

Designing possible, probable and preferable futures with mobile web technology advancing social development

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Position Paper

Overview

- *Human system questions* that impact acceptance and use of ICT.
- The value of Ethnographic Futures Research (EFR) as a tool to address critical *human system questions*.
- How EFR could be applied to improve the probability that mobile web technologies will contribute positively to social development.

Human System Questions

- Technology for what purpose?
- Technology for who?
- Technology for where?
- Technology for when?

Human System Questions

- **Technology for what purpose?**
 - Technology for who?
 - Technology for where?
 - Technology for when?
- communication with friends and family
 - business or income earning
 - communications
 - entertainment
 - access to health information
 - participate in educational initiatives
 - surf for information on the web

Human System Questions

- Technology for what purpose?
 - **Technology for who?**
 - Technology for where?
 - Technology for when?
- education level
 - degree of digital experience/literacy
 - income levels
 - access to complementary digital media
 - ethnicity
 - age
 - gender

Human System Questions

- Technology for what purpose?
 - Technology for who?
 - **Technology for where?**
 - Technology for when?
- energy supply options
 - availability of communications infrastructure
 - languages spoken in the region
 - political or religious context

Human System Questions

- Technology for what purpose?
 - Technology for who?
 - Technology for where?
 - **Technology for when?**
- preconditions to support expanded access to ICT
 - rate of adoption and speed of change
 - changes in the broader political, economic, environmental, technological, and socio-cultural contexts

Origin of the EFR Method

- Invented in 1976 by:

Stanford Professor Robert B. Textor

- Purpose:

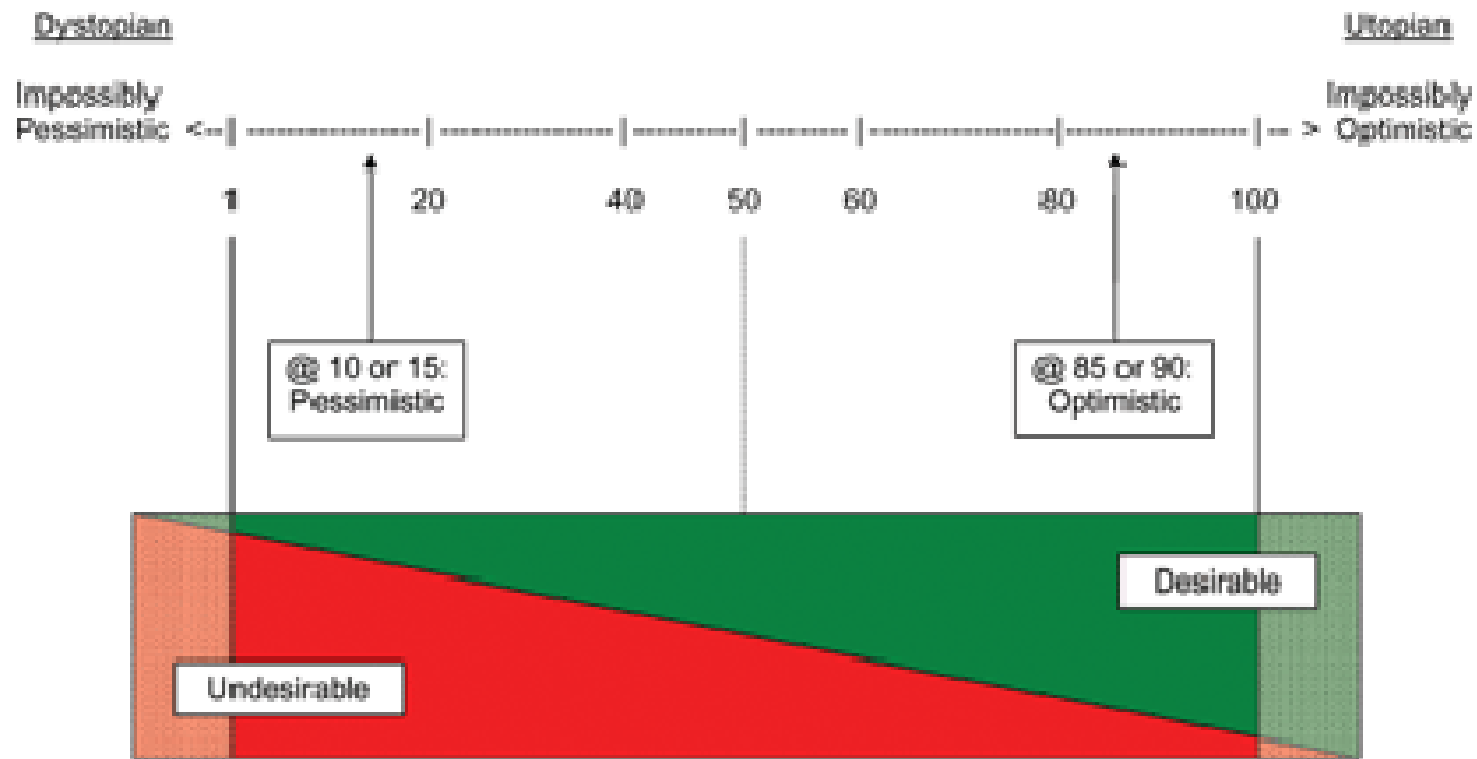
To systematically explore probable, possible and preferable futures through people's presently held perceptions and visions.

Relevance of EFR to Mobile Web and Social Development

- Complex questions with multiple inter-related socio-cultural, technological, political, economic, demographic, and environmental dimensions.
- Success depends upon making decisions today that are consistent with what is possible, probable and preferable in the context of the realities of tomorrow.

Scenario-Based Analysis

Range of Possible Futures by Desirability



EFR Building Blocks

- Confidential personal interviews with carefully selected *cultural insiders*.
- For each interviewee, a *individual summary* of his/her Optimistic, Pessimistic and Most Probable scenarios of the future.
- *Composite summary* reflecting a shared vision of a probable, possible and preferable future and decisions that make the composite scenario more probable.

Project Design Options

- **Community/Region Focus**
Expanded use of distance education technologies by California Native American Tribes.
- **Country Level Focus**
Austria 2005: Projected sociocultural effects of the microelectronic revolution.
- **Target Population Focus**
Visions of the Iridium Era: Ninety-nine propositions about how global personal connectivity will impact ordinary peoples lives worldwide.

Potential Contribution of EFR to Mobile Web and Social Development Challenge

- Refined articulation of a consensus position on a possible, probable and preferable future that engages mobile web technologies for social development.
- Anticipatory knowledge that provides a roadmap of opportunities and challenges leading to an identified desirable future.

Questions and Comments?

EFRsource: Designing Futures & Building Confidence in the Face of Uncertainty