrieved October 8, 2012, from www.isocarp.net/Data/case_studies/255.pdf
- Arun, M. (2010, September 23). *High-tech Bangalore arrived on a bullock cart*. Retrieved March 5, 2014, from Deccan Herald: 2012 from <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/98795/high-tech-bangalore-arrived-bullock.html>

- Atkinson, R., & Flint, J. (2004). Snowball sampling. In M. Lewis-Beck, A. Bryman, & T. Liao (Eds.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods* (pp. 1044-1045). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Aundhe, M., & Narasimhan, R. (2012). Project Nemmadi: The bytes and bites of ICT adoption and implementation in India. *Journal of Information Technology Teaching Cases*, 2, 29–45.
- Avendus. (2013, September 6). *India's mobile Internet: The revolution has begun. An overview of how mobile Internet is touching the lives of millions*. Retrieved September 2014, from http://www.avendus.com/Files/Fund%20Performance%20PDF/Avendus_Report-India's_Mobile_Internet-2013.pdf
- Axford, B. (2011). Talk about a revolution: Social media and the MENA uprisings . *Globalizations* , 8(5), 681-686 .
- Baber, Z. (2002). Engendering or Endangering Democracy? The Internet, Civil Society and the Public Sphere . *Asian Journal of Social Science*, 30(2), 287-303.
- Bageshree, S. (2014, April 15). *Garment workers: numerically strong, but with weak bargaining powers as voters*. Retrieved August 3, 2014, from The Hindu: <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/garment-workers-numerically-strong-but-with-weak-bargaining-powers-as-voters/article5913165.ece>
- Baker, S., & Edwards, R. (2012). *How many qualitative interviews is enough?* Retrieved July 23, 2013, from Discussion Paper, National Council of Research Methods (NCRM): <http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/2273/>
- Baltar, F., & Brunet, I. (2012). Internet Research. *Social research 2.0: Virtual snowball sampling method using Facebook*, 22(1), 57-74.
- Banaji, S., & Buckingham, D. (2013). *Young people, the Internet and civic participation*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press.
- Banerjee, D. (2005). Knowledge workers and information technology: Re-living early English industrial revolution. *The Indian Journal of Labour Economics*, 48(4), 777.
- Bangalore Mirror. (2014, May 6). *State cannot make Kannada mandatory language in private, unaided schools*. Retrieved February 20, 2015, from <http://www.bangaloremirror.com/bangalore/others/State-cannot-make-Kannada-mandatory-language-in-private-unaided-schools/articleshow/34741617.cms>

- Barn, R. (2013, September 1). *Social Media and Protest - The Indian Spring?* Retrieved April 13, 2015, from Huffington Post: http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/professor-ravinder-barn/india-social-media-and-protest_b_2430194.html
- Basant, R. (2006). Bangalore cluster: Evolution, growth, and challenges. *IIMA W.P. No. 2006-05-02*. Retrieved June 17, 2012, from www.iimahd.ernet.in/publications/data/2006-05-02rbasant.pdf
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). The Qualitative Report. *Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers*, 13(4), 544-559.
- Behar, A., & Prakash, A. (2004). India: Expanding and contracting democratic space. In S. U. Press, & M. Alagappa (Ed.), *Civil society and political change in Asia: Expanding and contracting democratic space* (pp. 191-222). Stanford, Calif. .
- Beinhocker, E., Farrel, D., & Zainulbhai, A. (2007). Tracking the growth of India's middle classes. *The McKinsey Quarterly*, 3, 51-61.
- Belair-Gagnon, V., Mishra, S., & Agur, C. (2013). Reconstructing the Indian public sphere: Newswork and social media in the Delhi gang rape case. *Journalism*, XX(X), 1-17.
- Benjamin, S. (2000). Governance, economic settings and poverty in Bangalore. *Environment and Urbanization*, 12(1), 35-56.
- Benjamin, S. (2005). *The lifestyle advertisement and the Marxist manifesto as Trojan horses in a city of stealth*. Retrieved April 13, 2013, from <http://www.isst-india.org/PDF/Lifestyle%20Advertisement.pdf>
- Benjamin, S. (2010). Manufacturing neoliberalism: Lifestyling Indian urbanity. In S. Banerjee-Guha (Ed.), *Accumulation by dispossession: Transformative cities in the new global order* (pp. 92-124). New Delhi; Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Bennet, W. (2003). Communicating global activism: Strengths and vulnerabilities of networked politics. *Information, Communication & Society*, 6(2), 143-168.
- Bhargava, S., & Bhargava, S. (1989, August 15). *The Jholawala Syndrome*. Retrieved December 11, 2012, from India Today: <http://fakeer.wordpress.com/2008/03/14/the-jholawala-syndrome/>
- Bhutta, C. (2012). Not by the book: Facebook as a sampling frame. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 41(1), 57-88.
- Biddix, J., & Park, H. (2008). Online networks of student protest: The case of the living wage campaign. *New Media & Society*, 10(6), 871-891.

- Bidwai, P. (2003, July 11). *IT experts or cyber-coolies?* Retrieved August 25, 2014, from <http://www.rediff.com/news/2003/jul/11praful.htm>
- Bijoor, H. (2014, January 22). *Bangalore's watermelon hour*. Retrieved August 4, 2014, from DNA: <http://www.dnaindia.com/bangalore/column-bangalore-s-watermelon-hour-1955194>
- Birks, M., & Mills, J. (2011). *Grounded Theory: A practical guide*. London: Sage Publications.
- Biswas, S. (2009). NGO Accountability: Issues and Possibilities. *KIIT Journal of Management*, 6(1&2), 1-25. Retrieved March 2, 2015, from http://www.academia.edu/4952226/NGO_Accountability_Issues_and_Possibilities
- Biswas, S. (2009). NGO Accountability: Issues and Possibilities. *KIIT Journal of Management*, 6((1&2)), 1-25.
- Bloor, M. (1997). Techniques of validation in qualitative research: A critical commentary. In G. Miller, & R. Dingwall (Eds.), *Context and method in qualitative research* (pp. 36-50). London: Sage Publications.
- Brenner, N., & Theodore, N. (2002). Cities and the geographies of "actually existing neoliberalism". In N. Brenner, & N. Theodore (Eds.), *Spaces of neoliberalism: Urban restructuring in North America and Western Europe* (pp. 2-32). Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell.
- Brint, S. (1994). *In an age of experts: The changing role of professionals in politics and public life*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Brint, S. (2001). Professionals and the 'knowledge economy': Rethinking the theory of postindustrial society. *Current Sociology*, 49(4), 101-132.
- Browne, K. (2005). Snowball sampling: Using social networks to research non-heterosexual women. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 8(1), 47-60.
- Business Standard. (2010, October 18). Bangalore's ORR among fastest growing IT corridor. Retrieved February 28, 2015, from http://www.business-standard.com/article/economy-policy/bangalore-s-orr-among-fastest-growing-it-corridor-110101800008_1.html
- Business Standard. (2010a, January 22). *Bangalore elevated tollway project inaugurated*. Retrieved December 31, 2013, from Business Standard: http://www.business-standard.com/article/press-releases/bangalore-elevated-tollway-project-inaugurated-110012200105_1.html

- Business.Gov.In. . (n.d.). *Cooperative Societies*. Retrieved January 5, 2014, from www.business.gov.in/manage_business/cooperatives.php
- Bute, S. (2014). The role of social media in mobilizing people for riots and revolutions. In B. Patrut, & M. Patrut (Eds.), *Social media in politics* (pp. 355-366). Cham: Springer.
- Cammaerts, B., Mattoni, A., & McCurdy, P. (2013). Introduction: Mediation and protest movements. In B. Cammaerts, A. Mattoni, & P. McCurdy (Eds.), *Mediation and protest movements* (pp. 1-20). Bristol, UK; Chicago, USA: Intellect.
- Carty, V. (2010). New information communication technologies and grassroots mobilization . *Information, Communication & Society*, 13(2), 155-173.
- Carty, V. (2011). *Wired and mobilizing: Social movements, new technology, and electoral politics*. New York; Oxon: Routledge.
- Castells, M. (1983). *The city and the grassroots: A cross-cultural theory of urban social movements*. London: E. Arnold.
- Castells, M. (1989). *The informational city: Information technology, economic restructuring, and the urban-regional process*. Oxford, UK; Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell.
- Castells, M. (2000). *The rise of the network society* (2nd Edition ed.). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers.
- Castells, M. (2001). *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business, and Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Castells, M. (2007). *Communication, power and counter-power in the network society*. Retrieved January 17, 2015, from International Journal of Communication: <http://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/46>
- Castells, M. (2012). *Networks of outrage and hope: Social movements in the Internet age*. Cambridge; Madlen: Polity Press.
- Chakravartty, P. (2008). Labour in or as civil society? Workers and subaltern publics in India's information society. In P. Chakravartty, & Y. Zhao (Eds.), *Global communications: Towards a transcultural political economy* (pp. 285-307). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- Chamaraj, K., & Rao, P. (2006). Functioning of Wards Committees in Bangalore: A case study. In K. Sivaramakrishnan (Ed.), *People's participation in urban governance* (pp. 57-129). New Delhi: Concept Publishing Company.
- Chandhoke, N. (2003). *The conceits of civil society*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.

- Chandhoke, N. (2011). Civil society in India. In M. Edwards (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of civil society* (pp. 171-182). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chandramouli, K. (2002, July 25). *The city of boiled beans*. Retrieved February 25, 2015, from The Hindu:
<http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/mp/2002/07/25/stories/2002072500270200.htm>
- Charan, S. (2004 , May 7). 'Pollution, changing lifestyles have led to increase in asthma cases'. Retrieved March 1, 2015, from The Hindu:
<http://www.thehindu.com/2004/05/07/stories/2004050714870300.htm>
- Charan, S. (2004, May 7). 'Pollution, changing lifestyles have led to increase in asthma cases'. *The Hindu*. Retrieved March 1, 2015, from
<http://www.thehindu.com/2004/05/07/stories/2004050714870300.htm>
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing Grounded Theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis*. London: Sage Publications.
- Chatterjee, P. (2001). On civil and political societies in post-colonial democracies. In S. Kaviraj, & S. Khilnani (Eds.), *Civil society: History and possibilities* (pp. 165-178). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chatterjee, P. (2008). Democracy and economic transformation in India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 43(16), 53-62.
- Chattopadhyay, R., & Duflo, E. (2004). Impact of reservation in Panchayati Raj: Evidence from a nationwide randomised experiment. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 39(9), 979-986.
- Chaturvedi, L. (2014, July 4). *The caterers of the garment industry*. Retrieved August 3, 2014, from Cividep India: <http://cividep.org/caterers-garment-industry/>
- Chen, W. (2014). Taking stock, moving forward: The Internet, social networks, and civic engagement in Chinese societies. *Information, Communication & Society*, 17(1), 1-6.
- Christensen, C. (2011). Twitter revolutions? Addressing social media and dissent. *The Communication Review*, 14(3), 155-157 .
- CiSTUP. (2011, December). *Traffic Study @ Mantri Square Mall, Malleshwaram*. Retrieved from http://cistup.iisc.ernet.in/radha/planner_images/TrafficStudy@MantriMall%20Report.pdf
- CNN-IBN. (2014, May 6). Kannada can't be compulsory medium of instruction in schools: SC to Karnataka. Retrieved February 20, 2015, from <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/kannada-cant-be-compulsory-medium-of-instruction-in-schools-sc-to-karnataka/469901-62-129.html>

- Coffey, A., & Atkinson, P. (1996). *Making sense of qualitative data*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing Grounded Theory* (3rd Edition ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Cortesi, S., & Gasser, U. (Eds.). (2015). *Digitally connected: Global perspectives on youth and digital media*. Retrieved May 7, 2015, from http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2585686
- Cox, R. (1999). Civil society at the turn of the millenium: Prospects for an alternative world order. *Review of International Studies*, 25, 3-28.
- Coyne, I. (1997). Sampling in qualitative research. Purposeful and theoretical sampling; merging or clear boundaries? *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 26, 623–630.
- CXOtoday News Desk. (2013 , August 2). *Bangalore listed among top IT innovation hubs*. Retrieved August 5, 2014, from CXOtoday.com.: <http://www.cxotoday.com/story/bangalore-among-the-top-it-tech-sites-in-the-world/>
- D’Costa, A. (Ed.). (2010). *A new India?: Critical reflections in the long twentieth century*. London; New York: Anthem.
- D’Cruz, P., & Noronha, E. (2007). Technical call centres: Beyond ‘electronic sweatshops’ and ‘assembly lines in the head’. *Global Business Review*, 8(1), 53-67.
- D’Mello, M. (2006). Gendered Selves and Identities of Information Technology Professionals in Global Software Organizations in India. *Information Technology for Development*, 12(2), 131-158.
- Daigle, K. (2011 , August 22). *Anna Hazare, fasting Indian anti-corruption activist, faces increasing criticism*. Retrieved May 16, 2013, from TheWorldPost: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/08/22/anna-hazare-fasting-corruption_n_933254.html
- Dasgupta, S. (2008). Success, market, ethics: Information technology and the shifting politics of governance and citizenship in the Indian silicon plateau. *Cultural Dynamics*, 20(3), 213–244.
- Datta, P. (2011). Exploring the evolution of a social innovation: A case study from India. *International Journal of Technology Management & Sustainable Development*, 10 (1), 55-75.

- David, C. (2013). ICTs in political engagement among youth in the Philippines. *International Communication Gazette*, 75(3), 322-337.
- David, S. (2005, November 21). *The revolt of the native*. Retrieved September 6, 2014, from India Today: <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/kannadigas-protest-against-outsiders-in-bangalore-demand-more-jobs-and-status-for-kannada/1/192600.html>
- Deccan Herald. (2011, November 22). *Yediyur lake on death row*. Retrieved September 17, 2012, from <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/206780/yediyur-lake-death-row.html>
- Denzin, N., & Lincoln, Y. (2003). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The landscape of qualitative research: Theories and issues* (2nd Edition ed., pp. 1-45). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Desai, R., & Joshi, S. (2012 , December 28). *India's protests as a social "stress test"*. Retrieved October 5, 2013 , from <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2012/12/28-india-gate-protests-desai>
- Desouza, R., & Dutta, M. (2008). Global and local networking for HIV/AIDS prevention: The case of the Saathii e-forum. *Journal of Health Communication* , 13(4), 326-344.
- Dev, A. (2011, June 11). *Cops book cops for violating traffic rules*. Retrieved August 13, 2014, from The Times of India e-newspaper: <http://epaper.timesofindia.com/Default/Scripting/ArticleWin.asp?From=Archive&Source=Page&Skin=TOINew&BaseHref=TOIBG/2011/06/11&PageLabel=3&EntityId=Ar00300&ViewMode=HTML>
- Dhapola, S. (2013, December 10). *The youth and AAP: Is Kejriwal the real thing?* Retrieved April 27, 2015, from Firstpost: <http://www.firstpost.com/politics/the-youth-and-aap-is-kejriwal-the-real-thing-1279939.html>
- Dhar Chakrabarti, P. (n.d.). Urban crisis in India: New initiatives for sustainable cities. *Development in Practice*, 11, 260-272.
- Dilevko, J. (2002). The working life of southern NGOs: Juggling the promise of Information and Communications Technologies and the perils of relationship with international NGOs. In P. Hanjal (Ed.), *Civil society in the information age* (pp. 57-94). England: Ashgate.
- Dittrich, C. (2007, April). Bangalore: Globalisation and fragmentation in India's high-tech-capital. *ASIEN*, 45-58.

- DNA. (2011, October 28). Bangalore's population grew by 48% in the past decade. Retrieved March 13, 2015, from <http://www.dnaindia.com/bangalore/report-bangalore-s-population-grew-by-48-in-the-past-decade-1604200>
- Dupont, V. (2007). Conflicting stakes and governance in the peripheries of large Indian metropolises - An introduction. *Cities*, 24(2), 89-94.
- Dupont, V. (2011). The dream of Delhi as a global city. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 35(3), 533-554.
- Dutt, P. (2012, September 27). *Bangalore has the most cosmopolitan crowd: Shankar*. Retrieved July 23, 2014, from The Times of India: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/entertainment/hindi/bollywood/news/Bangalore-has-the-most-cosmopolitan-crowd-Shankar/articleshow/16569247.cms>
- dvsquare. (2013 , November 22). *Press Release for Nov "Feel Bengaluru Cycle Day"*. Retrieved March 10, 2014, from Praja.in: <http://praja.in/en/blog/dvsquare/2013/11/22/press-release-nov-feel-bengaluru-cycle-day>
- Earl, J. (2006). Pursuing social change online: The use of four protest tactics on the Internet. *Social Science Computer Review* , 24(3), 362-377.
- Egov . (2010 , December 1). *India egov2.0 Awards 2010*. Retrieved November 25, 2013, from <http://egov.eletsonline.com/2010/12/india-egov2-0-awards-2010/>
- Elliot, N., & Higgins, A. (2012). *Surviving grounded theory research method in an academic world: Proposal writing and theoretical frameworks*. Retrieved January 5, 2014, from Grounded Theory Review: <http://groundedtheoryreview.com/2012/12/07/surviving-grounded-theory-research-method-in-an-academic-world-proposal-writing-and-theoretical-frameworks/>
- Enqvist, J. (2012). Environmental activism in India's garden city: The role of civil society networks for governance of urban social-ecological systems in the global south. *Unpublished Master's Thesis*. Stockholm Resilience Centre, Stockholm University.
- Enqvist, J., Tengo, M., & Bodin, O. (2014). Citizen networks in the Garden City: Protecting urban ecosystems in rapid urbanization. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 130, 24-35.
- Fang, K. (2014, October 3). *New media technologies in Hong Kong's Umbrella Revolution* . Retrieved May 4, 2015, from CGCS Media Wire: <http://www.global.asc.upenn.edu/new-media-technologies-in-hong-kongs-umbrella-revolution/>

- Fernandes, L. (2000). Nationalizing 'the global': Media images, cultural politics and the middle class in India. *Media, Culture and Society*, 22(5), 611-628.
- Fernandes, L. (2000a). Restructuring the new middle classes in liberalizing India. *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 20(1&2), 88-104.
- Fernandes, L. (2007). *India's new middle class: Democratic politics in an era of economic reform*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Fernandes, L., & Heller, P. (2006). Hegemonic aspirations. *Critical Asian Studies*, 38(4), 495-522.
- Ferus-Comelo, A. (2008). Mission Impossible?: Raising labor standards in the ICT sector. *Labor Studies Journal*, 33(2), 141-162.
- Foley, M., & Edwards, B. (1996). The paradox of civil society. *Journal of Democracy*, 7(3), 38-52.
- Foth, M., Forlano, L., Satchell, C., & Gibbs, M. (Eds.). (2011). *From social butterfly to engaged citizen: Urban informatics, social media, ubiquitous computing, and mobile technology to support citizen engagement*. Cambridge; London: The MIT Press.
- Fox, N. (2008). Induction. In L. Given (Ed.), *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (pp. 429-430). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Francis, M. (2012, July 16). *Namma Railu, the engine for progress*. Retrieved June 5, 2012, from DNA India : <http://www.dnaindia.com/bangalore/report-namma-railu-the-engine-for-progress-1715603>
- Francis, M. (2013, April 29). *Wonder why the crowd? City home to 1 crore now*. Retrieved November 7, 2013, from The New Indian Express: <http://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/bangalore/Wonder-why-the-crowd-City-home-to-1-crore-now/2013/04/29/article1566411.ece>
- Francis, M., & Prasad, A. (2014, September 11). *City gasps for breath as air quality worsens*. Retrieved March 2, 2015, from The New Indian Express: <http://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/bengaluru/City-Gasps-for-Breath-as-Air-Quality-Worsens/2014/09/11/article2425463.ece>
- Francis, M., & Prasad, A. (2014, September 11). *City Gasps for Breath as Air Quality Worsens*. The New Indian Express . Retrieved March 2, 2015, from <http://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/bengaluru/City-Gasps-for-Breath-as-Air-Quality-Worsens/2014/09/11/article2425463.ece>
- Friedman, T. (2006). *The world is flat: The globalized world in the twenty-first century*. London: Penguin Books.

- Friedmann, J. (1986). The world city hypothesis. *Development and Change*, 17(1), 69-83.
- Fuchs, C. (2008). *Internet and society: Social theory in the information age*. New York: Routledge.
- Gandhi, L. (2013 , November 25). *A history of indentured labor gives 'coolie' its sting*. Retrieved September 29, 2014, from <http://www.npr.org/blogs/codeswitch/2013/11/25/247166284/a-history-of-indentured-labor-gives-coolie-its-sting>
- Ganesh, M., & Ganesh, G. (2013). *Citizen power or media power?* Retrieved February 8, 2014, from Agenda Infochange: http://infochangeindia.org/downloads/agenda_26.pdf
- Ganesh, S., & Stohl, C. (2010). Qualifying Engagement: A Study of Information and Communication Technology and the Global Social Justice Movement in Aotearoa New Zealand . *Communication Monographs* , 77(1), 51-74 .
- Garrett, R. (2006). Protest in an information society: A review of literature on social movements and new ICTs. *Information, Communication & Society*, 9(2), 202-224.
- Gerring, J. (2006). *Case Study Research: Principles and Practices*. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press.
- Ghosh, A. (2005, November 19). Public-private or a private public? Promised partnership of the Bangalore Agenda Task Force. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 40(47), 4914-4922.
- Goldman, M. (2010). Speculative urbanism and the making of the next world city. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 35(3), 555-581.
- Goldman, M., & Longhofer, W. (2009). Making world cities. *Contexts*, 8(1), 32-36.
- Gopakumar, G. (2013). Who will Decongest Bengaluru? Politics, Infrastructures & Scapes. *Mobilities*, 10(2), 304-325.
- Goswami, D., & Tandon, R. (2013). Civil society in changing India: Emerging roles, relationships, and strategies. *Development in Practice*, 23(5-6), 653-664.
- Gowda, C. (2010). *Introducing "Karnataka Vignettes"*. Retrieved September 6, 2014, from Seminar: http://works.bepress.com/chandan_gowda/26
- Gowda, M. (2011 , September 10). *Technology-enabled elite political mobilization in India*. Retrieved June 5, 2012, from http://votecongress.files.wordpress.com/2012/10/microsoft-word-revised-ict-enabled-elite-political-mobilization-india_with_id.pdf
- Gowda, R., & Gupta, H. (2010). Tracking and explaining e-participation in India. *Paper presented at the Joint IFIP EGOV and ePart 2010 Conference, University of Lausanne*.

- Gudavarthy, A., & Vijay, G. (2007, July 27). Antinomies of political society: Implications of uncivil development. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42(29), 3051-3059.
- Guenther, K. (2009). The politics of names: rethinking the methodological and ethical significance of naming people, organizations, and places. *Qualitative Research*, 9(4), 411-421.
- Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability. *Field Methods*, 18(1), 59-82.
- Gupta, R., & Sornlertlamvanich, V. (2007). Text entry in South and Southeast Asian scripts. In K. Tanaka-Ishii, & I. MacKenzie (Eds.), *Text Entry Systems: Mobility, Accessibility, Universality* (pp. 227-250). San Francisco, CA: Morgan Kaufmann.
- Gurumurthy, A. (2008, May). *Gender equality through ICT access and appropriation: Taking a rights-based approach*. Retrieved February 10, 2012, from http://www.itforchange.net/Anita_GenderEqualitythrough_ICTAccess
- Hajnal, P. (Ed.). (2002). *Civil society in the information age*. Aldershot; Burlington: Ashgate.
- Harindranath, R., & Khorana, S. (2014). Civil society movements and the 'Twittering classes' in the postcolony: An Indian case study. *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 37(1), 60-71.
- Hariprakash, V. (2011, November 30). 'Ugly Indians' clean up Bangalore. Retrieved September 16, 2014, from BBC News: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-15769402>
- Harris, J. (2006). Middle class activism and the politics of the informal working class. *Critical Asian Studies*, 38(4), 445-465.
- Harris, J. (2007). Antinomies of Empowerment: Observations on Civil Society, Politics and Urban Governance in India. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 42(26), 2716-2724.
- Harvard Magazine. (2012, September-October). *The Business Ecosystem: "A country can become complacent about its assets."*. Retrieved July 10, 2014, from <http://harvardmagazine.com/2012/09/the-business-ecosystem>
- Harvey, D. (2008). The right to the city. *New Left Review*, 53, 23-40.
- Hasan, F. (2005). Forms of civility and publicness in pre-British India. In R. Bhargava, & H. Reifeld (Eds.), *Civil society, public sphere, and citizenship: Dialogues and perceptions* (pp. 84-105). New Delhi; Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Hasire Usiru. (2008). *Namma Raste! Namma Ooru! Hasire Usiru! Join the campaign to reclaim our city*. Retrieved September 16, 2012, from

- http://static.esgindia.org/campaigns/Tree%20felling/Hasire%20Usiru/other.docs/NammaRaste_Flyer_TownHall_29thNov08.pdf
- Hasire Usiru. (2009, April 23). *Campaign to reclaim Bangalore's commons. Public action support an appeal to stop, consult and redesign Bangalore Metro*. Retrieved September 16, 2012, from <http://www.esgindia.org/campaigns/press/hasire-usiru-campaign-reclaim-bangalores.html>
- Hassid, J. (2012). Safety valve or pressure cooker? Blogs in Chinese political life. *Journal of Communication, 6*(2), 212–230.
- Haunss, S. (2007). Challenging legitimacy: Repertoires of contention political claims-making, and collective action frames. In A. Hurrelmann, S. Schneider, & J. Steffek (Eds.), *Legitimacy in an age of global politics* (pp. 156-172). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Haynes, J. (2013). Foreword. In S. Sahoo, *Civil society and democratization in India: Institutions, ideologies and interests* (pp. xi-xiii). London; New York: Routledge.
- Haythornthwaite, C. (2007). Social networks and online community. In A. Joinson, K. McKenna, T. Postmes, & U. Reips (Eds.), *Oxford Handbook of Internet Psychology* (pp. 121-138). Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.
- Haythornthwaite, C., & Kendell, L. (2010). Internet and community. *American Behavioral Scientist, 53*(8), 1083–1094.
- Heitzman, J. (1999). *Becoming Silicon Valley*. Retrieved January 5, 2011, from Seminar: <http://www.india-seminar.com/2001/503/503%20james%20heitzman.htm>
- Heitzman, J. (2004). *Network City: Planning the Information Society in Bangalore*. Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Hentschel, J. (1999). Contextuality and data collection methods: A framework and application to health service utilisation. *The Journal of Development Studies, 35*(4), 64-94.
- Hesse-Biber, S., & Leavy, P. (2006). *The practice of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Hewitt, V. (2008). *Political mobilisation and democracy in India: States of emergency*. Oxon; New York: Routledge.
- Hindu, T. (2001, July 6). IT corridor 'master plan' in 9 months. Retrieved May 16, 2012, from <http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/2001/07/06/stories/0406402i.htm>
- Holloway, I. (2005). *Qualitative Research in Health Care*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

- Hussain, M., & Howard, P. (2012). Opening closed regimes: Civil society, information infrastructure, and political Islam. In E. Anduiza, M. Jensen, & L. Jorba (Eds.), *Comparing digital politics: Civic engagement and political participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hwang, V. (2014, April 16). *The next big business buzzword: Ecosystem?* Retrieved July 3, 2014, from Forbes.com: <http://www.forbes.com/sites/victorhwang/2014/04/16/the-next-big-business-buzzword-ecosystem/>
- IAMAI. (2014 , January 1). *India to have 155mn mobile Internet users by March'14*. Retrieved September 6, 2014, from http://www.iamai.in/PRelease_detail.aspx?nid=3240&NMonth=1&NYear=2014
- idontspam. (2010 , October 28). *Praja.in Best Social Media Initiative 2010*. Retrieved November 25, 2013, from Praja.in: <http://praja.in/hi/blog/idontspam/2010/10/28/prajain-best-social-media-initiative-2010>
- IGI Global. (n.d.). *What is Information and Communication Technology (ICT)*. Retrieved October 25, 2014, from <http://www.igi-global.com/dictionary/information-and-communication-technology-ict/14316>
- Ilavarasan, P. (2013). Community work and limited online activism among India youth. *International Communication Gazette*, 75(3), 284-299.
- InfoChange. (2003, October). *PROOF: Bangalore moves a step closer towards accountable governance*. Retrieved February 7, 2012, from <http://infochangeindia.org/governance/stories-of-change/proof-bangalore-moves-a-step-closer-towards-accountable-governance.html>
- Internet live stats. (2014). *Internet users*. Retrieved September 5, 2014, from <http://www.Internetlivestats.com/Internet-users/>
- Iyer, M. (2009 , April 23). *Metro vs citizens*. Retrieved December 17, 2013, from Citizen Matters: <http://bangalore.citizenmatters.in/articles/print/1034-lalbagh-trees-cut-for-bengaluru-metro>
- Janesick, V. (2000). The choreography of qualitative research design: Minuets, improvisations, and crystallization. In N. Denzin, & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 379-399). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

- Jayal, N. (2001). Reinventing the State: The emergence of alternative models of governance in India in the 1990s. In N. Jayal, & S. Pai (Eds.), *Democratic governance in India: Challenges of poverty, development, and identity* (pp. 132-150). New Delhi: Sage Publications India.
- Jayal, N. (2007). The role of civil society. In S. D. Ganguly, & M. Plattner (Eds.), *The State of India's Democracy* (pp. 143-160). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Jessop, B. (2002). Liberalism, neoliberalism, and urban governance: A state-theoretical perspective. In N. Brenner, & N. Theodore (Eds.), *Spaces of neoliberalism: Urban restructuring in North America and Western Europe* (pp. 105-125). Malden, Mass.; Oxford:: Blackwell.
- Jha, M. (2013 , November 2). 'We want to be a Google of civic issues'. Retrieved January 20, 2014, from Deccan Chronicle: <http://www.deccanchronicle.com/131102/news-current-affairs/article/%E2%80%98we-want-be-google-civic-issues%E2%80%99>
- Jobert, B. (2011). Civil-society debates in India: Civil society against political society? In J. Bruno, & B. Kohler-Koch (Eds.), *Changing images of civil society: From protest to government* (pp. 70-86). Oxon; New York: Routledge.
- Jodhka, S., & Prakash, A. (2011). *The Indian middle class: Emerging cultures of politics and economics*. Retrieved August 28, 2013, from KAS Annual Reports: www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_29624-544-2-30.pdf?111205133538
- John, S., & Phadnis, S. (2013 , August 2). *Bangalore among top 8 tech clusters*. Retrieved August 5, 2014, from The Times of India: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/tech/tech-news/Bangalore-among-top-8-tech-clusters/articleshow/21544103.cms>
- Johnson, C. (2003). *Decentralisation in India: Poverty, politics and panchayati raj*. Working paper 199, Overseas Development Institute. Retrieved March 20, 2015, from www.odi.org/resources/docs/2440.pdf
- Kamath, L. (2006). Achieving global competitiveness and local poverty reduction? Examining the public-private partnering model of governance in Bangalore, India. New Brunswick: Rutgers University.
- Kamath, L., & Vijayabaskar, M. (2009). Limits and possibilities of middle class associations as urban collective actors. *Economic and Political Weekly*, XLIV (26&27), 368-376.
- Karnataka, N. (2015, January 30). Karnataka govt to make Kannada Compulsory up to Standard 5. Retrieved February 28, 2015, from

- <http://www.newskarnataka.com/bangalore/Karnataka-govt-to-make-Kannada-Compulsory-up-to-Standard-5/>
- Kashyap, S. (1994). *Our Constitution: An Introduction to India's Constitution and Constitutional Law*. New Delhi: National Book Trust, India.
- Kaviraj, S. (1986). Indira Gandhi and Indian Politics. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 21(38/39), 1697-1708.
- Kaviraj, S. (2001). In search of civil society. In S. Kaviraj, & S. Khilnani (Eds.), *Civil society: History and possibilities* (pp. 287-323). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kaviraj, S., & Khilnani, S. (Eds.). (2001). *Civil society: History and possibilities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kaviraj, S., & Khilnani, S. (Eds.). (2001). *Civil society: History and possibilities*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- kbsyed61. (2012 , October 29). *Praja-RAAG awarded with 2012 Volvo Sustainable Mobility Award (Runner Up)!* Retrieved November 25, 2013, from Praja.in: <http://praja.in/hi/blog/kbsyed61/2012/10/29/praja-raag-awarded-2012-volvo-sustainable-mobuility-award-runner>
- kbsyed61. (2014, June 30). *Petition demanding Suburban Rail was submitted to new Railway Minister!* . Retrieved July July , 2014, from Praja.in: <http://praja.in/hi/projects/3110/announcement/petition-demanding-suburban-rail-was-submitted-new-railway-minister>
- Kesavachandran C, Rastogi, S., Das, M., & Khan, A. (2006). *Working conditions and health among employees at information technology-enabled services: A review of current evidence*. Retrieved December 10, 2012, from Indian Journal of Medical Sciences: <http://www.indianjmedsci.org/text.asp?2006/60/7/300/26606>
- Kim, J., Kim, J., & Kim, A. (2014). The communication adaptiveness and power dynamics of the state, the market, and civil society in the information age: The case of Korea. *Information, Communication & Society*, 17(8), 956-973.
- King, N., & Horrocks, C. (2010). *Interviews in qualitative research*. London: Sage Publications.
- Klitgaard, R. (2012). *Public-private collaboration and corruption*. Retrieved September 30, 2014, from <http://www.cgu.edu/PDFFiles/Presidents%20Office/Collaboration%20and%20Corruption%202012.pdf>

- Knowledge@Wharton. (2011, September 22). *Can Bangalore become the innovation hub of Asia?* Retrieved August 5, 2014, from <http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/can-bangalore-become-the-innovation-hub-of-asia/>
- Kodkani, J. (2011, April 9). *Story of Bangalore's identity crisis*. Retrieved March 18, 2012, from The Times of India: <http://www.timescrest.com/coverstory/story-of-bangalores-identity-crisis-5134>
- Kopecky, P. (2003). Civil society, uncivil society and contentious politics in post-Communist Europe. In P. Kopecky, & C. Mudde (Eds.), *Uncivil society?: contentious politics in post-communist Europe* (pp. 1-17). London; New York: Routledge.
- Krefting, L. (1991). Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 45, 214-222.
- Krishnamurthy, P. (2012, February 29). *Made in Bangalore – how social enterprise is transforming business-as-usual in India*. Retrieved September 29, 2014, from <http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/blog/2012/02/made-in-bangalore>
- Kudva, N. (2005). Strong states, strong NGOs . In R. Ray, & M. Katzenstein (Eds.), *Social movements in India: Poverty, power, and politics* (pp. 233----). Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Kumar, D. (1992). The affirmative action debate in India. *Asian Survey*, 32(3), 290-302.
- Kumar, R. (2008). Globalization and Changing Patterns of Social Mobilization in Urban India. *Social Movement Studies*, 7(1), 77-96.
- Kumar, S. (2014, July 9). *'Bangalore victim of false promises by its politicians'*. Retrieved July 21, 2014, from The New Indian Express: <http://www.newindianexpress.com/cities/bangalore/%E2%80%98Bangalore-victim-of-false-promises-by-its-politicians%E2%80%99/2014/07/09/article2321194.ece>
- Kvale, S. (1996). *Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Lahiri, T. (2010, November 15). *Paid a bribe in India? Vent here*. Retrieved February 18, 2012, from The Wall Street Journal: <http://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2010/11/15/paid-a-bribe-in-india-vent-here/>
- Lakha, S. (1999). The state, globalisation, and Indian middle-class identity. In M. Pinches (Ed.), *Culture and privilege in capitalist Asia* (pp. 252-276). London: Routledge.

- Lakha, S. (2003). Cyber gurus and social mobility in India's 'Silicon Valley'. In H. Dahles, & O. D. Muijzenberg, *Capital and knowledge in Asia: Changing power relations* (pp. 51-63). London; New York : RoutledgeCurzon.
- Lakha, S. (2003). Cyber gurus and social mobility in India's 'Silicon Valley'. In H. Dahles, & O. Muijzenberg (Eds.), *Capital and knowledge in Asia: Changing power relations* (pp. 51-63). London; New York: RoutledgeCurzon.
- Laveena, M. (2013 , June 21). *FB powers change in civic authorities*. Retrieved August 13, 2014, from Talk: <http://talkmag.in/cms/news/city/item/1672-fb-powers-change-in-civic-authorities>
- Laxmikanth, M. (2011). *Governance in India*. New Delhi: Tate McGraw-Hill.
- Lee, T. (2005). Internet Control and Auto-regulation in Singapore. *Surveillance & Society* , 3(1), 74-95. Retrieved from Surveillance & Society .
- Lee, T. (2013, November 26). *Singapore an advanced surveillance state, but citizens don't mind*. Retrieved May 10, 2015, from <https://www.techinasia.com/singapore-advanced-surveillance-state-citizens-mind/>
- Leontidou, L. (2006). Urban social movements: From the 'right to the city' to transnational spatialities and flaneur activists. *City*, 10(3), 259-268.
- Levy, S. (2011). *In the Plex: How Google thinks, works, and shapes our lives*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Lim, M. (2014). Seeing spatially: people, networks and movements in digital and urban spaces. *International Development Planning Review*, 36(1), 51-72.
- Liu, F., & Maitlis, S. (2010). Nonparticipant observation. In A. Mills, G. Durepos, & E. Wiebe (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of case study research* (pp. 610-612). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Lloyd-Jones, G. (2003). *Design and control issues in qualitative case study research*. Retrieved January 5, 2013, from http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/2_2/pdf/lloydjones.pdf
- Loader, B. (Ed.). (2007). *Young citizens in the digital age: Political engagement, young people and new media*. Oxon; New York: Routledge.
- Loader, B., Vromen, A., & Xenos, M. (2014). The networked young citizen: Social media, political participation and civic engagement. *Information, Communication & Society*, 17(2), 143-150.

- Lofland, J., & Lofland, L. (1995). *Analyzing social settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis* (3rd Edition ed.). Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth.
- Lynch, M. (2014). Media, old and new. In M. Lynch (Ed.), *The Arab uprisings explained: New contentious politics in the Middle East* (pp. 93-109). New York: Columbia University Press.
- Madon, S. (1997). The information-based global economy and socio-economic development: The case of Bangalore. *The Information Society*, 13(3), 227-244.
- Madon, S., & Sahay, S. (2000). Democracy and information: A case study of new local governance structures in Bangalore. *Information, Communication & Society*, 3(2), 173-191.
- Magnusson, M., Bellström, P., & Thoren, T. (2012). *Facebook usage in government – a case study of information content*. Retrieved August 13, 2013, from Paper presented at AMCIS 2012, July 29, Seattle: <http://aisel.aisnet.org.libproxy1.nus.edu.sg/amcis2012/proceedings/EGovernment/11>
- Maira, A. (2011). Rethinking India's industrial and innovation strategies. In *Business Standard India 2011* (pp. 95-108). New Delhi: BS Books.
- Malusare, K. (2013, July 15). *Commuter rail: Just a few miles more to start*. Retrieved November 21, 2013, from Citizen Matters: <http://bangalore.citizenmatters.in/articles/commuter-rail-just-a-few-miles-more-to-start>
- Malusare, N. (2013a, September 6). *Think, suggest, object; It's your Ward Committee after all!* Retrieved October 5, 2013, from Citizen Matters: <http://bangalore.citizenmatters.in/articles/think-suggest-object-it-s-your-ward-committee-after-all>
- Manor, J. (2009). Successful governance reforms in two Indian states: Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. In M. Robinson (Ed.), *The politics of successful governance reforms* (pp. 23-49).
- Markusen, A., Hall, P., & Glasmeier, A. (1986). *High tech America: The what, how, where and why of sunrise industries*. Boston: Allen and Unwin.
- Marolt, P. (2014, February 4). *Conceptualizing cyber-urban connections in Asia and the Middle East*. Retrieved March 1, 2014, from <http://blog.nus.edu.sg/ariurban/2014/02/04/event-cyber-urban-connections-in-asia-and-the-middle-east/>

- Martin, J. (2014). Mobile media and political participation: Defining and developing an emerging field. *Mobile Media & Communication*, 2(2), 173-195.
- Marx, L., & Smith, M. (1994). Introduction. In M. Smith, & L. Marx (Eds.), *Does technology drive history?* (pp. ix-xv). Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative researching* (2nd Edition ed.). London: Sage Publications.
- Mason, M. (2010). *Sample size and saturation in PhD studies using qualitative interviews*. Retrieved July 23, 2013, from Forum: Qualitative Social Research: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/1428/3027>
- Mathur, M. (2007). *Impact of the Constitution (74th) Amendment Act on the urban local bodies: A review*. Retrieved August 6, 2013, from National Institute of Urban Affairs: http://www.niua.org/Publications/working_papers/74CAA-mpmathur.pdf
- Mawdsley, E. (2004). India's middle classes and the environment. *Development and Change*, 35(1), 79–103.
- Maxwell, J. (1996). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Maxwell, J. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (3rd Edition ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Mayer, M. (2006). Manuel Castells' The City and the Grassroots'. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 30(1), 202-206.
- Mazumdar-Shaw, K. (2009, December 14). *Bangalore scores an A in Biotech*. Retrieved March 6, 2011, from http://www.dnaindia.com/scitech/comment_bangalore-scores-an-a-in-biotech_1323477
- Mazzarella, W. (2005). *Middle class*. Retrieved May 21, 2012, from http://d3qi0qp55mx5f5.cloudfront.net/anthropology/docs/mazz_middleclass.pdf
- McKechnie, L. (2008). Unstructured observation. In L. Given (Ed.), *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods* (pp. 908-909). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Meho, L. (2006). E-Mail interviewing in qualitative research: A methodological discussion. *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 57(10), 1284-1295.
- Michelson, E. (2006). *Clicking Toward Development: Understanding the Role of ICTs for Civil Society*. Retrieved May 6, 2015, from The Journal of Technology Studies : <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/ejournals/JOTS/v32/v32n1/michelson.html>

- Miles, M., & Huberman, A. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook* (2nd Edition ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Mirror, B. (2014, May 6). State cannot make Kannada mandatory language in private, unaided schools. Retrieved February 20, 2015, from <http://www.bangaloremirror.com/bangalore/others/State-cannot-make-Kannada-mandatory-language-in-private-unaided-schools/articleshow/34741617.cms>
- Mishra, G. (2009 , April 18). *The perils of Facebook activism: Nisha Susan locked out of Pink Chaddi campaign's Facebook group*. Retrieved May 13, 2013, from GlobalVoices Advocacy: <http://advocacy.globalvoicesonline.org/2009/04/18/the-perils-of-facebook-activism-nisha-susan-locked-out-of-pink-chaddi-campaigns-facebook-group/>
- Mishra, P. (2009, July 16). Nilekani has mentored, financed eGovernments Foundation. *The Economic Times*. Retrieved September 15, 2012, from http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2009-07-16/news/28444505_1_property-tax-srikanth-nadhamuni-egovernments
- Mohan, D. (2013, June 24). *BESCOM opens new FaceBook page*. Retrieved August 13, 2014, from Citizen Matters: http://bangalore.citizenmatters.in/blogs/deepa-s-jottings/blog_posts/bescom-opens-new-facebook-page
- Morse, J. (1991). Strategies for sampling. In J. Morse (Ed.), *Qualitative nursing research: A contemporary dialogue* (Revised Edition ed., pp. 127-145). Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications.
- Morse, J. (2000). Determining sample size. *Qualitative Health Research*, 10(1), 3-5.
- Mudalgi, Y. (2011, July 2). *Saldanha's move made police drop non-bailable charges*. Retrieved July 5, 2011, from <http://bangalore.citizenmatters.in/articles/3143-sankey-road-arrests-dropping-charges>
- Mulhall, A. (2003). In the field: Notes on observation in qualitative research. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 41(3), 306–313.
- murali772. (2011, June 12). *Wouldn't PRAJA have been a better option for BTP?* Retrieved August 13, 2014, from Praja.in: <http://praja.in/en/blog/murali772/2011/06/12/wouldnt-praja-have-been-better-option#comment-28129>
- Murthy, C., Sitharam, T., Hebbani, L., & Kumar, S. (2013). *Proceedings of the Workshop "Air Quality (AQ) Monitoring, Modeling and Assessment Workshop"*. Center for

- infrastructure, Sustainable Transport and Urban Planning (CiSTUP), Bangalore . Retrieved March 2, 2015, from <http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/file/Air%20Quality.pdf>
- Murthy, C., Sitharam, T., Hebbani, L., & Kumar, S. (2013). *Proceedings of the Workshop “Air Quality (AQ) Monitoring, Modeling and Assessment Workshop”*. Retrieved March 2, 2015, from CiSTUP: <http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/file/Air%20Quality.pdf>
- Nadeem, S. (2009). The uses and abuses of time: Globalization and time arbitrage in India’s outsourcing industries. *Global Networks*, 9(1), 20-40.
- Nagendra, H., & Gopal, D. (2010). Street trees in Bangalore: Density, diversity, composition and distribution. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, 9(2), 129–137.
- Nagendra, H., Nagendran, S., Paul, S., & Pareeth, S. (2012). Graying, greening and fragmentation in the rapidly expanding Indian city of Bangalore. *Landscape and Urban Planning*, 105(4), 400– 406.
- Nah, S. (2010). A theoretical and analytical framework of networked communities. *Javnost-The Public*, 17(1), 23-36.
- Naik, G., Basavaraj, K., Sultana, N., & Prasanna, R. (2010). *Public value creation through private partnership: Lessons from public service delivery in Karnataka, India*. Retrieved October 5, 2014, from <http://www.iimb.ernet.in/research/sites/default/files/PPP%20conference%20paper%20WP%20315.pdf>
- Nair, J. (2000a). Singapore is not Bangalore’s destiny. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 35(18), 1512-1514.
- Nair, J. (2000b). Language and right to the city. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 35(47), 4141-4146.
- Nair, J. (2005). *The promise of the metropolis: Bangalore's twentieth century*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Nair, R. (2013, May 24). Plustxt: Bangalore's startup that allows mobile users to communicate in regional languages. *The Economic Times* . Retrieved January 3, 2015, from http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2013-05-24/news/39502004_1_mobile-users-whatsapp-mobile-phones

- Nanabhay, M., & Farmanfarmaian, R. (2011). From spectacle to spectacular: How physical space, social media and mainstream broadcast amplified the public sphere in Egypt's 'Revolution'. *The Journal of North African Studies*, 16(4), 573-603.
- News Karnataka . (2015 , January 30). *Karnataka govt to make Kannada compulsory up to Standard 5*. Retrieved February 28, 2015, from <http://www.newskarnataka.com/bangalore/Karnataka-govt-to-make-Kannada-Compulsory-up-to-Standard-5/>
- Nilsen, A. (2007). On New Social Movements and 'The Reinvention of India'. *Forum for Development Studies*, 34(2), 271-293.
- Nisbett, N. (2006). The Internet, cybercafes and the new social spaces of Bangalorean youth. In S. Coleman, & P. Collins (Eds.), *Locating the Field: Space, Place and Context in Anthropology* (pp. 129-147). Oxford; New York : Berg.
- Nisbett, N. (2009). *Growing up in the knowledge society: Living the IT dream in Bangalore*. New Delhi; Abingdon, OX: Routledge.
- Norohna, F. (2007, January). *Social entrepreneurs make it their business to change India*. Retrieved September 30, 2014, from InfoChange News & Features: <http://infochangeindia.org/governance/features/social-entrepreneurs-make-it-their-business-to-change-india.html>
- Norris, P. (2001). *Digital divide? Civic engagement, information poverty, and the Internet in democratic societies*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Nørskov, S., & Rask, M. (2011). *Observation of online communities: A discussion of online and offline observer roles in studying development, cooperation and coordination in an open source software environment*. Retrieved May 5, 2013, from FQS: Forum: Qualitative Social Research: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/>
- Olsson, T., & Dahlgren, P. (Eds.). (2010). *Young people, ICTs and democracy: Theories, policies, identities and websites*. Göteborg, Sweden: Nordicom.
- OneWorld Foundation India . (2011). I Paid a Bribe. In *ICT facilitated access to information innovations: A compendium of case studies from South Asia* (pp. 129-145). OneWorld Foundation India.
- Padawangi, R., Marolt, P., & Douglass, M. (2014). Introduction to the special issue: Insurgencies, social media and the public city in Asia. *International Development Planning Review*, 36(1), 3-13.

- Pain, P. (2011 , June 13). *Now a website to fight corruption*. Retrieved January 20, 2014, from The Hindu: <http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/technology/Internet/now-a-website-to-fight-corruption/article2099387.ece>
- Panda, S. (2007). Globalisation, Culture, and Information Communication Technology in India. In K. Choudhary (Ed.), *Globalisation, Governance Reforms and Development in India* (pp. 443-462). New Delhi; Thousand Oaks : Sage Publications.
- Pangotra, P., & Sharma, S. (2006). *Modeling travel demand in a metropolitan city, W.P. No. 2006-03-06*. Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad. Retrieved March 1, 2015, from <http://vslir.iimahd.ernet.in:8080/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/168/2006-03-06ppangotra.pdf?sequence=1>
- Pani, N. (2009). Resource cities across phases of globalization: Evidence from Bangalore. *Habitat International*, 33, 114-119.
- Pani, N., Radhakrishna, S., & Bhat, K. (Eds.). (2010). *Bengaluru, Bangalore, Bengaluru: Imaginations and their times*. New Delhi, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Papacharissi, Z. (2004). Democracy online: Civility, politeness, and the democratic potential of online political discussion groups. *New Media & Society*, 6(2), 259-283.
- Parashar, A. (2012). *An analysis of new media's role in mass movements (with reference to Anna Hazare's campaign 'India Against Corruption')*. Retrieved June 5, 2013, from Mass Communication & Journalism: [http://omicsgroup.org/journals/an-analysis-of-new-media%E2%80%99s-role-in-mass-movements-\(with-reference-to-anna-hazares-campaign-india-against-corruption\)-2165-7912.1000118.pdf](http://omicsgroup.org/journals/an-analysis-of-new-media%E2%80%99s-role-in-mass-movements-(with-reference-to-anna-hazares-campaign-india-against-corruption)-2165-7912.1000118.pdf)
- Parker, E. (2014, October 1). *Social media and the Hong Kong protests* . Retrieved May 3, 2015, from The New Yorker: <http://www.newyorker.com/tech/elements/social-media-hong-kong-protests>
- Parthasarathy, B. (2004). India's Silicon Valley or Silicon Valley's India? Socially Embedding the Computer Software Industry in Bangalore. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 28(3), 664-85.
- Parthasarathy, B. (2005). The Political Economy of the Computer Software Industry in Bangalore, India. In A. Saith, & A. Vijayabaskar, *ICTS and Indian economic development : Economy, work, regulation* (pp. 199-230). New Delhi; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications .
- Pathiyam, P. (2006 , November 12). *A generation awakens*. Retrieved February 8, 2014, from The Times of India:

- <http://epaper.timesofindia.com/Repository/ml.asp?Ref=VE9JTS8yMDA2LzExLzEyI0FyMDQ5MDA=&Mode=HTML&Locale=english-skin-custom>
- Patnaik, P. (2011 , October 2). *Messianism versus democracy*. Retrieved May 16, 2013, from The Hindu: <http://m.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/messianism-versus-democracy/article2389694.ece/>
- Patton, M. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd Edition ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Paul, S. (2002). *New mechanisms for public accountability: The Indian experience*. Retrieved September 30, 2014, from http://regulationbodyofknowledge.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Paul_New_Mechanisms_for.pdf
- Paul, S. (2007). Citizen report cards in Bangalore, India: A case study in accountability. In D. Narayan-Parker, & E. Glinskaya (Eds.), *Ending poverty in South Asia: Ideas that work* (pp. 347-377).
- Perron, B., Taylor, H., Glass, J., & Margerum-Leys, J. (2010). Information and Communication Technologies in social work. *Advances in Social Work, 11* (1), 67-81.
- Pink, S. (2009). Urban social movements and small places. *City: analysis of urban trends, culture, theory, policy, action, 13*(4), 451-465.
- Portwood-Stacer, L. (2012, July 29). *How we talk about media refusal, Part 1: "Addiction"*. Retrieved September 21, 2014, from Flow: <http://flowtv.org/2012/07/how-we-talk-about-media-refusal-part-1/>
- Postmes, T., & Brunsting, S. (2002). Collective action in the age of the Internet: Mass communication and online mobilization. *Social Science Computer Review, 20*(3), 290-301.
- Praja. (2008, May 17). Praja.in: Modern day citizen activism.
- Praja. (2009a, May 7). Praja.in – An introduction, internal document.
- Praja. (2009b , April 20). What is Praja.in.
- Praja. (2009c, April 18). Praja meeting notes, internal notes.
- Praja. (2010a, February 3). What now? Where next? A Review: February 2010 status, internal document.
- Praja. (2010b , March 5). What now? Where next? A Review, March 2010 status.
- Praja. (2010c, October 11). Praja Society–October Review: Theme – Structure, Society vs Website, internal document.

- Praja. (2010d). Praja Society: An introduction to the advocacy group, November 2010, internal document.
- Praja. (2010e, December 2). Citizen participation & engagement: A new approach, internal document.
- Praja. (2012, January). Praja RAAG & website: Next steps, internal document.
- Prasad, C. (n.d.). *Thinking through social innovation and social entrepreneurship in India*. Retrieved September 30, 2014, from <http://www.villgro.org/images/social%20innovation%20paper%205.pdf>
- Prashanth, G. (2011, October 4). Bangalore is 6th worst city in world for commuting . Retrieved March 2, 2015, from <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/Bangalore-is-6th-worst-city-in-world-for-commuting/articleshow/10225602.cms>
- Prashanth, G. (2011b , December 16). *It is truly an international city*. Retrieved July 23, 2014, from The Times of India: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bangalore/It-is-truly-an-international-city/articleshow/11127933.cms>
- Rajagopal, C. (2008). *Bangalore: The informal economy of the Historic Pete*. Retrieved February 25, 2015, from Context: Built, Living and Natural: <http://www.dronah.org/issuedetails.aspx?issueid=35>
- Raman, B., & Bawa, Z. (2011). Interacting with the state via information and communication technologies: The case of Nemmadi Kendras in Karnataka. *Media Asia*, 38(1), 52-64.
- Raman, V. (2006). Information technology and participatory democracy: A case study of Bangalore City. *Unpublished dissertation, Pennsylvania State University: USA*.
- Raman, V. (2008). Examining the 'e' in government and governance: A case study in alternatives from Bangalore City, India. *The Journal of Community Informatics*, 4(2).
- Ramanathan, R. (2007). Federalism, urban decentralisation and citizen participation. *Economic & Political Weekly*, 42(8), 674-681.
- Ramani, C. (2013, July 13). *Green signal for suburban train system*. Retrieved November 21, 2013, from The Hindu: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/bangalore/green-signal-for-suburban-train-system/article4909629.ece>
- Ranganathan, M. (2011). The embeddedness of cost recovery: Water reforms and associationism at Bangalore's fringes. In J. Anjaria, & C. McFarlane (Eds.), *Urban navigations :Politics, space and the city in South Asia* (pp. 165-190). New Delhi; New York : Routledge .

- Rani, M., & Roy, A. (2009, October). *Citizens participation in local governance – A study of Wards Committee in Bangalore Municipal Corporation*. Retrieved 2013, from http://www.connectjournals.com/file_full_text/157001H_19_37-48.pdf
- Rao, A. (2010). Assessing techno-centric models of good governance: A case study of public-private partnership in Bangalore, India. *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association (ICA), Singapore, June 23, 2010.*
- Rao, A. (2012). "Sister-groups" and online-offline linkages in networked collective action: A case study of the Right to Information movement in India . *The Electronic Journal on Information Systems in Developing Countries* , 52(7), 1-17.
- Rao, A. (2012a). *What's the Matter with India?: A powerhouse of social innovation struggles to take the next step [Blog post]*. Retrieved September 29, 2014, from <http://r4d.org/blog/2012-12-07/whats-matter-india-powerhouse-social-innovation-struggles-take-next-step>
- Rao, A. (2013). Re-examining the relationship between civil society and the Internet: Pessimistic visions in India's 'IT City'. *Journal of Creative Communications*, 8((2&3)), 89–107.
- Rao, C. (2007, December 17). *If IT is going to take away our values, burn Bangalore, burn IT'*. Retrieved May 10, 2012, from Outlook: <http://www.outlookindia.com/article/If-IT-Is-Going-To-Take-Away-Our-Values-Burn-Bangalore-Burn-IT/236260>
- Rao, H. (2010a). Suspended in animation: The dilemma of Kannada identity in Bangalore. *Unpublished master's thesis, University of Oxford.*
- Ravindra, A. (2004, July). *An assessment of the impact of Bangalore citizen report cards on the performance of public agencies*. Retrieved September 30, 2014, from ECD Working Paper Series, 12: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTEDS14/Resources/ecd_wp_12.pdf
- Ray, A. (2014 , January 11). *Not in the loop on suburban rail: Kharge*. Retrieved January 20, 2014, from The Times of India: <http://www.one.in/timesofindia-bangalore/not-in-the-loop-on-suburban-railkharge-1042000.html>
- Ray, R., & Katzenstein. (2005). Introduction: In the beginning, there was the Nehruvian State. In R. Ray, & M. Katzenstein (Eds.), *Social movements in India: Poverty, power and politics* (pp. 1-31). M.F. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

- Rediff.com. (2014 , September 15). *Inspiring story: 'The Ugly Indian' is cleaning up dirty cities*. Retrieved September 29, 2014, from <http://www.rediff.com/business/report/pix-special-inspiring-story-the-ugly-indian-is-cleaning-up-dirty-cities/20140915.htm>
- Reisdorf, B. C., Axelsson, A., & Söderholm, H. (2012). *Living offline: A qualitative study of internet non-use in Great Britain and Sweden*. Retrieved September 20, 2014, from Selected Papers of Internet Research: <http://spir.aoir.org/index.php/spir/article/view/10>
- Remesh, P. (2008). Work organisation, control, and 'empowerment': Managing the contradictions of call centre work . In C. Upadhya, & A. Vasavi (Eds.), *In an outpost of the global economy: Work and workers in India's Information Technology industry* (pp. 235-262). London; New York: Routledge.
- Rheingold, H. (2000). *The virtual community: Homesteading on the electronic frontier* (Revised Edition ed.). Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Ribak, R., & Rosenthal, M. (2011). Rethinking marginality: Media ambivalence and resistance in an age of convergence and ubiquity. *The annual meeting of the International Communication Association, May 25*. Boston, MA. Retrieved from http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p490336_index.html
- Richards, L. (2005). *Handling qualitative data: A practical guide*. London: Sage Publications.
- Richards, L., & Morse, J. (2007). *Read me first. User's guide to qualitative methods* (2nd Edition ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Richards, L., & Morse, J. (2007). *Read me first. User's guide to qualitative methods* (2nd Edition ed.). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Rogers, Y. (2012). Foreword. In M. Foth, L. Forlano, C. Satchell, & M. Gibbs (Eds.), *From social butterfly to engaged citizen: Urban informatics, social media, ubiquitous computing, and mobile technology to support citizen engagement* (pp. 73-76). Cambridge; London: The MIT Press.
- Rooney, D., Hearn, G., & Ninan, A. (2005). *Handbook on the knowledge economy*. Glos, UK; Massachusetts, USA: Edward Elgar.
- Roy, A. (2011 , October 2). *I'd rather not be Anna*. Retrieved November 28, 2012, from The Hindu: <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/id-rather-not-be-anna/article2379704.ece>
- Roy, M. (1993). The Englishing of India: Class formation and social privilege. *Social Scientist*, 21(5/6), 36-62.

- RoyChowdhury, S. (2011). *Livelihood and income: Informality and poverty in Bangalore's slums*. Retrieved August 3, 2014, from South Asia Work in Progress Research Paper 8: <http://www.southasia.ox.ac.uk/sites/sias/files/documents/Oxford%20University%20CSASP%20-20Work%20in%20Progress%20paper%2010%20Supriya%20RoyChowdhury.pdf>
- Roye, J. (2013 , August 23). *Revolution on a bullock cart*. Retrieved January 12, 2015, from <http://www.littleindia.com/life/15671-revolution-on-the-bullock-cart.html>
- Rubin, H., & Rubin, I. (1995). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Rucht, D. (2013). Protest movements and their media usages. In B. Cammaerts, A. Mattoni, & P. McCurdy (Eds.), *Mediation and Protest Movements* (pp. 249-268). Bristol, UK; Chicago, USA: Intellect.
- Sahoo, S. (2013). *Civil society and democratization in India: Institutions, ideologies and interests*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Saith, A., Vijayabaskar, M., & Gayathri, V. (Eds.). (2008). *ICTs and Indian social change: Diffusion, poverty, governance*. New Delhi; Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Saldana, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. London: Sage Publications.
- Saldanha, L. (2012, August). *Whose streets?* Retrieved December 5, 2013, from Seminar, 636: http://www.india-seminar.com/2012/636/636_leo_f_saldanha.htm
- Sandhu, A. (2006 , October 14). Why unions fail in organising India's BPO-ITES industry. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 41(41), 4319-4322.
- Sanghvi, V. (2006 , December 23). *Redirecting middle class anger*. Retrieved February 8, 2014, from Hindustan Times: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/news-feed/nm21/redirecting-middle-class-anger/article1-195523.aspx>
- Sanjukta. (2009, January 21). *An interview with Jasmine Shah of Jaago Re! [Blog post]*. Retrieved January 14, 2014, from <http://sanjukta.wordpress.com/2009/01/21/an-interview-with-jasmine-shah-of-jaago-re/>
- Sarkar, S. .. (2008). The New Middle-Class, Technology and Modernity in Seelampur. *National Center for Digital Government, Paper 27*. Retrieved April 2, 2015, from <http://scholarworks.umass.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1029&context=ncdg>
- Sassen, S. (1991). *The global city*. Princeton, NJ:: Princeton University Press.
- Sassen, S. (2000). The global city: Strategic site/new frontier. *American Studies*, 41(2/3), 79-95.

- Sassen, S. (2001). *The global city: New York, London, Tokyo* (2nd Edition ed.). Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Sassen, S. (2010). The city: Its return as a lens for social theory. *City, Culture and Society*, 1, 3-11.
- Sastry, A. (2013 , November 22). *Karnataka seeks Railways' nod for suburban network*. Retrieved January 5, 2014, from The Hindu: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/bangalore/karnataka-seeks-railways-nod-for-suburban-network/article5376629.ece?ref=relatedNews>
- Sastry, A., & Shastri, D. (2012 , August 6). *Elevated toll expressway brings down fatalities on Hosur Road*. Retrieved December 31, 2013, from The Hindu: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/bangalore/elevated-toll-expressway-brings-down-fatalities-on-hosur-road/article3733237.ece>
- Sastry, G. (2008). *Emerging development issues of greater Bangalore*. Working Paper 194, Institute for Social and Economic Change (ISEC), Bangalore .
- Satish, D. (2008 , May 7). *Mind your language: Kannada now a poll issue*. Retrieved May 15, 2013, from <http://ibnlive.in.com/news/mind-your-language-kannada-now-a-poll-issue/64729-37.html>
- Saxena, A. (2011, May 3). *Updated: Bangalore Traffic Police launches Facebook page*. Retrieved August 13, 2014, from <http://www.medianama.com/2011/05/223-bangalore-traffic-police-facebook/>
- Saxenian, A. (2007). Bangalore: The Silicon Valley of Asia? In R. Muhkerji (Ed.), *India's economic transition: The politics of reforms* (pp. 359-387). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schrage, M. (2014, April 30). *How Innovation Ecosystems Turn Outsiders into Collaborators*. Retrieved July 10, 2014, from Harvard Business Review: <http://blogs.hbr.org/2014/04/how-innovation-ecosystems-turn-outsiders-into-collaborators/>
- Scoones, I. (2007). The contested politics of technology: Biotech in Bangalore. *Science and Public Policy*, 34(4), 261–271.
- Scott, A. (2001). Globalization and the rise of city-regions. *European Planning Studies*, 9(7), 813-826.
- Sen, S. (1993). Defining the Nonprofit Sector: India. *Working Papers of the Johns Hopkins Comparative Nonprofit Sector Project*, no. 12. Retrieved April 16, 2015, from http://www.adm-cf.com/jhu/pdfs/CNP_Working_Papers/CNP_WP12_India_1993.pdf

- Sen, S. (1999). Some aspects of state-NGO relationships in India in the post-Independence era. *Development & Change*, 30(2), 327-355.
- Sengupta, M. (2012). Anna Hazare and the idea of Gandhi. *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 71(3), 593-601.
- Shah, G. (2004). Social Movements in India: A Review of Literature.
- Shah, N., & Jansen, F. (Eds.). (2011). *Digital AlterNatives with a cause*. Bangalore; The Hague: Centre for Internet and Society/Hivos.
- Shankar, P. (2012). *Internet, Society and Space in Indian Cities*. Bangalore: Center for Internet and Society. Retrieved February 17, 2012, from <http://cis-india.org/raw/internet-society.pdf>
- Sharma, D. (2011). *An evaluation of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act: A case study of Chandigarh, India*. Retrieved August 6, 2013, from JOAAG, 6, 1: http://joaag.com/uploads/6_1_-8_Case_Study_Sharma.pdf
- Sheth, D. (2004). Globalisation and new politics of micro-movements. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 39(1), 45-58.
- Sheth, D., & Sethi, H. (1991). The NGO sector in India: Historical context and current discourse. *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 2(2), 49-68.
- Short, J. (2012). *Globalization, modernity, and the city*. Oxon; New York: Routledge.
- Shrikumar, A. (2012, October 5). Tackling technology. *The Hindu*. Retrieved July 6, 2013, from <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-features/tp-metroplus/tackling-technology/article3966700.ece>
- Siewert, J. (2013, December 2). *Is ecosystem just another buzzword? [Blog post]*. Retrieved July 3, 2014, from <http://smarterplanet.com/mobile-enterprise/blog/2013/12/ecosystem-just-another-buzzword.html>
- SiliconIndia. (2008, November 19). *Bangalore's IT, BPO crowd less than 10 percent*. Retrieved January 5, 2012, from SiliconIndia News: http://www.siliconindia.com/shownews/Bangalores_IT_BPO_crowd_less_than_10_percent-nid-48983-cid-2.html
- silkboard. (2011, October 15). *Sustainable Mobility Award 2011 - Praja get special recognition from Volvo. [Blog post]*. Retrieved November 25, 2013, from <http://praja.in/hi/blog/silkboard/2011/10/15/sustainable-mobility-award-2011-praja-get-special-recognition-volvo>

- silkboard. (2011a, June 20). *Bangalore's hall of shame - 3rd class treatment for Bus commuters @ Marathahalli [Blog post]*. Retrieved November 21, 2013, from <http://praja.in/en/blog/silkboard/2011/06/20/bangalores-hall-shame-3rd-class-treatment-bus-commuters-marathahalli>
- silkboard. (2011b , June 21). *Street meet @ marathahalli ring road chaos aka junction (date changed)*. Retrieved November 21, 2013, from <http://praja.in/en/events/2011/06/street-meet-marathahalli-ring-road-chaos-aka-junction>
- Simon, J., & Davies, A. (2013). *People powered social innovation: The need for citizen engagement*. Retrieved September 30, 2014, from http://ink.library.smu.edu.sg/lien_research/118
- Singh, A. (n.d.). Voluntary action in India: Past and present. Retrieved April 15, 2015, from www.sansad.org.in/Voluntary_Action_in%20India-Past_and_Present.doc
- Singh, B. (2013, June). *Governance, citizens and new civil society in contemporary urban India: Lessons from Mumbai*. Retrieved October 14, 2014, from ORF Issue Brief, #54: http://www.observerindia.com/cms/export/orfonline/modules/issuebrief/attachments/Issuebrief54_1371713087707.pdf
- Singh, H. (1994). Constitutional Base for Panchayati Raj in India: The 73rd Amendment Act. *Asian Survey*, 34(9), 818-827.
- Singh, M. (2014, September 12). *New Social Movements and Alternative Politics: India in a Comparative Theoretical Perspective*. Retrieved April 15, 2015, from <http://www.socialsciences.in/article/new-social-movements-and-alternative-politics-india-comparative-theoretical-perspective>
- Singh, P., Gurumurthy, A., & Nandini, C. (2012). *Exploring an institutional model for Community Knowledge Centres: A research study for the Karnataka Knowledge Commission*. Retrieved August 15, 2014, from IT for Change: <http://www.itforchange.net/taxonomy/term/317>
- Singh, R. (2014a). *New citizens' activism in India: Moments, movements, and mobilisation. An exploratory study*. Retrieved September 5, 2014, from Centre for Democracy and Social Action: <https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/study-new-citizens-activism-in-india.pdf>

- Sinha, A. (2013). *An India for Everyone: A Path to Inclusive Development*. India : HarperCollins Publishers .
- Sitapati, V. (2011 , July 23). What Anna Hazare's movement and India's new middle classes say about each other. *Economic & Political Weekly*, *xlvi*(30), 39-44.
- Sonntag, S. (2009). *Language politics in Karnataka*. Retrieved March 3, 2014, from Paper presented at the 21st World Congress of the International Political Science Association, Santiago, Chile, July 12-16: http://paperroom.ipsa.org/papers/paper_3206.pdf
- Soon, C., & Cho, H. (2014). OMGs! Offline-based movement organizations, online-based movement organizations and network mobilization: A case study of political bloggers in Singapore. *Information, Communication & Society*, *17*(5), 537-559.
- Soon, C., & Soh, Y. (2014). Engagement@web 2.0 between the government and citizens in Singapore: Dialogic communication on Facebook? . *Asian Journal of Communication* , *24*(1), 42-59.
- Soriano, C. (2012). New media and political mobilization: The case of online mediation of minority groups in the Philippines. *Unpublished doctoral dissertation, National University of Singapore, Singapore*.
- Spivak, G. (2000). Megacity. *Grey Room*, *1*, 8-25.
- Spradley, J. (1980). *Participant observation*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Sreekumar, T. (2010). Global city and civil society: Politics of the new techno-class in the urban spaces of India. *Paper presented at the 35th 4S Annual Meeting of the 4S, Tokyo, August 2010*.
- Sreekumar, T. (2011). *ICTs and development in India: Perspectives on the rural network society*. London; New York: Anthem Press.
- Sreenivasa, V. (2011). Streets as commons: What's happening to our streets? In *Vocabulary of Commons* (pp. 249-266). Gujarat, India: Foundation for Ecological Security.
- Sridharan, E. (2004). The growth and sectoral composition of India's middle class: Its impact on the politics of economic liberalization. *India Review*, *3*(4), pp. 405-428.
- srinidhi. (2013, October 28). *The first cycle day - we love it when a plan comes together!* [Blog post]. Retrieved March 10, 2014, from Praja.in: <http://praja.in/en/blog/srinidhi/2013/10/28/we-love-it-when-plan-comes-together>
- Srinivas, S. (2004). *Landscapes of urban memory: The sacred and the civic in India's high-tech city*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman.

- Srinivas, T. (2007). Everyday exotic: Transnational space, identity and contemporary foodways in Bangalore city. *Food, Culture & Society*, 10(1), 86-107.
- Srivastava, M. (2008, November 5). *A Backlash Grows in Bangalore Over Tech Revolution*. Retrieved August 25, 2014, from Bloomberg Businessweek: <http://www.businessweek.com/stories/2008-11-05/a-backlash-grows-in-bangalore-over-tech-revolution>
- Stake, R. (2006). *Multiple case study analysis*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Stake, R. (2009). The case study method in social inquiry . In R. Gomm, M. Hammersely, & P. Foster (Eds.), *Case Study Method: Key Issues, Key Texts* (pp. 18-27). London; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications .
- Stewart, J. (2013 , March 15). *Looking for a lesson in Google's perks*. Retrieved December 31, 2013, from The New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/16/business/at-google-a-place-to-work-and-play.html?adxnnl=1&pagewanted=1&adxnnlx=1388420481-N74HDiGFXMvPKaHCXwPig>
- Strauss, A. (1987). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Strom, S. (2012 , March 6). *Web sites shine light on petty bribery worldwide*. Retrieved January 21, 2014, from The New York Times: http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/07/business/web-sites-shine-light-on-petty-bribery-worldwide.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0
- Sudhira, H. (2008). The emergence of world city: Bangalore. In C. Johnson, R. Hu, S. Abedin, & M. Cramer (Ed.), *Metropolis 2008: Connecting Cities: India*. (pp. 117-140). Sydney: 9th World Congress of Metropolis: City - Regions.
- Sudhira, H., Ramachandra, C., & Bala Subrahmanya, M. (2007). City profile: Bangalore . *Cities*, 25(5), 379-390.
- Surman, M., & Reilly, K. (2003). *Appropriating the Internet for Social Change: Towards the strategic use of networked technologies by transnational civil society organisations*. Retrieved March 5, 2014, from http://marksurman.commons.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/Surman_2003_Appropriating_Internet_Social_Change.pdf

- Taeube, A. (2004). *Proximities and innovation: Evidence from the Indian IT industry in Bangalore*. Retrieved May 7, 2012, from DRUID Working Paper No. 04-10: <http://www3.druid.dk/wp/20040010.pdf>
- Tandon, R., & Mohanty, R. (2003). Introduction. Civil society and governance: Issues and problematics. In R. Tandon, & R. Mohanty (Eds.), *Does civil society matter?: Governance in contemporary India* (pp. 9-26). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Tata. (2008 , September 18). *Jaago Re! One Billion Votes Campaign' awakens young India! [Tata Companies press release]*. Retrieved December 10, 2013, from <http://www.tata.com/article/inside/oJbaL9LmLPs=/TLYVr3YPkMU=>
- TCLab . (2012). *Redefining urban infrastructure: Industry and equitable growth*. Retrieved August 3, 2014, from http://www.arch.columbia.edu/files/gsap/imceshared/lld2117/3_Bangalore_reduced.pdf
- tech. (2009, August 6). *Moderation launched on Praja [Blog post]*. Retrieved February 6, 2013, from Praja.in: <http://praja.in/en/blog/tech/2009/08/06/moderation-launched-praja>
- tech. (2010 , January 13). *Spam Control Feature [Blog post]*. Retrieved February 6, 2013, from Praja.in: <http://praja.in/en/blog/tech/2010/01/13/spam-control-feature>
- Tewari, R. (2009 , April 13). *Campaigns urge youth to wake up and vote for honest leaders*. Retrieved January 14, 2014, from HindustanTimes: <http://www.hindustantimes.com/news-feed/chunk-ht-ui-elections-sectionpage-spotlightonindia/campaigns-urge-youth-to-wake-up-and-vote-for-honest-leaders/article1-399811.aspx>
- The Economic Times . (2010, June 17). *Mumbai overtakes Bangalore, emerges as top biotech city*. Retrieved October 1, 2011, from http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2010-06-17/news/27570310_1_biospectrum-biotech-industry-biotech-companies
- The Economist . (2012, August 20). *Kannada, threatened at home*. Retrieved from The Economist : <http://www.economist.com/blogs/johnson/2012/08/language-india>
- The Economist. (2005, April 21). *The Bangalore paradox*. Retrieved February 20, 2015, from <http://www.economist.com/node/3886743>
- The Hindu. (2001, July 6). *IT corridor 'master plan' in 9 months*. Retrieved May 16, 2012, from <http://www.thehindu.com/thehindu/2001/07/06/stories/0406402i.htm>

- The Hindu. (2006 , February 27). *Hasiru Usiru steps in to protect over 50 trees*. Retrieved September 18, 2012, from <http://www.hindu.com/2006/02/27/stories/2006022718990300.htm>
- The Hindu. (2011, July 2). *Court stay comes too late for trees*. Retrieved July 5, 2011, from <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/bangalore/court-stay-comes-too-late-for-trees/article2151390.ece>
- The Hindu. (2011a, July 25). *It takes six minutes to cross a road*. Retrieved September 17, 2012 , from <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-karnataka/it-takes-six-minutes-to-cross-a-road/article2291405.ece>
- The Hindu. (2013 , November 1). *Janaagraha wins Google Global Impact Award*. Retrieved anuary 20, 2014, from <http://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/bangalore/janaagraha-wins-google-global-impact-award/article5305824.ece>
- The Indian Express. (2011, September 27). *Breathe carefully: Delhi third most polluted city in India*. Retrieved March 2, 2015, from <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/breathe-carefully-delhi-third-most-polluted-city-in-india/852253/>
- The Online Citizen . (2015, February 23). *Singapore: Blogger's conviction violates free speech*. Retrieved May 9, 2015, from <http://www.theonlinecitizen.com/2015/02/singapore-bloggers-conviction-violates-free-speech/>
- The Times of India. (2011 , June 9). *Karnataka sets up innovation council*. Retrieved July 6, 2011, from <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bangalore/Karnataka-sets-up-innovation-council/articleshow/8780741.cms>
- The Times of India. (2013 , January 9). *HC raps govt, asks it to form BBMP ward committees*. Retrieved December 25, 2013, from http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-01-09/bangalore/36236286_1_ward-committees-bbmp-mandur
- The Times of India. (2014, May 16). *They ride wheels of change*. Retrieved May 17, 2014, from <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bangalore/They-ride-wheels-of-change/articleshow/35612240.cms>
- Therborn, G., & Ho, K. (2009). Capital cities and their contested roles in the life of nations: Introduction. *Cities*, 13(1), 53-62.
- Thomas, D. (2003). *A general inductive approach for qualitative data analysis*. Retrieved July 22, 2013, from <http://www.frankumstein.com/PDF/Psychology/Inductive%20Content%20Analysis.pdf>

- Thomson, D., Bzdel, L., Golden-Biddle, K., Reay, T., & Estabrooks, C. (2005). *Central Questions of Anonymization: A Case Study of Secondary Use of Qualitative Data*. Retrieved January 5, 2014, from Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 6, 1.: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/511>
- Thomson, S. B. (2011). *Sample Size and Grounded Theory*. Retrieved July 24, 2013, from JOAAG, 5, 1: http://joaag.com/uploads/5_1__Research_Note_1_Thomson.pdf
- Tilly, C., & Tarrow, S. (2007). *Contentious politics*. Colorado, USA: Paradigm Publishers.
- Times News Network. (2012 , August 26). *Citizens set about to change their Bangalore*. Retrieved January 20, 2014, from The Times of India: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bangalore/Citizens-set-about-to-change-their-Bangalore/articleshow/15710259.cms>
- Times News Network. (2013, November 1). *Janaagraha bags Google award*. Retrieved January 20, 2014, from The Times of India: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bangalore/Janaagraha-bags-Google-award/articleshow/25013615.cms>
- Toyama, K. (2011). Technology as amplifier in international development. *Proceedings of the iConference 2011, ACM, New York*, (pp. 75-82).
- Tracy, S. (2013). *Qualitative research methods: Collecting evidence, crafting analysis, communicating impact*. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Uitermark, J., Nicholls, W., & Loopmans, M. (2012). Cities and social movements: Theorizing beyond the right to the city. *Environment and Planning A*, 44(11), 2546-2554.
- United Nations. (n.d.). *Innovation and technology for civil society*. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/egms/docs//2013/ict/innovation-technology-civilsociety>
- Upadhy, C. (2009). Imagining India: Software and the ideology of liberalisation. *South African Review of Sociology*, 40(1), 76-93.
- Upadhy, C. (2011). Software and the 'new' middle class in the 'new India'. In A. Baviskar, & R. Ray (Eds.), *Elite and everyman: The cultural politics of the Indian middle class* (pp. 167-192). London: Routledge.
- Upadhy, C., & Vasavi, A. (2006). *Work, culture, and sociality in the Indian IT industry: A sociological study*. Retrieved 10 June , 2011, from <http://www.nias.res.in/docs/NIAS-IDPAD%20IT%20Study%20Final%20Report.pdf>

- Upadhyaya, C., & Vasavi, A. (2008). Outposts of the global information economy: Work and workers in India's outsourcing industry. In C. Upadhyaya, & A. Vasavi (Eds.), *In an outpost of the global economy: Work and workers in India's Information Technology industry* (pp. 9-49). London; New York: Routledge.
- Upadhye, A. (2014 , January 14). *Pressure mounts for suburban rail, petition signed by MLAs and MPs*. Retrieved January 20, 2014, from Deccan Chronicle: <http://www.deccanchronicle.com/140114/news-current-affairs/article/pressure-mounts-suburban-rail-petition-signed-mlas-and-mps>
- Vadlamani, S. (2009 , April 17). *With tele-density of 111%, Chennai has the most mobile penetration*. Retrieved March 11, 2012, from asiancorrespondent.com: <http://asiancorrespondent.com/511/with-tele-density-of-111-chennai-has-the-most-mobile-penetration/>
- Vailshery, L., Jaganmohan, M., & Nagendra, H. (2013). Effect of street trees on microclimate and air pollution in a tropical city. *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening*, 12(3), 408–415.
- Van De Donk, W., Loader, B., Nixon, P., & Rucht, D. (2004). *Cyberprotest: New media, citizens, and social movements*. London: Routledge.
- Van Laer, J., & Van Aelst, P. (2010). Cyber-protest and civil society: The internet and action repertoires in social movements. In Y. Jewkes, & M. Yar (Eds.), *Handbook on Internet Crime* (pp. 230–254). Oxon; New York: Routledge.
- Varma, P. (1998). *The great Indian middle class*. New Delhi; New York, USA: Viking.
- Varma, P. (2007). *The great Indian middle class*. New Delhi, India: Penguin.
- Varshney, A. (1998). Why democracy survives. *Journal of Democracy*, 9(3), 36-50.
- Vincent, S. (2011, July 1). *Activists, retired BBMP official arrested on Sankey Road*. Retrieved July 5, 2011, from Citizen Matters: <http://bangalore.citizenmatters.in/articles/3139-sankey-road-tree-cutting-arrests>
- Viswanath, S. (2009). *New IT policy pitches for B'lore as R&D, innovation hub*. Retrieved September 10, 2011, from Deccan Herald: <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/28207/policy-pitches-blore-rampd-i%20%20novation.html>
- Vittalamurthy, S. (2011, November 1). *Can you survive Bengaluru without Kannada?* Retrieved May 15, 2013, from Citizen Matters: <http://bangalore.citizenmatters.in/articles/3537-can-you-survive-bengaluru-without-kannada>

- Volvo Buses . (2012). *Winners of Second Season of Volvo Sustainable Mobility Award Announced*. Retrieved November 25, 2013, from http://www.volvobuses.com/bus/india/en-in/news_and_events/volvo_sustainable_mobility_award_2012/Pages/volvo_sustainable_mobility_award_2012.aspx
- Vyas, H. (2012, May 1). 25% Bangalore children have asthma. *The Times of India*. Retrieved March 1, 2015, from <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/bengaluru/25-Bangalore-children-have-asthma/articleshow/12945868.cms>
- Watt, C. (2011). Philanthropy and civilizing missions in India c. 1820-1960: States, NGOs and development. In C. Watt, & M. Mann (Eds.), *Civilizing missions in colonial and postcolonial South Asia: From improvement to development* (pp. 271-316). London; New York: Anthem Press.
- We are social . (2014, July 1). *Social, digital & mobile in India 2014*. Retrieved September 6, 2014, from <http://www.slideshare.net/wearesocialsg/social-digital-mobile-in-india-2014?related=2>
- Webster, F. (2006). *Theories of the information society* (3rd Edition ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Wellman, B. (2001). Physical place and cyberspace: The rise of personalized networking . *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* , 25(2), 227-252.
- Wellman, B., Boase, J., & Chen, W. (2002). The networked nature of community: Online and offline. *IT & Society*, 1(1), 151-165.
- Whitehead, L. (1997). Bowling in the bronx: The uncivil interstices between civil and political society. *Democratization*, 4(1), 94-114.
- Winter, G. (2000). *A comparative discussion of the notion of 'validity' in qualitative and quantitative research*. Retrieved February 12, 2014, from The Qualitative Report, 4, (3/4): <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR4-3/winter.html>
- Wojcieszak, M., & Mutz, D. (2009). Online groups and political discourse: Do online discussion spaces facilitate exposure to political disagreement? *Journal of Communication*, 59(1), 40–56.
- World Population Review. (2014). *Bangalore population 2014*. Retrieved October 1, 2014, from <http://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/bangalore-population/>
- Wright, S., & Street, J. (2007). Democracy, deliberation and design: The case of online discussion forums. *New Media & Society*, 9(5), 849–869.

- Yahya, F. (2008). *New "Temples" of India: Singapore and India collaboration in information technology parks*. Brill, The Netherlands.
- Yang, G. (2003). The co-evolution of the Internet and civil society in China. *Asian Survey*, 43(3), 405-422.
- Yeung, K. (2013 , March 4). *Bangalore brings India's startup ecosystem into the limelight, but how exactly is it faring?* . Retrieved August 5, 2014, from The Next Web: <http://thenextweb.com/asia/2013/03/04/bangalore-brings-indias-startup-ecosystem-into-the-limelight-but-how-exactly-is-it-faring/>
- Yin, R. (2011). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. New York: Guilford Press.
- Yin, R. (2014). *Case study research: Design and methods* (5th Edition ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA; London; New Delhi: Sage.
- Zakaria, F. (2013 , January 17). *Fareed Zakaria: A new India has political demands*. Retrieved September 15, 2013, from The Washington Post: http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/fareed-zakaria-a-new-india-has-political-demands/2013/01/17/27fec888-600d-11e2-b05a-605528f6b712_story.html
- Zhang, W. (2007). Diverse and regulated? A study on the relationship between online deliberation and structural design. *Paper presented at the annual conference of the International Communication Association, San Francisco, CA, May 24-28*.
- Zhang, W., & Lallana, E. (2013). Youth, ICTs, and civic engagement in Asia. *International Communication Gazette*, 75(3), 249-252.
- Zhang, X., & Zheng, Y. (Eds.). (2009). *China's information and communications technology revolution: Social changes and state responses*. New York: Routledge.
- Zinnov. (2011). *Bangalore: Knowledge capital of India: A report on soft infrastructure*. Bangalore.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Sample Invitation Letter to Resource Persons

Dear Dr./Mr. /Ms. *name of invitee*:

Greetings! I am a PhD student of the Department of Communications and New Media at the National University of Singapore (NUS), currently conducting my PhD research entitled “**E[n]-visioning the megacity: Contestations of technology and governance in Bangalore**”. This research focuses on the ways in which the techno-centric imagination of cities influences urban governance forms and priorities – as well as resistance to them - in the developing world. This involves a study of new governance forms such as eminent-citizen task forces, and their visions for the city, as well as the competing visions of local actors on whom such techno-centric urban development impinges.

In this regard, your organisation is one of the civic groups whose experiences I am keen to study, and would like to seek your consent to participate in an in-depth interview sometime between May to July 2011. The interview will cover questions about you/your organisation/coalition’s role in protesting against projects and policies that reflect the current paradigm of techno-centric development, and the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in these activities. I would also be grateful if you could suggest the names of members of your organisation/coalition whom I could interview in this regard. The Interview Guide is provided in the attached sheet.

Your participation in this study is extremely valuable and will greatly enhance the outcome of this research. A Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form is also attached for your reference and signature. Should you have questions, I can be reached by email at anuradha.rao@nus.edu.sg or anu.rao6@gmail.com or telephone number _____.

Thank you very much in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Anuradha Rao

PhD Candidate

Department of Communications and New Media

National University of Singapore

Appendix B: Sample Participant Information Sheet & Consent Form

Participant Information Sheet & Consent Form



Project title: E[n]-visioning the megacity: Contestations of technology and governance in Bangalore

Principal Investigator and co-investigator:

Principal Investigator: Mrs. Anuradha Rao.

Co-Investigator: Dr. T.T. Sreekumar, Assistant Professor, Department of Communications and New Media, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore. Phone: (65) 65163148. Email: sreekumar@nus.edu.sg.

1. What is the purpose of this research?

You are invited to participate in a research. This information sheet provides you with information about the research. The Principal Investigator (the research doctor or person in charge of this research) or his/her representative will also describe this research to you and answer all of your questions. Read the information below and ask questions about anything you don't understand before deciding whether or not to take part.

This study seeks to understand the ways in which new urban governance forms, such as eminent-citizen task forces, and priorities (in the form of policies and projects) shape and are shaped by, the IT environment/paradigm in Bangalore. It also focuses on the ways in which the "technologization" or "IT-ization" of Bangalore impacts the civil society activity or activism, and the ways in which civil society (individuals and organisations) understands and engages with new media technologies for collective action.

2. Who can participate in the research? What is the expected duration of my participation? What is the duration of this research?

Adults (21 years and above) who are involved (directly or indirectly) in activities relating to *Praja* and *Hasiru Usiru*, which are centred on urban issues/ governance processes in Bangalore. Each interview is expected to last 1 hour. This research will be conducted during December – January 2012 in Bangalore city and in the peri-urban areas surrounding the city. You will be interviewed at your place of work or a mutually convenient place decided upon both parties in advance.

3. What is the approximate number of participants involved?

There are approximately 25 people to be interviewed during this research period.

4. What will be done if I take part in this research?

The principal investigator will conduct a face-to-face, in-depth interview that should last for 1 hour approximately. With your consent, the interview will be recorded using a digital-voice recorder. If you are uncomfortable with the idea of being audio-taped, written notes will be taken instead. If you agree, the PI may approach you for a follow-up interview (face-to-face or computer-mediated) and/or to conduct unobtrusive observations of your activities or activities of your organisation. If

you agree, the principal investigator may also conduct a brief question session after this observation session. The interviews will be conducted in English.

5. How will my privacy and the confidentiality of my research records be protected?

Only the principal investigator and the co-investigator will have all your identifiable information (e.g. names, email address, contact numbers, and organization details), which will not be released to any other person. Your name and surname will never be used in a publication or presentation. Other Identifiable information (such as organization details) will not be used without your express consent. Any electronic data will be stored on a laptop that is password protected, whereas hard copy data will be stored inside a suitcase with a combination lock. All recorded interviews (audio-tape and manual) will be transcribed and interview data will be destroyed five years after the completion of research or after publication of the thesis and article(s) based on it.

6. What are the possible discomforts and risks for participants?

There are no anticipated social, psychological, political, economic or other risks associated with participating in the interview.

7. What is the compensation for any injury?

No injury is anticipated. There will be no compensation for any injury.

8. Will there be reimbursement for participation?

As a participant, you will receive a souvenir upon completion of the interview.

9. What are the possible benefits to me and to others?

There is no direct benefit to you by participating in this research. The knowledge gained will benefit future research on urban governance issues and civil society activity in Bangalore and other developing cities that adopt a pattern of "high-tech"-led development.

10. Can I refuse to participate in this research?

Yes, you can. Your decision to participate in this research is voluntary, and you can withdraw from the research at any time without giving any reasons, by informing the principal investigator.

11. Whom should I call if I have any questions or problems?

Please contact the Principal Investigator, Mrs. Anuradha Rao or the co-investigator, Dr. T.T. Sreekumar at +65 65163148 (office phone) or email sreekumar@nus.edu.sg for all research-related matters.

For an independent opinion regarding the research and the rights of research participants, you may contact a staff member of the National University of Singapore Institutional Review Board (Attn: Mr Chan Tuck Wai, at telephone +65 6516 1234 or email at irb@nus.edu.sg).

Consent Form

Project title: E[n]-visioning the megacity: Contestations of technology and governance in Bangalore

Principal Investigator with the contact number and organization: Mrs. Anuradha Rao, Department of Communication and New Media, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore. Phone: +65 81891502.

I hereby acknowledge that:

1. My signature is my acknowledgement that I have agreed to take part in the above research.
2. I have received a copy of this information sheet that explains the use of my data in this research. I understand its contents and agree to donate my data for the use of this research.
3. If my comments are quoted in the Principal Investigator's academic publication, my surname and first name will not be disclosed. However, I agree to disclose the following personal identifiers: Organisation Name / Position / Disagree – I do not wish to disclose any personal identifiers.
4. I can withdraw from the research at any point of time by informing the Principal Investigator and all my data will be discarded.
5. I will not have any financial benefits that result from the commercial development of this research.
6. I consent to be audio-taped during the interview: (Yes/No)
7. I agree to be re-contacted for this research project, if necessary: (Yes/No)
8. I agree to participate in an observation session(s) by the principal investigator: (Yes/No/Not applicable)
9. I agree to a post-observation follow-up interview, if necessary: (Yes/No/Not applicable)

Name and Signature (Participant)

Date

Name and Signature (Consent Taker)

Date

Appendix C: Sample interview guide for experts/resource persons

INTERVIEW GUIDE (DRAFT) – FOR ABIDe TASK FORCE MEMBER

Background to interviewee’s involvement and role in the task force

Vision for the city & techno-centric governance:

What are ABIDe’s visions for Bangalore city?

Where and how does technology, particularly high-tech and other new technologies, fit into this vision?

How do these visions shape the policy priorities of the task force?

How do the internal dynamics (relationship among task force members) affect the imaginations of, and priorities for, the city?

Mega-projects and the ‘worlding’ of the city:

What is ABIDe’s stance regarding mega-infrastructure projects that are aimed at making Bangalore a ‘world city’? What do you see as the implications of these projects?

What are the linkages between ABIDe and JNNURM (policies) in terms of such mega infrastructure projects? Which projects does ABIDe approve and not approve of, and why?

What is ABIDe’s role in decision-making regarding these projects, and how does it negotiate various types of interests?

Democratic processes and urban governance:

How do you see ABIDe’s role in local democratic processes? How does it impact urban governance?

How do you respond to criticisms of the task force being elitist, unaccountable, or unrepresentative?

How does ABIDe ensure internal and external accountability?

What do you see as the merits and limitations of the task force in governance processes?

Relationship to “expertise” and civil society:

What is the role of “experts” in the task force?

How do you view the role of “civil society” as members of ABIDe?

Which civil society groups does the task force interact with, and what is its relationship with civil society?

How are civil society/citizen inputs considered in the process of policy-making?

Any comments/recommendations?

Appendix D: Sample Interview Guide for Case Study (Praja)

INTERVIEW GUIDE (DRAFT) – PRAJA CASE STUDY

Role in Praja & ICT engagement

- Your background, issues that you are interested in & how you came to be introduced to/involved in Praja
- What is/what do you see as your role in Praja?
- How do you participate?
 - Active online and offline participation
 - Active online participation
 - Active offline participation
 - Role as information provider
 - Role as gathering people together
- (How) does your IT (technology) background play a role in this?
- What do you see as the role of the Internet (the platform) in these activities?
- Perception of technology and technology use [do you think the Internet is an elitist medium? Why or why not?]
- What are the anticipated and actual gains (of the Internet-based platform)?
- What are the impacts on collective actions?
- What are the limitations and benefits of this platform?

Overcoming limitations *[For people who are not Internet-savvy (including older members) or do not have immediate access to the Internet]*

How did you learn to manoeuvre the website and participate on the platform?

What has your learning curve been like?

How do you manage this activity?

What is your experience of using the website, as a way to fruitfully channel your real-life experiences?

Do you see Praja as being useful in this work?

What are the benefits and limitations of this online medium?

Appendix E: Examples of Coding and Memos

Example of initial coding:

Excerpt from interview of a resource person/expert:

“It’s very simple. The city is – and this is the controversial part – the city is run by politicians from specific background. The political leadership is overwhelmingly Kannadiga, even though the city is not. The political leadership is overwhelmingly old Bangalore, even though the city is overwhelmingly new Bangalore. So you have the structural imbalance; now how does the political leadership, which doesn’t have cache in most of the city, deal with that portion of the city? Who in the BBMP corporation can go and talk in Electronic City? They need this bridge layer. So they appoint the bridge layer, to say you guys should be able to talk to these other people, and you are already able to talk to us, therefore you are the bridge.”

Initial codes:

- Continuance of task forces
- Dichotomy between old and new Bangalore
- Influence of IT on cosmopolitanism
- Task force as bridge between two Bangalores

Example of intermediate coding

Hasiru Usiru: Attitude towards Internet for collective action

Core group	Non-core group
<p>Media refusal/pessimism: Core group refuses to use the Internet more widely because it is seen as a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited or exclusionary domain (class-related) - Amplifier (amplifies voices of powerful) - Focus on non-Internet related activities that do not exclude main stakeholders (<i>contrary to current scholarship</i>) - Related to group ideology 	<p>Utility of the Internet viewed in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Connectivity - Information dissemination <p>However, limitations are also acknowledged:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limits to collective action (Realms of ideas vs. realm of action; armchair activism or slacktivism) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • - Limits to mobilisation: Amplifier (restricted to only those already interested in an issue)

Example of memo

(Interview excerpt below)

“I’m not completely sure what model Praja works on, but for me personally and for some of us, the very heavy reliance on Internet, I don’t think that is something that I would ever be happily a part of. Because for me, that *excludes* way too many people. Maybe you’re having a super discussion at a way too intellectual level, but for me that doesn’t make

sense unless you're reaching out more. I mean, I think an Internet group has its role, but that role is *limited*, so if I'm going to spend all my energies on that limited role, I'd much rather spend that time doing something else. I know they do a lot of offline work also, but that is their main platform."

(Memo below)

*While some members of Hasiru Usiru do engage with Praja, the interviewee is reluctant to do so due to certain differences between the organizations that she sees as irreconcilable. These differences I have categorized in terms of **discourse** (she sees Praja as catered towards (upper)-middle class interests, Vinay sees it as a forum where the view of Bangalore as global or world-class gets reinforced), **ideology** (Hasiru Usiru has a more left-leaning, socialist worldview, whereas Praja appears as a champion of privatization/private interests), and role of the **Internet**.*

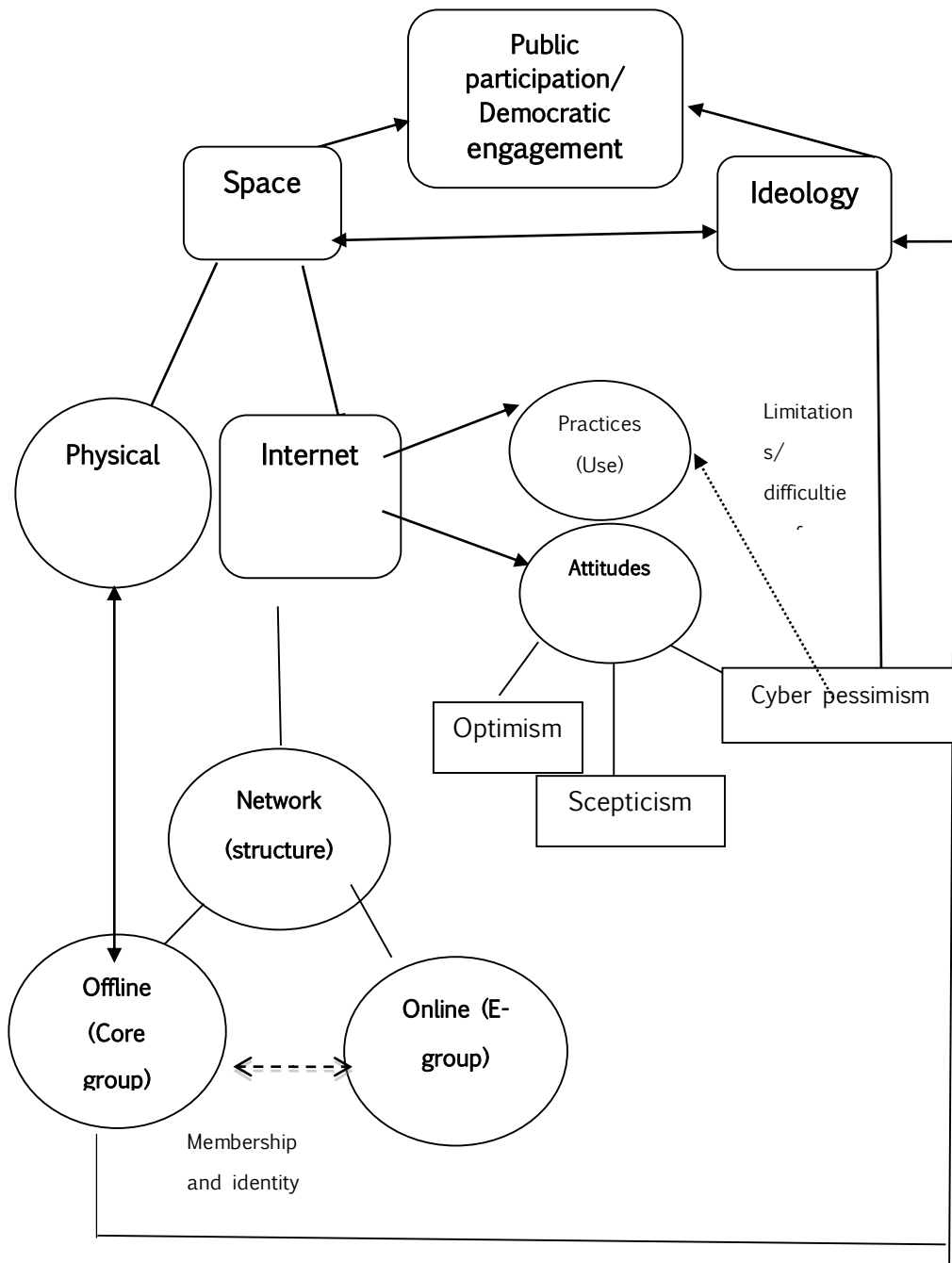
*While Praja's contribution in terms of technical information is acknowledged, the heavy reliance on the Internet, which is seen as an exclusionary and limited domain, makes the interviewee reluctant to engage with them on common issues. Praja is referred to in terms of the 'civil society' described earlier: tech-savvy, urbane, educated, English-speaking middle class. Praja's efforts at advocacy are also frowned upon, as their engagement is with a similar demographic, such as the 'experts' in ABIDe, which Hasiru Usiru views as an illegitimate actor in the city. Hence, whereas the goals of both organizations coincide in some areas, for the interviewee the means – rather than the ends - is paramount (**code: means vs. ends**). Praja is indirectly referred to as "**para-citizenry**", a group that is claiming to be representative of the city's interests; which is akin to the claims of representativeness by NGOs discussed in an earlier code [Civil society vs. political society / Civil society and the Internet / The idea of representation]. She argues that Praja needs to be more reflexive about its role and to acknowledge that processes are as important as the final outcome, and that's its members must realize that they are not Bangalore's voice.*

Focused codes to emerge from this memo:

Vis-à-vis Praja: Incompatibilities in discourse, ideology and the Internet
Praja as civil society, not political society/ para-citizenry
Ends vs. Means

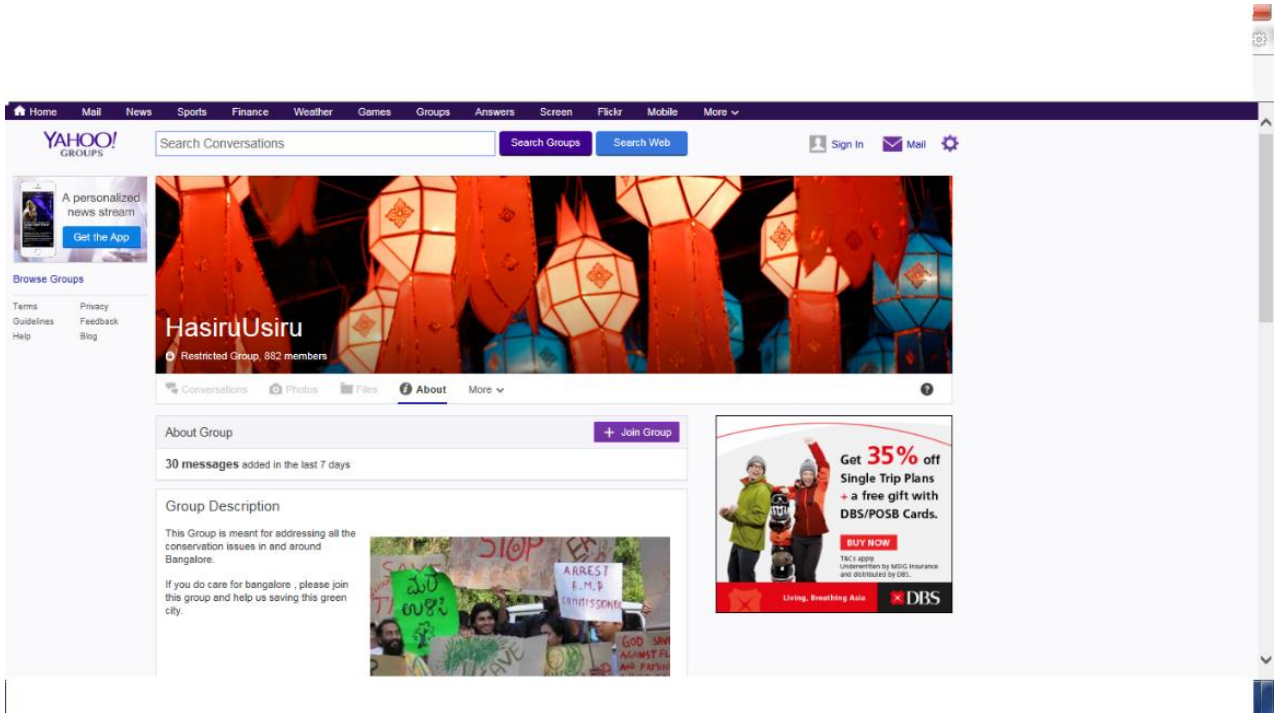
Appendix F: Diagrammatic Representation of Main Categories

Post coding and pre-writing: Hasiru Usiru



Appendix G: Images (Website Screenshots)

Image 3.1: Hasiru Usiru home page



(<https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/HasiruUsiru/info>)

Image 4.1: The Praja website

praja
KNOW | CARE | PARTICIPATE

HOME DISCUSSIONS PROJECTS GYAN HELP REGISTER

Login/Register

FOLLOW PRAJA

Feed: Posts
Feed: Comments
Twitter:
Facebook:

HOT TOPICS

- Bellandur Lake
- Bengaluru Footpaths
- Cycling
- Commuter Rail
- Solar Power
- Bangalore Metro

UPCOMING EVENTS

- CiSTUP 5th Foundation Day event (Event) (3 days)
- Malleswaram Parisara

Active Posts Latest Posts Top Rated New Comments

Title	Comment from
Asphalt Milling? whats that?	srinidhi
Delhi Power Distribution privatisation - a model for all cities to follow?	murali772
Grab the opportunity to offload Air-India	murali772
Praja Campaign Supporting "AADHAR" !	murali772
Namma Rasthe .. New Project for BRTS	Vasanth
Some unsolicited advice for AAP, Bengaluru	murali772
BBMP now in tree nurturing mode	Sanjeev
Byappanahalli as a World Class Railway Station - a Terminus for Public Transportation	Sanjeev
Hurdles in registering Apartment association under Karnataka Apartment Ownership Act	msshankar1961@g...
Bangalore City Station Developments	Sanjeev

See full list

Recent Top Rated Posts

Some unsolicited advice for AAP, Bengaluru

17 December 2013 - 9:10am — murali772

Aam Aadmi Party's rout of the Congress, I would like to believe, had more to do with the revulsion of the Delhi-ites with the inept and corrupt Central regime than with the comparatively competent Sheila Dikshit government. Badass

ACTIVE PROJECTS

- Namma Railu
- The Cycle Day campaign
- Intermodal Bicycle Connectivity
- Support for Pedestrian Safety PIL
- Disciplined Driver's Club

Click here to see all projects

PRAJA VOTES

WHAT KEEPS YOU FROM USING CYCLES FOR LOCAL GROCERY STORE RUNS, OR SHORT COMMUTES?:

- Nothing really, just that I haven't given it a try
- Scared that a bus/car/2-wheeler may hit me
- Cycling is tiring and stressful

Image 4.2: The Praja Ecosystem

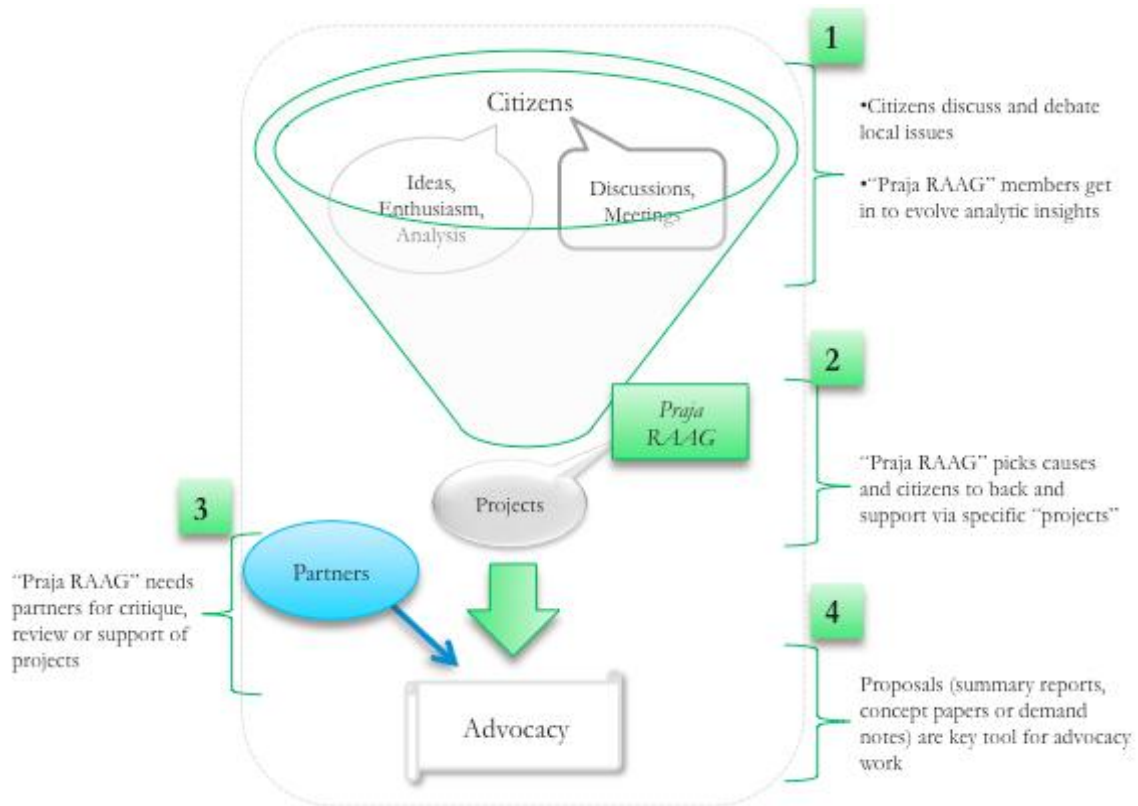


Image 7.1: Screenshot of www.ipaidabribe.com

The screenshot shows the homepage of the 'I Paid a Bribe' website. The header includes navigation links: 'I PAID A BRIBE', 'I CHANGE MY CITY', and 'JANAAGRAHA'. A call to action reads 'CALL 080 88 88 77 66 TO REPORT A BRIBE'. A search bar and a counter for 'REGISTER FOR UPDATES' showing '4547280' (4 MILLION PLUS VISITS) are also present. The main navigation menu includes: 'I PAID A BRIBE', 'I DID NOT PAY A BRIBE', 'I MET AN HONEST OFFICER', 'BRIBE HOTLINE', 'ALL REPORTS', 'NEWS', and 'REPORT A BRIBE'. A featured banner for a music video 'MUJHSE HOGI SHURVAAT' is displayed. Below this, three statistics are shown: 725 Cities, 28588 Reports, and 229.35 Cr Rupees. A map of India is titled 'Across India' with a table of statistics: TOTAL REPORTS (28588), TOTAL AMOUNT (Rs. 229.35 Cr), BRIBES PAID (20096), BRIBE FIGHTERS (2528), and HONEST OFFICERS (867). A red 'REPORT A BRIBE' button is prominent. Below the button, a list of reports is shown, including 'Lanchavataara at menezes international' and 'Bribe for police report'. A 'feedback' button is located in the bottom right corner.

725
Cities

28588
Reports

229.35 Cr
Rupees

REPORT A BRIBE

OR CALL 080 88 88 77 66 TO REPORT A BRIBE

Reported 22 hours ago 59 views
Lanchavataara at menezes international
Bangalore
Reallocated to bangalore from uk shipped my personal belongings by air cargo... Read more

Reported 1 day ago 51 views
Bribe for police report
Gorakhpur
In 1997 I lost my passport.Spore High Comm told me to get a police report.The... Read more

Reported 1 day ago 68 views
Facing trouble...

feedback

Image 7.2: Screenshot of www.ichangemycity.com

www.ichangemycity.com — Report civic issue in Bangalore — I Change my city

ichangemycity

LOG IN

Make Your City Better

Improve your street, to improve your neighbourhood, to improve your city.
Improve your quality-of-life.

SIGN UP NOW

40,579 users and growing • 11,926 complaints posted • 4,968 complaints resolved

“Real change begins with me
in my neighbourhood”

change

Leave a message