

Building on Virtual Common Ground: design participation for the network age

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Key Concepts for this Paper

■ **Design**

- *Supporting both artifacts and processes*

■ **Participative Action Research**

- *Collective skilling*
- *distributed teamwork*
- *disintermediation*

■ **Social Learning**

- *Sproull & Kiesler, 1991*
- *preparing for and conditioning the next paradigm*

■ **Accessibility and Sustainability**

- *long term prospects for use*

Chains versus Networks

- **Global Production Chains replaced by Global Production Networks**
 - *Majority of global trade is among members of the dominant developed economies*
 - *substantial areas and populations are excluded from the global cycle of technical innovation and improvement*
- **Moving along the Value Chain**
 - *higher value-added activities sought*
 - *distinction between products & services is eroding*
 - *closer adjustment to cultural variation among users & customers is needed)*

Globalization: Geography is History is Geography

■ **Organisational & cultural segmentation**

- *cultural dimension to technical standards.*
 - *key innovations in ICT have succeeded where mapped on to existing cultural frameworks*
- *English as a global language (Crystal, 1997)*
 - *historic lack of support for non-Roman text*
 - *ASCII standard straightjacket*

■ **Context Counts**

- *informating versus automating (Zuboff, 1988)*
- *2nd level social learning (Sproull & Kiesler, 1991)*
- *social & cultural interoperability (Kaye & Little, 1998)*

Access from the Margins

- **Divisions in both developed and developing countries present the less advantaged actors with a major problem**
 - *accessing or utilising technologies which have been shaped by other players towards the support of different priorities.*
- **Existing inequalities will be reinforced unless access to these technologies can be achieved.**

Access versus Ownership



Skilling the diaspora
*low cost internet-
based telephony*

*Business centres &
internet cafes
located at the margins*



Windows of Opportunity

- **Can “small” players influence an emerging new “techno-economic paradigm” (Perez, 1985) ?**
- **A window paradigm for access and sustainability**
 - *using available technologies without regard for their underlying assumptions*
- **“Windows of opportunity” may be inadvertently closed by the momentum of mainstream technical development.**
 - *broadband assumptions*
 - *rapid technical obsolescence*

The Odyssey Group

http://www.geocities.com/the_odyssey_group/

- **Exploring the emerging social potential of new modes of electronically-mediated communication**
 - *particularly in respect of alternative forms of organising and managing and the promotion of greater social inclusion*
- **Members work together in physical locations and through the internet and world wide web.**
 - *between events, members work together in varying partnerships to develop their ideas and present these in papers for publication and in other forms*

“Virtual Journeys”

http://www.geocities.com/stephen_e_little/vjourney.html

- **Use of free web sites**
 - *<http://www.geocities.com>*
- **Minimum set of HTML instructions**
 - *simple templates*
 - *use of on-line editor/Notepad*
 - *half-day skilling*
- **Simple use of images**
 - *leavening text into ‘rich pictures’*
- **Micro-portal approach**
 - *harnessing available web resources*
 - *bottom-up*

Seeking Sustainability

- **Tim Berners Lee's original model of the Web**
 - *production model for coordination not consumption*
- **Free server web sites**
 - *cost - "pop-up" advertising*
- **Simple On-line editors**
 - *WYSIWYG tools can produce opaque and complex code*
- **Simple HTML commands**
 - *Java & XML developments can add complexity*
- **Narrow Bandwidth access sufficient**
 - *shift to newer tools requiring broadband access to internet*

Eg Ghanaian Partners

http://www.geocities.com/csps_ghana/

■ **Centre for Social Policy Studies**

University of Ghana - Legon

- *Department of Social Work University of Ghana*
- *Ghana Red Cross Society*
- *RESPONSE*
 - *Charity dealing with street children*
- *Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana, Accra*
- *Community and Water Sanitation Agency*
- *Ghana Federation of the Disabled*
- *Department of Planning and Housing Research, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi*

Sharing Skills

- **Work with local partners**
- **Use of available infrastructure**
 - *affordable internet cafés*
 - *slow connectivity*
- **Unreliable utilities:**
 - *electricity, water, transport*
- **Unreliable presence**
 - *endemic malaria and related diseases*

Sharing Practice

<http://www.geocities.com/odysseygroup2001/sharing/index.html>

One to One



One to Many *IT skilling for social work students*

Social versus Technical Learning

- **Organisational learning is needed to move beyond the technical effects of direct substitution of information technology for manual processes.**
 - *informating versus automating (Zuboff, 1988)*
 - *2nd level social learning (Sproull & Kiesler, 1991)*
- **Social learning is the key to successful and sustainable implementation**
- **It can take place ahead of or in tandem with the deployment of technical resources**

Level 1

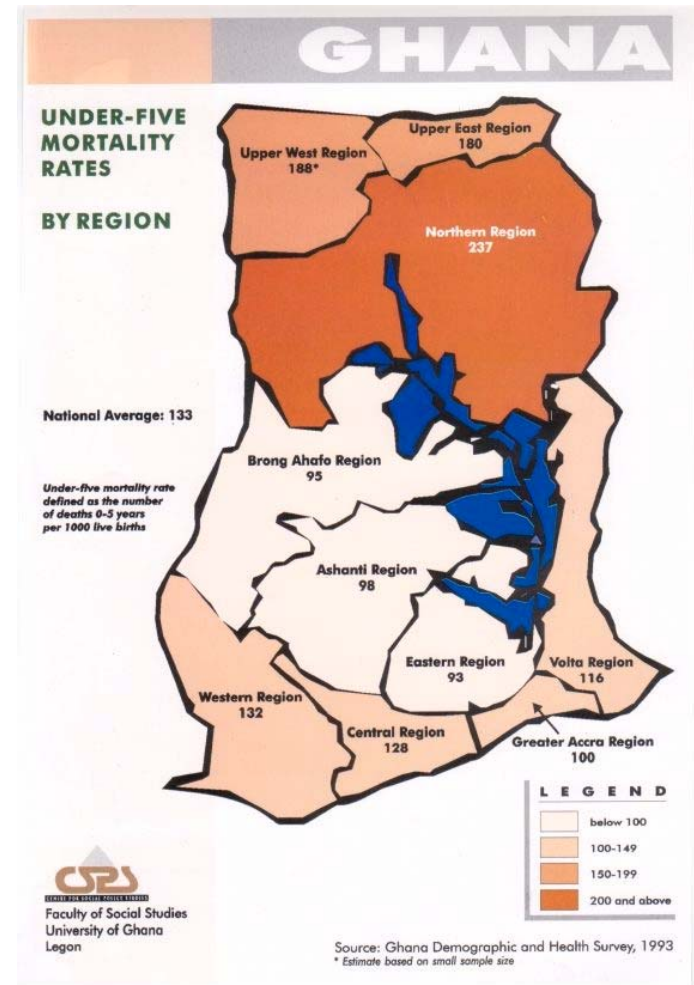
Collaborative design of web sites

- **Design Input from a community**
 - *physical co-presence*
 - *virtual co-presence*
- **Remote support**
 - *shared passwords*
 - *online templates*
 - *roaming access*

Ghana Social Index

http://www.geocities.com/csps_maps

- **Locally generated and integrated data**
 - *ported to Geocities web site*
 - *designed for slow connections*
- **Exemplar and portal**
 - *resource for students and local organisations*
 - *draw for CSPS main site*
 - *performance indicator for funding agencies*



Combining Resources

■ Ghanaian visit to Open University

- *Elizabeth Abena Prempeh with Tim Wales, OU Library*
- *<http://www.geocities.com/cspslibrary>*



Level 2 Web-supported problem definition and articulation

■ **Moor Park Explore Club**

- *www.geocities.com/moorparkexploreclub/*
- *on-line illustration of deficiencies of transport infrastructure, many amenable to relatively simple design solutions.*

■ **CSPS Ghana on-line Action Auction**

- *www.geocities.com/cspg_ghana/actionauction/*
- *on-line research proposals seeking sponsorship*

Distributed Data Gathering

http://www.geocities.com/tatra_transport/

- **Comparing performance**
 - *bus stop timetables*



Hong Kong

Newcastle

Distributed Data Gathering

http://www.geocities.com/the_odyssey_group/

- **Comparing performance**
 - *light rail services*



The Moor Park Explore Club recently visited Amsterdam to sample public transport

Level 3

Policy monitoring

■ North East Action on Transport

- *www.newnet.org.uk/neat/*
- *Regulators, service providers and users collaborating on the monitoring of service provision*
- *GPS*
- *digital video*
- *digital still*
- *WAP*



Monitoring Performance

<http://www.newnet.org.uk/neat/monitor/>



- *real-time monitoring of transport services from within the community*

Entry Points: Tools

A growing set of on-line resources

- **http://www.geocities.com/stephen_e_little/vjourney.html**
- **<http://www.geocities.com/odysseygroup2001/sharing/index.html>**
- **<http://www.geocities.com>**

Entry Points: Examples

- http://www.geocities.com/the_odyssey_group
- http://www.geocities.com/csps_ghana/
- <http://www.newnet.org.uk/neat/>
- <http://monitor.goneat.org.uk>
- <http://www.geocities.com/moorparkexploreclub>