

# CONCLUSION

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The results of this research can be used as a base for continued dialogue, an introduction to the region in relation to the ICTs on an international level, and as a reference document for pinpointing the diverse areas that need to be addressed in ICT advocacy work. It is also the beginning of including Croatia into the broader picture of ICT practice and theory. Continuing to examine why and how women in Croatia use the Internet is one way to explore the expected value the Internet offers to new democracies.

The potential of the Internet in a society in transition needs to be monitored over a period of time in order for specific conclusions to be formed. Connecting theory with practice, the analysis shows that the women's use of the Internet in Croatia is also in a process of transition.

New ways of formulating terminology to include perspectives and experience from the region need to be created to form a more global and inclusive view of the way the ICTs play a role in women's lives. It becomes highly problematic when addressing countries based on the universal categories of "poor" or "north/south." By applying solutions or theories solely on economic classifications, one neglects each country's diverse history and culture. Even though some countries may be economically similar, each region and country has their own specific background and faces specific challenges that may influence how and which solutions can best apply. It may be possible to determine the scope of women's use of the ICTs by identifying specific indicators or evaluating the experiences of women.

However, for Croatia and other countries in the region the serious lack of gender-desegregated data and information limits the possibilities — not only to participate in the global discourse, but also to make appropriate and relevant policies and decisions. Without the use of internationally accepted uniform methods of collecting data, monitoring to see if the use of the Internet contributes to the democratic process of a country remains a difficult task.

There are many reasons that can limit women's online use. The results of our research show that activists and professionals are often the ones

who use the Internet the most. However, we still cannot speak of a feminist cyber culture or autonomous women's online movement. From the content of women's pages researched from the *CroLinks* portal, we see a hesitation on the part of women to express opinions or creative ideas, despite the new open democracy and expectations of the Internet. Women's use of the Internet, lack thereof, or lack of appropriate and effective use is a result of lack of ICTs skills and resources. There are other indirect aspects that can influence the way people use the Internet. These indirect aspects may not be so apparent or fixed as a society is in transition and the pace of change varies from one day to the next, from country to country within the region.

Nonetheless, to connect theory to practical and daily past and present experiences of women we must keep in mind the cultural context that allows for, and sometimes hinders, maximum use of the ICTs. A culture of communication can adapt a mixture of new technologies with traditional face-to-face communication. To see if and how the Internet can flourish we look at the cultural, political and historical backgrounds of a society, as well as women's memories and past experiences. Indicators that point to problems or challenges, such as mass media portrayals of women and new technology, free time, poverty, and even lack of interest, for example, may be a process of transition that will change on line and in "reality."