

Call for papers NETCOM

NETWORKS AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES



ICTs in rural areas

L. BARTHE – Assistant professor of Geography & Spatial Planning University of Toulouse le Mirail –
Dynamiques rurales- UMR 1936 –MA 104

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Ph. VIDAL, Assistant professor of Geography & Spatial Planning of Geography & Planning
University of Le Havre UMR 6266 IDEAS-CIRTAI

This call for papers of the NETCOM journal invites interested researchers to submit analysis on the uses and difficulties of implementation of ICT in rural areas. Three categories of rural areas (not exclusive of other types of positioning) are concerned. The first, referring to the process of counterurbanisation, is based on the assumption that ICT will be the new vectors of urbanity and that their introduction would result in a loss of rural substance, a profound change in the "way of life", with an erasing the traditions and solidarities formerly active in rural areas (I). The second trend involves the opposite that there are innovative and creative campaigns, ICT does not call into question the rurality but rather contributing to its maintenance or its renewal with always greater diversification of non-agricultural activities (tourism, teleworking ...) (II). The third tendency concerns the sparsely populated areas (less than 30 inhabitants per km²). This kind of rural area suffers the most "digital divide", with very few perspectives in the way in which they could connect to a very high-speed bandwidth. Which are the perspectives for this kind of rural space? (III).

I-ICT exporters of urbanity in the countryside near cities

In most European countries, the city "nibbles" the countryside. This phenomenon is called "urban sprawl" and refers to the setting up of urban households who kept their urban habits in areas whose environment is marked by rurality. This phenomenon is often seen as the cause of many evils, guilty of a meltdown of the rural space and above all, a profound change in ways of living. There would be an inexorable decline of the agricultural land (artificial soil), a phenomenon that would exhaust the land reserves, would be responsible for the isolation of social groups, and would lead to the trivialization of landscapes ... As one of the last symbols of urbanity, would ICTs not contribute to the disappearance of rural areas near the cities which were already impacted by the use of personal cars, by the strong presence of large supermarkets and the invention of the freezer to conserve fresh food ?

In this first part, we are interested in collecting analysis on:

1. The **changes in lifestyle related to ICT in rural areas** under urban influence. Proposals based on organizational forms and practices within the peri-urban households (equipment, place of young people, e-commerce ...) are particularly welcome.
2. **Analysis of the responses from local authorities** on the equipment and support for digital uses in these areas that are not quite the city nor the countryside altogether, are sought.
3. The **issue of telecommuting in this type of space** where it becomes possible to rethink the relationship to employment. The use of ICTs to create new centers related to employment in suburban areas (refocusing of forms of activities mobilizing ICT).

II-Innovative Campaigns

The innovative campaigns are those where ICTs would serve the rural economy. If the city is the crucible of innovation in the field of digital invention, in rural areas, there exists specific skills in the digital field. Thus, in the 1980s, the agricultural sector has been able to have to accommodate the Minitel (the French digital terminal). Farmers used the device to learn about the weather, observe the price of the wheat or the milk, they used ICT tools better than a lot of other professional sectors. More recently, tourism would not improved without the Internet (reservation, promotion...). A number of devices within the e-administration are experienced in the field to meet the gradual transformation of public services. Electronic commerce is also benefiting agricultural areas. Special offers for local products have flourishing on the web, from distribution platforms (Paysans.fr, Centre of Rural Excellence Corbières Minervois) for those who are looking for fresh and organic food.

In this second part, contributions on the following questions are expected:

1. **Digital development strategies for rural areas.** The question of intercommunal cooperation and public-private partnerships will be at the heart of the matter. We want a better understanding of elements of success but also failures in this field for over a decade of public involvement.
2. How are ICTs integrated in the logic of the economic **development in rural areas and in different sectors of the rural economy?**
3. The role of **digital public spaces and cybercafes as a social activator** within rural spaces. Results from feedbacks are expected.

III-Sparsely populated areas face the digital divide

Rural areas of low density (less than 30 inhabitants per km²) are by definition isolated, underserved and have little ability to gather funds, skills and local expertise in the ict field. These areas suffer the most "digital divides" both in terms of infrastructure and the production of local contents and services. Public debates on this type of space will focus primarily on broadband connectivity and territories. They are places of experimentation of ICTs, particularly around alternative solutions to the optical fiber (satellite kit , WiMAX).

In this third part, inputs on the following questions are expected:

1. How **to get away from the dominant infrastructural concern**, when we talk about low density areas? Proposals, such as case studies on local tests on the uses of ICT in sparsely populated areas are particularly welcome.
2. Can **tourism applications based on ICT serve** as a springboard to the digital sparsely populated areas?
3. Can the **impact of mobile internet in rural areas** greatly change the situation (telecommuting, e services)?

Schedule

October 1 : **Authors Submit Papers and Suggest Referees**

October 15 : **Double blind reviews of papers**

December 20 : **publication of accepted papers**