
Dr. Jan Schmidt
(Research Centre „New Communication Media“, Bamberg)

Mainstream Media and Weblogs

Competing or complementary publics?

Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem, February 15th, 2007

Introduction

MSM & Blogs

Conclusion

- Discussing the connections between Blogs and Mainstream Media (MSM) for an international audience poses some problems:
 - Different levels of *internet penetration* and *blog diffusion*
 - Different *media systems* (centralization, commercialization, state control, freedom of speech, ...)
 - Different *cultural values, expectations and norms* regarding self-presentation, public discussion and social networking
- This presentation will outline and discuss two general ideas:
 1. MSM and blogosphere do compete for attention, but are based on different practices for publishing and referencing information
 2. Mass-mediated publics and personal publics of the blogosphere do complement each other in terms of mutual referencing and providing different kinds of information about current events

Introduction

MSM & Blogs

Conclusion

- Basic problem of information management: How to find relevant information within a seemingly boundless sea of events and sources?
- MSM: journalists acting as gatekeepers
- Blogosphere: introducing additional filtering mechanisms
 1. *Wisdom of Google*: Search engines favor sources that are constantly updated and heavily linked (=blogs)
 2. *Wisdom of the crowd*: making aggregated selections of all other users visible: digg, technorati, ...
 3. *Wisdom of your own network*: customizing individual news repertoire through RSS feeds
- MSM and Blogosphere are both contributing to publics of varying size/audience

Contrasting MSM and Blogs

Introduction

- Both in MSM and blogosphere, publics emerge as result of individual publishing/posting & referencing/linking practices
- However, elements of practices differ:

	Traditional journalism	Blogs
Selection criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> News factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal relevance
Approach to audience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audience as passive recipient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Audience as co-creator, „distributed conversations“
Presentation style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Detached Neutral „both‘ sides 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Personal Opinionated One-sided
Story form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structured format (e.g. inverted pyramid) Answers basic questions (who, what, etc.) Closed text Sources and datelines for credibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fragments Incomplete Open text Hyperlinks for credibility

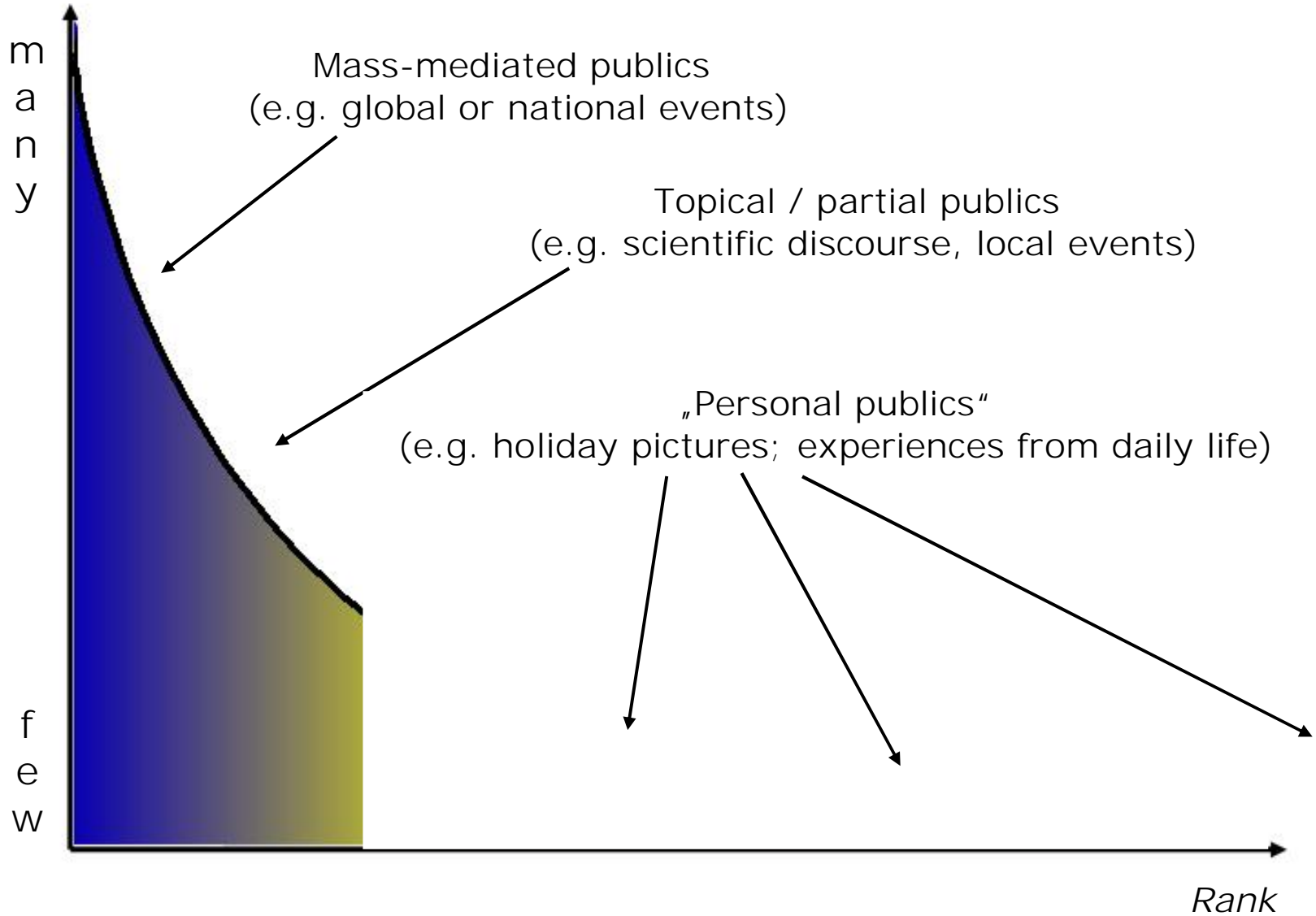
MSM & Blogs

Conclusion

Source: adapted from Wall (2005)

Ranking publics

Attention / Audience size



Introduction

MSM & Blogs

Conclusion

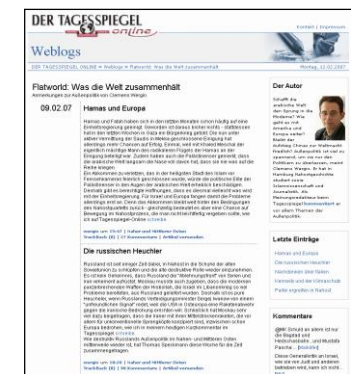
Overlapping publics

Introduction

MSM & Blogs

Conclusion

- Rather than being exclusive, MSM publics and personal publics overlap and complement each other
1. Blogs are increasingly used by MSM as additional communication channel
 - e.g. Jerusalem post: currently 27 blogs
 - some high-ranked authors (Likud chairman Netanyahu; former NY mayor Ed Koch)
 - few postings get comments though
 - e.g. Tagesspiegel [Berlin]: currently 8 blogs
 - „Flatworld“-Blog by editor Clemens Wergin (focussing on international affairs) has some heated debates on neo-conservative positions
 - e.g. taz [Berlin]: currently 33 blogs
 - „Hitler-Blog“ by freelance journalist Daniel Erk deconstructs the ways Hitler / Nazi symbolics appears in various popular cultures



Overlapping publics

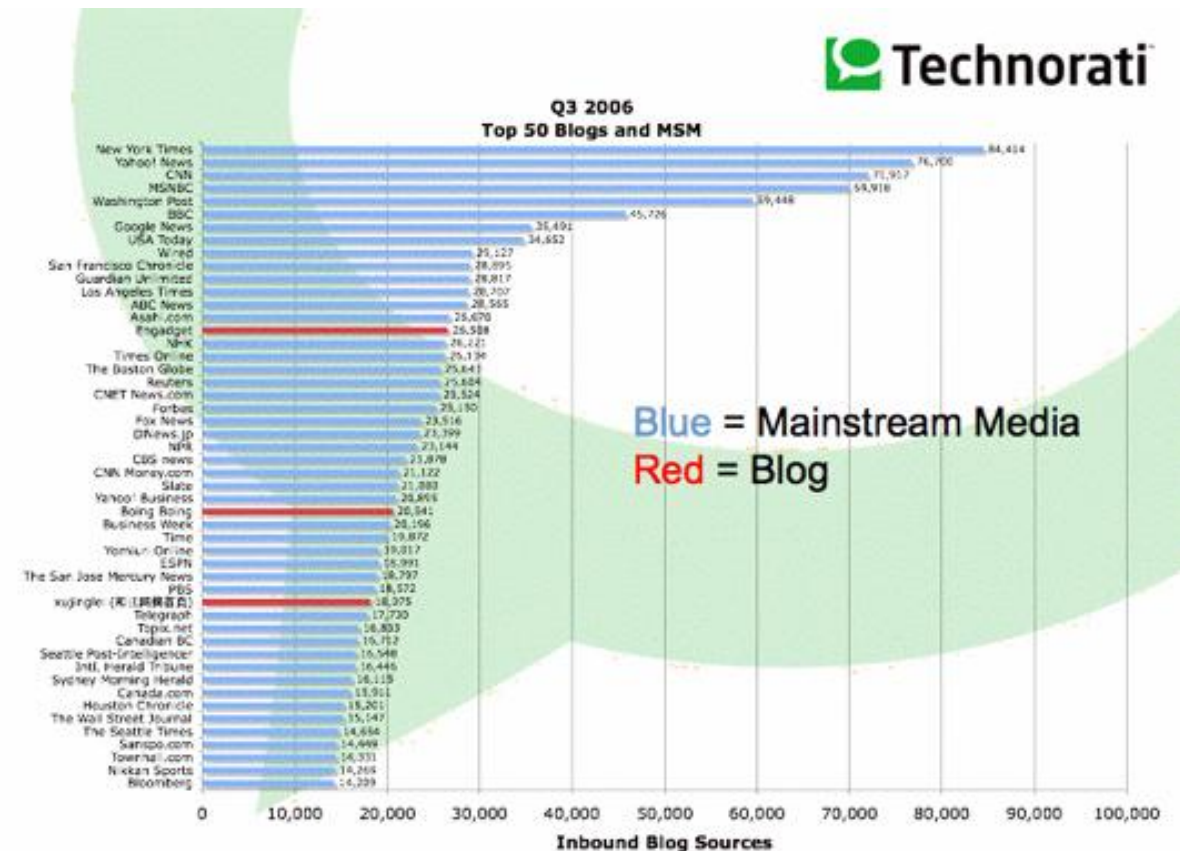
2. Mutual Agenda Setting

- MSM increasingly watch and cite Blogs as additional or alternative sources for news and commentary
- Blogs refer to, comment on and further diffuse MSM stories

Introduction

MSM & Blogs

Conclusion



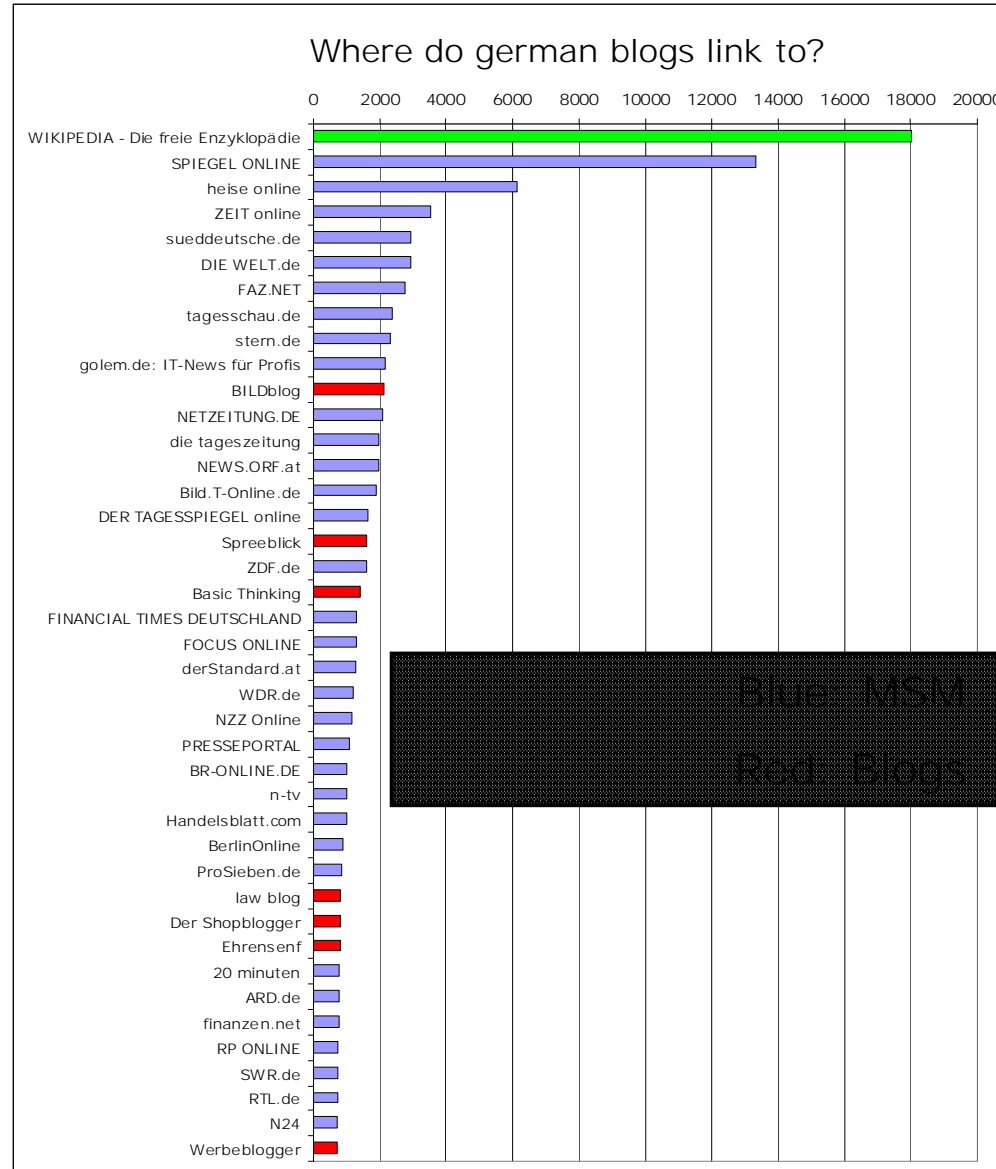
Source: <http://www.sifry.com/alerts/archives/000443.html>

Overlapping publics

Introduction

MSM & Blogs

Conclusion



Blue MSM
Red Blogs

Source: deutscheblogcharts.de; 3rd jan 2007. Shown are the numbers of blogs that link to particular sites (based on technorati.com)

Why do people blog?

Introduction

MSM & Blogs

Conclusion

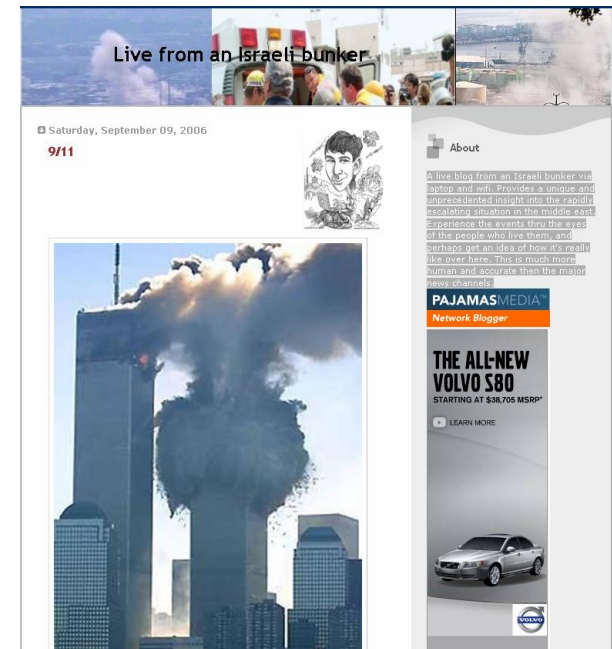
- While there are a few blogs that reach wide audiences, most are part of the „long tail“, meaning they have relatively small audiences („personal publics“)
- But judging the impact of blogs by audience size alone is not sufficient
- Personal publics provide the bloggers opportunities for identity management (presenting oneself, one's experiences and opinions to others) and relationship management:
 - Through links and comments, social networks are articulated and expanded
 - These networks provide ‚social capital‘ of various kinds
 1. Information dissemination
 2. Strengthening group solidarity
 3. Providing socio-emotional assistance
- Different functions can be exemplified through War Blogs

Blogs in the Israel-Lebanon War

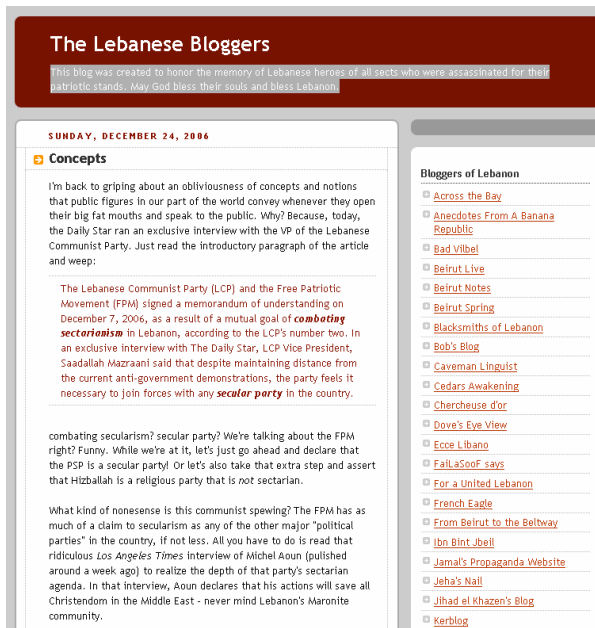
Introduction

„A live blog from an Israeli bunker via laptop and wifi. Provides a unique and unprecedented insight into the rapidly escalating situation in the middle east. Experience the events thru the eyes of the people who live them, and perhaps get an idea of how it's really like over here. This is much more human and accurate than the major news channels.“

(<http://israelibunker.blogspot.com/>)



MSM & Blogs



„This blog was created to honor the memory of Lebanese heroes of all sects who were assassinated for their patriotic stands. May God bless their souls and bless Lebanon.“

(<http://lebanesebloggers.blogspot.com/>)

Conclusion

Blogs in the Israel-Lebanon War

Introduction

„Hello Lebanon, hello Israel. I don't know what will come next, but I was thinking to my self_ maybe we could take advantage of the Blog power and open a channel to...all“

MSM & Blogs

Conclusion



WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2006

Annemarie and Emily

i have been absent for a while.

the war ended. maya's condition grew worse. she passed away and i have been left with a stain on my heart. what now? i have been living the past few weeks in total darkness, not know what lies ahead. not knowing if things could get any worse.. if i was going to lose anyone else... and today it almost happened in Palestine. i almost lost two more friends.

below i have posted an email i just received from Annemarie Jacir:

>Four hours ago my sister, her curator Carolyn and I were shot at by the Israeli army. My nerves are still shaky. We've been drinking every since. My legs are weak. I feel I can't stand on them.

Today in downtown Ramallah at around 4:15 pm as we were driving down Ramallah's main street...we had just bought kanafa to eat ...after spending the day at 'amari camp.

I was driving down the main street. A taxi driver cut me off. I rolled down the window and cursed at him. We pulled over and Emily and Mohammed jumped out to buy kanafa. Then we continued, dropping off Mohammed at his car...which he had left in the center of town. We agreed to meet at Mohammed's place down the street.

I was alone in the front seat. Emily and Carolyn in the back. Suddenly there was a van directly in front of our car. He veered a bit towards our car. I slowed down. wonderine how I was going to

ABOUT ME
ZEMA
VIEW MY COMPLETE PROFILE

LINKS
ziggydoodle.com
xanaduart.com

OTHER RELEVANT BLOGS

- beirutlive
- civilian resistance in lebanon
- ecocampaigner
- electronic intifada (lebanon)
- euroarabe
- frombeirutwithlove
- hopefulbeirut
- laure ghorayeb
- lebanonupdates
- littlepaperboat
- mazen kerbj
- rittabaddouraparmilesbombs
- raytoh
- the lebanon chronicle
- these_days

RELIEF CENTERS : DONATE HERE

- Help Lebanon
- Mowatinun
- ReliefLebanon

„beirut update. war diaries of a 30 year old woman... with love from beirut.“

(<http://www.beirutupdate.blogspot.com/>)

קצה

”מגזרת הילום על האיש אשר הביב בין שנין שמש לחומר במכרות את ימי, ולקנץ את שעותי למנות קטנות“ מילאטוס

ענין בן בסט
עיתונאי, מטייל וחוקר
עולמות.
פרטים נוספים

Hello Lebanon, Hello Israel (פוסט מתגלגל - 30.7)
Time now is 22:24. I don't know what will come next, but I was thinking to my self_ maybe we could take advantage of the Blog power and open a channel to...all

To see comments (and posts) of this never ending post, please scroll down patiently...

עידון 30.7 17:00

הבלוג הזה, כמו כל בלוג אחר, יש לו חזונה משונה, הוא נובע לנפוח על צעלי הנדיד משנה - גם אם זה אינו מתלהב, או שגוין לו מה להגיד. ובענין נכיר בנה...
במלחמה הזאת ראה שאנו צריכים, משבר לחנה וליריחו, גם לנוה הגנו של חל. אין ספק שבהצדך הזה לא מצי בקומוניזם לאחורנו. עינת ממכירה לי שיה יקח עוד כמה ימים, עד סוף חקופת "בן המצרים" אוחו היום בוקופה אל פשוטו, היא אמרת, בריחית השעה הימים האחרונים שלה. החל מראש חדש או עד לי באב שמה ימים של צרה ומתקנה. לא יוצא. לא מבין דבר. אבל להק לעמוד הבלחון הלינסו לחונו בר שובל או מינו שבע"ל לו כיוון את הפצצה אל אותם עשרות אמולטים, נחטס בטוח שלא, אבל הפצצה נכנסה בדיקו בקמסו שהוטלט ציפה לו. עכשיו יבואו כל ההוצעים ויה, נחטס הכפ יו, ס יסי יגיחו שמה החחיל, אבל שום דבר לא יחיד את אותם ימים ששטרפו, ושום דבר גם לא יחיד לנו את הלחט שיהיה בנו להניס לחנוה הוא באבי אבי.

הנה הם שנחבו לי כעת הלחט המסודר. אחר כך תנוסו לללוג של אמיל בנא.

I write from Spain I read about your blog in one of the more important newspaper in my country. Its great to hear about people from both countries talking about peace. Today Israel has bombed a 40 civils in Cania. For us its very difficult to understand all that nonsense. I am a mother I am crying for all those children dead. PLEASE YOU are the future. I read about a soldier who write from the border , why are you there? The politicians are in their "palace" leave the weapons away. With all my love from Spain. Elena elenafefito@arrakis.es

תצינו במדרגות בללג של רופא לבנוני בשם רחי. הוא מספר על בקור בפנא. קתה הנתמבי אחו בימים הראשונים, נעת הוא שווק לנחנחי, את הפוסט האחרון הוא מסיים בקטע אתר "מהמים לנור":

Warblogs and free speech

Introduction

MSM & Blogs

Conclusion

- Warblogs focus on subjective impressions and eyewitness accounts, thus lending „personal face“ to military events
- While some of them might be subject to control and censorship (e.g. blogs of military personnel ➔ *Milblogs*), most provide an unfiltered perspective on daily life in conflict regions
- Blogs are aimed at conversation and dialogue, but this can include partisan viewpoints as well as attempts for intercultural understanding

Introduction

MSM & Blogs

Conclusion

- MSM and Blogosphere both contribute to publics, but apply different criteria for filtering, publishing and linking information
 - MSM provide general and (most often) objective information to a wide audience
 - Blogosphere provides specific, i.e. personalized information to (most often) small audiences
- Blogs not only increase opportunities for information management, but also allow for identity management and relationship management
- Both spheres of communication are interconnected through processes of mutual agenda setting, thus complementing (rather than replacing) each other

Thank You for listening.

...FoNK

*Forschungsstelle „Neue
Kommunikationsmedien“*

Dr. Jan Schmidt

An der Universität 9/501

D – 96045 Bamberg

jan.schmidt@split.uni-bamberg.de

www.fonk-bamberg.de

www.bamberg-gewinnt.de



Selected references



Schmidt, Jan (2006): Weblogs. Eine kommunikationssoziologische Studie. Konstanz.



Schmidt, Jan (2007): Blogging practices: Analytical framework and empirical findings. To appear in: Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication. <http://jcmc.indiana.edu>



Wall, Melissa (2005): ‚Blogs of War‘. Weblogs as news. In: Journalism, Jg. 6, Nr. 2, S. 153-172.