

**Social Science Research Centre
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ICT and Community Series

**Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) as resources for
community development: What is being done? What is their potential?**

**Case study, interviews and analysis - *With reference to government
policies***

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Outline

This research is part of a wider study on the socio-economic impacts of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs). The present research focuses on “community.” It is noteworthy that millions of central and local government dollars are poured into the “community” aspect of ICT developments. However, although “community” is called upon to address the socio-economic impacts of ICTs, there appears to be little understanding about what this “community” consists of, how this “community” can assist, and of the practicalities involved in the implementation of community ICT projects.

Specifically, this research:

- Draws attention to the potential of Information Communications Technology (ICTs) in community development
- Makes linkages between such developments and stated government social and economic policy goals
- Points to the ways in which ICT-supported community development can enable new, more effective delivery of various central and local government policy objectives.

For this research project, I drew on my MA thesis (2002) where I carried out in depth interviews with 10 people in St Albans. In addition, in April 2003, I interviewed 13 people in Christchurch and Wellington. These included those directly involved with five community ICT projects, and those in supportive roles. In this research, ICTs include computers, desktop publishing software, digitised multi-media technologies such as digital cameras and various Internet or web technologies.

Scott Lash (1994), a social/cultural theorist, provides a framework for thinking about community in contemporary societies and argues that ICTs can and indeed need to be utilized as resources for community development.

Introduction

The current Labour government’s *Growth and Innovation Framework (2002)* which underpins much social and economic policy, is clear about the need for a cohesive society and for the ideal of all to participate in the “knowledge society”. Clearly expressed in the strategy is a concern that if “isolated pockets” of people are excluded from participation, social and economic development will be curbed. It is thought this will in turn reduce New Zealand’s ability to participate in the global knowledge society.

This concern arises out of a set of changes in the 80s and 90s whereby a technology revolution (miniaturization of computers and development of Internet and World Wide Web) coincided with the deregulation that opened the New Zealand economy to international competition. Gaps opened up between those who have access to the new information structures, enabling relevant social, economic and political participation, and those who do not enjoy such access, creating the “information rich” and “information poor,” or the “digital divide”. Further, it is increasingly noted that participation in ICT structures relates to participation in society (Lash, 1994:133). For instance, most

employment requires the use of ICTs, as does much person-to-person communication. Being able to have a voice or influence opinion and participate in public decision making also increasingly requires access to and use of communications media.

Most governments and international organizations (e.g. United Nations) recognize the benefits of full participation in ICT structures and the social and economic costs of not doing so (Cullen, 2000). They have accordingly, begun to design policies and commit resources to ensuring participation (Cullen, 2002, Thomson, 2002, Maharey, 2002). New Zealand decision-makers have followed suit though they are considered by many to have been slow in getting started and minimalist in committing resources compared to comparable countries (Thomson, 2002:4).

Research on policies to close the digital divide indicates that the best method of ensuring full participation is through the community (Cullen, 2000, United Nations, ECOSOC, 2000). Further, other research cautions that the success or failure of enabling more participation is predicated on whether or not community is involved, if there is community buy-in, and grass roots support (Thomson, 2002:13).

In June 2002, the government released what it called the *Connecting Communities Strategy* to “ensure that all [New Zealand] communities can participate in the knowledge economy” (Press release, Maharey 26 June, 2002).

Its vision is that:

All New Zealanders, either as individuals or as members of communities, have the opportunity to access and effectively use current and emerging information and communications technologies. This will enable individuals and communities to participate fully in the economic, social, educational, cultural and democratic opportunities available in an information society.

Two million dollars were made available to coordinate and implement the strategy. In this strategy, as in other documentation about the digital divide, a direct correlation is drawn between access and ability to effectively use ICTs and participation in all aspects of society. The meaning of “community” and “connecting” in enabling this to take place, is unclear, as is the value and role ICTs. In other words, there is an assumption that all know what “community” means and that this community exists. There is also an assumption that ICTs will have some role in connecting people and communities and in enabling participation. Given clear evidence of the positive or negative socio-economic impacts for all in society when people can or cannot participate in ICT structures, and the number of times “community” is called upon, it is essential to clarify how “connecting communities” can be a solution.

Scott Lash’s (1994) theorizing about what he refers to as “reflexive community” is helpful in thinking about the emerging forms of “community” in the knowledge society, and the potentials of ICTs for connecting and for the enabling of social, economic and democratic participation.

Community

When politicians and officials call on “community” to assist in the deployment of ICTs, their appeal tends to be implicitly directed at what Lash, drawing on Tonnies, refers to as the *Gemeinschaft*, or traditional communities. However, for the most part, they are appealing to entities that no longer exist. These *Gemeinschaft* communities were geographically bounded and people living in the community knew they lived in this community and knew each other and what each was able to contribute. In this community, shared stories or traditions, and similar norms and values bound people together. As Lash points out, these communities have been largely supplanted by what Tonnies refers to as *Gessellschaft*, societies that are large, impersonal and abstract. In these societies, people are seen as individuals with individual freedom and choice, and social connections are built up around roles in employment, consumption or leisure. Local neighbourhoods are no longer the primary source of identity.

John Wardle, a primary instigator of the use of ICT for community development in New Zealand, described the *Gessellschaft* reality for many when he claimed:

We live in cities, surrounded by strangers we cannot afford to trust because we do not know their background or what pressures they are under. And we know there are a lot of unnatural pressures out there in the big bad world, making some people act in some very un-community-like ways (cited in Ashton, 2002:79).

Lash (1999:145,153) draws attention to the fact that there are further fragmenting pressures on community from powerful global organizations and media in an “age of speed.” For instance, multi and trans-national companies can make decisions to move money or buy and sell that impact directly on whether people in communities will have access to livelihoods. Global media can determine the kinds of information people and communities receive and limit the voices that can be heard.

Rather than connecting community, new ICTs such as the Internet can be seen to be taking people away from their localities into roles in the wider society and cyberspace. That is, for those who have access and are in a position to participate. Whereas the government refers to “isolated pockets” of people who miss out, Lash refers more strongly to areas without access to ICT structures (such as computers, telephones) as “dead zones” and “wild zones” (Lash, 1994:132). He makes a strong case that excluding people from ICT structures will result in what he calls the “revenge of the repressed” that is disruptive and destructive of civil society (Lash, 1994:131).

Given these kinds of pressures, is it even useful to appeal to “community” for the delivery of solutions? This is where research on the potential of ICTs in community development projects can be useful. For instance, what, if any kind of ICT intervention, helps retrieve and develop geographic community, rather than take away from it? And what can help ground and develop community in a way that enables it to relate more effectively to the wider *Gessellschaft* world?

In examining these questions, Lash's differentiation between community and individual or *Gemeinschaft* and *Gessellschaft* is important and provides the basis of a framework for researching community ICT projects. For instance, in spite of the fact that "community" is thought to be the best vehicle for ICT deployment, actual policy for implementation appears to focus on the *Gessellschaft* individual, not the community. Dr Papaarangi Reid illustrates with an example of Maori and health that could equally be said of Maori and ICTs when she argues:

Increasingly, we are being encouraged to find solutions at an individual level, and 'victim blame' members of our communities who have "health risk behaviours" like tobacco-use. In the name of progress, we are being encouraged to 'look-after-ourselves' and lose what used to be our national asset, our ability to care for our neighbours and our fellow citizens. It is not only those who understand public health who will realise that what is good for one's neighbours and one's neighbourhood is also good for oneself (Reid, 1998:13).

In this context, Lash is specific about the need to retrieve and develop community, not to either presume it is already there, nor to accept an engineered consensus about community and its membership (Lash, 1994:165). For Lash, the speed and force of global pressures make it increasingly difficult to retrieve continually changing community ground. In community development, these global pressures must be taken account of. Lash includes in this ground, "history, tradition, the symbolic, place, the material, language, life-world, the gift...the political, the religious forms of life, memory, nature, the monument, the path...the tale (Lash, 1999:6).

While a dichotomy has been drawn between what is seen as individual freedom and communal pressures that constrict and stifle these freedoms, Lash proposes that this conflict can and needs to be bridged. He argues, "what is needed is a notion of involvement in communal practices out of which the self grows (1994:164). In his autobiography, *The Long Walk to Freedom* Nelson Mandela illustrates this concept thus:

I do not know that I could have done it had I been alone. But the authorities' greatest mistake was to keep us together, for together our determination was reinforced. We supported each other and gained strength from each other. Whatever we knew, whatever we leaned, we shared, and by sharing we multiplied whatever courage we had individually. That is not to say that we were all alike in our responses to the hardships we suffered. Men have different capacities and react differently to stress. But the stronger ones raised up the weaker ones, and both became stronger in the process (Mandela, 1994:375).

Methodology

Introduction

This research methodology draws heavily on work carried out for my MA thesis (Ashton, 2002) that in turn was informed by practical involvement in community development using ICT in St Albans (1992-2002). This background was brought to the reviewing of literature, and understanding and interpretation of research of community IT projects and interviews.

The research was carried out with people engaged with, and supportive of community ICT projects in Wellington (Newtown and Island Bay) and Christchurch (St Albans, Waltham and Addington). The present overview draws together the different experiences and understandings of key participants.

Research methods

The research employed qualitative research methods which focused on exploring the understanding participants involved in community ICT projects had of community and the potential of ICTs for community development.

Notes of interviews were taken and after typed up. Under each quote or section of information to be used a short piece explaining that this would be used in the text was developed. These were sent along with an information sheet, consent form and a stamped addressed envelope to participants. Participants were then asked to sign the consent form *after* they had seen the text and amended, and/or deleted anything they wanted changed. In the consent, form people were given options to choose anonymity of themselves and/or their organization.

The research sought to be as transparent and as open as possible about the nature of the research and encourage people to feel free to express any concerns about material and how it is used. It was made clear to all participants that the researcher had a background in community ICT projects. Participants were also given the name and phone number of the supervisor of the research project along with an invitation to contact him for any concerns or inquiries.

The project was reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee.

The research draws from the input of 23 participants. All were involved in community ICT projects, some at a practical and others at an official level.

Introducing Community ICT projects

Island Bay

Island Bay is the first New Zealand suburb to have a community website. Known as *The Island Bay Community Network Site*, it was developed in 1996 by Tim Jordan and Alan Brunton (now deceased) with support from Richard Naylor of Wellington's InfoCity. The site has material on Island Bay history, particularly of the importance of community festivals. Fourteen annual festivals were held prior to 1999. The Island Bay community centre is situated close to the shopping district. The coordinator who had been newly appointed did not know about the website, history of local ICT use, or the people involved, however, she put me in touch with a couple of volunteers who were knowledgeable. I later talked with Tim Jordan who is planning to revamp the site later this year, to enable community members to update their own material.

Newtown

There are several Community ICT projects in Newtown. These come under the umbrella of the "Smart Newtown Pilot Project." They include the Pacific Island Network Centre, the Newtown Park Flats, the Newtown Branch Library, Newtown Primary School and the Newtown Community and Cultural Centre. Most of the projects were up and running late in 2001 and early 2002. I visited the Newtown Park Flats (several high-rise low-income complexes with 275 flats) and its computer room, the Pacific Island Network Centre and the library. The Centre is beside the library in a side street next to a bustling, rich-in-diverse-cultures, business district. The ICT component of these projects involves computer teaching and Internet use, including developing websites. There is a Smart Newtown website and mailing list that keeps people well informed about community and Smart Newtown events. I talked to a couple of people at the Pacific Island Network Centre, one of whom was introduced as Rahul, the ICT coordinator. He is from India and has a professional background in ICT.

Waltham

Referred to as the "Waltham Community Cottage," community ICT projects began with a web project in November 2001. Teaching involved web skills, such as learning to surf the net, and later building web pages. A new project, due to begin in September 2003 is called "Waltham Entrepreneurs Online." It is geared towards people who have an idea for a business that could be marketed on the Web. It is for 6-8 people over the period of a year. I talked to three of the people involved in this and other Waltham ICT projects, Adrienne, Julianne and Isabella.

Addington

The community ICT project "AddingtonNet" is situated in a shop in a small shopping mall that is just off the main road. The project began in November 2001. The community ICT component consists mainly of teaching large numbers of people computer skills based on Polytech manuals. However, there is a website, but apart from one item at the beginning of the project, this has not been used. There are plans for this website to be revamped. The area has become quite run down, with the loss of the bank, post office and supermarket, and it was hoped that AddingtonNet would go some way to helping

revitalise the business area. I talked to the community development worker Jan Rogers, who is a trustee of AddingtonNet and is based at Manuka cottage, a short distance away, and the ICT manager Ian McAllister.

St Albans

St Albans ICT projects currently consist of a community paper, the St Albans Neighbourhood News (STANN), a website, and what is called “computer rescue,” a kind of help desk. The website is linked to the resource centre activities and currently has limited use. Computer help is available during set hours, depending on teacher availability, at the resource centre. The centre is situated a short distance from the Edgeware shopping area.

St Albans has developed community ICT projects over a period of ten years (1992-2002). The community paper (STANN), which began in December 1992, was published from a computer in one household and printing press in the garage of another. It goes to 5,000 St Albans households every month and is paid for by the advertising of local business and an annual grant from the Community Board. Earlier community ICT projects have included a local bulletin board “InfoLink,” which began in August 1995, (this was later known as “NeighbourNet”) and then a community website that started in September 1998, and community development website that was launched in September 2000. For St Albans information, I shall be referring to interviews carried out for my MA thesis (Ashton, 2002). An exception to this is an interview with John Wardle, that I carried out in 1997, not long before he died.

2020 Communications Trust and Wellington Region Communications Trust

The 2020 Communications Trust is a nationally based voluntary group made up of professional people who have a background in ICT and an interest in supporting community ICT projects. This interest encompasses, research on community ICT projects, influencing government policy, and networking of those working in the area of community and ICT. A branch of this is The Wellington Region 2020 Trust, and the Newtown ICT projects, also referred to as “Smart Newtown”, is one of the Trust’s projects. I talked to the director of the 2020 Communications Trust, Ian Thompson and two people who worked for the Wellington Regional 2020 Trust.

From the perspective of those involved – What has been achieved?

Island Bay

According to Tim Jordan, who created the Island Bay Community network site, it's purpose was "creating a 'connected community' and enabling that community to make use of the web and provide a focal point for anyone to find out more about Island Bay." Tim acknowledges the site has not been updated as much as it could have been and says that he is working on a computer re-vamp of the site to enable Island Bay community members to update their own material via a web browser. The website contains interesting material about past Island Bay festivals that involve many in the Island Bay community, along with activities at the centre. I talked to a couple of volunteers at the centre who had ICT skills, were very keen to be involved and had ideas for ICT use that would more effectively disseminate community information amongst local people.

Newtown

All those interviewed (2020 Communications Trust, and Wellington Region 2020 Trust and Newtown people themselves) referred to ICT projects in Newtown as being synonymous with, and inclusive of, the diversity of cultures in Newtown.

The ICT co-ordinator, Rahul is from the Gujarat state in India. He has a strong background in developing ISO (International Standards Organization) software. Rahul has not been able to get employment in New Zealand that uses his specialised knowledge. Rahul uses his skills to maintain the computer equipment and teach basic and more advanced computer skills.

When I was waiting to talk to Rahul, he was assisting a distressed local Massey University student to deal with a social problem. Rahul had previously coached this student in software writing and it appeared that another student had copied this student's work and handed it in as an assignment. Rahul was suggesting ways this student could address this problem. I asked Rahul if I could include example in the research because this kind of interaction would not normally been noted as an "achievement" or "outcome," yet, these kinds of early interventions can be crucial.

Although Rahul had lived in a city, Baroda near Bombay, most people from his locality knew each other's names and would look out for each other. Rahul says that if they (as children) came home and their parents' were still out, neighbours would ask them over for lunch and dinner. Although Rahul admits that he has not seen this kind of neighbourly hospitality in Newtown, he none-the-less adapts his high level of ICT training, to teach beginners and is motivated by a community feeling.

I talked to another person at the Pacific Island Network Centre, and listened to examples of what I have come to recognise as the "invisible" or "behind the scenes" community work, in particular of the work to include otherwise socially isolated people in the community ICT projects. Regrettably, I did not manage to get written consent to make use of this material.

Waltham

In the early stages of the Waltham ICT projects, a major achievement was in building confidence in the use of ICTs. Waltham cottage initially saw itself as a place people came before moving elsewhere to start a class that was more formal. Community workers discovered that often, “people were too scared, often too scared to even put their hand up and ask” in more formal classes. They also said that quite a few people came to them after first trying a more formal classroom situation, giving such reasons as “they do not like to be treated like babies.”

The community aspect of the cottage is thought to permeate the ICT teaching. It was said, “people meeting at the cottage and supporting each other can be likened to meeting at the old village well, where community members gain a sense of belonging.”

Community workers say they believe, “the cottage is seen in the community as progressive – a place operating confidently and positively reflecting the needs of the community.” They see this reflected in the Waltham resident’s own material going up on the Web and in responses to this. For example, one woman assisted to build a website used to be a famous actress in India. Because of the web presence, a Christchurch city newspaper did an article on her. The Waltham project developers have been assisting her to “develop a CV and find ways to utilise her web page and promote herself, possibly teaching acting.” Local businesses also have web pages, and their sponsorship pays for the website.

Other achievements mentioned include positive relationships with outside organizations that can give support and funding. For instance, they say they have excellent relationships with the residents group and with the Beckenham service centre. “We can not speak highly enough of them... the community development worker is excellent.” With respect to funding, they say, “you need to develop a reputation and high profile so people will see what you are doing and want to fund you. You have to be continually marketing yourself.”

The project developers see it as important to give attention to their personal maintenance and wellbeing. They say, “The work culture at the cottage is open and supportive... we are clear about the vision, the management team are very supportive, and we are trusted to get on with it.”

The next project, “Waltham Entrepreneurs Online,” has grown out of the realisation that “many [in Waltham] have been unaware of their potential to generate their own incomes in moves towards independence.” They also found that lack of confidence and lack of resources were major stumbling blocks. The focus of the new projects is on “branding and marketing” as well as “keeping the passion and vision alive.”

Addington

A major aim of AddingtonNet has been to make ICTs “affordable and accessible” for people living in the area. In 2002, 210 people a week, attended classes. In 2003, this has dropped to 165 a week. All classes are free of charge. These Polytech sponsored classes

draw on adult education funding and the co-ordinator, Ian McAllister believes it is “money targeted well.” He says that AddingtonNet have been able to adapt classes that are unique to Addington. For example, they have a course for beginners who, left to themselves, would normally be frightened to even turn the computer on.

With respect to affordable access, the public is able use the Internet for free if on a low income, and for a gold coin, if not. Children use the computers after school for homework, to access the Internet and email and to play games. The service for children is important because at the Addington primary school, there is only one computer per class, so if children do not have a computer at home, children could miss out.

Ian says, that coordinators of community ICT projects like this need good community and good ICT skills, however, “one could be good in community but not ICT, but not the other way around.” He says that his job involves everything from vacuuming the floor to fixing computers to teaching, obtaining funding and dealing with the public. He gave an example of needing to manage children who were fighting each other, a child being responsible for broken glass and causing more problems on being asked to help clean it up. He says “troubled children and bullying” are an inevitable aspect of much community work.

With respect to community, Ian says local “people come here and form relationships. This might mean they neglect their work and their tea break might be quite long.” He talked about this kind of participation as “creating as sense of community.”

Jan Rogers, the community development worker, and trustee of the project believes that AddingtonNet is going well. She sees herself attending to the people aspects and finds herself asking, “Is this what people want? Let’s listen. Let’s follow what they want”. She gives, as an example, the realisation of the need for very basic assistance before beginning the training manuals. Jan and Ian talked about plans for more focus on children’s needs, and for programmes that will be more useful to children. Ian said some money had been put aside for a person, possibly a teacher, to take on this work.

One of the major aims of AddingtonNet was to “revitalize and energise the business area.” Jan says she thinks AddingtonNet has brought some life to the mall. For instance, “the car park now has some cars in it, and the tea room some increase in custom.” However, she does note that, to date, the hoped for contribution to business development has been limited.

With respect to funding, Ian says he personally has to obtain funding for himself (his wage) and the project. However, he says that AddingtonNet has good support from funders. Jan agrees saying that AddingtonNet is “moving in the right direction and “funding is okay as any can be.”

Technical support has also been essential. Ian says, “I don’t know how we would do it if we did not have a highly skilled person giving his time. It would be very expensive if we had to pay for this service at this level.”

St Albans 1992-2002

The first of St Alban's community ICT endeavours, The St Albans Neighbourhood News (STANN) began in December 1992, and continues to this day. A key factor has been that participation is explicitly comprehensive. All St Albans people, who had basic literacy skills, (not just journalists or professional writers) are encouraged to have a voice in local affairs. As Frank Prebble, an instigator and initial printer of STANN, pointed out:

It was for people who could send anything in, it didn't matter how it was written, it goes in. So it didn't matter how good you were at writing (cited in Ashton, 2002:82)

Founding editor John Wardle argued that the success of STANN was its focus on "communication." He said,

With STANN we started nothing but communication. We tried not to make it an organization. We tried not to make it into anything more than something that generates ideas (cited in Ashton, 2002:82).

This ICT project has proved to be sustainable over eleven years because business has been considered as part of community. As Murial Soanes, a local activist and lifetime resident says,

It's a good magazine, we look forward to it monthly, and there's quite a lot of news in it. And I think the advertisements are good too for local people. They know where they can get anything done by just looking up the magazine and finding the local people who'll do the jobs (cited in Ashton, 2002:83).

Peggy Kelly, secretary to the Friends of Packe Street Park in St Albans drew attention to the value of STANN tapping into the many resources in the community in this example of a request for chisels to use for a carving school at the Park:

"...we put a message in STANN that we needed chisels. Every time I opened the front door there were chisels...Sometimes there is slack in the community itself that isn't being used. I mean a lot of those chisels I think appeared from homes of widows because they were minding these tools that belongs to their husbands who died. And they were very pleased that they could be used, you know. I think quite often there are resources available, but they're just not tapped" (cited in Ashton, 2002:85).

For Kate Taylor, a long time editor of STANN, a major achievement of STANN is the institutional memory that has been built up. She says:

It is quite a buzz going through, you know I've got these two folders here with all the issues of STANN we have done and I can look through and there are things I have completely forgotten about – you know we covered all that stuff. There is so much going on in the area (cited in Ashton, 2002:86).

A highlight for those interviewed was the saving of Abberley Park hall. St Albans Community Facilitator, Douceline Wardle says of this success:

I think we started realising the power of STANN at that stage, where the Abberley Park Hall was going to be bulldozed because it was too expensive for the city council to run and putting a wee article in STANN about it and getting people to come to Abberley Hall for a meeting (cited in Ashton, 2002: 88).

The second ICT project was a neighbourhood bulletin board with a parallel computer-recycling scheme. For John Gallagher, a major achievement of using the InfoLink/NeighbourBoard bulletin board was to:

Utilize technologies to network locally more effectively and thereby be in a better position to both support one another locally as well as to relate to the world beyond (cited in Ashton, 2002:94)

St Albans had some residents, who were immigrants and though very skilled in ICT, were unable to get paid employment. The InfoLink project benefited from these technical skills and knowledge, and in turn, immigrants benefited from improved support networks. An interesting example was where immigrant children made use of the homework support offered on the InfoLink board. Anyone on the board could type in a question, and people seeing it would help if they could (cited in Ashton, 2002:96). Such immigrants found they could also meet local people more easily, obtain local information and feel more appreciated.

The third ICT project was the Web project. As with STANN, communication was the basis of this project. The community web project involved diverse groups, including those who would not normally participate in community projects. For instance, some St Albans youth expressed concern about the driving licence laws that they thought discriminated against youth, particularly males. A meeting was arranged between the local MP Tim Barnett, and the young people. Their meeting was recorded and a photo taken for the web. Feedback included comments such as:

He got a big tick for understanding that putting lots of authority on young people would not work...I'm glad that he seemed to understand what we said about the cops because otherwise we would have lost interest in talking to him (cited in Ashton, 2002:109).

There was subsequent discussion about these topics on the interactive NeighbourBoard, including comment from the police.

When asking (via STANN) for people to be involved in the web project, the call was not primarily for technical skills, but for people with skills or an interest in writing, art, photography, history, politics, community, diverse cultures, business and marketing.

Interestingly, a 12-year-old ICT enthusiast was considered by many to have had the best and most practical “business” and marketing ideas. The web team was thus made up of many who did not even like technology, but appreciated the value of being in a supportive community that utilised ICT.

Peter Walker, editor of the writers group that met weekly in order to ensure continuous flow of stories, articles and items for the community web, spoke of the benefit to him of being part of the web project team. He said:

The opportunity to do some of the writing that I did and to function as the editor...it was an opportunity to try something that I hadn't really done before in an area I hadn't really focussed on... Overall it was quite a positive thing which kind of impacts on my self image (cited in Ashton, 2002:106)

The local artist for the web project, Shaugn Briggs says:

My own personal skills have been developed, I am doing things now in the area of digital design that I wouldn't have done if I had been by myself. It is good to see and develop and work with a team with so many talents... from a business point of view, I have picked up ways of making something successful. I have learnt from other people's ideas (cited in Ashton, 2002:10).

2020 Communications Trust

The Director, Ian Thomson says that an aim of the 2020 trust is to “get greater use of ICTs in the community” and in “helping government shape policy to this end.” He argues, “you can see how much money the government is spending on progressing e-government and supporting business, but the community, or the third sector, misses out.”

Ian quoted a Treasury official saying that governments want to invest in projects that have multiple outcomes. Ian gave as an example of the usefulness of investing in the “Computers in Homes Project” with outcomes of jobs, promotions, literary improvements, educational, self confidence, community building etc.

Wellington Region 2020 Communications Trust

The mission of the Trust is to “bring people together to explore new opportunities and that the trust will do this by operating a not-for-profit Trust to create, trial and establish sustainable community ICT initiatives.” In terms of accomplishments, Tim Jordan points to projects such as Smart Newtown, Wellington Community Net, and Computers in Homes (that won the Stockholm challenge Award in 2001). There is a commitment to “sharing knowledge with anyone who can benefit from the Trust’s experience and capability.” As an interested researcher, I experienced this commitment, and regret I did not have time to follow up many of the suggested contacts. The Trust has funding from the City Council for a full-time coordinator.

Practicalities and Problems

Island Bay: issues around support for ICTs in community

While some extol the virtues of ICT for community, not all see benefits of ICTs to community work. For the recently employed community worker at Island Bay, it was not appropriate, nor was it viable to add ICT, to an already full workload.

Because I was aware that Island Bay was the first to have a community website, I expected to find people who knew about this, but even the ICT enthusiasts informed me it was a while before they realised there was a website. In talking with people at the Island Bay Community centre, it was easy to see how community history, even that of being the first with a community website, could easily be forgotten.

ICT enthusiasts at the centre were interested, and had ideas for using ICT to improve community connectedness, but there were no people (at least not obviously) with an interest in utilising their energy and skills. Tim Jordan is to revamp the website to make it easier for local people to use, but he is clearly a very busy person, with many in Wellington wanting him to do their ICT work.

Newtown: issues around funding

When I talked to people in Wellington, it was thought that the Wellington City Council would help fund the Smart Newtown project. However, more recently (June 2003), a report posted on the website www.smartnewtown.org.nz reads:

Financial threat... despite two reports to the Wellington City Council showing it's been successful. Funding is needed to turn this successful pilot into a sustainable project... the council has made no funding provision for it in its 2003/2004 draft budget..."

In a Report on the Smart Newtown Project (2002) carried out by the College of Business from Massey University, a research participant defined a major problem with respect to funding saying:

There is already a huge pressure on the community development budget already... Whether we can convince council that this is, say, more important than more playgrounds, or more important than more city safety officers, or more important than more road crossings or more important than more Lord of the Rings premiere funding... it's really difficult (Report on Smart Newtown Project, 2002:44).

Another difficulty expressed is the obvious power difference between community and funding agencies, in spite of the rhetoric of partnership.

You need to know how to work with community. How it comes across is that we're needy, we're so poor, here you are, come and get these things and you should be

grateful. It's so patronising and insensitive (Report on Smart Newtown Project, 2002:44).

Waltham: issues around length of funding rounds

The Waltham project workers have not yet begun the “Entrepreneurs on Line” project, and yet they are already asking, “what would be the next natural progression?” They point out that it is difficult to get funding for three workers, so funding for separate projects is the best way to go. They say that they hope a move to get funding agencies to grant three-year funding will succeed.

Addington: issues around personal support and committee decision making

With respect to personal support, Ian, the manager says he is supposed to meet with a committee member once a week, but notes that this does not tend to happen as “everyone is busy.”

Ian makes recommendations to the committee responsible for the project, but sometimes these recommendations can sit for a few months before they are discussed. Ian appears to be both frustrated at not being able to move more quickly and philosophical about these delays, saying it is part of what happens when people are working in a voluntarily capacity in a structure where the manager has limited authority.

St Albans: issues around funding, relationships with funders, failing internal processes, lack of understanding about community development.

St Albans ICT projects 1992-2002 did not manage to build a good relationship with local and central government funding agencies. The local Community Board has given some financial support to STANN, but it has been under constant threat. Kate Taylor, who did the typesetting and editing of STANN for many years pointed said:

I have had messages that there won't be any more money for St Albans and your grant of \$1,3000 from the Community Board for STANN – and again that's the equivalent of them taking a quarter page ad – you know, sometimes we will have anything up to a couple of pages of Community Board information going into STANN, so I think that is a reasonable way for them to support us – we're supporting them (Ashton, 2002:89).

As coordinator of the InfoLink project, John Gallagher did receive some funding from the community board for a computer and relevant software, but only because of much sustained pressure for funding, by those of us who thought the community ICT project was supporting. However, this funding was at a cost. John Wardle said of this:

As soon as bureaucracy started to get so involved, ... I started to get cold feet. And it started to drag on so slowly...I could see the weight the community board was putting on John [the project coordinator] who was spending bloody hours trying to keep them happy and the energy that was being sucked out of the guy was unreasonable (Ashton, 2002:99).

I received some funding from government for my work as co-ordinator of the web project. As above, the cost was also too high. If I had my time again, I would have continued as I started, in a voluntary capacity.

Regarding the building of community connections, the InfoLink bulletin board provided an excellent means of enabling those that wanted help and those that could help to find each other. For instance, most of us were very pleased to assist children of migrant families with their homework. However, one person did not understand the difficulties migrant children had in adjusting to a different language, education system, expectations, and history. John Gallagher recalled,

This fruitful interchange had just began and then some unthinking person stomped on it in real geek fashion with concerns that this was cheating (Ashton, 2002:96).

John Wardle, was concerned that STANN, in common with other community organizations was becoming “comfortable” and forgetting its purpose. He wanted a proactive community that would work to constantly find ways to ensure full participation. This was needed for as John Wardle pointed out,

Let's be honest the people with the problems are the least likely to stumble through the door. They are the ones who are not involved who are not interacting with society in the most effective ways, so they don't do a lot of walking into doorways.

With respect to the Web, there was no understanding that skills needed to motivate large numbers of diverse people to give of their [unpaid] time and energy to ensure a professional website, that was regularly updated with local ground breaking interesting stories and pictures. However, Peter Walker, who was the editor of the Web writers group said of my community development work in the web project:

I got a sense that a lot of the work that you were doing behind the scenes was unnecessary... I never saw the fruits of all the work behind the scenes that you did. Except in things like the launch - I mean obviously there was a lot of work gone into that... but in terms of the actual web site from day to day, I didn't see a lot of the fruits of whatever work was going on behind the scenes (cited in Ashton, 2002:115).

Not surprisingly, because it was thought my work was “unnecessary,” I had no support for getting a co-ordinator to replace me. Further, though all work on the web project ceased when I left (more recently a centre web site has been put up) there still appeared to be no understanding that a person with community development understanding is required to do the co-ordination.

2020 Communications Trust/ Wellington Region 2020

When asked about the situation with respect to the future of the “Smart Newtown” pilot, Ian Thomson stated,

Newtown started as techno push by economic development people. We are now at the community building stage, which can only be done through the community.

And when asked about government input into community ICT projects, such as Newtown, Ian argues that,

Modern social and economic development theory is that it comes best for the ground up. The government needs to be there to facilitate, not drive.

Findings: potential of ICTs for Community Development

Connecting/networking

In St Albans, the community paper, STANN, was the main communication tool that connected St Albans. It helped retrieve and build community ground. As noted, it was used to draw out support, and make even more effective, other ICT projects. It is important to stress the need for a locally produced, desk top published magazine that goes to all local households and businesses as a basis for community networking. In spite of the move to more on-line communication, many still prefer and make use of paper communication. Local businesses have strongly supported STANN throughout its 10 years by advertising, helping to make it sustainable from resources within the locality.

Inclusion

As John Wardle rightly said, those who are socially isolated do not just decide to “walk through the doorway” and magically become socially connected. In Newtown, there was expertise that could point the way to deeper understanding of the problematic of issues to do with exclusion and to ways of helping overcome it. However, because I did not manage to get written consent to use this material; I was not able to document these excellent examples. This points to the need for these normally unnoticed, but enormously important inclusive practices to be documented in further research. St Albans ICT projects (prior to 2002) attempted to reflect diverse voices and were proactive in gaining inputs from those who would not normally participate. In this, it was noted that much ongoing, behind the scenes work is involved. Waltham cottage has been proactive in interesting otherwise socially excluded people in the “Waltham Entrepreneurs Online” and Addington Net has shown sensitivity to the “people” aspects of ICT projects.

Diverse cultures

Newtown and St Albans projects point to the benefits of community development that includes diverse cultures in ICT projects. Newtown leadership was extremely valuable in demonstrating how it is possible to work with diverse cultures and with different socio-economic groups. At a time of polarisation, with respect to debates on immigration, and on The Treaty of Waitangi, this can mean added dimension to community work that addresses the government’s expressed wish for a socially connected society. Newtown and St Albans also demonstrated how non-mainstream cultures could provide a sense of what community can be in New Zealand, when space is made for this to happen. In Newtown and St Albans, immigrants had ICT skills that were not otherwise wanted in New Zealand, but were of enormous value to the local communities.

Local/International

St Albans (prior to 2002) and Waltham point to potentials for using community ICTs such as websites, to enable local connections to tap into international networks and possible employment and business opportunities.

Institutional community memory

Given the speed of change and often the fragility and/or short-term nature of community projects, ICTs such as community papers, websites, and videos can be an invaluable repository of community history and information. This ensures experiences are learned from, and can become resources that can help local communities to understand and deal with many pressures. This also enables community members to have a sense of who they are, and learn from where they have been.

Sustainability

St Albans developments (1992-2002) pointed to the potential of tapping into wider community and international resources, for instance, by including local business as part of the community, and proactively welcoming diversity. It is interesting that Newtown and Island Bay have many more thriving businesses over a greater area than St Albans, yet local businesses are not obviously included in community ICT projects. The ways in which ICTs as a networking tools can draw community support and expertise could be further explored. Addington and Waltham have good relations with funding and supporting agencies and appear to be able to keep their autonomy. However, it should be noted that the Beckenham Service Centre (that services Addington and Waltham) had key actors that had a strong appreciation for community ICT and were therefore in a position to provide support and encouragement and encourage politicians to do the same.

Teamwork in ICT community projects

Current trends of employment are for diverse people to come together for particular projects. St Albans ICT projects provided examples of how “individuals” in a community can learn how to work together in a team and at the same time grow and develop both themselves and their communities in ways they would not have been able to do by themselves, or in a formal class setting. Waltham points in a similar direction, and importantly, places value on the work environment where people are encouraged to develop and take risks.

Outside agency support and organization

Outside support can be invaluable, especially where this is well focused and based on good two-way communication. There is a need to clarify the uses of the term “sustainability” in setting up projects, rather than assume understanding, and that this can somehow be achieved. Sustainability is not going to be achieved by permanent dependence on outside grants. To be real it needs to be derived, as soon as possible, on any of the activities of the project itself that have revenue earning potential. Waltham has had useful support in its efforts to set up a project that enables local people to market their products and services on the Web.

It is recognised that it is not suitable to charge for many of the activities of such projects, especially where issues of affordability and access for all are paramount.

Linkages to government policy

The following section considers government policy as reflected in the Connecting Communities Strategy (2002).

Community

The Connecting Community Strategy's (2002) stated purpose is:

Increasing communities' ability to access, participate in and efficiently use ICT.

However, in order for effective implementation of ICT "community" projects, an understanding of what this "community" consists of is paramount, before, not after, the initiation of such projects. This is especially so given current policy goal of:

Focusing limited government resources on kick starting projects that communities can "own", and that in the long term are funded by non-government sources.

Local areas that had little or no sense of being a "community" will not be able to miraculously come together and "own" a project, that some outsiders may suddenly choose to place in their midst. As Lash (1994:165) argues, it is important not to presume community exists, or to engineer a consensus that this or that is a community. In this research, although the traditional *Gemeinschaft* community is alluded to, in practice "community" is a paid community worker in a community centre owned by local or central government with volunteers (often temporary on some form of government scheme). Over time, it may mean a series of short-term schemes that have short term funding and very little other support. If this is the "community" that is expected to take "ownership" then this needs to be clearly stated.

If, on the other hand, a limited number of community development workers are expected to make a "community" of several thousand people beyond the centre, then this also requires clarification.

As the practical examples of the potential of ICTs in community development demonstrate, ICTs can in fact be made into very effective tools for developing a new sense of what a community in New Zealand can be. However, for this to develop greater attention needs to be placed on community leadership. There is a need to identify such people and examine how to support them, and how not to burn them out, or tie them up with "red-tape." This research identified cases where community building was impressively inclusive, especially of ethnic and socio-economic diversity. More support in building inclusive communities now, will save resources in dealing with problems as "isolated pockets" get larger.

Sustainability

With respect to sustainability, the Connecting Communities Strategy (2002)

Identifies the need to ensure much better coordination of the government's many ICT initiatives, to support community-led innovation and focus on developing sustainable projects which will have an on-going life.

It is clear from this research that there are some differences in the meaning and use of the word “sustainability.” As expressed on the Smart Newtown website for Newtown ICT projects, “sustainability” appears to be equated with receiving local government funding. This is not surprising, because for other projects such as Waltham, AddingtonNet, and currently St Albans, local government funding has also been seen as the basis of a degree of sustainability. In other words, there has been a reliance on this ongoing external funding from local and central government. St Albans ICT projects before 2002 were the only projects that did not rely on a centre, and explicitly and substantially used ICT as a community-connecting tool that enabled resources from within the community to be generated and tapped.

That said, given the e-government strategy is to place all of its information on-line, and its stated intention is for all to access this information, and that a major site for many to do this in community, then it could be argued that basic on-going funding community ICT centres, could be justified.

Inclusion

A major concern of the government’s Growth and Innovation Framework has been that:

Efforts to build a more innovative New Zealand could isolate pockets of our society unless proper effort is put into ensuring all New Zealanders can learn about and access new technology.

This research argues for the need for a focus on inclusion to ensure that those least likely to participate can feel comfortable doing so and can become more integrated with others in the community in the course of this. There are people with skills who are able to do this work, however, as this research suggests, they largely go unnoticed. It is essential that research understands, identifies, and learns from those whose community development work results in these “community connections.”

A major feature of literature on the digital divide is on obstacles to participation in ICT. In the Connecting Communities strategy they are summarised as:

Lack of ICT infrastructure, socio-economic barriers, cultural issues, lack of literacy and numeracy, lack of technical and mentoring support, poor information literacy and/or knowledge management, Lack of relevant on-line content and motivation.

It is worth noting that if tapped, a connected community has resources within it to assist with these problems. The issue is how to nourish and support these efforts.

Connections

As the government’s Growth and Innovation Framework (2002) explicitly recognised:

a modern cohesive society is an essential building block for a growing and innovative economy and society. People who feel socially connected also contribute towards building communities and society...

As argued in this research, people benefited from diverse connections. In New Zealand, the emphasis has been to support programmes the bondings of like with like, for example, of separate projects for Maori, Pacific, and Asian. This research argues for the value of community ICT as a tool for bridging and enabling diverse peoples to communicate and therefore better understand each other.

The Connecting Community Strategy (2002) argues for situations where:

Communities are encouraged to create their own ideas and be innovative in promoting a knowledge-driven society

It is therefore necessary to understand and appreciate the conditions that enable innovation to occur. Waltham pointed to a direction with the understanding of the need for project group personal maintenance and planning. St Albans provided setting for people with diverse talents to work together as a team.

Connecting Community Strategy - funding

Two million dollars was made available to coordinate and implement the Connecting Community Strategy (Press release, Maharey 26 June, 2002). However, most people I talked to had not even heard of the “Connecting Communities Strategy” and none of the community ICT practitioners had heard of the two million dollars funding. It appears that much of this funding is to go to resource new ICT projects. According to *Employment Matters* (January, 2003):

Otara, Tokoroa and Southland have been selected as pilot regions for the Government’s Connecting Communities strategy, the implementation of which is being co-ordinated and developed by the Community Employment Group.

The government is funding in new pilots, while projects that have much to offer, such as Newtown, struggle to survive. Further, the government is to test an “international planning model. The *Employment Matters* (January, 2003) reports:

Working closely with CEG, the communities are testing an ICT planning model developed by Making the Net Work (MTNW), an international organization that focuses on ICT as a tool for community.

This research has touched lightly on the community ICT work that has been done and, by drawing from the experiences of participants, suggested ways it can, more effectively, be done. I believe this research demonstrates there is a need to draw together and apply this “New Zealand” knowledge, seeking to better understand and suitably appreciate good practice, before, not after, looking to overseas models.

Recommendations

ICTs for community development

Since the 1990s, affordable new information and communications media such as desktop publishing, Internet and the Web technologies have opened up new possibilities for households and communities to be involved in networking and development. The potential for reconceptualizing community, and implementing community development, are subtle but revolutionary in their import. In this situation, it becomes important to develop and share new experiences and knowledge about community development, how to support it – or for that matter, pitfalls to avoid.

It is in this spirit, that the recommendations are offered.

Begin local community ICT development with a community paper

The first thing needed for community development is to build up a sense of shared community. The most effective way to do this is via a free community paper that reaches all households and businesses in a local area. It is still paper, delivered to all, that reaches the most people. In contrast, relatively few people regularly access Internet and web technologies. Community ICT projects can themselves draw more community support when they are advertised in a community paper that reaches everyone. Most importantly, local businesses can have paid advertising in community papers and this can help to fund more ICT development.

Recommendations: Make the first local community ICT project a community paper, probably on a monthly basis, that goes to all households, community organizations, and businesses. This should aim to be to make this self-funding, with local advertising, at the earliest opportunity.

Community Web Projects

The advantage of a community web site is that projects can be kept up to date, and reached any time by anyone who has access to relevant ICTs. Where these also include interactive facilities such as discussion boards, people can be in touch with one another at any point in time.

Project sites – households or community ICT centre?

The new ICTs are essentially networking technologies that do not require centralised locations. There is much to be said for running them from the homes and/or organizations of local people. Control should be through a suitably constituted community trust or incorporated society that is accountable to the local people.

Centralised locations can be helpful, especially if appropriately utilised. However, there can be problems if too much time and energy is needed to find resources to pay for the centre, if there is too much bureaucracy, if there is limited space and/or if people at the centre do not have the understanding required.

Many places currently have a “community centre,” but these are constricted in what they can offer. At best, they can provide for physical activities for comparatively few people.

What is required is a centre that is able to meet the needs of the wider locality. A community ICT centre can do this, when there are resources, understanding and support for this.

Recommendations

That support is available for setting up a trust or a society for ICT community groups. That supporting organizations review options for the siting of community ICT projects. For examples, the various strengths of households/local organisations, or centre, or a mixture?

That a review of possible roles for a community centre with ICTs be carried out. For example, access and use of technologies that include education training, demonstration of new technologies along with information about local amenities available for non ICT activities (eg church halls, school buildings)

Creating, developing and sustaining an institutional memory

At a time of social, geographic and workforce mobility, there is a need for community ICT projects to develop methods of passing on knowledge about good practice, useful networks and resources. Community ICT resources, such as community newspapers, websites and videos can enable a community to create, develop and sustain an institutional memory, or a sense of history that can be retrieved. Such facilities will avoid duplication and waste, and draining an irretrievable loss of energies, enthusiasms and hopes.

Recommendation: that community ICT projects are supported to develop and sustain an institutional memory. This could include funding for facilitation for community processes to establish this and/or support for research on community ICT projects that is on what has worked well and what has not worked. It could also include support for employment practices that ensure induction practices for new projects that ensure new employees familiarise them with what has gone before.

Diversity and inclusivity (bridging)

Bonding strategies, such as funding that supports particular groups, can often create intra group solidarity at the expense of wider interrelationships, or bridging. Inclusion in community ICT projects of diverse ethnicity, age, socio-economic status and gender is possible with increasingly available ICTs. However, inclusion, particularly of “out groups” into the so-called “mainstream” does not just happen automatically. It needs a high level of expertise and understanding.

Recommendations: that research which focuses on community models that include and integrate diversity be fully investigated. That “inclusivity” and “diversity” be developed as “outcomes” that can be measured and therefore be valued.

ICT use for communication/connecting

ICTs such as desktop publishing, and Internet are increasingly available and affordable, enabling connections between people, groups, businesses, and governments. Such

connecting, potentially at least, enables all to understand social change and participate in the knowledge society. There are however, issues that require further understanding.

Recommendations: that research on how best to make use of these connections, particularly in the context of community, is performed. Also, that there is better understanding on how to establish good communication practices and cope with issues such as information overload.

Potential for new international connections

The ability to identify and tap into the international networks is essential if New Zealand is to prosper in the global economy. Community ICT projects can enable connections between New Zealanders and immigrants and from these new international networks can be developed. Immigrants living in New Zealand are not commonly valued, because there is no understanding of their potential skills and connections.

Recommendations: that task forces, such as the government ICT task force, take seriously the contribution community ICT projects can make to enabling, developing and sustaining local connections that can tap into international business and other networks.

Internal practices, organisational and interpersonal

Community is called on to address the ICT issues, and many other problems. Community work typically is difficult, has low status, and lacks recognition and recompense. There are very talented highly motivated people working in community, and they often work hard in spite of, not because of any monetary rewards. Burn out, and disillusionment, especially of the effective community workers, is common. Further, as with any group or organization, there can be conflict that is destructive of the group. Today, *Gessellschaft* community that is further pressured by global trends is, at best, fragile and easy to destroy, and needs every support.

Given the need for and value of effective community ICT projects, and their need for good leadership, communication, planning skills, professional development and training, it is incumbent on supporting agencies to ensure this knowledge is available for community development projects.

There is no question that development and training is essential in the government and corporate environments, so there should be no question as to their need in community contexts.

Recommendations : That community organizations be able to access to the same level of planning, leadership, training, and development as local and central government.

Leadership that is participatory, and sustainable

Leadership styles can range from top-down managerial control to facilitative, grass roots and participatory. While there is much rhetoric on the need to move away from the

managerial style of leadership, in community work, there is little incentive. In order for projects to be sustainable, there is a continual need for people to be coming up through the system to take on new leadership roles. However, many find the effort to include people time consuming and difficult, so they don't bother. Therefore, most community projects consist of a paid community worker and a few volunteers (often on schemes). They are the "community."

With respect to financial incentives, the incentives currently in place are for community workers to ensure projects are dependent on them, so funding agencies keep funding the position. There is no financial incentive for community development workers to grow leadership and work their way out of the job.

Recommendations : Those who create projects that are sustainable with new leadership and inclusively should be rewarded – handsomely. Support should be given to project initiatives that have effective facilitative leadership skills. They need to foster and support this style of work.

External support – business, government, NGO

Policy that begins with externally supported community ICT projects that end with pleas for community buy-in is flawed. "Community" that effectively consists of a community worker, a centre and a few volunteers is not in a position to sustain community projects. External support can be very important to help set up and support community ICT projects but this support needs to be managed in ways that are helpful, not damaging of the projects and people.

At the outset meaningful discussion, possibly with an external facilitator, is required to ensure aspirations, goals, resources wanted and offered are clearly understood.

Communities are different, and supporting organizations need to caution against the imposing of a "one size fits all" tool kit.

The type of relationship between the supporters and practitioners needs to be clarified at the outset. Is it top-down, we know best, and bureaucratic, or a reflexive and meaningful partnership? Expectations are also important to clarify, for instance, if supporting organizations which to encourage "social entrepreneurs" to "stick their neck out," and "innovate" then there is a need to clarify if there is support with a hand or an axe.

Relationships need to include, not exclude practitioners, as currently tends to happen.

There is a need to involve those who see the possibilities of ICT and community development, and not just presume the relevance is noted. This is so of people in the decision making chain, (politicians and bureaucrats) and in community work. In other words, because the government has a policy such as the "Innovation Strategy" or the "Connecting Communities" it does not necessarily mean that people implementing the policy will necessarily have read and/or agreed with the policy. Likewise, because community development workers find themselves employed to implement community ICT projects, it does not mean they think it a worthwhile endeavour. Conversely,

community ICT projects should not be shaped or driven by those with predominantly ICT skills and interests. It is important that “community” drive the process.

Local business is important to provide local autonomy and support. Including local business also increases local employment and recreation opportunities. However, for this, there is a need for an integrated, locally based approach. Currently community and business projects are conceptualised as separate entities.

In all of the above, there is a need to support local autonomy, and not dependence. Material support is required to come from somewhere if projects are to be supported and sustained. Localities must be able to express their diverse needs and views without fear of losing of funding.

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St Albans Neighbour Net <www.stalbans.net.nz>

Waltham Community Cottage <www.walthamcottage.com>

The 2020 Communications Trust <http://www.2020.org.nz>

Hazel Ashton completed her MA thesis in Sociology (University of Canterbury) in 2002 looking at the impact of ICT on the development of “reflexive community” in St Alban Christchurch.