Does the Internet deserve everybody?

Yehia Elkhatib    Gareth Tyson    Arjuna Sathiaseelan

Lancaster University    Queen Mary University of London    University of Cambridge
What is the ethicality of ICT initiatives in developing regions?
Why Internet deployment for developing regions?

• Only 37.9% of the world's population have access to the Internet.
  – Developed: 75.7% 0.9 0.3
  – Developing: 29.9% 1.8 4.2

Sources:

• Many Western countries and organisations are working to bridge the digital divide.
Let them have Internet!

• Undeniably benefited millions:
  – economic growth
  – better health interventions
  – topple dictators; etc.

• Correlation between Internet penetration and development (social and economic) is often cited.

• Not entirely altruistic:
  – e.g. fostering long-term economic relationships.

Let them have Internet!

- “Some access is better than none”.
- Raises questions on long lasting implications.
- Exploring the nuances is key to avoid short/medium/long-term damage.
Internet?

Value through being connected.

But…
Not always successful

• No association with national/regional strategies.

• Poor sustainability planning.
  Best and Maclay. “Community Internet access in Rural areas: solving the economic sustainability puzzle”, 2002.

• Extremely difficult to recruit users.
Possible side effects

Mirani. “Millions of Facebook users have no idea they’re using the internet”, 2015.
Possible side effects

Does not give access to “the Internet”
Possible side effects
Sanity Checklist

• Considerations for ethical and effective long-term ICT deployment initiates.
  – 4 themes. Transparency at the core.
  – To follow: political and societal will.
  – Non-exhaustive. Stimulate discussion.

Sustainability
Trust
Impact
Community Capacity Building
Sustainability

Ensure independence and long-lasting effect.

• **Affordability:**

• **Stake:**
  Benefactors and beneficiaries. Maintenance. Conflict of interest between financial and managerial machinery.

• **Partnership:**
  Liaison with public and private sectors. Opportunities to engage with a wide cross-section of society, and stimulate reforms.
• **Stakeholders:**
  Who are they (internal and external)?
  Exact role of each.

• **Decision making process:**
  Decision makers.
  How much control.
  Accountability.
  Mechanisms for local community to participate in the process.

• **Timeline:**
  Targets (foundation, pilot, launch, etc.).
  Who is managing these?

Trust

Huge CAPEX and expertise is needed, but it places scary power in a few hands.
Consult recipients to identify clear pathways to benefit.

- **Recruitment:** Adoption means and success criteria. Retention strategy.

- **Local impact:** Educational, organisational, commercial opportunities. Community dynamics: potential to favour certain groups over others?

- **National impact:** Business/social links to be built. Effect on the political structure.

- **Global impact:** Enriching the international community with local knowledge and experience. Contribution to global governance.
Community Capacity Building

Infrastructure & software are not enough. A commitment to continuous learning is required.

- **Introduction:**
  Introduction to the Internet. Education about different access means. Education about potential risks.

- **External input:**
  Training processes, educational material, shared best practices and lessons learnt. Availability in local languages. Respect to local traditions.

- **Local input:**
  Technical support channels, Internet safety courses, and material for responsible use. Support for localisation.
Summary

• Improving ICT metrics will not magically bring transformation in developing regions.

• A more sophisticated methodology beyond “let’s do it” should be formed.

• No one size fits all. Context dictates.