Chapter 7
Think Global, Act Local:
How ICTs are Changing the Landscape in Community Development

Sylvie Albert
Laurentian University, Canada

Don Flournoy
Ohio University, USA

ABSTRACT

Being able to connect high-speed computing and other information technologies into broadband communication networks presents local communities with some of their best chances for renewal. Such technologies are now widely perceived to be not just a nice amenity among corporations and such non-profit organizations as universities but a social and economic necessity for communities struggling to find their place in a rapidly changing world. Today, citizens want and expect their local communities to be "wired" for broadband digital transactions, whether for family, business, education or leisure. Such networks have become a necessity for attracting and retaining the new "knowledge workforce" that will be key to transforming communities into digital societies where people will want to live and work. Since the Internet is a global phenomenon, some of the challenges of globalization for local communities and regions are introduced in this article and suggestions for turning those challenges into opportunities are offered. To attain maximum benefit from the new wired and wireless networks, local strategies must be developed for its implementation and applications must be chosen with some sensitivity to local needs. New Growth theory is used to show why communities must plan their development agenda, and case studies of the Intelligent Community Forum are included to show how strategically used ICTs are allowing local communities to be contributors in global markets.

INTRODUCTION

Whatever economic and social changes occur globally, they are eventually felt locally. Thomas Friedman (2006), author of The World is Flat, Don Tapscott and Anthony Williams (2008), authors of Wikinomics, and numerous others have pointed to the ways global developments change for good or bad the future prospects of local communities, of local enterprises and their citizens. Many aspects of the various globalization scenarios they describe are not always hopeful, and community leaders who think about such things are understandably nervous. Change cannot be held back; but community leaders can have some control over how they plan to deal with change.

Among the driving forces in the shifting economic and social order of nations is the rapid and widespread adoption of computer processing and the ease with which information in digital form can now be exchanged over wired and wireless communication networks. Technological advancements are viewed as tools that human beings employ to better their condition. From the perspective of community, the whole point of a telecommunications solution is that the pace of human enterprise can be accelerated and the reach of human players can be extended inward and outward for the benefit of all.

"Think Global" in this article has to do with the fact that communities everywhere are being affected by the rapid, transformational changes brought by information and communication technologies (ICTs). This is a global phenomenon. Whether these changes are positive or negative will depend on strategies that communities develop to make use of them. "Act Local" has to do with the steps communities take to insure a networked infrastructure that is sound and sustainable, one that will allow citizens to innovate around those ICTs, to develop new business opportunities and to promote a better quality of life. Local strategies for preparing citizens to think more broadly will go a long way toward promoting the right kinds of

growth for communities as the broadband Internet opens new doors for local development.

Near-instant access to information stored on remote web sites and much easier, more personalized communication via the Internet have changed the very definition of global reach and of what local means. Eger (2007, 1) says, "*No technology in human history is having, or is likely to have, such tremendous influence on life and work and play, and in the transforming process, on our physical space, as the Internet.*" As scary as the Internet is, participation in the panoply of networks being created within the broadband Internet space seems irresistible, and may actually be a competitive necessity. Certainly, local citizens and institutions who have managed to get themselves better connected are seeing the advantages of being linked to their neighbors regionally and around the globe.

With pervasive digital networks in place, the economics of access, innovation and distribution have undergone radical transformation. Communities are choosing to use these networks to better identify and promote their assets. Local institutions and local businesses are finding ways to more efficiently connect and collaborate with one another, to cluster their businesses for maximum impact. Whether those points of collaboration stay within communities or reach beyond them, computers and telecommunications will be the basic technological infrastructure on which most of the newly formed alliances are grounded. The assumption of this article is that a deliberate and reasoned approach to ICT adoption and use can increase the prospects for community transformation that is under local control.

The Intelligent Community Forum is a New York City-based think tank that studies economic and social development of modern communities. From the mission section of its web site, the ICF says:

Whether in industrialized or developing nations, communities are challenged to create prosperity, stability and cultural meaning in a world where

14 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/think-global-act-local/62779

Related Content

Knowledge Sharing in Virtual and Networked Organisations in Different Organisational and National Cultures

Kerstin Siakasand Elli Georgiadou (2008). *Building the Knowledge Society on the Internet: Sharing and Exchanging Knowledge in Networked Environments (pp. 45-64).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/knowledge-sharing-virtual-networked-organisations/6001

Relationships in Technological Processes: Finding the Common Ground between Diffusion of Innovations and Relationship Marketing Theories - A Case Study

Francisco Cua, Steve Reamesand Joe Choon Yean Chai (2013). *International Journal of Information Systems and Social Change (pp. 17-41).*

www.irma-international.org/article/relationships-technological-processes/78317

Preparing for the Future: Staying Ahead of Obsolescence

Paula Millerand James O. Connelly (2022). *International Journal of Smart Education and Urban Society (pp. 1-15).*

www.irma-international.org/article/preparing-for-the-future/303566

The Centrality of Team Leaders in Knowledge-Sharing Activities: Their Dual Role as Knowledge Processors

Evangelia Siachouand Anthony Ioannidis (2008). *Building the Knowledge Society on the Internet: Sharing and Exchanging Knowledge in Networked Environments (pp. 24-44).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/centrality-team-leaders-knowledge-sharing/6000

Networked Knowledge Communities in the 21st Century Classroom Practices: The Internationalization of Nursing Education through a Technology-Enabled Curriculum

Heather Wharrad, Derek Chambers, Catrin Evansand Jackie Goode (2014). *Emerging Pedagogies in the Networked Knowledge Society: Practices Integrating Social Media and Globalization (pp. 25-59).*

www.irma-international.org/chapter/networked-knowledge-communities-in-the-21st-century-classroom-practices/96051