Research Lab Overview

The Collaboratory on Technology Enhanced Learning Communities (cotelco.syr.edu/~coteleco)

Introduction

The Collaboratory on Technology Enhanced Learning Communities (Cotelco), established in 1999, is a social science research lab organized to explore the socio-technical infrastructure required to support geographically distributed collaboration and knowledge work, particularly between developed and developing countries. In 2002, Nominated by John Chambers, CEO of Cisco Systems, Cotelco won a Smithsonian Innovation Award/Computerworld Honors Award for its contribution to building the Information Society (http://www.cwheroes.org). A case-study on the lab, along with supporting materials, are on deposit in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC and in museums and archives around the world. Cotelco uses a mixed-methods approach in its research, including qualitative techniques (interviews, focus groups, participant observation, and content analysis), quantitative techniques (survey research, statistical analysis), and social network analysis. Cotelco is directed by Dr. Derrick L. Cogburn at the Syracuse University School of Information Studies (IST). Assisting Dr. Cogburn in managing the lab this semester is Shuyuan Mary Ho (smho@syr.edu), a doctoral student at IST.

Research Agenda

The broad research agenda of the lab is to achieve a better understanding of three areas: (1) the institutional mechanisms of global governance for information and communication technology; (2) the role, development, and functioning of transnational policy-actor advocacy networks in global regime formation and their linkages with epistemic communities, and finally, (3) the socio-technical infrastructure for geographically-distributed collaboration in knowledge work. Currently, we are studying the participation of transnational advocacy networks in elite global information and communication technology policy processes such as the United Nations-sponsored World Summit on the Information Society. We are specifically interested in the impact of web-based socio-technical collaboration infrastructure – configured as a “policy collaboratory” – on the interaction and density of these policy networks and on the epistemic communities that nourish them. To accomplish the goals of our research program, we are currently engaged in three interrelated research projects, which are as follows: (1) From Pawns to Partners; (2) WFUNA Policy Collaboratory, and (3) Going Global, Locally.

This research agenda is tightly integrated into Professor Cogburn’s teaching agenda, specifically his geographically-distributed graduate seminar entitled, "Globalization and the Information Society: Information, Communication, and Development" (IST 600), as well as his courses on Information Policies and Decision Making (IST 456) and Global Electronic Commerce (IST 442/642).

Cotelco Collaboration Suite

As a social science collaboratory, we try to “practice what we preach” (or “eat our own dogfood” as some would have it). This means that we are not only studying geographically distributed collaboration, but we are constantly applying the findings from our research to our own practice. As such, we have established a suite of collaboration tools for use in the lab. This suite of tools supports our synchronous and asynchronous collaboration in three ways: (1) enhances our people to people communication; (2) strengthens our access to digital resources; and finally (3) facilitates our remote access to physical spaces. The focal point of our collaboration suite is our Content Management System (CMS) called the Cotelco Cove.