

# Extended Abstract Comment Form

## Preconference Symposium "Interrogating Information Realities of Information and Communication Systems" ASIST 2006.

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*Please fill out the following information about the abstract that you are reviewing for the preconference symposium. Use as much space as you think is necessary.*

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Name of commenter Michael Tyworth

### 1. Title of abstract reviewed:

Influencing Adaptation: Discourse, values, and information and communication technologies

### 2. Eprint # of abstract reviewed:

1457

### 3. The main question or concern this research addresses is:

How do communities with goals other than productivity negotiate interactions with ICT?

### 4. The most interesting thing about the research described by the abstract is:

This abstract is certainly a provocative subject, and I expect that the research findings will be equally thought inspiring for the premise seems targeted towards challenging socio-cultural (at least American) orientation towards progress as a worthy goal. Results that indicate a compelling alternative to that larger societal value (going on the assumption that it is a value) are sure to generate robust discussion both inside and outside the scholarly community.

### 5. The biggest question I had after reading the abstract was:

A number of questions arose in the course of reading this abstract. Some may have answers that were not included simply due to space limitations, or perhaps the author intends to cover them in her presentation. These questions are:

1. If I understand the premise of the proposed research correctly, the author is taking the position that the progress mentality and the attendant employment of ICTs has at least partially contributed to negative environmental consequences (e.g., toxicity). One question is, whose environment (recognizing that the environment is a global system, but consequences often tend to be most pronounced locally)? Are environmental conditions (e.g., water and air quality, degree of forestation) better or worse in cultures that employ ICTs for progress than those that do not or unable to? Are the environmental consequences experienced by those who employ the ICT, or those who dispose of it?

2. Many in social informatics / the social analysis of computing/technology point to the inevitable unintended consequences of technology as a counter to the deterministic discourse to be found in other disciplines, popular commentary. If we accept (and I do not know if the author does) that premise, how then do we "hold before the public...the consequences of their use" as Illich suggests?

3. A final set of questions are more intended as “food-for-thought” questions related to the author’s proposal to study “ecovillages.” Doing a quick web search on the term ‘ecovillage’ it appears that a majority of the ecovillages exist in generally highly industrialized nation states. One question that occurs immediately is: would these villages be able to adhere to their aspirations of a self-sustainable, environmentally friendly community without being embedded in a larger social, geographical, environmental area that they are embedded in? For these communities seem to not exist in a vacuum, but rather at least indirectly benefit from the larger context within which they are embedded (for example, medical care, law enforcement, security, etc.). Could these villages exist in locales that don’t have those elements? It would be interesting to see if these communities can indeed be studied as isolated entities.

## **6. The author should look at the following topics or sources as they continue their study:**

The author is probably familiar with many of these suggestions already, but in case not:

1. *The Whale and the Reactor* – Charles Perrow
2. Smith, M. R. (1994). Technological determinism in American culture. In M. R. Smith & L. Marx (Eds.), *Does technology drive history?: The dilemma of technological determinism* (pp. 1-35). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press
3. There is, I believe, also a significant body of literature on how the idea of ‘progress’ has been espoused as an American value – which might be relevant if your research is going to focus on American culture.

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Thank you for completing the comment form. Please save this form to your desktop, and if possible convert to PDF format. You will then need to upload the completed form to dLIST. Please see the following website for further instructions on how to upload your comments:

**<http://slisweb.lis.wisc.edu/~kreschen/dlistcomment.htm>**