


# Global online protest: but who is listening?

 [blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2007/02/16/global-online-protest-but-who-is-listening/](http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2007/02/16/global-online-protest-but-who-is-listening/)

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I've always thought that the idea of a global news village was a nonsense. The more I travel the more I believe that media markets are very different. This week the world came to me in the shape of a [conference](#) looking at global free expression. Journalists from Egypt, Bosnia, Lithuania, Lebanon, Argentina and elsewhere were discussing whether new media technologies can transform journalism and increase democracy world-wide.

The point is that everyone had a different story to tell. 

The [Serbian journalist](#) gave the example of a fascist party setting up a website with a list of all non-Serbs in the country without true Serbian bloodlines. Her family had fled to the Balkans when Napoleon invaded Italy so she was proud to be on the list. But it was hardly an example of New Media bringing liberal political discourse – or was it? On the other hand, the Nigerian human rights lawyer explained how mobile phone texting was enabling activists to cut through the corruption of public bureaucracy and reach voters directly – and allow voters to speak back via SMS. And in the UK? Well what happens when the Government tries to encourage e-democracy by allowing the public to put petitions up on the [Downing Street website](#)? Shockingly, the *wrong* people use it. Ghastly motorists sign up a million people to protest about road charging! Where was the nice petition to save some obscure furry creature from extinction or a sensible proposal to get children to learn more foreign languages?

Obviously, new media democracy is supposed to be liberal and nice and environmental because new media is innately progressive isn't it?

I wonder whether the liberal establishment really wants to hear the voice of e-democracy at all. Judging my most blogs and political forums, online political debate is nasty, brutish and short on new ideas. But even if represents a kind of cyber-rage it is still a useful way of hearing voices that old media often ignored. And that includes Serb nationalists as well as rural Nigerian mothers.

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