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Iran und die Neuen Medien - Herausforderungen für den Auslandsrundfunk

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Iran und die Neuen Medien – Herausforderungen für den Auslandsrundfunk

/ Iran and the New Media — Challenges for International Broadcasters

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Redaktion und Lektorat deutsch
Mona-Maryam Emamzadeh
Dr. Mirjam Schneider
Dr. Joachim Staron
Dorothea Grassmann

Redaktion und Lektorat englisch
Geoffrey Rodoreda

Satz und Gestaltung
Andreas Mayer, Stuttgart

Bildnachweis
ifa

Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e.V.
Charlottenplatz 17
70173 Stuttgart
Postfach 10 24 63
D-70020 Stuttgart

info@ifa.de
www.ifa.de

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GRUSSWORT
A WORD OF WELCOME

Cornelia Pieper,
Staatsministerin im Auswärtigen Amt

Soziale Medien als Kommunikationsräume sind eine Herausforderung. Etabliertes Rezeptionsverhalten wird in Frage gestellt, weil die Grenze zwischen Sender und Empfänger verwischt und weil es keinen einer Redaktion vergleichbaren Mechanismus gibt. Doch gerade deshalb bietet das interaktive Web 2.0 auch große Chancen für die Information der Bürger. Die Auswärtige Kultur- und Bildungspolitik, deren Inhalte ja nolens volens immer auch Elemente einer werteorientierten „Außenpolitik der Gesellschaften" (Ralf Dahrendorf) sind, findet darum natürlich auch im Web 2.0 statt.

Die Akteure der Auswärtigen Kultur- und Bildungspolitik – Deutsche Welle, Goethe-Institut, Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst, die Deutsche UNESCO Kommission, die Zentrale für das Auslandsschulwesen und natürlich das Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e.V. – haben eine Vielzahl erfolgreicher und spannender Internet-Präsenzen erarbeitet. Das Auswärtige Amt bietet Webseiten wie www.entdecke-deutschland.diplo.de, www.magazine-deutschland.de, www.young-germany.de und www.deutschland.de an, die sich besonders an junge Menschen richten. Die Initiative „Schulen: Partner für die Zukunft" oder das junge Austauschprogramm „kulturweit" setzen auf interaktiven Austausch in ihren Internetpräsenzen.

Das Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e.V. (ifa) geht im Rahmen des ifa-Forschungsprogramms „Kultur und Außenpolitik" der Frage von „Social Media" auch theoretisch nach. Im Rahmen der Fachtagung „Challenges and Chances of Social Media for International Broadcasters – a Case Study: Iran" in Zusammenarbeit mit der Deutschen Welle (DW) 16. November 2010 betraten das ifa und die DW gemeinsam das neue Terrain der „social media". Die vorliegende Publikation, in der die Ergebnisse der Fachtagung einfließen, dokumentiert in klassischer Buchform, wie wir uns im Informationszeitalter Schritt für Schritt neue Wege erschließen. Einer dieser Schritte ist diese Publikation selber.

Dabei ist das Beispiel Iran ausgezeichnet gewählt. Schließlich haben die Ereignisse vom Juni 2009 in Teheran fast paradigmatisch gezeigt, welche praktische politische Bedeutung den sozialen Medien heute zukommt. Twitter und Facebook haben die Aufgabe in- und ausländischer traditioneller Medien, die ja nur sehr eingeschränkt arbeiten konnten, übernommen und in der dezentralen Struktur der „social media" weiter geführt. Das war für alle entscheidend wichtig, die sich auf diese Art informieren konnten und wollten, und insgesamt ein Sieg der Informationsfreiheit über die staatliche Kontrolle. Inhalt sowie Art und Weise der uns im Internet erreichenden Informationen warfen manchmal aber auch Fragen nach der Objektivität der Berichterstattung und nach journalistischen Standards auf.

Das gemeinsame und diskursive Entdecken des Web 2.0 für die Auswärtige Kultur- und Bildungspolitik in der vorliegenden Publikation greift mit dem Thema Iran aber nicht nur ein besonderes Beispiel auf, sondern illustriert auch die wichtigste „Arbeitsmethode" in diesem Politikfeld. Auswärtige Kultur- und Bildungspolitik ist auf Gegenseitigkeit angelegt, auf Austausch und Kooperation – genau wie das Web 2.0. Sie soll dazu beitragen, dass Menschen aus verschiedenen Kulturen mehr Verständnis und Respekt für den jeweils anderen gewinnen. Auswärtige Kultur- und Bildungspolitik will Brücken bauen und Menschen zusammenführen.

Der Brückenbau gelingt, wo Menschen frei sind, an ihm teilzunehmen. Nur dort, wo universelle Werte geachtet werden, kann sich Kreativität und Kraft für die Gemeinschaft voll entfalten. Mit der Auswärtigen Kultur- und Bildungspolitik öffnen wir Räume, in denen weltweit Menschen an der Freiheit teilhaben können. Das fördert auch Kreativität und Leistungsbereitschaft des Einzelnen. Wo jedoch der kulturelle Schaffensprozess

unterdrückt und behindert wird, fehlt eine wichtige Antriebsfeder für gesellschaftlichen und wirtschaftlichen Fortschritt.

Vor diesem Hintergrund ist es naheliegend, dass sich die Bundesrepublik mit ihrer Auswärtigen Kultur- und Bildungspolitik insbesondere auch in Iran engagiert.

Mit mehr als 20 Millionen Nutzern hat das Internet dort ein beachtliches Potenzial. Insbesondere bei Jugendlichen genießt es große Beliebtheit. Nach Englisch und Mandarin ist Farsi die am meisten genutzte Blog-Sprache weltweit. Die sehr junge iranische Gesellschaft – etwa Dreiviertel der Bevölkerung sind unter 30 Jahre alt – nutzt aktiv die vielen Möglichkeiten, die das Web 2.0 bietet, um sich über Politik, Kultur, Gesellschaft und viele andere Themen auszutauschen. Sie beweist dabei immer wieder bemerkenswerten Einfallsreichtum, um die in den letzten Monaten anhaltend massiven Zensur- und Kontrollmaßnahmen der Behörden zu umgehen. Ein Blick in die mittlerweile unüberschaubare iranische Blog-Landschaft zeigt, dass das Bedürfnis nach freier Meinungsäußerung und freiem Informationsaustausch im Land riesig ist. Das anhaltend repressive Vorgehen der iranischen Sicherheitsbehörden gegen iranische Internetaktivisten steht auch im Widerspruch zu internationalen Verpflichtungen des Landes, etwa aus dem Internationalen Pakt über bürgerliche und politische Rechte.

Hier setzt die Deutsche Welle mit der Online-Plattform Ru dar Ru (From face to face) an, welche seit letztem Jahr existiert. Das Projekt zielt darauf ab, engagierte Iranerinnen und Iraner in ihrer freien Meinungsäußerung und unabhängigen Informationsbeschaffung zu unterstützen. Auf einer professionell moderierten Plattform innerhalb von sozialen Netzwerken werden nach journalistischen Kriterien von Nutzern verfasste Beiträge systematisch ausgewertet und aufbereitet. Journalismus geht hier neue Wege, indem die Professionalität und das Augenmerk etablierter Medien mit den Äußerungen der Bürgerinnen und Bürger in sozialen Netzwerken gepaart werden. Mit dieser Plattform wird ein geschützter Kommunikationsraum, ein Raum für Meinungsbildungsprozesse geschaffen. Beide sind für die Interaktion von Menschen, die Bündelung von Interessen und die Identifikation von Interessengruppen von großer Bedeutung, gerade auch für Iran.

Das digitale Zeitalter macht keinen Halt vor Ländergrenzen. Es ermöglicht die Interaktion zwischen Menschen, die sich anders als über den digitalen Austausch nie begegnet wären. Durch eine zunehmende Transparenz von politischen, aber auch wirtschaftlichen und sozialen Entscheidungsprozessen wird ein erweitertes und vertieftes Demokratieverständnis ermöglicht. Es geht um nichts weniger als die Stärkung der repräsentativen Demokratie. Politik- und Demokratieverdrossenheit sind Phänomene, die sicherlich auch durch eine ernst genommene Mitsprache der Bürger über das Web 2.0 begrenzt werden können.

Cornelia Pieper ist Mitglied des Bundestags und Staatsministerin im Auswärtigen Amt.

VORWORT
FOREWORD

Adelheid Feilcke,
Deutsche Welle (DW)

Im Dezember 2010 waren alle Augen auf Sidi Bouzid gerichtet. Die tunesische Kleinstadt wurde zum Schauplatz von Auseinandersetzungen, nachdem sich Mohammed Bouazizi aus Verzweiflung über Arbeitslosigkeit und Korruption in der Öffentlichkeit verbrannte. Nur wenige Monate später sollte sich herausstellen, dass das der Beginn einer Demokratiebewegung in der gesamten arabischen Welt war.

Die Bewegung sprang von Tunesien über Ägypten nach Libyen über. Die Aufstände der Bevölkerung gegen die Verletzung politischer Rechte, wirtschaftliche Ausgrenzung und Korruption wurden stets von staatlicher Seite niedergeschlagen und die Berichterstattung darüber verboten. Trotzdem gingen Meldungen, Bilder und Videos der Aufstände dank Web 2.0-Angeboten um die ganze Welt. So geschehen auch im Iran zwei Jahre zuvor.

Als im Juni 2009 Tausende Iraner auf die Straßen gingen, um gegen die gefälschte Präsidentschaftswahl zu demonstrieren, kam es zu gewalttätigen Ausschreitungen zwischen dem Volk und der Staatsgewalt. Auch hier verhinderten die Machthaber die aktuelle Berichterstattung und behinderten ausländische Medien bei der Arbeit. Dennoch wurde die Welt über Soziale Medien und Blogs Zeuge der Ereignisse.

Die Vorkommnisse verdeutlichen, dass Social-Media-Kanäle den Informationsfluss verändern und helfen, Machtmonopole zu umgehen. Facebook, Twitter, Blogs und Co. bieten eine dringend benötigte Plattform für offenen Diskurs. Vor allem in Ländern, in denen die staatliche Zensur eine freie Meinungsäußerung verhindert.

Während die Regierung das nationale Fernsehen für Propagandazwecke instrumentalisiert, nutzen junge Menschen zwischen Teheran und Tunis Web 2.0-Angebote, um Proteste zu koordinieren, Bilder und Videos zu versenden, um das Ausland in Kenntnis zu setzen oder gar Hilfe anzufordern.

Als deutscher Auslandssender ist die Deutsche Welle eine Stimme für Demokratie, Freiheit und Menschenrechte. Darüber hinaus fördert sie die Meinungsfreiheit und den Dialog zwischen Kulturen. Diese Mission erfüllen wir mit einem journalistischen und multimedialen Portfolio aus TV, Radio und Online Angeboten und der Aus- und Fortbildung von Medienschaffenden. Farsi ist eine von 30 Sprachen. Seit 2010 können wir dank finanzieller Sondermittel unserem iranischen Publikum (mit „Ru Dar Ru“) eine zusätzliche Kommunikations-Plattform bieten.

Die Auslöser der Aufstände im Iran und in Tunesien waren nicht Facebook und Blogs. Im Iran ging es um eine manipulierte Wahl, während die Menschen in Tunesien gegen Korruption und Vetternwirtschaft protestierten. Die Social Media – Instrumente gewannen während der Unruhen in Nordafrika und dem Nahen Osten für die Berichterstattung an Bedeutung. Öffentlich-rechtlicher und privater Rundfunk schaffen es nur Hand in Hand mit den so genannten Bürger-Journalisten das Gesamtbild der Ereignisse aufzuzeigen.

Mit dem Thema der vorliegenden Publikation: Iran und die Neuen Medien – Herausforderungen für den Auslandsrundfunk hat die ifa- Stipendiatin und DW-Akademie-Studentin Mona-Maryam Emamzadeh ein hoch aktuelles und brisantes Thema ausgewählt. In einer gleichnamigen Konferenz diskutierten im November 2010 Medienmacher, Journalisten, Wissenschaftler und Internet-Aktivisten das Thema. Die vorliegende Publikation ist das Ergebnis dieses Expertenaustauschs.

Wir freuen uns über die Zusammenarbeit und die Möglichkeit, uns diesem Thema mit besonderer Aufmerksamkeit widmen zu können.

Adelheid Feilcke
Leiterin der Abteilung Internationale Angelegenheiten der Deutschen Welle

VORWORT
FOREWORD

Sebastian Körber,
Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e. V. (ifa)

Seit der „grünen Revolution“, in der die Zivilgesellschaft mit Mobiltelefonen in Echtzeit ihre „Revolution“ in den verschiedenen Tools des Web 2.0 dokumentiert hat und die ganze Welt teilhaben ließ, lässt es keine mediale Berichterstattung aus, die Wirkung der neuen Medien in gesellschaftlichen Umwälzungsprozessen in Ländern mit eingeschränkter Pressefreiheit zu betonen. Jüngstes Beispiel sind die Länder Nordafrikas und des Nahen Ostens. Längst ist jedoch bekannt, dass der Überraschungseffekt, den die Oppositionellen in Iran bei der Nutzung der sozialen Netzwerktools für sich verbuchen konnten, verpufft ist. Die iranische Regierung lernte schnell und scheut keine finanziellen Mittel, die Freiheit des Web zu unterbinden. Aus den einst überschaubaren politischen Blogs sind unzählige geworden; die Grenzen von Subjektivität und Objektivität verschwimmen, nicht zuletzt deshalb, weil es sich bei den Autoren der Blogs zumeist um „Bürgerjournalisten“ handelt. Wie filtert man seriöse Quellen heraus? Ersetzen die sozialen Medien den Journalismus? Nicht zuletzt sind das die Fragen, die sich die Akteure der ausländischen Berichterstattung für ihre Arbeit heute stellen müssen. Haben die sozialen Medien zunächst ermöglicht, überhaupt Informationen aus einem Land zu bekommen, rücken die Gefahren immer mehr in den Blickwinkel.

Der vorliegende Sammelband nähert sich dem Themenkomplex in drei Blöcken. Im ersten Block analysieren Vertreter der iranischen Social-Media-Szene die Rolle des Web 2.0 in Iran von seinen Anfängen bis heute. Der iranische Blogger Mehdi Mohseni umreißt die Social-Media-Aktivitäten der Parteien rund um den Präsidentschaftswahlkampf 2009 und die Folgen für die iranische Bloggerszene nach dem Wahlausgang. Der Medienwissenschaftler Gholam Khiabany hinterfragt die zumeist pauschale positive Beurteilung des Web 2.0 und konzentriert sich wie Mehdi Yahyanejad, Gründer der persischen Website Balatarin, in seinem Beitrag auf die Instrumentalisierung des Internets durch den iranischen Staat. Was hieraus entsteht, lässt sich mit dem Begriff „Cyberkrieg“ betiteln, den der Politiker Omid Nouripour in seinem Beitrag thematisiert. Der zweite Teil des Sammelbandes geht der Frage nach, welche Aufgaben sich daraus für den Auslandsfunk ergeben und welche Fallstricke sich verbergen, wenn der Adressat zum Dialogpartner wird. Der dritte Block fragt, wie die neuen Medien für den politischen Dialog genutzt werden können. Hier untersucht der Islamwissenschaftler Marcus Michaelsen die Rolle der sozialen Medien für die Öffnung autoritärer Regime.

Der vorliegende Sammelband entstand im Rahmen des ifa-Forschungsprogramms „Kultur und Außenpolitik“ in Kooperation mit der Deutschen Welle und ist aus der gemeinsamen Fachkonferenz "Challenges and Chances of Blogs and Social Media for International Broadcasters—a Case Study: Iran" hervorgegangen. Als Stipendiatin des Forschungsprogramms hat Mona-Maryam Emamzadeh nicht nur einen Fachartikel zu diesem Band beigesteuert, sondern mit ihrem Engagement die Konferenz erst möglich gemacht. Ihr ist es gelungen, Akteure aus der iranischen Social-Media-Szene sowie internationale Experten aus Wissenschaft, Politik und Auslandsrundfunkanstalten für den Sammelband zu gewinnen. Bedanken möchte ich mich auch ganz herzlich bei Adelheid Feilcke von der Deutschen Welle, ohne die diese Kooperation nicht zustande gekommen wäre und die der Stipendiatin mit Rat und Tat zur Seite stand. Mein Dank gilt auch dem Auswärtigen Amt, das die Entstehung dieses Bandes durch die finanzielle Unterstützung des Forschungsprogramms möglich gemacht hat.

Sebastian Körber,
Stellvertretender Generalsekretär des
Instituts für Auslandsbeziehungen e. V.

EINLEITUNG
INTRODUCTION

by **Mona-Maryam Emamzadeh**

Die Neuen Medien, die iranische Gesellschaft und der Auslandsrundfunk – eine Einführung

The New Media, Iranian society and international broadcasters — an introduction

by **Mona-Maryam Emamzadeh**

Massenmedien haben in demokratischen Gesellschaften die Aufgabe, das Volk zu informieren, zu unterhalten, zu sozialisieren und zu orientieren. Sie sollen die Politik kontrollieren und kritisieren, damit die Bürger in die Lage versetzt werden, mündig zu entscheiden und zu handeln. Dem Auslandsrundfunk kommen daneben noch zusätzliche Aufgaben zu: Unterstützung bei Entwicklungszusammenarbeit, Demokratieförderung, Nationbuilding, Good Governance und Public Diplomacy.

Seit dem Aufkommen des Internets stehen Redaktionen, Journalisten und Mediennutzer vor neue Herausforderungen und werden mit einer Masse an Informationen und Nachrichten konfrontiert, die sich immer schneller verbreitet. Deshalb gilt es für den professionellen Journalisten wie für den privaten Nutzer, den Umgang mit den Neuen Medien zu lernen sowie die Zuverlässigkeit und Wertigkeit von Informationen einzuschätzen. Gerade der Auslandsrundfunk, der in seiner Berichterstattung Konflikte beeinflussen oder das internationale Engagement zu deren Lösung aktivieren will, muss sich den Herausforderungen und Möglichkeiten der Neuen Medien stellen.

Die vorliegende Publikation befasst sich mit dem Einfluss des Web 2.0 auf die Arbeit von Auslandssendern am Beispiel des Iran. Sie ist im Rahmen eines Stipendienprojekts des ifa-Forschungsprogramms „Kultur und Außenpolitik“ im Zeitraum von September bis Dezember 2010 entstanden. In ihr fließen die Ergebnisse einer Fachkonferenz mit dem Titel „Challenges and Chances of Social Media for International Broadcasters — a Case Study: Iran“ ein, die das Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e.V. (ifa) zusammen mit der Deutschen Welle (DW) in Bonn am 16. November 2010 veranstaltet hat. Dreißig internationale Experten aus Medien, Wissenschaft und der iranischen „Social Media-Szene“ beschäftigten sich mit der Frage, ob Soziale Medien und der damit einhergehende sogenannte „Bürgerjournalismus“ die traditionelle Berichterstattung in und aus Ländern mit starker Zensur wie dem Iran ersetzen und diskutierten den Stellenwert Sozialer Medien bei der Recherche und der Berichterstattung in Redaktionen des Auslandsrundfunks für diese Länder.

Im ersten Kapitel der Publikation stehen Soziale Medien und Blogs im Iran und ihre Auswirkungen auf die iranische Gesellschaft im Zentrum. Hier berichten iranische Blogger, Journalisten sowie Meinungsführer über ihre Erfahrungen im Umgang mit den Neuen Medien insbesondere im

Zusammenhang mit den iranischen Präsidentschaftswahlen im Juni 2009.

Das zweite Kapitel beschäftigt sich mit den Reaktionen außerhalb des Iran. In diesem Zusammenhang diskutieren Verantwortliche von BBC, Voice of America, Radio France International und der Deutschen Welle über ihre Social-Media-Aktivitäten und ihre Erfahrungen mit User-Generated-Content.

Im dritten Kapitel geht es um die Verbindung von Neuen Medien und Politik. Dazu äußern sich Politiker sowie Wissenschaftler, die Chancen und Herausforderungen für den Auslandsrundfunk und die Auswärtige Kultur- und Bildungspolitik skizzieren.

Meine und eure Welt: Web 2.0 als Fenster nach außen

Mit dem Aufkommen des Web 2.0 im Jahr 2004 hat sich nicht nur die digitale Welt grundlegend verändert. Was sich im Cyberspace abspielt, hat auch Auswirkungen auf die Realität. Der digitale Raum bietet nicht mehr nur Platz für eine One-way-Kommunikation vom Sender hin zum Rezipienten, sondern auch für den Austausch von Meinungen und das Führen von Debatten. Erheben sich die Stimmen im virtuellen Netz, beeinflussen sie die Außenwelt, die Massenmedien, die Gesellschaften und sogar die Politik.

Dabei stellt der Begriff „Web 2.0“ den Oberbegriff für eine Reihe technischer, ökonomischer und sozialer Entwicklungen dar, wie Tim O’Reilly es beschreibt:

„Web 2.0 is a set of economic, social, and technology trends that collectively form the basis for the next generation of the Internet — a more mature, distinctive medium characterized by userparticipation, openness, and network effects.“

Anders als im Web 1.0, in dem der Nutzer nur Informationen abrufen und anderen via Email oder in Chaträumen kommunizieren konnte, bietet ihm die neue Generation des Internet vielfältigere Kommunikations- und Interaktionsmöglichkeiten. Der Web 2.0-Nutzer ist Empfänger und Konsument und agiert gleichzeitig als Produzent und Sender. Er erstellt Inhalte zu den unterschiedlichsten Themen und stellt sie anderen Nutzern zur Verfügung. Das Internet ist mehr als ein weiteres Medium neben den bisherigen konventionellen Massenmedien. Es ist das Medium für und von den Massen, die nicht mehr nur passiv konsumieren, sondern aktiv partizipieren.

Auch das Nutzungsverhalten im Internet hat sich grundlegend verändert. Es geht um die „Vernetzung von Informationen zu Interaktion mit den vernetzten Informationen“ (Stefan Münker). Je vernetzter und breiter das Angebot ist, sei es eine Webseite oder eine einzelne Nachricht, desto wertvoller und effektiver ist dieses für alle Nutzer. Man spricht vom so genannten Netzwerkeffekt: Der Nutzen eines Netzwerks wächst mit der Zahl seiner Nutzer.

Im Zusammenhang mit der Nutzerorientierung ist hier oft von der sozialen Komponente die Rede. Zwar sind Medien immer „sozial“, weil sie eine Interaktion zwischen den Nutzern zulassen. Das Innovative hier jedoch ist, dass die neuen Internetanwendungen erst im gemeinsamen Gebrauch und „durch die massenhafte Nutzung gemeinschaftlich geteilter interaktiver Medien entstehen“ (Stefan Münker) und eine multidirektionale Kommunikation zulassen.

Das Charakteristische sind dabei nicht nur die nutzerbasierten Inhalte, sondern das, was durch den Austausch, die Weiterverarbeitung und die Interaktion zwischen den Nutzern entsteht: das virtuelle Netzwerk, das Menschen global und sozial miteinander verbindet.

SUNG

Gemeinsam ist man klüger

Blogs sind der Ursprung aller Web 2.0-Anwendungen. Sie haben sich im Laufe der Jahre zu einer maßgeblichen Größe in der Kommunikation entwickelt. Hinter Weblogs steht zunächst das Konzept von Homepages, die geöffnet werden: Andere erhalten die Möglichkeit mitzumachen und sich selbst in die digitale Netzwerkgemeinschaft einzubringen. So entsteht die Blogosphäre: ein Netz aus Informationen und Meinungen, das nicht nur Texte, sondern auch Fotos, Videos und Audioeinträge umfasst.

Die Blogger teilen dabei nicht nur wie in einem Tagebuch der Welt ihre persönlichen Geschichten mit, sie werden auch als Informationsvermittler aktiv, indem sie auf andere Blogs, Medienberichte und ähnliche Informationen verweisen und dazu Stellung beziehen.

Doch Blogs können mehr. Durch die Vernetzung der Teilnehmer und die dadurch entstehende „Mundpropaganda“ (Miriam Meckel) sind sie zu einem wichtigen Multiplikationsinstrument für das Agenda-Setting im Netz geworden. Die Blogosphäre ist ein Paradebeispiel für das Wirken der „Weisheit der Vielen“ – „blogging harnesses collective intelligence as a kind of filter“, wie Tim O’Reilly es nennt. Gemeinsam ist man klüger.

Seit 2006 gibt es die Mikro-Blogging-Anwendung Twitter – eine Form des Bloggens, bei dem ebenfalls Meinungen und Informationen präsentiert werden, allerdings in Form kurzer Nachrichten, ähnlich wie SMS-Nachrichten. Twitter wird zuweilen auch als Soziales Medium definiert, was allerdings nicht nur nach einer in Korea durchgeführten Studie widerlegt werden kann. Denn Twitter-Posts sind monologisch, während Blogs dialogisch und auf Austausch angelegt sind. Mit Hilfe von Twitter werden lediglich Nachrichten verbreitet, es findet keine direkte Interaktion zwischen Twitterer und seinen „Followern“ statt.

Bei den Sozialen Medien hingegen geht es in erster Linie um Beziehung und „direkte“ Interaktion mit anderen Nutzern innerhalb des Netzwerks. Zu den Marktführern gehören das Videoportal Youtube und das Kontaktnetzwerk Facebook – wobei in manchen Ländern andere Anbieter erfolgreicher sind, wie etwa in Brasilien Orkut.

Bei allen Web 2.0-Angeboten gilt: Je mehr „Freunde“, Leser und Kommentatoren ein Nutzer hat, desto mehr Aufmerksamkeit wird ihm entgegengebracht und desto höher ist der Netzwerkeffekt. Während in der Wirtschaft Angebot und Nachfrage den Preis koordinieren und über das Bestehen des Marktes entscheiden, sind im Internet Aufmerksamkeit und Beliebtheit die maßgeblichen Kriterien und Indikatoren.

Die Effekte der Web 2.0-Angebote sind vielseitig. Zum einen werden die Kommunikation und damit auch die Informationsverbreitung beschleunigt. Ein Post auf Twitter, in einem Blog oder auf der Pinnwand eines Facebook-Nutzers kann innerhalb weniger Minuten im gesamten Netzwerk verbreitet werden.

Zum anderen produzieren sie Öffentlichkeiten. Public Sphere bzw. öffentliche Meinung ist die kollektive Sichtweise, die von einem signifikanten Teil der Gesellschaft geteilt wird und nach der Definition von Jürgen Habermas durch dialogischen, kritisch-rationalen Diskurs entsteht. Durch die starke Verbindung der Nutzer in Kommunikationsräumen wie Blogs, Sozialen Netzwerkseiten sowie Foto- und Video-Communities wird eine alternative öffentliche Meinung gebildet. Somit ermöglicht Web 2.0 eine diskursive und partizipative Öffentlichkeit.

Kommt noch hinzu, dass die Bildung einer „Schweigespirale“ im Cyberspace unterbunden werden kann. Die Bereitschaft vieler Menschen, sich öffentlich zu ihrer Meinung zu bekennen, ist oft abhängig von der wahrgenommenen Mehrheitsmeinung, die von den Massenmedien transportiert wird. So besteht die Gefahr, dass viele sich öffentlich nicht äußern, da sie fürchten, sich sozial zu isolieren – es entsteht eine Schweigespirale. Die Anonymität und die Zirkulation vieler unterschiedlicher Meinungen im Internet ermöglichen auch Minderheiten, sich zu äußern und vielleicht sogar zu Meinungsführern zu werden. Web 2.0 wird deshalb auch oft als ausgesprochen demokratisches Kommunikationsmittel gesehen, weil es eine reziproke Kommunikation und die Einbindung von Bürgern in politische Prozesse zulässt. Für autoritäre Regime stellt das Web 2.0 deshalb eine Gefahr dar, da es die Kontrolle des Informationsflusses durch die Regierung erschwert.

Die Islamische Republik Iran ist ein solches Land. Hier wurden die Chancen und Risiken des Web 2.0 für Gesellschaft, Politik und Medien durch die politischen Ereignisse im Jahr 2009 besonders deutlich. Die vorausgehenden theoretischen Überlegungen werden deshalb im Folgenden am Beispiel Iran konkretisiert.

Grün ist die Hoffnung: Die Geschehnisse im Iran im Juni 2009 und die Verknüpfung der virtuellen mit der realen Welt

Wenn sich eine Tür schließt, öffnet sich anderswo ein Fenster. So geschehen vor knapp elf Jahren mit der Geburt des Bloggings in der Islamischen Republik Iran. Ein repressives Regime und ein Mediensystem, das in öffentlicher Hand lag und der Zensur unterworfen war, trieben das junge iranische Volk ins Internet. Das Web wurde zum geistigen Freiraum. Doch die virtuelle Welt ist kein Raum, in der die Meinungen und Informationen eingeschlossen bleiben.

Kurz vor den Präsidentschaftswahlen im Juni 2009: Ausländische Medien verfolgten voller Aufmerksamkeit das Geschehen im Iran. Die Straßen in den Großstädten und vor allem der Hauptstadt Teheran waren grün. Wohin man schaute: ein Meer aus grünen Fahnen und grünen Menschen. Zu Tausenden waren sie unterwegs in der Millionhauptstadt. Das Bild, das die Kameras festhielten, glich einem friedvollen Straßenfest. So ungefähr könnte man sich ein Karnevalsfest im Iran vorstellen.

Ein ungewöhnlicher Anblick. Auch, dass zahllose Frauen mit bedecktem Kopf und im Tschador dazu gehörten. Hier waren Männer und Frauen jeden Alters und aus jeder Bevölkerungsschicht gemeinsam auf die Straße gegangen. Ihre Euphorie kurz vor den Präsidentschaftswahlen war kaum zu übersehen. Sie alle schien eines zu verbinden: Hoffnung. Die Massenmedien ließen die Welt an dieser Hoffnung teilhaben.

Dies war ein anderes, bisher ungewohntes Szenario vom Iran, welches an diesen Tagen in den Medien, vor allem aber im Fernsehen, vermittelt wurde.

Bis dato hatten stereotypisierende Bilder von tief religiösen Menschen, in sich gekehrten, verschleierten Frauen und Berichte über einen Präsidenten, der im Ausland besonders durch seine umstrittene Außenpolitik von sich reden macht, die Berichterstattung über das Land bestimmt; ein Land, das seit der Islamischen Revolution 1979 vorwiegend mit Menschenrechtsverletzungen, Unterdrückung und Frauenfeindlichkeit in Verbindung gebracht wird, weniger mit dem niedrigen Durchschnittsalter seiner Bevölkerung und seinen hohen Akademikerzahlen.

Doch einer breiteren Öffentlichkeit wurde diese Seite des iranischen Volkes erst mit den Ereignissen um die iranischen Präsidentschaftswahlen im Juni 2009 vorgeführt, vor allem die Existenz einer jungen, technik- und internetaffinen Bevölkerung. Aber auch die angespannte Beziehung des Volkes zu seinem Regime. Der Journalist und Filmemacher Jaron Gilinsky aus Jerusalem hat es so beschrieben:

„The image that most of the world has been getting about Iran just does not match up with the one that we've only recently been receiving via social media."

Aufgrund der starken Inflation, der hohen Arbeitslosenzahlen und des schlechten Rufs des Iran im Ausland sehnen sich viele Iraner nach Freiheit und Sicherheit. Die grüne Farbe, mit der sie sich selbst und ihre Straßen verhüllen, steht für Hoffnung auf Veränderung. Raus aus der Tristesse des Alltags, der Unterdrückung der Meinungs- und Pressefreiheit und der Ohnmacht gegenüber den sozialen, ökonomischen und politischen Zuständen im Land.

Die Menschen gingen zu Tausenden auf die Straße und riefen zur Wahlbeteiligung auf. Sie waren nicht politisch radikal, sondern im Wahlfieber, durch die Medien ähnlich erlebbar wie bei den Präsidentschaftswahlen in den USA 2008. Die Wahlbeteiligung im Iran ein Jahr danach war so hoch wie niemals zuvor.

Nach dem monatelangen Wahlkampf zwischen vier von den ursprünglich 475 zugelassenen Bewerbern verkündeten iranische Medien am frühen Abend des 12. Juni 2009 den Wahlsieg Mahmud Ahmadinedschads. Der Präsident blieb im Amt.

Was danach passierte, hat (Medien-)Geschichte geschrieben. In den „traditionellen" Medien erfuhren wir darüber zunächst nur wenig. Die aktuellste und schnellste Informationsquelle für die Stimmungsbilder und -nachrichten nach der Wahlverkündung war das Internet; und hier waren es vor allem Soziale Netzwerke und Blogs. Allen voran Twitter, wo Nutzer aus aller Welt schnell und kurz unter der Kennung #iranelection alles posteten, was im Land vor sich ging, und ihre Meinung dazu kundtaten.

Der Wahlsieg Ahmadinedschads war umstritten. Ein Großteil des Volkes war überzeugt, mit der eigenen Stimme den amtierenden Präsidenten abgewählt zu haben. Eine grüne Protestwelle ging durch die Straßen. Die Menschen wirkten fassungslos, wütend und wollten nicht begreifen, dass die vielen Menschen, die sich in der Öffentlichkeit klar gegen den konservativen Ahmadinedschad und für die liberalen Kandidaten Mir Hussein Mussawi und Mehdi Karroubi ausgesprochen hatten, angeblich nur eine Minderheit darstellten. Denn das war es zumindest, was in den nationalen Medien verkündet wurde.

Die Demonstrationen blieben nicht ohne Folgen. Sie gerieten außer Kontrolle, als es zwischen den friedlichen Demonstranten und Regierungseinheiten zu Auseinandersetzungen kam.

Die Machthaber hatten nach und nach die Aufmärsche verboten, und die mediale Berichterstattung wurde von der Regierung bestimmt. Im nationalen Fernsehen gab es kaum Informationen über die zum Teil gewalttätigen Ereignisse im Landesinneren.

Der Ausweg für die Informationssuchenden war das Internet. Hier fanden sie Artikel und Nachrichten in Blogs, Bildern und Videos – hochgeladen von den Menschen, die an den Demonstrationen als aktive oder unbeteiligte Zuschauer teilgenommen und die Ereignisse mit ihren Handys festgehalten hatten. Die Bilder gingen mittels mobiler Nutzung des Internets via Blogs, Twitter, Facebook und vor allem Youtube um die Welt. Als nach und nach ausländische Korrespondenten des Landes verwiesen wurden oder unter Aufsicht standen, bedienten sich auch die internationalen Medien zunehmend der Informationen der später so genannten „Bürgerjournalisten". Das iranische Volk wurde dank Web 2.0 zum Produzenten von Nachrichten und nahm die Aufgabe der Journalisten selbst in die Hand.

Im Bazar der kommunikativen Möglichkeiten

Die starke Nutzung des Internets und vor allem der Web 2.0-Anwendungen ist im Iran nichts Neues und ist nicht erst seit den Wahlen 2009 in Gang gekommen. Das Internet ist bereits seit vielen Jahren für die iranische Bevölkerung ein Fenster zur Außenwelt.

Meinungs- und Pressefreiheit sind im Iran zwar im Grundgesetz verankert, doch die nationalen Medien stehen entweder im Dienste der Regierung, oder sie befinden sich zumindest unter der starken Aufsicht der Regierung und damit unter (Selbst-) Zensur, denn bei kritischer und von der Regierung ungewollter Berichterstattung drohen ihnen Sanktionen. Unabhängige Medien werden immer wieder verboten.

Soziale Medien und Blogs sind deshalb das Mitteilungs- und Informationsmittel Nummer eins in der Islamischen Republik. Es waren vor allem Blogs, die seit dem vergangenen Jahrzehnt das junge Volk erreichten. Als „Godfather of Blogs" gilt Hossein Derakhshan. Vor knapp zehn Jahren brachte der heute 36-Jährige das Format in seine Heimat, indem er in seinem eigenen Blog Anleitungen zur Erstellung von nutzerfreundlichen Blogs gab. So ermöglichte er vor allem jungen Iranern, ihre Stimme zu erheben oder einfach nur mit anderen ihr Leben, ihre Sehnsüchte und Hobbies zu teilen. Derakhshan sitzt seit 2008 im Gefängnis – wie so viele seinesgleichen, die sich im Internet, in Zeitungen oder auch auf der Straße kritisch zum Regime äußern oder zu „freizügig" mit ihrer Freiheit umgehen.

2005 beschrieb Nasrin Alavi in ihrem Buch „Wir sind der Iran" die iranische Bloggerszene bzw. den so genannten „Weblogestan" – die Welt der persischen Blogger. Sie gibt einen Überblick über die in den Blogs beschriebenen und diskutierten Themen und vermittelt damit den Lesern einen ersten Eindruck vom Leben im Iran mit allen seinen politischen und sozialen, gesellschaftlichen und kulturellen Facetten.

Den „Bazar der kommunikativen Möglichkeiten", wie es der iranische Blogger Arash Abadpour nennt, nutzen die Menschen, um die unzutreffende und gesteuerte Berichterstattung der staatlichen Medien aufzudecken. Damit werden sie zu politischen Aktivisten. „Die persische Blogosphäre ist bereits zu einem Leuchtfeuer der Freiheit geworden, auf das das iranische Regime keinen Einfluss mehr hat", so Abadpour.

Allerdings lässt das Regime das Vorgehen im Netz nicht kalt. So hat es – ähnlich wie in China – umfassende Kontrollapparate entwickelt, die das Netz überwachen, ganze Seiten blockieren und User identifizieren, denen harte Strafen – von Hausarrest über Gefängnisaufenthalt bis hin zur Todesstrafe – drohen. Doch die junge iranische Generation lässt sich offenbar trotz der Repressionen nicht einschüchtern. Die sehr technikaffinen Internetnutzer schaffen es immer wieder, Filter zu umgehen. Der Iran gilt als Bloggernation schlechthin. Doch auch Twitter, Facebook und Co. haben mit den Jahren an Beliebtheit und auch an Relevanz gewonnen.

Das Beispiel Iran zeigt, dass die bis dato existierenden Web 2.0-Anwendungen die konventionellen Medienangebote ergänzen und komplettieren. Sie verhelfen zu einem Diskurs aus dem Netz heraus in die reale Welt.

Erstmals ist mittels eines Mediums eine tatsächliche Many-To-Many-Kommunikation möglich. Jeder Netzwerkteilnehmer hat die Chance, seine Stimme zu erheben, seine Meinung mitzuteilen. Die Kehrseite der Medaille: Durch seine Offenheit für alle gibt es auch denen eine Stimme, die das Netz als Propagandamittel missbrauchen wollen.

Gemeinsam ist man besser informiert – Journalismus im Zeitalter von Web 2.0

Wie aber gehen Journalisten und Medienunternehmen mit den Neuen Medien um und wie sehr beeinflussen diese ihr Tätigkeitsfeld? In Demokratien werden den Massenmedien neben der Informationsfunktion noch drei weitere Aufgaben zugeschrieben: eine soziale (Orientierungs-)Funktion durch die Vermittlung von gesellschaftlichen Normen und Werten; eine politische Funktion als Sprachrohr für alle demokratischen Parteien und als Wissensvermittler für die politische Willensbildung; und schließlich eine ökonomische (Zirkulations-)Funktion.

Internationale Auslandssender stellen zudem für ihr jeweiliges Land auch ein Instrument der Public Diplomacy dar und sollen durch ihre Angebote zum effizienteren Dialog mit den Empfängerländern – seit dem 11. September 2001 insbesondere mit der Arabischen Welt – beitragen.

So setzen Medienunternehmen wie BBC, Deutsche Welle und RFI seit Jahren auf die Verbreitung von Inhalten in anderen Sprachen. Da es der genauen Kenntnis des Landes, seiner Kultur, seines (Medien-)Systems und der politischen Kontexte bedarf, um aus fremdkulturellen und -sprachlichen Systemen Informationen zu empfangen, zu erklären und zu senden, ist die Zuhilfenahme von User Generated Content heutzutage unerlässlich für die publizistische und dialogorientierte Arbeit von internationalen Journalisten.

Durch Web 2.0 hat sich auch die Public Diplomacy verändert. In der muslimischen Welt sind die Neuen Medien die „Motoren einer Öffentlichkeit“ (Oliver Hahn). Deshalb ist das Internet ein wichtiges Werkzeug, um sich in den Zielländern an die Rezipienten zu wenden und die Marktstellung wahren zu können.

Das Internet und speziell das Web 2.0 haben den Journalismus verändert und bieten neue Möglichkeiten für Formate und Kommunikations-, Marketing- und Verbreitungsstrategien. War die journalistische Thematisierung zu Zeiten des Web 1.0 noch eine Einbahnstraße, mischen sich über die Kommunikationsplattformen des Web 2.0 neue Akteure in die Medienproduktion und in

das Agenda-Setting ein, indem sie Informationen in Text und Bild zu aktuellen Ereignissen aus der lokalen Nachbarschaft und der Welt liefern.

So haben sich neue journalistische Rollenbilder ergeben. Journalisten handeln gleichsam als Broker, die für die Sammlung relevanter Informationen im Netz oder als Schnittstelle zur Verbindung unterschiedlicher Communities zuständig sind. Ihre journalistischen Erzeugnisse sind keine fertigen Produkte mehr, sondern werden – ungefragt – weiterverarbeitet, getagged und verlinkt. Es gibt keine „Top-down"- oder „Write-Read"-Hierarchie mehr, sondern einen Wechselwirkungsprozess zwischen „Write" und „Read" einer unbegrenzten Zahl von Beteiligten.

Im Zuge dieser Veränderungen wird das Internet als Recherche-, Kooperations- und Kommunikationsplattform verstanden und genutzt, denn es ist das Spiegelbild der Gesellschaft und somit auch der Welt. Hier bietet das so genannte „Crowdsourcing" die Generierung neuer Ideen und Informationen direkt aus der betroffenen Community. Crowdsourcing, so Jeff Howe, sei gleichzusetzen „mit der Auslagerung auf die Intelligenz und die Arbeitskraft einer Masse von Freizeitarbeitern im Internet". Web 2.0 und damit auch Crowdsourcing bedeuten Kommunikation auf Augenhöhe, die bestehenden Nutzer zu involvieren, aber auch neue zu lokalisieren, sie an sich zu binden und sie dazu zu motivieren, sich aktiv einzubringen.

Somit sind die so genannten „Bürgerjournalisten" auch letztlich Informanten – und keine klassischen Journalisten –, da sie (Teil-)Informationen weitergeben, die dann von jedermann und eben auch von Journalisten für ihre Berichterstattung als Quelle genutzt werden können. Die von den Bürgern generierten Inhalte (User Generated Content) sind ungefiltert, nicht hinsichtlich des Wahrheitsgehalts überprüft und können lediglich als Zusatz- oder Zweitquelle etwa zu Nachrichtenagenturen oder Korrespondenten betrachtet werden.

Das Netz ist zwar offen für alle, offen für Dialog und Meinungsaustausch. Doch sind es auch im digitalen Raum nur wenige, die für viele sprechen. So war der iranische Twitterer „Persiankiwi" die meistgelesene Quelle und einer der Meinungsführer und Multiplikatoren bei der Dokumentation der Ereignisse im Iran, an dem sich auch Journalisten orientierten.

Damit ist der „Embedded Journalist", der einst als Teil der eigenen Truppen an die Front geschickt wurde, heute eingebettet „in Prozesse der kollaborativen Informations- und Geschichtenproduktion und in eine Vielzahl von Öffentlichkeiten" (Miriam Meckel). Auslandssender wie BBC, Deutsche Welle (DW) und Radio France International (RFI) beziehen seit Jahren Cyber-Journalisten bei ihrer Recherche- und Redaktionsarbeit mit ein. So stellte 2001 der BBC-Online-Dienst Journalisten aus dem Iran ein, die ihre Arbeit durch die Schließung von unabhängigen, reformorientierten Zeitungen verloren hatten und ins Ausland gegangen waren. Die Farsi-Redaktion der Deutschen Welle startete 2010 die Social-Media-Plattform „Ru dar Ru" („von Angesicht zu Angesicht"), um die Verbindung zu ihrer Zielgruppe zu stärken.

Eine ähnliche Plattform hat Radio France International/France24 mit „Les Observateurs de France" ins Leben gerufen. Dabei handelt es sich um eine „kooperative" Webseite und ein Fernsehprogramm auf France 24, das über internationale Themen berichtet und dabei ausschließlich auf Video-, Text- und Audiomaterial zurückgreift, das von Bürgern eingesendet und dann von Journalisten selektiert, verifiziert, übersetzt und publiziert wird.

Unerlässlich bei der Verwendung von User Generated Content ist die Überprüfung der Quellen auf Richtig- und Zuverlässigkeit – ein ohnehin wesentlicher Teil der journalistischen Arbeit. Doch speziell im Zeitalter der Internetrecherche geht die notwendige schnelle Arbeitsweise oft zu Lasten von Qualität, Richtigkeit und Wahrheit. Sicherheits- und Qualitätsdenken ist mit einer großen Verantwortung verbunden, wie es der Zeitungsherausgeber William Randolph Hearst bereits im Jahr 1909 als Slogan für eine Nachrichtenagentur formuliert hat: „Get it first – but first get it right!" Eine Regel, die im Fall von Neda Soltani im Zusammenhang mit den Unruhen im Iran nicht befolgt wurde.

Der Name „Neda" wird weltweit gleichgesetzt mit der Grünen Bewegung im Iran; sie wurde zum Symbol des Freiheitskampfes im Iran – oder doch ihr Foto. Folgendes war geschehen: Bei den Protesten am 20. Juni 2009 wird auf den Straßen Teherans eine junge Frau niedergeschossen, die Szenerie per Handykamera aufgenommen und zunächst via Youtube im Internet veröffentlicht. Aus Zeitmangel und unter dem Druck, schnell reagieren zu müssen, wird Neda Soltani als die im Film Sterbende identifiziert. Dazu nutzen die Massenmedien die Meldungen und Bilder, die in Twitter, Facebook und Co. verbreitet werden. Ein großer Fehler, wie sich später herausstellt. Neda Soltani lebt, die Verstorbene heißt Neda Agha-Soltan. Diese Verwechslung hat für die junge Universitätsdozentin schwere Folgen: Von der Regierung bedroht, flüchtet sie wenige Woche nach der Veröffentlichung ihres Fotos aus ihrer Heimat.

Weniger als zwei Jahre nach dem Beginn der Grünen Bewegung im Iran entbrannte nun im Januar 2011 in der arabischen Welt eine Protestbewegung – vorangetrieben durch Soziale Medien und Blogs. Angefangen in Tunesien, zog sie wie ein Flächenbrand weiter nach Ägypten, Algerien, Bahrain, in den Jemen und nach Libyen.

In Libyen erfahren die Vertreter der Massenmedien in diesen Tagen wenig aus dem eigenen Land. Von offizieller Seite gibt es lediglich Berichte, die auf Regierungsinformationen basieren. Auslandsmedien wären wenig bis kaum informiert, gäbe es nicht die Informationen, Bilder und Videos, die von den Libyern mittels Sozialer Medien und Blogs im Netz veröffentlicht werden.

Nun werden weder der Journalist oder die konventionellen Medien im Zuge dieser Entwicklungen irrelevant. Vielmehr sind sie gefragter denn je. „The winner of the Iranian protests was neither old media nor new media, but a hybrid of the two", schrieb etwa der „Economist". So lag und liegt noch immer die Aufgabe der Journalisten darin, beim Auswahlprozess zu helfen. Die neuen Möglichkeiten im Internet und damit die Masse an Informationen erfordern Experten, die relevante Themen und Informationen identifizieren, herausfiltern, bearbeiten und weiterleiten. Außerdem sind die Inhalte aus dem sozialen Netz häufig eher subjektiv, es fehlt die journalistische Distanz.

Die generierten Informationen sind wie Puzzleteile, die von Journalisten korrekt zusammengesetzt werden müssen, damit am Ende ein handwerklich sauberer und stimmiger Bericht steht. Der Kern der Arbeit eines Journalisten bleibt also bestehen: sammeln, sichten, werten und veröffentlichen; lediglich Recherchemittel, -methoden und Verbreitungswege ändern sich.

Medien und (politischer) Dialog

Auch wenn die Neuen Medien die privaten Haushalte bereits vor Jahren erreicht haben, so wurde erst durch die Unruhen im Iran deutlich, welche weit reichenden politischen Effekte die digitalen Medien haben und welche Potenziale sie für die Politik mit sich bringen.

Vergleicht man die Aktivitäten der Facebook-Nutzer im Jahr 2009 mit den heutigen, so lässt sich auch in demokratischen Ländern wie Deutschland ein Anstieg der Nutzerzahlen und eine Politisierung erkennen: so etwa bei den Demonstrationen für einen vorzeitigen Atomausstieg Ende 2010. Viele Menschen beteiligten sich an der Debatte im Internet, z. B. auf Facebook: Hier wurden Seiten angelegt, über die Atomgegner versuchten, so viele Anhänger wie möglich über ihre Netzwerke zu generieren und sie auf diese Weise für Demonstrationszüge zu mobilisieren.

Gerade an diesen Beispielen zeigt sich, wie ein Soziales Medium wie Facebook funktioniert: Die Administratoren erstellten Gruppen auf Facebook, versuchten so viele „Freunde" wie möglich über ihre Netzwerke zu gewinnen und mobilisierten auf diese Weise Atomgegner, die via Internet Demonstrationszüge vereinbarten. Darüber hinaus nutzen vor allem Printmedien wie Spiegel.de, FAZ.de oder Stern.de Facebook, um auf Ihre Online-Artikel aufmerksam zu machen und ihre Leser bzw. Newsticker-Abonnenten zu deren Meinung zu befragen.

Das bedeutet: Erst die Medien können ihre Rezipienten zu einem Dialog mit anderen Nutzern bewegen. Dazu müssen sie diese zunächst auf ihre Internet-Seite lenken, ihnen ein auf sie zugeschnittenes Thema präsentieren und schließlich die verschiedenen Parteien dazu bewegen, über ihre Positionen zu diskutieren.

Hier haben die Sender nicht nur die Aufgabe, Meldungen zu verfassen und nach Meinungen und Einstellungen zu fragen, sondern auch, die Antworten und Kommentare zu kontrollieren und gegebenenfalls auf ethisch fragwürdige Inhalte zu überprüfen.

Journalismus im Zeitalter des Web 2.0 ist weit mehr als Informationsbeschaffung und -verbreitung. Insbesondere was den Auslandsrundfunk betrifft, so haben Redakteure und Journalisten die verantwortungsvolle Aufgabe, alle im Netz dargebotenen Kommunikationsmöglichkeiten zu nutzen, um ihrer Funktion als Wertevermittler, als Dialog- und Demokratieförderer gerecht zu werden.

Zur Autorin

Mona-Maryam Emamzadeh ist diplomierte Medienökonomin und war in verschiedenen Medienunternehmen in Deutschland, England und den USA im Bereich Marketing/Kommunikation und Produktion tätig.
Sie studierte „International Media Studies", ein Masterprogramm der DW-Akademie, und war Stipendiatin im ifa-Forschungsprogramm „Kultur und Außenpolitik", in dessen Rahmen die vorliegende Publikation entstanden ist.

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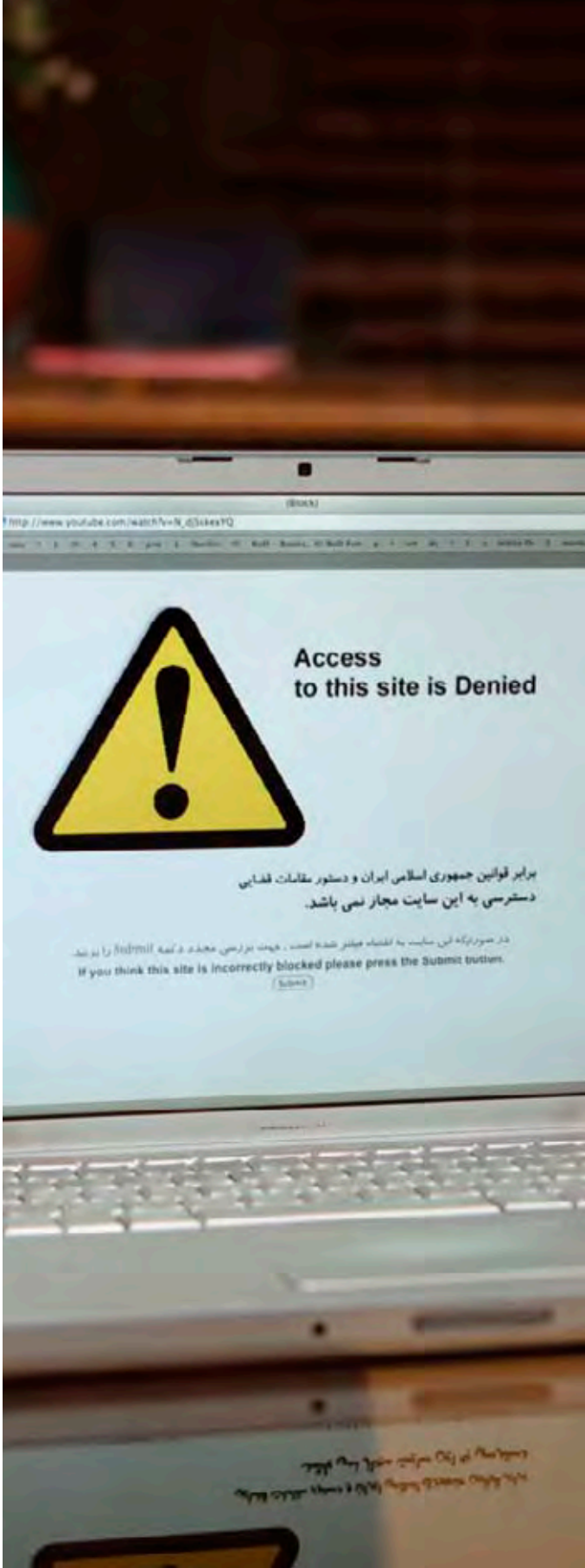

1.

DIE NEUEN MEDIEN UND DIE IRANISCHE GESELLSCHAFT

THE NEW MEDIA AND IRANIAN SOCIETY

The defiance of Iran's bloggers

by **Mehdi Mohseni**

Government authorities who've previously cracked down on the newspaper industry have now turned their attention to the internet and Iran's network of critical bloggers. A report on the dangers involved in 'unlicensed' cyberspace activity.

Iran with a population of seventy million has 28,000,000 internet users which is equal to 40 percent of its total population. Iran has the highest rate of growth in the region. Within eight years the number of internet users has increased from 250,000 to 28 million. There are more than 1,000,000 bloggers, and thousands of news sites in Farsi or Persian.

In the beginning most internet users were government organisations, research centres and universities but an increase in the number of PC's meant that the internet entered homes too. Most users of this new technology were young students who used the internet to circumvent imposed social limitations. Meetings between young men and women are not allowed in public places in Iran, so people started meeting in chat rooms instead. Iranians made Yahoo messenger the most popular internet software in the country.

But Sayed Mohammad Khatami's victory in presidential elections changed things. Towards the end of the 1990s Iranian society experienced greater political and social openness and many of the pressures were reduced. This time period might be called the end period for the first generation of Iranian internet users.

The majority of the second generation of internet users had not experienced the pressures and limitations of the past, but they were experiencing a social and cultural backwardness. The birth of the Persian blogger gave a new identity to this generation. Iranian bloggers were trying to create their own type of internet literature, learning about the sensibilities and sensitivities of cyber space, and developing internet professionalism.

However, at this time the prosecution of the reformists began, orchestrated by the traditionalists who are the real holders of power in Iran. They also attacked the independent press. Fifteen papers were closed in one day. And within a year 100 newspapers and magazines were closed. This was known as the haphazard closure of the press. Under these conditions the reformists were forced to use the internet in order to keep in touch with society. The traditionalists responded shortly afterwards by confronting reformists on the internet.

In the first confrontation, police under the command of Mohammad Ghalibaf, the current mayor of Tehran, arrested a number of bloggers and managers of reformist sites. These young people were kept in solitary confinement for 60 to 120 days and were tortured. This became known as "the blogger's case". It is interesting to note that only three of the first 21 detainees had their own weblogs. Some of these 21 were forced to go on TV and radio and confess to crimes against national security. Towards the end of Khatami's term (he was president from 1997–2005) the situation for bloggers was getting worse. Perhaps one of the reasons for this was that they were working under their real names and could be identified easily. In these years most of them were arrested and imprisoned. These were mostly bloggers and website founders who had criticised the more conservative and traditional elements of the Islamic government and who had ties with secular movements, nationalist political activists and other reformists. During the elections of 2005, the cybersphere seemed even more energetic than real life.

But since the result of elections did not meet public satisfaction, many started to doubt the effectiveness of the internet, blogs and websites in Iranian society. In fact, the lack of true understanding of cyberspace and miscalculating the extent of its influence were the prime reasons for contradictory views between those writing in cyberspace and those based in real society.

The march of repression

The Presidency of Ahmadinejad, which began in 2005, imposed new conditions on Iranian society. Social and political freedoms and free speech were severely curtailed. All segments of government adopted new security measures and an intelligence apparatus. The parliament's ratifying of new laws and the judiciary's monitoring and summonsing of civil and political activists imposed further controls and prevented organised communication between the reformist parties, opposition groups and the general public. Iran's foreign policy is now more aggressive and economically the country is facing a management crisis.

The severe control of the press has extended to threatening editors of the remaining few independent presses to print headlines and publish stories of the government's choosing. This has been rare for the past 100 years, and may be the reason that bloggers have emerged as independent journalists, economic and cultural critics, and defenders of social freedoms.

It is no exaggeration to say that bloggers and internet users were in the forefront of opposition to Ahmadinejad's government and its supportive propaganda tools. The success of the site Balatarin, a subscription-based website, encouraged the emergence of other such websites as well. In this period, the activities of news and social issues websites increased rapidly, and over the last few years internet bloggers have addressed issues such as human rights, women's rights, ethnic and religious minorities, student concerns, the economy, Ahmadinejad's views on the holocaust, the real number of 9/11 victims, the existence of Israel, Iran's nuclear program and other issues.

Bloggers are trying very hard to distance themselves from Ahmadinejad's government and many of his unwise comments. For example they have presented links, pictures and other information about 9/11 victims, about women and girls who have been harassed, beaten up and arrested for not following dress codes, about police violence. People have become outraged at some of the things that have been shown on the internet and sometimes the government has backed down.

The women's internet movement

Women are at the forefront of the social and civil rights campaign in Iran. Because of a lack of press support for their cause they are using weblogs and electronic media. They have had a significant influence in this regard on cyber space.

Iranian women are fighting hard for equal rights with men, for the right to keep their children, for equal rights with men in giving evidence, for the right to inherit property from their husbands, for the right to become economically independent, for the right to travel abroad, and to be present in sports grounds.

But the ruling class and especially Ahmadinejad are trying to impose pressure on this movement. Increasing numbers of women are being charged and arrested. The government is closing down and filtering women's rights weblogs. This reveals the fears of the government about this type of campaigning. They are especially fearful of the campaign to collect 1,000,000 signatures to change unfair and discriminatory laws against women in Iran.

When women collected signatures for this campaign in public places, they and their supporters were beaten up. Many have been arrested, some have been whipped, and some have been released after apologising and promising not to work on the campaign any more. A few of these campaigners are still in jail.

These campaigning women are now working in cyber space and they know their sites are filtered. Individual sites have been shut down simply because they are run by a "female blogger". Fifty popular sites advocating women's rights were filtered in one month. Many more sites with feminine names or with women editors have been filtered. The government offers no legal explanation for its actions. Bloggers continue to campaign with mottos like, "Women are not impudent, censorship is," and they are paying the price for their defiance.

The 2009 election and social networks

What distinguished the 2009 presidential election from the previous elections was a shift in the domain of internet activity. Bloggers and internet users switched from internet news websites and blogs to subscription-based websites and networks such as Twitter, Facebook and Balatarin. This time the public did not need to be convinced to participate in the elections — the catastrophic maladies inflicted on Iranians during the first term of Ahmadinejad's government were encouragement enough.

About a week before the official election campaign, a new wave of blogger discourse began. Writers focussed much more closely on current social issues and not so much on intellectual analysis or naïve and simplistic commentary, as in earlier internet user. These discourses were initiated by the socially-oriented websites and subscription networks that had been recently freed from censorship and had found numerous subscribers among internet users.

But why had the government lifted its filtering from these websites? There are two possible explanations. First, it was done on purpose to identify activists who might join the anti-government movements or to pave the way towards linking social websites in a so-called 'velvet revolution'. The second scenario, though, is more realistic and more likely. The filtering of websites, right after they had become successful and gained in popularity among the public, was done hastily and without any consideration as to how much it annoyed the public. And so Ahmadinejad ordered the filtering to be lifted to prevent the spread of adverse propaganda resulting from such hasty decisions. The policy stayed in effect until a few days after the election.

Cyberspace and the Green Wave

A few weeks before the June 2009 presidential election in Iran, Facebook, Twitter, Friendfeed and other websites competed fiercely in Iranian cyberspace. But one site stood out: Mir Hussein Mousavi's Green Wave. This site initiated a new element of internet activity in Iran by creating a television network online, quite apart from the dozens or even hundreds of pages it generated in Facebook and Twitter. The other reformist candidate, Mehdi Karoubi, may also have recruited quite a lot of support via the internet. He and his supporters tried to attract the interest of intellectuals, students and the middle class by sending emails to internet users, with campaign film clips.

Ahamadinejad, by contrast, had very little presence in cyberspace. Although his supporters did produce film clips, uploaded to YouTube, to try to boost his popularity.

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Meanwhile, a few other events occurred that undermined everything else, the debates among the candidates broadcasted on television being the most important. Just as these debates began the supporters of the candidates took part in protests and took over the streets of Tehran. This was the beginning of the real election campaign, in the real world of the streets of the capital, and it overrode events taking place in cyberspace. However, internet users also played an important role in these protests. As citizen journalists, they announced upcoming events and reported on what was happening, although SMS and one-to-one messaging was the most common form of transmitting the news.

Among the websites and news sources, there were some that enjoyed more popularity among the public. Balatarin, with all of its strengths and weaknesses, remained at the top of the list as a unique subscription website for news and information. The sites Kalameh and Qalam News, due to their affiliation to Mir Hussein Mousavi, were two of the most viewed news websites.

Third Wave, designed to support Iranian ex-president Mohammad Khatami, published online and in print, and collected signatures to invite him to run for the presidency. Its editorials, mostly written by students and young people who were looking for change, switched to supporting Mousavi after Khatami decided to drop out of the race. Third Wave succeeded in collecting nearly half a million signatures supporting the reformist candidate. Jomhouriyat, Norouz, Aftab, and Emrouz were also among the other sites that supported Mousavi.

There were few sites that covered news about Karoubi. Taqhier, a site critical of Ahmadinejad as well as Mousavi, edited by the late Mohammad Ghoochani, was one of the most important sites in this group. Roozna was the official site of the National Trust Party directed and managed by Karoubi. It was suspended after the elections and had a moderate view towards Mousavi.

Dar Emtedad Mehr, a site run by the Ahmadinejad's supporters, failed to attract many viewers. Of all the candidates, Ahmadinejad was the only one who had a personal blog, though it was not widely commented on. IRNA (Iran's official news agency), Fars News Agency (affiliated with the Revolutionary Guards), Raja News, Jahan News, Alef, and a few other news sites all supported Ahmadinejad.

Tabnak was the only site that supported Mohsen Rezaii. This very well visited site first appeared online under the user name Baztab. However, after it was shut down on the orders of the judiciary and its office was closed and sealed, it resumed under a new name and new management personnel. This moderate conservative site is still operated by Mohsen Rezaii, then a presidential candidate.

Cyberspace after the elections

The unexpected result of the presidential election angered the opposition and new groups formed in cyberspace. Arguments raged between those who believed the elections were fraudulent (including Mousavi's and Karoubi's supporters, and many who did not participate in the election but were angry at the apparent fraud) and those who were defending the result of the election as true and genuine.

The Ahmadinejad government appeared to be prepared for the upcoming events. Along with the arrest of journalists and bloggers, the closing down of some newspapers and the imposition of severe censorship over other publications, the government started to recruit its own cyber army for a cyber war. The sites closest to opposition candidates, which became the prime source of news after the elections, were all inaccessible as a result of filtering and other government interference.

The opposition, for its part, retaliated in kind. Its supporters managed to incapacitate several sites affiliated with the government. Fars News Agency Online, Keyhan Online, Raja News and Gerdab, a site affiliated with the Revolutionary Guard's Center for Preventing Cyber Crimes, were all inaccessible for a few days.

Under these conditions, Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook became the centre of attention as the main sources of news circulation. Despite the repeated filtering of these sites, internet users posted news, film clips and photos to inform hundreds of thousands of users about events in Iran. These sites were effective at two levels. First, they functioned as primary sources of news, especially for those news agencies whose staff were denied visas to the country or were expelled prior to the elections. Second, they were used as a communications device for the people's protests, for exchanging information about how and when and where to meet—although most of these protests were spontaneous and news of them was communicated either by word of mouth or through social networks. Most of the reliable Twitter users who were relaying protest news minute by minute were based outside of Iran. Most of the visitors of these Twitter sites lived outside Iran as well.

The most popular Twitterers were "Mir Hussein 1388" with some 30,000 followers; "Iranian", which belonged to the Turkish-based Fereshteh Ghazi, with 10,000 followers; and "Ray-e Sabz", which belonged to a group of Iranian activists inside and outside of Iran, with some 5,000 followers. Also of interest was the site "Mir Hussein", which did not have a single post but had more than 25,000 followers. After the elections, Facebook and especially pages belonging to the supporters of Mousavi and Zahra Rahnavard, Mousavi's wife, gained in popularity. Activists who ran these pages lived outside of Iran.

Who were the Green Movement's cyber activists?

The Islamic Republic of Iran's Revolutionary Court was told that the post-election protests were organised by foreign agents and had been planned years before. However, research on the activists involved in the Green Movement in cyberspace indicates that most of them supported the movement within Iran purely out of a genuine inclination to participate in the process of change, and this participation was not part of any prior agenda—it had been quite spontaneous.

Many of these cyberspace activists were journalists who simply wanted to pursue principles of accurate reporting and the circulation of news to the public, although the publication of some of this news placed the journalists involved within the camp of those opposed to the government. Many other cyber users were indeed political activists with certain political views they wished to propagate, some of which supported the opposition.

But the largest group of supporters and active members of this movement were youth who had no connection to any political views or organisations and who didn't have any journalistic experience. These youths, who may be living in Iran or abroad, quite spontaneously, harmoniously and without direction from any organisation communicated news from Iran to other Iranians and to the world. Although youth within the country were at the forefront of events, Iranians living abroad had better logistics at their disposal and had access to uncensored cyber facilities. (Most of the attacks on pro-regime sites were carried out by Iranians outside Iran.)

Although the websites supporting the movement had experienced crippling cyber attacks before, they were never equipped to withstand the new barrage of cyber attacks. Therefore, many of these sites were incapacitated for a long time after

the street protests started. The numerous arrests of editorial board members and technicians of particular news sites also caused closures. When the security forces arrested the managers and directors of the cyber services of Hasting Domain, which provided software for news service sites, or when a few sites affiliated with Mousavi were hacked, these opposition sites completely ceased to function.

In the meantime, the American firm cPanel, appealing to the implementation of international sanctions, tried to incapacitate the control panels providing services to Iranian sites. This action threatened to bring more than one hundred sites, all affiliated with reformists and the Green Movement, to a standstill. Host and Domain Services Co. and an American company, Go Daddy, also appealing to sanctions, closed down the IPs of Iranian users so they could not access the Hasting company to receive a service.

And so at the peak of the protest period in Iran, activists had inhibited access to Yahoo Messenger, Skype, Facebook, Friendfeed and Twitter due to filtering by Iranian authorities but also because of international sanctions. Google, for example, closed access to facilities such as Google Chrome Visual Dialogue for Iranian users.

Internet solidarity

Beyond the elections though, the collective activities of Iranian bloggers have involved collecting signatures and designing logos in support of political prisoners, women's rights activists and arrested bloggers, or of organising opposition to stop hangings, stonings or environmental destruction. Some of these actions have had a positive effect on changing government positions in some cases.

The government's inability to fully control critical blogs led to legislation for a charter for organising Iranian weblogs and internet sites. The new law was passed in 2006. Iran is one of the few countries in the world that has newspaper licensing. If licensing for websites is approved as well, it will be one of the first countries to seek to license blogs too.

In this regard the Culture Ministry required writers and managers of weblogs to register their names and the titles of all sites. The requirement makes it easier for the ministry to take legal action against the sites and their owners. Any sites not registered will be closed. To express their disapproval with these regulations many bloggers coordinated themselves and used a logo: "I will not register my site." Experts argue the makers of these regulations have no basic knowledge of either the Islamic republic's laws or rules governing the internet.

The Pasdaran — the revolutionary guards of the Islamic revolution — have claimed that some subversive internet sites have now been destroyed. The activities on these sites are, in the opinion of the anti-cybernetic criminal department of Iran, against religion, against the nation and against the social and moral standards of the country. It is claimed that members of these bandit groups have confessed they are supported by foreign intelligence services.

The anti-cybernetic department has also proclaimed that members of these groups are planning and organising a soft revolution. Members of these groups were shown on one of Iran's state TV channels openly admitting having worked with an American TV station and thereby engaging in immoral activities. It appears that the authorities have established a connection between activities in the internet and the spread of immorality.

The Iranian government's control over internet networks is far reaching. It disconnects mobile phones and MSM in times of crisis, slows down internet speed, sometimes disconnects access altogether and even jams broadcasts when a special show is re-broadcast. These problems should

encourage thinking about an Iranian national internet network. Satellite internet is considered a good alternative these days but it has not been tested properly and we do not know about its pluses and minuses.

About the Author

Mehdi Mohseni is a journalist who began blogging on political, social and cultural topics in 2002. He has worked on reformist newspapers in Iran and for a number of news websites including Kaleme, Rouydadnews and Radio Zamaneh in Amsterdam.

A brief history of the Iranian internet

by **Cyrus Farivar**

The invention of Unicode solved the problem of creating a useable Persian text for the internet. Since then, Iran's blogosphere has blossomed. An overview of the development of internet writing, adapted from a new book "The Internet of Elsewhere" (Rutgers University Press, May 2011).

While the technological cat-and-mouse game between the Islamic regime and its opponents has intensified over the last decade, Iran has been online for nearly twenty years, the second-longest of any country in the region. Because the Internet has had time to mature in Iran, the country has one of the highest rates of Internet penetration in the Middle East, at an estimated 35 percent. Today, Iran has the fastest growth rate of Internet users of any Middle Eastern country, growing from one million Internet users in 2005 to 23 million in 2008.

But this high level of connectivity did not happen all of a sudden. The complex online conflict in Iran is a direct result of the maturity of Iran's Internet infrastructure and history. Following the Islamic Revolution of 1978 and 1979 and the U.S. Embassy hostage crisis, Iran was essentially barred from participating in any kind of American government research, including that of the ARPANET and its related projects. Further, by 1980, Iran's border dispute with Iraq had escalated into a very bloody war with its neighbour. The combination of these two events made the importation of any sort of technology transfer or training nearly impossible—Iranian educational and technological prowess was entirely devoted to the conflict.

With the end of the war came the first opportunities for Iranians to study abroad, and learn about advances that had taken place over the last several years, including the Internet. One of the first Iranians to use email was Dr. Siavash Shahshahani, a 46-year-old mathematician who was a visiting scientist at the International Center for Theoretical Physics (ICTP) in Trieste, Italy, during the academic year 1988-1989. At that point, email was one of the main applications of networking on the ARPANET, and had rapidly spread through the academic community. Shahshahani observed that email was mainly being sent from scientist to scientist to organise professional work, to conduct correspondence concerning lab results and to perform general day-to-day operations. Although sceptical of this new "gadget" at first, he soon became a "very active user" of email. However, before leaving for Italy, Shahshahani had been appointed as the deputy director of IPM, a post he held for 13 years.

In the spring of 1989 the newly appointed director of IPM, Mohammad-Javad Larijani, visited Shahshahani and other Iranian scholars and scientists at ICTP Trieste. Shahshahani and others lobbied Larijani to consult with the director of the Center, Abdus Salam, about how to get email access in Iran. Abdus Salam introduced IPM to EARN, and by the fall of 1992, Iran took its first baby step on EARN, the European version of academic BITNET. Over the next year or so, as the technical staff at IPM learned more and more about the nascent Internet and Shahshahani, then the deputy director of IPM, helped them to establish the first Internet connection to Iran.[1]

It is somewhat ironic that a technology that has caused so many headaches for the Islamic Republic can be traced back to a member of one of the most politically powerful and religiously conservative families in Iran today. Mohammad-Javad Larijani's brother, Ali Larijani, was the Iranian chief nuclear negotiator and is currently Speaker of the Iranian Parliament, and his other brother, Sadeq Larijani, is the new head of the Judiciary. Today, Mohammad-Javad Larijani himself is an advisor to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei and heads the human rights council in the Judiciary.

The web grows

With Iran's newfound connection to the Internet, it wasn't long before commercial Internet providers began connecting ordinary people to the nascent World Wide Web. Unencumbered by traditional laws and a government that wasn't as hip to the changes afoot, Iranians began to swear on the public Web, post "indecent" photos of themselves, chat and flirt with members of the opposite sex. These, of course, were all activities that without a computer screen to hide behind, Iranians would never publicly engage in.

Three years later, in 1995, there were nearly 30,000 Iranians online, all of them getting their connection through IPM and its node access in Europe. At the time, Iran had more Internet users than any other country in the Middle East except Israel. Having a single, painfully-slow 9600 baud connection as its only link to the outside world made Iran very vulnerable to outages, as was shown for a couple of months in 1996, shortly after Congress passed the "Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 1996," which established economic sanctions on firms doing business with Iran and Libya. At the time, a "patriotic" National Science Foundation midlevel employee was single-handedly able to prevent Internet traffic from Iran—Web and email alike—from being routed into the United States for several weeks.

As more and more Iranians were going online, creating their own virtual agora where previously

1 Siavash Shahshahani, in email to author, April 28 2010.

forbidden issues could be discussed openly, Iranian politics was progressing along a parallel track. In 1997, Mohammad Khatami was elected as the fifth president of the Islamic Republic. He surprised many outside observers by winning as a moderate, despite his extensive conservative and religious credentials. After winning, he was hailed as a new leader who could balance and navigate Islamic theology and Western philosophy.

One of the most salient changes Khatami made to the Iranian political system was the expansion of civil society and social freedoms. In fact, he became the first Iranian president to ever use the phrase "civil society" in a national address, as he did during his inaugural speech before the parliament on August 4, 1997:

"Protecting the freedom of individuals and the rights of the nation, which constitute a fundamental obligation of the President upon taking the oath, is a necessity deriving from the dignity of man in the Divine religion ... [It requires] provision of the necessary conditions for the realization of the constitutional liberties, strengthening and expanding the institutions of civil society (jame'eh-ye madani) ... and preventing any violation of personal integrity, rights and legal liberties. The growth of legality (qanun-mandi), and the strengthening and consolidation of a society based on a legal framework for conduct, interactions and rights, will provide a favorable framework for the realization of social needs and demands.... In a society well acquainted with its rights and ruled by law, the rights and limits of the citizens (shahrvandan) are recognized."

In an interview with CNN, directed at the American people in early 1998, Khatami spoke extensively about a "dialogue of civilizations," and encouraged discussions with the United States in a conciliatory tone not heard by any previous or subsequent Iranian president.

Khatami didn't just talk about expanding civil society—he spearheaded various legislative efforts that made it easier for non-governmental organizations to operate in Iran. While some limited relief and charity NGOs existed both before and after the Revolution, in the wake of Khatami's election new NGOs that focused on a much broader range of issues burgeoned in Iran. For example, the number of NGOs with a focus on women grew from 30 to nearly 600, while environmentally focused NGOs went from about 50 to over 500.

Khatami also sought to tone down the violent rhetoric that many outsiders are familiar with, including the "Death to America!" chant that many Americans have heard since the Islamic Revolution. At a Tehran rally two years into his presidency, in response to supporters cursing his opponents, he said, according to an account in The New York Times:

"No, no, I don't like to hear slogans like that, I don't like to hear 'Death to opponents' or death to anybody, because as matters stand in our society at present, it will be interpreted in a very negative way, as meaning that anybody who does not share your views should be silenced, and that's not right at all. The Iran we want should be one where there will be room for all the different viewpoints, for all ideologies, even those that oppose the President. They, too, must have the right to express themselves."

The conservative turnaround

However, from the perspective of religious conservatives, Khatami's civil society agenda created a dangerous precedent where non-state actors could freely engage in a civil dialogue with themselves and the government. Further, the restrictions on the press were much more relaxed than they had been before. This relative liberalization made the

blogging that would come in the next few years finally possible.

By mid-April 2000—just two months after an election in which the reformists won a decisive majority in Parliament—the conservative-dominated judiciary came down hard on the community of reformist newspapers and magazines, closing fourteen papers in a single day.[2] This was the second such major crackdown in as many years. All of the papers were charged with "continuing to publish articles against the bases of the luminous ordinances of Islam and the religious sanctities of the noble people of Iran and the pillars of the sacred regime of the Islamic Republic."[3]

Given the toxic atmosphere of publishing in Iran, one might think that the reformist journalists would have migrated to online publishing much sooner. After all, during these same years, many new online magazines, including Salon (1995), and Slate (1996) were founded in the United States. However, while the Internet was flourishing in the United States in the late 1990s, at the height of the dot-com boom, Internet access in Iran was still rare and expensive. Even though the Net came to Iran in 1993, six years later, only 80,000 people (out of 65 million) were connected. The country itself relied exclusively on external and expensive satellite connections via Canada, Europe and other Persian Gulf states.

The few people who were connected to the Internet had very little material to read in their own language. This problem was complicated by the fact that there wasn't a standard way to display websites in the Persian language, which uses a non-Latin alphabet and is read right-to-left. Not all word processing programs and web browsers supported the various fonts that only at best half worked in Persian.

In 1991, a group of computer scientists got together to solve this problem of how to get different alphabets to display properly across different applications, different web pages, and different operating systems—they called it Unicode. Nearly a decade later Unicode became sophisticated enough such that it included the Persian alphabet and was supported in both Microsoft Windows and its browser, Internet Explorer. (Today, Unicode is nearly standard in all browsers and operating systems, so it's easy to type in and read in Persian, Russian, Chinese, or most other non-Latin alphabet languages.)

The birth of Persian bloggers

Once Unicode began to support Persian, Hossein Derakhshan, a young Iranian columnist who wrote about the Internet for a reformist newspaper, Hayat-e Noh, took notice. On November 6, 2000, he wrote a column extolling the virtues of Unicode, and observed that this could bring about a potential radical change for written Persian online.

By the end of the year, Derakhshan had immigrated to Toronto with his Iranian-Canadian wife, where he immersed himself in online content on a much faster Internet connection than he'd had in Iran. He discovered the earliest generation of bloggers, including Jason Kottke and Dave Winer, who combined their interest in current affairs and technology in a way that Derakhshan wanted to emulate.

He continued writing for Iranian newspapers from his newly adopted home. As the months went by, he tried to use Unicode, but the computer he was using ran Windows 98, and the only program that supported Unicode was the stripped-down word processing program, Notepad. Even when

2 The full list of these newspapers is: Asr-e-Azadegan, Fat'h, Aftab-e-Emrooz, Arya, Gozaresh-e-Ruz, Bamdad-e-No, Payam-e-Azadi, Azad, Payam-e-Hajar, Aban, Arzesh, Iran-e-Farda, Sobh-e-Emrooz, and Akhbar Eqtesad.

3 "Press crackdown intensifies, fourteen newspapers closed, two journalists imprisoned," CPJ/IFEX, April 25, 2000. http://canada.ifex.org/es/content/view/full/10218

he could get an article typed and sent to Iran, the piece didn't always come out exactly the way he had written it.

"After a while when I realized that writing from Canada and sending to Iran was such a difficult thing, they were censoring it, and they were mistyping the stuff I had written," Derakhshan said.[4] "It was horrible."

In the subsequent months, Derakhshan tried to publish some articles on different websites, but again, none of the sites made it quite as easy as he felt it should be. None of the sites allowed him to type directly in Persian, and display, in Persian, as easily as could be done in English, or any other language written in the Latin alphabet.

As Derakhshan was exploring the nascent blogosphere in 2001 from Canada, so too was a twenty-one year-old computer science student at Tehran's prestigious and technically oriented Sharif University. Salman Jariri spent much of his free time reading Kottke and Winer, just as Derakhshan was doing. He had also just ordered an e-book from the Internet, "The Lexus and the Olive Tree", Thomas Friedman's seminal work on globalization.[5]

On September 7, 2001 Jariri started the first Persian-language blog using Unicode. He didn't make a point of drawing attention to himself, and didn't link to any other blogs. He alerted only a few of his closest friends and family members by email to his new endeavor. As there was no existing blogging platform, he had to code each page by hand, a process that was tedious and time-consuming. His first piece read:

"What is the meaning of a weblog? Weblog, website or homepage are all personal writings that are about an individual's interests and thoughts. Weblogs are updated everyday. You can go to Google to see others' weblogs. The many interesting points that I see read or hear, throughout the day...or the interesting things I find on the web…to the thoughts and issues that come to my existence…everything!"

Three weeks later, completely unaware of Jariri's blog, Derakhshan himself started one of his own. He'd been living in Toronto for nearly a year, and immediately after September 11, the word "blog" entered the English-speaking lexicon, as some bloggers who had been writing in near-obscurity outside of a core community gained some recognition in the mainstream press. These included nearly the exact same set of blogs that Jariri had been reading—Jason Kottke, Dave Winer and Jeff Jarvis.

"I started reading these and then I realized that this is exactly what I have to do now," Derakhshan recalled.[6] "Because this gives me an amazing platform for my style of writing, for the stuff that I wanted to address and the content that I was actually already writing about in my columns when I was in Iran—they were so similar to blogs."

He continued writing over the next few weeks, mostly commenting on the state of the nascent Persian blogging world. By early October, he discovered Jariri's blog and pointed out that Jariri claimed to be the first Persian-language blogger.[7] The following month, he put together a definitive guide that outlined how to create a blog in Persian, using the free site blogger.com.

4 Hossein Derakhshan, in discussion with the author, September 12 2007.

5 Salman Jariri, in discussion with the author, September 23 2007.

6 Hossein Derakhshan, in discussion with the author, September 12 2007.

7 http://i.hoder.com/archives/2001/10/011007_005490.shtml

Beating the red lines

As blogging began to take root, editor Masoud Safiri encouraged his writers to follow Derakhshan's example as a blogger. He estimated later that within the first year, nearly 30 percent of the 100 writers and editors at Hayat-e Noh had blogs.[8] Many journalists at other reformist papers, frustrated with the constantly fluctuating "red lines"—the ill-defined boundaries of censorship imposed by the Islamic Republic—turned to blogs as a way of skirting the rules. One blogger, Parastoo Dokouhaki, a 26-year-old former journalist for the reformist and feminist weekly magazine, Zanan (Women), once used her blog to describe a documentary film that she had seen at a conference that featured interviews with Iranian prostitutes—a subject that could not be mentioned, even in a feminist magazine like Zanan.

Over the last decade, Persian blogs began growing from a handful to tens of thousands, it remains unclear who the winners and losers are in this interplay between the hard-line government and many in the moderate, reformist and secular blogging public. To be fair, there are also many conservative and Islamist bloggers, as Hamid Tehrani, the Iran editor of globalvoicesonline.org, points out in an article from late 2007:[9]

"In the last two years, Islamist bloggers became much more active and organized than before. Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's victory played a key role in mobilizing these blogs in different ways. Reformist bloggers found themselves out of power and started to use the blogs as instruments to get votes. Government itself supports—directly or indirectly—organizations such as the Office for Religious Blogs Development (ORBD). This office has a project to help every religious student get a blog."

Still, many Iranian bloggers seem to agree that a significant portion of their fellow bloggers tend to be better educated, urban, and thus, are more likely to be moderate and secular. However, as the Internet continues to grow rapidly in Iran, it is only natural that the government and its ideological allies will use the medium to spread their own message as well. Indeed, the Islamic Republic has been successful in using intimidation to drive many of them out of the country.

The bloggers who have left Iran could be viewed as being the winners in this game, as they have broken free of the shackles of the Islamic Republic; from the comforts of California or the United Kingdom, they are free to say whatever they want. They are able to express their ideas to their fellow citizens unhindered by the threat of arrest, harassment or violence. Many have been able to pursue degrees in higher education, or develop careers as journalists or with NGOs in the West. This is precisely what many want for themselves. There is hardly a twenty-year-old Iranian who wouldn't want to emigrate to Europe, Canada, or the United States for the simple reason that the Iranian economy has been in a deep slump, and there simply aren't enough jobs—let alone jobs for young journalists and writers.

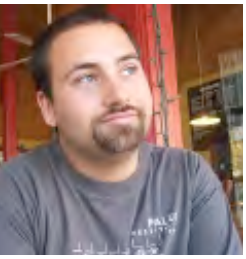
That being said, it is precisely because of the fact that these Iranians, like many of their predecessors in decades previous, are now outside of the country, that the government easily dismisses them. Many of those who have been arrested or targeted by the regime continue to be very cautious, and tend to keep a low profile concerning their professional activities. Many Iranians born after 1979 who have left Iran for political reasons over the last several years have family members back home, and there is a lingering thought that hangs in many of their minds that something may happen to them.

8 Masoud Safiri, in discussion with the author, November 12 2007.

9 A pseudonym.

About the Author

Cyrus Farivar is a freelance technology journalist and a radio reporter/producer who was born and raised in Santa Monica (USA) but now lives in Bonn, Germany. He is the science and technology editor at Deutsche Welle's English Service and host of its internationally-syndicated radio program "Spectrum." His book "The Internet of Elsewhere" is due out from Rutgers University Press in May 2011.



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ADSL
کافی نت
پست
همراه اول
تلفن ثابت
POST BANK IRAN
کافی نت

Media in Iran: state, social, other

by **Gholam Khiabany**

Are Twitter and Facebook really the technological forces behind protest in Iran? Hardly. Understanding the media in Iran is a little more complex. A report on the make-up, the mythologies and the contradictions of the media landscape in Iran.

More than 30 years after the revolution and more than a year after the uprising in Iran, the nature of the Iranian state and society remains a contentious subject. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 remains problematic both theoretically and politically, and the 'trans-class' and 'religious' nature of the Iranian revolution has been the main source of confusion over the precise nature of the state which replaced the monarchy. The revolution of 1979 without a doubt had an emancipatory character, but elements of counter-revolution were clearly visible from early on. The tension between the revolution and counter-revolution, and the existence of multiple sites of sovereignty, aspiration and power contention, urges an analytical distinction between the Iranian revolution and the Islamic Republic.

The claim of the new state was to go back to the roots, to original ideals of Islam and to Islamicise Iran. The social realities of the Iranian state and society, and certainly the new movement for democracy in Iran, demonstrate that it is impossible to Islamicise a state, society, media, and sociology without the statisation and sociologisation of Islam.

The ideological/cultural explanation of revolution in Iran and the transfer of power to Ayatollah Khomeini and his followers, not only confuses the tactical coalitions that brought an end to the monarchy with the 'revenge of tradition', it also fails to differentiate between the diverse religious aspirations and perspectives amongst religious groups in Iran which have crippled the Islamic Republic for over 30 years.

Generally speaking there are of course some fascinating paradoxes. These include:

- The claim of creating an Islamic state and the influence of 'democratic' polity (the idea of parliament, the presidency, the separation of powers, and making the executive and legislative estates subject to periodical elections). These republican elements were always useful so long as they did not contradict the views and will of the supreme leader and unelected institutions.
- The claim of internationalism of the new state and the Iranianness and nationalism of the Islamic Republic.
- The claim to commitment to the poor and dispossessed and the increased gap between rich and poor, and increased privatization and liberalization of the economy, such as the privatisation of public/state resources and spreading 'share holding culture'.
- The volcano of gender: segregation and discrimination and the strong presence of women in the public sphere.

Explaining the contradictions

We can see a similar pattern of paradoxes when looking at media structure and ownership in Iran. Iran is a country where censorship and control of the media is a well-known reality, and the Islamic Republic is regarded as an enemy of press/media

freedom by many Iranians and NGOs. However, we have seen a massive expansion of media outlets as the following figures demonstrate.

Between 1979 and 1993, 2,253 titles were published in Iran (in 13 years), compared to 4,841 titles published in the 53 years from 1925 to 1979. The number of national television channels has increased from two to six. The Iranian state broadcaster, the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting (IRIB), also operates a number of international TV channels (Al-Alam, Sahar and Jam-e Jam and Press TV), and broadcasts radio programs in more than 20 languages. In 1979 less than a million people had access to a telephone. In 1997 this had increased to over eight million and by 2007 it had reached over 23 million people.

Access to mobile phones has seen one of the sharpest increases; from 135,219 in 1997 to 2.5 million in 2003 and over 21 million in 2007. The number of internet users also shows similar expansion and increase: from 2,000 in 1996 to over 12 million in 2007. According to some sources, while Iran is still lagging behind richer countries in the region, it has registered the biggest increase in internet usage in the region, of 2,900 percent between 2000 and 2005. Blogging in Iran is also well known and Farsi is still one of the top ten languages in the blogosphere.

Indeed, Iran's communications industry has emerged as one of the fastest growing economic sectors and the state has emerged as the dominant media player. Major state-owned newspaper players include Kayhan (13 titles), Etella't (12 titles) and the Islamic Republic News Agency (7 titles). The most significant media player in Iran nowadays, however, is the IRIB which remains a state monopoly and the voice and vision of the core of the political establishment in Iran.

The other model of ownership, wrongly perceived as private, is the individual ownership of newspapers. Many of these individuals, however, are ex-ministers, MPs and officials, who have turned to the press market to promote themselves and their policies. Indeed, some of the best known dailies and weeklies were owned by such officials: Salam was owned by Khoeini'ha (ex-district attorney), Khordad was owned by Nouri (ex-Interior Minister), Jameh was owned by Jalaipour (ex-commander of the Islamic regime army in Kurdistan) and so on.

The distinction between these two types of ownership is usually presented as state versus civil society. However, only a very reductionist notion of the state can claim that these publications were located outside the realm of the state. The existence of such 'individual' newspapers certainly allowed for a kind of diversity of titles and content. But if the dominance of petty production has provided a platform for the emergence and revival of many titles and contributed to some extent to the existing diversity in the press market, it equally has made the survival of many such publications a difficult task. In addition to the economic difficulties and failure to reach the necessary safe margins, the judiciary managed to suspend many of these papers by simply targeting the individual owners. Salam, Khordad, and many others ran into difficulties as soon as their owners found themselves on the wrong side of the judiciary. This process has intensified in recent years.

Limited perspectives

This diversity has more to do with the peculiar nature of the 1979 revolution, its important consequences and the nature and structure of polity that was born in the aftermath of the revolution. There are three main and interrelated reasons for the existence of (limited) diversity in titles and perspectives.

The first important reason has to do with the nature of Shi'a, the multi-pole sources of power and legitimacy within Shi'a structure and the crucial issue of the economic structure which sustains the various factions inside the Islamic Republic. The key reason for the diversity within the Shi'a structure and the existing Sources of Emulation was the very specific forms of religious tax (most notably khoms and Zekat) paid to selected *ulema*. The idea of Velayt Faghih was in a way an attempt at the Vaticanization of Shia structure. Increasingly the state has actively tried, as we have seen in the case of Ayatollah Montazeri and Saanea'i, to suppress this historical diversity. Linked to this is the significance of Bonyads (Foundations) controlling over 30 percent of the country's assets.

Immediately after the revolution the new state began a process of nationalisation and large-scale confiscation of private property. This was put under the control of para-governmental institutions which are under the control of the Supreme Leader. The existence of these institutions, the Bonyad, has made the borders between public and private even more ambiguous. More and more the Revolutionary Guards have tried to take over and control a bigger chunk of the Iranian economy and the media. Their takeover of the Telecommunication Company of Iran is a good example. Above all there is the deep mark of the revolution itself. Revolutions, however unsuccessful, are still significant and in Iran, as in many other societies, the biggest achievement of the revolution is said to be the revolution itself. The hopes and aspirations, the dynamism and emancipatory nature of them cannot be overlooked.

The above factors have and still are contributing to a vibrant media environment. The new state which emerged out of a broad/popular alliance, like all post-revolutionary states, is yet to achieve centralisation of power. The multiple tendencies and factionalism (usually reduced to 'conservatives' versus 'moderates'), is a product of this reality. The disputed presidential election of 2009 and its aftermath was the outcome and, in some way, a predictable result of such paradoxes and conflicts.

The reality of military might

The electoral coup of 2009 was one final push to completely brush aside any illusions about the 'republican' elements in the Islamic Republic, and for the state to finally rid itself of various tendencies and take a uniform and homogenous shape. Prior to this there were discussions of a Chinese model of 'development', but what is happening (or what some would like to happen) is the Pakistanisation of Iran: the military are taking over all significant spheres of society. That of course depends on the degree of resistance, and judging by recent events, the state, despite having all the necessary means, has been unable to move forward.

This attempt to centralise the state also shows itself in the media. Brushing aside various factions, marginalising and undermining them, have always been visible in state attempts to silence those media organisations that are not in tune with the Supreme Leader. Since TV is controlled by the Supreme Leader and has always represented the view of the centre of power in Iran, others who have wanted to express their views have relied on the press.

Censoring and closing newspapers is certainly not new in the Islamic Republic and did not start with the presidential elections of 2005 or 2009. The closure of over 100 titles in the early period after the revolution is a case in point. In that period even the publications (or the members) of political parties and personalities that were committed to the Islamic Republic came under attack. Mizan (the publication of the Liberation Movement of Iran) and Enghelab Eslami (published by the first

president, Bani Sadr) were among the early casualties of the new state's drives to achieve centralisation. This process was also repeated after the 1997 presidential election with the closure of many reformist papers.

The story of the internet becomes interesting after such closures and the migration of many dissenting voices to the net. The protests unleashed after the presidential election in June 2009 brought Iran's vibrant internet culture to the world's attention. There is of course a very good reason why the subject of new technologies and in particular Twitter, Facebook and Youtube attracted so much attention. The assumption is that these technologies played a significant part in promoting Ahmadinejad's main rival, and then after the election these technologies were instrumental in organising mass demonstrations and rallies across Iran.

Comparing green with orange

There is a German proverb that translates as: "All comparisons are lame." But the wisdom of this proverb did not stop many commentators making lame comparisons. There were comparisons with Moldova, when it came to the issue of Twitter. Colour-coded campaigns — in Iran's case, the green of Mousavi's camp — drew comparison with the 'Orange Revolution' in the Ukraine. Many media organisations from the BBC to CNN and various newspapers jumped on the bandwagon of the alleged role of technologies in the election and its aftermath.

After that, headlines such as 'Twitter Revolution', 'Twitter Revolutionaries', 'Revolution will be Twittered', 'The Iranian Twitter-lution', highlighted the alleged significance of technologies in Iran during and after the June presidential election. Prior to that, what fascinated commentators about the internet culture in Iran was the expansion and diversity of blogs, and everyone was excited about how a developing nation had managed to be up-there in the blogsphere with the most developed countries. The June election, however, somehow changed that. Suddenly blogs were so out of date, so yesterday, so irrelevant.

There is little doubt that the media and journalism are unimaginable without various forms of technology. There is also no doubt that technologies have always been used by social movements. But to attach so much importance to Twitter, Facebook or Youtube is to ignore history and significantly to ignore the mass movements, the true agents of transformation and historical change. Therefore, there is no surprise that in addition to labels such as 'Twitter Revolution', or 'Green Revolution', some commentators also referred to the uprising in Iran as a 'Middle Class Revolution'.

Comments about the 'Twitter Revolution' therefore raise a number of significant questions, questions which anyone who is seeking to understand the world (Iran included), social transformations, technologies and the broader production and dissemination of news, should engage with.

First, there is the problem of access and the digital divide. The most optimistic estimate is that around 30 percent of Iranians have access to the internet. This government-provided data conceals the nature of access as well as the quality of usage. In the case of Twitter, according to Alexa ranking, Twitter traffic in Iran is almost zero. Other reports have suggested that there are around 10,000 Twitter users in Iran but only a small number of them (around 100) were active. It is true that some of the Twitterers had a large following, sometimes as many as 5,000, but it is not clear how many of the followers were based in Iran. It was also reported that tens of thousands of Twitter users across the world switched their locations to Tehran. To this, we have to add censorship and control.

Accessing cyberspace

The Iranian state strategy for controlling the internet has three dimensions: 1) colonisation of cyberspace with official sites and blogs; 2) filtering and censoring and arresting bloggers and online journalists; 3) limiting the speed of the internet. The purchase of TCI by the Revolutionary Guard in November 2009 has tightened the grip of the dominant military-industrial complex over telecommunications in Iran. The privatisation of communication in Iran paved the way for the Revolutionary Guards to buy 51 percent of the Telecommunication Company of Iran for around eight billion dollars. TCI has a monopoly over Iran's fixed line infrastructure, Iran's largest cellular operator (MCI), and Iran's major internet service provider and data communication operator (DCI).

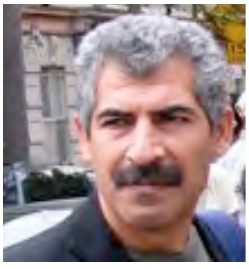
We also have to remember that cyberspace is not a unified site of resistance to the Iranian state. The use of technology was and is not limited to opponents of the state. Ahmadinejad's supporters also relied on blogs and social networking sites to defend the integrity and legitimacy of his victory. Furthermore, there is little evidence that Twitter and Facebook or Youtube played a major role (if any at all) in organising demonstrations. They became channels through which messages could be sent to media organisations that had little access to first-hand information about what was happening in Iran. These also helped in attracting international solidarity, in particular from Iranians living outside of the country.

It is safe to suggest that there are far more people using Twitter in developed countries. It is also safe to suggest that the Iranian election wasn't the only significant election or event in the world in 2009. Had it not been for the international focus on Iran, and had it not been for relaying tweets and other information by international media, the interests and coverage of the election in Iran probably would have matched the interest in and coverage of other elections in the world in 2009.

It was not Facebook, Youtube, or Twitter, but the BBC, CNN, and other big media organisations that kept Iran at the top of the news agenda. For a long time Iran remained the biggest story and only the death of Michael Jackson relegated Iran to second place. After the big media lost interests, stories about Facebook and Twitter just fizzled out. Whatever the outcome of protests in Iran it is already obvious, as Andy Greenberg had written in Forbes: Iranian protests are good for Twitter's business.

About the Author

Gholam Khiabany is reader in International Communications in the Faculty of Applied Social Sciences, London Metropolitan University. He is the author of "Iranian Media: The Paradox of Modernity" (Routledge, 2010), and co-author of "Blogistan: The Internet and Politics in Iran" (I. B. Tauris, 2010).



The internet and protest in Iran

by **Mehdi Yahyanejad**

What role did the social media play and how were different platforms used to influence events following the presidential election in Iran in 2009? Here, a look at the methods used by the Iranian government to combat the influence of the internet.

Activists in Iran used social networking, blogs and micro blogging platforms before and after the Iranian presidential election in 2009 to build a political movement within a country with little political freedom and limited freedom of the press. The internet helped to make the movement known to an international audience. It produced a common understanding among protesters and allowed for agreements on tactics and the publicising of demonstrations.

The Iranian government used a range of tactics including denial of service, attacks against opposition websites and the surveillance of internet traffic to interrupt the use of the internet by the opposition. Social media offered a new form of communication that was harder for the Iranian government to control. In addition, it was safer to engage in than other modes of political activity in Iran.

Pre-election jostling

The social media played a significant role in the creation of Iran's Green Movement before and after the Iranian presidential election of June 12, 2009. The Persian blogosphere helped to create the discourse for democracy, pluralism and tolerance in the years before the election. During the three months leading up to the election, the internet and social media were used to campaign for the presidential candidates.

Before the election, social media were used by reformist activists to support their favourite candidates, Mir Hussein Moussavi and Mehdi Karoubi. Campaigning took place via blogs, political websites, social news aggregators (Balatarin), microblogging tools (FriendFeed and Twitter) and social networks (Facebook).

In most studies done on the impact of the social media in the aftermath of the Iranian election, researchers mainly focused on the impact of Twitter, and in most cases found little evidence to support claims for the importance of the social medium. The focus on Twitter was due to several factors. The content on Twitter was primarily in English and was easier to analyse without the need for a Persian-to-English translation. Twitter also has a powerful API, which makes it easy to measure active use, including the number of postings and re-Tweets. Social media were important but in most cases the activity was taking place elsewhere.

Figure 1: This diagram shows the inter-related context of mass media as social media, micro-blogging sites and satellite TV in Iran.

Figure 3: Google search volume for Balatarin, BBC (Persian services) and Fars News (official Iranian news agency) during mass demonstrations in Iran.

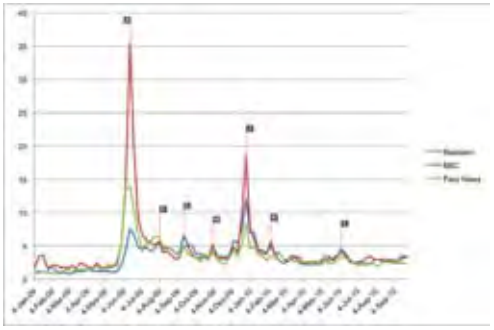
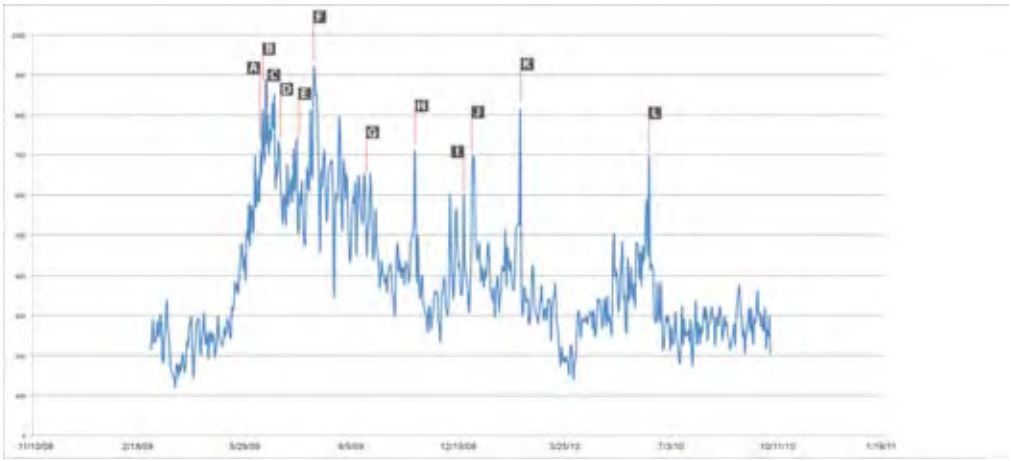


Figure 2: The number of posts submitted to Balatarin in the category of 'politics' per day; the labels correspond to those in the event timeline, Figure 4. In each case, there is more demand for information prior to the event. After each event, the demand for news remains high for several days. The peaks labelled A to C correspond to the events right after the presidential election. The peak J corresponds to the Ashoora demonstration on December 27, 2009. The peak K corresponds to 22 Bahman (February 11, 2009). The last peak labelled L corresponds to the anniversary of the presidential election. Activists called for major demonstrations on this day but the Green movement leaders called off the demonstrations due to the increasing crackdown on street protests.



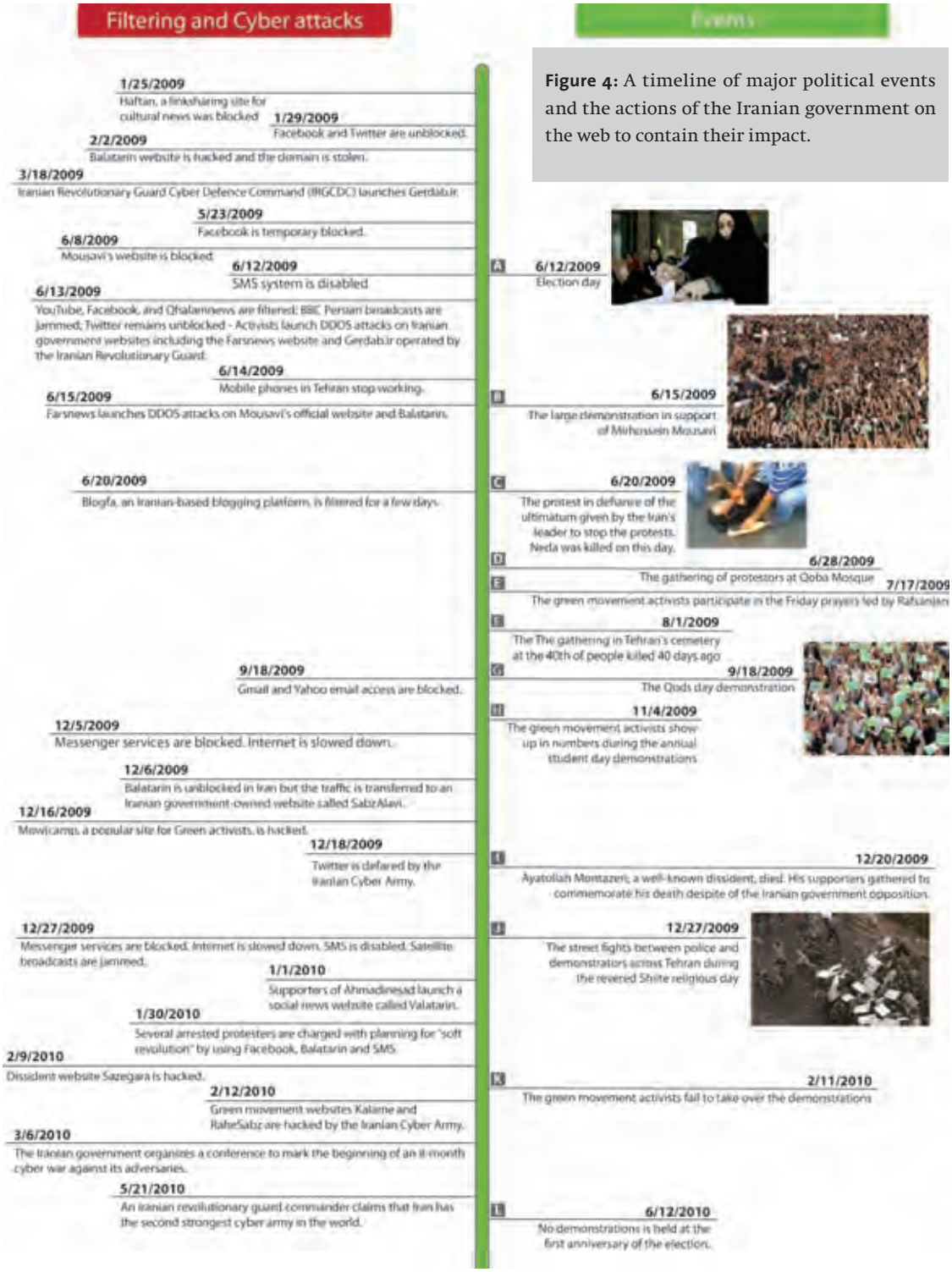


Figure 4: A timeline of major political events and the actions of the Iranian government on the web to contain their impact.

The graphs displayed in Figures 1 to 4 show how cyber attacks and filtering by the Iranian state increased just as the level of social activism online intensified following the contested presidential election of June 2009. Balatarin was a key social player as it became the main site for mobilisation online.

Twitter was mainly used by a few journalists and activists to send information to an international audience but had few readers in Iran. Due to slow internet connections, YouTube content was not easy to watch in Iran but the videos were still broadcast through BBC Persian and VOA satellite programs.

Election Day

The day of the presidential election was a critical day. The speed of events caught everyone by surprise. On the day of the election, the Iranian government disabled SMS services across Iran. Mousavi's camp had more than 20,000 observers in different polling locations. The observers were supposed to report the results as well as voting irregularities to Mousavi's campaign headquarters using SMS messages. The Mousavi campaign named the interruption of SMS services as one of the primary pieces of evidence that pointed to election fraud taking place on June 12.

The government claims that SMS services were interrupted to prevent campaigning by different candidates on Election Day itself, an activity which is illegal in Iran.

The second event of the day, in which the social media played a role, was the militia attack on one of the main campaign headquarters of Mousavi in Tehran. On the fifth floor of the Qeytarieh campaign headquarters, the Mousavi campaign had set up a room with web broadcasting of video interviews with politicians and celebrities who were encouraging people to get out and vote. The video of the events was later broadcast on BBC Persian's evening newscast.

Videos of the militia attack on the Mousavi headquarters became one of the most important elements revealing a militarisation of the election. The perception emerged that a silent coup had taken place. Supporters of the Iranian government claim that security forces went to the headquarters to disable a broadcast that was violating campaigning laws.

At 6:30pm, several hours before polling stations closed, Fars News Agency, a website close to the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, predicted that Ahmadinejad would win the election with 60 percent of the vote. There was a general disbelief among online users. The announcement by Fars News was posted to Balatarin with the altered title: "Is this believable: Mousavi 28 percent!! Ahmadinejad 69 percent?" (The biggest fraud of the century.) This link was posted at 12:09am (Tehran local time), only three hours after the polling stations closed.

Keeping the movement alive

Internet and SMS provided convenient mediums with which to keep the Green Movement alive at a time when demonstrations were not feasible due to state suppression. Different campaigns on the internet kept activists connected and active. In some cases, creative ideas emerged from internet discussions—ideas which were widely taken up by the public.

The most watched program on Iranian state-run TV is a sports program called 90. During this program, people are sometimes asked a question and invited to vote on one of several answers by sending SMS messages. Early in January 2010, online activists called on people to send an SMS to the next program of 90 and to choose the third option regardless of what the question was. This

idea was spread via SMS in Iran. The third option was chosen because it was usually shown in green. More than 1.8 million people voted and 75 percent of them chose the third option.

This simple and fairly low-risk action proved to the people who were watching the program that there were at least one million Iranians who were ready to show their dislike of the government by following the campaign of Green Movement activists. The Jahan News website, a news website supporting Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, accused the host of the program of fraud by saying "the websites of Twitter, Facebook, and Balatarin have announced that they won with 77 percent of the votes before the program ended."

There was widespread discussion about whether or not this campaign was a good idea. Some people argued it would allow the Iranian government to identify supporters of the Green Movement. In fact, the person who maintained Mousavi's Facebook page asked people not to send SMS. By then, the campaign was outside of the internet and was spreading through SMS messages in Iran.

Neda's video

Social media provided tools for reporting the news quickly and anonymously. For example, Neda Agha Soltan was killed at 7:20pm Tehran time. The person who took the video sent it to someone else outside of Iran who posted it onto Facebook at 8:53pm. The link to the video was posted at 9:45pm to Balatarin and was promoted to the front page after getting the required votes by 9:59pm. The video was subsequently posted to YouTube at 10:19 pm. That video received 270,000 views on Facebook.

In less than three hours, the video of Neda's death had been broadcast to thousands of viewers worldwide. A person (S.E.) who was interviewed for this article said:

"In the 1980's, thousands of Iranians were killed in mass executions inside Iranian prisons within a short period of time and to this day that event has received very little publicity. Now a good number of atrocities have been documented and the Iranian government is forced to come up with explanations for them."

In the case of Neda, the Iranian government changed its story four times.

Balatarin: site for social mobilisation

Many people using the phrase "Twitter Revolution" imagined activists running through Tehran streets, coordinating gatherings and demonstrations using their mobile phones. This never happened. As has been stated elsewhere, there were not that many Twitter users in Iran. As well, the SMS system was disabled by the Iranian government. However, social media was used in a number of ways to call for action and it was used as a tool for brainstorming ideas and improving these ideas before publicising them any further. This mostly took place in blogs and on Balatarin.

Once these ideas were ready, they were publicised widely by activists on blogs, Balatarin, Facebook, Twitter and chain emails. The author knows of at least two groups which had built up mailing lists with tens of thousands of emails and were sending news or action calls to people in Iran. Another person who was interviewed for this article (S.V.) states that he received up to 30 chain emails per day during the post-election summer.

The importance of social media cannot be exaggerated though. It is hard to find cases in which only social media were involved in publicising events. In practice, satellite TV, SMS and word of mouth also played an important role. On one occasion, for example, a blogger posted a link

on Balatarin suggesting people gather in Mohseni Square in Tehran for a public mourning for Ayatollah Montazeri. In less than nine hours, people circulated the announcements and about 3,000 people gathered. This was one of the rare occasions in which the call originated from an anonymous blogger, and did not have any other endorsement from Green Movement leaders.

The social media and citizen journalism reporting had an impact on the mainstream media. News networks such as CNN started broadcasting YouTube videos from Iran. BBC Persian and VOA also started using uploaded videos from YouTube in their reporting. The impact on the BBC or VOA was not limited to reporting style. Considering that the bulk of their audience was supporting the Green Movement and many of their own journalists were supporting the movement, it became difficult for them to prevent their airtime from being used to encourage further protests.

The Iranian government again disrupted internet services on another day of protest, International al-Quds Day. For several hours after the demonstrations, there were no YouTube videos of the demonstration. BBC News published a news article which read:

"Reformist opponents of the controversially re-elected President Ahmadinejad seem to have been massively outnumbered by system loyalists eager to demonstrate their support for the president and his patron, the Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei."

Balatarin users posted a link with the title:

"The weird claim of international media regarding the low number of Green Movement activists in the demonstrations. There is a need to send pictures."

Online activists then began sending links to pictures and new videos on YouTube to show the large demonstrations by Green Movement supporters. The BBC website updated its article without acknowledging the correction:

"Thousands of opposition supporters have clashed with security forces during a government-sponsored rally in Tehran. The Green Movement protesters had been present in large numbers and had subverted the official demonstration. The protests on Quds Day revived the movement. In a way, Quds Day protests changed it from an election protest to a long lasting movement."

Mousavi was well aware of the significance of the demonstration. He called it a turning point for the movement. He also acknowledged the role of social media in a speech after the demonstration:

"Today, there has been a network created in the virtual space acting very efficiently when there isn't any other type of [independent] media available. Members of these groups have given dynamism to the movement which has made us much more hopeful. There hasn't been any official call [by the leaders of the movement] for demonstration on the Quds day, but we witnessed this great demonstration. This was at a time where there had been many, many threats in the past three months and many of the families were preventing their children from going [to the demonstrations]. This could have not have been achieved without this [virtual] network."[1]

Conclusions

As has been shown, in most of the events the internet was used along with other tools of communication such as word of mouth, SMS and satellite television stations. The internet lowered the cost of political participation and protests for the masses. It also proved to be the only place to call for demonstrations on a specific day. In Iran the cost of

1 www.parlemannews.ir/?n=4128

being a member of an opposition party is so high, it would make most people refrain from protesting against the Iranian government in an organised way. The internet, on the other hand, reduced the risks of involvement.

Loose affiliations, established via the internet, have lowered the cost of participation but at the same time can result in confusion when there is a need to deal with complex issues and tactics, which require better coordination and discipline.

About the Author

Mehdi Yahyanejad is the founder and director of Balatarin, a website developed and launched in 2006 and now recognized as the most popular Web 2.0 website in Persian. Among many other web-based activitives, he is the co-founder of the Iranian Studies Group (isgmit.org) and the Knowledge Diffusion Network (knowdiff.net).

Ein Land im Cyber-Krieg

A land in cyber-war

by **Omid Nouripour**

Cyber-Krieg lautet das neue Schlagwort im internationalen Sicherheitsdiskurs. Im Zusammenhang mit dem Iran denkt man dabei an den Computerwurm „Stuxnet", der im Sommer 2010 Computer von Mitarbeitern des iranischen Atomkraftwerks Bushehr befallen und das Kraftwerk lahmgelegt hatte. Dabei ist noch eine andere Art von Cyber-Krieg längst Realität, wie er im Umgang der iranischen Regierung mit ihren eigenen Bürgern zum Ausdruck kommt.

"Cyber War" is the latest cutting-edge phrase in international security discourse. In relation to Iran, one is reminded of the computer worm "Stuxnet", which forced its way into the Iranian nuclear power plant Bushehr and brought it to a standstill. But another type of cyber war has long become reality in Iran, which is revealed in the way the regime deals with its own citizens.

Gleich zu Beginn seiner ersten Amtszeit 2005 machte Irans Präsident Mahmud Ahmadinedschad deutlich, dass es für Frauen unter seiner Ägide nicht leicht werden würde. Er sorgte dafür, dass Frauen systematisch in ihrem öffentlichen und politischen Engagement eingeschränkt wurden. Kritische Frauenzeitschriften wurden verboten, und die Frauenbewegung erhielt keine öffentlichen Räume mehr für ihre Treffen. Spätestens damals wichen viele engagierte Frauen in das Internet aus, gründeten neue Internetportale, schrieben Blogs und bauten Netzwerke auf.

Welche Dynamik in diesem neuen Medium liegt, hatten Ahmadinedschad und seine Regierung offensichtlich unterschätzt. Sie setzten vor allem auf das Verbot von Zeitungen und Zeitschriften, um den kritischen Journalismus im Land mundtot zu machen. Doch im Internet und per E-Mail waren weiterhin unabhängige Nachrichten und Meldungen von ausländischen Medien zu bekommen.

Via Twitter, Facebook und Youtube überrollte im Präsidentschaftswahlkampf 2009 und in den Wochen nach dem Wahltag eine Welle von Nachrichten, Terminen, Analysen und Bildern die Internetcommunity innerhalb und außerhalb des Iran. Die Sozialen Medien sorgten für mehr Transparenz und verhinderten so zumindest teilweise, dass die staatliche Gewalt gegen die Demonstrierenden noch weiter eskalierte. Die ganze Welt schaute auf das, was im Iran passierte, und war erschüttert.

Krieg gegen das eigene Volk

Seither hat sich vieles gewandelt. Die iranische Regierung hat ihrem Volk den Krieg erklärt, den Cyberkrieg. 33 Millionen Iraner nutzen heute das Internet. Und der Staat gibt sich größte Mühe, Informationen zu filtern und Netzaktivitäten einzuschränken.

Im September 2009 trat die Islamische Revolutionsgarde auf den Plan. Sie stützt die Regierung Ahmadinedschads seit Langem und hat sich gleichsam zum größten Unternehmer des Landes entwickelt. Der von ihr kontrollierte „Mobin Trust" kaufte einige Wochen nach den Präsidentschaftswahlen die „Telecommunication Company of Iran" von der Regierung. Damit verfügt die Revolutionsgarde über sämtliche Telefonleitungen und Netzprovider sowie zwei Mobilfunkanbieter im Land. Seither nehmen Zensur und Überwachung weiter

zu, und die Datenübertragung wird künstlich langsam gehalten. Facebook-Aktivitäten können schnell als „Handlung gegen die nationale Sicherheit" denunziert werden und zur Inhaftierung führen.

Im Netz melden sich immer mehr regierungstreue Blogger zu Wort, deren Auftrag es offensichtlich ist, die kritischen Stimmen zu neutralisieren. Die Schulung und Fortbildung dieser staatlichen Online-Aktivisten lässt sich die Regierung Einiges kosten. Sie hat im Staatshaushalt hierfür extra ein Budget bereitgestellt, aus dem Veranstaltungen, Seminare und Wettbewerbe finanziert werden. Ziel ist es offensichtlich, mit Regierungspropaganda die Deutungshoheit in der iranischen Internet-Community zu erringen.

Dagegen hat sich längst der „Cyber-Widerstand" formiert. Doch für die oppositionellen Internetaktivisten können die Sozialen Medien angesichts der Maßnahmen der Regierung schnell vom Segen zum Fluch werden. Die Regierung versucht nicht nur, deren Aktivitäten einzuschränken, sondern arbeitet gleichzeitig daran, mehr über Oppositionelle und ihr Umfeld zu erfahren. Dafür bieten soziale Netzwerke ebenfalls gute Voraussetzungen.

Die Überwachung der iranischen Regierung macht an den Grenzen des Landes nicht halt. Auch Iraner im Ausland werden überwacht. Der seit dem Jahr 2000 in Kanada lebende junge Journalist Hossein Derakhshan machte sich mit seinem regierungskritischen Blog „Sardabir: khodam" („Editor: Myself") einen Namen. Er gilt als „Blogfather" der iranischen Internet-Community. Als er im November 2008 in den Iran einreiste, wurde er festgenommen und ist seither inhaftiert. Er wurde der Blasphemie, der Propaganda gegen die iranische Regierung, der Kollaboration mit feindlichen Regierungen und des Betreibens einer obszönen Internetseite angeklagt und im September 2010 zu 19 Jahren und sechs Monaten Haft und einer Geldstrafe von umgerechnet 30.000 Euro verurteilt.

Euphorie über die scheinbar unbegrenzten Möglichkeiten der Sozialen Medien ist angesichts dieser Entwicklung nicht angebracht. Es war ein kleines Zeitfenster rund um den Wahltag im Juni 2009, in dem mittels Twitter, Facebook und Youtube im Iran ein bislang unerreichtes Maß an Transparenz und Widerstand gegen die Machthaber geschaffen werden konnte. Doch dies funktionierte nur, weil die Regierung von der Grünen Welle im Netz überrollt wurde.

Die iranische Regierung hat den Kampf gegen ihre Bürger auch im Netz aufgenommen. Soziale Netzwerke bieten weiterhin Möglichkeiten für die Menschen im Iran, aktiv zu sein und mit Gleichgesinnten im Iran und im Ausland in Kontakt zu bleiben. Doch sie bergen auch Risiken, wenn sie den staatlichen Stellen ermöglichen, die Aktivitäten und das Umfeld von Oppositionellen zu überwachen.

Die iranische Regierung hat aus dem Sommer 2009 ihre Schlussfolgerungen gezogen und einen Cyber-Krieg gegen ihre Bürger eröffnet. Doch die Sehnsucht der Menschen im Iran nach Freiheit kann sie damit nicht zerstören.

Zum Autor
Omid Nouripour ist sicherheitspolitischer Sprecher der Fraktion Bündnis 90/Die Grünen und Obmann im Verteidigungsausschuss. Außerdem wurde er zum stellvertretenden Koordinator des Arbeitskreises Internationales und Menschenrechte der Grünen Fraktion im Bundestag gewählt. Er ist stellvertretendes Mitglied im Auswärtigen und im Haushaltsausschuss.

The Iranian women's movement and cyber resistance

by **Mahboubeh Abbasgholizadeh**

The women's movement in Iran has played a discreet but significant role in the emergence of Iran's Green Movement. A report on how women's use of cyberspace has helped sustain protest.

Cyber resistance was first utilised by the women's movement during the ascension to power of Ahmadinejad's radical government in the year 2005. During this period the movement witnessed the closing of civil society organisations, the public sphere, independent media, and any space that permitted connections between different social groups. We frequently observed the suffering of human rights activists, various social movements, journalists and civil society activists to a degree that made activities in the public arena almost impossible.

Nearly a decade ago, the leadership of the women's movement was based on non-governmental organisations (NGOs) meaning that most of their offices, projects, and sometimes even human and financial resources could be readily identified. In this phase, the women's movement could be described as 'organisation-oriented', from a group structure perspective. When restrictions were imposed on public spaces, however, and the activities of women's NGOs were subjected to strict security, the women's movement adopted a strategic plan to transform its activities from organisation-centred to 'campaign-centred'.

Those who follow the women's movement in Iran are familiar with the One Million Signatures Campaign[1] or the Stop Stoning Forever Campaign[2], among others. Each of these campaigns was created after 2005, as Ahmadinejad's government imposed restrictions on civil society. This repression led the women's movement to ask many questions, such as: What is the relationship between civic movements and public spaces? What is the relationship between repression, fundamentalism and the appearance of social movements? Do social movements only grow under conditions of openness and democracy or also under oppression? This self-seeking led to the emergence of new strategies and tactics that would preserve and strengthen the Iranian women's movement.

The subsequent adaptations and transformations undertaken by the women's movement demonstrate that movements can grow under authoritarian regimes, among closed public spaces and civil society repression. Their experience illustrates that a movement can alter its strategies to enable its continued existence. But how did the women's movement really reach its climax within the past few years? Was it through NGOs? Was it through seminars and conferences or through opportunities provided in other countries with safer environments? In fact, the movement relied on none of these methods. Instead, the success of the women's movement can largely be attributed to the tireless efforts of its members to create alternative spaces. In the past few years, Iranian women have led the transition from public places to alternative spaces and have demonstrated how to utilise virtual space for organisation and development.

1 http://www.we-change.org/english/

2 http://www.meydaan.com/campaign.aspx?cid=46

From 2005 to 2009, when networks of various feminist student groups were organised or when women's campaigns such as the One Million Signatures Campaign[3], Maydaane Zanan[4], Feminist School[5], Focus on Iranian Women[6] were organised, none of them had a corporate profile, nor were they accessible through a particular physical location. Unlike other non-governmental groups, these campaigns also had no sources of income, other than through limited voluntary contributions from the public.

For the most part, these groups are best identified by websites, such as Change for Equality, Feminist School and Fair Family Law[7]. Each of these sites represents a stream of social networks and differs greatly from a typical online newspaper or magazine. While these websites also contain various news reports and articles, an editor or an editorial board does not manage them. Their contributions come from citizen journalists, advocates and theoreticians. These sites are considered to be alternative media by their own operators and any member of their audience can participate.

One can contribute by sending an email to the site's administrator requesting permission to publish on a particular topic and one can join one of the campaign debates the same way. Once a member becomes a regular contributor, he or she will be entered onto a mailing list, which constitutes the social network represented by that site.

Social networks and campaigns

Following the severe oppression enforced by Ahmadinejad's government, the Iranian women's movement decided to start working in smaller groups centred on a specific thematic axis. Women would voice their demands on open websites to raise awareness and publicity. A closer look will reveal that these campaigns and websites stretch back to the year 2005, the time when Ahmadinejad took office and began shutting down the public sphere. Within a few years these groups had established numerous websites, each running and representing a specific campaign.

The One Million Signatures Campaign, for example, initially created the Change for Equality website (http://sign4change.info/), which led to the rapid expansion of this social network. Various supplementary websites associated with the campaign were created in different cities or even in other countries, and these currently number up to 40 websites and weblogs. This network continued to interact with the public on the streets, through the gathering of signatures. Throughout this process, they exchanged words, ideas and experiences with the general public, which led to further analysis, discussion and discourse.

The Stop Stoning Forever Campaign utilised a similar process. While there was no direct coordination with the One Million Signature Campaign, this campaign created the Meydaane Zanan website (www.meydaan.com/english/default.aspxto), defended victims of stoning and provided news, debate and analysis on the topic of stoning on a daily basis.

What was happening behind the public face of these sites? While this has not been publicly discussed in recent years for security reasons, the regime has learned about these operations. It is therefore timely for the women's movement to claim credit for its vast cyber network, which aided the genesis of the Green Movement.

Our efforts began with a few activists who had the ability to plan. They formed an original core and examined various ways of organising and mobilising

3 http://www.we-change.org/

4 http://www.meydaan.com/default.aspx

5 http://www.feministschool.com/

6 http://irwomen.com/index.php

7 http://fairfamilylaw.in/

women into a network. The organisers studied the experiences and struggles of women in different political, historical and cultural times. These core members asked how it might become possible to survive in a society where cooperative work and official organisational activities were banned.

A change of tactics

With the increasing arrest and detention of activists, the risks of becoming socially active increased. So the core leadership began discussing options for participating in joint feminist activities which would not involve a fear of arrest. Campaigners thus became more pragmatic and less idealistic than their predecessors, attempting to focus on themes and methods that would attract and engage the common woman in the marketplace and to work in ways that minimised the risk to themselves and their fellow participants.

Based on this new, pragmatic strategy, the core leadership chose to focus on six key approaches to enable their survival:

1. The movement would prioritise women's demands that could mobilise the maximum amount of women's support across social classes;
2. The movement would try to be as self-sufficient as possible, remaining independent from funding streams and physical locations;
3. The movement would conduct its activities in a manner that would expose their members to minimum risk;
4. The movement would challenge the current political structure, which is male-dominated and discriminatory; and
5. The movement would be progressive and change-oriented.

Based on this strategy, several groups began to define various campaigns. They chose the structure of a campaign for its lack of a formal institutional mechanism. The campaign structure was network-based and allowed participants to join or leave without the obligation to recruit or to be employed. Furthermore, there was no long-term mission or defined ideology, only short-term targets that did not require specific conditions and high expectations. Demands were posed in a way that would mobilise women according to a particular need, and this identified need could be shared with others in order to find a solution.

What were these demands? In this particular case I am going to explain my experience in the Stop Stoning Forever Campaign. Stoning has been permitted since the day the Islamic Republic came to power but it was always considered to be a political issue and not a women's rights issue until the Stop Stoning Forever Campaign.

Stop stoning

Previously, the political opposition abroad used the issue of stoning as a trump card in their efforts to present the Islamic regime as a barbaric authoritarian regime. The women's movement chose to focus instead on the issue of stoning as a form of violence against women, which is driven by the regime's aim to control sexuality.[8] The stoning victim is also the victim of discriminatory family law, which is based on Sharia law, which restricts a woman's choice in marriage, divorce, child custody, etc.

A female victim of stoning generally suffers from low literacy, has no right to divorce her

8 For more information on the Women's Movement's approach to the issue of stoning, please see: Rochelle Terman and Mufuliat Fijabi, Stoning is Not Our Culture: A Comparative Analysis of Human Rights and Religious Discourses in Iran and Nigeria (March 2010), available at http://www.stop-stoning.org/files/Terman_Fijabi.pdf.

husband, and has not married him by her own choice. She has no financial independence and has been forced to engage in a relationship with another man in the midst of the crisis that has arisen from these pressures. The other man often plays the role of a 'saviour' in her life. Thus, the women's movement shifted the stoning discourse away from politics and towards women's rights and feminist discourse.

If a fraction of women's rights activists chose to address the subject of stoning, it was because they wanted to make the larger point that many women could be entrapped by the vicious and discriminatory legal cycle that led to stoning.

Selecting a particular discourse and advocacy strategy is a complicated aspect of movement building, which must be informed by considerable experience and expertise. Fortunately, the exchange facilitated by the social networks allowed for such dialogue and concept development.

The next step was to construct a platform through the Meydaane Zanan website, which eventually led to the development of other social networks. Participants began sharing and exchanging views and working tasks. The process was very similar to what happened with the One Million Signatures Campaign. Permanent group meetings were occurring in small assemblies at private houses and closed spaces, and people only entered the public sphere when wider activity was needed, such as on International Woman's Day, or when they needed to collect signatures, distribute brochures and leaflets or join street rallies. These activities always brought the risk of arrest, which is how many activists were detained.

Previously, when different women social networks needed to meet in person, representatives from each network would gather in an inauspicious place, such as a café. Sometimes a birthday cake was placed on the table, so the meeting would appear to be a private party. These methods began in 2009 and continued until security forces located the meeting points. When the meetings were forced to move from offices to private houses, security officials started monitoring and controlling activities in members' homes.

Linking real space with cyberspace

The women's movement's experience with social networking also demonstrated how to link cyberspace planning with public action. A significant step that established the connection between social networks and the women's movement happened with the intensification of crackdowns in 2008 in preparation for the presidential elections the year after. The process of detaining activists, particularly members of the One Million Signatures Campaign, had significantly increased, and all channels with which to engage the public were restricted.

It was in this environment that the Family Protection Bill was introduced into parliament. This Bill explicitly supported polygamy, temporary marriage and further restrictions on women's rights. Polygamy and temporary marriage were two issues that would easily provoke annoyance among all women, regardless of their social class or background, and so campaigning on these issues was neither too costly nor risky. All women were opposed to the Bill. Therefore, in spite of the political and intellectual differences among the participants, calculated planning by different campaigns eventually led to the creation of a broad alliance among different women's social networks.

In 2008, the first large mailing list for women in Iran was created in reaction to the Family Protection Bill, which contained approximately 300-400 members. Group agendas were planned and discussed, and work tasks were assigned through these mailing lists. Each associated website took a portion of responsibility in accordance with the skills of its members. Each website also featured

a logo designed to protest against the Family Protection Bill. By displaying the logo and publishing statements and brochures in protest against the bill, these sub-networks participated in a grand coalition. This coalition was formed at a time when even private assemblies at home were becoming impossible, and street protests were met with severe persecution. Yet women took new initiatives and engaged in novel activities in their opposition to the Family Protection Bill.

These activists also learned to become specialised in their various approaches. Journalists working in traditional media challenged lawyers and members of parliament in their interviews. Those who had closer relationships to different political parties or to the governmental body formed lobby groups, and those who were closer to other segments of the society gathered letters from the public and forwarded them to parliamentary representatives. Even artistic groups were actively involved. Competition between women's social networks stirred momentum.

On the day the Family Protection Bill was to be debated in parliament, each group from every city sent an envoy to their parliamentary representative to express their disapproval. The entire planning and organisation of this grand coalition, which ultimately blocked the Family Protection Bill, occurred in cyberspace with the aid of one massive mailing list.

The backpack strategy

It is worth mentioning that social networks were created voluntarily and without any financial aid or funding. Unemployment among many women activists meant that they had time to spend on their computers and involving themselves in different social networks. Almost every door to employment became shut once an activist was identified. Participating university students were suspended or dismissed, and most university professors, journalists, publishers and artists became unemployed. In fact, the dismissal of social and political activists from gainful employment remains one of the government's oppression tactics.

Unemployment also led to a dramatic downgrade in the social class and lifestyle of many an activist. Women were forced to live on minimal means. However, certain equipment, such as laptops and portable digital devices, were considered to be necessities. The activist's office could be reduced to a backpack and, hence, the 'backpack strategy' was formed.

This strategy yielded numerous practical benefits. It enabled the quick movement of documents and supplies, and came to represent mobility and agility. Activists were no longer bound to a fixed site or location, which enhanced security. These changes in lifestyle facilitated the later transfer of women's social networks into the Green Movement.

The experience of the women's coalition, which emerged as a result of the protests against the Family Protection Bill together with the One Million Signatures Campaign, informed the development of effective political networks during the 2009 Iranian presidential elections. This virtual alliance connected various networks with one another, strengthening and stabilising them in the process. By the time the presidential election took place these networks extended beyond national borders.

Transferring networks to the Green Movement

Several months before the elections, a broad coalition of activists in the Coalition for Women's Demands in the Elections, inspired by the Coalition against the Family Protection Bill, attempted to organise itself in cyberspace. Their large mailing

list included male and female activists from both inside and outside of the country. When the electoral coup occurred, these mailing lists became news networks that shared information about the coup and subsequent protests.

While the administration of these mailing lists was based inside Iran during the election, in the first days of the electoral coup, the administration of these lists was transferred to activists outside of the country. This was done in reaction to slow internet connections but also in an attempt to increase domestic security and accelerate the exchange of information.

The near instantaneous organisation of the Green Movement was facilitated through the transfer of young activists from the women's movement to human rights groups or other activist groups. These activists brought with them experience and social capital honed over a four-year period. They could easily trust one another in creating active cores publicly or covertly in Facebook. Once the broader Green Movement campaign was activated in the virtual realm, on Facebook and Twitter and other social networks, the number of women's rights activists in these networks increased, and their experience was shared.

Young activists, who also experienced various bottom-up methods for initiating democratic change in the One Million Signatures Campaign, also utilised similar organisational methods in Facebook and other social networking sites. As a result, Green Movement networks are becoming more sophisticated and knowledgeable every day.

Conclusion

Women's social networks in cyberspace have seen various phases. With increased suppression, the women's movement undertook more activities in cyberspace, only operating in real space when strategically necessary. With the daily increase of repression, the movement has extended into Green Movement networks.

The experience of the women's movement has revealed a number of interesting observations about social movements' use of cyberspace.

First, there is a direct link between increased oppression and the transferral of social movements to virtual social spaces and the provision of alternative space. Movements do not necessarily need open and democratic spaces in which to grow.

Second, cyberspace not only accelerates the speed of information exchange and social mobilisation by providing a place for information exchange, it also facilitates movement organisation and movement building.

Third, cyberspace creates a space in which social activists may share their concerns, find a similar language, and discuss mutual demands in order to collaborate and ultimately produce social capital. This social capital, in turn, is used to mobilise and lead the movement in new directions. Although this social capital is created in the exclusively social context of the virtual world, which is clearly different than the real world, it is an objectively real phenomenon and the product of cyberspace.

About the Author
Mahboubeh Abbasgholizadeh is a women's rights activist, journalist and filmmaker from Iran. She is a founding member of the Stop Stoning Forever Campaign and the Iranian Women's Charter Movement. She has directed non-government organisations in Iran and served as editor-in-chief of Farzaneh Women's Studies Journal.

A virtual reality: the Women's Museum of Iran

by **Mansoureh Shojaee**

It exists already in the minds of Iran's women activists—the aim, first of all, is to make it a 'reality' in cyberspace, and then, one day, to build it for real. A report on plans to establish a Women's Museum of Iran.

The preservation of history and transferring it from one generation to another, whatever state it is in, has been manifested in a variety of forms. From carvings on cave walls, to stone inscriptions, written papyruses, manuscripts, lithographs, typographical prints, books, magazines, photographs, records, tapes: all are created and invented to narrate the story of our lives.

Human artefacts, physical as well as intellectual achievements, are collected and recollected in various centres such as libraries, museums, archives etc., which serve as the central venue of communication. Due to their function, these centres of transference of ideas and experiences have always had a high status in culture and civilization—although from time to time they have been buried under the dust of forgetfulness, in dark, lonely, forgotten storages spaces, or locked away altogether.

The advancement of technology during the second half of the twentieth century has changed the face as well as the effectiveness of these tools of cultural transport. Modern technology, the advent of the internet, the emergence of websites, blogs, and virtual interactive social groups have all served to narrate life over epochs and to transfer those narrations from one part of the world to another. The Women's Museum of Iran, if it comes into existence and survives, will play a dual rule. On the one hand, it would be an institution for collecting and preserving women's artefacts and achievements; on the other hand, it would become a progressive media space for transferring the distinguished history and culture of women from generation to generation. The Women's Museum of Iran would be on display in both a virtual and a real sense.

The beginnings of an idea

"In every country in the world, a museum should be devoted to the preservation and exposition of women's achievements. I will go back to my country and, with the cooperation of my female colleagues, we will create a women's museum together."

This was part of the speech of Shirin Ebadi, the Iranian Nobel laureate, at the opening ceremony of the Women's Museum in Moreno. She was invited by the museum to be its honorary 'mother'.

On her return to Iran, she had a souvenir for me: the museum project. I became a recipient of a precious gift, loaded with responsibilities, and I'm honoured to be able to carry this load.

By then, I was used to a life of travelling from city to city, with a head full of dreams, side by side with my friends and colleagues, carrying the message of the Campaign for Equality and for democracy, and so I joyfully accepted the responsibility of executing this task as well.

However, I first had to answer the most basic question: why a women's museum? Although I already had my own answer to this question, I felt a need to benefit from collective wisdom. I started to seek advice and the opinions of other women scholars and experts. Given the turbulent political conditions in Iran, some people argued against

the museum project; they found it futile. However, the overwhelming majority were in favour of the project. Don't we have a women's library? Don't we have women's publications? Don't we have tens of women's sites and weblogs? Then why not a women's museum?

A women's library? Well, that was a different story. I was there when we started to write the first draft of the project, I was there at its opening, and I'm still proudly observing its growth. It grew like a child within a motherly circle of women colleagues.

But how could a museum emerge, given our lack of resources? My starting point was to outline the reasons why a women's museum was important.

- Because of the lack of effective rule of women in the present infrastructure of the country, and because women's names have been removed from the pages of history.
- Because of the loss of many of their legal and civil rights that has resulted in their removal from society.
- Because of the need to create new spaces we never had before, because our feminine love, affection and creative capabilities have all been exploited for the benefit of men in a chauvinist system.
- Because we need to create a centre for collecting, preserving and transferring information about women, and the democratic and progressive movements and events which have been of great importance to Iranian women. And because Iranian women have been an effective presence in forming the modern society of Iran, since its birth (around 1900), as dated in the Constitutional Movement.
- Because we need to create a gallery to exhibit women's art and artefacts such as paintings, sculptures, performing arts, homemade crafts, weaving, and so on.
- Because we need to create a space for women to be together, to talk together, to listen together, to watch together, to think together, and finally to be proud of their own achievements throughout history.
- Because we need to create a centre in which women can have access to valuable sources, and learn to realise that no country can flourish without the presence of women with such a history as their own.

Finding support, overcoming obstacles

As in all new movements, the emergence of a modern discourse and the establishment of social institutions are welcomed mostly by thinkers and progressive individuals. There were some contrary views but on the whole the idea of the women's museum was welcomed by women's activists and scholars. It took almost two months for planning to be completed. We invited women whose fields of interest and expertise were in line with the goals of the museum to participate in a preliminary discussion, held in Shirin Ebadi's office. In addition to myself, Mansoureh Etehadiyeh, Noushin Ahmadi, Rosita Sharaf Jahan, Soheila Shahshahani and Shirin Ebadi were present. The preliminary draft of the proposal was read and various views were discussed. Nasrin Sotoodeh, a legal advisor, and Parastoo Frouhar, a world-renowned artist, were invited to a later meeting.

New movements have always been the target of harsh criticism or even rejection by conservatives, sectarians and closed-minded social activists. However, there are times when criticism empowers movements and we tried to stay open to criticism. The first women's school (1908) and the first women's magazine (1910), the first independent women's institution (1907), the first book written

by a woman (1908) and all other 'firsts' involving women, from the Constitutional Movement to today, at governmental and non-governmental levels, have all been challenged. Opposition to our plans, voiced by reactionary and misogynistic members of society, never surprised us. Indeed, we were prepared for it.

However, what amazed us was the government's strong determination to support the plan. This decision was apparently communicated to the security and intelligence forces after my first interrogation in Evin prison in 2009, very likely after a careful examination of all the related documents and materials pertaining to the museum. They announced their approval by offering their cooperation in establishing such a museum, though on the condition that it be supervised by a governmental institution.

A clever move on their part! But a women's museum, established by a government with as notorious a record in discrimination and misogyny as the Islamic Republic of Iran? I wished that they had left us alone to make the museum to our taste and to our plan and for our own purposes, free of their censorship and free of their interference. But it would not be like that. Their aim was to exploit our idea. They simply wanted to add to their 'achievements' by offering fake support.

However, we had our prize in living a life of agitation and wandering, in prison or exile. And somewhere in our feminine imagination we aimed to build a museum to keep safe our experiences as treasures.

A digital museum: a means to collect and preserve

In our fourth meeting, we discussed the possibility of having a virtual museum as a more practical alternative. Given the police-state condition of the country after the June 2009 coup, having a virtual museum in place of a real, physical one seemed a reasonable option—even though it wasn't our ideal model. We discussed this alternative under the intense scrutiny of the security and intelligence forces, and decided, firstly, that a virtual museum was indeed an option for us. These were the issues we considered:

- The suppressive political system in Iran, with its harsh gender-discriminative policy, would simply not allow the foundation of an independent new institution by well-known women's activists. The chances of obtaining a permit for such an institution were nil.
- Our lack of funds for buying property for the museum.
- Our lack of sufficient documentation, such as licenses, permits etc., to rent a location for the museum.
- How to reduce the costs of upkeep and maintenance of museum objects and facilities.
- How to reduce the cost of security for those who might work for the museum anonymously.

Secondly, we considered the opportunities that a virtual museum could provide, including:

- Easy access.
- A fast and easy way to introduce the museum to the world through joining social interactive websites.
- The relatively low cost of cyber institutions in comparison to real institutions.
- Receiving direct consultations from experts who might want to donate their services to the museum.
- Benefiting from the advice and contributions of Iranian women professionals living outside of Iran.

The effects of cyberspace

Women's activists used the cyber system in different ways. They either created smaller institutions, pursuing particular goals, or they had one unified goal pursued by small units. The Campaign for One Million Signatures was founded under these terms in 2008. It developed and expanded each day and became a model for other movements.

There were hundreds of blogs and dozens of sites, and they operated well with each other. One got filtered, the other one wrote about it. When one got hacked, another site would spread the news. One is destroyed, another is born in its place. An atmosphere full of variety, without any restrictions or impositions and even with competition, where one site can expand without getting into someone else's domain, and where there is no hierarchy. No wonder it became the best model for modern working institutions. This view of cyber technology strengthened our ideal of a cyber museum, though it led to my arrest and imprisonment in December 2009.

The original idea of a women's museum

The concept of a women's museum was hatched as recently as the beginning of the new wave of the women's movement in the early 1970s, but it came into being in 1981. The women's museums of Germany and Denmark were the pioneers of this movement. The women's museum in San Francisco became the first such cyberspace institution in 2005. Nowadays, they are all part of a large network of women's museums throughout the world.

Many of these museums have concentrated on history, anthropology, ethnicity and social movements. Some only exhibit women's arts and crafts. But what they all have in common is the creation of an atmosphere for learning, criticism and an analysis of cultural clashes with a sensitivity towards gender issues in the discourse of the modern museum.

The original idea of a women's museum was a desire to have a centre for the presence of women, like a city in which women could live. We wanted to make a barricade to defend the realm of womanhood, its history, its culture, its arts, and its rights from further violation.

But can all this be achieved in cyber world? The idea of equal access to cyberspace can be both a virtue and a vice. We take refuge in it when speaking our mind becomes impossible in the real world. However, the suppressive forces also use it when it becomes difficult for them to exercise the degree of control they wish over the real world. As a matter of fact, control and tracing becomes much faster and easier in cyberspace, and indeed the presence of the cyber army is more economical than a real army. Taking refuge in the cyber world might also be seen as an excuse for running away from the responsibility of establishing a real museum and turning one's back on the essentials of women's institutions.

The best of both worlds

The ideal for the women's museum is the existence of both the real and the virtual museum. Neither one can substitute the other but they can complement each other perfectly. The digital museum is, in fact, the young, wise sister to the real museum who can share her mischievous knowledge, gathered from sisters all over the world, and keep it in her memory in safety, immune from destruction, plunder, war and confiscation. In this way, the museum is carried on the shoulders of both sisters, cooperating with each other.

The younger sister is inexperienced but she has a magical treasure chest for the storage and safe keeping of the older sister's stories, so that eventually one day Iran, too, will be ready to sit and listen to the tales of the older sister through the younger sister's box of magic. That box could be a useful and necessary instrument for the establishment of a real museum. It can never truly exhibit the actual experiences of the older sister but in times of hardship it can become a vital support for the museum structure.

About the Author

Mansoureh Shojaee is an Iranian writer, translator and women's activist. She was a librarian at the Iranian National Library for 22 years, and is a co-founder of the Women's Cultural Center, Sedigheh Dolatabadi Library and the One Million Signatures Campaign. In December 2009, she was arrested and sent to prison — for the third time in four years. She was later set free and currently lives in Germany.

2.

DIE NEUEN MEDIEN UND DER AUSLANDS-RUNDFUNK

NEW MEDIA AND INTERNATIONAL BROADCASTERS

On fusing the social media with journalism

by **Katarina Stanoevska-Slabeva**

Deutsche Welle, the BBC, VoA and others: they all need to adjust to the challenges posed by new developments in the Social Media, where the traditional boundaries between writer and reader, reporter and viewer are becoming blurred.

International broadcasting dates back to the 1920s. The term denotes "a complex combination of state-sponsored news, information, and entertainment directed at a population outside the sponsoring state's boundaries" (Price, Haas & Margolin). International broadcasting is provided by specific media companies — International Broadcasters (IB). IBs can be commercial global broadcasters such as CNN or government-funded media organisations. The latter will be the focus of this paper. They include Deutsche Welle from Germany, the BBC World Service from Great Britain and the Voice of America from the United States.

According to O'Keeffe and Oliver, the five main goals that governments pursue with international broadcasting are:

- to provide credible alternative sources of information and ideas, particularly where there is an information deficit (e.g., former colonies);
- to access diasporas;
- to preserve non-English languages;
- to counter Western and English-language media, cultural or political dominance; and
- to project a country's culture, ideas, values and expertise.

For example, according to its statutory mission, Deutsche Welle "will promote understanding of Germany as an independent nation with its roots in European culture and as a liberal, democratic, constitutional state based on the rule of law." It is also meant to "provide a forum in Europe and on other continents to German and other points of view on important issues, with the aim of fostering understanding and exchange between cultures and people. In addition, it will contribute to promoting the German language."[1]

Due to the fact that IBs are government funded and, at the same time, target foreign audiences, the main success factor for IBs is credibility. IBs are considered to be credible if they can operate with complete editorial independence from their funding government (O'Keeffe and Oliver). According to O'Keeffe and Oliver, the most effective guarantee of independence is legislative protection.

For many years IBs have been reliable sources of objective information and news in particular in countries with dictatorial regimes. Most of the IBs have successfully expanded nearly everywhere in the world and have continuously broadened their coverage and reach. For example, Deutsche Welle

"reaches nearly 90 million listeners and viewers worldwide every week. It receives well over half a million responses to its programming and online services every year and is respected as a credible source of information."[2]

One major factor for the positive development of IBs and the growth of their audiences has been their ability to quickly adjust and embrace technological developments in order to reach more people and overcome barriers imposed by governments in the target regions. In the beginning this

1 Cited from Deutsche Welle's Website: http://www.dw-world.de/dw/0,,3325,00.html

2 Cited from Deutsche Welle's Website: http://www.dw-world.de/dw/0,,3325,00.html

meant broadcasting mainly by short-wave radio (to a lesser extent medium wave or long wave), then to include TV services in their portfolio and in the last fifteen years to launch online 24-hours news services often in many languages. Today, IBs are using online and mobile services as third-pillar channels apart from conventional radio and TV.

Despite this success, Western state-backed IBs are coming under increasing competitive pressure from different sides. On the one hand, new entrants such as Al Jazeera and Xinhua were able to quickly position themselves in target markets like the Middle East and Asia. On the other hand, the evolution and increased use of the internet and mobile phones as distribution and access channels is considerably changing the way content is produced and distributed. These developments have given rise to new independent and commercial competitors such as independent bloggers, online news aggregators and other new players that have been successful in attracting audiences targeted by IBs.

At present, IBs and journalism in general are being challenged by developments in the Social Media. Examples of well known Social Media are the video streaming platform YouTube, news and information distribution platforms like Twitter and Digg, as well as various social network sites like Facebook and MySpace. Even though Social Media are the most recent phenomena on the internet, they have attracted and connected millions of users globally within a very short space of time.

Challenging broadcasters

Social media have become important agenda setters and sources of alternative information and news. Being the main channel for eyewitness news, Social Media are fundamentally changing the way news is broken. They are "contributing to the compression of the 'news cycle'" (Newman), and are putting more pressure on editors and journalists about what to report and when. Social Media are also powerful new distribution channels and multiplicators for news and content.

Because of their specific characteristics and their impact, Social Media were at first considered as competition to traditional media and as a threat to quality journalism. But many commercial and public media outlets are now using Social Media as complementary sources of information and distribution channels. Furthermore, new concepts are being tested to include Social Media into the working routines of journalists.

The following questions arise: Is the fusion of Social Media and journalism a possible scenario for IBs? What are the prerequisites that need to be established by IBs in order to use Social Media and journalism in an effective and successful way? Are IBs, given their institutional make-up, a suitable platform for collecting information from Social Media and allowing audience participation in newsgathering?

The discussion in this paper is based on a secondary analysis of the findings of a case study of reporting based on Social Media during the Iran election in 2009 (see Ebermann et al). The case study analyses how the journalist Robert Mackey of The New York Times used Social Media as both an information source and as a distribution channel. The findings of the case study are combined with findings from literature and are evaluated from the perspective of IBs.

Social Media — an overview

Social Media can be defined as online platforms where users can manage relationships among themselves as well as collaboratively create, share and manage various kinds of user generated content, known as UGC (Stanoevska-Slabeva). While

Social Media originally specialised on either a specific type of UGC (for example, videos on YouTube) or on the management of relationships (Facebook), at present they are evolving into comprehensive platforms where users spend most of their online time managing contacts, creating and sharing UGC, playing, working, coordinating common activities and receiving and providing information.

The Facebook example illustrates the intensity of user activities and involvement in an impressive way. At present Facebook has more than 642 million users. According to Facebook statistics, there are over 900 million objects that people interact with (pages, groups, events and community pages). An average user is connected to 80 community pages, groups and events, and creates 90 pieces of content each month. More than 30 billion pieces of content (web links, news stories, blog posts, notes, photo albums, etc.) are being shared each month.

Even though many of the activities taking place in Social Media are conversations, status messages and self-representation, a substantial part of the exchanged information and content relates to news about events as well as political and business topics (see also PearAnalytics). Social Media have thus developed into important sources of information and news, and are important distribution channels for news. They provide a space for discussion where users can get connected and involved. Social Media are changing the way news and the media in general is produced, distributed and consumed. They are challenging journalists and IBs in several ways.

The new agenda setters

Social Media are an important source of eyewitness information. As Jeff Jarvis puts it in The Guardian: "The witnesses are taking over the news." Especially in situations where there is uncertainty over sources of information, cooperation between journalists and non-professional content providers is considered particularly valuable.

A second important point about Social Media is that they provide platforms for bottom-up political activism, in particular for so called 'Citizen Activist' news, in countries with dictatorial regimes. Social Media have evidently played a major role in reporting events of global importance such as the Mumbai bombing, the election in Moldova, or the Iran election in 2009. Apart from citizens, public figures such as politicians and business people are increasingly disseminating their messages directly to audiences via Social Media, bypassing media outlets as mediators.

Third, in certain situations, such as for example in Iran during the election of 2009, Social Media may well be the only source of information. They are platforms where UGC is created, shared, distributed and managed. The discussions among Social Media users may be beyond the agendas of media outlet news coverage but may be of interest to audiences nevertheless. Overall, Social Media can be considered as important sources of news that cannot be neglected by journalists and IBs.

The new distribution channels

An increasing number of users spend more and more time on Social Media. In particular, representatives of the typical target audience of IBs — the critical elite and agents of change — are also mainstream Social Media users. Social recommendation has furthermore begun to play a significant role in driving traffic towards traditional news broadcasters. Thus, Social Media are needed in order to reach relevant audiences.

However, Social Media also impose considerable changes on the distribution process. While IBs are focused on one-to-many mass communication,

Social Media imply participatory many-to-many communication. Distribution of news via the Social Media means the establishment of a direct, participatory relationship with the audience. An important question in this context is how to establish credibility in conversations with different members of the audience.

Overall, the Social Media play an increasingly important role in the news ecosystem and cannot be neglected either as a source of information nor as interactive, participatory and global distribution channels. Jarvis points to the personal character of relationships in establishing Social Media networks (2008a), and in this context journalists are able to play a major role as curators, enablers and organisers. Journalists can become authorities on certain topics and for certain audiences. Many media companies have now started to develop approaches to integrate Social Media into journalistic practices and culture. However, this process still requires further development and adjustment.

Even though all Social Media serve as news channels to a certain extent, the platform that most closely resembles traditional news media is Twitter.

Twitter explained

Twitter is a micro blogging communication platform by which users can transmit brief messages (tweets) of up to 140 characters to a basically worldwide audience. Tweets can also contain hyperlinks to Web pages and thereby reference content outside of Twitter, such as newspaper articles and blog entries. Twitter enables users to create two different kinds of relationships. A Twitter user can have friends and followers. A user's friends are other Twitter users from whom he/she automatically receives tweets. A user's followers are other Twitter users to whom he/she is sending tweets. Friends and followers of one user do not necessarily have to be the same people. Twitter users can compose direct and indirect messages. Direct public messages contain an "@" sign and the name of the recipient. They are used when the user wishes to send a message to a specific person. Indirect messages, on the other hand, are used when the message is addressed to all followers.

A further important aspect of Twitter is that it not only allows communication within one's own network but also enables users to automatically create a thematic area where a reference to a given subject is made possible by using the hashtag ("#" sign). Such a hashtag (e.g., #iran) is also called a tweme. Twemes have proven to be a successful means of creating micro-networks on a given event and thus of creating a shared resource. Users can also forward to their followers a Twitter message written by someone else; this is called a retweet (RT). RT and the name of the author are added to the original message in order to credit the source.

Another distinguishing feature of Twitter is the so called buzz. This denotes a critical mass of communication on Twitter on a certain topic. Even though there is no unique definition of a Twitter buzz, it is commonly measured by the aggregation of single tweets related to the same topic or #hashtag and by the share of conversation that the specific topic gets from the overall Twitter communication (see for example www.trendistic.com or Kimmel). The more often and the longer Twitter users tweet about a topic, the more intensive and visible is the buzz.

As a closed platform, Twitter makes it possible to examine the social and communications relationships of its actors. Since references can also be made to content outside the platform, Twitter functions as an indicator of the diverse forms of relationships and expressions in the social Web and thus permits insights into the media ecosystem of the internet.

The Iran street protests and the role of Twitter

The political unrest following the elections in Iran aroused worldwide attention. It started on Election Day on June 12, 2009 after the government news agency IRNA announced the victory of incumbent Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. His opponent Mousavi expressed suspicion of electoral fraud and rejected the election results. Protests, street battles between opposition forces and the police, arrests and fatalities were the result.

Journalists from around the world tried to report on the events but were severely restricted by Iranian authorities. The few images and reports that emanated from Iran were mostly produced by non-journalist individuals and distributed worldwide through Social Media. The communications portal Twitter, in particular that associated with the hashtag #Iranelections, became the central aggregation point for news related to the unrest (Newman). Twitter also became one of the major communications and coordination tools among protesters. The U.S. State Department even reportedly asked Twitter to postpone scheduled maintenance in 2009 in order to allow messages to continue to flow during the unrest.

According to the Web Ecology Project: "During the time around the presidential election in Iran (6/07/2009–6/26/2009), 2,024,166 tweets were written on the subject by 480,000 users. Of those users, 59.3 percent wrote just one message on the subject. Only 0.57 percent of all messages were written prior to June 12, 2009. The most active 10 percent of users produced about 65.5 percent of all messages. Twenty-five percent of them—one tweet in four—are retweets of other content" (Beilin, 2009).

Later analysis did reveal that not all tweets were true; errors and misinformation were detected (see Newman). Furthermore, Twitter was mainly used by the opposition and their supporters, so that information provided was unbalanced towards the opposition.

A case study: reporting on Iran

Due to the specific situation during the Iran election, when UGC was the only available source of information, media outlets developed various solutions to use the information being supplied by Social Media. On the one hand, already established crowdsourcing platforms like the BBC's "Have Your Say" were used to collect contributions by users. On the other hand, journalists were directly involved in real time reporting based on input from Social Media. Robert Mackey of the New York Times, Nico Pitney from the Huffington Post and Andrew Sullivan of the Atlantic were named by The Economist as among those who used Social Media and provided reliable information about the protests in Iran.

Robert Mackey's reporting was also the subject of analysis of the case study published by Ebermann et al, which is to be summarised here with respect to the following aspects: choice of Social Media sources, use of Social Media as part of reporting, and distributing of news via Social Media.

The Web Ecology Project identified a list of 200 Twitter accounts that were considered to be the most active and most influential sources on the Iran election in 2009. Ebermann and his colleagues narrowed this list to 100 by excluding those accounts that were not primarily sources of information about Iran. Out of that list Mackey was following seven Twitter accounts: tehranbureau, mousavi1388, madyar, laraabcnews, iranriggedelect, persiankiwi and iranelection09. This reveals the fact that using the Social Media does involve a selection of relevant and reliable information sources.

In a second step, Ebermann examined the content of Mackey's blog entries in the period from June 12 to end of October 2009. Fifty-one of his blog posts created in that period of time were related to the Iran election. Over half of these blog entries contained direct references to Twitter (58 percent). Mackey always named and quoted his Twitter sources. Between June 13 and June 26, 2009, he mainly posted updates on the dispute surrounding the elections in Iran. For example:

"Earlier on Sunday one Iranian Twitter user, using the name Change_For_Iran, tweeted: 'according to rumor mousavi requested all people to gather near his office at 12:30 pm today.'"[3]

And:

"As darkness fell on an extraordinary day in Tehran, the Mousavi1388 Twitter feed called for shouted protest: 'Tonight & every night 9–11pm, 'Alaho Akbar' from rooftops.' As The A.P. explains, this cry was used to unite the Iranian people in support of the Islamic Republic 30 years ago: As darkness fell, cries of 'Allahu akbar!'—'God is great!'— were heard across central Tehran as people gathered on rooftops for a second straight night. On Sunday night, Ahmadinejad opponents shouted 'Death to the dictator!' The protest bore deep historic resonance—it was how the leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini asked Iran to unite against the Western-backed Shah 30 years earlier."[4]

The tone of some of his comments clearly points out that cited tweets cannot be verified. However, at the same time they still might include important information. Mackey distinguishes clearly between original sources he has accepted as such and sources from which he distances himself:

"A blogger who seems to be writing Twitter updates from inside Iran reports that Ali Larijani, the speaker of Iran's parliament, may be trying to get permission for Mir Hussein Moussavi to speak on the Iranian state television channel IRIB: 'Larijani pressing for Mousavi to be given airtime on IRIB to discuss elections.'"[5]

The main distribution channel of Mackey is his New York Times blog "The Lede". However, through automatic postings of his blog entries via Twitter and through retweets his blog posts reached a broader audience. Based on social network analysis, Ebermann et al were able to show that for some of his followers in Twitter, Mackey was the main middleman providing information on the Iran election.

Case study: key findings

An important prerequisite for journalists using Social Media is to build up a professional presence in them. Without having a Social Media account it is not possible to establish relationships with other users who provide relevant information or to establish relationships with an audience. Setting up an account and nurturing relationships is to be considered something that yields results in the long run.

When using Social Media as sources of information two aspects need to be considered: the credibility of both the sources and of the information. When Social Media is the only source of information and it cannot be verified, as in the case of the Iran election, such sources should be clearly marked as such.

The distribution of news via Social Media requires established relationships to audiences. A Twitter account without an established network of followers will hardly create impact. Social Media channels can be used for mass communication without allowing direct participation and contributions by users.

3 6/13/2009: Landslide or Fraud? The debate online over Iran's election results

4 6/15/2009:Updates on Iran's Disputed Election

5 6/23/2009: Updates on Iran's disputed election

Social Media and International Broadcasters

Given the importance of Social Media as sources of information and as distribution channels, the question is not if the Social Media are relevant for IBs but rather how to apply Social Media in an efficient way. Taking into consideration the fact that Social Media are based on personal relationships among users, it is evident that participation in Social Media requires a new role for journalists based on their use of Social Media.

The most important factor that needs to be considered by IBs is the preservation of credibility, impartiality and neutrality in using the Social Media. One way to achieve this is by building up relationships with relevant information sources over a long period of time. This requires investment in terms of resources and time. To keep neutrality and impartiality requires the establishment of relationships to all relevant parties concerned by a topic, in particular in case of conflicts. In cases when only one aspect of a story is being presented in Social Media it is necessary to include traditional sources of information or to identify reporting as being one-sided.

Furthermore, Social Media are important distribution channels. Here the ability of IBs to address their audiences in different languages is an advantage. Customisation through the different languages becomes possible. However, Social Media are interactive participatory communication channels. Applying Social Media as platforms for dialogue provides higher gains but also higher risks. First of all, negative, wrong or simply bad contributions cannot be avoided. This requires extensive monitoring and editing work. International broadcasters also need to avoid becoming platforms for the profiling of one particular side of a story. As Newman shows, in times of conflict it becomes all too easy for one side to control the discourse on spaces created by IBs.

A potential method of practice may well be the launch of interactivity and participatory crowd sourcing platforms under different labels, like the BBC's "Have Your Say". This would provide the opportunity for the IBs' journalists to choose the contributions that will be presented under the well known global brand. The establishment of an interactive and participatory channel to Social Media audiences needs to become a part of the everyday routine of journalists and a part of the journalistic culture of IBs. A successful fusion of journalism and Social Media requires a new role for journalists in Social Media and clear editorial guidelines reflecting the specific chances and risks of Social Media.

About the Author

Prof. Dr. Katarina Stanoevska-Slabeva is the chair of Journalism and New Media at the University of Neuchatel, Switzerland as well as Associate Professor at the University of St. Gallen and Vice-Director of the Institute for Media and Communications Management.

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Die Deutsche Welle: Vom Sender zum Dialogpartner

Deutsche Welle: from broadcaster to dialogue partner

by **Julia Hildebrand**

30 Sprachen und 86 Millionen Mediennutzer weltweit: Die Deutsche Welle muss mit ihren Angeboten einem ausgesprochen heterogenen Publikum gerecht werden. Auch ohne Web 2.0 und User Generated Content eine große Herausforderung. Seit 2010 soll eine Social-Media-Guideline den adäquaten Umgang aller Redaktionen mit Web 2.0-Angeboten und damit eine dialogorientierte Kommunikation mit den Nutzern sicherstellen.

Thirty languages and 86 million media users worldwide. Deutsche Welle has to appeal with its programming to a heterogeneous audience. This challenge is big enough — without Web 2.0 and User Generated Content. A Social Media Guideline, established in 2010, is aimed at fostering both the sensible use by all editorial departments of Web 2.0 material and a dialogue-oriented communication with users.

„Die DW begreift sich nicht nur als Sender, sondern als Kommunikationspartner. Das heißt, sie verfolgt das Ziel, die zunehmend aktiven Hörer, Zuschauer und Nutzer in einen Dialog einzubinden“: So heißt es in der Aufgabenplanung der Deutschen Welle (DW). Dieses Selbstverständnis lässt sich auf unterschiedliche Weise auslegen. Durch Sendungsformate wie „Jugend ohne Grenzen“ bringt die DW die Sichtweisen verschiedener Kulturen zusammen und bildet so einen Dialog in ihren Programmen für die Zuschauer ab. Wenn die Deutsche Welle hingegen bei einer Veranstaltung wie dem Medienkongress „Global Media Forum“, der Ende Juni 2011 zum vierten Mal stattfindet, Medienvertreter aus der ganzen Welt zu einem Thema von globalem Interesse zusammenbringt, bietet sie Menschen ein Forum zum direkten Austausch über Themen wie den globalen Klimawandel, Demokratisierungsprozesse in Lateinamerika, die internationale Wirtschaftskrise oder politische oder religiöse Konflikte vom Kaukasus über den Nahen und Mittleren Osten bis Südafrika. Im Internet hat die Deutsche Welle jeden Tag die Möglichkeit, über diese Themen nicht nur zu berichten, sondern ein globales Diskussionsforum bereitzustellen. Hier sieht der deutsche Auslandsrundfunksender mit seinen Mitarbeitern aus 60 Nationen die Chance, ein Prinzip in den journalistischen Produkten fortzusetzen, das im DW-Funkhaus Alltag ist: einen direkten interkulturellen Dialog.

Als die Deutsche Welle 2006 ihre ersten Accounts bei Twitter in neun Sprachen einrichtete, war noch nicht absehbar, dass sich diese Website, bis dato bekannt für die Kommunikation der Belanglosigkeiten des Lebens, zum bislang schnellsten Nachrichtendienst entwickeln würde. Zunächst wurde hier eine Möglichkeit gesehen, den Usern ein Online-Abo der neuesten DW-Nachrichten für das Mobiltelefon anzubieten. Mittlerweile werden am Tag weltweit 90.000 000 Tweets über den Microblogging-Dienst gesendet. In Indonesien und auch in Brasilien twittert jeder fünfte Internet-Nutzer im Alter von über 15 Jahren. Ist das noch belanglos?

Zweites Beispiel: Facebook. Gestartet als Netzwerk zum Austausch unter Harvard-Studenten,

hat sich das Soziale Netzwerk in nur sechs Jahren zu einer der weltweit meist besuchten Websites entwickelt: 500 Millionen User, 70 Prozent davon außerhalb der USA. Etwa die Hälfte der aktiven User besucht das Netzwerk täglich. Hier tauscht eine halbe Milliarde Internetuser also täglich Meinungen und Erfahrungen aus. Sollten Medienunternehmen da nicht mitreden?

Wenn die Deutsche Welle sich heute in den Sozialen Medien engagiert, dann steht, wie schon im Jahr 2006, das Ziel an erster Stelle, bei ihren Nutzern im gemeinsamen Kommunikationsraum Internet Aufmerksamkeit zu erzeugen; aber inzwischen führt der Weg zu diesem Ziel nicht allein über die Distribution von Content und Links, sondern vielmehr darüber, Gespräche anzuregen und zu steuern. Auch das ist in Zukunft Journalismus.

Neue Nische für den Journalismus

Im „Social Web" entwickelt sich eine neue Nische für den Journalismus. Und zwar für einen Journalismus, der sich nicht auf die Veröffentlichung eines Artikels, Beitrags oder einer Dokumentation beschränken lässt, sondern der den User in die Entstehung, Veröffentlichung und Nachbereitung seiner Produkte einbindet. Als Mitarbeiter bei der Recherche, als Teil einer Geschichte oder auch als Kritiker. Für einen solchen Netzwerk-, Community-, oder Prozess-Journalismus ist es überlebens- oder zunächst einmal entstehensnotwendig, dass er das Publikum als Experten ernst nimmt, dessen Meinung schätzt und diese verarbeiten möchte. Ein Mehrwert bei der Social Media-Nutzung entsteht dann, wenn Journalisten die Kommunikation auf Augenhöhe mit ihrem Publikum beherzt in Angriff nehmen. Besonders groß sind die Chancen einer besseren Berichterstattung durch die Userbeteiligung auf Märkten, auf denen sich die Informationsbeschaffung für Journalisten besonders schwierig gestaltet. Das gilt insbesondere für Zielregionen der DW wie Iran und China.

Um im Bereich „Social Media" Erfolg zu haben, muss sich der Journalismus neu erfinden und die Netzwerke nach ihren eigenen Regeln bespielen. Eine reine Reproduktion von bereits vorhandenem Content genügt nicht. Es muss vielmehr ein neuer, userzentrierter Content extra oder in Ergänzung zum Vorhandenen produziert werden. Das verlangt Übung und Erfahrung mit der Kommunikation in sozialen Netzwerken, über die bisher nur eine geringe Zahl von Journalisten verfügt. Der erste Schritt bei der Nutzung von „Social Media" für ein Medienunternehmen wie die Deutsche Welle besteht daher darin, diese Erfahrungen zu sammeln und auszuwerten.

Die DW hat mittlerweile in beinahe allen im Programm der Welle vertretenen Sprachen von Amharisch über Paschtu bis hin zu Urdu eigene Seiten bei Facebook und eine ebenso große Zahl von Accounts bei Twitter. Auf der Grundlage von DW-Artikeln oder -Berichten werden die User dazu aufgefordert, sich auf den DW-Plattformen auszutauschen. Daneben entstehen immer häufiger Formate, die sich aus Userbeteiligung speisen, wie etwa „Alis Mekka-Tagebuch", ein Projekt, bei dem die User einen DW-Reporter der arabischen Redaktion auf seiner Pilgerreise nach Mekka begleiten konnten und ihm unter anderem via Facebook Fragen stellten, die er in Artikeln auf DW-WORLD.DE beantwortete. Ein Mehrwert nicht nur für den User, sondern auch für den Journalisten, der seine Recherche nach den Wünschen des Publikums steuern und vor Ort die „richtigen" Fragen stellen konnte.

Für die Vermittlung der deutschen Sprache sind die Deutschkurse der Deutschen Welle ein

wichtiges Standbein. Auch hierfür werden in zwei Facebook-Accounts und einem Twitter-Account wertvolle Erfahrungen in der Social Media-Nutzung gesammelt. Mit Fotos, die von „typisch Deutschem" erzählen, Vokabeltrainings und Smalltalk über die Sprachkurs-Telenovela werden den Usern während ihres täglichen Chats mit Freunden auch Sprechanlässe zur Verbesserung ihrer Deutschkenntnisse angeboten. So lernen sie Deutsch ganz nebenbei.

Qualität als oberstes Prinzip

Die wohl größte Herausforderung bei der Nutzung Sozialer Medien besteht in der Sicherstellung des hohen Qualitätsanspruchs der Deutschen Welle. Sie übernimmt die redaktionelle Verantwortung gegenüber allen Inhalten, die auf den eigenen Seiten – sei es auf DW-WORLD.DE oder bei Facebook – veröffentlicht werden. Die regelmäßige Kontrolle aller auf den Seiten erscheinenden Einträge aus rechtlicher und journalistischer Sicht ist unverzichtbare Bedingung für die Nutzung externer Seiten, seien es Facebook, Youtube oder Twitter. Hier gilt das Vier-Augen-Prinzip – also das Prüfen der Posts durch zwei Redakteure – genauso wie für jeden Radiobeitrag, der über den Äther geht. Das hat die DW in Social Media-Guidelines explizit festgelegt und auch im DW-Journalisten-Handbuch verankert. Genauso kritisch werden die User-Posts überwacht. User müssen sich, wenn sie auf DW-Seiten posten, an eine „Netiquette" halten, die sie zum Dialog einlädt, aber auch auf die Kommunikationsregeln hinweist, die hier gelten, wie etwa das Unterlassen von Beschimpfungen oder rassistischen Äußerungen.

Der Aufwand für die Kontrolle von User-Kommentaren ist bei einem sozialen Netzwerk wie Facebook weit geringer, als jemand, der aus langjähriger Zuständigkeit für Hörerpost oder Zuschauermails regelmäßige Verstöße gegen die in der „Netiquette" aufgeführten Regeln gewohnt ist, vielleicht meinen könnte. Durch die direkte Verbindung mit dem persönlichen Profil und dem eigenen „Freunde"-Netzwerk kommt es sehr selten vor, dass ein Kommentar auf einer DW-Facebook-Seite gelöscht werden muss. Für die DW derzeit ein Grund, stark auf Facebook zu setzen, wenn es um den Dialog mit den Usern geht.

Regionale Unterschiede in der Social Media-Nutzung

Eine Besonderheit für einen Auslandsrundfunksender wie die Deutsche Welle besteht in der Heterogenität der Zielmärkte. Das Nutzungsverhalten der User variiert in vielerlei Hinsicht. Während in einem Land ein User mit einer Twittermeldung sein Leben aufs Spiel setzt, ist seine größte Bedrohung in einem anderen der „Unfollow"-Button; während in einem Land Microblogging-Dienste oder Foren der bisweilen einzige Weg sind, um sich über bestimmte Themen zu informieren, ist dieser Zugangsweg woanders lediglich eine von vielen Alternativen der Informationsbeschaffung; während in einem Land „Social Media" vor allem der politischen Kommunikation dienen, möchten im anderen die Nutzer vor allem unterhalten werden; während in einem Land Blogger oder Prosumenten schon seit Jahren die Medienagenda mitbestimmen, gewöhnen sich anderswo die User durch Facebook gerade erst daran, ihre Meinungen im Netz mit anderen zu teilen; während in einem Land die größte Sorge bei der Social Media-Nutzung im Schutz der Privatsphäre besteht, haben Menschen in anderen Ländern noch nie so etwas wie eine Privatsphäre genossen. Es gibt also eine Reihe von Unterschieden, die aus journalistischer Perspektive einen sehr differenzierten Umgang mit den Sozialen Medien erforderlich machen. Um diesem

breiten Spektrum an Ansprüchen ihrer Zielgruppen gerecht zu werden, investiert die Deutsche Welle seit Langem viel Arbeit in die genaue Beschreibung von Mediennutzungsverhalten, Informationsbedürfnissen und Lebensrealitäten. Hierbei werden „Social Media" genauso berücksichtigt wie TV oder Radio, um die für die jeweilige Zielgruppe ideale Kommunikationsstrategie zu entwickeln. Darüber hinaus sind es natürlich die Erfahrungen, die von den Sprachredaktionen nach und nach bei der Arbeit mit diesen userzentrierten Kommunikationsformen im Netz gesammelt werden, die es ermöglichen, Nutzungsszenarien zielgruppengerecht zu spezifizieren.

Social Media-Skills als Grundvoraussetzung

Um diesen Lernprozess ging es wohl auch BBC-Chef Peter Horrocks, als er unlängst die Anschaffung eines Accounts bei Facebook und Twitter für BBC-Mitarbeiter zur Pflicht machte und klarstellte:

„Das ist nicht einfach die Laune eines Technologie-Freaks. Ich fürchte, dass wir unsere Arbeit nicht machen, wenn wir diese Dinge nicht beherrschen."

Auch wenn der Aufwand für die Einhaltung von Qualitätsstandards sehr groß ist: Wo sich neue Kommunikationswege auftun, muss ein Kommunikations-Unternehmen sich diese zunutze machen. Nicht jedem einzelnen Journalisten, der über Jahrzehnte unter den Voraussetzungen der massenmedialen Verbreitung seiner Profession nachgegangen ist, kann heute schon abverlangt werden, sich nun als Community-Journalist zu engagieren. Künftig gehört es jedoch zum Selbstverständnis eines Journalisten. So nehmen die Sozialen Medien mittlerweile auch einen zentralen Platz in der Journalistenausbildung bei der Deutschen Welle ein. Bloggen, Twittern, in Sozialen Netzwerken Recherchieren, Facebooken, Userdiskussionen moderieren, all das gehört in Zukunft zu den Fähigkeiten eines Journalisten und ist schon heute Teil des Profils der Deutschen Welle.

Zur Autorin
Julia Hildebrand betreut die Social Media-Präsenzen der Deutschen Welle. Zu ihren Aufgaben zählt die fortlaufende Optimierung und Weiterentwicklung der Web 2.0-Angebote des deutschen Auslandsrundfunksenders, die Beratung der verantwortlichen Redaktionen sowie die Erarbeitung von Zielen und Richtlinien für den praktischen Einsatz von Social Media.

„Von Angesicht zu Angesicht“: interaktive Plattform für den Iran in Deutschland

“From face to face” — an interactive platform for Iran in Germany

by **Azin Heidarinejad**

Die Farsi-Redaktion der Deutschen Welle setzt auf User Generated Content. Dabei sind die Nutzer der Internet-Angebote nicht nur zentrale Zielgruppe, sondern gleichzeitig auch wichtige Informanten beim Wahrnehmen ihrer Rolle als „Stimme der Menschenrechte“.

The Farsi editorial team at Deutsche Welle draws on User Generated Content. On the one hand, internet users are an important target audience; on the other hand, they are also important informants when they become “Voices for Human Rights”.

Die Berichterstattung über die Proteste 2009 im Iran lassen sich als Wendepunkt für die öffentliche Aufmerksamkeit bezeichnen, die sozialen Netzwerken zuteil wird. Journalisten und viele Medien im Ausland nutzten die iranische Blogosphäre oder Twitter, um sich Informationen über den Iran zu beschaffen. Die so verbreiteten Nachrichten und Videos wurden nach und nach von den klassischen Medien wahrgenommen, akzeptiert und in Krisensituationen als ergänzende und verlässliche Quellen anerkannt.

Ende der Einbahnstraße

Mit der Geburt des „Qualitäts-Bürgerjournalisten“ bekam die Einbahnstraße des Informationsflusses in den traditionellen Medien erste Risse. Die Ära vom „Ich bestimme, was eine Nachricht wert ist, und du konsumierst“ ging zu Ende, und damit auch das Zeitalter, in dem sich die Mitwirkung von Usern an Medienprodukten in Lesebriefen oder dem Versand einer E-Mail an die Redaktion erschöpfte. „Der User tritt nun als Akteur und nicht nur als Rezipient der Medienprodukte auf“, sagt Mehdi Mohseni, iranischer Blogger und Journalist. Er arbeitet seit 2010 an dem Projekt „Interaktive Plattform für den Iran“ der Deutschen Welle mit, einem Projekt, das sich mit der virtuellen Revolution der Informationen befasst. „Ru dar Ru“, übersetzt „von Angesicht zu Angesicht“, heißt die Rubrik auf der persischen Seite des deutschen Auslandsenders, die Mitte Mai 2010 eröffnet wurde. Mit diesem Projekt will sich die Farsi-Redaktion mit ihrer wichtigsten Zielgruppe stärker vernetzen: den jungen, weltoffenen Menschen im Land, die moderne Kommunikationsmittel nutzen.

Redaktion und Nutzer auf gleicher Augenhöhe

Die User Generated Contents (UGC) aus dem Iran machen deutlich, wie sich die Grenzen zwischen Redaktion und Usern auflösen. „Der zunehmende Einfluss sozialer Netzwerke zwingt alle konventionellen Medien, sich mit den Bürgerjournalisten im Web zu vernetzen“, so Dr. Jamsheed Faroughi, Leiter der Farsi-Redaktion und Initiator von „Ru dar Ru“.

Im Mittelpunkt des interaktiven Projektes, das vom Auswärtigen Amt gefördert wird, stehen das von der DW-Redaktion geschaffene Netzwerk „Bloghaus“ und Facebook. Im „Bloghaus“ werden mehrmals wöchentlich Texte von Bloggern gesammelt und in einem Beitrag zusammengefasst. Daneben liefern bekannte iranische Blogger auf Einladung von „Ru dar Ru“ wöchentlich Kommentare zu von der Redaktion vorgegebenen Themen.

Der Iran hat eine junge Bevölkerung mit einem Durchschnittsalter von 35 Jahren, die ganz selbstverständlich mit den neuen Medien umgeht. „Fortgeschrittene technische Möglichkeiten und das besondere Medienkonsumverhalten iranischer Nutzer in den sozialen Netzwerken sind gute Voraussetzungen für ein erweitertes Engagement, um noch mehr interessierte Menschen anzusprechen und die Resonanz auf die Deutsche Welle in der Region zu steigern“, betont Faroughi. Nach dem Start des Projektes hat sich die Zahl der Facebook-Fans der Farsi-Seite in den vergangenen acht Monaten um das Zehnfache gesteigert. Viele Zugriffe auf die Internetseite der Farsi-Redaktion laufen über Facebook. Die Klickzahlen der Webseite vervierfachten sich im letzten Quartal 2010 im Vergleich zu den ersten drei Monaten des Jahres.

Dazu kommen positive Rückmeldungen und Anregungen von Nutzern. So schreibt der iranische Blogger Mirza Pikovsky: „Während in den klassischen Medien die iranische Blogosphäre und die Meldungen darüber ignoriert werden, bin ich regelrecht begeistert von ‚Ru dar Ru‘“.

Die klassischen Medien haben es mit einer neuen Generation von Nutzern zu tun, die sie nicht mehr mit Totschlagargumenten wie „mangelndes Hintergrundwissen“ oder „fehlende Objektivität“ ignorieren können. Die Nutzer agieren in einem Netzwerk und verfügen über vielfältige Kontakte. Sie schaffen Aufmerksamkeit für neue Themen, die noch nicht in traditionellen Medien zu finden sind. Sie repräsentieren eine Generation, die, nicht selten unter Lebensgefahr, Inhalte produziert, Informationen zusammenträgt, sortiert, selektiert und in ihrem Netzwerk und den Medien präsentiert: die Content Contact Generated Generation (CCG). Diese Generation wird in Ägypten durch Webaktivisten wie Vael Ghonim, in Tunesien durch Blogger wie Sami Ben Gharbia und im Iran durch tausende aktive User vertreten.

Insbesondere in Krisenregionen nutzt die Opposition die sozialen Netzwerke, um sich zu organisieren und Anhänger zu mobilisieren. Der amerikanische Medien-Experte Clay Shirky meint: „Die modernen Netzwerke können nicht allein eine Revolution verursachen, aber ohne Zweifel können sie bei der Verwirklichung einer Revolution helfen.“

Zur Autorin
Azin Heidarinejad leitet das Projekt „Ru dar Ru – die interaktive Plattform für den Iran" und ein Angebot des Farsi-Programms der Deutschen Welle.

نوبل ادبیات در اروپا ماند
هرتا مولر
راوی دیکتاتوری سرخ
راوی دیکتاتوری
بهارستان نباید دنبال باستور بدوه
امیدواریم دیگر زندانی سیاسی نداشته باشیم
بی‌اعتمادی مردم نسبت به رژیم سابق سبب سقوط آن شد
«بهارستان» نباید دنبال «باستور» بدود
انتخاب اوباما به‌عنوان برنده جایزه صلح نوبل
بازگشت آرنولد به سینما
جوانه

قرائت گزارش کمیته ویژه
در جلسه غیرعلنی مجلس
هشت فیلمساز ایرانی به امریکا سفر کردند
پیروزی اصلاح طلبان
عضو کمیته ویژه مجلس:
چهره های سیاسی آزاد می شوند
آفتاب
نوبل صلح برای اوباما
روسیه قابل اعتماد
به چین هم نباید امید

Voice of America (VOA): chances and risks of social media

by **Alex Belida**

Iran's blogosphere is growing, citizen journalists are both consumers and producers of material for the new media. But what of the traditional media? International broadcasters like Voice of America (VOA) are responding to the challenge posed by the new media. In the end though, whatever the medium, credibility is what counts.

Although research shows television is the main medium used by Iranians for receiving news and information, the internet, along with mobile technology and social media, including blogs, Facebook, YouTube and discussion groups, has grown in importance. The has led to what Geneive Abdo, the creator and editor of insideIRAN.org, describes as "an alternative media that shapes public opinion and serves to counter the contrived political narrative advanced by the regime through the state-run media."

According to the Iran Primer issued by the U.S. Institute of Peace (iranprimer.usip.org), the number of internet users in Iran has grown from less than one million in 2000 to about 28 million, or 38 percent of the population, in 2009. And the Persian blogosphere is considered one of the most active in the world with approximately 60,000 regularly updated blogs, according to the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University.

While experts such as Ms. Abdo concede Iranian authorities have far more resources to control and manipulate the internet compared with civil society, the use by Iranian activists of new media as a political weapon against the state is, as she puts it, "among the most sophisticated and savvy in the world."

We at VOA are very aware that this is the future, the place we are going to capture the next generation of VOA users in Iran. The protests in Iran in 2009—the story that grabbed worldwide attention and caused Iran's leadership to rail against the Western media—represented the latest example of VOA's leap into the new information delivery world.

Traffic originating inside Iran to VOA's Persian website increased in June 2009 over 500 percent from the previous month. And despite the Iranian government's efforts to jam TV satellites and block the internet audience feedback told us they were unable to completely block VOA's eight hours of original Persian programming daily—or deny access to our websites through proxies.

We knew very quickly that Iranians were desperate to communicate with the outside world at that time. And in response we set up a special online account to which Iranians could send video footage securely. Our editors could then retrieve, review and use the material, on-air and on-line. At the height of the 2009 crisis, Iranians were sending VOA 300 videos a day, along with thousands of still pictures—all this in addition to their emails and telephone calls.

VOA's audience

"Citizen journalists" in a country where the state controls the media sought out VOA for good reason—the same reason the Iranian government alleged that VOA was responsible for the protests. We have a substantial and regular audience. VOA's Persian News Network, created in 2006, currently commands a weekly TV audience of about 20 percent of the adult population in Iran, according to

InterMedia survey results from earlier this year. VOA-branded Twitter, Facebook and YouTube channels in Persian all helped VOA to broaden its audience. At the height of the crisis, one survey indicated half the population was turning to VOA.

Iran underscores VOA's flexibility in addressing the challenges posed in getting through to hard-to-reach audiences in countries with authoritarian governments, particularly in times of unrest.

To further improve our access, we have been involved in the development and distribution of software that users can install on their computers to permit them to have direct, uncensored access to the web without the use of special web-based proxies.

But let me provide a couple of additional examples of innovative thinking to reach audiences. VOA's Persian News Network (PNN) created a new mobile device application that allows Iranians to download and send content to friends and to VOA via smart phones.

This new application has given Iranians an opportunity not only to get the latest news on their mobile devices but also to share with the world the news as it happens in their country. It is a groundbreaking way to expand our reach inside Iran and deepen our relationship with a key audience.

The application enables users of Apple iPhones and Android phones to get the latest news from PNN and, with a single click, send links to VOA stories in Farsi to friends via Facebook and Twitter pages and e-mail accounts. The application also enables Iran's citizen journalists to use their iPhones and Android phones to send video and still pictures taken on their devices to a secure web site where PNN editors can download the images and review them for possible broadcast use and web posting.

This web application, we believe, has empowered Iranians. To date, there have been over 11,000 downloads of the iPhone app—a modest number but still significant considering iPhones aren't sold openly inside Iran. We don't have recent data on Android downloads. The app is being upgraded to provide live video. And we are expanding our efforts to reach users of other types of mobile devices.

Another example of melding Social Media with traditional broadcasting is the creation and launch of a satirical television show called Static (or Parazit in Farsi) that has become one of Iran's most popular programs. A good measure of its popularity is evident in its Facebook presence. Parazit's Facebook friends number more than 130,000.

The host of the show, 35-year-old Iranian-American Kambiz Hosseini (left below), says people respond to the program because it allows them to "laugh at the things that are happening in Iran."

Co-creator, Saman Arbabi (right above), says shows are often downloaded to DVD and played at parties. Shows are also copied and posted on scores of other websites. Azadeh Moaveni, the author of "Lipstick Jihad," said the show's "irrepressible wit, and most importantly … its humor, slang and cultural references" resonate deeply with a majority of 20, 30, or even 40-year-old Iranians.

What is the impact of all this?

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has apparently decided to make a big move of his own into Social Media. Iran's supreme leader "Tweets" and, according to our colleagues at Radio Free Europe, he's now promoting citizen journalism. Khamenei's office recently called on citizens to send videos, pictures, and audio files they recorded on their phones of his trip to the holy city of Qom to be posted on his website.

khamenei_ir
ب‌الق‌نا ربه‌ر اب مق نای‌وج‌ش‌ناد دون‌ش و تفگ / س
http://bit.ly/bV6MzY about 1 hour ago via twitterfeed

Khamenei's office has announced that it will also post reports and observations from citizens on a special page. Will the office also post critical observations? I doubt it.

But clearly the use of social media by Iran's opposition was a wake-up call for the country's leaders who now appear to be trying to catch up. As Khamenei said last year, the media is more powerful and dangerous than nuclear weapons:

"Today, the most effective international weapon against enemies and opposition is the weapon of propaganda and the media. Today, this is the most powerful weapon and it is even worse and more dangerous than the atomic bomb."

Iran's supreme leader went on: "Didn't you see this weapon of the enemy during the postelection unrest? With this very weapon, the enemy was following our affairs second by second and giving advice to those who were evil [the opposition]."

In this respect, the social media have been embraced by Iran's government, by its activists and by international broadcasters like VOA. But while Twitter and Facebook and the like are nice, how important are they? There were some strong words about the impact of social media during the Iranian election crisis. For example, according to The New Yorker magazine, Mark Pfeifle, a former U.S. national-security adviser, called for Twitter to be nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, saying: "Without Twitter the people of Iran would not have felt empowered and confident to stand up for freedom and democracy."

James Glassman, a former senior State Department official and one-time Chairman of the Broadcasting Board of Governors was quoted in The New Yorker as telling a group of cyber-activists: "You are the best hope for us all." Sites like Facebook, Glassman said, "give the U.S. a significant competitive advantage."

But were these glowing assessments accurate?

Golnaz Esfandiari, a Radio Free Europe/RL correspondent writing in Foreign Policy last June notes that the western media "never tired of claiming that Iranians used Twitter to organize and coordinate their protests" in the post-election period in 2009. She goes on: "Simply put: There was no Twitter Revolution inside Iran. As Mehdi Yahyanejad, the manager of 'Balatarin,' one of the Internet's most popular Farsi-language websites, told the Washington Post last June, Twitter's impact inside

Iran is nil. 'Here [in the United States], there is lots of buzz,' he said. 'But once you look, you see most of it (is) Americans tweeting among themselves.'"

Esfandiari says: "Good old-fashioned word of mouth was by far the most influential medium used to shape the post-election opposition activity. There is still a lively discussion happening on Facebook about how the activists spread information, but Twitter was definitely not a major communications tool for activists on the ground in Iran."

Nevertheless, we at VOA believe that using such tools is essential in the modern era. International broadcasters must have a presence on as many outlets used by their audiences as possible. However, the key, for us, remains the credibility of the news and information that is being distributed.

As VOA Director Danforth Austin put it to me in a recent exchange: "I think our greatest challenge is the one we've faced since we started broadcasting in 1942: maintaining credibility and trust with our audiences. The way people consume media, including news media, is changing rapidly around the globe, and keeping up with those changing habits is critical for a news organization like VOA. But if the content we deliver, whether via shortwave radio or a 3G mobile device, can't be believed or trusted, we've accomplished nothing. Credibility trumps everything."

About the Author
Alex Belida, a veteran VOA correspondent, became a Senior Advisor to the VOA Director in May 2010 after serving as Managing Editor of VOA News and Director of VOA's Persian News Network.

BBC: Social media and Citizen Journalism

by **Rozita Lotfi**

The BBC's Persian service has been enriched by realms of texts, pictures and video images sent to it by a new generation of 'citizen journalists' in Iran. The great temptation is to show it all, immediately, but caution is sometimes warranted.

In June 2005, when Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was elected to his first term as president of Iran, YouTube was just a few months old. A lot had changed by the time he stood for re-election four years later. In June 2009, hundreds of thousands of videos were being uploaded to YouTube every day, Facebook claimed 250 million members across the world, and Twitter had burst into the social media landscape six months earlier.

Against this backdrop, on 14 January 2009 BBC Persian television made an entrance into Iran's media scene, joining radio and online services. After just a few months on air, BBC Persian was named in Newsweek magazine's list of the 20 Most Powerful People in Iran. Part of that power may be attributed to the multitude of opportunities the channel offers the Persian-speaking audience to converse, engage, and express views, through debates, interactivity, and user-generated content.

In 2009, as the presidential election campaign got into full swing, the debate inside Iran grew vigorous. It was inevitable that in this election, the media—and technology-savvy people in Iran—took full advantage of every means of expression available. Rallies were organised via text messages, and videos of the turnout were posted on YouTube. When doubts emerged about the outcome, those active in the country's political dialogue continued communicating via the same channels. Increasingly in the days and weeks following the vote, many channelled their video and interactivity skills toward the newest outlet: BBC Persian TV.

On-the-ground coverage

As protesters took to the streets, we became overwhelmed with calls and emails. People were sending us video, mobile phone footage and still images from the unrest in Iran. The overwhelming volume of unsolicited material we received was often the only source of images from Iran. It was a huge job processing, verifying and cataloguing these images. Some images were broadcast after careful verification. Others images were impossible to verify or too graphic to broadcast. Eventually, the emails, photographs and video that were sent to us by ordinary Iranians become the cornerstone of the BBC's coverage of events in Iran. In doing so, young Iranians have given the term 'citizen journalist' a currency it didn't have before.

Today, digital and social media are viewed as credible tools to be used in news gathering. Ordinary citizens are no longer merely passive subjects whose stories are reported by professional journalists. Increasingly, they are taking centre stage to shape the news agenda. They are taking a proactive role in helping the media tell their stories. They are Citizen Journalists.

For those of us who are in the business of reporting the news, this is, in my opinion, the most exciting aspect of our work today. We see this in newsgathering operations all over the world, from the earthquake in Haiti to the floods in Pakistan, mobile phone footage has offered revealing insights and pictures that we may never

have otherwise seen. At the BBC our viewers have become increasingly important contributors to our coverage. They take us where we cannot go, they show us what they see, they bear witness to events and through their submissions they help us tell the story of what is happening in their cities and communities. Without their contribution, these moments — authoritative testimonies from eye-witnesses — would have been lost. If we don't engage with our audience we lose touch with them, with what they are saying, and with what matters to them.

These developments have brought with them interesting challenges. We are all too aware of the dangers posed by the speed of new technologies — the instantaneous quality — is it better to be first, or better to be second and certain? We still believe in the latter but it's a constant pull in both directions. Resisting the urge to publish immediately is crucial; the seductive nature of unsolicited material is very powerful indeed. Having the courage to say "this is what we know", while also being honest about what we don't know is the key, as well as respecting the intelligence of our audiences enough to let them form their own opinions from that evidence. It is not just the pictures themselves that are seductive to journalists; the idea of providing a voice to the voiceless in the way expressed so powerfully in Tehran is a compelling one. The concept of citizen journalism, of all of the people telling all sides of a story, is difficult to resist.

But as news professionals tasked with the daunting responsibility of providing impartial, accurate and balanced coverage, we must be vigilant. As we do our best to tell the story, we must balance the seductive pull of instantaneous and often moving images against our duty to be accurate and provide comprehensive and well-considered coverage of events as they unfold.

News organisations have to recognise that they do not own the news any more. The public can now determine what is being reported. In this conversation with the pubic, news editors have to listen to the public and then make their own judgements. And they have to learn to be accountable; to explain why they made a decision on what's news and what is left out. Citizen journalism and blogs add to our understanding of what is going on in the world. The direct experience of people has a realism and authenticity that sometimes professional journalism can lack. And if news organisations embrace that, it can strengthen their content.

About the Author
Rozita Lotfi is Head of Television News for the BBC's Persian Service. She was born in Iran, studied in Tehran and London, and joined the BBC in 1996. She was part of the team that launched BBC Persian TV in January 2009.

RFI: Vom „Beobachter“ zum Journalisten: Soziale Netzwerke und Bürgerjournalismus

RFI: From ‘observer’ to journalist: Social networks and citizen journalism

by **Bärbel Moser**

Die sozialen Netzwerke spielen bei den französischen Sendern Radio France International (RFI) und France 24 eine immer bedeutendere Rolle als Vertreiber von Informationen, aber auch als Informationsquelle. Augenfällig wurde das zum ersten Mal nach der Präsidentschaftswahl im Iran 2009.

The main target audiences of the Audiovisuel Extérieur de la France (Radio France Internationale, Monte-Carlo Doualiya, France24, TV5 Monde) are in Africa and the Arab world. RFI also broadcasts to Iran, the Far East and the Americas in local languages and on our webpages. France24 television broadcasts in three languages, in French, Arabic and in English. However AEF has been proposing content based on global social networks for some time. In 2007, RFI launched “L’Atelier des medias” (Media workshop). Each week, the 10,000 members of the network are invited to participate in the conception of this programme which deals with media-linked issues. With its service “Observateurs”, France 24 has been focusing on citizen journalism since 2008.

Seit einigen Jahren verfügt der französische Auslandsrundfunk über zwei Programme, bei denen soziale Netzwerke und Bürgerjournalismus im Mittelpunkt stehen. Bereits 2007 startete RFI das Programm „L’atelier des médias“ (Atelier der Medien), bei dem die 10.000 Community-Mitglieder jede Woche sowohl in Bezug auf die Inhalte als auch bei der Produktion „mitreden“.

Mit dem Programm „Les observateurs“ (Die Beobachter) setzt France 24 schon seit 2008 auf Bürgerjournalisten aus aller Welt, die dazu aufgefordert werden, Videos und Bilder zu aktuellen Ereignissen einzusenden, die dann in Paris überprüft, ins Netz gestellt und zuweilen auch im Fernsehen gezeigt werden.

Evolution und Revolution der Medien

Bekannt geworden ist sie als „Tunisian Girl“: Lina ist 27 Jahre alt und wohnt in Tunis. In nur wenigen Wochen ist sie zur Ikone der Jasmin-Revolution in Tunesien geworden. Lina ist Bloggerin. Mit ihren Fotos und Texten über die Straßenschlachten und andere Ereignisse, die zum Sturz des Regimes in Tunesien geführt haben, hat sie sich einen Namen gemacht. In ihrem Blog schreibt Lina auf Arabisch, Französisch und Englisch. Journalistin ist sie nicht. Sie unterrichtet Englisch an der Universität von Tunis. Wie sie die Ereignisse erlebt und in ihrem Blog verarbeitet hat, berichtete Lina Ben Mhenni in der RFI-Sendung „L’atelier des médias“. Deren Redaktion war im Februar 2011 aus aktuellem Anlass für eine Woche nach Tunis gezogen.

„L’atelier des médias“ sei gleichzeitig eine fast klassische Radiosendung und ein soziales Netzwerk zum Thema Evolution und Revolution der Medienwelt, so definiert Moderator Ziad Maalouf die knapp 45 Minuten, die er jede Woche mit den

Community-Mitgliedern zusammenstellt. Die Sendung läuft nur einmal die Woche, das Netzwerk aber funktioniert praktisch Tag und Nacht und hat inzwischen rund 10.000 Mitglieder.

Woher sie stammen und wer sind sind, das hat Bertrand Kogoe in einer ausführlichen Studie beschrieben. Bertrand ist 34 Jahre alt und lebt in Lomé, der Hauptstadt von Togo. Die Statistiken über das Netzwerk von "L'atélier des médias" erstellt er in seiner Freizeit und liefert sie als aktives Community-Mitglied gratis.

Die Mehrzahl der Fangemeinde, knapp 52 Prozent, kommt aus französischsprachigen Ländern südlich der Sahara und ist im Durchschnitt unter 30 Jahre alt. In den frankophonen Ländern West- und Zentralafrikas hat RFI die meisten Hörer. Die aktive Beteiligung an den vom Sender geschaffenen sozialen Netzwerken und die Hörerzahlen stehen also in direktem Zuammenhang.

In „L'atelier des médias" werden nicht nur medienpolitische Tendenzen reflektiert. Es wird auch über die Wechselwirkung zwischen den in Netzwerken verbreiteten Beobachtungen und den von Profis gestalteten Radioinhalten sowie über den Einfluss, den soziale Netzwerke haben und haben könnten, kollektiv nachgedacht.

Eine besondere Sektion für Blogger gibt es in der Sendung erst seit ein paar Monaten. Unter anderem werden hier die besten frankophonen Blogger weltweit von einer Jury ausgewählt. Die Gewinner haben dann sechs Monate lang die Möglichkeit, ihre Blogs mit Unterstützung von RFI weiter zu entwickeln und über die Plattform „Mondoblog" ins Netz zu stellen.

Die Beiträge gehen weit über die Medienthematik hinaus und werden von den Bloggern selbst bestimmt. Sie müssen jedoch von der Redaktion in Paris zur Veröffentlichung freigegeben werden. In der Radiosendung kommt dann jede Woche einer der Blogger zu Wort.

Immer vor Ort

Seit zwei Jahren haben auch „Les Observateurs" (Die Beobachter) vom internationalen Nachrichtensender France 24 (mit RFI über die Holding „Audiovisuel extérieur de la France" verbunden) in „L'atelier des médias" ihren festen Platz. Bei den „Observateurs" handelt es sich um einen interaktiven Internetauftritt, der seit dreieinhalb Jahren besteht und mit der Hilfe von über 2.000 Bürgerjournalisten aus aller Welt gestaltet wird. Mittlerweile gehört auch eine wöchentliche Fernsehsendung dazu. Julien Pain, der für die Inhalte verantwortlich ist, und seine Kollegen überprüfen in der Pariser Redaktion die Richtigkeit der Informationen und stellen sie dann ins Netz. Immer öfter werden die Videos auch im Fernsehen ausgestrahlt. Die 2.000 Aktiven werden aus über 25.000 Mitgliedern des Netzwerks ausgewählt. „Die ‚Observateurs' sind vor allem dort stark, wo die Meinungsfreiheit extrem eingeschränkt ist und wo keine Journalisten hinkommen", erklärt Julien Pain.

In Tunesien hatte die kleine Redaktion der „Observateurs" schon früh einen aktiven und mutigen Beobachter gefunden. Im Sommer 2010 hatte der 50-jährige Lehrer Slimane Rouissi Bilder von Spannungen im tunesischen Sidi Bouzid nach Paris geschickt. Die Redaktion wählte ihn als „Beobachter" für diesen abgelegenen tunesischen Landstrich, 250 km südlich von Tunis, aus. Als dann im Dezember die ersten Unruhen genau dort losgingen, war France 24 dank Slimane Rouissi einer der ersten Sender, die darüber berichten konnten.

Die in aller Welt tätigen „Beobachter“ gehen oft ein sehr großes persönliches Risiko ein. Meist ist ihre Identität nur der Pariser Redaktion bekannt. Im Internet bleiben sie anonym. Das erfordert großes Vertrauen seitens der Bürgerjournalisten, und die Pariser Redaktion muss sich auf ein solides Netzwerk stützen können, um die Informationen professionell auszuwerten, einzuordnen und dann zu entscheiden, ob sie veröffentlicht werden oder nicht.

Die Zukunft des Journalismus

Die Berichterstattung über die Umwälzungen in der arabischen Welt lief anfangs kaum über professionelle Journalisten. Es waren Blogger und Augenzeugen, die die ersten Bilder vom Geschehen in Tunesien, Ägypten und Libyen in die ausländischen Medien brachten. Schon 2009, nach der Präsidentschaftswahl im Iran, waren die Nachrichten über die Proteste der Opposition hauptsächlich über Twitter, Videoportale und andere Internet-Dienstleister an die ausländische Öffentlichkeit gelangt.

Das persische Programm von RFI ist auch heute noch weitgehend auf Informationen angewiesen, die auf solchen Wegen übermittelt werden. Das mühsam aufgebaute Korrespondentennetz im Iran ist nach den Ereignissen von 2009 völlig zusammengebrochen. Eine der Korrespondentinnen wurde erst nach einer langen Protestkampagne, unterstützt von internationalen Medien und von Reporter ohne Grenzen, und nach einem mehrmonatigen Gefängnisaufenthalt mit schweren gesundheitlichen Folgen im Dezember 2009 wieder frei gelassen.

Das persische RFI-Programm arbeitet heute mit Bloggern und Journalisten, die aus dem Land fliehen konnten und jetzt in Westeuropa leben. Dank ihres engmaschigen Netzwerkes gelingt es, den Kontakt zum Iran aufrecht zu erhalten und so an Informationen zu gelangen, die sonst nicht mehr nach draußen dringen. Und das trotz der Internetzensur.

Wie könnte es weitergehen?

Ziemlich schnell wurden die Umwälzungen in den arabischen Ländern als Facebook-Revolution bezeichnet. Das Internet hat bei solchen Umbrüchen vor allem zwei Funktionen: Die Menschen vor Ort können sich schneller vernetzen, das vereinfacht die Organisation der Proteste, und die Nachrichten über das Geschehen gelangen schneller in die ausländischen Medien, die sie dann über Satellit und Internet wieder in die Länder zurückbringen. Das erhöht den Druck auf die Regime und kann den Gang der Ereignisse beschleunigen.

Das Beispiel Iran vor zwei Jahren hat aber gezeigt, dass die Organisation über die Netzwerke und die Verbreitung der Nachrichten im Ausland allein nicht ausreichen, um den Ausgang des Geschehens nachhaltig zu beeinflussen. „Muss ein Journalist heute noch herausfahren, um über eine Demonstration zu berichten, über Unglücke oder andere Ereignisse dieser Art? Können das jene, die zufällig vor Ort sind, mit einem einfachen Mobiltelefon nicht schneller und besser?“, fragt sich Julien Pain von „Les Observateurs“. Und weiter: „Muss der Profi-Journalist in Zukunft nicht eher die Flut an Informationen filtern, sie einordnen, Hintergrundinformationen liefern und dann dahin gehen, wo seine Erfahrung und wirkliche Kompetenzen gefragt sind?“ Welche Bedeutung die sozialen Netzwerke und die Bürgerjournalisten in Zukunft haben werden, hängt auch von der technischen Entwicklung ab und vor allem davon, wie schnell das mobile Internet weltweit zugänglich sein wird, da sind sich die Spezialisten bei RFI und France 24 einig.

Zur Autorin

Bärbel Moser arbeitete als Nachrichtenredakteurin, war beim französischen Rundfunk in Straßburg und als Korrespondentin für den deutschen Dienst von Agence France Presse in Straßburg tätig, bevor sie nach Paris zu Radio France International wechselte. Dort ist sie Chefredakteurin der fremdsprachigen Programme.

Reporters Without Borders: shoulder to shoulder for free speech

by **Lucie Morillon**

Around the world, divisions between traditional journalists, online journalists and citizen journalists are breaking down. They need each other to report on big stories. Various regimes, however, are also awake to the latest trends. A report on freedom of speech and a media without borders.

Since the creation of the internet online freedom of expression has never been more threatened. Yet there has never been a greater proliferation of social networks and individual contributions to information than there is today.

Reporters Without Borders, whose mission is focused on the defence of press freedom, has been striving to protect online freedom of expression since the early 2000s. For in many countries where the traditional media cannot—or do not wish to—cover sensitive subjects, it is the bloggers and citizen journalists who are on the front line in the struggle for the right to inform.

The internet and social networks have created unprecedented spaces for information exchange and communication. In Saudi Arabia, it is no accident that half of the bloggers are women. They discuss women-related subjects neglected by the state-owned media. It is also no coincidence that online chat rooms have become so popular with young 'netizens' who want to circumvent prevailing social codes of conduct.

In Egypt, Facebook has become a mobilisation tool, the rallying point for the "6 April Youth Movement" and those protesting against the social and political order. An online refuge is essential in a country in which the emergency law bans demonstrations. Thanks to a torture video distributed over the Net by the now-famous Wael Abbas, Egyptian police officers were judged and found guilty of police brutality. A Facebook group of over 300,000 members was formed to condemn the murder last summer, by plain-clothes policemen, of Khaled Said, a young man arrested in a cybercafé and killed a short time later. During the November 2010 elections, bloggers provided live coverage of the elections on Twitter and exposed observed violations and voting-related protests.

In Iran, the video of Neda Agha-Soltan, the young protester killed during the demonstrations against Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's re-election, was a severe blow to the Iranian regime's propaganda as news of it spread like wildfire on the Net, causing widespread public indignation at home and abroad. During the demonstrations, exasperated police forces had resolved to confiscate mobile phones to prevent "leaks" of similar videos. What was exaggeratedly labelled the "Twitter Revolution" actually relied on social networks, but the latter were also used by the regime to track and expose the dissidents.

In Burma, the Saffran Revolution was experienced live, virtually as it happened in 2007, thanks to the videos posted online via mobile phones belonging to the demonstrators and their supporters. The 1988 uprising had been crushed in absolute secrecy, initial images of it having seeped through only weeks after the massacre.

Authoritarian regimes have retaliated by blocking particularly controversial websites and the most popular social networks, temporarily

suspending Net access in Burma, slowing down bandwidth speed in Iran, expanding cyber-surveillance, and promoting active propaganda on the Web in order to prevent dissidents from using Web 2.0. Russian President Dimitri Medvedev's blog has managed to attract a bona fide audience on RuNet, the Russian Web. In Venezuela, Hugo Chávez has launched a power grab for the Net, creating a blog and a Twitter account at the same time as liberticidal laws were being enacted. In Belarus during the December 2010 elections, internet users who wanted to visit opposition websites were redirected to websites which were visually similar, but promoted regime propaganda. China was quick to implement a very impressive technical filtering system known as the "Electronic Great Wall". Along with Vietnam and Iran, China is now one of the world's biggest prisons for netizens: to date, 77 Chinesee netizens are behind bars.

As for our democracies, the time is long gone when mainstream media journalists would consider with disdain or distrust those who had resorted to informing the public online. Not only have they learned to co-exist, but they even collaborate. The advent of the social media was not a death sentence for traditional journalism. On the contrary, it has given it the opportunity to maximise its potential and perfect its mutation by adopting a format that can take full advantage of technology.

A study conducted in 2009 by the Pew Research Centre for the People and the Press revealed the public's growing disinterest in the media, while also stressing the importance of the role of "watchdog journalism". This lack of trust created a favourable environment for social media growth. If the information being provided to the public is unreliable or biased, let us go and look for it for ourselves! For information is no longer circulated through a one-way street. A new process is underway. Bypassing publishers' filters, the average citizen can now not only select the information he or she wants to read, but contribute to it, comment on it, and distribute it to an impressive number of contacts. All of this is being done via networking.

Everyone is becoming a producer or broadcaster of information. There is no longer any need for the right diploma, or concern about document layout and production costs. Yet citizen journalists conducting authentic investigations are adhering to the principles that ensure effective journalism: transparency, attentiveness, and the sharing and dissemination of information. The life span of a given article or opinion is extended online, enlivened by readers' comments, the author's response, and sometimes even enriched by experts on the issue who decide to take part in the debate. One article's circulation can thus reach an unexpectedly broad readership.

Everyone's a potential journalist

Anyone may be a witness to key events and relay them to a wider audience. Naturally, manipulations and false news may also be circulated, hence the necessity to verify sources. Yet thanks to its self-regulating capacity, the web can overcome such pitfalls precisely because it is able to rely on tested networks and cybernauts' reactions. Above all, when the filter of traditional journalism is brought into play, the news is verified and brought into context.

CNN understood this when it created its "iReport" section, which calls for contributions from cybernauts, an initiative already adopted by numerous media. The France 24 TV news channel's "Observers" show relies on a network of bloggers in order to rebroadcast amateur videos. Journalists use Facebook and Twitter to gather the news, check its accuracy, and call for unsolicited testimonies when covering natural disasters or noteworthy events.

In 2010, WikiLeaks published confidential documents on such a massive scale that it is still too soon to measure the consequences. Yet the website has made a clever transition from a mere "raw news whisteblower" to that of a media that removes the names of local informants and, first and foremost, chooses to work hand-in-hand with several major news organisations. This constitutes one example of collaboration between the new media—with their capacities for unlimited publishing and responsiveness—and the traditional media, with their talent for bringing content into context and making it accessible to the general public.

Azerbaijan has been the setting for a successful partnership between the traditional and new media. Taboo subjects abound in Azerbaijan, where freedom of expression is routinely abused, and where journalists fall prey to an endless cycle of violence and intimidation. In September 2010, however, when the Frontline Club in Baku opened, a documentary was shown produced by the Turan Press Agency and the online television website, Objectiv TV. The topic was the corruption of local authorities who had embezzled funds earmarked for flood victims in central Azerbaijan.

The collaborative platform Ushahidi relied on crowd-sourcing to monitor the spread of the H1N1 virus or post-election violence in Kenya. Its findings are used by the traditional media.

Chinese web surfers are the first to acknowledge that the internet and social media have helped push back the limits of censorship. Whether the topics relate to societal problems or consumer rights, they are being dealt with on the Net before being taken up by the media.

The corruption of local state officials has been exposed and relayed online, occasionally leading to the arrest of perpetrators. The same thing is happening in Egypt, where cases of sexual harassment in Cairo were first broached on the internet and then by the traditional media, which quoted blog content.

The greatest challenge today is not so much to persuade seasoned journalists, citizen journalists and curious Net surfers to work together: that transition is already underway. They need each other to ensure that the information they are disseminating is true. The unanswered question, however, is whether the founding principles of interactivity, sharing and dialogue will survive when it is so easy for people to choose what they want to read on the web, to choose their friends and their contacts, and yet no longer have to consider divergent opinions. Another challenge is to prevent the spread of digital segregation and access to information that differs according to the country in which the internet connection is made, not as the result of individual choice, but because of the web-filtering methods adopted by certain governments. What is needed now is vigilance.

About the Author
Lucie Morillon is the Head of Reporters Without Borders New Media Desk. She deals with monitoring online freedom of expression and advocating for the release of online reporters, bloggers and netizens who have been imprisoned for speaking freely on the internet.

Radio Zamaneh's approach to news-making

by **Farid Haerinejad**

Seeking to provide a professionally produced and independent media forum for bloggers and opinion-makers, on Iranian political news and cultural concerns, is the task of Radio Zamaneh.

"Free" and "press" have both had limited meaning in the heavily censored media environment in Iran over the last few years. But an alternative media forum has taken shape in the form of a radio station/website, stationed in the diaspora, which aims to promote a free press, practise freedom of expression, and publish non-partial news and uncensored literature. It has also made room for collaborations involving citizen journalists and pioneer journalists, challenged taboos in the backrooms of Iranian culture, and provided coaching lessons in democracy to a society that has been craving for human and civil rights.

One of the reasons that pulled Iranians out of their homes and into the streets in the year prior to 1979 was a lack of freedom of expression. The revolution was meant to bring with it a free press, among other freedoms, but these never eventuated. After the revolution, the press played a game of tag with the government, in that reformist newspapers were shut down only to be re-launched under new auspices by the same teams of journalists, shut down again and re-launched again until the game became a war between the press and the Ministry of Guidance. The punishments for those journalists who dared to practise their rights ranged from floggings, to exile, to jail time, and worse.

Many journalists and activists switched to blogging. Internet blogs became the perfect medium for established and beginner journalists as well as for political and civil activists to express their views. But such a vast market of ideas also provided room for reckless and opinionated posts and articles, and blurred the bliss of freedom of expression that was easily attained in weblogs. The only real way to solve this problem would be for a change to take place in the political sphere, to protect freedom of expression and a free press, and this wasn't likely to happen quickly inside of Iran.

Iranians in the diaspora, however, could play a constructive role. The diaspora already hosted many online Farsi magazines, and in this context Radio Zamaneh was established, in 2006, as a non-partisan political media tasked with covering issues of concern to the Iranian public. Radio Zamaneh is a democratic forum for staging website news and radio programs, using a hybrid of old and new methods. It has become known as the Bloggers Website and as the Blog Pool. In its first phase of development it encouraged blogging and podcasting using all of the up-to-the-minute tools of communications available to the readership/listeners. It addressed issues with the help of a free-spirited, young generation of bloggers who observed society and responded swiftly to changes within it.

In its second phase of development, a more established directing of the editorial team has prevailed. While blogging is crucial, simply turning Radio Zamaneh over to blogging might hurt the foundations of what radio and newspapers are all about. This led to a fusion of the best-of-the-best to create an independent yet responsible, skilled, and non-partial media, for those living in Iran as well as for those Iranians working from the outside for democracy in Iran.

Radio Zamaneh's approach to publishing news, at the time of the disputed presidential elections in 2009, was to encourage the twitting and

facebooking of events as they unfolded, but in a polished and professional manner, managed by a news-savvy team, to make sure the reader/listener received news without partial and partisan interpretations.

Cultural storytelling is another of Radio Zamaneh's tools. Articles are written and literature is analysed as if it were oral history retold. Again, the aim is to bring together academic as well as ordinary-people views on such issues as human rights, women's rights and minority rights, and to overcome obstacles preventing people from developing a civil society armed with a knowledge and a practice of human rights.

For example, Radio Zamaneh has critically examined taboos on moral and gender issues, literature and philosophical theories. Women's issues are examined with a view that has distanced itself from both traditional and traditionally-sited political ideas. Women essayists and rights activists submit reports and essays on what they think is more significant in women's lives. Taboos are explored and discussed with a view towards their 'de-tabooing' further into the future. Books considered to be of literary merit, which have never been published because of censorship, are published on Radio Zamaneh's site for a Farsi readership. Issues concerning sexual minorities and other marginalised groups, who have long been considered pariahs, are also discussed and published on Zamaneh's site, helping to break down barriers, taboos, censorship, bias and violations of human rights.

All of this work is carried out while upholding the principles of independence and professionalism.

The challenge at Radio Zamaneh has been to handle a form of media that has no real precedent. There are two types of media that are more or less easy to manage. One is a controlled media, with strict rules and the censoring of anything outside the margins. The other is a completely free and uncontrolled media that takes no responsibility whatsoever for what it publishes or presents. At Radio Zamaneh we aim to be responsible for what we publish and we aim to be independent, in the sense that we would like to take credit for an intelligent and open-minded monitoring and channelling of content while making sure that we do not censor and we do not neglect. Plus, we want to develop a freedom to reach deep inside our culture, with a vast variety of voices that add streets and backstreets of opinion, that turn on text and audio, that create a huge city of media, that achieve a freedom of the press that might proudly mirror society, and that will criticise in order to better the culture.

About the Author
Farid Haerinejad is an award-winning journalist and documentary film-maker who is currently Editor in Chief of the Dutch-based Persian-language Radio Zamaneh in Amsterdam.

Alternative media, supplementing the mainstream

by **Fred Andon Petrossians**

The new spectrum of citizen media/social media offer much to the information world but they also face many challenges and, in turn, need to be challenged. A look here at two dynamic projects: Global Voices and Radio Farda.

Social Media and Citizen Media not only provide news and information but also create a space where Iranians can launch political campaigns, environmental warnings, art expositions and many other activities. Such a space itself can become an interesting source of information and news. As such, interactive web technologies occupy a key position in the internet ecology and, increasingly, traditional media organisations are attempting to use these technologies and position themselves within this new market. One example of a new media venue that is used by those interested in learning about Iranian society is Global Voices (globalvoicesonline.org), which for more than six years has revealed both the opportunities and the challenges that an alternative media faces.

A pioneer

Being the first in the virtual world is a non-deniable advantage for both profit and non-profit organisations. At the end of 2004, when Global Voices emerged from a conference at Harvard University in the USA, many were questioning whether blogging or citizen media was useful at all. Today, politicians can convey their messages through channels such as YouTube, which President Obama used to send a New Year's message to Iranians, or Twitter, which a US State Department official used ironically to wish Ahmadinejad Happy Birthday and to ask him to free two jailed young Americans. Global Voices was a pioneer in the use of blogs as a source of information and the site has highlighted the value of bloggers as citizen journalists.

Here are a few examples of how Global Voices helped us to learn about Iran beyond the mainstream media. In 2005, pro-democracy and pro-reform bloggers were considered by many in the West as the only or most dominant voices in Iran's citizen media. By contrast, the presence of Islamist bloggers was completely ignored. For the first time in the international media, Global Voices published a report on Hezbollah bloggers (globalvoicesonline.org/2005/12/12/iranian-hezbollah-goes-blogging) which demonstrated their diversity. One of them wrote: "We support Hezbollah and we are very interested [in the] Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt but we do not support and like Hamas because it is a Salafid group and it kills innocent civilians." (hnn.us/articles/44774.html)

The Western media used to claim that both reformist and hardline Islamists shared the same opinion on nuclear issues. By reading reformist's blogs, Global Voices exposed the radical difference between the two groups. Reformists could not publish anything in the media that differed from the official position on nuclear issues but a few, like Mohammad Ali Abtahi, the former Vice President, used blogs to express their views against established policy (globalvoicesonline.org/2007/02/08/nuclear-crisis-and-shadow-of-war-at-the-iranian-blogosphere).

Event-focused media

People read and hear about what is going on in foreign countries when a news event, such as demonstrations, a natural disaster or a scandal, occurs in that country. This is true for reporting in the mainstream media as much as it is for Global Voices. In other words, to get due attention, there is no difference between the alternative media and the traditional media: there is a distinct correlation between hot events and intensive readership.

However, when your information comes exclusively from bloggers, it can be very difficult to receive a balanced point of view on a given situation. This is something the mainstream media claims to provide you with. In a dictatorship like Iran, where the media is a monopoly controlled by the regime, citizen media becomes the only space for citizens to express their ideas. The outcome of this circumstance is clear. On the one side we have a majority of cyber activists who are anti-regime and on the other side there is a multitude of state-run, regime-controlled sites.

There are many pro-democracy bloggers who operate in a pressured society like Iran. They write anti-regime material and provide raw material for Global Voices, material that is essentially against the Islamic State or very critical of Islamic Republic leaders. Such sources of information mean that citizen media platforms, like Global Voices, inevitably become opinionated sites. Although this does not exclude the fact that pro-regime opinions have also been mentioned in Global Voices.

Global Voices has helped to create a new model of news gathering quite different from the traditional one. After June 2009, as protests erupted following the presidential election, both social networking and citizen media played a key role in informing the whole world about the events occurring in Iran. CNN, BBC and probably all of the mainstream media relied on films from YouTube, Facebook posts, Tweets and blog posts to gather information on the protest movement. Today, various media outlets still follow Iran's social media and citizen media.

Although Global Voices is always following Iran's citizen media, in a crisis period it loses its previous 'monopoly' to coverage by mainstream media like The New York Times or alternative media like The Huffington Post. But by providing in-depth analysis, Global Voice can create an added value to events that others miss all too often.

Radio Farda: between two worlds

Radio Farda, a US-funded organisation outside Iranian borders, may be considered an alternative media to Iran-based media. Farda's mission is to provide news and information that Iranians are deprived of and cannot receive through existing channels in their country. The Radio Farda site (www.radiofarda.com) was attracting 14 million page views per month by the end of 2010. Farda seizes on opportunities in citizen media and social networking to expand on and fortify its presence. It also faces challenges, such as filtering by officialdom in Iran, which also applies to many other Iranian news sites.

Radio Farda launched its Facebook page in spring 2009. At the end of 2010, it had more than 67,000 fans. Radio Farda's fans read Farda articles, share photos and films, and leave comments. It is worth noting that most comments on the Facebook site are not simply simple statements such as "Poor Iran" or "Down with dictatorship". Fans reply with intelligent comments when Radio Farda asks them questions or invites them to share their experiences. For the thirtieth anniversary of the Iran-Iraq war fans were asked to talk about their own war experiences. Ex-soldiers and war refugees wrote about their experiences in detail.

Engaging with fans creates a dynamism for both fans/users and Radio Farda.

Social media and citizen media can be both a blessing and a curse. On some occasions a piece of unreliable information can move forward too quickly on social networks and link-sharing sites. Enormous pressure is then placed on Radio Farda to report on unconfirmed stories. Farda can then be accused of censorship, carelessness and even of making compromises with the regime. Farda establishes a dialogue by answering comments and emails and explaining its journalistic mission.

Farda's channels into Iran are limited, and due to fear and repression, people do not give interviews or write for Farda's site from inside the country. Iranian officials do not give interviews either. So, only two sources remain: the experts and the opposition. Reflecting the opposing point of view without anyone challenging it can make Farda seem like a one-sided site. This poses everyday challenges to Radio Farda's team.

With all these things in mind, it is clear that social media is both a source of information as well as possible misinformation. It's the people behind the screens that matter, as much as the people who report on what they are saying.

About the Author
Fred Andon Petrossians is Online Editor in Chief of Radio Farda. He recently co-edited a book on Iran's protest movement called "Hope, Votes and Bullets".

3.

DIE NEUEN MEDIEN UND DER POLITISCHE DIALOG

NEW MEDIA AND POLITICAL DIALOGUE

Über Kommunikation zum Wandel?

Change through communication?

by **Markus Michaelsen**

Nicht zum ersten und nicht zum letzten Mal bot die iranische Wahlkrise vom Sommer 2009 Anlass für eine Diskussion über die demokratiefördernden Potenziale des Internet. Immer wieder weckt das Internet die Erwartung, politischen Wandel voranzutreiben. Doch welche Leistungen können soziale Netzwerke, Blogs und Onlinemedien tatsächlich bei der Öffnung autoritärer Systeme erbringen?

The election crisis in Iran in the summer of 2009 provided occasion — not for the first time and not for the last time — for a discussion about the potential of the internet to foster democratic change. The internet always seems to exceed expectations in expediting political change. But what can social media, blogs and internet sites really do to promote openness in authoritarian regimes?

Natürlich können „die Medien" nicht als einheitlich und eigenständig handelnder Akteur betrachtet werden. So sind in autoritären politischen Systemen Massenmedien wie Presse oder Fernsehen meist strikter Zensur durch den Staat unterworfen. Infolgedessen steigt die Bedeutung so genannter „kleiner" Medien für die Kommunikation von Opposition und Zivilgesellschaft. Bekannt sind hier die samizdat der Dissidenten in den damals sozialistischen Ländern – Amateurpublikationen verbotener Literatur, die mehr und mehr ein Forum für politische Diskussionen boten. Ein prominentes Beispiel liefert auch der Iran: Während der Revolution gegen den Schah 1979 verbreiteten die Anhänger des im Exil befindlichen Ayatollah Khomeini dessen Predigten über geschmuggelte Kassetten im Land. Flugblätter, CDs und kleinere Pressepublikationen fallen ebenfalls in diese Kategorie.

Kleine Medien ermöglichen es politischen und sozialen Akteuren, die eine Veränderung der bestehenden Ordnung anstreben und keinen Zugang zu öffentlicher Kommunikation erhalten, ihre Ansichten zumindest an ein begrenztes Publikum zu übermitteln. Über den so entstehenden Austausch werden nicht nur kollektive Interessen und Ziele entwickelt, sondern auch Strategien für ihre Umsetzung. Durch die Debatten in diesen alternativen Öffentlichkeiten können letztlich neue Vorstellungen für die Zukunft der Gesellschaft erarbeitet werden; eine essenzielle Voraussetzung für politischen und sozialen Wandel. Zudem wird die Herausbildung gemeinsamer Solidaritäten gefördert, was spätere politische Mobilisierung erleichtert.

Das Potenzial dieser alternativen Medien kann indes ohne eine lebendige Zivilgesellschaft oder eine mutige Opposition kaum ausgeschöpft werden. Ebenso spielt der Grad autoritärer Repression eine wichtige Rolle. So genannte „softe" Regime, etwa in der arabischen Welt, gewähren bei Respektierung bestimmter Tabuthemen der Presse Freiräume, um einen liberalen Eindruck zu vermitteln und ihre Legitimation zu erhöhen. Dementsprechend bilden politische Einstellungen und Professionalität der Journalisten einen weiteren wichtigen Faktor.

Medienakteure sind eher dazu bereit, den Positionen der Zivilgesellschaft oder der Opposition Zugang zur Öffentlichkeit zu verschaffen, wenn zwischen beiden politische Übereinstimmungen

bestehen. Auch die Motivation von Journalisten, sich mit Mechanismen der Selbstzensur oder der Vereinnahmung durch dominante politische Akteure auseinanderzusetzen und eine ausgewogene Berichterstattung zumindest anzustreben, prägt mögliche Beiträge von Medien zu demokratischer Veränderung.

Dieses Schema hat durch die Verbreitung des Satellitenfernsehens in den 1990er Jahren eine zusätzliche Dimension erhalten. Von den grenzüberschreitenden Programmen internationaler Nachrichtensender versprach man sich nicht nur eine Durchbrechung von Informationsmonopolen autoritärer Staaten, sondern auch „Demonstrationseffekte", die den Menschen in diesen Staaten die Erfahrungen der demokratischen Umbrüche in anderen Ländern vor Augen führten. Sprachliche und kulturelle Barrieren von Sendern wie CNN entfielen erst mit dem Aufkommen regionaler Medienmärkte. So existieren in der arabischen Welt mittlerweile mehr als 200 Satellitensender. Deren Funktionsweise ist allerdings sowohl von wirtschaftlichen Faktoren als auch den Kriterien massenmedialer Informationsverarbeitung geprägt. Die Sender selbst vertreten nicht aktiv ein politisches Programm, sondern reagieren auf Ereignisse. Gleichwohl haben engagierte Talkshows von Sendern wie Al-Jazeera zu einer offeneren gesellschaftlichen Debatte beigetragen, die längerfristig einer Veränderung politischer Werte und Einstellungen förderlich sein kann.

Der Iran ist seit Mitte der 1990er Jahre ebenfalls Ziel einer wachsenden Zahl persischsprachiger Satellitensender. Zum Großteil von der iranischen Exilgemeinde produziert, haben sie beim Publikum nach anfänglichem Enthusiasmus mitunter auch Befremden ausgelöst. Politische Ansichten und selbst Sprachstil der Auslandsopposition hatten kaum noch Bezug zur Realität der Islamischen Republik. Demgegenüber hat der von der US-Regierung finanzierte persische Ableger von Voice of America (VOA) mit der allmählichen Verbesserung seiner Berichterstattung und der zeitgleichen Verschärfung der Medienzensur im Iran mehr Zuschauer gewonnen. Das allzu offensichtliche Eintreten des Senders für Washingtons Politik stoßen beim iranischen Publikum jedoch auf Vorbehalte. Höhere Maßstäbe an journalistische Professionalität setzt zweifelsohne BBC Persian TV, das seit Anfang 2008 nach der Rekrutierung einer großen Zahl junger Journalisten aus dem Iran in London produziert wird. Allen Satellitensendern gemein ist jedoch das Problem, dass sie über keine eigenen Korrespondenten in Teheran verfügen.

Potenziale des Internets

Wendet man die aufgezeigten Qualitätskriterien für Medien in der politischen Transformation auf das Internet an, so sind dessen Vorteile zunächst nicht von der Hand zu weisen: Das Internet bietet die Flexibilität kleiner Medien, eine transnationale Reichweite und integriert mehrere Medienformate. Prinzipiell können alle Anwender direkt online kommunizieren, ohne die Zugangshürden anderer Medien überwinden zu müssen. Anwendungen wie Weblogs und soziale Netzwerke machen die Erstellung von Onlineinhalten und die Vernetzung von Teilnehmern noch leichter. Die Einschätzung des Internets als ideales Medium für soziale Bewegungen, Dissidenten und Oppositionsakteure erscheint also nachvollziehbar. Nichtsdestotrotz stehen dem einige Einschränkungen entgegen.

Zunächst reduzieren Faktoren wie Internetzugang, Bildung und Medienkompetenz, die häufig unter dem Begriff des „Digitalen Grabens" zusammengefasst werden, die Zahl potenzieller Anwender. Entscheidend ist zudem die Frage, inwieweit

Internetnutzung überhaupt politisch motiviert ist. Inhalte müssen aktiv „ersurft" werden, nicht jeder Anwender sucht zwangsläufig nach politischen Informationen und Debatten. Eine Studie in Marokko – einem Land, das durchaus als sanft autoritär eingestuft werden kann – zeigt, dass Jugendliche hier im Internet vor allem Zerstreuung suchen und individuelle Interessen verfolgen.

Weitaus schwerer noch wiegt der Faktor der autoritären Kontrolle: Länder wie der Iran und China haben ausgeklügelte Zensursysteme entwickelt und blockieren durch Filter den Zugang zu bestimmten Themenbereichen. Zugleich müssen kritische Onlineautoren mit juristischer Verfolgung und Repressionen rechnen. Überdies setzen autoritäre Machthaber das Internet erfolgreich zur Festigung der eigenen Position ein, sei es bei der Überwachung ihrer Bürger oder zur Propagierung eigener Sichtweisen.

Geht es also um demokratische Veränderungen, so profitieren vor allem engagierte Akteure der Zivilgesellschaft vom Internet – ganz ähnlich wie bei anderen alternativen Medien auch. In Indonesien beispielsweise tauschten oppositionelle Studenten vor dem Sturz General Suhartos Zeitungsberichte, Kommentare und Gerüchte über Mailinglisten aus, die internationale Menschenrechtsgruppen und Exiloppositionelle ebenfalls mit einbanden. In der Ukraine und in Russland zirkulieren von Journalisten und Amateuren erstellte Onlinemedien, die vor allem der politisch und kulturell interessierten Mittelschicht ein Informations- und Meinungsforum bieten. Mit zunehmender staatlicher Einflussnahme auf die Massenmedien steigt nicht nur die Beliebtheit, sondern auch der oppositionelle Charakter dieser Publikationen. Auch in China erleichtert das Internet trotz „Great Firewall" die Suche nach alternativen Nachrichtenquellen, und in einigen Fällen gelang es, über Informationsverbreitung im Netz der Regierung Zugeständnisse abzutrotzen, wie etwa 2003 einen transparenteren Umgang mit der SARS-Pandemie im Land.

Auch im Iran ist die Bedeutung des Internets für die Reformbewegung seit 2001 nach Schließung von weit über 100 Zeitungen und Zeitschriften innerhalb weniger Jahre gestiegen. Verschiedene Nachrichtenseiten im Internet bieten nicht nur kritischen Journalisten und Intellektuellen ein Forum, sondern suchen auch den eingeschränkten Zugang von Reformpolitikern zu den übrigen Medien zu kompensieren. Andere Onlinepublikationen entstehen im Ausland und vernetzen exilierte Journalisten mit den Kollegen in ihrer Heimat. Weblogs erweitern und vertiefen den Informationsaustausch im Internet zusätzlich. Obwohl sich nur ein verhältnismäßig kleiner Teil der großen Zahl persischsprachiger Blogs mit Themen von politischer Relevanz beschäftigt, entwickeln sich doch in der iranischen Blogosphäre regelmäßig Diskussionen von hoher Qualität und Intensität. Dabei sind es vor allem journalistisch geprägte Blogger, die Debatten lancieren und als Meinungsführer agieren. Soziale Medien wiederum haben vor allem während der Kampagne zu den Präsidentschaftswahlen 2009 sowie in der nachfolgenden Krise an Einfluss gewonnen. Die mittlerweile weitestgehend von der Öffentlichkeit abgeschnittenen Oppositionsführer veröffentlichen Kommuniqués über Facebook und Videointerviews auf Youtube. Zweifellos haben die sozialen Netzwerke im Internet den Austausch über Ziele, Identität und Strategien der Grünen Bewegung deutlich verstärkt.

Resümiert man mögliche Leistungen des Internets für einen demokratischen Wandel, so gilt es zunächst, den durch Internetanwendungen erleichterten Bürgerjournalismus abzugrenzen,

wie ihn die Menschen auf den Straßen Teherans praktizierten, als sie das brutale Vorgehen der Sicherheitskräfte dokumentierten und einem internationalen Publikum zugänglich machten. Dieser entfaltet vor allem in Krisenzeiten kurzfristig seine Wirkung. Fraglich bleibt ebenfalls, inwieweit Onlinekommunikation eine tatsächliche politische Mobilisierung fördert. In der Forschung zu sozialen Bewegungen wird die Ansicht vertreten, dass das Internet weder andere Formen der Protestkommunikation, wie Mobiltelefone oder Mundpropaganda, noch die zentrale Erfolgsbedingung einer kohärenten Organisierung von Opposition zu ersetzen vermag, sondern eher ergänzend wirkt.

Der von Webseiten, Blogs und sozialen Netzwerken getragene Informations- und Meinungsaustausch hingegen widmet sich kontinuierlich gesellschaftlichen und politischen Entwicklungen. Dabei werden nicht nur neue Themen und Positionen zur Sprache gebracht, sondern wird auch Regierungspolitik kritisch kommentiert und hinterfragt. Als Schlüsselfiguren der iranischen Zivilgesellschaft beanspruchen Journalisten, Reformintellektuelle und Frauenrechtlerinnen hier aktiv ihr Recht auf freie Meinungsäußerung. Dabei praktizieren und propagieren sie grundlegende Werte einer demokratiefreundlichen Diskussionskultur. Nicht zuletzt half Kommunikation mit internationalen Medien und Menschrechtsorganisationen dabei, den Druck auf das iranische Regime aus dem Ausland zu erhöhen. Innerhalb ihrer begrenzten Möglichkeiten erfüllen diese alternativen Öffentlichkeiten des Internets somit grundlegende demokratische Funktionsleistungen von Medien: Informationsverbreitung, Meinungsbildung und Kritik.

Chancen für den Auslandsrundfunk

Wie lassen sich diese Erkenntnisse in Bezug zu Arbeitsweise und Aufgaben des Auslandsrundfunks setzen? Als klassisches Medium grenzüberschreitender Kommunikation reichen die Ziele des Auslandsrundfunks von einer positiven Selbstdarstellung des Produktionslandes über die politische Werte und Positionen vermittelnde Public Diplomacy bis hin zum Ausgleich eines fehlenden Medienpluralismus im Empfängerland (das Angebot eines „Heimatprogramms“ für im Ausland lebende Bürger des Produktionslandes sei hier ausgeklammert). In der Medien-Transformations-Matrix ist der Auslandsrundfunk damit an einer ähnlichen Position wie das Satellitenfernsehen anzusiedeln. Im Gegensatz zu den innerhalb der autoritären Staaten produzierten alternativen Medien ist er nicht durch Repressionen bedroht und verfügt meist über eine gesicherte finanzielle wie redaktionelle Ausstattung. Ebenso wie die Satellitenprogramme kann der Auslandsrundfunk jedoch nicht zwangsläufig auf qualifizierte bzw. permanente Korrespondenten im Empfängerland zugreifen. Unklarheit über eigene Zielstellungen und Programmgestaltung kann beim anvisierten Publikum mangelndes Interesse (fehlende inhaltliche oder kulturelle Bezugspunkte) oder sogar Ablehnung (allzu offensichtliche politische Botschaften) erzeugen. Andererseits ist der Auslandsrundfunk sowohl bei der Themenauswahl als auch bei der Übermittlung seiner Programme deutlich flexibler als das Satellitenfernsehen. Eine Konvergenz mit Onlineformaten ist ebenso möglich wie die Besetzung von Nischenthemen.

Die verschiedenen im Iran zu empfangenen Auslandssender konnten Qualität und Publikumsakzeptanz ihrer persischsprachigen Programme in den letzten Jahren verbessern. Dies ist einerseits

auf die immer drastischere Zensur nationaler Medien zurückzuführen, die das Interesse an alternativen Informationsquellen gesteigert hat. Andererseits waren angesichts düsterer Berufsperspektiven mehr und mehr iranische Journalisten bereit, ihre Heimat zu verlassen – eine Abwanderung, die nach der Wahlkrise noch einmal deutlich zugenommen hat. Viele junge und professionelle Journalisten mit teilweise exzellenten Kontakten in den Iran haben mittlerweile bei verschiedenen Medien im Ausland Beschäftigung gefunden. Nicht zuletzt aber hat das Internet die Interaktion mit Journalisten und Publikum vor Ort sowie den Bezug der Programminhalte auf gesellschaftliche Entwicklungen im Iran verbessert.

Die Gewinnung qualifizierter Mitarbeiter mit präziser Kenntnis des Empfängerlands ist natürlich nur ein Aspekt, um der Herausforderung einer authentischen Programmgestaltung zu begegnen und sollte keinesfalls auf Kosten der lokalen Medienentwicklung gehen. Umso offensichtlicher sind die Chancen, die sich für den Auslandsrundfunk aus einer Anknüpfung an die alternativen Öffentlichkeiten des Internets ergeben. Hier lassen sich Themen und Meinungsführer einer vom autoritären Nationalstaat eingeengten Zivilgesellschaft identifizieren. Der Auslandsrundfunk kann diese Debatten aufgreifen, mittels eigener journalistischer Standards aufbereiten und dank der zur Verfügung stehenden Ressourcen und Sendestrukturen mit verbesserter Resonanz an das Empfängerland zurückleiten. Auf diese Art lassen sich nicht nur Relevanz, Glaubwürdigkeit und Publikumsbindung der Programminhalte steigern, sondern auch die Bemühungen demokratisch orientierter Akteure unterstützen. Letztlich bietet sich hier auch eine Möglichkeit, Positionen des Produktionslandes in gleichberechtigter und dialogischer Form in Debatten des Empfängerlandes einzubringen, im Falle des Iran etwa in Bezug auf die Atompolitik. Onlinemedien und Auslandsrundfunk können sich somit gegenseitig ergänzen und wichtige Beiträge zu demokratischer Entwicklung leisten.

Zum Autor

Marcus Michaelsen promoviert am Seminar für Medien- und Kommunikationswissenschaft der Universität Erfurt über das Internet in der politischen Transformation der Islamischen Republik Iran. Zu seinen Forschungsinteressen zählen Medien in Entwicklungs- und Demokratisierungsprozessen sowie in Politik und Gesellschaft im heutigen Iran.

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Digital media and democratic change

by **Olaf Böhnke**

The Canadian explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson once said of ethics in advertising: "Unethical advertising uses falsehoods to deceive the public; ethical advertising uses truth to deceive the public." This could just as easily apply to international broadcasters working in semi- or undemocratic environments. For them the question remains: what is the difference between unethical and ethical journalism?

The events around the presidential elections in Iran in June 2009 clearly demonstrated the power of freedom of speech, as hundreds of thousands of people demonstrated across the country to protest an election result that was based more on falsehood than truth. Subsequently, the Iranian government expelled all Western journalists and correspondents, since they challenged the regime's power to define what should be reported and what should not.

The meaning of truth in journalism is a weighty question in its own right, but is nevertheless a common driving force for all major international media outlets broadcasting in and on Iran, e.g. BBC, Voice of America, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) or Deutsche Welle. A look into all four mission statements underlines the importance of truth and independence as the basis of, and justification for, all their actions: "We report independently, comprehensively, truthfully and on a pluralistic basis." (Deutsche Welle) or "Trust is the foundation of the BBC: we are independent, impartial and honest." (BBC)

In illiberal countries like Iran "the truth" is not only a highly valuable good but also a highly political one. Whoever dares to disagree with the regime´s "truth" risks being confronted with the regime's security forces, whether the offender is a prominent blogger from Iran like Hossein Derakhshan or the correspondent of an international broadcaster like Parnaz Azima, a journalist from the Persian-language radio station Radio Farda, a regional program of RFE/RL, who was imprisoned in 2007 after being accused and charged with spreading propaganda against the Iranian state. Both crossed the sacred red lines, whose existence is both multifaceted and flexible.

In contrast to broadcasting in more friendly environments, other motives for international broadcasters like commercial interests, cultural reasons or education fade into the background, while promoting "the values of democracy and … human rights," as stated in DW's mission statement, gains in importance. In the case of today's Iran the lack of freedom of expression and a mainly state-controlled media in print, radio and television might be one of the strongest motivating forces for international broadcasters to operate in the country. Freedom of speech and freedom of expression are interpreted by Western broadcasters as indispensable and fundamental for journalistic integrity; promoting them is the raison d'etre for foreign broadcasters in countries like Iran. Deutsche Welle, for example, articulates a clear message in its mission statement: "We provide comprehensive and uncensored information to countries that lack free media, particularly crisis regions and war zones." This values-based approach is justified not only by Western notions of freedom but also by the "universal" values contained in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Article 19 of this document states clearly that: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to

hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." Iran was a signatory to this document, on December 10, 1948, at the United Nations General Assembly, thus adding credence to the claim that international broadcasters are not importing "Western" values to Iran but simply upholding values to which Iran, at least in principle, also adheres.

Getting news in and out of Iran

All international broadcasters face two major challenges in their everyday operations in Iran: getting local news out of Iran and broadcasting news into Iran. Both tasks are greatly complicated by the restrictive nature of the regime.

Censorship pervades the difficult environment both for customers and consumers of media. It is an omnipresent threat to journalists, writers, artists and activists in Iran. There are no easy ways around it and the potential consequences of trying to overcome censorship place people under a range of pressures. Indeed, anyone who publishes anything in Iran is acutely aware of censorship and its potentially grave consequences.

The digital media has offered some means by which to avoid censorship yet it is not free of its strictures. Similarly to samizdat publications in the Soviet Union, this has led to elaborate and subtle forms of expression, for example the use of metaphors, e.g. animals instead of people (like in George Orwell's novel Animal Farm), to describe political situations. Censors, however, have adapted to this sophisticated use of metaphors, to the point that a documentary about the possibility of an earthquake in Tehran was banned for being a metaphor for social unrest.

Massive fragmentation at the administrative level further complicates the environment surrounding media censorship. Up to five different authorities can be officially involved in censorship: the office of the Supreme Leader, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, the Ministry of Information & Communications Technology, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Intelligence and Security, as well as unofficial pressure groups such as irregular paramilitary units (e.g. Ansar-e Hezbollah). As these administrative bodies are controlled by different, sometimes competing, factions, their policies on censorship are inconsistent and sometimes in direct conflict with each other. This haphazard arrangement is compounded by the fact that, in theory, the office of the Supreme Leader is the most powerful institution, while in practice there is often no clear hierarchy between these institutions.

Talking from the outside

Traditionally, international public broadcasting is based on radio broadcasts, ideally in a shortwave format. Due to the restricted access to Iran, most foreign news entities switched to satellite transmission of their Persian language radio and TV programs. But even satellite transmission is not without its problems: since June 2009, various international public broadcasters faced repeated, deliberate jamming of their satellite signals from within Iran.

In addition to their conventional radio and TV broadcasts, internet services have expanded continuously in recent years. While the BBC World Service and the Deutsche Welle websites have not been censored for a long time, BBC Persian Service and U.S. funded institutions like Radio Farda and Voice of America have been targeted from the very beginning. Today, many Iranian internet users access this kind of website by proxy services and even by the use of circumvention tools.

But technical reasons aside, all agencies prefer the internet to traditional radio broadcasts, because the web provides audiences with continuous access to content as well as the opportunity to interact with editors and reporters.

These audiences offer not only feedback but also, critically, news itself. Roughly one third of the reader mail sent to DW-World offers updates or rumours about Iranian affairs[1]. The importance of such on-site reporting should not be underestimated, particularly since many editors at foreign publications have been out of the country for years, and their agencies are not allowed to keep correspondents in Iran. The traditional divide between producers and consumers of media is thus blurred and is, in itself, a result of the difficulty in getting a sense for "what's news" in Iran.

The foregoing discussion on censorship makes clear how problematic it is to take cues from the Iranian mainstream press, as most Western sites do. It takes creativity to circumvent this problem: the BBC World Trust has, for example, offered online training courses for Iranian journalists, embedded in a project called ZigZag. Through closed-access sites ("virtual newsrooms"), young men and women worked with London-based editors in honing their reporting and writing skills. Just as important, they also provided scoops on Iranian news that the outside media might have otherwise not picked up.

Most of the foreign agencies also look to the Iranian blogosphere for stories. Especially in times when foreign reporters are banned from Iran, international public broadcasters rely on user-generated content, even though it can be biased and untrustworthy. Partly to overcome this severe limitation, NGOs and in-country informants are used, when possible, to confirm reports. As a result, subjects that are taboo in Iran receive some attention in the foreign press, but not too much: frankness on topics like homosexuality and dating, for example, has been found to turn off some Iranian listeners.

This fact illustrates many broadcasters' complex relationship with the "truth" — specifically, it draws attention to the difference between "truth" and "completeness". Is it untruthful, or misleading, not to report on certain topics because they are offensive? If so, which standards and ethical codes should journalists follow? In other words, journalists are faced with a seemingly irreconcilable choice: a well-placed desire to respect Islamic culture and customs — a necessary prerequisite to obtaining as wide as possible an audience — sometimes conflicts with journalists' self-imposed ethical mission.

International broadcasting vs. public diplomacy

How should foreign news services try to be balanced and objective? Indeed, should they pursue such a goal in the first place? International broadcasters in Iran seem to follow two contrasting models in answering these questions. On the one hand lies the BBC model: striving for strict neutrality and aiming to report the "truth", irrespective of political circumstances. On the other hand, broadcasters like Radio Farda recognise that foreign media are not just observers of, but also participants in, the struggle for reform.[2] Their "truth", in other words, serves a political goal and, among some Iranians, engenders a general distrust of all foreign journalists.

1 As reported by a DW official at a conference of the Aspen Institute Germany in Berlin, April 2008

2 "RFE/RL's mission is to promote democratic values and institutions by reporting the news in countries where a free press is banned by the government or not fully established", from: Mission Statement of RFE/RL, http://www.rferl.org/section/mission/169.html

Historically, accusations of hidden agendas and questions surrounding the general legitimacy of international public broadcasters — especially by governments in less democratic countries — are as old as the institutions themselves. Starting with the "career" of the BBC among citizens attempting to resist the regime in Nazi Germany, this tradition includes anti-Communist Cold War broadcasters like Radio Free Europe and stretches to the present-day example of the Iraqi diaspora press' support of the U.S. invasion in Iraq. International broadcasters thus tread the uneasy ground between unbiased news reporting and political intervention.

A quote by RFE/RL's president, Jeffrey Gedmin, illustrates the thinking behind the latter: "Radio Farda is not intended to be the broadcast arm of the Green opposition movement. But (...) Farda's mission remains to reach Iranians excluded or persecuted by the regime. At the end of the day, we're after a kind of sympathetic evenhandedness. The reporting itself should be accurate and reliable, but it does have a compass. Those parts of Iranian society that feel voiceless are natural allies and a basis for an audience."

It is important to remember that even the "truth-centred" media, like the BBC, are not free of ethical considerations: the BBC is supported by the BBC World Service Trust, the BBC's international charity, which aims to "use media and communications to reduce poverty and promote human rights, thereby enabling people to build better lives."

Don't believe the hype!

In summary, the increasing use of digital media for international public broadcasters is not simply part of a global media revolution, but responds to the necessity of providing concrete alternatives to the challenges of operating in hostile environments: this new form of communication, where the audience is also a producer of content, is fast, flexible and interactive. But it is important not to forget that digital media is, as the name suggests, still a medium — sometimes a shortcut, sometimes a bypass — but it is not a form of content.

The myth of a 'Twitter revolution' in Iran "reveals more about western fantasies for new media than the reality in Iran," argues Hamid Tehrani, the Persian editor of the blogging network Global Voices. "The West was focused not on the Iranian people but on the role of western technology," he says. "Twitter was important in publicising what was happening, but its role was overemphasised." Technology and media can influence content, but they are not the content itself.

That said, international public broadcasters should continue integrating Web 2.0 or social media tools like Facebook, Flickr and of course Twitter. Cooperation with YouTube for the creation of sub-channels by BBC Persian, Deutsche Welle and others will definitely introduce new audiences to countries like Iran. With its new multiplatform strategy "POPE" (produce once, publish everywhere) Deutsche Welle for instance is helping to open the path for communication with audiences in closed societies.

But as outlined above, because of their responsibilities towards audiences inside and outside countries like Iran, China, Cuba or Belarus, international broadcasters have a special duty to support, train, and care for, journalists and, increasingly, citizen journalists in these closed societies.

Initiatives like the BBC's Zigzag Project or Deutsche Welle's DW-Akademie program require continuous support by their national governments. Independent and unbiased journalism practised by international public broadcasters can provide a role model to demonstrate the importance of the "fourth estate" in a free and democratic society. It can also act be an important export for democratic countries and a benchmark for local media outlets.
We must not forget that competing international news channels like Iran's English language program Press TV, Russia Today, Al Manar or CCTV/CNTV from China are gaining ever larger audiences for their stories about world politics. We had better not miss the boat.

About the Author

Olaf Boehnke is the chief of staff and foreign policy advisor to Dietmar Nietan, a Social Democratic member of the German Bundestag. His fields of expertise include the Middle East, EU foreign policy and transatlantic relations.

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Beauty

Iran, die Neuen Medien und die Grenzen der Auswärtigen Kulturpolitik

Iran, the new media and the limits of foreign cultural policy

by **Rolf Mützenich**

Wie geht man mit einem Regime um, das die elementaren Grund- und Menschenrechte missachtet? Wo kann die Auswärtige Kultur- und Bildungspolitik ansetzen – auch dann, wenn ihr Online-Angebot zensiert wird?

How does one deal with a regime that disregards the most basic of fundamental human rights? How can an effective foreign cultural and educational policy be put into practise even when internet sites are censored?

Das Thema Auswärtige Kulturpolitik, Neue Medien und Iran wirft eine grundsätzliche Frage auf, die sich nicht nur der deutschen Außenpolitik stellt: Wie geht man mit einem Regime um, das elementare Grund- und Menschenrechte verletzt und missachtet? Dies ist naturgemäß ein schmaler und zumeist (innen-)politisch heftig umstrittener Grad. Prangert man das Fehlverhalten öffentlich an, oder versucht man im Hintergrund die diplomatischen Fäden zu spinnen, um konkrete Erfolge im Einzelfall zu erreichen? Lässt sich die iranische Atomkrise mit Zuckerbrot oder Peitsche lösen? Oder mit einer Kombination aus diplomatischen und ökonomischen Anreizen sowie Sanktionen, verbunden mit militärischer Eindämmung? Redet man mit den Machthabern, oder isoliert man sie international? Wann schlägt der „Wandel durch Annäherung“ in Anbiederung um? Ist es nicht heuchlerisch, die Todesstrafe im Iran anzuprangern, während man im Fall der USA dazu meist verschämt schweigt?

All dies sind Fragen, mit denen der Deutsche Bundestag und die Mitglieder des Auswärtigen Ausschusses ständig konfrontiert sind und waren. Es sind dieselben Fragen, die sich heute auch im Umgang mit China stellen und die in der Vergangenheit die Debatte um die neue Ost- und Entspannungspolitik gegenüber der Sowjetunion begleiteten.

Jede Delegation deutscher Parlamentarier, die in den Iran reist, muss sich kritische Fragen und Vorhaltungen von Dissidenten- und Menschenrechtsgruppen gefallen lassen – diese dürfen und können gleichwohl nicht als einzige Entscheidungsgrundlage dienen. Dabei lehrt die praktische Erfahrung, dass man gerade bei schwierigen Partnern die Gesprächskanäle offen halten muss. Natürlich gerät man bei Staaten wie dem Iran, China, Nordkorea und Saudi-Arabien relativ schnell auch an die Grenzen der auswärtigen Diplomatie und der Auswärtigen Kulturpolitik.

Feinde des Internet

Das Internet und der freie Zugang zu den Neuen Medien birgt Chancen und Risiken, und dies nicht nur für die Staaten, die die Organisation Reporter ohne Grenzen (ROG) zu den „Feinden des Internets“ zählt. Hierzu gehören neben dem Iran auch Birma, China, Kuba, Ägypten, Nordkorea, Saudi-Arabien, Syrien, Tunesien, Turkmenistan, Usbekistan und Vietnam. „Diese Staaten haben das

Internet zu einem Intranet gemacht, um damit die Bevölkerung am Zugang zu ‚unerwünschten' Online-Informationen zu hindern", kritisiert Reporter Ohne Grenzen.

Aber auch für die demokratische Welt birgt das Internet Gefahren. Die Wikileaks-Veröffentlichungen stellen die amerikanische Diplomatie zweifelsohne vor ein riesiges Problem. Der Schutz kritischer Infrastrukturen und geheimer Informationen ist zu einem zentralen Faktor der nationalen und internationalen Sicherheit geworden. Selbst die NATO befasst sich mittlerweile in ihrem neuen strategischen Konzept mit „Cyberwar" und den Problemen und Herausforderungen der elektronischen Kriegsführung.

Für „Reporter ohne Grenzen" ist der Iran der mit Abstand „größte Feind des Internets" im Nahen Osten: Regelmäßig werden Blogger festgenommen. Nach offiziellen Angaben haben die iranischen Behörden allein im Jahr 2009 fünf Millionen Webseiten sperren lassen. Neben der Überwachung und Kontrolle von Online-Informationen und Nachrichten werden unliebsame Internetnutzer systematisch verfolgt. Mit Zensur und Propaganda versucht die iranische Regierung, die Kontrolle über die öffentliche Wahrnehmung des Iran zu behalten. Über das Internet und private Netzwerke halten junge iranische Journalisten und Bürgerrechtler dagegen. Sie berichten in Blogs, in den digitalen Netzwerken wie Facebook und Twitter sowie über E-Mail-Verteiler u. a. über Demonstrationen und Gewalt der Sicherheitskräfte. Die iranische Regierung hingegen versucht immer wieder, die privaten Nachrichtenkanäle zu kappen. Die Internetverbindungen wurden verlangsamt, die SMS-Funktion der Handys abgeschaltet, ein BBC-Programm, das auf Farsi sendet, verboten und auch das Iran-Programm der Deutschen Welle wird immer wieder zensiert und abgeschaltet.

Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Auswärtigen Kulturpolitik

Die Erfahrungen der letzten Jahre haben gezeigt, dass den Möglichkeiten von außen, die freie und objektive Berichterstattung zu fördern, enge Grenzen gesetzt sind. Es gibt natürlich die Arbeit der politischen Stiftungen, die Goethe-Institute und verschiedene Instrumentarien des Austausches in der Wissenschaft und im Jugendbereich. Wichtiger sind jedoch die privaten NGOs wie das in den USA ansässige „Tehran Bureau", ein Online-Projekt amerikanischer und iranischer Journalisten, die sich zum Ziel gesetzt haben, journalistisch fundierte Berichte aus dem Iran zu liefern, die in klassischen Medien bisher nicht zu finden sind. Auch die Gemeinde der Bahai, die im Iran verfolgt und ausgegrenzt werden, verfolgt eine rege und in Teilen durchaus erfolgreiche Öffentlichkeitsarbeit.

Die Auswärtige Kultur- und Bildungspolitik ist und bleibt trotz ihrer offensichtlichen Grenzen ein wichtiges Instrument, das unter Außenminister Frank-Walter Steinmeier nachdrücklich gefördert und gestärkt wurde. Sie war durch jahrelange Unterfinanzierung in die Randlage geraten, da die finanziellen Mittel für die Auswärtige Kulturpolitik bis 2005 real gesunken waren. Dazu kam die Krise der Goethe-Institute mit Nachrichten über drohende Schließungen. Unter Steinmeier gelang es, die Auswärtige Kulturpolitik wieder zu einer wirklichen dritten Säule der Außenpolitik auszubauen, Netzwerke und Räume für Austausch zu schaffen und auch die Kreativwirtschaft und die Künstler einzubeziehen.

Leider schickt sich das Auswärtige Amt unter Guido Westerwelle derzeit an, die Errungenschaften wieder rückgängig zu machen. Dies ist m. E. ein verhängnisvoller Fehler. Durch die Auswärtige

Kulturpolitik gewinnt unser Land wichtige und verlässliche Partner in der Welt. Stabile internationale Beziehungen bedürfen eines kulturellen Fundaments. Ein intensiv und offen geführter Kulturdialog – auch und gerade mit der islamischen Welt – kann dabei helfen, zu verhindern, dass aus kulturellen Unterschieden Konfrontation und Gewalt erwachsen. Entscheidend ist dabei das Bemühen um Dialog und Austausch, um das Verständnis für kulturelle Unterschiede, aber auch die Erkenntnis der uns verbindenden Gemeinsamkeiten und der Anerkennung universeller Werte. Übergeordnetes Ziel des Austausches mit dem Iran muss sein, durch praktische Maßnahmen zivilgesellschaftliche Kräfte zu stärken, die sich für Frieden, Demokratie und Menschenrechte einsetzen. Dies ist mühsam aber alternativlos.

Zum Autor
Dr. Rolf Mützenich ist seit November 2009 außenpolitischer Sprecher der SPD-Fraktion.

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ifa

Institut für
Auslandsbeziehungen e. V.

Charlottenplatz 17
D-70173 Stuttgart
Tel. +49/711 2225-0
www.ifa.de

Postfach 10 24 63
D-70020 Stuttgart
Fax +49/711 2 26 43 46
info@ifa.de