



IMS Conference on ICTs and
networked communications environments

Opportunities and threats for press freedom and democratization

CONFERENCE REPORT

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Foreword

Global means of communication are undergoing significant changes. This is a consequence of the emergence of networked communications environment, supported by inter-connected and converging internet-based technologies, greatly increasing the intensity and speed of global communications. These changes are being driven at an exponential rate by a complex blend of technological, business and political forces.

By holding a conference in September 2008 dealing with the changes that new media and networked communications environments are bringing, IMS had the ambitious goal of providing a meeting point for a broad range of actors from the communications industry, ICT innovators, civil society, policy makers, researchers, international agencies, donors and the mainstream media. Having such a broad group together provided a unique opportunity to look at the opportunities and threats for press freedom and democratisation.

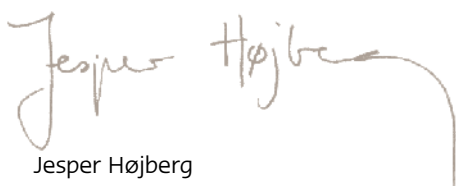
Authoritarian governments and state institutions are becoming increasingly techno-savvy. They seek to control the public sphere and propagate their own political agenda to ensure broad legitimacy. Ending authoritarian rule is not only a matter of wiring enough people. Technology is a tool that can be made useful by political, economic and social actors. It is the experience of IMS from working around the world in difficult political environments that only by promoting very specific programmatic uses of new media and networked communications can impact be achieved.

IMS has in recent years worked with local partners and provided direct assistance to technology projects in various conflict-affected areas and in countries with politically repressive regimes. We have assisted a group in Sri Lanka around a programme on citizens' journalism. It is grassroots journalism facilitated by new media that empowers local communities to produce their own stories. We have assisted the development of underground/pirate radio in Belarus and, recently during the events in Burma support was provided to Mizzima News who brought instant images out of Burma. In Zimbabwe, SMS news messages are brought to an information hungry public by SW Radio.

IMS therefore wanted to utilise the conference to strategise and set forward specific action points that will allow us to collectively better understand and utilize new media and networked communication environments to improve press freedom and promote democratisation.

In this regard, IMS made a commitment at the end of the conference to ensure a follow-up group met within a few weeks to review the findings and chart the next steps. This group had its first exploratory meeting in October and we look forward to continuing to work closely with our partners in this field.

IMS would like to thank The Open Society International for financially supporting the conference, Telia and Nokia for contributing with in-kind support to enabling the EXPO and last but not least the Kaospilots for making the EXPO and thus the conference a success.



Jesper Højberg
Executive Director
International Media Support

1 Introduction

New media and information and communications technologies (ICTs) have a growing impact on society and not least on how media operate and how the public sphere is organized. Advances made with these technologies present civil society with new possibilities and challenges and dramatically change the existing perceptions of democracy. The Internet potentially empowers everyone with a voice, and citizen or participatory media has flourished with the advent of technological tools and systems that facilitate easy production and distribution of media.

Affordable technology, and broader access to the Internet in particular, has created new ways of distributing information. Traditional public and corporate media outlets have enjoyed a long period of monopoly, but with the Internet a new electronic media freedom has paved the way for the emergence of numerous citizen media producers. ICTs provide access to an open, pluralistic and horizontal debate that contrasts with the hierarchical structure of the traditional media. In his introductory presentation Jens Linde, Chairperson of IMS and Managing Editor at Danish Broadcasting Corporation (DR), argued that

"ICTs do not belong to us, but to society."

The background to the IMS Conference on ICTs and Networked Communications Environments: Opportunities and Threats for Press Freedom and Democratization was to examine the potential for change in media and democracy which ICTs and networked communications environments provide. The conference background paper focused on three specific areas affected by new media and ICT: 1) the way in which the media operate, 2) the potential they may hold for capacity building in relation to freedom of the press and civic engagement, and 3) how this might lead to a deepening of democracy both in democratic and repressive countries.

The conference ran over two days and combined an expo and workshops on the first day, together with debates around key themes on the second day. The expo of new media and technological tools allowed participants the opportunity of testing some of the tools presented. The expo was a collaboration between IMS and the KaosPilots,¹ which is an entrepreneurial educational program based in Scandinavia.

Four different tools were presented: blogging on the internet using Blogger.com, real-time streaming from mobile phone cameras uploaded to the Internet site Bambuser.com, the social networking site Jaiku with text content uploaded from mobile phones, and finally the Media Sprinkler, a recently developed device that is able to mass-disseminate text messages to mobile phones.

The second day of the conference was structured with three individual debate sessions organized along the thematic outline from the conference background paper. The following sections provide a brief summary of the framework for the conference, described in the concept paper for the conference as a pro-et-contra discussion.

The first theme revolved around the question of whether the networked communications environment fosters a more restrictive and intrusive

1 <http://www.kaospilot.dk/>

government control or whether it enhances democracy. From an *optimistic* perspective, new technologies offer new opportunities for bringing governments and citizens closer together by dissolving bureaucratic boundaries. Government transparency and accountability is also increased through eGovernance, and the technologies provide new possibilities for participatory democracy.

From a *pessimistic* perspective, governance systems that make use of the new technologies will only reflect the governments that design and use them. In and of themselves, new media and ICTs do not have the capacity to further the democratization of political systems. Many governments use ICT to introduce more pervasive surveillance and personal data storage systems, rather than employing communications technologies to increase transparency and dialogue with citizens. This holds true in relation to repressive regimes as well as democratic countries where ICT-policies may sometimes increase government control in ways that are not always obvious.

The second theme addressed the question of how new media and ICTs are changing the way media operate and how this may affect form and content. From an *optimistic* perspective new technologies challenge the traditional mass media model of one-way communication from news providers to the general public. ICTs are creating new channels of communication for disseminating information to the general public, but they are also providing new channels for communication between individuals and groups outside the media. Hence, ICTs provide the foundations for a more democratic and participatory media and public sphere than was previously possible.

From a *pessimistic* perspective the new technological opportunities do not necessarily translate into a more democratic public sphere. Firstly, the same powerful groups that dominate information flows in mass media also dominate the networked environment, namely governments and a few large corporations. Secondly, the Internet prompts isolation into smaller, sectarian fora, and it promotes fragmentation rather than diversity. Finally, new communication technologies provide as many new opportunities for disinformation, propaganda and thoughtless argument as they do for democratic debate and citizen journalism.

The third and final theme raised the issue of ICTs capacity to enhance freedom of the press and support civil society groups. From an *optimistic* perspective, digital media empower civil society organisations because they are able to quickly disseminate information, online and via e-mail. In turn, this makes it easier for civil society organizations to access funding, mobilize the public and form national, regional and global alliances with organizations working in similar fields. New communication technologies also provide civil society with new ways of taking action, for example via e-mail, blogs and SMS campaigns and petitions, and facilitate the formation of scattered networks that are difficult for centralized power structures to destroy.

From a *pessimistic* perspective, social movements and civil society organizations that use ICT tools to mobilize are likely to be fragmented and unsustainable, consisting of people with diverse interests who come together at specific political moments rather than committing to more effective and sustained action over time. Another danger is that the networked communications environment provides criminal, violent and fundamentalist groups with new opportunities to bypass legislation; the lack of online regulation makes cyberspace an ideal platform for communicating, organizing and disseminating offensive and dangerous material.

These aforementioned positions were the starting point for the conference that was hosted and organized by IMS with support from the Open Society Institute, Telia and Nokia. The conference brought together different fields of expertise and the list of participants included ICT innovators, the new media industry, civil society organizations, media practitioners, government representatives, and lobby groups.

The ensuing summary charts the themes that emerged during the expo, the panel debate, and general discussions. The conference report has three main parts: the first part briefly summarizes the expo concept and offers introductions to the four technical tools. The second part provides a summary of the discussions during the three sessions on the second day.

This summary is, however, structured thematically rather than chronologically. The themes include:

1. The framework: legal and technical aspects
2. The content: media diversity and citizen journalism
3. The context: freedom of expression and the democratic potential.

The third and final part of the report offers some concluding remarks and general observations.

The second day of the conference was streamed live at [Bambuser.com](http://bambuser.com/),² and additional information on the conference is available on the wiki,³ where contributors are welcomed to add comments, post material and links, and contribute to the online post-conference discussions.

² <http://bambuser.com/channel/IMS>

³ <http://wiki.i-m-s.dk/>

2 Day one – the EXPO

The upsurge of Web 2.0 tools such as blogs, social networking and micro-blogging services like Blogger, Facebook, Twitter and Jaiku, video- and photo-sharing sites like YouTube, Flickr and Bambuser, as well as the spreading of mobile technology, provide ordinary citizens with the potential to express themselves and have a voice in the public sphere, as well as the chance to participate more fully in the democratic process. While the use of these tools might come naturally for digital natives – i.e. the generation that have grown up with digital technology – other generations might find it awkward and less natural to incorporate Web 2.0 tools in their work and daily life.

Bearing this context in mind, four technological tools and developments were presented at the EXPO, namely Blogger,⁴ Jaiku,⁵ Bambuser⁶ and the Media Sprinkler.⁷ The technologies, although not necessarily new, are all relevant to issues pertaining to freedom of expression, the freedom of the press and media development advocates, particularly those working in countries affected by a restricted media environment.



The KaosPilots organized the participants into groups to test the new technologies.

The whole EXPO was designed so that all participants had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the technical tools presented. The first part of the day was a dynamic organizing of the participants into clusters with very little, little, good or very good technical knowledge. These clusters were then divided again so that the most and the least technically savvy would blend in a group. Afterwards the groups dissolved into four smaller entities that each went to a workshop on one of the technical tools. The aim was that after the workshops each group had at least one expert on each tool. With the knowledge presented at the seminars each group got an assignment and using the knowledge gained through the small introduction seminars was crucial in order to solve the tasks. The KaosPilots described the activities and the events of the day:

"We have provided the frame – you paint the picture."

- 4 <https://www.blogger.com/>
- 5 <http://www.jaiku.com/>
- 6 <http://bambuser.com/>
- 7 <http://www.it46.se/entry/342/>

One of the assignments was to use the distributed Nokia mobile phones to try out tools like Jaiku and Bambuser. Walking to a nearby shopping mall, taking the train to the central station and walking back to the conference location, participants had to broadcast from the mobile phone camera and upload it in real-time to Bambuser. The core idea of the Bambuser technology is to provide the opportunity to communicate audiovisual broadcasts in real-time using mobile phones or web-cameras as broadcasting devices. This means that there are no limits for uploading visual content that may have an artistic, entertaining or informative angle. When the software is downloaded to a mobile phone with Internet connection and a camera, it is possible to document events live.



Sanjana Hattotuwa from CPA in Sri Lanka streaming events using a cell phone, which connects to Bambuser.com from where live images may be viewed on the internet with one second delay of real time.

The most important aspect of this tool, especially in a Human Rights context, may be the possibility for documenting events in real-time just by using a mobile phone camera. This trend is already evident at the video hosting website YouTube,⁸ although the broadcasted content here is not in real-time. However, the possibilities exist for documenting everything from corruption, assaults, violent attacks, demonstrations etc. Another feature in the Bambuser software is that the location and movement of the person broadcasting the stream may be followed from the website by using the GPS⁹ in the mobile phone.

Apart from getting instructions about the Bambuser technology the groups were guided through the other assignments and provided inspiration for using the various technical tools. At the central station each group was asked to conduct a short interview with randomly selected people, using the mobile phones to text the answers and upload them to Jaiku. Jaiku is a social networking site with micro-blogging and mobile live updating services similar to the comparable service Twitter.¹⁰ Jaiku is a way to connect with friends and contacts by sharing short messages called Jaikus, and the main goal is to enable people to share their activity streams. An activity stream is a log of everyday things as they happen: status messages, recommendations,

⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/>

⁹ Global Positioning System

¹⁰ <http://twitter.com/>

events the person is attending, photos – anything can be posted directly on Jaiku or added using web feeds. Being away from one's computer is no hindrance, as it is also possible to post Jaikus from mobile phones, which is one the most powerful instruments for social networking. For that reason Jaiku has developed "Jaiku Mobile"; a software application for mobile phones that makes it possible to post Jaikus, add comments, and share status and location with your contacts. Everyone can use Jaiku for free, however, it is currently a closed-beta service and people who wish to join Jaiku have to be invited.

The goal was to gather material – text with Jaiku and visual material with Bambuser – in order to design individual group blogs. Back at the conference area, the last stop was the blogging room with computers, where the participants could look at the collected materials and start blogging about the events of the day. Blogs are interactive websites, usually maintained by an individual or a group, with regular entries of commentary or news on a particular subject, descriptions of events, or other material such as graphics or videos. A typical blog combines text, images, and links to other blogs (a blog roll), websites and other media related to its topic. Allowing readers to leave comments in an interactive format is an important part of many blogs. The comments and blog entries are commonly displayed in reverse-chronological order.

The interactive aspect of blogs means that blogs can potentially function as dynamic fora for communication. The blogosphere is a collective term for this virtual 'web of blogs', encompassing all blogs and their interconnections. Thus, blogs co-exist as connected communities and as social networks. The motivation for blogging is often the desire to express oneself as well as the rewarding feeling of having one's text read and receiving comments. While this of course seems to be a universal drive, the possibility of expressing oneself is particularly valued in countries where the public sphere and the media are restricted.



Sunanda Deshapriya from Freedom Media Movement in Sri Lanka and IMS staffer Helene Bach set up a blog and become bloggers themselves..

Blogs have become increasingly popular as a forum for interactive debate on the Internet. As of December 2007, the blog search engine Technorati was tracking more than 112 million blogs.¹¹ One of the most popular blog publishing systems is Blogger, which was the service that was introduced at the conference.

In addition to blog about the events of the day the groups were asked to blog about the Media Sprinkler and explain the technical device in their own words. The Media Sprinkler is a portable device that is able to connect services of GSM (mobile telephony), the PSTN (fixed telephony) and IP network (Internet), and the main goal of the system is to develop new services and solutions and to provide a flexible architecture between these communication tools.

The Media Sprinkler is a technical platform with endless possibilities that can easily be adapted within hours to implement any new service. For example, the platform allows for the creation of new information services via voice or text messages that may be used for campaigns or media coverage. Moreover, it is possible to distribute the same text message to a huge group of mobile phone numbers. Another possibility is to connect mobile phone calls between different operators and to identify whether a given number is an active phone number. The Media Sprinkler may also be used to record and play pre-recorded messages from and to any voice media, which makes

*Taking down the airwaves
from low-frequency radio.
From left: Elshad Farzaiyev
(IMS, Azerbaijan), Finn
Rasmussen (IMS) and Mikhail
Doroshevich (e-belarus,
Belarus)*



¹¹ <http://technorati.com/>

it easy to communicate with sound using various communication tools. This could be done by recording a radio program, play a mp3, connect to media streaming services, etc and link those audio sources to a GSM or VoIP phone call. Finally, the device can be used to upload text messages from mobile phones to the Internet.

In addition to the presentation of the technologies of Bambuser, Jaiku, Blogger and the Media Sprinkler a few civil society groups presented how they are using similar technical tools in their work in countries with a restricted media environment. These presentations added to the understanding of the possible uses and effects of the tools and placed the technical tools within a broader real-life context. The tools presented had a strong focus on ways to disseminate citizen media to a larger audience. One project was to use very small, simple and low-cost radio transmitters in conjunction with mobile phones, to record sound with the aim of broadcasting 'citizen radio'. Another project focused on creating an alternative multimedia outlet employing texts, visual and sound based material to tell relevant stories.

The objectives of the civil society activists were to promote media diversity, and to provide a transparent space for public debate: a space that is useful for linking personal freedom and cohabitation in an inclusive and autonomous civil society. In addition, they described these and other citizen media using Web 2.0 tools as an alternative to the restricted public sphere of the government controlled press. Some stressed that they do not have an overt political agenda, but are often merely exercising their rights as citizens.

The day ended with a Q&A plenary session with feedback on the events of the day. The session was accompanied by a general enthusiasm for the possibilities of the tools presented.

A recurrent conclusion was that a developed technological infrastructure combined with training is vital for fully benefiting from the technological tools. In the discussion of ICTs' potential in relation to freedom of expression and media diversity, the focus is almost never on the technical infrastructure, which is the precondition for using new media. In general, participants seemed to agree that there need to be a more fruitful discussion between the technical and the human rights' communities. As Alberto Escudero Pascual one of the people behind the Media Sprinkler stated:

“There is a need to bridge the two worlds – it is all about cables plus content.” (Alberto Escudero Pascual)

This discussion continued the next day, when the subject of infrastructure was brought up again.

3 Day two – the debates

The practical experiences of using the new media tools fed into the panel discussions on the second day of the conference. Three panels were presented dealing with the following questions:

1. **Does the networked communications environment enable restrictive and intrusive governance – or does it enhance democracy?**
2. **The way the media operates is changing. What are the effects of this on the style and delivery of media content and the media structure and institutions that provide them?**
3. **Does the networked communications environment increase the capacity of civil society organizations to achieve positive social change?**

The panelists had a few minutes to present their perspective on a given topic. These short presentations formed the basis for the ensuing discussion between the panelists and conference participants. These themes have been clustered into three main currents of the discussions: the framework, including the legal and technical issues, the content, about media diversity and citizen journalism and finally the context which debates the potential of freedom of expression and democracy through ICT.

Based on the abovementioned questions and the background information provided in the concept paper for the conference, the presentations and ensuing discussions revolved around issues of privacy, anonymity, accountability, infrastructure, eGovernance, citizen vs. traditional media, mobile information and communication, freedom of expression and the democratic potential.

3.1 The framework: legal and technical aspects

An important issue regarding new information and communication tools is the framework that supports or restricts the digital content. National and international ICT-policies and the technical development from the corporations are crucial to the improvement and regulation of the technical infrastructure that provides us with the information and communication highway.

One of the greatest concerns during the discussions was how the use of information and communication technologies may potentially lead to the invasion of privacy. Viewed from this perspective, there is a need for initiatives and solutions that protect the private sphere of citizens without placing unnecessary restrictions on utilizing the technological potential. There was general agreement on the need for protecting privacy, and in this context the issue of anonymity was raised from various perspectives.

Several participants pointed out that anonymity comes at the expense of accountability, meaning that anonymity in citizen media – for example bloggers using a pseudonym – lose credibility. In this respect, some participants

argued that traditional media and citizen media differ: public and cooperate media outlets are accountable for what they say and write, but the same demand for accountability does not seem to apply to citizen journalism. Some participants echoed this and considered individuals and organizations accountable for what they upload; meaning that if the content is uploaded anonymously people would not take notice of the information.

However, others opposed and defended the need for anonymity on the Internet arguing that many bloggers may be anonymous and still have a large audience that trusts their credibility. Especially in countries with a restricted public sphere, anonymity may sometimes be the only way to get around censorship. In those cases, it becomes something valuable and worthwhile that deserves support and encouragement – and at the end of the day, it is up to the readers to choose what content to trust.

For people working with human rights or digital activists working within a restricted public sphere it is crucial to find ways of safe communication. In relation to the Internet everyone may decide to be anonymous, and the infrastructure should provide, and preserve, this anonymity.

Some of the presentations from the first session about the democratic potential of ICTs focused on how eGovernment may enhance transparency and accountability, particularly in developing countries with a more restricted media environment, and how governments are developing ICT-policies with numerous regulations.

Developing countries often refuse to give access to information and lack transparency, and eGovernment may play a key role in filling this void. However, eGovernment is not a panacea for creating positive development:



Lars Bestle, UNDP, Asia.

“ICTs and eGovernment cannot turn bad development into good development and in that sense technology may both contribute to both good and bad governance.” (Lars Bestle, UNDP Asia)

In addition Lars Bestle, regional ITC expert with UNDP Asia, stressed that another important aspect of securing eGovernment's contribution to more transparency and accountability is to ensure that the digital content is both relevant to, and targeted at, the end-users – the citizens – also in poorer developing countries. EGovernance may enable citizens to address their governments directly, and the system could be supported by an ombudsman, an authority that ensures that citizens may file a complaint outside the bureaucratic system. Moreover, it is crucial that a legal framework in relation to rights to information and freedom of expression is implemented. The national legislative framework should enhance an open infrastructure, and open source and interoperability should be promoted by governments.

Though the implementation of the legal framework is vital, the establishment of a technical infrastructure is equally crucial. The infrastructure of ICTs and networked communications environments is built and owned by the private sector, but is largely regulated by governments.

According to consultant Christian Nissen from Denmark, the private sector is generally seen by citizens and civil society organizations as 'the enemy' that exploits citizens and the public sector as a neutral institution that we trust to regulate the Internet and other ICT-tools. However, in some Eastern European and other countries with a strong public media sectors, the relationship between citizens and the private and public sectors is reversed: The private sector holds more integrity than the public sector to the citizens. Either way, whether the infrastructure is controlled by the private or public sector, it is vital for civil society that an open infrastructure is ensured.

During the discussion it was emphasized that when it comes to securing a relevant eGovernance platform, governments may learn from the private sector which is much more demand oriented. Ensuring an eGovernment platform is not sufficient: citizens must engage actively in order to bridge the gap between citizens and governments. This is when eGovernment becomes a tool for empowerment and ensures that the public sector becomes more transparent and relevant for the users. Moreover, several participants maintained that the mechanisms of eGovernment can help to reduce corruption.

Edetan Ojo (Media rights Agenda, Nigeria) between Oona Solberg (Norway) to his left and Anna Oscarsson (KaosPilots) to the right.



"I would not trust the private sector to be the regulator of infrastructure. If there was a democratic government it would be good if the government was responsible for the infrastructure." (Edetan Ojo, Media Rights Agenda in Nigeria)

However, the good intentions of eGovernance might be in jeopardy, since an eGovernment platform may be used for propaganda. In sum, many speakers and participants seemed to agree that users should be able to choose their anonymity on the Internet, and that eGovernance was positive and users should be guaranteed an infrastructure with no monitoring and full privacy. However, the question of who should be responsible for developing and regulating the technical infrastructure remains unanswered.

The debate of government control with technological media was placed in a wider context by Niels Elgaard Larsen from the Danish IT Policy Association, who argued that control and regulation was equally central in the Western world and in the developing world. The argument was that all governments tend to be focused on control over the public sphere and wish to maintain the gate-keeper function. This government control and surveillance deprives citizens of their privacy. There are various technological tools for circumventing these restrictions on the Internet, but the point is that Internet users should neither be restricted nor have their activities monitored.

3.2 The content: media diversity and citizen journalism

Having discussed the technical and legal framework of ICTs, the discussion turned to content on the Internet. In addition to being a platform for communication, the Internet is a means for obtaining alternative and diverse information, especially if the media is strongly influenced by government censorship or self-censorship. This means that the Internet can represent an alternative source of news and information and may function as a watchdog in relation to the established media. The debate was divided between adherers to traditional journalistic virtues and digital enthusiasts. As the moderator Ranga Kalansooriya, director of Sri Lanka Press Institute noted, the question is how the future of journalism is to be molded and how journalists keep up with technological advances.

One of the panelists Staffan Sonning representing Radio Sweden and the public sector media defended the continuous relevance of public service media and traditional journalistic virtues. These virtues include professionalism in sorting what is relevant, researching, verifying and presenting various perspectives on the news stories. Professional journalism, which can be found in the public broadcasting agencies, represents a trustworthy alternative.

One of the main arguments for those petitioning for the lasting relevance of the traditional media was that providing users with more than one side of a story is a central feature of journalistic quality. Another closely related argument pointed to surveys documenting that traditional media ranked over the Internet and perceived as the most trustworthy news source. As one of the defenders of traditional public service media, Staffan Sonning stated his concern with the media development as follows:

“I am deeply worried with the media environment, quality journalism, media ethics point at the tabloids. The whole media is on an ethical slope.” (Staffan Sonning, Swedish Radio)

Another speaker Måns Adler, founder of Bambuser.com challenged the importance of traditional media and objected to the idea that media audiences need journalists as gate-keepers for news coverage. Sorting out, researching and verifying stories could be done via the Internet without involving the traditional news media.

In support of this perspective other participants also focused on the great potential for doing your own research on the Internet and argued that the journalistic interpretation of a news story is in fact needless. To get the full picture, various angles on a particular news story may be found on the Internet, which makes it possible to interpret the story yourself. All in all, there was, however, general agreement on the argument that the new media function as a supplement to traditional media.

In this context the issue of whether public broadcasting is still relevant in a world where global media diversity is just one click away was raised. Some participants argued that public service had lost its relevance; others argued that public service served as a central platform for democracy.

There was a general concern that one of the challenges for the new media would be to find a profitable business model. Web journalists, bloggers, vloggers and others have difficulties finding sponsors and a sustainable commercial strategy for their online activities. One of the speakers Sanjana Hattotuwa from the Centre for Policy Alternatives in Sri Lanka noted that many of these voices provide content even if they do not get paid:

“One of the strengths in new media is not asking about what money I will get out of it.” (Sanjana Hattotuwa, CPA Sri Lanka)

On a global scale, an increasing number of people are engaging in online activities and contributing to citizen journalism. This genre mostly deals with local issues and being small localized media, they have the opportunity to be interactive and enhance community empowerment. In support of this viewpoint, a participant from Eastern Europe commented that:

“It is easier to be creative in a pressured situation. This is where the energy comes from.” (Eastern European participant)

Balancing the defense for the relevance of respectively traditional journalism and citizen media, a compromise was found in traditional private media outlets using the Internet and Web 2.0 tools as an asset. Lars Jespersen, Editor in Chief at Nordjyske Medier in Denmark explained how this was the way ahead for media institutions: *Quality is being redefined*. The users often want to have access to all kinds of media forms. To facilitate this diversity the journalists are creating contents for all media platforms. The new media are creating new markets as well; it is a completely new business model where new advertising possibilities must be identified.

The rapid dissemination of citizen media does not only apply in the Western hemisphere. In developing countries, especially where media freedom and freedom of expression have been cut back, citizen media become an important tool and an outlet for marginalized groups. ICT and the emergence of these new possibilities and potentials confront governments with a new paradigm, as the media and the public sphere move beyond government control. Attempting to exert firm control with the networked communications environments, governments operate outside the virtual world and seek to regulate and restrict digital activists and web journalists.

Sanjana Hattotuwa emphasized the importance of Human Rights organizations and donors realizing that the new media prompts greater challenges:

“You cannot rely on what has been drawn up for traditional media. You have to be very careful to adapt technology – not adopt.” (Sanjana Hattotuwa, CPA Sri Lanka)

Networked communications environments may potentially be instrumental in disrupting existing structures of power within the traditional media, which in turn may diminish the traditional media's monopoly on the public sphere. The hierarchical structure of traditional mass media is democratized and everyone can upload information and broadcast online, even if, as one speaker added, the content may only be relevant to a handful of people.



Iryna Vidanava from Belarus speaking at the conference (far left).

*"It is important to have as many opportunities as possible: To keep the best from the old times, but also to build on the new technologies."
(Iryna Vidanava, Belarus)*

One of the tools that are presenting new possibilities of information and communication structure is the mobile phone. The final session started off with a virtual presentation of the potential of mobile phones in developing countries by Emma Kaye, focusing particularly on Africa. Emma Kaye is the driving force behind a text-based mobile channel and the first woman in Africa nominated as one of Mobile Entertainment's top 50 women. Mobile phones make it easy to coordinate, organize, and not least to access information – elements which may all have an impact on both economical and social change. Having Internet access through a mobile phone can lead to economic empowerment, for example via eBanking.

Jussi Impio from Nokia Research Center in Nairobi (NoRA) presented a new research entity¹² that operates in sub-Saharan Africa. The goal is to engage in a growing market place and to play a positive role for socio-economic development. In order to do so, the research centre focuses on civic engagement and citizen journalism, and one project might be to create a social media forum for children in low income communities or to support the informal music industry in urban slums. The idea is to create, build and test new concepts, with focus lying five to ten years ahead and not necessarily based on the existing technologies.

3.3 The context: freedom of expression and the democratic potential

Throughout the discussions about the potential of ICTs, a recurrent theme was how to use the technical tools in relation to civic engagement and user-activism. Several participants working with freedom of expression issues

¹² http://research.nokia.com/research/labs/teams/nokia_research_africa

emphasized the importance of ICT-tools in a country with restricted media freedom and freedom of expression.

Local digital activism is often linked to the international online community – for instance the international blogosphere – which has the potential to strengthen the local activists through international media and advocacy. Additionally, Iryna Vidanava from Belarus noted that ICTs can help to organize, and to motivate activism, in *all* aspects, not just the political. However, the technologies, in and of themselves, will not necessarily bring about changes in the regime, but they may open the mind of the citizens.

“We will find new way to express our ideas and thoughts.” (Eastern European participant)

In addition, Edetan Ojo from Media Rights Agenda in Nigeria touched upon the subject of media rights, especially in the context of developing countries, and argued that ICTs do enhance democracy. In countries where the policy makers are far from the citizens, ICT may be a way to improve the communication and reduce the divide. Internet and mobile phones represent new opportunities for people to intervene and affect the political agenda by employing these technological tools as a means for communicating with legislators and political decision makers. In countries with a restricted public sphere and media environment, some digital activists are constantly one step ahead of public officials in understanding and using new technology. In most cases, however, it is a question of time before the authorities develop and ratify legal restrictions on ICTs, as government control over networked communication and information spreads.

One of the cases of digital activism was the Yemen Portal¹³ presented by its founder Walid Al-Saqaf. The portal is an aggregator for local and international news and opinion in Arabic and English. It is, briefly put, a collection of all Yemenite media into one portal like Google News. The portal is currently run from Sweden, because of the constant filtering by the Yemenite authorities. In this context, the Internet functions as an alternative to the government controlled media. An example was given that the mainstream media avoided showing footage from a huge political demonstration in Yemen. However, the demonstration was captured by a mobile phone camera, and uploaded to YouTube, which Yemen Portal could link to.

“Yemenites use it because of a need, it is not entertainment. You look for what you cannot get elsewhere.” (Walid Al-Saqaf, Yemen Portal)

Presented with the Yemen Portal and the cases from repressive countries, one of the participants raised the question how to monitor the activism, and how to assess whether these new media have an empowering potential.

Other questions were from participants from civil society organizations within media development that were interested in the impact of new media and ICTs linking to a possible political change. They wanted to know how donors can avoid overinflating markets that are not sustainable. Iryna Vidanava replied that it depends on the context.

“It depends on the project, country etc. The best way is to cooperate with local organizations, person and donors, and to include local people.” (Iryna Vidanava, Belarus)

13 <http://yemenportal.net/english/>

Andrew Puddephatt, director at Global Partners and Associates in the UK argued that aid may not be the only way for ICT and media development.



Walid Al-Saqaf, Yemen Portal, Yemen.

"There is a conditional sustainability. There should be taxation of growing markets in Africa. Ear mark the money to develop local, community based media." (Andrew Puddephatt, Global Partners and Associates, UK)

Yet another participant argued that new media and ICTs generate social activism. However, most ICT-initiatives are user-generated and do not need venture capital, only very little funding is needed to start a website for instance. The business model is the community, so no donor grants are needed. As Biljana Tatomir from the organization Open Society Institute, pointed out in the session wrapping up the whole conference:

"Many networks are very anarchical. They emerge and they disappear." (Biljana Tatomir, OSI)

It is hard to say whether the online activity and organization inside the Web will have an impact on civil society. However, the examples give a picture of the debate on the limits for the discourse in the public and the media sphere between civil society on the one hand and the authorities on the other. The Internet and ICTs both represent an opening-up towards the possibility for change through an alternative news source and alternative means of organizing.

Andrew Puddephatt noted that in relation to democracy and empowerment we know that we can bypass censorship and that there are new interactional relationships between people and governments. We have seen a massive growth in rights to information; more than sixty countries have implemented a law on rights to information. But we also know there is increasing surveillance of citizens, particularly post 9/11. The increasing integration of government data bases give governments access to a much broader range of information about their citizens, and many feel that privacy is conditional. It is granted to us, when governments choose to grant it, and it is not a fundamental right.

"Digital network communication is both transformative and disruptive technologies, there is no doubt they are changing the world and the way we do things in the world. They can recast not the formal possibilities of freedom of expression, but its realization." (Andrew Puddephatt, Global Partners and Associates, UK)

Moreover, the final discussions stressed that the lesson for those of us who believe in freedom of expression and freedom of the press is that we have to grasp the totality of communications, if we want to engage in, and further, this issue. Not just the content, but the infrastructure, connectivity and applications. If we do, we may have a future where freedom of expression flourishes; but if we do not, we may have lost a great opportunity.

4 Concluding remarks

The conference was influenced by the fact that a wide range of professions were represented and the discussions reflected the varying professional backgrounds of the participants. As IMS Executive Director, Jesper Højbjerg, noted in his closing remarks:



Learning to use the Jaiku micro blogging system. In the background Jesper Højbjerg flanked by Ann-Nina Finne (left) and Thomas Hughes (right) both from IMS.

"We have tried to look at the totality of actors who are involved in new media. We have looked at who is in control: from the angle of governments, from the angle of the private sector and from the perspective of end-users. What is the most important dynamic, how do we crack this to have more trust between the worlds." (Jesper Højbjerg, IMS)

This was echoed by several other participants asking for more synergy between technology experts and the human rights organizations and (citizen) journalists.

The issue of privacy and how to ensure a high and effective level of network, information and communication security turned up as a recurrent theme throughout the conference. It is crucial that citizens, public authorities and businesses are able to exchange data without compromising privacy. This is particularly relevant in the context of working with human rights or digital activists in places with a restricted public sphere, where it is vital to find safe ways of communicating. Consequently, ICT-policies should enhance an open and non-regulated infrastructure, including access to open source software.

A group of participants test the new technologies; from left: Finn Rasmussen (IMS), Wijayananda Jayaweera (UNESCO), Christina Dahlman (SIDA) and Amy Hamilton (KaosPilots).



eGovernment was brought to the fore as one of the tools for including ICTs in the democratic processes. ICTs may help to increase transparency and accountability, especially in developing countries with murky and complex bureaucratic systems. It is vital that digital solutions add value to the individual user and usability, rather than technology in and of itself, should be given priority. However, participants generally agreed that eGovernment is not a panacea for creating a positive development: ICTs and eGovernment cannot turn bad development into good, and in that sense technology can contribute to both good and bad governance.

Another issue that was brought up was ICTs potential to be instrumental in disrupting existing structures of power within the traditional media, which in turn may diminish the mainstream media's monopoly on the public sphere.

An increasing number of people worldwide are engaging in online activities and contributing to citizen journalism without pay. Consequently professional media find it hard to establish sustainable business strategies for working online. Citizen media is redefining the quality of media, and are eroding standing professional journalists standards.

“New communications technologies do not substitute traditional media. There is a lack of understanding of what is expected by the media. We do not want to define what is good and bad media.” (Wijayananda Jayaweera, director, Division for Communication Development, UNESCO)

New technologies, market forces and governments are all contributing to the transformation of the Internet. However, with the focus on the user, this means that the person using the technology will contribute to the development of these technological tools. It is the user-driven environment that is changing both the way in which the media operate and the way civic engagement and democracy work.

Both in terms of dissemination of information and as a tool of communication, mobile phones represent a great potential, particularly in developing countries and countries with a restricted public sphere. Mobile phones make it easy to coordinate, organize, and not least to access information – elements which may all have an impact on both economical and social change.

ICTs, apart from being a way to work with citizen media, may help civil society groups to organize. Furthermore, ICTs may serve as providers of alternative media, but do not necessarily substitute traditional media. Ending an authoritarian regime is not simply a matter of using ICTs – new technologies cannot produce sociopolitical change in and of themselves. ICTs can promote openness, but will not automatically lead to regime changes.

“Mobile phones and the Internet are just tools. It is a debate how to increase knowledge and to stimulate democracy.” (Jens Linde, chairman of IMS board, managing editor at Danish Broadcast Company, DR)

The potential of ICTs and networked communications environments depend on how the medium is utilized, since technologies are only instruments for social interactions. As with all other media, the social context determines how these technologies function as part of the public sphere.

5 Annexes – user guides

5.1 Annex 1: How to make a blog on blogger.com

HOW TO MAKE A BLOG ON BLOGGER.COM



START PAGE



STEP 1



STEP 2 - Fill out form – Email, Password, and the name that been shown.

1 Create a Google Account

This process will create a Google account that you can use on other Google services. If you already have a Google account perhaps from Gmail, Google Groups, or Orkut, please [sign in first](#)

Email address (must already exist): johnndoe@hotmail.com

You'll use this address to log in to Blogger and other Google services. We'll never share it with third parties without your permission.

Retype email address: johnndoe@hotmail.com

Type in your email address again to make sure there are no typos.

Enter a password: *****


Password strength: **Strong**

Must be at least 8 characters long.

Retype password: *****

Display name: johnndoe

The name used to sign your blog posts.

Word Verification:  sinesting

Type the characters you see in the picture to the left.

Acceptance of Terms: ☒ I accept the [Terms of Service](#)

Indicate that you have read and understand Blogger's Terms of Service

STEP 3 – Name your blog

Blogger Publish Button Publishing

2 Name your blog

Blog title: My first blog

Your blog title will appear on your published blog, on your dashboard and in your profile.

Blog address (URL): http://johnndoe.blogspot.com

[Check availability](#)

The URL you choose will be used by visitors to access your blog. [Learn more](#)

Advanced Options (you can always set up advanced options later)

Host your blog: Work to find your blog somewhere else? The [Advanced Blog Setup](#) - This will allow you to host your blog somewhere other than Blogger.

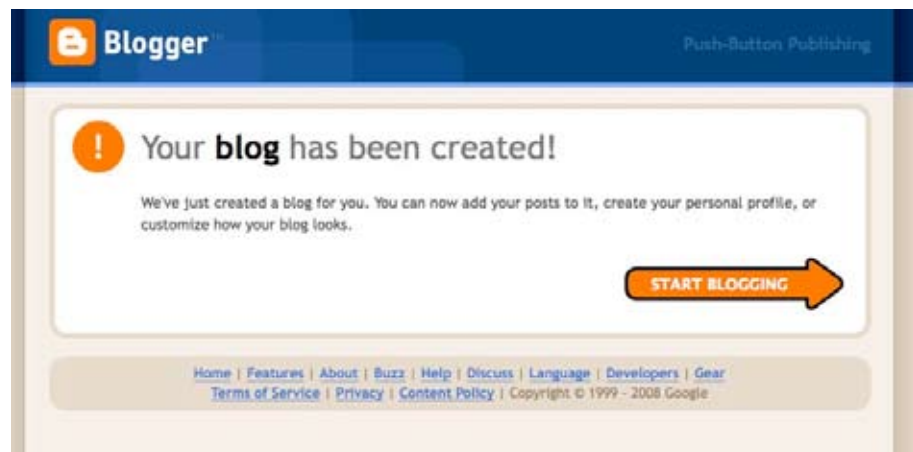
[Continue](#)

[Home](#) / [Features](#) / [About](#) / [Help](#) / [Blog](#) / [Privacy](#) / [Language](#) / [Resources](#) / [Help](#)
[Terms of Service](#) / [Privacy](#) / [Content Policy](#) / Copyright © 1998 - 2008 Google

STEP 4 – Design your blog - You can always change this.



STEP 5 - Your Blog is Created – Start blogging!



STEP 6 – Public your first Blog Post – Under ”posting” You can write your texts.

The screenshot shows the Blogger 'a blog' posting interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with 'Posting', 'Settings', 'Layout', and 'View Blog' tabs. Below this is a sub-navigation bar with 'Create', 'Edit Posts', and 'Moderate Comments' links. The main area has a 'Title:' field and a rich text editor with various formatting tools. To the right of the editor are 'Edit HTML' and 'Compose' buttons. Below the editor is a 'Labels for this post:' field with the example text 'e.g. scooters, vacation, fall'. At the bottom, there are 'PUBLISH POST' and 'SAVE NOW' buttons, and a 'Return to list of posts' link.

In the line where it is written ”Labels for this post”; you can fill in key words here. This will make it easier for other people to find your post when searching, for example by google, and yahoo search engines.

When you are done writing, press Publish Post button, the Post will now appear on your blog.

STEP 7 – DONE! Blog away!



5.2 Annex 2: What is Jaiku?



What is Jaiku?

Jaiku is a way to connect with friends by sharing short messages called Jaikus. You can create your own stream of Jaikus and follow your friends.

How does Jaiku work?

By joining Jaiku for free, you can start your own stream of Jaikus at yourname.jaiku.com. You can post new updates to your stream using the Web or your phone. Invite your friends to Jaiku so you start seeing each others' latest updates. You can also add comments to the updates.

Are my Jaikus public?

That's up to you to decide. If you'd rather not share your stream of Jaikus publicly, you can hide the updates from the public and limit their visibility to your contacts only. Check the "Hide my Jaikus from the public" box when you join Jaiku, or change your privacy preferences at any time in the Settings section.

How much does it cost?

Everyone can use Jaiku for free. Our revenue comes from ads displayed on some of the pages on the Web site. In the future we plan to also offer pay-for features but you can always keep using the basic service for free.

How do I post a new Jaiku?

You can post a new Jaiku by signing in on the Web, typing your message, and posting it to your stream. You can select an icon to spice up the message, and also set your location if you like. If you're away from your computer, you can also post Jaikus from your mobile phone.

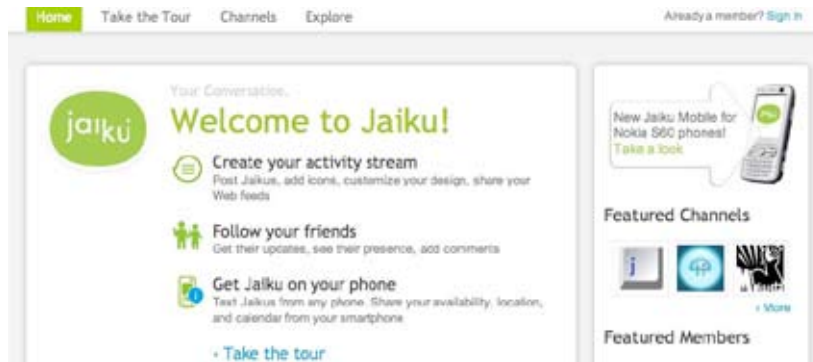
How do I use Jaiku on my phone?

You can text your Jaikus to +467374940501. To activate texting, enter your number in the Settings: Text Messaging section on the Jaiku Web site and click "Send Activation Message".

How do I follow other people?

You can start following another person by adding them as your contact. To add a contact, use Search to find your friend and click the "Add as contact" link on their profile. If your friend is not yet on Jaiku or if their stream of Jaikus is not visible to the public, you can send them an email invitation by clicking "Invite Friends".

Start Page



Add Contacts, get updates



Use Jaiku on your Phone



The screenshot shows the Jaiku website's 'Jaiku Tour' section. At the top, there are three tabs: 'Create your activity stream', 'Add contacts, get updates', and 'Use Jaiku on your phone'. The 'Use Jaiku on your phone' tab is selected. Below the tabs, the heading 'Jaiku Tour' is followed by 'III. Use Jaiku on Your Phone'. A list of features is provided, including text presence updates, using Jaiku as a phonebook, browsing and posting Jaikus, adding comments, sharing location, availability, calendar events, and sharing with friends. To the right, there are two images of mobile phones. The top phone displays the Jaiku mobile interface with a list of contacts and their latest Jaikus. Below it, a smaller phone shows a Jaiku widget. A blue callout box next to the phones contains text about downloading the Jaiku Mobile Beta for Nokia S60 3rd Edition handsets and a link to 'Learn more'. Another callout box asks if the user has another Java phone and suggests downloading the Jaiku widget.

Sign In Page – Enter Username and Password



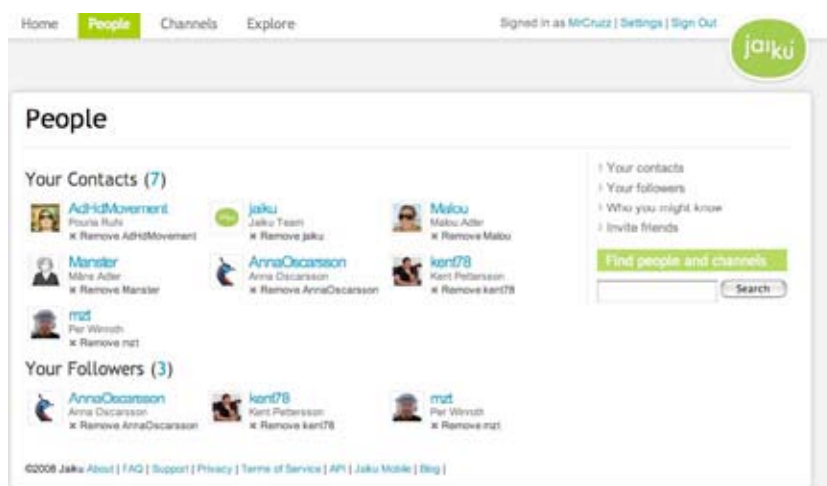
The screenshot shows the Jaiku sign-in page. At the top left is the Jaiku logo. To the right, there is a link for 'Not yet a member? Request an Invitation'. The main heading is 'Sign in to Jaiku'. Below this, there are two input fields: 'Screen name or email:' and 'Password:'. A checkbox labeled 'Remember me on this computer' is positioned below the password field. A 'SIGN IN' button is located below the checkbox. Below the button, there are two links: 'Forgot your password?' and 'Return to Home'. At the bottom of the page, there is a footer with copyright information and links to 'About', 'FAQ', 'Support', 'Privacy', 'Terms of Service', 'API', 'Jaiku Mobile', and 'Blog'.

Home – Overview of your and your contacts updates.

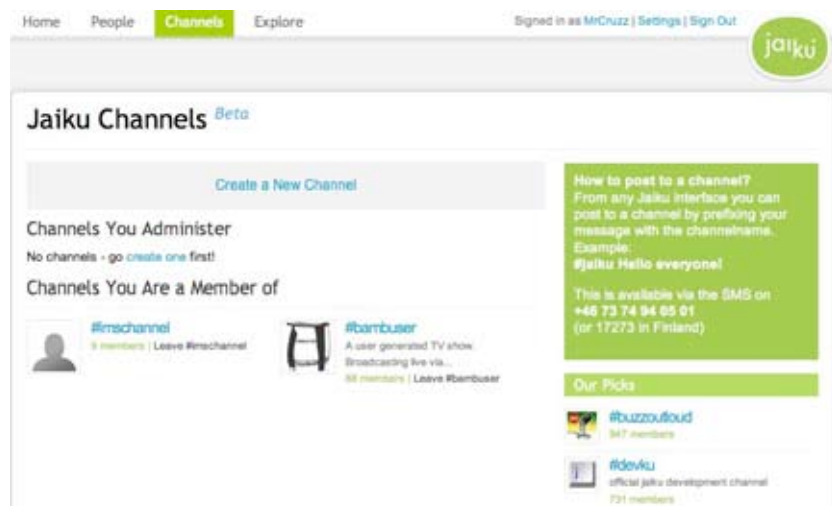
To publish a new Jaiku- write in the "box" on top of the page. Press Post to publish your Jaiku.



People – Here are your Contacts and Followers.



Channels – Here you can see all the channels you are member of and create a new.



Explore – Here you can see all the latest public Jaikus even if they are not your contacts.



5.3 Annex 3: Bambuser

Stream video live
from your mobile
to the web



bambuser
Live from your Mobile

Interact with viewers while broadcasting



www.bambuser.com

**...through your mobile
or computer**



www.bambuser.com

Network and GPS based



www.bambuser.com

Share your stuff with others

at your blog or other social services



0:40 / 7:21 Menu

Chat Archive Map Info Share

Embed this clip

`<object id="bplayer" classid="clsid:D27CDB6E-AE6D-11cf-9" data-bbox="325 575 610 588">` [Copy](#)

Share the link

<http://bambuser.com/channel/kolonabout> [Copy](#)

Post to



bambuser
Live from you. Mobile.

www.bambuser.com

Let's summarize...

Live video

from mobile phones and webcams

Interact

through web to mobile chat

Live-mix

multi camera productions

Store hours

of material remotely

Share

with your friends your blog or at other

Notify

through 3rd party services

Geo-tag

Automatic GPS and network based

API

for easy integration

Questions? Comments? Small talk?

We would love to hear from you.
Send us an email at business@bambuser.com!

www.bambuser.com

www.bambuser.com

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