

Rural communities and ICT: comparisons from the community informatics experience

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Fecha

Digital divide?

- ❖ It all started there.
- ❖ Many criticisms.
- ❖ Many stakeholders.
- ❖ An imported concept.

“Soft” divides

- ❖ The ones that will eventually go away
- ❖ The ones that can be changed easily

“Hard” divides

- ❖ Structurally constructed
- ❖ Society / Community / individual aspects

*Almost always, defined externally
and by external interests.*

Inevitably, a failed concept...

Perhaps only a manifestation. Or an illusion.

From telecenters to apps

The early attempts were based on the need to bring “exotic” technology to specific populations.

Currently, technology resides in each house, and it’s controlled by each person.

From basic connectivity to broadband initiatives

The effort to bring technology included connectivity, a significant issue back in the mid 90s.

Pressure now lies on providing broadband.

In the end, subsidization is still the key demand.

- ❖ Technology had to come from outside
- ❖ Then, technology had to be sustained and sustainable
- ❖ Now, technology has disappeared

Five stages of Internet presence

- ❖ Field of Dreams
- ❖ Skills for all!
- ❖ What's the purpose of it all, beyond piracy and chat?
- ❖ Services galore (and get in line or else)
- ❖ Mobile digital life is fun!

- ❖ It has become personal
- ❖ It has become minimally invasive
- ❖ It has become fundamental to daily life
- ❖ It has become a defining conduit to social and cultural life

- ❖ However, connectivity, a necessary element of technology, is still an issue.
- ❖ Who pays for it?
- ❖ What should be prioritized?

- ❖ Is it appropriation, or consumption?
- ❖ Is it sustainable?
- ❖ Is it relevant?

And what about development?

- ❖ Developing the economy?
- ❖ Developing society?
- ❖ Developing community?
- ❖ Developing individuals?

the one constant is community

but then again, what is a community?

❖ Ethnicity

❖ Language

❖ “Cultural”

❖ Political actors

Basics of community

- ❖ Attached to the land?
- ❖ Attached to some identity brought from long time ago?
- ❖ Resulting from collective action?
- ❖ Resulting from collective plans?

- ❖ In specific contexts (like under Latin American catholicism), community appeals to traditional, even reactionary approaches to social conditions and norms.
- ❖ Also, a strand of traditionalism purports to understand communities as “static manifestations of pure living”, as artifacts to be preserved rather than develop / evolve, under its own volition.

Back to the classics

Society

- ❖ A collection of individuals?
- ❖ rational, consensual agreement

Community

- ❖ Affects and traditions
- ❖ Collections of relationships?

❖ Mechanical solidarity

❖ Organic solidarity

❖ But, what does “organic” means in times of digital social links?

Who is interested in technology?

- ❖ Individuals?
- ❖ Communities?
- ❖ Governments?
- ❖ Donors?
- ❖ Industries?

- ❖ Each potential answer provides a new question:
 - ❖ Who is really defining the problem?
 - ❖ Who is really defining the solution?
 - ❖ Who is really caring about what?

- ❖ Either rural, urban or transnational, communities are still the main line supporting individuals caught in disruptive change.
- ❖ Technology is an element of such change as well as a tool to face it and turn it into an advantage.

Needing to consider communities, technology becomes
secondary.

Needing to consider technology, communities should be
paramount.

¡Gracias!