MobiMundi: Exploring the Impact of User-generated Mobile Content – The Participatory Panopticon

Mark A.M. Kramer
University of Salzburg
Sigmund-Haffner Gasse 18
5020 Salzburg, Austria.
Tel: +43(0)662 8044 4800
mark.kramer@sbg.ac.at

Erika Reponen
Nokia Research Center
Visiokatu1
33720 Tampere, Finland.
Tel: +358 50 4835643
erika.reponen@nokia.com

Marianna Obrist
University of Salzburg
Sigmund-Haffner Gasse 18
5020 Salzburg, Austria.
Tel: +43(0)662 8044 4800
marianna.obrist@sbg.ac.at

ABSTRACT
The MobiMundi Workshop aims to provide a forum for researchers and developers from different backgrounds to gather together to explore and discuss the impact of existing and emerging mobile information and communications technologies and services on society. The theme for this workshop will examine the real and potential impacts of user-generated mobile content on individuals and society as a whole. The individual and societal impacts discussed will primarily focus on user centered and social perspectives, but will also explore how user behavior is changing and which problems are emerging, bearing in mind that individual actions are creating privacy and security issues which could lead towards a new quality of a hyper-surveillance society by providing the framework for the participatory panopticon. Moreover, mobile human-computer interaction and design related issues will be explored and considered in order to support users requirement to share and co-create mobile user-generated audiovisual content.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

General Terms
Computers and society, human factors, social issues, theory.

Keywords
Blogs, citizen-media, mobile-technologies, mobile-services, participatory-journalism, panopticom, privacy, social-factors, social impact, smart-mobs, surveillance, sousveillance, social impact, technology-assessment, user-generated content.

1. INTRODUCTION
Mobile information and communication technologies are increasingly impacting the lives of individuals and are a major factor in helping re-shape our cultures and societies. [2] With the widespread availability and usage of networked-enabled multimedia devices capable of recording audio and visual media, we are witnessing exponential usage and generation of digital artifacts

Within the context of traditional-media and journalism, user-generated content is understood as a phenomenon that is synonymous with: “citizen-journalism”, “grassroots journalism”, “p2p journalism” or even “social news”. It can be observed that portable, mobile information and communication technologies are enabling individuals to engage in this new quality of journalism through the recording, editing and distribution of digital content in mobile, ubiquitous and pervasive ways. This form of “ubiquitous journalism” can be understood as “citizen-media” or “participatory journalism” and we are beginning to witness how these emerging publishing and journalistic practices are leading towards scenarios in which people observe each other constantly and therefore shape a type of surveillance society or a new quality of sousveillance, (surveillance from below, among the masses) in which the capturing and sharing of personal experiences are commonplace.

This pervasive recording of events demonstrates the emergence of a quality of ubiquitous and pervasive journalistic practice. On the one hand we are beginning to observe a new quality of journalism emerge. On the other hand we witness how this could lead towards a culture where people observe each other constantly and therefore build a newer “panoptic” quality of surveillance society. According to Jaime Cascio, eventually we will “be living in a world where what we see, what we hear, what we experience will be recorded wherever we go. There will be few statements or scenes that will go unnoticed, or unremembered. Our day-to-day lives will be archived and saved. What’s more, these archives will be available over the net for recollection, analysis, even sharing.”[1][3]

This analogy to a “Panopticon” [4] is drawn upon Jeremy Bentham’s vision [4] of how prisons should be designed in the 18th century in which all inmates could be watched at all times.[1] This term, according to Cascio “has a [much] broader meaning,” especially when individuals augment and equipped themselves with mobile information and communication technologies which is used in creating user-generated content.

What we are witnessing currently is a trend towards increase production of content on the move which demonstrates how individuals are voluntarily participating in the creation of what
Cascio terms the “participatory panopticon”, a voluntary form of sousveillance- society in which individuals are generating audio and visual content which could lead towards a new quality of a hyper-surveillance society by providing the framework for the participatory panopticon

Both scenarios are beginning to make an impact on the lives of individuals and our society. Although the term journalism is questionable in this context, this paper investigates whether this practice is journalistic in nature or not. Therefore, the question remains, how will current and emerging technologies help create a culture of ubiquitous, and pervasive journalistic practice, or are we shaping a new world or personal surveillance? The purpose of this workshop is to explore these questions and more.

2. MOTIVATION

MobiMundi (Mobi=Mobile, Mundi=World) is a series of workshops which was launched at the 2007 MobileHCI conference in Singapore. The purpose and motivation of MobiMundi is to provide the environment for researchers and developers to explore the effects of existing and emerging mobile information and communications technologies and services on society, and to use this knowledge to help improve current and future human computer interaction research and development.

The topics of interest explored within the MobiMundi Workshops are focused primarily on the human factors and social implications of mobile technologies and services. This year’s workshop proposes to explore the impact of mobile technologies and services on citizen media and participatory journalism. Topics covered this year include, but are not limited to:

- Examining the positive and negative impact of citizen-media and participatory journalism;
- Discussing the impact of mobile blogging and citizen journalism on society;
- Reflecting on the meaning of mobile phones and related mobile technologies for various sub-groups in society;
- Discussing the impact of mobile technologies and services on cultures and communities in the age of instant access and ubiquitous computing;
- Determining ways in which mobile technologies can amplify and enhance human cooperation;
- Investigate the emergence of smart-mobs and mobile ad-hoc social networks;
- Examine the unintended and imaginative uses of mobile technologies and services;
- Examining the negative aspects of mobile technologies and services;
- Evaluate and discuss the challenges for designing mobile technologies, multimedia devices that take into consideration the production of mobile user-generated content;
- Explore new interaction styles afforded by these new mobile technologies and services.

3. AIMS OF THE WORKSHOP

The primary aim of this workshop is to provide the environment for researchers and developers to explore the impact of existing and emerging mobile information and communications technologies and services on society. The goal of this workshop is to assist the workshop participants to gain a broader understanding on how their research and development impacts society in order to help improve current and emerging mobile computer interaction scenarios and methodologies.

4. INTENDED AUDIENCE

The intended audience for this workshop is active researchers and developers within the field of mobile communications and technology development. The exchange and interaction among workshop participants will come from different research communities with various experiences and backgrounds.

5. WORKSHOP FORMAT

The format of the workshop will be a full-day event in which the presentation and discussion of thoughtfully written positions papers will be conducted. There will be a call for contributions in the form of position papers and the participants will present those contributions, which are accepted for the workshop, within the workshop. The workshop agenda will be determined by the organizing committee and will include a panel discussion with invited speakers who are active researchers in the field of mobile computing.

Pre and post MobiMundi Workshop activities will be coordinated through an easily accessible internet portal. The MobiMundi Portal will allow for pre and post conference preparations and discussions amongst the workshop participants. Furthermore, this workshop portal will be accessible via mobile-devices and will allow for real-time notification through RSS feeds and will aggregate various web-based services to enhance and supplement the workshop.

6. ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

MobiMundi is coordinated by Mark A.M. Kramer who is a Research Fellow and Doctoral Candidate at the ICT&S Center for Advanced Research and Studies in Information & Communication Technologies and Society at the University of Salzburg, Austria. Mark is an active mobile-blogger and participatory observer of participatory journalism and citizen media initiatives. Mark’s research focus deals with observing and critically analyzing and assessing the various impacts of mobile technologies and services on society. Mark has academic credentials and experience in the fields of cultural anthropology, international relations and communications research. Currently, Mark is conducting research on forecasting the future of mobile-learning, including the establishment of ubiquitous learning communities and the emergence of self-organized, citizen-based media and participatory-journalism.

Erika Reponen has been working for Nokia since 1997. Currently, Erika is a member of the research staff at Nokia Research Center Tampere concentrating on personal content and media, primarily focused on video communication. Erika is also completing a doctoral thesis on mobile first person reality television. She has designed visual UIs for several successful commercial products,
most notably the Nokia 9210 Communicator. Erika received a Master of Arts in Audiovisual media culture at University of Lapland, in 2003. She is part of the EuroITV2008 organizing committee.

Dr. Marianna Obrist is assistant professor within the HCI & Usability Unit of the ICT&S Center at the University of Salzburg. She holds a doctoral degree in Communication Science from the University of Salzburg. The focal point of her research lies in human-computer interfaces, user-centered designs of interactive services, and in particular the user involvement into the development of new products/systems. She is involved in several research projects concerned with the study of the home environment and the analysis of user requirements for interactive TV (i.e. iiTV@home, iTV 4 all), as well as on co-creation and user experience evaluation in the new user driven media landscape (i.e. CITIZEN MEDIA). She was part of the organization team for the MobileHCI2005 and ACE2007 conference and is co-chair for the EuroITV2008 conference.

7. REFERENCES