



## OVERVIEW

E-COMMERCE, E-HEALTH, E-GOVERNMENT AND E-LEARNING ARE ALL WELL ESTABLISHED DOMAINS FOR DESIGN. BUT LIFE IS MORE THAN COMMERCE, GOVERNMENT AND FAMILY. THE 'THIRD SECTOR', 'CIVIL SOCIETY', 'THE VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR', 'UN-COERCED COLLECTIVE ACTION AROUND SHARED INTERESTS', IN SHORT SOCIAL ACTION - IS AN EQUALLY IMPORTANT AREA OF LIFE THAT HAS RECEIVED TOO LITTLE ATTENTION IN THE DESIGN OF INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT). OUR PURPOSE IS NOT JUST TO UNDERSTAND THIS DIMENSION OF THE WORLD, BUT TO CHANGE IT. THE CLUSTER BRINGS TOGETHER DESIGNERS, RESEARCHERS AND PRACTITIONERS TO MAP OUT THE ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND QUESTIONS; TO IDENTIFY AND UNDERSTAND IMPORTANT INNOVATIONS, AND TO INITIATE DIFFERENT FUTURES.

## Activities

During the year we held 5 separate workshops bringing together practitioners and academics to begin and progress new research directions for this space. We also conducted an on-line Delphi consultation with an international group of experienced practitioners to discover their perceptions of key challenges in both research and practice relating to ICT in social action settings.

Wayfinding in this uncharted terrain, the early workshops were open-ended struggles to establish coherent clusters of issues from a diverse group that extended from Indymedia activists, through trade-unions, charities working with the housebound elderly to technology lobbyists and Free / Libre open-source software (FLOSS) developers. The very effort of identifying shared concerns and finding common ground was, in itself, important as both means and end. Three core issues were identified for further collaborative work: FLOSS in Social Action, Narrative and Storytelling in Social Action, and Evaluation and Organisational Learning around ICT in Social Action. These issues were taken as indicative rather than representative of the space. The later workshops were used to refine our understanding of these themes and to explore cross cutting issues, leading to proposals for new work such as developing tools and practices for 'open documentaries'.

## Insights

Technology doesn't just mean gadgets – we cannot understand Technology and Social Action unless we recognise that our technologies include our ways of organising ourselves, of communicating; of storytelling; our ways of co-ordinating activities and managing the technical systems around us.

In social action, 'technology' designers are widespread, but frequently isolated. Effective practices and skills may remain rather localised. Key questions are:

- How can the competency and confidence to innovate be spread more widely within and between social action organisations?
- How can organisations evaluate their technology design interventions and learn from that evaluation?
- How can we support people without a voice to design the technology around them allowing them to have their stories heard in the emerging on-line world?
- What can we do to mediate communication between technology specialists and social activists to support informed design decisions?