"Young People, Media Pedagogy, and Participatory Design: Sketching a Dialogic Process."

The following two initiatives from India, organised in terms of specific media, through a series of sketches and vignettes, explore how young people learn and develop innovative uses of media in diverse socio-cultural settings. In the Cybermohalla project, youngsters work with a range of digital media and produce experimental digital works, computer animation, write texts using graphics publish wall magazines, edit books, etc. The main aim is to give a forum where the youngsters not only explore their creativity, but also comment an the social and moral topics that impact their lives. *Mapping the Neighbourhood* is conceptualized as an alternative learning experience through the use of ICT and community maps in the learning process and is based an participatory learning and collection of relevant information of the locality. Throughout this exploration a fine balance has been attempted between theory and practice as young people's voices – dialogue and deliberations – are articulated. Young people gain access to tools of media production in a variety of ways; from training and imparting basic to advanced technical skills, using production facilities and equipment to learning about script writing, story boarding, lighting, set design, page design, layout, digital graphics, and computers. The acquisition of media-making, knowledge and skills, embedded in the lived experience of young people, offers unique perspectives, a vision and a voice that need to be examined to understand youth participation in media. More importantly, these are instances of teaching and learning about the media.

New Media Explorations

That increasing technological convergence and innovations are reshaping the media, in content creation and distribution is a point that we need not belabour. Indeed, this publication itself is an outcome of some of the developments in images graphics and book design. Print, electronic and digital forms overlap and become simultaneously available, thereby providing an interesting mélange of older information and communication technologies (ICTs) with the newer ones. The emergence of computers, Internet, the World Wide Web, and various mobile communication devices has raised optimism among developmental agencies and media education practitioners. **There are two responses: one celebratory and euphoric and the other cautious, but optimistic.** UNESCO has been engaged in developing policies and programmes that are cautious and optimistic. Consequently, questions are asked and discussions carried out on the transformative potential of these emergent ICTs for children and young people.

In this context, it is appropriate to ask whether these technologies could enable enhanced participation and help overcome barriers to education . In what ways, if at all, children and young people interact with these technologies? In the following chapter, I looked at two initiatives from India where children and young people are exploring new media technologies for informal learning and personal development.

ICTS and the Learning Experience

Cybermohalla (Cyber-Neighbourhood) is an experimental project designed to enable democratic access to information and communication technologies among poor young women and men in Delhi, India. These young participants (ages of 15 and 23), mostly school dropouts visit the Compughar (literally, a house of computers, in Hindi), a media lab with several low-cost desktop computers and free software, to freely express their ideas and imaginations from the mundane to the serious. Working at the media lab these participants write, draw and sketch a range of interesting verbal and visual narratives and texts published as books, diaries, magazines, and wallpaper that become available in print as well as digitized formats. The following account describes the philosophy of the project:

One can approach the Cybermohalla project from many directions. One can begin with a critique of the technological imagination and the excessive universe of the dominant mediascape, and then go on to map a counter stragety which grounds itself on access, sharing and democratic extensibility. One can see it as an experiment to engage with media technologies and software 'tactically', and create multiple local media contexts emerging within the larger media network that the Internet seems to engender. Still one can see it as an engagement with local history, experiences, modes of expressions and creativity (http://www.sarai.net/ community/saraicomm. htm).

From this description, it is clear that Cybermohalla is about adopting alternative strategies to explore and engage the ICTs so as to provide young people opportunities for learning and education. The Hindi-Urdu words that are combined with English to produce terms like "Cybermohalla" and "Compughar", capture the evocative and open-ended features of new media technologies. These technologies are not rooted in a singular space and place, but as deterritorialised forms offer unique possibilities for informal learning that can be actualized in non-linear ways. For instance, reflections of young participants on the everyday life in the city are

sprinkled with personal experiences, creative self-expressions, and commentaries that offer some concrete suggestions on social and political issues. The ICTs also open up "spaces of dialogue" for the young participants: conversations and discussions lead to collective participation in a variety of multimedia experimental works. "What binds them together is their experimentation and play with diverse media forms (photography, animation, sound recording, text, etc.) to improvise and create crossmedia works – texts, collages, posters, print publications, videos, installations." These multimedia projects – involving new ICTs and "media mixes" – not only generate excitement among the youngsters, but also overcome the deficiencies of the older and traditional models of education and learning, particularly in the formal systems of education.

One example where ICTs are being incorporated into the formal school learning settings is the *Mapping the Neighbourhood Project* in India. The project, conceptualized and developed by the Centre for Spatial Database Management and Solution (CSDMS), an independent organisation with support from the Department of Science and Technology of Government of India, involves school children from the rural and urban regions of Almora and Nainital of Uttaranchal province of North India. The basic approach to community mapping has been to visually construct a "map" of the places and spaces in the community. It has been widely used as a tool for planning and development of various projects. The *Mapping the Neighbourhood* Project extends the concept by involving school children in the process . The main purpose of the project is to provide school children opportunities to learn about their regional geography and landscape and share this with other members of the community. The school children learn about global information system through workshops organised at their respective schools. The students work with personal digital assistants (PDAs) and global positioning systems (GPS) technologies to map their neighbourhoods. Another goal is to bring students in dialogue with local and rural communities about the integrating mapping technologies for local development. An important aspect of learning here, one that goes beyond the formal schooling, is in **active participation of school children in community development**. The notion of participation takes on a whole new meaning in the activities of die school children. **ICTs provide a context for social networking and ongoing conversations among children and adult members of the rural communities.**

Commenting on the innovative work, Rumi Mallick and Himanshu Kalra point out *"that young people learn about participation and democracy while in school where they not only spend considerable proportion of their lives and undertake a formal education, it is also a place where many of their views and perspectives on life are developed and shaped."* Although the idea behind the project is referred to as *"an alternative learning experience"*, the primary intent is to integrate ICTs into formal education. Mallick and Kalra explain that *"with an aim to create an enabling context for the youth to live, grow, learn, participate, decide, analyze, and change, the programme empowered the youth of the mountain areas by exposing them to technology tools in this case Geo-ICT tools."* These are innovative ideas, extending the traditional community mapping through technologies and bringing school children as stakeholders in the development process. More important, it is aimed at transforming the idea of education from classroom settings to the field. These strategies enable learning, and as Mallick and Kaira rightly point out, provide knowledge as weil as raise the consciousness of the school children.

Working Class Neighbourhoods and Community Mapping

The three media labs of Cybermohalla are located in different parts of Delhi – an illegal working class settlement in central part of the city and a poor colony in south Delhi – and provide opportunities to young people to work individually and collectively. The idea of a "mohalla", as a neighbourhood, exceeds the semantic connotations implied by the English term. As a social space, mohalla, with "its sense of alleys and corners", can be conceived as "dense nodes" **where young people from economically deprived and marginalized communities negotiate their lives and subjectivities. Formal schooling is out of reach or unaffordable for the youngsters. They visit the lab out of curiosity, but soon get absorbed in the creative possibilities offered by computers and other media**. Gradually, the young members, mostly women, begin to express themselves via the computer screens. A bimonthly magazine "Ibarat" explored various meanings of work in women's lives. The magazine in Hindi and English is made available in digital and printed forms. A series of creative writings as diaries has been published into a book called, "Galiyon Se" (By Lanes). These are a bunch of reflections and thoughts on the everyday life in the city. Here is one such reflection on streets and by lanes: *For the last one year now, I have been in regular conversation with the group of young people in Compughar. Amongst other things streets and lanes were discussed many times, Streets make for great conversations. Streets would lead us to think about the harsh and aggressive behaviour of men towards each other and towards women in particular, the total lack of pedestrian pathways or respect towards them, the absence of street lighting, noisy traffic and its uncaring behaviour, or the neartotal inaccessibility for disabled people or elder people. Also being amidst strangers, in crowds and moving with crowds .*

This young women's narrative account of the streets of Delhi offer some unique insights into what has become of the public places and spaces. Although this reads as a political critique, there are many more writings that offer

"Young People, Media Pedagogy, and Participatory Design: Sketching a Dialogic Process."

some interesting solutions to civic life and public infra-structure in the city. Some participants write about streets, some draw and sketch using graphics software presenting multiple perspectives on the topic. The materials produced become available to all participants and distributed in the neighbourhoods for further commentary and reflections. Shveda Sarda, coordinator at the Cybermohalla project, suggested that linking the broader environments of our digital words with the conversational worlds that we live with in our localities is central in understanding "publicness": *The world of the digital surrounds us. In our lanes and by-lanes we live through a dense palimpsest of images, texts and sounds, increasingly accessed and accelerated through the digital – VCDs, CDs, Cable, PCOs, DTP operations (pamphlets, stickers, sign boards' etc . Through our own practice, we are trying to work out an interface between this density and our concerns. We use the digital to create for us a network ed platform in our own explorations with texts, images and sounds.*

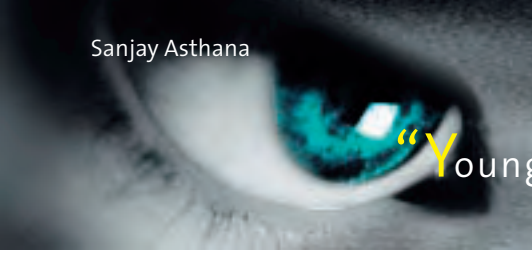
Sixty young participants from three different labs – 20 from each – have been involved in sketching ideas around "publicness." Working with a range of multimedia forms like animations, booklets, broadsheets, HTML, typed and formatted texts, sound scape, photo stories, written word, audio and visual juxtapositions or narratives, storyboards, etc. members develop innovative perspectives on alleys, corners, mohallas, and locality – important metaphors for "publicness." Visiting the city alleys and corners, meeting disadvantaged children and other dwellers in the poor and working class neighbour-hoods, young participants begin conversations with a young girl child working in a factory, an old woman sweeping the streets of Delhi, to a middle aged man who runs a photo studio, a shop keeper, a tea stall owner, etc. Several young members have produced a collage called "Hamari Dilli" (Our Delhi) texts.

The "Walls" project draws upon ideas of publicness and locality to talk about how walls interact with and shape human experience. The experimental multimedia work being carried-out by young participants connect ideas of dwelling and experience. *"Dwellings are made of walls. Our lived experience shows these walls are testimonies of fractured, fragile, contested stories of the everyday struggle to make life in the city. Walls are demolished. Walls get hardened. Fragile lives build themselves and reside along walls. Women gather around walls to share experience, youngsters lean against them to recount the day's stories from other parts of the city, infants rest in their shade."* The Cybermohalla project provides opportunities of self-expression and exploration for the young under privileged people from Delhi. The new and old ICTs not only enable an enhanced participation in media, but also allow young participants a creative range of possibilities for commentary, critique, and dialogue.

In recognition of the contributions in media education through ICTs for young people, Sarai, the parent organisation of Cybermohalla was awarded the UNESCO Digital Art Award in 2004. The approach to cyberspace and the new media as open-ended and globalised forms of communication with the ability to connect with localised forms of communication as embodied in the "mohalla" is an innovative feature that provided inspiration to several groups in different parts of the world. Several youth members from Cybermohalla were invited to Hamburg, Germany for a workshop on innovative uses of new media.

Although the Cybermohalla project is organised around a set of inter-related objectives, its main focus is in making available ICTs, and the emerging technologies to poor working class youngsters. Consequently, the longterm new media explorations undertaken by these youngsters lead to some interesting and unexpected outcomes. The individual diaries, commonly known as "Compughar Diaries", as a record of creative and critical ideas in several formats that include written texts, still and moving images, graphics, and audio bytes, contain mundane observations on the flow of the city life to the serious social and political reflections. These begin to take on new meanings as the conversation proceeds among the members via hyperlink notes. The juxtaposition of personal experiences with the social and political realities produces a series of questions. Thus, what begins as an individual idea evolves into a collective engagement . The ideas, observations, questions, generated in the media labs are taken into the neighourhoods, the "bastis", to which these young members belong for an extended dialogue with the community.

In important ways, then, the computers and the new media function as more that mere technological artifact: rather these ICTs are "demystified" and provide a context for the young participants from the poor neighbourhoods to express and explore their creative and interpretative ideas. Although the urban areas in India (as well as the many other developing and underdeveloped regions of the world) have a high density of information and communication-based technologies in the form of the presence of printing presses (old and new), photographic studios, radio, cinema, television, cable television Operator's, internet kiosks, etc., these have not been made particularly relevant to youth development or as enablers of media education. Commenting on the dynamics of the urban public culture, within which the old and new ICTs are embedded, Shuddhabrata Sengupta articulates the general idea behind the project: *"We were interested in the way in which we could see the urban space we were located in, begin to reveal itself to us as a dense communicative network. As a matrix (as crowded as the streets of the old quarters of our city) within which, new and old technologies and the practices of communication, ranging from print to photography to film and the Internet were able to constantly renew a*



"Young People, Media Pedagogy, and Participatory Design: Sketching a Dialogic Process."

dynamic media ecology." It is precisely this "media ecology" – constituted by the copresence of the old and new ICTs – that offers a context for developing innovative media education models that not only overcome the deficiencies of traditional approaches to education, but also shift the focus of media from commercial considerations to its pedagogic role. As discussed in chapter one, some of the emerging media education models, drawing insights from the work of Dewey and Freire, have identified the innovative uses of ICT's. Both the Cybermohalla and Mapping the Neighbourhood projects serve as good examples of these emerging models of media education.

The main goal of Mapping the Neighbourhood is to make computer-based education attractive to young learners. Although ICTs are understood to enhance learning and participation, the project integrated the uses of several technologies like personal digital assistants and global positioning systems to local development needs. This itself is an innovative approach. The involvement of school students makes it a unique exercise. First, it seeks to transform the traditional education process with learning that now takes place in the community, outside the classroom. It is through "doing" that students acquire knowledge. Second, the idea of development itself is transformed. Community participation provides the student learners opportunities and training in citizenship. The convergence of ICTs, development and education can be glimpsed in the work being carried out by students in Almora and Nainital area in Hawalbag. Here community mapping goes beyond territories and landscape; rather the visual representations of their regions gives the people knowledge and understanding of how communities live in the social and material world. Mullick, Dhar, and Satyaprakash (2004) conclude that, *"the use of ICT as an alternative form of education in rural and urban areas has demonstrated that this form of education can have a positive affect on the community at large ... Innovative use of technology changes the way development takes place and ensures that the issues of general public are addressed. Taking the children as 'agents of change', this project has tried to evolve an alternative form of education as well as developmental process."*

The creation of community maps – of basic socio-economic, cultural, and ecological resources – by the school children in their respective neighbourhoods provides a new learning experience that is not only free from the formalized classroom education, but takes them into the 'real' world where learning and knowledge become complementary. In other words, as Siva Kumar asserts, *"instead of learning geography, history, and environmental sciences and the textbooks, the children will learn by producing knowledge of relevance for their community"*. Further, referring to the feasibility of the project, Siva Kumar points out that the initial fears about the ability of rural school children to adapt to technologies like GIS, GPS, and PDA's proved wrong as these experiments became successful. Gradually the concept of community mapping has been integrated into the curriculum of several schools. An excerpt from "Mapping of Water Resources with PDA and GPS", provides a concrete example on why school children find these experiments challenging and useful:

With the help of PDA coupled with GPS (running on an indigeneously developed GIS software called Todermal) the students with assistance from the community created base maps for villages. Other than the patwari maps [traditional revenue maps in India, outdated and unavailable in the community], no village map exists. The students generated the village maps, collected and marked GPS locations of all water, resource points (natural and manmade). The location of each house was marked and linked to GIS in order to be able to reassess the water need and supply situation. Other built structures (temples, roads and pathways, shops, community centers, health centers. other infrastructures etc.) were also mapped. This involvement of the students in community mapping, the ongoing conversations with rural citizens, the engagement with their environment, the coming together of local forms of knowledge and modern information and communication technologies, points to an innovative exercise in social development that can be adapted and replicated in other underdevelopment and developing regions of the world. This form of the localglobal engagement is more productive than the one that is visible in commercial and popular media around the world, and is an interesting social communication and development mode! articulated by young people. The conversations between student teams and local community members is an exercise in decentralized planning and rural development. As a form of "direct education" it emulates what Paulo Freire had outlined through his philosophy of education: **dialogical education through interaction with a focus on practice (or praxis)**. The ICTs also open up "spaces of dialogue" for the young participants: conversations and discussions lead to collective participation in a variety of multimedia experimental work.

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Die Veröffentlichung des Beitrags **"Young People, Media Pedagogy, and Participatory Design: Sketching a Dialogic Process." [= "Teaching about Media. Media Education, Learning and Literacy"]** aus dem Sammelband "**Empowerment through Media Education.** An Intercultural Dialogue", herausgegeben von Ulla Carlsson, Samy Tayie, Geneviève Jacquinot-Delaunay und José Manuel Pérez Tornero erfolgt mit freundlicher Genehmigung des International Clearinghouse on Children, Youth and Media – NORDICOM der Universität Göteborg/Schweden und des Autors

Susanne Hanger

Grenzüberschreitende Jugendmedienarbeit in Europa

Einmal mehr beschert uns die Europäische Kommission ein Schlagwort, das viele von uns am Ende des Jahres nicht mehr werden hören können. Dabei stellt sich die Frage, ob der interkulturelle Dialog tatsächlich einer solch intensiven Kampagne bedarf. Die European Youth Press arbeitet mit jungen Medienmacherinnen in ganz Europa und darüber hinaus zusammen. Interkulturell kommuniziert wird ganz von selbst.

Das Paradebeispiel sind die ersten European Youth Media Days, die vergangenen Juni in Brüssel stattfanden. 270 Jugendliche wurden für drei Tage in die EU-Hauptstadt eingeladen, um Medien zu machen, Politik zu diskutieren und sich zu vernetzen. Das Resultat: ein neues europäisches Jugendmagazin, neue Jugendmedienorganisationen in Portugal, den Niederlanden und Italien, aber vor allem ein Berg neuer Kontakte und viel Motivation, sich weiter auf der internationalen Ebene zu engagieren. Die European Youth Press schafft auf unterschiedlichste Art und Weise Raum, um Jugendlichen jeglicher Herkunft kreatives Arbeiten mit Medien zu ermöglichen. Seien es europaweite Kongresse oder regionale Kooperationen, zusammengearbeitet wird auf allen Ebenen. Nicht nur innerhalb der Europäischen Union, sondern auch über ihre Grenzen hinaus, die Festung Europa zeigt sich dann nur noch in Form von Visa-Formalitäten.

Unsere Generation ist privilegiert, noch vor wenigen Jahrzehnten wären solche breit angelegten Initiativen nicht möglich gewesen. Ein Trip von Österreich ans Meer in Italien glich einer Weltreise, der Weg in den Osten war grundsätzlich keine Option und Flüge über den Ozean für die meisten unerschwinglich. Verschwindende Grenzen, billige Flüge und eine rasante Entwicklung in der Telekommunikation ermöglichen uns heute, schon im jungen Alter die verschiedensten Ecken und Enden dieser Welt zu bereisen und kennen zu lernen. Doch das garantiert nicht unbedingt das Näherrücken der Kulturen. **Denn Akzeptanz ist nicht gleich Verstehen, für Letzteres fehlen meist eine gemeinsame Basis und ein gemeinsames Ziel, die intensives Zusammenarbeiten erfordern.** Dass das Fremdbild von Touristinnen sich selten mit dem Selbstbild der Bevölkerung eines Landes deckt, wissen wir aus eigener Erfahrung.

Die European Youth Press hat ihren gemeinsamen Nenner in den Medien gefunden. Hätten wir diesen