COMMUNICATION POLICIES FOR URBAN VILLAGE CONNECTIONS: BEYOND ACCESS?

MARCUS FOTH **(Refereed)**

m.foth@qut.edu.au

ANETA PODKALICKA

am.podkalicka@qut.edu.au

Institute for Creative Industries and Innovation
Queensland University of Technology
Musk Ave, Brisbane QLD 4059
Australia

Abstract

The urban renewal strategies being rolled out in all Australian capitals result in an increasing number of residents living and sharing space in city areas. This densification process calls for a closer inspection of the communication policies and initiatives and their adequacy to support the socio-cultural needs and interactions of urban residents. In this paper we discuss findings to date which are derived from an ongoing media and communication study into the Kelvin Grove Urban Village, the Queensland Government's flagship urban renewal project in Brisbane. Its master plan indicates that the key design aim is *'to engender a strong sense of community and a safe sustainable environment'*, and in the context of the proposed information and communication strategies to *'deliver a viable and enduring connected community'*. In this paper we examine how the master plan's rhetoric about the importance of the information society and village connections has been translated into strategies and policies, and how these policies are now being converted into practical and tangible initiatives. We examine some of the strategies designed and employed to move beyond access and towards effective use of the communication infrastructure in order to enable and support social connections between urban village residents.

Keywords: communication policy; master-planned community; urban informatics; triple play; urban village; access

Introduction

Approximately two-thirds of Australia's total population reside in major cities (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2004). Current projections for South East Queensland are 3.71 million residents by 2026, an increase of around 1.05 million people, or almost 50,000 each year on average (Queensland Government, 2005, p. 5). Brisbane is one of the most pressured given its long history of low density urban sprawl and now its status as the second highest growth region in the world after Phoenix, USA. These trends are similar in other areas elsewhere in Australia and the world and reflect the changing role of cities internationally. Although some simple minded developers still claim that, *'building new infrastructure on the fringe is cheaper than upgrading services in the inner suburbs and lowering densities increases*

biodiversity and lowers air pollution levels' (Day, 2005; cf. Masters, 2005), many governments, developers and communities have come to the realisation that the continuation of the low-density urban sprawl in Australia is not sustainable – neither environmentally, socially nor economically. As a result, Australia – one of the most urbanised countries in terms of the high proportion of urban dwellers among its total population – has developed compact city policies (Healy & Birrell, 2004).

In order to accommodate sustainable urbanisation and population growth outside current metropolitan areas, the design and development of mixed-use, master-planned communities are a key component of these policy responses. Master-planned communities are usually *'large scale, private sector driven, integrated housing developments on 'greenfield' suburban sites. [... They] usually integrate a mix of housing types, open space and recreationfacilities, commercial and service facilities, and sometimes employment opportunities'* (Minnery & Bajracharya, 1999, p. 33). These developments are supposed to be more than agglomerates of buildings insofar as they are driven by master plans which aim to generate a 'sense of community and belonging'. However, Gleeson (2004) argues that the prevailing attitude of developers, who confuse genuine efforts to encourage participatory planning with 'master-programming', is detrimental to their original design objectives.

Some master plans include an assessment of planning policy outcomes based upon 'triple bottom line' accounting (Gleeson, Darbas, & Lawson, 2004, p. 353), that is, accounting for the development's impact on environmental, economic and social sustainability criteria. In recognition of the fact that communication and interaction is a key feature to support the social component of urban sustainability, master plans contain policies and design strategies that seek to provide access to a communication infrastructure. However, Gilchrist (2000, p. 269) argues that *'community development involves human horticulture, rather than social engineering'*. Access to a communication infrastructure per se may be necessary but is not sufficient to fulfill the ambitious community development objectives of master planned communities (Foth, 2003; Gaved & Foth, 2006).

From an anthropological point of view, policies not only 'codify social norms and values, and articulate fundamental organizing principles of society, they also contain implicit (and sometimes explicit) models of society' (Shore & Wright, 1997, p. 7). The increasingly important identity model offered and constructed by the urban development policy discourse (as well as across other fields such as health, education, economy) is that of 'community'. Randolph (2004, p. 483) argues that, *'the language of community has come back with vengeance in policy areas that ignored it for many years. Cities are becoming, perhaps more than ever before, collections of distinctive communities and neighbourhoods, all the more differentiated as the cities grow in size and complexity. As the city expands, people remain focused on their small part of it.'*

Master-planned communities are this 'small part of it' for an increasing number of Australians. Regarded as a new way to make urban densification socially sustainable, they are supposed to provide an environment conducive for local interactions with other residents to occur and informal social networks to emerge. Place-based issues can be a motivation for such local interactions, but in their absence, neighbourhood community development requires attention to social rather than place-based stimuli (Foth, 2006a, 2006b). Rather than being limited to exploring place-based issues, the alternative approach is to seek out opportunities as per Hornecker et al. who examine opportunity spaces where *'there is no urgent problem to be solved, but much potential to augment and enhance practice in new ways'* (2006, p. 47). Neighbourhoods can be such opportunity spaces insofar as they provide residents with

opportunities to communicate, interact and socialise with each other. How can we identify and nurture these opportunities?

Re-evaluating literature on community, Defilippis et al. (2006, p. 674) suggest that, *'communities, because of their central place in capitalist political economies, can be a vital arena for social change. But they are also arenas that are constrained in their capacities to host such efforts'*. How can we identify and overcome these constraints?

In this paper we exlore some of these opportunities and contraints in relation to the communication policies and initiatives proposed and realised at the Kelvin Grove Urban Village, a master-planned community development in Brisbane. The paper offers an examination of the continuing translation of the master plan's rhetoric about the importance of the information society and village connections into strategies and policies. These policies are now being converted into practical and tangible initiatives. We examine some of the strategies designed and employed to move beyond access and towards effective use of the communication infrastructure in order to enable and support social connections between urban village residents. With this paper we hope to be able to contribute to the ongoing debate informing the establishment of a working model of communication policies for similar estates, developments and precincts.

Village connections between face-to-face and mediated interactions

The primary[1] case study selected for this research is the Kelvin Grove Urban Village (KGUV; see Figure 1 and www.kgurbanvillage.com.au) – a master-planned residential development in inner Brisbane which offers a unique opportunity to theorise ways that local social networks evolve and operate around individual 'capillaries' (Foth & Adkins, 2006). It is a joint initiative by the Queensland Government Department of Housing and Queensland University of Technology to create a mixed-use development on 16.57 hectares of existing land at Kelvin Grove, a suburb just two kilometres from Brisbane's central business district. The KGUV is guided by a planning and design strategy aiming at a higher level of integration between residential, commercial, educational and cultural facilities. This $600M urban renewal project is expected to be fully developed and occupied by 2010 at which stage it will comprise more than 1000 residential units for more than 2000 residents.

The project partners are currently selling sites for 800 to 900 private housing apartments of middle to high value as well as additional sites for private retail and commercial development projects. They are negotiating for approximately 100 affordable housing apartments to be built within these new developments. Additionally, they are transferring four lots to the Brisbane Housing Company for more than 150 affordable housing apartments to be developed. The Department of Housing feeds the profits made from these transactions back into public housing initiatives.

[1] For comparative reasons, we are working in collaboration with our overseas partners on other secondary sites such as vertical real estate, gated communities and greenfield developments (Foth, Gonzalez, & Taylor, 2006).

Figure 1: Aerial view of the Kelvin Grove Urban Village indicating mixed land use, courtesy of the KGUV project team

Despite the fact that master-planned communities are usually associated with large-scale urban developments, the 16.57 hectares of land occupied by the KGUV are relatively small compared with some master-planned communities spanning over 100 hectares developed over more than 20 years. The reference to a 'village' in the title 'Kelvin Grove Urban Village' evokes associations with a small-scale, casual and arguably safe locale – perhaps even the 'little box' *'where people walked or cycled to visit one another and one's strong ties were regularly encountered within the immediate neighbourhood'* (Larsen, Axhausen, & Urry, 2006, p. 264). Wellman (2002) characterises such ties as door-to-door and place-to-place relationships – as opposed to person-to-person and role-to-role relationships of networked individualism. Larsen et al. (2006) explain further that these everyday face-to-face proximities and social interactions in village-like city neighbourhood of the first half of the twentieth century are widely documented across classic studies. They cite Richard Hoggart who describes proletarian neighbourhoods in the 1930s as *'small worlds, each as homogenous and well-defined as a village where one knows practically everybody, and extremely local life, in which everything is remarkable near'* (Hoggart cited in Larsen et al., 2006, p. 264).

The 'urban village' notion of the KGUV is conversely organised around the principles of heterogeneity, diversity and permeability in terms of both socio-economics and demographics. However, for some apartment owners and tenants, the image of a 'diverse city fringe community' which they formed through marketing material and sales presentations does not reflect their lived experience after moving into the KGUV. Some of the young people at our research workshops expressed a desire to meet other young and 'well-off' people with diverse tastes and preferences. They were not aware that diversity also meant being collocated with diverse income groups some of which are poor, unemployed and accommodated in affordable housing. The fact that collocation per se does not ensure social proximity or compatibility is further evidence for the significance of community development initiatives.

The geographic proximity to Brisbane's CBD and related benefits of being 'urban' such as access to city infrastructure ranging from cultural and educational venues, health, administration and public transport, align with a general 'metropolitan diversity' connotation of an urban village environment. Naturally, apart from positive aspects conveyed by the term 'village', there are also negative undertones that are reminiscent of feelings of insularity, homogeneity and intolerance. In Florida's creative cities studies, he remarks that, *'the high social capital communities showed a strong preference for 'social isolation' and 'security and stability' and grew the least – their defining attribute being a 'close the gates' mentality. The low social capital communities had the highest rates of diversity and population growth'* (Florida, 2003, p. 15).

In any case, the concept of 'urban village' can be a useful organising discursive device. It points to the metonymic relation between 'urban' and 'village' which gives meaning and direction to the design goals of the residential project rolled out on the ground. This dialogical definition between 'urban' and 'village' can also provide grounds for thinking about a series of other related dualisms observable empirically, such as stability and mobility, physical (offline) and virtua (online), visible and invisible, and local and global (Aurigi, 2006) – in short of mediated and unmediated forms of communication.

Vilém Flusser, a media philosopher, observes in the chapter 'Thinking about Nomadism':

> *Until now those who never left their home were seen as 'idiots' in the original Greek sense of the word, that is, private people who knew nothing of the world. That has changed as a result of the Information Revolution. Information is now distributed to private homes, and presently it is the person who leaves his home and goes out in public who is seen as the idiot.* (Flusser, 2003, p. 42)

As opposed to the past, when people had to go back and forth between their homes and the village square, walk up and down the hill, and go down to the stream to refill their buckets with water, Flusser finds that, *'it looks as if this rushing about is now purposeless and that it is now finally possible to remain seated'* (Flusser, 2003, p. 42). He goes on to argue that:

> *(1) It is information and not possessions (software not hardware) that empowers, and (2) communication, not economics, now forms the substructure of the village (society). What this two-part formulation makes clear is that the settled form of existence – the home – and a fortiori the stable, field, hill, and stream are no longer functional.* (Flusser, 2003, p. 43)

Flusser is well aware of the ubiquity and impact of communication technologies on everyday practices. He was indeed one of the first to formulate the concept of 'tele-society' in human communication, which he broadly defines as a potential for bringing people closer via networks, including media. However, his two-part formulation and the boundary between physical mobility and the 'real' world and 'remaining seated' and the 'mediated' world is much more blurred and complicated. There has been a lot of research drawing attention to a more holistic approach needed to understand and interpret the contemporary urban spaces and urban designs for the functionality of the former. Aurigi (2006) for example, proposed the notion of the city augmented and permeated by information and communication technologies, rather than looking at ICT projects in isolation. The same can be said about social relations and civic participation that has long been acknowledged to have moved from the public squares to textual sites of media (Hartley, 1999).

The point raised here is that the design requirements of public 'urban village' space such as that provided by the KGUV are retaining traditional aspects of social interaction and networking (unmediated face-to-face communication) while relying on old and new media

technologies to connect with others (mediated communication). The physical urban village design of the KGUV features a town centre and shops along the main street, and people do go back and forth between their homes and the village square, walk up and down the hill – quite literally, for a lot of residents and QUT staff and students commute between the old Kelvin Grove campus on the hill and the Creative Industries Precinct at the bottom on a daily basis. At the same time do they use ICT routinely and in a quotidian way.

Empirical data for this paper was collected in conjunction with four other sub-research projects for a broader KGUV community research project, and took place over two collective workshops in July 2007. Each workshop lasted for two hours, during which each project team (of two researchers) was given approximately twenty minutes to conduct their research. The reason for conducting collective workshops was due to the concern that frequent invitations for participation may appear intrusive and may – over time – cause 'research fatigue' and therefore negatively affect the residents' feelings towards their membership to the community. According to the slogan of the community, *Learn, Live, Work, Play*, we recruited participants from various backgrounds in relation to KGUV – including students and staff members of Queensland University of Technology and residents. The recruitment process involved notifications at the Community Hub (official community space where regular meetings occur) and emails, which resulted in the total of 32 participants including the researchers involved in the KGUV project. Although the format remained identical for both of the workshops, the participant groups showed some fundamental demographic differences, especially in terms of age and thus lifestyle. This presented nuanced comparative results between two broadly defined demographics – older (40+) and younger (20's) with general connotations these terms embody – despite the limited size of the groups and the time of 20 minutes. Apart from two participants, all were competent English speakers; however, the two non-English speakers were assisted by an interpreter to provide increased freedom with communicating their ideas.

In one of our focus group, when asked about the ways of contacting other residents at KGUV, senior residents observed:

> *Oh, we just yell out.*
>
> *We live on the ground floor and shout out 'X, you're there?'*
>
> *[I shout] through my kitchen window.*
>
> *Or we just knock on the door.*
>
> *I knocked on the door, and I thought 'they probably don't know who it is' because no one knocks on the door here. We all buzz instead.*

At the same time, younger focus groups participants admitted sending between 20 to 40 text messages a day and spending a lot of time online, and senior residents expressed interest in 'catching up' on using new media technology. They also make use of a computer lab located at the KGUV community hub, particularly when training sessions are available. This can be seen as a classic example of generational gap and digital divide which is a common finding of other studies as well (e.g., Dutta-Bergman, 2005; Hopkins, 2005; Meredyth, Ewing, & Thomas, 2004; Selwyn, 2004). It also gestures at the existence of many variables and meanings of community for different people as confirmed in our empirical studies (physical/virtual), the relation mirrored and constituted at the level of communication (mediated and unmediated). Indeed, the increasing ubiquity of internet services and applications has led many scholars to question the dichotomy between cyberspace (the virtual or mediated) and real space (the physical or unmediated). New media and information and

communication technology afford an increasingly seamless transition between mediated and unmediated forms of interaction (Wellman & Haythornthwaite, 2002).

A more integrated approach to communication and community also allows for the recognition of the importance of typically modern sites for social interactions such as coffee shops and culture / community hubs (Oldenburg, 2001; cf. Soukup, 2006). In fact, it is only with the opening of local cafés and bistros at the KGUV that local community within the village started to emerge visibly, including the mingling of QUT staff, students and village residents. Urban public spaces inviting sociability are increasingly important not despite but because of the range of communication forms supporting social ties, bridging links and local interactions that occur across the online / offline scale of communications (Fallows, 2004; Horrigan, 2001), an effect that has been termed 'glocalization' (Robertson, 1995). Thus both face-to-face and mediated forms of interaction need to inform communication policies for urban village connections.

Communication strategies in the KGUV master plan

The KGUV is 'committed to a diversity of uses and a lively public realm'. Its master plan indicates that the key design aim is 'to engender a strong sense of community and a safe sustainable environment', and in the context of the proposed information and communication strategies to 'deliver a viable and enduring connected community'. As such, the KGUV is seen as a significant showcase of Queensland's emerging information economy, designed to provide opportunities to integrate work and home through high-speed communication systems for both the local business community and the residential community. The ICT infrastructure at the KGUV completes the $30M community infrastructure investment already made and handed over in roads, sewers, water, electricity, parklands, etc. It features a 'triple-play' fibre network providing telephone, television and data services. The fibre network is complemented by wireless services allowing subscribers to access the internet in parks, restaurants and other locations around the KGUV. The ICT ifrastructure of the KGUV received a 'Special Mention for the Effective Use of Broadband' from the Australian Telecommunications Users Group (ATUG) at its 23rd Annual Conference, Gala Dinner and National Awards night which was held in Sydney on the 7 and 8 March 2007.

The list of goals in the KGUV integrated master plan (KGUV, 2004) is explicit and as wide ranging as spatial framework, identity and urban performance, built form, heritage, sustainability, planning, economic development, social development, transport, research, delivery, community development and information and communication technology. In this paper we focus on the latter two. Still, the whole list provides a broader framework into the underlying design principles and intentions of the development more generally.

Communication policies and access to media infrastructure for community-building have long been a central part of the urban development framework and a public sphere in general. The significance of media in constructing a sense of identity and belonging has however shifted away from a 'common' and politicised the public sphere debate embodied by public service broadcasting within a nation-state to more open and highly differentiated mundane active participation characterised by 'connections' and 'networks' of the Web 2.0-type in a globalising world. In parallel, the practice of citizenship, traditionally conceived as focused on political civil rights and responsibilities, and later politics of recognition demands, has been extended to encompass also entertainment, leisure and consumption activities (Burgess, Foth, & Klaebe, 2006; Nava, 2002; Sinclair & Cunningham, 2000). Against the backdrop of socio-political discourse of the 'knowledge economy' and 'information society', access to communication and information services and media literacy figure now prominantly as part of

cultural citizenship, 'a key means, a right even, by which citizens participate in society' (Livingstone, 2004, p. 11). Additionally, the idea of 'creative industries' has emerged as a powerful trend in policy field, especially in the Australian context. As its proponents argue, the attractiveness of the concept lies in mainstreaming the economic value of the arts and media through recognition of creativity as a critical input into developing areas of the growth economy (Cunningham & Turner, 2006). Indeed, QUT's Creative Industries precinct is symbolically located within the KGUV.

These key concepts and policy domains impinge on the strategic development of our case study; they constitute a platform for the organisation of the KGUV community. The master-plan's rhetoric about the importance of 'community development' and 'information society' is merged together in an idea of 'village connections' and envisions:

Community development

> *We will foster a sense of community by using facilities, spaces, events and technology to deliver experiences that enrich Village life. Strategies include appointing a Community Development Manager, forming a community association and using QUT services to form a community well-being program.*

Information and communication technology (ICT)

> *We will deliver a viable and enduring connected community, enhanced by continuing innovations in ICT. Strategies include installing a fibre optic spine throughout the Village, and connecting all businesses and residences to it.* (KGUV, 2004)

In this policy imagination, ICT are to play an important role in establishing intra and inter-village connections. The emphasis is simultaneously on both the local and global communication and networks that extend beyond the 'village'. At the same time, a 'connected village' is to *'achieve integration on-line and in life'* (Village Handbook, March 2007). These different communication modalities – local and global – are strategically pursued by the ICT infrastructure at the KGUV. The 'triple-play' fibre network provides telephone, television and data services, including a 'peering link' allowing QUT students living in the KGUV to access the university's online resources from their home computers at no charge. Significantly for the local community-building project, the KGUV ICT package includes also free of charge gaming, voice and video chatting at up to 100Mbits per second available to the subscribers within KGUV, apart from more traditional technologies such as free-to-air and pay-television (Foxtel) and a small range of other satellite services.

Take-up of access to the ICT infrastructure is slower than expected. Our research indicates that many KGUV residents do not access the internet from their homes. A high proportion of older residents use the free internal telephone services available but not internet services. The situation looks different with the younger generation. Young people report high demand for good quality ICT services, and the specifically established company 'Village Connections' is on its toes trying to keep up. As a result, the possibility of accessing an advanced ICT network does not always correspond with performance, demand and actual practice on the ground. Many residents we interviewed are not yet aware of the 'triple-play' services and do not intend to use the internet at home. Many perceive 'free online gaming' with other 'villagers' as an odd idea, and while they are likely to use free phone calls on a regular basis, they are also happy to continue to 'yell out through the kitchen window'. This further reinforces the need for communication policies which are not limited to issues of 'access' and 'being online'.

Beyond access and towards an urban village?

The KGUV development partners acknowledge that access to the ICT infrastructure is necessary but not sufficient to ensure 'effective use' (Gurstein, 2003). Therefore the integrated master plan (KGUV, 2004), which is complemented by a four year community development strategy to initiate and animate the 'urban village', calls for research and development of appropriate systems which can run on the applications layer of this infrastructure and provide an online mechanism to link the people and businesses that 'live, learn, work and play' at the KGUV, including residents of the KGUV and nearby areas (including affordable housing residents, seniors and students); university staff and students living or studying in the KGUV and nearby areas; businesses and their customers; and visitors. One of the systems currently being developed is a community portal intended to encourage participation in the KGUV by being a key information resource of the mix of activities, programs and facilities available. It also seeks to facilitate community uptake of ICT by hosting entertainment and information content that encourages exploration of the ICT infrastructure available at the KGUV.

Aurigi suggests that the term portal is limiting *'people's interpretations ... to broadcasting information and providing institutional services'* (Aurigi, 2006, p. 19). He argues for a

> *need to re-address this tension and identify the emergence of the portal paradigm as something that has a lot to do with television and has weakened the reflection on, and construction of, a civic network. [...] But it has to be remarked how powerful and accepted the portal paradigm has become and how this type of vision can affect the shape of things to come in the augmented city'* (p. 19).

Although we continue using the term portal, we are challenging the established paradigm of its expected functionality by moving away from a pure broadcast-only medium towards a hybrid community information and networking system.

The KGUV project team would like to see the community portal as part of a toolbox that residents can access to maintain their private social networks, alongside and possibly interconnected with email, phone, SMS and face-to-face interaction. Hence the objective is to design a community portal which learns from the issues faced by previous projects (e.g., Arnold, 2003; Arnold, Gibbs, & Wright, 2003; Cohill & Kavanaugh, 2000; Hampton & Wellman, 2003; Hopkins, 2005; Horning, 2007; Meredyth et al., 2004) and includes features that allow residents to take advantage of the communication services the internet can offer in order to conduct personalised networking (Wellman, 2002). The community portal affords local communication and interaction partners – compared with other global communication tools, this may be a unique advantage (Foth, 2006b). The system would allow residents to meet and interact online, but also to translate and continue the online interaction into offline, real life, collocated and face-to-face interaction. This offline and place-based dimension is a key challenge in the design, development and deployment of the portal.

In order to explain this challenge we distinguish between collective interaction for discussion *about* place and networked interaction for sociability *in* place. The portal includes features such as public discussion forums, noticeboards, events calendars and content management services. These functions support collective interaction for discussion about places that promote a one-to-many or many-to-many broadcast mode of communication. They complement the collective community activities organised by the community development workers and could extend to place-based community activism around issues such as neighbourhood watches, traffic calming and street rejuvenation initiatives organised by the proposed KGUV Community Association.

Activities and interactions around such place-based interests may be able to fuel social interaction for a while. Yet, a system that is solely based on a collective interaction paradigm requires a continuous effort to reach and sustain a critical mass of users. Many consider this to be a key criterion of success (Arnold et al., 2003; Patterson & Kavanaugh, 2001), and critical mass has been reported as one of the most common stumbling blocks for such systems: *'If you build it, they will not necessarily come'* (Maloney-Krichmar, Abras, & Preece, 2002, p. 19). Although place-based initiatives and collective activities present valid motivations for neighbourhood interaction, we argue that there can be other, more inherently social reasons which do not require a critical mass of users. Analysing the interaction paradigm of social networking systems such as instant messaging shows that a network interaction paradigm may turn the problem – lack of shared place-based interest – into an advantage: social diversity.

Our previous research found that – despite not knowing many of their neighbours – urban residents believe that it is very likely that within the diversity of residents living in the same neighbourhood, there may be some who they might be socially compatible with, alas certainly not all of them. Yet, apart from serendipitous encounters, there are no convenient means to find out if they are. The aforementioned notion of the neighbourhood as an 'opportunity space' introduces the conceptual context for such scenarios and opens up a new set of design challenges for the KGUV community portal. This view sees the portal as a way to enable, enhance, augment or facilitate existing or emerging social networks between urban residents. This networked interaction for sociability in place describes the more private space occupied by a 'society of friendships', that is, social networks of friends who live within relative proximity to each other. They use informal peer-to-peer type of network communication tools such as email, SMS and instant messaging to interact online, but proximity enables them to gather face-to-face and interact offline. They see each other primarily as 'friends who live nearby and not as 'neighbours'.

If we regard the KGUV as an opportunity space, one of the key challenges of the portal is thus to find appropriate means to afford residents a seamless, selective and voluntary pathway to transition from 'neighbour' to 'friend' and to link these new nodes with their existing social networks.

However, linking the people and businesses that 'live, learn, work and play' at the KGUV is also possible without the necessity of accessing the ICT infrastructure at all. One of the most successful initiatives are the Digital Storytelling workshops run by public historian Dr Helen Klaebe which investigated the potential of digital storytelling to constitute a form of history production that adds value beyond that of the traditional aural or video oral history interview by maximising direct participation. Further details about the Sharing Stories project as well as related KGUV community development initiatives beyond access have been published elsewhere (Burgess et al., 2006; Klaebe & Foth, 2007; Klaebe, Foth, Burgess, & Bilandzic, 2007).

Conclusions

This paper emphasises the role of the interconnections between different types of communicative practices of the face-to-face and virtual interactions, not only along the lines of the traditionally theorised digital divide and different types of media literacy between older and younger generations of KGUV residents but also of an ongoing everyday negotiation between the two, irrespective of demographics. We argue that those two are not conflicting practices. As a result, communication policies need to consider how residents traverse between physical / virtual, local / global, collective / networked interaction modi. The significance of our research lies precisely in its capacity to help inform adequate policy

strategies, based on awareness and empirical findings. This can ensure a more open-minded approach to policy and strategic planning, a more interactive policy process that extends beyond a fashionable discourse of 'information society', 'innovation' or even 'village connections'. We argue for a more actor-orientated and cross-disciplinary perspective, emphasising the need to take into account the opinions of individuals, agencies and social groups that have a stake in how a system evolves.

Policies and master-plans are instruments to regulate a population, often technical, rational, and action-oriented they are used to solve problems and affect change. However, they have also a more diffuse impact. Through linguistic devices of 'community' and 'society', categorisations of individuals as 'citizen', 'community-member', 'national' or 'customer' and strategies that emerge from those visions, policies influence how people think and construct themselves and conduct their social relations as free individuals (Shore & Wright, 1997). In the case of a diversified demographics such as in the KGUV, a participatory sharing of ideas between policy-makers, stakeholders and people who are influenced most directly by the outcome is particularly crucial in order to capture many variables of needs, desires and an aggregate of illiteracies and practices without leaving some groups out of the picture.

In fact, these apparent asymmetries in media competences or generally life experience can be potentially turned into a mutual advantage. Yuri Lotman argues that *'bipolar asymmetry of semiotic systems'* is the generative mechanism of meaning in any semiotic system (Lotman, 1990, p. 2). A shift in value and position, a dialogue between heterogeneous elements, including different levels of skills and competences, result in creation of something new, which in turn leads to cultural development and change (Lotman, 1990). What occurred to us in the workshop conducted is an idea of mutual, inter-generational learning for community-building. Collaborations are a useful tool for bringing people together, whether using digital media and communications or not. Similarly, a well-known, traditional community board where KGUV residents could exchange their skills and learn from each other (e.g., gardening swapped for baby-sitting, language teaching for teaching to play the piano, etc.), could potentially be more effective in fostering community than interventions that depend on ICT take-up.

Finally, to avoid utopian hopes it is important that challenges are acknowledged and probed but possibilities also suggested. Policy constructions are processes rather than products, as it often remains unclear how a particular vision and program or initiative is taken up in a particular context. Policy stipulations are often articulated in general terms, allowing unpredictable outcomes once implemented in a given context. In the case of the KGUV master-plan however, the program is targeted at a specific community and therefore should account for contingent relationships of the context (i.e. a diverse socio-economic, age base of the resident demographics).

This paper set out to explore some questions around communication policy available in the KGUV, moving from the normative claims of the master-plan to the empirical experiences underpinned by different variables of the meaning of 'community'. The data gathered in the workshops allows for setting preliminary grounds for recognition and description of the problem. The master-plan rhetorics of 'village connections', advanced 'triple-play' information and communication technology gestures towards a particular policy vision for the KGUV that favours a popular 'knowledge economy' branding but sometimes looses sight of people's actual needs and practices. The recognised disjunction between policy rhetoric and on the ground reality and some examples presented in this paper suggest that communication policy around the KGUV should take account of not only access provision to ICT but also a number of variables in meaning of community and communication for different

demographics, different socio-cultural competences, needs as well as an ongoing dialectic between the local and the global in our times.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by the Queensland Government Department of Housing and the Australian Research Council's Discovery Projects funding scheme (project number DP0663854). Dr Marcus Foth is the recipient of an Australian Postdoctoral Fellowship. The authors would like to thank Helen Klaebe, Julie-Anne Carroll, Barbara Adkins, Mark Bilandzic, Angela Button, Jaz Choi, Nicole Garcia, Greg Hearn, the KGUV project team and the participants of our research workshops and focus groups for their time, input and effort, as well as our anonymous reviewers for valuable comments on earlier versions of this paper.

R E F E R E N C E S

Arnold, M. (2003). Intranets, Community, and Social Capital: The Case of Williams Bay. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society, 23*(2), 78-87.

Arnold, M., Gibbs, M. R., & Wright, P. (2003). Intranets and Local Community: 'Yes, an intranet is all very well, but do we still get free beer and a barbeque?' In M. Huysman, E. Wenger & V. Wulf (Eds.), *Proceedings of the First International Conference on Communities and Technologies* (pp. 185-204). Amsterdam, NL: Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Aurigi, A. (2006). New Technologies, Same Dilemmas: Policy and Design Issues for the Augmented City. *Journal of Urban Technology, 13*(3), 5-28.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. (2004). *Year Book Australia: Population. Article: How many people live in Australia's remote areas?* (No. 1301.0). Canberra, ACT: Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Burgess, J., Foth, M., & Klaebe, H. (2006, Sep 25-26). *Everyday Creativity as Civic Engagement: A Cultural Citizenship View of New Media.* Paper presented at the Communications Policy & Research Forum, Sydney, NSW.

Cohill, A. M., & Kavanaugh, A. L. (Eds.). (2000). *Community Networks: Lessons from Blacksburg, Virginia* (2nd ed.). Norwood: Artech House.

Cunningham, S., & Turner, G. (Eds.). (2006). *The Media and Communications in Australia*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin.

Day, B. (2005, Sep 12). Planning bungles overheat housing. Retrieved Sep 11, 2007, from http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=178

DeFilippis, J., Fisher, R., & Shragge, E. (2006). Neither Romance Nor Regulation: Re-evaluating Community. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 30*(3), 673-689.

Dutta-Bergman, M. J. (2005). Access to the internet in the context of community participation and community satisfaction. *New Media & Society, 7*(1), 89-109.

Fallows, D. (2004). *The Internet and Daily Life*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet & American Life Project.

Florida, R. L. (2003). Cities and the Creative Class. *City and Community, 2*(1), 3-19.

Flusser, V. (2003). *The Freedom of Migrant: Objections to Nationalism*. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

Foth, M. (2003, Oct 1-2). *If you build it, they will not necessarily come: The need for online communication research into communities of place.* Paper presented at the Communication Research Forum (CRF), Canberra, ACT.

Foth, M. (2006a). Analyzing the Factors Influencing the Successful Design and Uptake of Interactive Systems to Support Social Networks in Urban Neighborhoods. *International Journal of Technology and Human Interaction, 2*(2), 65-79.

Foth, M. (2006b). Facilitating Social Networking in Inner-City Neighborhoods. *IEEE Computer, 39*(9), 44-50.

Foth, M., & Adkins, B. (2006). A Research Design to Build Effective Partnerships between City Planners, Developers, Government and Urban Neighbourhood Communities. *Journal of Community Informatics, 2*(2).

Foth, M., Gonzalez, V. M., & Taylor, W. (2006, Nov 22-24). *Designing for Place-Based Social Interaction of Urban Residents in México, South Africa and Australia.* Paper presented at the OZCHI Conference 2006, Sydney, NSW.

Gaved, M. B., & Foth, M. (2006). More Than Wires, Pipes and Ducts: Some Lessons from Grassroots Initiated Networked Communities and Master-Planned Neighbourhoods. In R. Meersman, Z. Tari & P. Herrero (Eds.), *Proceedings OTM (OnTheMove) Workshops 2006* (Vol. LNCS 4277, pp. 171-180). Heidelberg, Germany: Springer.

Gilchrist, A. (2000). The well-connected community: networking to the 'edge of chaos'. *Community Development Journal, 35*(3), 264-275.

Gleeson, B. (2004). Deprogramming Planning: Collaboration and Inclusion in New Urban Development. *Urban Policy and Research, 22*(3), 315-322.

Gleeson, B., Darbas, T., & Lawson, S. (2004). Governance, Sustainability and Recent Australian Metropolitan Strategies: A Socio-theoretic Analysis. *Urban Policy and Research, 22*(4), 345-366.

Gurstein, M. (2003). Effective use: A community informatics strategy beyond the digital divide. *First Monday, 8*(12).

Hampton, K. N., & Wellman, B. (2003). Neighboring in Netville: How the Internet Supports Community and Social Capital in a Wired Suburb. *City and Community, 2*(4), 277-311.

Hartley, J. (1999). *Uses of Television*. London and New York: Routledge.

Healy, E., & Birrell, B. (2004). *Housing and Community in the Compact City* (Positioning Paper). Melbourne, VIC: Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute.

Hopkins, L. (2005). Making a Community Network Sustainable: The Future of the Wired High Rise. *The Information Society, 21*(5), 379-384.

Hornecker, E., Halloran, J., Fitzpatrick, G., Weal, M., Millard, D., Michaelides, D., et al. (2006). *UbiComp in Opportunity Spaces: Challenges for Participatory Design.* Paper presented at the Participatory Design Conference (PDC), Trento, Italy.

Horning, M. A. (2007). Putting the Community Back Into Community Networks: A Content Analysis. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society, 27*(5), 417-426.

Horrigan, J. B. (2001). *Cities Online: Urban Development and the Internet*. Washington, DC: Pew Internet & American Life Project.

KGUV. (2004). Kelvin Grove Urban Village Master Plan. Retrieved Nov 10, 2006, from http://www.kgurbanvillage.com.au/vision/masterplan.shtm

Klaebe, H., & Foth, M. (2007). Connecting Communities Using New Media: The Sharing Stories Project. In L. Stillman & G. Johanson (Eds.), *Constructing and Sharing Memory: Community Informatics, Identity and Empowerment* (pp. 143-153). Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Klaebe, H., Foth, M., Burgess, J., & Bilandzic, M. (2007, Sep 23-26). *Digital Storytelling and History Lines: Community Engagement in a Master-Planned Development.* Paper presented at the 13th International Conference on Virtual Systems and Multimedia (VSMM'07), Brisbane, QLD.

Larsen, J., Axhausen, K. W., & Urry, J. (2006). Geographies of Social Networks: Meetings, Travel and Communications. *Mobilities, 1*(2), 261-283.

Livingstone, S. (2004). Media Literacy and the Challenge of New Information and Communication Technologies. *The Communication Review*(7), 3-14.

Lotman, Y. (1990). *The Universe of the Mind*. London: I.B. Tauris & CO. LTD.

Maloney-Krichmar, D., Abras, C., & Preece, J. (2002, Jun 6-8). *Revitalizing an Online Community.* Paper presented at the International Symposium on Technology and Society (ISTAS) – Social Implications of Information and Communication Technology, Raleigh, NC.

Masters, E. (2005, Oct 24). Seeking solutions to the housing affordability crisis. Retrieved Sep 11, 2007, from http://www.unisa.edu.au/news/2005/241005.asp

Meredyth, D., Ewing, S., & Thomas, J. (2004). Neighbourhood Renewal and Government by Community. *International Journal of Cultural Policy, 10*(1), 85-101.

Minnery, J., & Bajracharya, B. (1999). Visions, planning processes and outcomes: Master planned communities in South East Queensland. *Australian Planner, 36*(1), 33-41.

Nava, M. (2002). Cosmopolitan Modernity: Everyday Imaginaries and the Register of Difference. *Theory, Culture & Society, 19*(1-2), 81-99.

Oldenburg, R. (2001). *Celebrating the Third Place*. New York: Marlowe & Co.

Patterson, S. J., & Kavanaugh, A. L. (2001). Building a sustainable community network: An application of critical mass theory. *The Electronic Journal of Communication, 11*(2).

Queensland Government. (2005). *South East Queensland Regional Plan 2005 - 2026*. Brisbane, QLD: Office of Urban Management, Department of Local Government, Planning, Sport and Recreation.

Randolph, B. (2004). The Changing Australian City: New Patterns, New Policies and New Research Needs. *Urban Policy and Research, 22*(4), 481-493.

Robertson, R. (1995). Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity. In M. Featherstone, S. Lash & R. Robertson (Eds.), *Global Modernities* (pp. 25-44). London: Sage.

Selwyn, N. (2004). Reconsidering Political and Popular Understandings of the Digital Divide. *New Media & Society, 6*(3).

Shore, C., & Wright, S. (Eds.). (1997). *Anthropology of Policy: Critical Perspectives on Governance and Power*. London: Routledge.

Sinclair, J., & Cunningham, S. (2000). *Floating Lives: the Media and Asian Diasporas*. St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press.

Soukup, C. (2006). Computer-mediated communication as a virtual third place: building Oldenburg's great good places on the world wide web. *New Media & Society, 8*(3), 421-440.

Wellman, B. (2002). Little Boxes, Glocalization, and Networked Individualism. In M. Tanabe, P. van den Besselaar & T. Ishida (Eds.), *Digital Cities II: Second Kyoto Workshop on Digital Cities* (Vol. LNCS 2362, pp. 10-25). Heidelberg, Germany: Springer.

Wellman, B., & Haythornthwaite, C. A. (Eds.). (2002). *The Internet in Everyday Life*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell.