

SOCAP Session Summary – Who Tells the Story? Emerging New Voices

Conference: SOCAP11, September 6-9, 2011

Panel Topic: Who Tells the Story? Emerging New Voices

Panel Description: With people around the world having unprecedented access to the tools of media, we are both witnessing and participating in the democratization of our planet. The panelists for this session have a vested interest in ushering these new voices into the conversation, forging non-traditional alliances that bridge worlds in order to achieve common goals.

Moderator & Panelists:

- Jeff Leifer, CEO, Circadian Media Lab [moderator] - <http://circadianmedialab.com/>
- Tom Kostigen, Reporter, Dow Jones MarketWatch - <http://www.marketwatch.com/>
- Patrice Schneider, Chief Strategy Officer, Media Development Loan Fund - <http://www.mdlf.org/>
- Jeanne Bourgault, President, InterNews Network - <http://www.internews.org/>

Design, Methodology, Approach Reports and expert opinions from panelists.

Main Panel Discussion Points: The panelists delved into local stories, and how to give voice to local communities who often are left out of the global conversation. Schneider, from the Media Development Loan Fund, which invests in countries with a history of media oppression, discussed the need for a free flow of information in emerging democracies. A free flow of information can also help better the efficiency of development aid, he noted, citing the corruption index to further this point. Schneider further emphasized that for social investment to succeed, a media watchdog can help improve the efficiency of the distribution of this capital. Bourgault from Internews (a sister organization to MDLF) spoke more about the meaning side of the equation (versus money and statistics), emphasizing the importance of investing in local media, ranging from mainstream to citizen journalism. She discussed the direct impact of information on all of our lives – and in the developing and transitioning world, much of this information can be life-saving, such as in post-earthquake Haiti, post-floods Pakistan, and now with Somalian refugees. When you invest in media, you are in effect investing in small businesses that can become sustainable over time with benefit to their local community. Kostigen, a journalist with Dow Jones, discussed the need to “reframe” the story, and how journalists need to portray more stories with a human face in order to resonate with readers, “the gatekeeper type of mentality that needs to be there.” These stories, he noted, need to go viral in order to provide answers and solutions to these readers.

Outcomes & Analysis: The issue of story telling was a common theme during the sessions, which is fascinating because many describe social entrepreneurship that way. In the case of this panel, the value of media can be two-fold – to humanize social causes in the developed world, and to provide life-saving information to local communities in the developing world. There is a need for both bottom-up and top-down support for local media, bettering the quality and access

to information, as well as improving regulatory policies and frameworks to support the growth of these organizations. It is also important to have a wider lens when we discuss the support of media – since today the term has become increasingly democratized to include citizen media, new media, radio, mainstream, etc. As media diversifies, so does its ability to reach more remote communities, and that access can change livelihoods and in turn have a significant social impact.

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