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Community Broadband Initiatives: an example of neo-endogenous rural development

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“The Rural Penalty” (Malecki, 2003)

- Rural areas are on the wrong end of developments
- Market is not interested in the rural
 - More profit opportunities in densely populated areas
 - ‘Cherry picking’
- Urban-rural digital divide (Townsend et al., 2013)
- In light of rural development challenges...
 - the communities that are most in need of improved digital connectivity, have least opportunity to do so (Salemink et al., forthcoming)
 - The Rural Paradox (Galloway and Mochrie, 2005)



Supply side 'vs.' Demand side

- Lack of demand for broadband?
 - Low densities
 - Late adopters? Chicken and egg...
- Demand bundling
 - Market hegemony
 - Telco's want risk prevention
 - Rural communities are expected to provide it
- Supply side requirements and demand side action



Why the neo-endogenous approach?

Endogenous-based development in which extra-local factors are recognised and regarded as essential but which retains belief in the potential of local areas to shape their future (Ray, 2001, p4)

- Top down and bottom up in the local
 - Following Castells: two-way connectedness is required within a network society
- Local entrepreneurs and community actors co-produce with...
 - Other rural stakeholders
 - Public bodies
 - Private companies
- Social capital lies within these relationships

	Exogenous devt	Endogenous devt	Neo-Endogenous Development
Key principle	Economies of scale & concentration	Harnessing local (natural, human & cultural) resources for sustainable development	Maximising the value of local resources; Competitiveness based on local assets
Dynamic force	Urban growth poles (drivers exogenous to rural areas)	Local initiative & enterprise	Networks of local actors connected to external influences
Functions of rural areas	Producing food & primary products for urban economies	Diverse service economies	Diverse production and service economy Interdependent – urban demand remains critical for services and traditional sectors alike
Major rural development problems	Low productivity & peripherality	Limited capacity of areas/groups to participate in economic activity	The “Rural Penalty” Connectivity and capacity for participation in networks
Focus of rural development	Agricultural modernisation;	Capacity-building (skills, institutions, infrastructure); overcoming exclusion	Holistic approach to include local empowerment, capacity building, overcoming exclusion, adding value to local resources, enhancing connectivity & promoting innovation

Methodology

- Prior experiences
- Interviews and (board) meetings in Oldambt and Almelo
 - Discerning important elements in initiatives
- Online information on initiatives
 - Scale
 - Key drivers (persons)
 - Network relations
 - Campaign arguments
- Precursor for further research



Initiative and Geography	Key persons and drivers	Network relations of key drivers	Arguments used for campaigning
<p>Stichting Oldambt Verbindt</p> <p>Municipality level</p> <p>www.oldambtverbindt.nl</p>	<p>Mix of municipal policy officer and directors of semi-public institutions</p>	<p>Board members related to semi-public institutions have strong ties to governmental agencies and politicians</p> <p>- Business representatives are part of local business networks</p>	<p>Broader rural development argument (“it’s essential for many aspects of everyday rural life”) with tendency towards eHealth for ageing population</p>
<p>ECO Oostermoer</p> <p>Local community action group</p> <p>www.eco-oostermoer.nl</p>	<p>Local residents and active volunteers; hired a professional consultancy company for project management</p>		<p>Broadband as essential asset for liveability of rural areas, reducing impacts of declining service and amenity levels, ‘countering the vicious cycle’</p>
<p>Initiatiefgroep Glasvezel Notter-Zuna</p> <p>Local community action group</p> <p>www.notterzuna.nl</p>	<p>Local residents and active volunteers; Broadband is a key point of the ‘Dorpsplan Plus’</p>	<p>Active volunteers have strong links to local businesses, including agricultural</p>	<p>Broader rural development argument (“the rural can’t do without”)</p>

Initiative and Geography	Key persons and drivers	Network relations of key drivers	Arguments used for campaigning
Initiatiefgroep Glasvezel SPOW (Stichting Plattelandsontwikkeling Wierden) Local community action group www.spow-wierden.nl	Local residents, active volunteers; ‘Gebiedscoördinator’ or regional coordinator, originally from farming business(SPOW recently lost funding for her)	Regional coordinator has both business links (mainly farming) and policy links	Broader rural development argument, discuss many sectors but stress importance for rural businesses, especially agriculture
Buren op Glas Local campaigning initiative, municipality of Neder-Betuwe www.burenopglas.nl	Local residents, active because of broadband issue (unifying aspect)	Strong links to established (biggest) fibre optic provider in the Netherlands, Reggefiber/KPN	Initiate demand-bundling Political argument: “All the villages get it, so we outside the villages should get it as well”
Three initiatives related to Cogas (Twente) Bottom-up initiatives supported by Cogas, the regional cable company - Denekamp - Tubbergen - Borne	- Cogas tries to stimulate activity in countryside areas and is searching for stakeholders to become active Aiming for bottom-up initiatives on a community level - defined on basis of ‘het buitengebied’ (areas outside village envelope)	Regional cable company, owned by nine municipalities in Twente Cogas has an interest in creating goodwill in its market areas Funding?	Broader rural development argument “We are the first company in the Netherlands that wants to include the whole of the countryside in our market area in new plans” (create goodwill)

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<p>Great Asby</p> <p>Village level Community Interest Company</p> <p>www.gabroadband.net</p>	<p>CIC set up by retired professional individuals - one is brother to Lord Mandelson generating political leverage.</p> <p>Integrated with Parish Council</p>	<p>Accessed rural community development funding in 2012 as a pilot project (now connected into County Council programme)</p>	<p>Affordability for residents and businesses alike.</p>
<p>Alconbury Telecom</p> <p>Local residents group from two villages</p> <p>http://alconburytelecom.co.uk/</p>	<p>Seeking “local champion” to raise awareness and help prove demand levels</p>	<p>Working with Connecting Cambridgeshire, a county council initiative to support local campaigns</p>	<p>“fed up with slow internet and determined to do something”</p> <p>Business focused - promote support for businesses too</p>
<p>“Wolds Broadband”</p> <p>Walton & Burton on the Wolds, Leicestershire</p> <p>Local community action group</p> <p>www.woldsbroadband.com</p>	<p>Working group established by 3 Parish Councils. Other interested members of the community are invited to join (with a maximum of 10 in total). The Chairman of the Working Party shall be a Parish Councillor.</p>	<p>The website states that: many details regarding this project are dependent on the <u>Superfast Leicestershire project</u>. (a County Council group)</p> <p>Informal links to local business community</p>	<p>13 individual and 6 business points - no one dominant argument – more about assessing demand and trying to catch up rest of UK.</p> <p>- Affordability (for residential and business use) is one of the core aspects of the project</p>

Initiative and Geography	Key persons and drivers	Network relations of key drivers	Arguments used for campaigning
<p>BetterbroadbandSuffolk Suffolk County Council Initiative http://www.betterbroadbandsuffolk.com/</p>	<p>Directed by a board composed of council leaders, chief executives, business representatives and council officers, chaired by council leader.</p>	<p>Working closely with business groups the Federation of Small Businesses, the New Anglia LEP, Suffolk ACRE and the district/ borough councils within Suffolk.</p>	<p>target 90% superfast and something to everyone by 2015. Increase efficiency of Council service delivery</p>
<p>“Fibrelincs” Cluster of villages in Lincolnshire http://www.fibrelincs.org.uk/introduction/</p>	<p>Community interest company, owned and maintained by local communities</p>	<p>Community workforce to help lay cables Connected to other local initiatives No reference to policy or supplier networks</p>	<p>Market forces exclude them The value of homes will increase (Tallington)</p>
<p>Honeybourne, Worcestershire Village based community group for Honeybourne and Pebworth http://www.honeybourne.org.uk/broadband-campaign/</p>	<p>Independent campaigners who formed a group in 2011. Professionals with business/employment reasons for better home broadband.</p>	<p>Engage specialist consultants Applying for grants Lobbying suppliers and County council</p>	<p>Unsure whether they will be included in the County’s 90% target “future-proof the village”</p>

English examples

- 'Fairness' argument
 - Affordability for all
 - Additional example from Derbyshire -> Democratic?
- Mix of key drivers:
 - Local authority-led
 - Community-led
 - Business-led

} Businesses embedded in community?
- Unifying character of rural broadband?
 - Bridging and bonding social capital
 - Side-effect of community initiatives



Dutch examples

- Scale of initiatives
- Key arguments for broadband
 - General rural development
 - Some sector-related examples
 - More than just a consumers collective!
- Role of entrepreneurs
 - Traditional rural based industries
 - Side-activities
 - Hospitality business?



Community responses

Broadband Market

Dynamics

Activistic responses
responses

Negotiative

Who's in the
lead?

Exogenous or
endogenous?

Communities



Factors in community-led broadband

People:

- Key drivers and followers
 - Choice of arguments for campaign

Rhetoric:

- Activistic and Negotiative approaches

Resources and literacies:

- Market literacy
- Policy or funding literacy

» Unifying discourses in the rural?

Next steps

For this paper:

- In-depth studies for further comparison
 - Oldambt
 - Cogas
 - Lincolnshire

Other research:

- Lincolnshire project on broadband and businesses

Policy advice:

- Province of Groningen



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Thank you, any questions

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