Building information societies in the Asia Pacific:

Issues discussed in the new edition of the
Digital Review of Asia Pacific

The 2005/2006 edition of the Digital Review of Asia Pacific to be published this summer opens with four thematic chapters that explore lessons emerging from the application of information and communication technology (ICT) in promoting socio-economic development in the region. These chapters also flag salient issues we should address during the Tunis phase of WSIS. It reviews in the first chapter, the challenges facing us in building information societies from the perspective of the lines of action that emerged from the Geneva phase of WSIS. It concludes with concrete proposals for the digital solidarity agenda aimed at addressing the particular needs of the Asia Pacific.

The second thematic chapter maps urgent issues relating to Internet governance. It introduces the background to the global debate on the theme and examines key policy issues and provides some perspective from the region. The chapter first examines the role of ICANN before moving on to discuss Internet governance broadly including issues such as international charging arrangements for Internet services, exchange points and regional backbones, spam, cyber security and crimes, and legislation for ICT related sectors.

The third chapter focuses on crucial social, political and cultural aspects of ICT that have largely been ignored in the past as we concentrated on building the infrastructure rather than the use of ICT. It discusses e-governance and the potential of ICT for enhancing democratic exchange at a global level thereby enabling people to address issues such as the environment, human rights, poverty and injustice from an international perspective.

http://www.digital-review.org   <dirAP>

DIGITAL REVIEW *of*

Asia Pacific

2005-2006

This edition reports on 29 economies together with three sub regional chapters on the Pacific Island States, ASEAN and APEC, and four special thematic chapters on:

Building Information Societies:
Bridging the digital divide in Asia Pacific

Internet governance and the Asia Pacific:
Urgent issues for the region

Social, political and cultural aspects of ICTs:
E-governance, popular participation and international politics

Appropriate ICT for the Asia Pacific:
Opting for open source, localisation, internationalisation and free access

It also sets out to answer the tricky question: Does technology change society?

The fourth and last thematic chapter considers what may be appropriate ICT which will meet the particular needs of the Asia Pacific with its diversity of languages, and complex mix of demographic, economic, geographical and industrial environments. It describes examples drawn from across the region of efforts to localise technologies and devise appropriate and low-cost ways of deploying ICT. The chapter also discusses efforts underway to adopt open source software in building tools that meet the special needs of users in the region.

The chasm that separates the most developed and the least connected economies are clearly illustrated in the diagrams of the Digital Divide Index that illustrate the chapters that review the individual Internet domains. We cover a total of 29 domains in this edition, two more than the last. Iran and the Maldives are the additional domains reviewed. The other 27 chapters on individual domains set out to update information as well as cover aspects of ICT usage and deployment not reviewed in the 2003/2004 edition.

The Pacific Island States are reviewed in a sub regional chapter. It covers altogether 22 island states and some of their sub regional collaboration underway. Besides the Pacific islands we have expanded our sub-regional coverage to include two other groupings; there is a chapter each on the ICT-related initiatives of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum.

Chin Saik Yoon

Measurement and Evidence of a Gender Digital Divide

The issue of gender is widely viewed as an important component of the Information Society in general, and ICT for development in particular. The wide ranging applications and effects of the Information Society have enormous implications, both positive and negative, for gender equality. Information about the extent, nature and consequences of the gendered nature of the digital divide is critical if existing disparities are to be reduced and the Millennium Development Goals achieved.

However ICT measurements and comparative country analyses in this area have been extremely scarce. Orbicom's recent effort (Monitoring the Digital Divide... and beyond, 2003) has focussed on the quantification of the Digital Divide across countries and over time, but data limitations have not allowed for sex-disaggregated data collection and analysis. Currently available data on women's use of and access to ICTs indicates that women's active participation in the information society, particularly in the poor countries of the world, lags behind that of men, a cause of serious concern.

The World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS/Geneva phase) explicitly recognized the importance of sex-disaggregated statistics and indicators, calling for the development of comparable statistical indicators that should incorporate a gender analysis.

In addition WSIS called for the development of gender-specific indicators on ICT use and needs, as well as the identification of measurable performance indicators to assess the impacts of funded ICT projects on the lives of women and girls (Plan of Action, Follow-up and evaluation, para 28d). Many efforts by a number of agencies are underway in an attempt to close the statistical gap, both within and across countries.

Orbicom has undertaken to incorporate an in-depth research on gender and ICT in its publication on the Digital Divide to be released in time for the Tunis phase of WSIS under the title of "From the Digital Divide to Digital Opportunities, Measuring Infostates for Development". The gender and ICT component complements the basic application of the Digital Divide work, in an effort to shed light on female connectivity and use of ICTs, as well as gender disparities in the development and application of ICTs.

Existing statistical data have been extensively collected along with information on field-work experiences, case studies and compiled anecdotal evidence. The result is an analysis of the gender digital divide and an assessment of its magnitude, evolution and implications for women world-wide.

Orbicom's Gender and ICT team is composed of Heidi Ertl and Heather Dryburgh of Statistics Canada for the quantitative indicators' analysis, Nancy Hafkin and Sophia Huyer of Women in Global Sciences and Technology (WIGSAT) for the qualitative indicators' analysis. The team is under the leadership of George Sciadas, Scientific Director of the Digital Divide project.

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El valor de la mujer

Mujeres... ¿para que servimos? Absolutamente para todo. Pero sería difícil creerlo si analizamos el campo del desarrollo. Dentro de la retórica del desarrollo, nuestro valor se expresa en términos de nuestra capacidad de reproducirnos y alimentar a los hijos, familias, comunidades y naciones; de nuestra propensión al consumo; de nuestra posición de víctimas en las confrontaciones violentas. En esencia, nos reproducimos y alimentamos, compramos y lloramos. Pero en realidad, hacemos muchas otras cosas: creamos, consolamos, vinculamos.

En aras de la discusión, me referiré sólo a algunos elementos clave en la pasiva y monolítica caracterización de las mujeres, presente en el discurso del desarrollo. Específicamente, a su "sexualización" en los programas de salud reproductiva y de población; su "mercantilización" en las campañas de comunicación; y su "victimización" en las ayudas de emergencia y las intervenciones militares. Las mujeres, a menudo sujeto y objeto de las intervenciones de desarrollo, son más que sexualidad, reproducción y consumo, y más que las víctimas típicamente retratadas en esos discursos. Espero abrir un debate sobre cómo incorporar estrategias respetuosas, que reconozcan la complejidad asociada al género y a los procesos de cambio social.

En buena parte del discurso del desarrollo, el papel de las mujeres se define a través de sus cuerpos, como criaturas maternales o sexuales. Vale la pena anotar que muchas organizaciones donantes tienden a canalizar los recursos financieros destinados a temas "de la mujer" hacia programas de salud infantil, nutrición, y población. La sensación de que las mujeres sufren pasivamente bajo el peso de su capacidad sexual y reproductiva, debido a sus culturas "tradicionales" es más pronunciada en regiones culturalmente alejadas de los donantes bilaterales. Una aproximación orientalista al desarrollo incorpora supuestos patriarcales, que imaginan a esas "otras" mujeres en roles pasivos que requieren "nuestra" ayuda. La "ayuda" a las mujeres en estos espacios culturalmente lejanos está enfocada hacia la sexualidad de la mujer, a través de programas de desarrollo centrados en intentar controlar sus cuerpos.

Aunque la salud reproductiva puede ser un tema importante, los programas de desarrollo deben ser criticados por concentrarse en ella, a expensas de un amplio rango de otros temas, y por construir una imagen de la mujer como objeto pasivo de las intervenciones, que no se involucra activamente en la toma de decisiones acerca de su propia sexualidad. Pero el problema no es solo que las agencias de desarrollo conciban a las mujeres como víctimas pasivas que requieren ayuda: es que además, las concepciones de la mujer varían a lo largo del espacio cultural, de manera que se justifica que los culturalmente "otros" sean el objeto de intervenciones de desarrollo.

Las campañas de comunicación para el desarrollo también se basan en caracterizaciones pasivas de las mujeres, concebidas como "objetivos" de las intervenciones.

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http://www.comminit.com/la/drum_beat_102.html

Orbicom honoured by the CDFJ

Orbicom and its President Alain Modoux were honoured by Centre for Defending Freedom of Journalists (CDFJ), together with UNESCO and a group of international media professional organizations (International Federation of Journalists, International Press Institute, Reporters Without Borders, etc.), with a memorial commemorative shield in recognition of their efforts over the past years at defending press freedom, democracy and human rights. The ceremony took place at the opening of the conference on "Media and Good Governance" held in Amman, Jordan, on 14 and 15 February 2005.

From left to right: Centre for Defending Freedom of Journalists President Nidal Mansour, Acting Prime Minister Marwan Muasher and Orbicom President Alain Modoux.
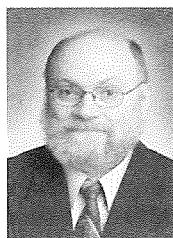
Roch Denis, nouveau président du CREPUQ

Monsieur Roch Denis, membre ex-officio d'Orbicom et recteur de l'Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM), a été élu le 23 mai 2005 à la présidence de la Conférence des recteurs et des principaux des universités du Québec (CREPUQ).

Le recteur estime que l'éducation est un enjeu majeur et se propose de tout mettre en oeuvre pour venir à bout du sous-financement des universités.

Détenteur d'un doctorat d'État en science politique de l'Institut d'études politiques à Paris, Roch Denis a surtout fait carrière comme professeur au département de science politique de l'UQAM, où il a été embauché en 1971. Il a aussi été président de la Fédération québécoise des professeurs d'université du Québec de 1993 à 1999 et membre de la Commission canadienne pour l'UNESCO.

Orbicom's Online General Assembly of Members 17 - 31 October 2005

I have the pleasure to inform the membership that Orbicom's General Assembly of Members (AGM) is convened from 17 October until 31 October 2005 for two weeks. As for previous years, we will have a substantial agenda to cover, and I will need your full support and cooperation to make this year's exercise as productive as possible.

Again, the membership will be asked to endorse the recommendations for the appointment of new directors for a two-year term. This appointment exercise is a difficult one as much attention must be paid to a balanced representation on the Board, of genders, geographic locations, and chair holders and associates.

The Marrakech Conference of November 2004 was a good opportunity for Orbicom Chairs and Associate members who were able to travel to Marrakech to meet their colleagues and at the same time, take part in important discussions in the context of the second phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (Tunis, November 2005). A formal meeting of Orbicom's Board of Directors took place in Marrakech, on the eve of the Marrakech Conference (21 November). The Board members drew up "The Marrakech Roadmap", a document for the future of Orbicom. The participants to this year's AGM will be invited to examine this Roadmap for comments and recommendations.

I really look forward to engaging again in a very constructive dialogue with you all in October.

Claude-Yves Charron
Secretary General of Orbicom

Draft Agenda

I. Word of the President

II. Approval of the Agenda

III. Approval of the Minutes of AGM Sept. 2004

IV. Report of the Board of Directors
    4.1. Report of the President
    4.2. Report of the Treasurer
    4.3. Approval of the Certified Financial Statements
        (2004-2005)
    4.4. Nomination of the Financial Controllers (2005-2006)

V. The Secretary General's Report
    5.1. Status Report of the Action Plan
    5.2. Future of Orbicom / Marrakech Roadmap
    5.1. New Chairs, New Associate Members

VI. The Chairs' Programmes and Activities

VII. Board of Directors
    7.1. Motion of Appreciation for the Out-going
        Board Members
    7.2. Endorsement of the New Board Members

VIII. Varia

Publications

La médiatisation de l'histoire
Ses risques et ses espoirs

De nos jours, les médias généralistes, voire les médias spécialisés, jettent un regard sur le passé qui prend souvent des libertés avec les réalités historiques.

Loin de la rigueur recherchée par les historiens, ils appliquent à leurs constructions narratives ou à leurs scénarisations visuelles des critères d'analyse de l'actualité qui sont évolutifs au gré de leur propre histoire.

De ce fait, ils n'évitent ni l'anachronisme, ni l'amalgame, ni la confusion des situations comme des représentations collectives de l'Autre et de Soi auprès des opinions publiques peu portées à la connaissance de leur passé.

L'histoire est-elle compatible avec les exigences de l'immédiateté et de l'offre des événements en « temps réel »? Est-elle compatible avec le commerce des images filmées, celui des regards des historiens d'hier et des historiens d'aujourd'hui?

Jusqu'à quel point, le sujet historique, à l'instar de n'importe quel autre choisi par les grands médias, peut-il subir la sanction du marché comme critère déterminant et... discriminant? Et quelles en sont les conséquences?
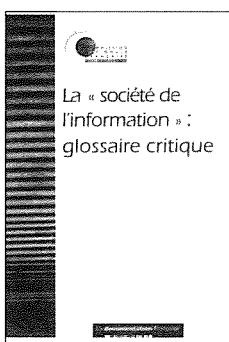
Les événements qui ont suivi le 11 septembre 2001 ont donné une acuité à notre thème... Ils interrogent sur l'argumentation historique chaque fois utilisée autant que sur l'annonce des faits.

Extraits de l'introduction de Michel Mathien

La médiatisation de l'histoire, ses risques et ses espoirs, sous la direction de Michel Mathien, Editions Bruylant, Bruxelles, 2005, « Collection Médias, Sociétés et Relations Internationales » (438 pages). Préface de Jean Favier, de l'Institut de France.

Contact: info@bruylant.be
Diffusion LGDJ, Paris.

La "société de l'information" :
glossaire critique

Les réflexions menées dans le cadre de la préparation du Sommet mondial sur la société de l'information (SMSI de Genève en 2003 et le prochain SMSI de Tunis en 2005) révèlent une certaine confusion terminologique et conceptuelle sur l'enjeu même du débat.

Ce glossaire critique se propose d'analyser la complexité de cette figure imposée du discours international qu'est la "société de l'information" : sous une apparence de clarté et d'évidence, l'expression recèle en fait une grande diversité d'approches, parfois contradictoires, selon la nature des acteurs et de leurs intérêts.

Élaboré à l'initiative la Commission française pour l'UNESCO, il comprend des contributions de spécialistes, d'experts et de chercheurs reconnus dans leur discipline. Il ne prétend ni à l'exhaustivité ni à la formulation d'une position unique et définitive, mais vise à susciter une réflexion critique sur les mots et leur représentation, ainsi qu'un débat ouvert autour d'un sujet qui, par ses implications, concerne chaque citoyen.

La "société de l'information" : glossaire critique, Commission nationale française pour l'UNESCO, ISBN: 2-11-005774-Z

http://www.ladocumentationfrancaise.fr

Global Monitoring Report 2004

El Global Monitoring Report entrega una evaluación por puntos de los avances logrados hasta la fecha en pro de la consecución de los Objetivos de Desarrollo del Milenio. Han pasado apenas cuatro años desde que en 2000 se reunieran diversos líderes mundiales en la Cumbre del Milenio de Nueva York y propusieran establecer un conjunto de metas para la salud, la educación, las mujeres y el medioambiente.

http://www.bancomundial.org/temas/omd/camino.htm

Conferences