

The potency of New Media on the landscape of Israeli democracy is currently being tested. All indicators show that it works.



The unprecedented demonstrations of the summer of 2011 for changing the Israeli government's social and economic policies began on the Internet and brought hundreds of thousands of citizens to the streets. Peaceably, they compelled government offices to burn the night oil and develop plans that will attempt to satisfy the demands of the once-silent majority. One of the government's reactions was to establish an online dialogue with the protestors and the public. These events demonstrate the New Media's ability to unite people, amplify their voices in decision-makers' ears, and involve them in novel ways to affect policy.

An Institute with a Mission

Foreseeing the New Media's potential to affect change in a connected democratic society, Ariel University Center (AUC) established the Institute for the Study of New Media, Politics and Society at its Moskowitz School of Communication. The institute aims at becoming Israel's leading academic institution in the study of digital New Media.

The Institute functions as a breeding ground of ideas, initiating and implementing studies on the New Media's impact on Israel and the world. It acts as a one-stop-shop for scholars, providing statistical services, editing, design, and, of course, students with a passion for the subject.

Leading Projects

• Creating deliberative discourse from a cacophony of voices

Israeli society is beset with socio-economic gaps, divisiveness and a vociferous political culture not conducive to deliberative and collaborative problem solving. The institute is working to define the elements needed for deliberative discourse leading to practical ways of strengthening perceptions of political efficacy and enhance confidence in the process. The process will culminate in an "issue forum" where some 400 students deliberate a political issue and reach a decision.

• Making the governmental decision-making process more deliberative

The Office of Public Services has established a website for "Shituf Hatzibur" (Involving the Public) to create a dialogue between citizens and decision makers on pending legislation. The Institute will be activating deliberative modules, recruiting a representative sample of the public, and exposing readers to a variety of opinions on legislation. The project will analyze opinion changes and other consequences of online deliberation.

• Reports

The Institute produces reports that monitor and analyze the penetration of New Media into Israeli communications and its impact on users.

1. Which sectors of the population remain unconnected to the Internet? An Institute report will show which groups (defined by ethnic origin, age, gender, socio-economic status, education, location, etc.) do not access the Internet, and why.
2. Which Israeli media is most popular? The report will present an annual summary of the Israeli communications market, including organizations, funding sources, content and data on popularity.

• Individual studies

1. **Sociology of Mobile Phones** in the Military (IDF) – A case study in an authoritarian, hierarchical organization and how it engages with cellular technology.
2. **Ecology of Online News** – How does news and information reach the public and how does the public access it?
3. **Patterns of Exposure to TV Content** – What media channels (YouTube, other external sites) are being used for TV content and why?
4. **The Place of User Comments** (Talkbacks) in Reading News Portals in Israel – Do talkbacks play a greater role than the story? Researchers will use eye-tracking systems.
5. **Local Newspapers in Israel** – A pioneering study of local press defining the character of local online newspapers. Sample newspapers will be used to study citizen participation.
6. **Public Relations in the Age of Digital Media** – How has digital media changed the way PR professionals plan and work?
7. **The Impact of Pictures on Primary Elections.** A growing number of political parties conduct their primaries online. The study examines how a candidate's picture impacts popularity.



Your contribution to the Institute can make the difference

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