

Abstract for IPID Symposium

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This research forms part of the **ICT4D collective's** work, for more information visit www.ict4d.org.uk.

Research: ICTs and Sustainable Communities. The case of the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria.

The aim of the research is to explore how ICTs may contribute to the sustainable development of communities in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria.

Presentation Title: Communicative Ecology in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria: Findings from the Field study.

The presentation presents the findings from the ethnographic study of 3 communities in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. This critical ethnography was conducted over a period of three months in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Communities studied were selected from two states in the region.

The aim of the study was to understand the communicative ecologies of the target communities. Communicative Ecology is the complete range of communication media and information flows in a community, the structure of communication and information in a people's way of life.

There is a critical lack of any clear understanding of indigenous people's Social life. It is not fixed but dynamic and changing. Tim May argues that if people's social lives are constantly changing, we must become part of their lives to understand how it changes; we must participate in it and record our experiences of those transformations, their effect on people, as well as their interpretations. Knowledge of the social world does not come from logical propositions but rather it comes from experience and the undertaking of detailed and meticulous inquiries through which we generate our understanding. (May, 2001)

For this research, in which sustainability of these communities is a desired end, understanding the incremental and progressive nature of people's social life is crucial. The dynamism of a given community needs to be understood to be able to fully explore what solutions may be suitable in the long term. It is important to participate in social relations and seek to understand actions within the context of an observed setting.

The study sought to ground the understanding of ICT usage (or not) among indigenous communities and consumers in the reality of their everyday lives, in order to promote actions for sustainability.

This was achieved by investigating the local information flows, community connections, social networks and structures and how these may affect (or not) people's perception and use of ICTs.

The study was designed to answer the central research problem in my theses, which is an exploration of how ICTs may be employed to support these communities towards sustainability.