

THE USE OF AN INTERNET CAFÉ AND SOCIAL CAPITAL IN A LOCAL COMMUNITY

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1. BACKGROUND

The aim of this report is to present a study on the relationship between the use of an Internet Café and social capital in a local community. The report is based upon a case study of an Internet Café in Sweden.

The general research question is: *To what extent can the use of an Internet Café create social capital in a local community?* In more detail: Does the use of an IT-Café lead to more social contacts? How can it provide community members with support and trust and generate community solidarity? Who are the users of the Café and what is it used for? Can usage of an IT-Café facilitate co-operation and collaboration?

1.1. Social Capital

The concept of social capital has recently become popular among academics, practitioners and policy makers. The British Prime Minister Tony Blair (2001) states in *Prospect* that:

"...the cutting edge work in social science is about the nature, limits and dynamics of co-operation, about trust and social capital, knowledge and human capital. The tide of the debate has swung back to community, mutual responsibility and cautions internationalism" (quoted in Healy, 2001:3).

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Social capital is the opposite of social isolation. Social isolation reflects a lack of social capital (Wacquant & Wilson; 1989, Lin *et al.*, 2001). Putnam (1995a) defines it as "features of social organization such as networks, norms and trust that facilitate coordination and co-operation" (p. 66). Social capital can take many forms, but Putnam (1995b) has mainly examined civic engagement: "people's connections with the life of their community" (p. 665). Wellman (2001) also stresses the importance of community in his description of social capital in that he adds an element of community attachment to the term. Following Putnam and Wellman, social capital is in this report defined *as the existence of social networks, support, trust and community solidarity*.

There are many different dimensions of social capital. One of the most important ones is the distinction between bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding ties refer to links with people similar to oneself; bridging ties refer to links with people different to oneself. The former is important for 'getting by' in life in that they tend to provide social support. The latter is important for 'getting ahead' in life since more diverse information can be found through bridging ties (Putnam, 2000).

1.1.1 Consequences of Social Capital

The idea behind the concept of social capital is that social connections have a value. Variations in social capital have been used to explain differences in health and wellbeing (e.g. Venstra, 2001), levels of crime and disorder (e.g. Sampson *et. al.*, 1997), educational achievement (e.g. Hanifan, 1920; Coleman, 1988, 1990), economic performance (e.g. Fukuyama, 1995) and democracy (e.g. Putnam, 1993, 1995, 2000).

According to Putnam (2000) social capital keeps communities "together, healthy, crime-free and livable" (p. 127). Woolcock (2001) suggests that communities with high levels of social capital can cope better with "poverty and vulnerability, resolve disputes, and/or take advantage of new opportunities" (p. 12). The World Bank emphasise similar community benefits arguing that social capital can reduce problems, like violence, through shared values and norms of behaviour; increase business opportunities by reducing transaction costs and providing informal access to credit; and improve the access to health services and the quality of education.

1.1.2 Downside of Social Capital

It is important to reference the social context in which social capital is being considered. In societies in which segregation exists, individuals may well be integrated into their local community yet isolated from the wider society. People in stigmatised communities may feel discriminated against and excluded from the wider society and may, in turn, disengage (Suttles, 1972; Foundations, 1999).

Fragmentation may also occur among different groups within a community. Bonding social capital can lead to the exclusion of outsiders. In addition, dense, close-knit social groups can create conformity among members that restricts freedom and may not provide access to needed resources and information elsewhere (Portes & Landolt, 1996). As Putnam (2000) points out, it is important that members of close-knit groups also have access to bridging ties that enable them to seek out new resources. This is a function which developments in communication and information technology (C&IT) seem well designed to facilitate (e.g. Ferlander & Timms, 1999; 2001).

1.1.3 Decline of Social Capital

Putnam (2000), concentrating on US evidence, argues that social capital has declined in the past thirty years. He notes that there has been a decline in voting, joining political parties, signing petitions, keeping informed of the news, and in particular, joining community organizations. According to Putnam people increasingly live in isolation, paying little attention to their communities. He argues that the decreases in social capital are caused by the privatization of leisure time, especially by television viewing.

According to Sennett (1978) the modern social order is characterised by anomie. On an individual level people are prone to anomia, a general mistrust of others. Oldenberg (1991) defines the loss of community solidarity or social capital in terms of the decline of what he calls “great good place” or third places: public arenas where members of the community can meet, celebrate ties and seek informal support.

An alternative view of the role of third places is proposed by Wellman (1997), who notes that although there may have been a reduction of the use of public arenas, this does not automatically mean that there has been a decrease in the extent of informal association. He argues that the site where people meet have been transferred from the public to the private arena and cites the use of electronic forms of communication as a way of maintaining informal association.

There has been much speculation about whether communication and information technology can counteract the trend identified by Putnam. The question is whether the use of C&IT, as, for example, through the use of an IT-Café, can re-create or enhance civic engagement and social capital in existing communities, or whether, in the same way as it is claimed television works, it will lead to a decrease of civic engagement and social capital.

1.2. Communication & Information Technology

There is a considerable amount of literature about the relationship between social capital and C&IT, but surprisingly few empirical studies. Wellman and Gulia (1999) point out that the topic is dominated by anecdotes, assumptions and prejudices rather than empirical research.

The majority of commentators (including the present author) believe that social capital can be reinforced by the use of C&IT, but some suggest that the use of technology may have negative effects on social capital.

1.2.1 Critical versus Positive Voices

Critics fear that computer-mediated communication may replace face-to-face contact between people and lead to further isolation and the atomisation of society. Stoll (1995:58) claims that “computer networks isolate us from one another, rather than bringing us together”, pointing to the danger that “by logging on the networks we the loose ability to enter into spontaneous interactions with real people”.

According to McClellan (1994) writing in *the Observer*:

"Just as TV produces couch potatoes, so online culture produces mouse potatoes, people who hide from real life and spend their whole life goofing off in cyberspace" (p. 10).

Despite the colourfulness of their imagery, the skeptics are in a minority and most writers see C&IT as providing a means for increasing social capital (e.g. Blanchard & Horan, 1998, Wellman, 2001). On the basis of empirical studies Beamish (1995) and Hampton (2001) assert that the use of C&IT complements face-to-face interaction, rather than acting as a substitute. C&IT enable users to participate in the community despite the barriers of time and place. The World Bank, one of the positive voices, argue that:

"Information technology has the potential to increase social capital – and in particular 'bridging' social capital, which connects actors to resources, relationships and information beyond their immediate environment (www.worldbank.org)."

Many supporters of the development of C&IT think that it can create bridges between different groups. For example, Morino (1994) assumes that electronic networks can be used to bring fractured communities together providing a base for collaboration and the recreation of a sense of local identity. C&IT has the potential to enhance social networks, providing new grounds for the development of relationships based on choice and shared interest (e.g. Schuler, 1996, Wellman, 1997).

If residents can access C&IT through an Internet Café in their local community there is also a face-to-face aspect added to the virtual one, making relationships multi-stranded. Visitors can get to know each other better face-to-face as well as online, which should lead to an increase in contact and encourage greater participation in the community: contact creates circles of increased trust, favouring further interaction.

1.2.2 The Digital Divide

If the Internet has the power to increase social capital, access becomes a major issue. One of the biggest fears with technology is that it will not include the whole society, but will instead be confined to traditional computer users, such as young well-educated men from high social classes. Under these circumstances, the use of C&IT may create new forms of social exclusion increasing the 'digital divide': the division between the connected and the disconnected (Luke, 1993).

In order to counteract the risk of a digital divide, there are many projects in deprived communities providing residents with subsidised access to C&IT. To promote inclusion into the Information Society, access is often provided from public access points, such as community centres, libraries and IT-café. More recently there are also many local net projects offering subsidised access in people's homes.

Another way to include local communities in the wider society is to work together to build interlocking networks that can help address problems that transcend local boundaries. Morris and Hess (1975) refer to the "outward movement", which is about interconnecting communities throughout the world. This may be done through the use of C&IT in terms of online collaboration.

Part of the wider research programme that forms the basis from the present report is an investigation of ways which online collaboration between groups in different countries may promote social capital. An online project, *Community Portraits*, described in section 2.1.2 has been designed in order to assess this aspect of the programme.

2. A SWEDISH CASE STUDY

This report is based upon a case study of an Internet Café. The studied Café is located in the suburban community of Skarpnäck in Sweden. The community consists of two sub-areas called Skarpnäcksfältet and Skarpa By. The former area mainly contains rented flats; the latter flats or houses, which are owned by the residents.

The community is physically separated from the rest of the urban area. There was no underground connection until 1994. The area has been stigmatised in the media where it several times has been described as being 'problematic'. According to data from USK, the Swedish Research and Statistics Office (Ivarsson, 1993, 1997, 2000), many residents of Skarpnäck are dissatisfied with local safety and order (e.g. scrawl, vandalism, theft, burglary and violence). In 1997, in comparison with 23 other areas, Skarpnäck had the highest percentage of respondents complaining about theft and burglaries.

According to official data (USK, 2000), the population of Skarpnäck at the time of the study is circa 8600, with a preponderance of young people: 34 percent of the population are under 19 years old and 8 percent over 65 years¹. Incomes are relatively low compared to the rest of the urban area and there is considerable mobility. In 1999, the median income was 178,000 SEK² (cf. 205,200 SEK in the rest of Stockholm). In 1997, 1324 residents moved into the community and 1421 moved out. According to Ivarsson (1993, 1997, 2000) many residents have lived in the area a short period of time.

Possibly as a result of the high proportion of students living in the community, the educational levels appear relatively high, at least by British standards: 19 percent of adults have elementary school as their highest educational level, 42 percent secondary school, and 37 percent have a university degree³ (cf. 44% of the residents in the whole of Stockholm). The local area has a high percentage of residents with a foreign background (28% are foreign citizens born abroad or in Sweden or foreign-born Swedish citizens⁴) and single parents (28% of all households with children⁵), groups generally identified as being at high risk of social exclusion.

The housing area was built in the 1980s and is well planned in terms of architecture. Fogelström (1996) argues that no other newly built Stockholm suburb has been as

¹ In 1999

² Residents aged 25-64.

³ Age 25-64 in 1999

⁴ In 2000

⁵ In 1998

well planned as Skarpnäck. The area was built as a contrast to the so-called 'Million Programme'⁶, with its suburbs being criticised for being monotonous and large-scale. Following the completion of that programme attention switched to the creation of attractive suburbs characterised by diversity and identity. The aim with Skarpnäck was to build a cohesive small-scale area with a sense of community and local identity. This was, for instance, to be accomplished through the creation of inner-yards as natural meeting-places within each block of flats. There is an avenue in the middle of the community with shops, restaurants and other local services, including the Culture House, which for instance contains a library, a cinema and now the Internet Café.

2.1 The Internet Café

The Internet Café was officially opened in April 2000. At this time there had been several threats to local services, e.g. citizen services had been closed down and the Culture House itself, which according to Ivarsson (1997) is very popular in the area, was thought of being in danger of being closed. Ivarsson (1997) also demonstrates that of all the Stockholm areas analysed, Skarpnäck had the most residents (70%) requesting more local services. The respondents were disappointed with local services such as banks, health services, shops and commercial businesses.

The residents, through citizen groups, requested more meeting-places and proposed the opening of an IT-Café. Their pleas were listened to and the Café was opened and sponsored by a combination of the local council, the two main housing associations and an Internet provider. The full-time staff of the Café consists of a single person: the IT-manager, a network technician living in the area with a background as a youth carer. The Café is open daily from Monday to Friday as well as one evening a week. Visitors to the Café are offered access to computers and to the Internet with, if needed, IT-support and help from the manager.

⁶ The post-war period in Sweden was characterised by a lack of accommodation. In order to prevent this the Swedish Parliament decided in 1965 to start the large-scale project of the 'Million Programme'. The aim was to build 100 000 new households, every year during a 10-year period, which was also accomplished. Many of the areas built during this time are characterised by the size and the speed in which they were built (Fogelstrom, 1996).

2.1.1 Aims of the Internet Café

The Internet Café offers subsidised access to computers and to the Internet. The prices are low: 10 SEK (£ 0.70) for half an hour, 20 SEK (£ 1.40) for an hour and 100 SEK (£ 7.50) for a monthly member card, which gives unlimited access during the opening hours of the Café (with a maximum 1 hour if the Café is full). In addition to using computers, the Café provides a place where people get the opportunity to meet face-to-face. It was initially hoped that an 'ordinary' café would open next-door to the IT-Café to cater both its visitors and other people not necessarily interested in C&IT. This has, however, not been accomplished.

On the web site of the IT-Café the following aims are stated (<http://www.itcafeet.com>):

“To increase knowledge within the new media and to create a place where people, old and young and from different nationalities, can meet and in that way increase communication between people in the area” (translated by Ferlander, 2001).

The prime aim of the Internet Café is to increase interest in and knowledge of the new media of C&IT. This is accomplished through help and support from the IT-manager. The Café also offers a variety of computing courses, for example Word and Internet courses for beginners; an evening course in the creation of web pages (Front Page) has recently been offered. In addition to the technical service it provides, the Café also functions as a local meeting-place, providing an opportunity for increased communication in the area. Part of the rationale of the Café is that it can bring together groups in the community that may not otherwise naturally meet and communicate, such as different age groups and people from different ethnic backgrounds.

The Café is making a determined effort to attract groups that might otherwise be excluded from the Information Society, e.g. elderly people and people with a foreign background. It does this through offering computer courses and organising special events for different groups and interests. Several computer courses have been aimed

at elderly people, so called 'senior courses'. The IT-manager also tries to reach a variety of visitors through inviting different associations to make use of the Café, such as immigrant-, youth- and pensioner associations. One result of this has been that a Spanish-speaking group meets weekly in the Café, making use of its computers.

2.1.2 Community Portraits

In addition to the courses and special events, the Café has been involved in an international project with the University of Stirling in Scotland called 'Community Portraits'. The project is designed to use the Internet to engage members of different communities in international online collaboration. The participants develop their own view of their local areas and compare them with other groups in another country (Timms, 1999). The aim is to increase local knowledge and identity as well as to increase social networks local and trans-nationally.

The project has been piloted among a group of Café-visitors in Skarpnäck, which has lead to the development of a web site concerning the local area created by the residents themselves. For further information about the pilot and its outcome see: www.itcafeet.com/skottland/skottland.htm. The extent to which on-line collaboration can contribute to social capital is to be investigated through a series of in-depth interviews to be conducted with the Community Portrait participants and the project co-ordinator.

2.2 The Local Net (Skarpnet)

A local net is a computer network based within a particular area dealing with local issues. Local nets have become relatively common in Sweden. The lead in their creation has frequently been taken by housing associations, which offer tenants subsidised connection to the network. The aim generally is to include all members of a community, not just traditional computer users. Local nets often try to provide access

at home for everybody as well as from public access points, capitalising on the high proportion of households with computers in Sweden⁷.

In 1998, in a conscious effort to improve social capital and the image of the community of Skarpnäck, the main housing company in the area, Stockholmshem, proposed the development of a local net, which was called Skarpnet. Tenants in the local area were offered subsidised access to the network from home as well as from public access points, for instance in the Internet Café. The local net was to provide local and global information and communication services with access to the local net as well as to the Internet and e-mail. The project does not exist any more due to, for example, financial and technological difficulties.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Evaluation of the Local Net

An evaluation of the Local Net project started in the autumn of 1999. Postal questionnaires were administrated to a random sample of households not yet connected to the local net, to households connected to the network and to households who turned down the offer of being connected to the network. The samples contain tenants of the main local housing company, which was also the main sponsor of the project. In total, about 400 were distributed and 200 returned. Surveys have also been conducted among young people in the youth club concerning C&IT and social capital.

A detailed report of the Local Net study is still to be presented. For an analysis of the households not connected to the Local Net see "Local Nets and Social Capital" by Ferlander & Timms (2001) in *Telematics and Informatics* (available online: www.elsevier.com/locate/tele). Parts of the analysis of the Local Net (non-connected and connected) are used in this report to provide comparisons with the IT-Café study.

⁷ In 2000, more than half of all Swedes aged 12-79 years have a connection to the Internet (MMXI Nordic, 2000).

3.2 Evaluation of the IT-Café

The evaluation of the Internet Café has used mixed methodologies, both quantitative and qualitative. In-depth interviews have been carried out with the IT-manager at the beginning of the project as well as about a year later. The researcher has also attended several meetings regarding the Internet Café as well as conducting observational studies in the Café.

Focus groups with Café users are to be carried out in the spring of 2002 to clarify the points raised in the surveys and the interviews with the manager. Some complex issues and matters that have surfaced during the course of the initial studies will be explored with the focus groups. Three different groups in terms of age and ethnicity are to be established; each group will contain about five regular Café-users.

From the official opening of the Café in April 2000, questionnaires have also been put in the Café for visitors to fill in. 62 have been returned. A second study was conducted in October 2001. Postal questionnaires were sent out to about 90 visitors who at some point have bought membership cards: 32 questionnaires have been returned.

The response rate is regarded to be satisfactory due to the high mobility and number of different languages spoken in the area. In addition, many surveys have been conducted in the area, e.g. by the Swedish Research and Statistics Office (USK), which may make residents fed up with filling in surveys. Throughout the presentation of the results of the surveys there may be different numbers in the number of respondents depending on how many answer each question.

3.2.1 The Café Questionnaire

Most questions in the two surveys are identical. The first questionnaire, however, contain slightly more questions. All questions in the questionnaires are presented in the appendix. Most questions contain the response category “either/or” or neutral. Many respondents have chosen that category (see appendix), which should be taken into consideration when interpreting the results.

General research questions in the questionnaire are: *What is the extent of social capital in the community? Who are the users of the IT-Café? What do they use it for? What are the expected and perceived outcomes of the Café in terms of social capital?*

Social capital is a complex concept containing several aspects. In this report the concept has been operationalised through questions about the respondent's social networks, social support, trust and community solidarity. Questions were asked about the respondent's number of close friends and participation in different spare-time activities, for example sports, cinema, library visits, meetings and courses. Questions concerned with support include ones on availability of financial, emotional and social support, e.g. *"If you needed support is there anyone who would be there for you need to talk about personal problems or have to borrow £30?"*

Trust is measured using the Srole anomia-scale (Srole, 1956) with statements measuring general mistrust such as: *"These days you do not really know whom to trust"* and *"There is no point in writing to officials since they are rarely interested in the problems of the average man"*. Community solidarity is measured by questions about meeting-places and social cohesion, such as: *"Do you think there are enough meeting-places in the area?"* In addition, a question about local identity has been included; the same question has been used in earlier studies in the area carried out by USK (Ivarsson, 1989, 1993, 1997, 2000). According to Ivarsson the scale measures rootedness and community attachment. The question used is: *"To what extent do you feel 'locally anchored' and rooted in the community where you live? (Give rootedness on a scale from 0, no roots, to 10, very strong roots)"*.

Bridging and bonding social capital are investigated in the questionnaire in both geographical and social terms. In terms of geographical location the distinction is between local and non-local activities: networks and support within the community (bonding social capital) are compared with those outside the local community (bridging social capital). The following questions were asked: *"What do you normally do in your spare time [examples given range from sports activities to courses] a) within the community b) outside the community?"*; *"How many really close friends do you have a) within the community b) outside the community?"* and, finally: *"If you*

needed support is there anybody who would be there for you if you...[examples given include sickness, borrowing money and talking about personal problems] a) yes, in the community b) yes, outside the community c) no, nobody?".

Within the local community, the dimensions of bridging and bonding are also investigated in relation to contacts between different groups and questions are asked about the existence of tension between groups in the area: *"Do you believe there is tension between different groups in the community? "If you think there is tension, which groups are you thinking about?"*

3.2.2 Analysis

The questionnaires have been analysed in PinPoint. First frequencies and percentages have been calculated to give an overview of the results (see appendix). Secondly, cross tabulations have been conducted in order to investigate associations between different variables. The Café-study has also been compared to the study with non-users. Significance has been tested using t-tests and chi-square, as appropriate. Since the two Café studies produce very similar data they have been combined. Where differences occur, the results will be presented separately.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Sample Description

Comparison with statistics from USK (2000) suggests that the Café sample is generally representative of the overall characteristics of the area's population. The variety of visitors, evidenced in the surveys, is corroborated by the IT-manager who believes the visitors to be a reasonable cross-section of the area.

4.1.1 Demographic Factors

Table 1: Demographic Factors (%).

	IT-Café	Population
Age		
11 – 34	30	33 ⁸
35 – 64	42	38
65 -	28 N=90	11
Occupation		
Students	20	na ⁹
Employed	32	72 ¹⁰
Unemployed	9	2
Pensioners	40 N=91	na
Gender		
Female	64	52
Male	36 N=91	48
Educational Level¹¹		
Elementary School	22	19
Secondary School	37	42
University	41 N=91	37
Handicapped		
	5 N=86	7 ¹²
Ethnicity		
Foreign background	27 N=88	28 N= 300 ¹³

The age of respondents varies between 11 and 80 years. About a third (30%) is below 35 years (cf. 33% in the population). The Café sample has more old people than the population as a whole: more than a fourth (28%) is over 65 years (cf. 11% in the population). Another group that is more prominent in the first Café sample is the unemployed (9% vs. 2% in the population). There are, however, no unemployed respondents in the second sample (respondents who have been or are Café-members).

Almost two-thirds in the sample (64%) are female (cf. 52% in the population). The manager, however, argues that about half of the visitors are men and half women. Initially, it was believed that there would be a majority of male visitors, which obviously has not turned out to be the case. The educational levels among the Café respondents

⁸ Age 13 - 34

⁹ Not available in the USK data

¹⁰ Age 20 - 64 (USK, 1999)

¹¹ (USK, 1999)

¹² Early retirement or disablement pension (USK, 1999)

¹³ Source: USK, 2000

are representative of the area. More than a fifth of the sample (22%) has elementary school as the highest educational level (cf. 19% in the population), more than a third (37%) secondary school (cf. 42% in the population) and about two-fifths (41%) have a university degree (cf. 37% in the population).

In line with the population data, five percent of the sample has some kind of handicap (cf. 7% in the population). However, in the second sample, respondents who have bought membership cards, there are no handicapped respondents. The manager argues that the physically handicapped is a category not as represented as initially intended. He believes this may be due to the Café not being very 'handicap friendly'. According to the manager, there are, however, several visitors with mental handicaps, who seem to appreciate the IT-support offered by the Café.

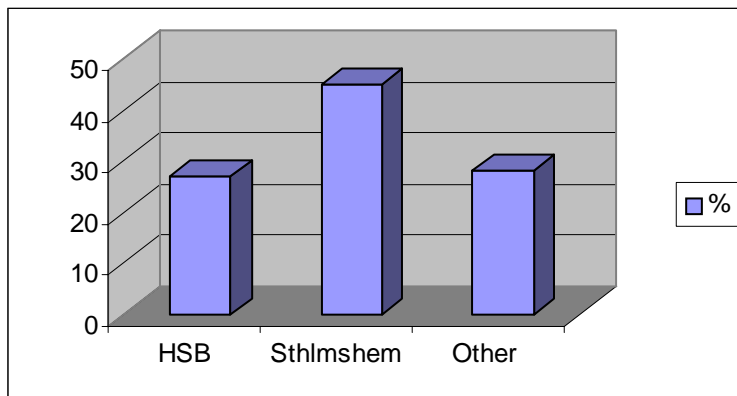
Ethnicity in the sample is also in accord with the population figures. 27 percent of the sample have a foreign background (cf. 28% in the population). One quarter (25 %) of the Café sample state that their mothers have a foreign mother tongue and 32 percent have a father with a foreign mother tongue. A wide variety of mother languages are represented, including Danish, Estonian, Finnish, Indonesian, Italian, Norwegian, Pakistani, Persian, Polish, Romany, Russian, and Serbo-Croatian.

4.1.2 Housing

Among the sample about three-quarters of the respondents (76%) live in the local community of Skarpnäck. The vast majority of them (92%) live in Skarpnäcksfältet. Seven percent live in Skarpa By. Most of the remaining live in the nearby areas of Bagarmossen (13%) or Kärrtorp (4%). There are also visitors from areas including Hökarängen, Midsommarkransen, Pungpinan, Sköndal and Värmland.

The majority of the sample (61%) live in rented flats; about one-third (29%) live in flats, which they own. One-tenth of the respondents (10%) live in houses.

Table 2: Housing Companies (%).

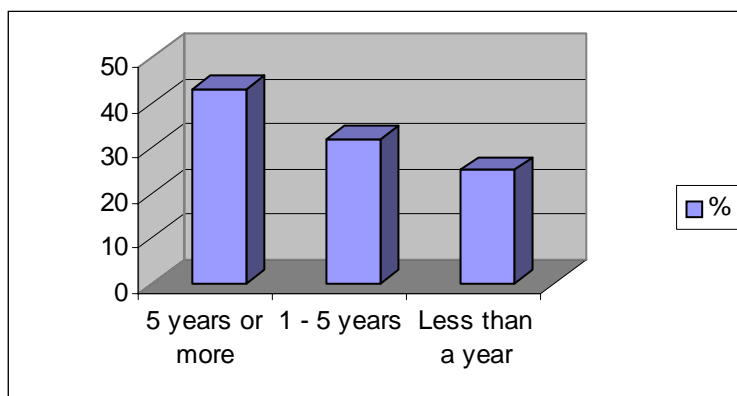


N = 85

Almost half of the sample (45%) rent their flats from Stockholmshem, the main housing company in the area; more than a fourth (27%) have bought or rent their flats from HSB. Examples of other housing companies are Svenska Bostäder, Riksbyggen and SKB. The first housing company is a provider of rental flats and the two latter provide flats for purchase.

4.1.3 Computer Experience

Table 3: Computer Experience (%).



N = 90

Computer experience is relatively high among the sample: more than two-fifths (43%) have used a computer for five years or longer. In contrast to this group, a fourth of the respondents (25%) have little previous experience of computers (less than one year or just started). Perhaps surprisingly, more than half of the sample (59%) has a computer

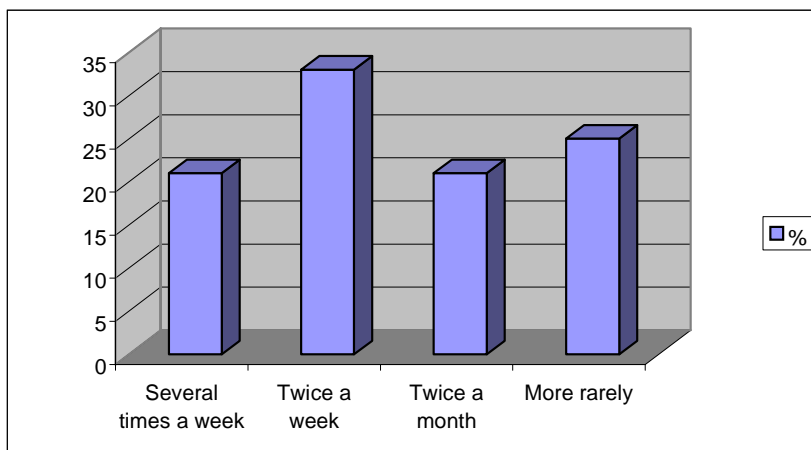
at home. Neither computer experience nor access at home is associated with any of the demographic factors: gender, age, ethnicity or occupation.

4.2 IT-Café Usage

4.2.1 Visitor Patterns

Visitor patterns differ in the two Café samples. Respondents in the first sample visit the Café more regularly; while respondents in the second have visited the Café on more occasions. One-fourth of the respondents (25%), who replied to the first questionnaire, are first time visitors. About one-third of them (32%) have been to the Café between two and five times; about one-fourth (24%) between six and ten times, and 16 percent of the respondents has visited the Café more than ten times. The respondents in the second study have visited the Café more times: more than half of the sample (52%) has been to the Café more than ten times. Almost half of them (47%) have visited the Café more than twenty-five times.

Table 4: Regularity of Visits (%).



N = 52 (Sample I)

Most respondents in the first sample (33%) visit the Café about twice a week. More than one-fifth (21%) goes to the Café more often than that: several times a week. The same amount of the sample (21%) visits the Café about twice a month and one-fourth (25%) more rarely than that. The latter is probably related to the fact that the same amount of respondents (25%) is first time visitors.

Respondents in the second sample seem to be less frequent in their visits. 62 percent visit the Café less than twice a month; 28 percent of the sample never visits the Café. Two-fifths of the respondents who rarely or never visit the Café (40%) cite that they do not have the time. Other common reasons are that the respondents have bought their own computers (16%) or have access at other places (12%), for example at work. The remaining respondents state illness, moved out from Skarpnäck, need access at different times or not much need anymore as reasons for few or no visits. One respondent wrote that:

"I can now manage on my own since I have attended all Micke's (read the IT-Manager) courses in the Café" (Café-user, 2001).

4.2.2 Visitor Patterns and Demographic Factors

There are no associations between demographic factors and number of Café visits. However, there is a weak association between regularity of visits and demographic factors such as age, ethnicity and occupation.

Table 5a: Association between Regularity in Visits and Age.

	Age		
Regularity of Visits	- 50	50 +	Total
Twice a week or more	28 (57%)	6 (19%)	34 (43%)
Twice a month or less	21 (43%)	25 (81%)	46 (57%)
Total	49	31	80

Chi-Square 9.6 P 0.0019
Cramer's V 0.3723

Younger respondents tend to visit the Café more regularly than older ones: more than half of those aged under 50 years (55%) visit go to the Café twice a week or more (cf. 19% among those over 50 years).

Table 5b: Association between Regularity in Visits and Ethnicity.

	Ethnicity		
Regularity of Visits	Swedish	Foreign	Total
Twice a week or more	18 (33%)	17 (65%)	35 (44%)
Twice a month or less	36 (67%)	9 (35%)	45 (56%)
Total	54	26	80

Chi-Square 6.08 P 0.0137
Cramer's V 0.3027

Respondents with a foreign background visit more regularly than those with a Swedish background: about two-thirds (65%) of the former visit the Café twice a week or more (cf. 33% of the latter).

Table 5c: Association between Regularity in Visits and Occupation.

	Occupation		
Regularity of Visits	Pensioners	Others	Total
Twice a week or more	6 (19%)	27 (55%)	33 (41%)
Twice a month or less	25 (81%)	22 (45%)	47 (59%)
Total	31	49	80

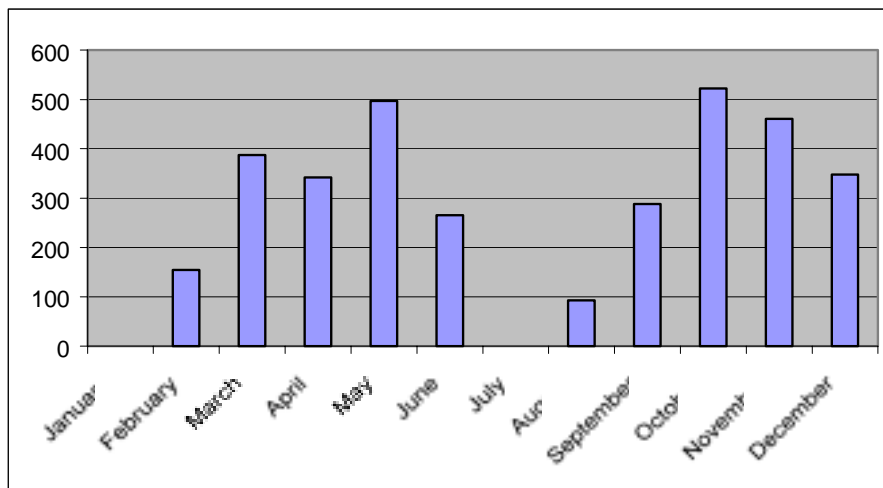
Chi-Square 8.59 P 0.0034
Cramer's V 0.3537

Finally, pensioners visit the Café less often than others (students, employed and unemployed): less than a fifth of the pensioners (19%) visit the Café twice a week or more (cf. 55% of the others). The reasons behind these associations will be examined in the focus groups.

4.2.3 The Manager's Data on Visitor Patterns

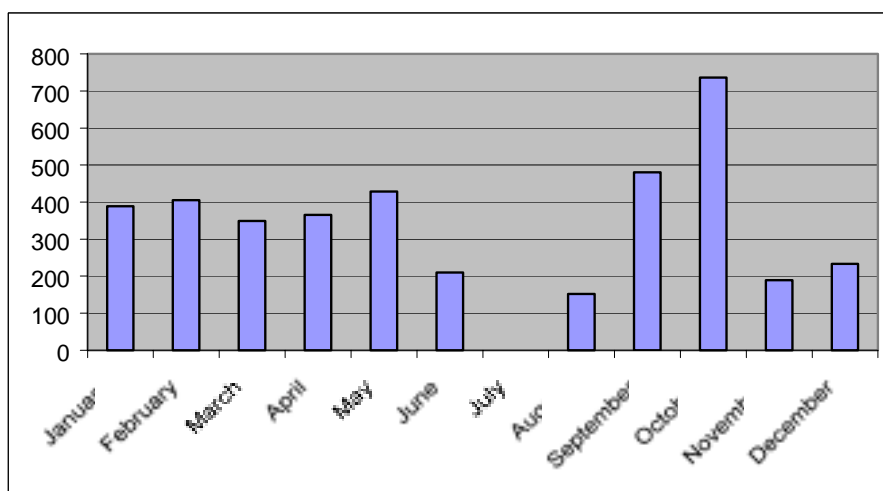
The manager produces monthly returns on the number of visits to the Café. The Café was officially opened in April 2000, but had visitors coming from February. It is generally closed for summer from July until mid August.

Table 6a: Numbers of Monthly Visits in 2000



N = 3357 Source: Cullgert (2001)

Table 6b: Number of Monthly Visits in 2001



N = 3940 Source: Cullgert (2002)

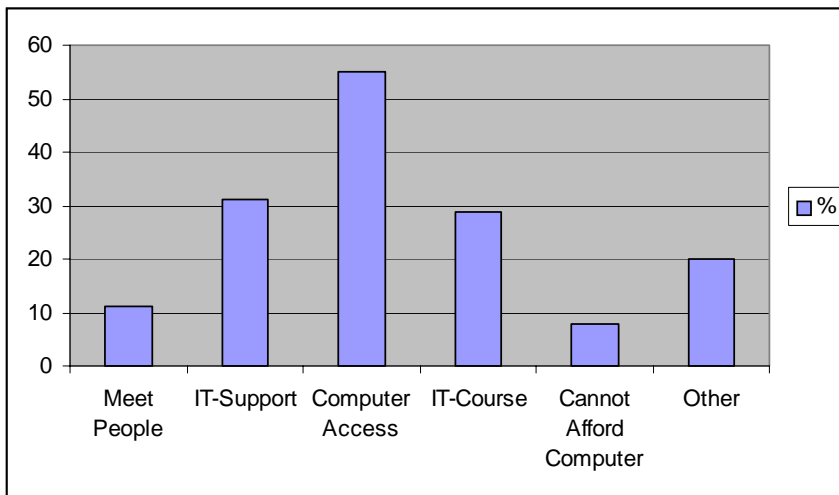
In 2000, the Café had an average of 362 visitors per month (excluding July and August). The following year the Café had a slight increase (5%) in visitors: an average of 379 visitors per month (excluding July and August). October has been the most popular month for visits. In October 2000, the Café had 522 visitors and in October 2001, 736 visitors used the Café. This is an immense increase in visits (41%) from the same time the previous year. However, November and December 2001 have an even larger change, in terms of a 91 percent decrease, compared to the same time in 2000.

Since only one person works in the Café, it is closed whenever the manager is ill, takes care of ill children or attends meetings. It is also closed for 'ordinary' visitors when there are computing courses in the Café. The Café is mainly open during afternoons (1 - 5 p.m.). In total, the Café was open 161 days in 2000, and 190 days in 2001. This gives an average of 21 visitors a day. The target to have an average of 20 visitors a day is hence being accomplished.

Although the data indicate that the Café has reached its original goal in terms of number of visits, the manager would still like to see an increase in visits. He thinks this could be accomplished through increased marketing of the Café, which has been fairly moderate. The only marketing conducted so far is the distribution of information sheets, handed out in the underground station. Most of the publicity of the Café has occurred through the spoken word between people. However, information sheets will shortly be delivered to all residents in the area.

4.2.4 Reasons for Visits

Table 7: Reasons for Visits (%)



N= 87

The most common reason for visiting the Café is, unsurprisingly, getting access to a computer (55%). Receiving help and IT-support (31%) as well as attending computer courses (29%) are other common reasons for the visits. There is a difference,

however, in course attendance in the two Café samples. About a third in sample I (32%) visit the Café to attend a course compared to a fifth (20%) in sample II.

About one-tenth of all respondents go to the Café in order to meet people (11%) or because they cannot afford to buy a computer (8%). Almost a fifth (19%) have stated other reasons like getting access to the Internet (11%) and taking part in the Spanish association (5%). The rest of the respondents have mentioned either the low price, applying for jobs or doing homework as reasons for their visits.

As evidenced in the surveys, visitors to the Café provide many different reasons for their visits. The IT-manager remarks that in addition to the rather obvious reason of getting access to computers, people also go there to receive help with IT, e.g. with printing, scanning and emailing. Many visitors with access to computers at home go to the Café to get help and advice about their own computers. The manager thinks many people come to the Café because they feel a sense of security there. In his opinion, some people also want privacy, which they might not get at home.

Although only 16 percent of the survey respondents say that they visit the Café to meet people or take part in the Spanish association, the manager argues that the social aspect is an important reason for visiting the Café. He comments that many users have said that "they think it is more fun to go to the Café where things happen and they can meet other people". Furthermore, he says that many visitors want to talk. For example, some pensioners return after computer courses in order to chat to the manager, making little or no use of the computers.

4.2.5 Reasons for Visits and Demographic Factors

There are no associations between stated reasons for visiting the Café and gender or ethnicity. There are, however, significant differences in some reasons for visits in terms of age and education.

Table 8a: Association between Reasons for Visits and Age.

	Age		
Reasons for Visits	- 50	50 +	Total
Access to Computers	37 (74%)	15 (25%)	52
	13 (26%)	45 (75%)	58
Total	50	60	110

Chi-Square 24.34 P <.0001
Cramer's V 0.4887

	Age		
Reasons for Visits	- 50	50 +	Total
Computer Course	3 (6%)	21 (35%)	24
	47 (94%)	39 (65%)	86
Total	50	60	110

Chi-Square 11.18 P 0.0006
Cramer's V 0.3497

There are no age differences in terms of meeting people and getting IT-support. There are, however, significant differences in relation to computer access and course attendance. About three-quarters of the respondents below 50 years (74%) go to the Café get access to a computer; only one quarter (25%) of the older respondents do that. The most common reason for visiting the Café among old respondents is to attend a computer course (35%). Only 6 percent of the younger respondents do that.

Table 8b: Association between Reasons for Visits and Education.

	Education		
Reasons for Visits	School	University	Total
IT-Support	19 (38%)	7 (12%)	26
	31 (62%)	53 (88%)	84
Total	50	60	110

Chi-Square 9.07 P 0.0026
Cramer's V 0.3087

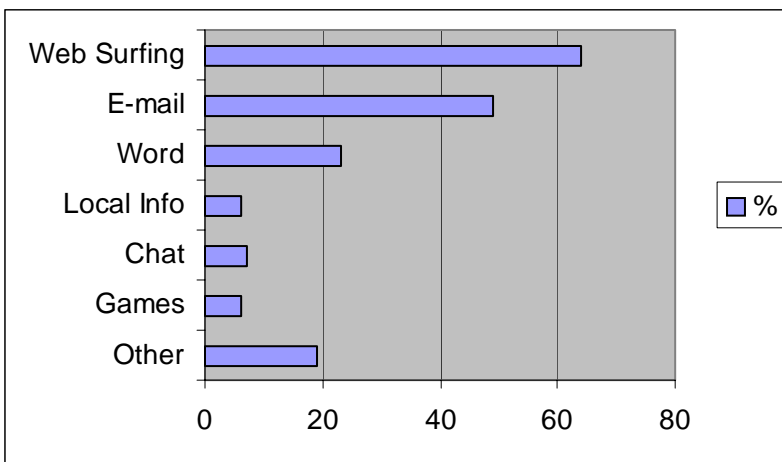
	Education		
Reasons for Visits	School	University	Total
Course	20 (40%)	4 (7%)	24
	30 (60%)	56 (93%)	86
Total	50	60	110

Chi-Square 15.86 P <.0001
Cramer's V 0.4018

There are no differences between respondents with different educational level in terms of visiting the Café to meet people or to get access to computers. There are, nevertheless, significant differences in relation to IT-support and computer courses. More respondents without a university degree go to the Café to get help and IT-support than respondents with a university degree (38% vs. 12%). The former group also attends significantly more courses than the latter (40% vs. 7%).

4.3 Computer Usage in the IT-Café

Table 9: Computer Usage (%).



N = 80

Surfing on the Web is the most common usage among respondents (64%). Sending emails (49%) and word-processing (23%) are other popular activities. Chat, games and search for local information are less common activities in the Café: 7 percent of the respondents chat with people on the Internet; 6 percent search for local information and 6 percent claim to play games in the Café. Other activities mentioned are printing, searching for information, looking for jobs and paying bills.

The manager discusses the rather low interest in local information and communication. In his view, the reason is the lack of good web sites containing local information and communication services. The level of usage would, according to him, be much higher if there were such sites available. The manager stresses the importance of local web sites concerning and run by the community members themselves, which was the idea behind the Local Net project in the area. Computer usage in relation to social capital is to be investigated in more detail in the focus groups.

4.3.1 Computer Usage and Demographic Factors

Tables 10: Association between Computer Usage and Age.

	Age		
Reasons for Visits	-50	50+	Total
Local Information	0 (0%)	5 (11%)	5
	88 (100%)	42 (89%)	130
Total	88	47	135

Chi-Square 6.97¹⁴ P 0.0083
Cramer's V 0.2683

	Age		
Reasons for Visits	-50	50+	Total
Word	7 (8%)	10 (21%)	17
	81 (92%)	37 (79%)	118
Total	88	47	135

Chi-Square 3.8 P 0.0518
Cramer's V 0.1913

According to the data there is no significant association between computer usage and the demographic factors gender, ethnicity and occupation. Nevertheless, there appear to be weak associations between some usage patterns in the Café and age.

Respondents over 50 tend to search for local information more than those below 50 (11% vs. 0%). They older ones also use word-processing more (21% vs. 8%).

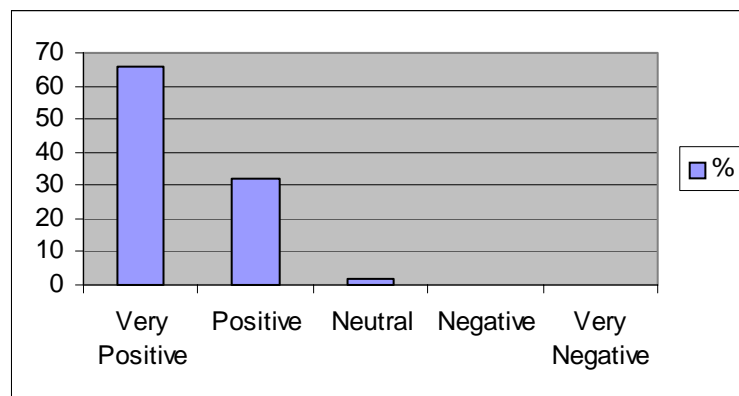
¹⁴ Two of the expected cell frequencies are smaller than five.

However, the manager believes there is a clear connection between patterns of usage and demographic factors. He supports the survey data in that he maintains that elderly people like to use word-processing, e.g. writing for an association they belong to. The manager also says that many young people play games, chat and download mobile phone signals and icons. The latter is a rather recent, but very popular activity among young people. Gender differences among young visitors have also been noticed: male visitors tend to play games and surf the Web without any specific aims; females generally prefer a more specific computer usage, such as email and private chat groups where they can create their own personal group and be more intimate.

The manager also declares that many visitors of foreign background tend to search for information about their home countries, for example through national newspapers. An increase in such activity has been noticed during problematic times. For instance, recently there have been many Afghans searching for information about the war in their country. The association between computer usage and demographic factors will be further examined in the focus groups.

4.4 Attitudes towards the IT-Café

Table 11: Attitudes towards the IT-Café.



N = 94

Almost every respondent in the sample (98%) is positive towards the Internet Café. Two-thirds (66%) are very positive; about one third (32%) is positive. Nobody is negative. As such, the results indicate that there are no differences between different groups in relation to the attitudes towards the Café. There is, however, a difference

between the two Café samples. In the first one more than three-quarters of the sample (76%) are *very* positive; in the second sample less than half (47%) are *very* positive.

In the open survey questions, most respondents cite the staff (i.e. the IT-manager) as a reason for their positive attitudes. They feel very welcomed and receive considerable support and help from the IT-manager who is regarded as competent, calm, friendly and helpful. Other important aspects in relation to the positive attitudes are the low prices, the social aspects and access to C&IT. Many respondents regard the Café as a social meeting-point for different groups (e.g. different age groups) as well as for people with similar interests (e.g. Spanish-speaking visitors).

The calm and quiet atmosphere in the Café is brought up by many respondents. There is, however, some divergence of views about the physical environment of the Café: some have stated that they are satisfied with the room in terms of size and tidiness; others have complained about the small size of the room and the poor working environment in the Café, specifically regarding lighting and ventilation.

There is a demand for more courses, which seem to be much appreciated, as well as for longer opening hours, e.g. at weekends and in the evenings. One respondent writes that: "The IT-Café should have more evenings open for youngsters - until 22.00 for chatting. The opening hours seem to be aimed towards the unemployed at the moment. Have more staff during evenings!"

Several respondents in the second Café survey, users who are or have been members, argue that the opening hours are not always consistent. One respondent also claims that there is neither enough staff nor sufficient individual IT-support and help. These issues are demonstrated by the following respondent's statement:

"Have the Café more open! Find a substitute if the staff (read manager) is ill! Never close during opening hours!" (Café-user, 2001).

Additionally, several respondents have mentioned the availability of computers, the fast connection, and the easy accessibility both to C&IT and to the Café itself (with it being locally based) as positive aspects. Finally, many respondents have stressed the importance of the Internet Café in the community in terms of social inclusion. Some examples of their statements are:

"Important initiative!", "It is crucial since everyone cannot afford to have a computer at home", "It is absolutely necessary", and "It gives everyone the possibility to deal with and use computers" (Café-users, 2001).

4.5 Social Capital

A number of questions in the survey are concerned with elements of social capital in the local area, including participation in social networks and spare-time activities, aspects of social support and trust, and beliefs about community solidarity. The data in this section is compared with material from the Local Net study: 90 respondents not at the time connected to the Local Net, which was collected in 1999 (before the opening of the IT-Café).

4.5.1 Participation in Social Networks and Spare-Time Activities

Participation in social networks has been measured in terms of a question about number of close friends. Participation in spare-time activities has been operationalised through various questions about recreational activities.

Table 12: Number of Close Friends.

	Café-Users		Non-Users		Significance
	Mean	Std Dev	Mean	Std Dev	
Locally	2.6	3.72	1.5	3.42	**
Non-locally	6.1	7.72	6.3	8.69	ns
N	76		86		

p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

(t-value: 3.41 and 0.12)

The respondents in both groups, Café-users and non-users, have more close friends outside the local community: an average of 2.6 locally versus 6.1 non-locally among the Café sample (cf. 1.5 vs. 6.3 among non-users). The Café-users have significantly more friends in the local community than non-users (2.6 vs. 1.5). There is no significant difference between the groups in the number of friends outside the area.

In response to an enquiry about the impact of the Café, the manager is clear it has a direct impact on social contacts in the area. He observes that the average of about 20 visitors a day creates meetings in itself and that people who use the Cafe recognise each other outside:

"I think the Café can lead to new contacts, at least superficial ones. People might meet here in the Café, perhaps talk, and later say 'hi' to each other out on the street" (IT-manager, 2001).

Table 13: Participation in Spare-Time Activities.

Café-Users				Non-Users			
Activities	Locally	Non- Locally	N	Locally	Non- Locally	N	S
Sports	7 (7%)	8 (9%)	13	24 (27%)	24 (27%)	41	***/**
Theatre, Cinema	7 (7%)	32 (34%)	33	12 (13%)	48 (53%)	50	ns/*
Dancing, Restaurants	15 (16%)	32 (36%)	34	14 (16%)	37 (41%)	50	ns
Libraries	21 (22%)	9 (10%)	26	36 (40%)	13 (8%)	41	*/ns
Meetings, Seminars	21 (22%)	18 (19%)	27	10 (11%)	12 (14%)	18	ns
Courses, Circles	7 (7%)	13 (14%)	16	4 (4%)	15 (17%)	18	ns
Other	2 (2%)	6 (6%)	8	20 (22%)	17 (19%)	29	***/*
N	94	94		90	90		

p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

People's recreational activities have been investigated in terms of both local and non-local participation. As with the number of friends, most spare time activities seem to take place outside the local community. Among all respondents claiming to participate in spare-time activities, most state that they attend courses and study circles, go to the theatre, cinema, concerts, exhibitions, night-clubs, discos, parties, cafés, restaurants and pubs outside the local community. However, many respondents visit the local library as well as participate in sports, meetings, debates and seminars in the local area. Café respondents also, of course, visit the IT-Café in the community.

There is no general difference in local participation between the Café-users and the non-users, only in certain types of spare-time activities. Non-users tend to take part in more sports. They also visit the local library more often than the users. In addition, non-users tend to go to the cinema and the theatre outside the community more than Café-users. However, although only almost significant, users seem to be more involved in local meetings and debates. This is subject to further investigation.

4.5.2 Social Support

Most respondents claim to have access to informal social support (Table 14).

Questions were asked about the availability of support if the respondent were to be sick, to want company, to need to talk about personal problems, to have to borrow 500 SEK (£35) or to need help with baby-sitting.

Table 14: Social Support.

Social Support	CAFÉ -USERS				NON-USERS				S
	Locally	Non- Locally	Nobody	N	Locally	Non- Locally	Nobody	N	
Sick	44 (47%)	47 (50%)	5 (5%)	73	48 (53%)	78 (87%)	5 (5%)	85	ns/***/ns
Company	39 (41%)	41 (44%)	8 (9%)	67	65 (72%)	86 (96%)	8 (9%)	81	***/**/ns
Problems	32 (34%)	45 (48%)	12 (13%)	72	45 (50%)	82 (91%)	6 (7%)	78	*/***/ns
Money	29 (31%)	49 (52%)	8 (9%)	68	35 (39%)	84 (93%)	8 (9%)	75	ns/***/ns
Baby-Sitting	25 (27%)	22 (23%)	9 (10%)	43	58 (64%)	34 (38%)	9 (10%)	52	****/ns
N	94	94	94		90	90	90		

p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

In general, respondents get more support from people outside the local community than from within it. The one exception to this rule is baby-sitting, where more support is believed to be available locally. There is a considerable difference between the two groups. Non-users get a significantly higher level of support non-locally compared to Café-users in all five types of social support. Non-users seem to have more access to people who would provide them with company and to people who they could talk to about personal problems. They also seem to be in receipt of more local support in terms of baby-sitting. Again, these are factors to be further investigated.

Few respondents are isolated in the sense of knowing nobody who would provide them with social support. There are no significant differences between the groups in terms of isolation, i.e. having no one available to give assistance or advice.

4.5.3 Trust

Trust has been measured using questions Scrole's anomia scale. Questions were asked about social distrust (distrust in other people) and political distrust (distrust in the officials and politicians).

Table 15: Distrust (%).

	Café-Users	N	Non-Users	N	Significance
Social Distrust	44	79	66	89	**
Political Distrust	53	49	58	87	ns

* p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

As measured in terms of responses to questions relating to distrust, there seems to be a relatively high level of general distrust. Non-users, however, seem to have an even higher level of distrust in other people compared to respondents visiting the IT-Café. Two-thirds of the non-visitors (66%) agree with the statement “*these days you do not really know whom to trust*” (cf. 44% among the Café-visitors). These differences in trust will be further discussed in the focus groups. There is little difference in political distrust between the two groups.

The manager also acknowledges the existence of a degree of distrust between immigrant groups and Swedes. He also suggests that there is a difference in trust between people living in rented flats and in owner-occupied accommodation. In his opinion, there is less trust among neighbours living in rented flats, perhaps as a result of cultural clashes. The manager thinks that meetings involving members from different groups in the Café may have a positive affect on trust.

Within the IT-Café itself the manager reports that there seem to be high levels of trust and visitors appear to have confidence in the manager. As an example of the trust that has been established, he quotes the fact that the only thing that has been stolen from the Café is a mobile phone that was left behind by a user. The person who took the phone was found by the manager and the owner got her mobile back quickly. People generally leave their bags and jackets if they leave the room for a while. If anyone forgets to pay they tend to do it at the next visit.

4.5.4 Community Solidarity

Community solidarity is a complex concept. It has been defined as satisfaction with meeting-places, perceived level of social cohesion, community attachment, sense of belonging and local identity.

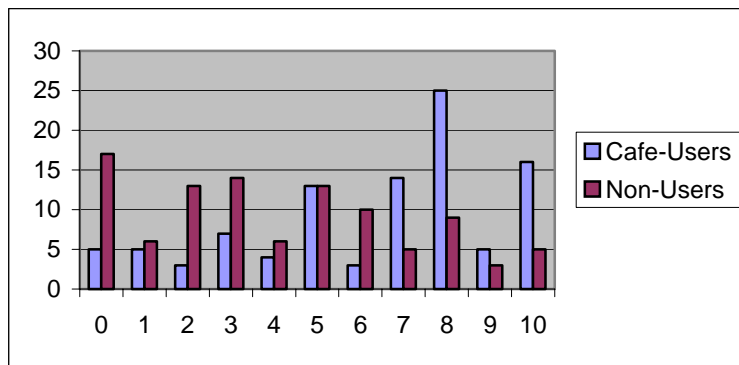
Table 16: Satisfaction with Meeting Places and Perceived Social Cohesion

	Café-Users	N	Non-Users	N	Significance
Satisfaction with Meeting-Places	26	46	26	87	ns
High Social Cohesion	29	45	24	88	ns

p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

Few respondents in either sample are satisfied with the amount of local meeting-places (26%) or the level of social cohesion (29% versus 24%). There are no significant differences between Café-users and non-users in terms of cohesion and satisfaction with meeting-places.

Table 17a: Local Identity



N=76 (Café-users)

N=87 (Non-users)

A scale, used by USK in earlier studies of the community (Ivarsson, 1989, 1993, 1997, 2000), has been used to measure community solidarity or local identity. The scale spans between 0 and 10, where 0 indicates no sense of local identity and 10 a very strong sense of local identity.

The results show a high level of local identity among Café-users. Sixty percent of the Café-users feel a strong sense of local identity (score 7-10 on the identity scale); among non-users only 22 percent feel a similar sense of identity. About one-sixth of the Café respondents (16%) feel a *very* strong sense of local identity (score 10 on the scale) versus only 5 percent among non-Café respondents. Fewer Café respondents (13%) feel a low sense of local identity (score 0-3) than non-users of the Café (26%). About one sixth (17%) feel no sense of local identity at all among non-users versus only five percent among Café-users.

Table 17b: Local Identity

	Mean	Std dev	N	Significance
Café-users (2001)	7.4	2.95	76	***
Non-users (1999)	5.1	2.99	87	
USK-STUDY (Ivarsson)				
Skarpnäck 1996	5.4	na	198	
Skarpnäck 1992	5.3	na	300	
Skarpnäck 1989	5.1	na	210	

p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

(t-value: 10.45)

The mean on the identity scale for Café-users is 7.4 compared to 5.1 among non-users, a highly significant difference. Both the present research and studies carried out over more than a decade by USK, suggest that the general level of local identity in Skarpnäck has been relatively low for a long time. The data demonstrates that the average local identity score in Skarpnäck has been slightly over five between 1989 and 1999. There has hence been no significant change for over ten years. The Café-users are clearly exceptional.

In 1996, USK compared local identity among 24 different urban areas in Stockholm. The score for the city as a whole was 6.7. Skarpnäck, with a mean of 5.4, had the third lowest score among the areas considered. Ivarsson (1997) describes the districts with the highest scores (between 7.2 and 7.8) as inner city areas or high status outer city areas. He describes the five areas with the lowest scores, Tensta-Rinkeby (6.2), Vantör (6.1), Skarpnäck (5.4), Kista (5.1) and Rinkeby (5.1), as being from the time of the 'million programme' housing scheme and having high proportions of immigrants¹⁵. In a later report Ivarsson (2000) argues that there is an association between the strength of local identity and the social status or attraction of the area.

According to the Café-manager and the interviews conducted in the youth club, the residents, and especially young people, seem to feel a strong sense of identity with the area. The manager himself admits to feeling a strong sense of belonging to the community. At the same time, he thinks that the feeling of solidarity in the community can be further increased by the Café, which serves as a meeting point and a means of integrating residents. He does not think the Café, by itself, has made the area more attractive, but, at the same time, he argues that many people are impressed by the existence of an IT-Café in an outer-city area. These issues concerning local identity will be further explored in the focus groups.

¹⁵ Skarpnäck does, of course, have a relatively high proportion of residents with a foreign background, but, in contradiction to Ivarsson's characterisation, was not part of the 'million programme'.

4.6 Bridging and Bonding Social Capital

Bridging and bonding has been measured within the community in terms of tension between different groups. Questions have also been asked relating to bonding and bridging social capital in geographical, local versus non-local, terms, e.g. questions about social support and participation in networks and spare-time activities within as well as outside the local community.

4.6.1 Tension between Different Groups (Bonding)

Table 18: Tension between Different Groups (%).

	Café-Users	N	Non-Users	N	Significance
Tension between Groups	19	43	39	89	*

p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

When asked about the existence and extent of tension between groups in the community, non-users are much more likely to specify conflict than users: about two-fifths (39%) of the non-users think there is tension between different groups compared to only about one-fifth (19%) in the Café sample. Almost half of those who think tension exists, cite Swedes and immigrants as the groups involved; approximately one third specify tension between old and young residents.

In addition, as demonstrated previously, most respondents seem to have their close friends, receive social support and participate in spare-time activities outside the local community. This suggests that the few respondents are bonded to the community as a whole, but only to certain groups within it.

In discussion, the manager agrees that there is tension in the community, especially between young and old residents. He says that the media has presented a negative picture of the area, which has influenced many people's perceptions negatively, especially people outside the area and elderly people within the area. For instance, many pensioners are scared of young residents in the community.

One example of the tension is a recent fight between youngsters, which ended up in a shooting and received considerable publicity in the media. After that, the manager noticed increased anxiety among elderly Café users who organised a meeting through their pensioner association in relation to the incident. The manager of the Café arranged for representatives from the youth association to attend the meeting, which resulted in a positive dialogue between the two age groups and is a clear example of the way in which the Café may function as a means of bridging groups.

4.6.2 Social Integration (Bridging)

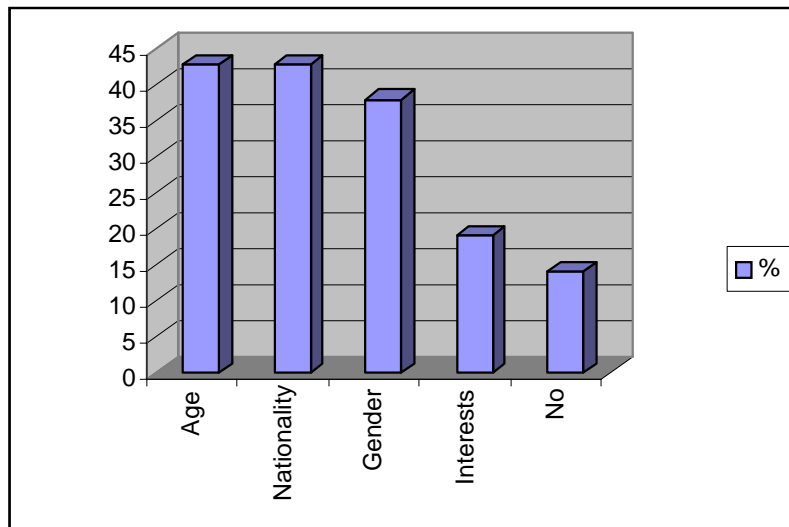
More generally, the manager believes the variety of visitors to the Café can reinforce social integration in the area, creating new face-to-face contacts and bridges between different groups:

“I feel a bit touched when I see a youngster helping an elderly person or when an immigrant asks straight out in the room about the spelling of a word. These things happen in the Café. I definitely think that the Café integrates people” (The IT-manager, 2001).

These are examples of social integration within the Café as a physical meeting place. They could hence occur in any kind face-to-face meeting-point. However, the manager also believes that social integration is created through the use of C&IT:

“I think IT can do a lot with the right instruments. For example, I believe a Local Net can create meetings in the area. The good thing with IT is that one can be anonymous and not judge anyone due to gender, ethnicity etc. There are no prejudices online. Through online communication people might realise that they should meet face-to-face, and if they live in the same area that can create really 'cool' meetings, e.g. between an immigrant and a racist. When they eventually meet they cannot say: ‘What – is it you? Get lost!’” (IT-manager, 2001)

Table 19: Bridging Social Capital (%).



N= 21

As suggested by the manager, the Café has the potential to integrate and bridge groups, decreasing tension between them. This is further emphasised in the second Café survey. In this, many respondents claim to have made new contacts while using the Café. About two-fifth state that they have made new contacts with people different to themselves in terms of age (43%), nationality (43%) and gender (38%). Almost a fifth (18%) have met people with different interests.

Several respondents have also increased their bonding social capital through the Café. Many have met new people similar in age (47%) and people sharing similar interests (35%). Almost a fifth of the respondents (19%) have got in touch with other visitors similar in gender and ethnicity. The extent of bridging and bonding social capital, online as well as offline, is to be further explored in the focus groups.

4.7 Expected and Perceived Outcomes of the IT-Café

In the first survey questions were asked about visitor's expectations of the IT-Café. The Café data has been compared to expectations of the Local Net project. The latter sample involves 87 respondents who, at the time, were connected to the Local Net.

Table 20: Expected Outcomes of the IT-Café and the Local Net (%).

	IT-Café	N	Local Net	N	Significance
More Contacts	69	52	27	83	***
Disagree	8		19		
More Participation	69	52	43	83	**
Disagree	2		14		
Decreased Isolation	67	54	42	82	**
Disagree	6		17		
Decreased Group Tension	40	52	22	82	*
Disagree	12		23		
Stronger Cohesion	48	54	33	82	ns
Disagree	8		25		
Increased Trust	53	53	28	60	*
Disagree	8		16		
Increased Support	42	29	26	60	ns
Disagree	17		22		
Increased Local Identity	66	54	42	81	**
Disagree	2		12		
More attractive Housing-Area	80	55	58	83	*
Disagree	4		8		
More IT-Interest & Knowledge	95	59	80	83	*
Disagree	2		6		

* p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

The expectations of the IT-Café and the Local Net were very high. Most respondents believed that both the Café and the Local Net would lead to an increase in social capital. However, the expectations of the IT-Café were even higher. More than two-thirds of the Café respondents (69%) believed the Café would lead to more contacts and participation in the community (cf. 27% and 33% of the Local Net sample); few did not think so (8% vs. 2%). Two-thirds (67%) expected the Café to decrease isolation of residents (cf. 42% in relation to the Local Net); only 6 percent disagreed.

Two-fifths in the sample (40%) believed that the Café would decrease tension between different groups in the area (cf. 22% in the Local Net sample). Although not significantly different, 48 percent of the Café sample thought the Café would increase social cohesion in the area (cf. 33% of the Local Net sample); 8 percent did not think so. Most respondents thought that trust (53%) would be positively affected by the

Internet Café (cf. 28% of the Local Net sample); few (8%) disagreed with the statements. Many Café respondents (42%) thought that the IT-Café would lead to an increase in social support. The difference is not, however, significant in comparison with the Local Net sample (26%).

The vast majority (80%) agreed with the declaration that the Internet Café would make the housing area more attractive (cf. 58% in the Local Net sample); few disagreed (4%). Two-thirds of the respondents (66%) agreed with the statement that local identity would be increased by the Café (cf. 42% of the Local Net sample); only 2 percent did not think so. Almost every respondent (95%) expected the Café to increase interest in and knowledge of computers (cf. 80% in the Local Net project); few disagreed (2%).

The manager assumes that both a Local Net and an IT-Café are good things to gather around, to teach and help each other and to create new meetings. He argues that an Internet Café is socially very beneficial, due to its face-to-face aspect, but at the same time he claims that home access, which often is offered within a local net project, is very comfortable, private and flexible. He says that: "One can do whatever one wants at any time". The nature of a local net in terms of social capital including comparisons between public and home access will be further discussed in the analysis of Local Net project.

Table 21: Perceived Outcomes of the IT-Café (%).

In the second survey similar questions were asked in order to investigate the extent to which the expectations of the Café had been fulfilled. There are no significant differences between expected and perceived outcomes in terms of social capital.

	IT-Café I	N	IT-Café II	N	Significance
More Contacts	69		48		ns
Disagree	8	52	15	27	
More Participation	69		52		ns
Disagree	2	52	15	27	
Decreased Isolation	67		69		ns
Disagree	6	54	16	26	

Decreased Tension	40		39		ns
Disagree	12	52	11	28	
Stronger Cohesion	48		37		ns
Disagree	8	54	15	27	
Increased Trust	53		37		ns
Disagree	8	53	15	27	
Increased Support	42		43		ns
Disagree	17	29	16	26	
Increased Local Identity	66		74		ns
Disagree	2	54	4	27	
More attractive Area	80		85		ns
Disagree	4	55	4	28	
More IT-Interest & Knowledge	95		84		ns
Disagree	2	59	3	30	

p<.05; **p<.01; ***p<.001.

Most respondents in the second sample think that the IT-Café has resulted in an increase in social capital. However, although non-significant, experience of the IT-Café seems to have led to a slight tempering of the expectations. Almost half of the respondents (48%) think that the Café has lead to more contacts among residents; 15 percent do not think so. More than half (52%) think it has increased local participation; 15 percent disagree. The vast majority (69%) believe that the Café has decreased isolation in the area, which is slightly higher than the expectations; 16 percent disagree.

Almost two-fifths (39%) believe the Café has decreased tension between different groups in the community, which is about the same amount as the expectations; about one tenth (11%) disagree. 37 percent think that social cohesion has been positively affected by the IT-Café; 15 percent disagree. 37 percent think that trust is positively related to IT-Café usage; 15 do not think so. 43 percent think social support has been increased by the IT-Café, which is the same as the expectations in relation to support; 16 percent disagree with that statement.

The perceived effects on local identity and attraction of the area are even higher than the expectations of them. A considerable high level of respondents (85%) thinks that the Café has made the housing area more attractive; only 4 percent disagree. Almost two-thirds (74%) think that the local identity has become stronger due to the Café; only 4 percent do not think so. The vast majority (84%) believes that the Café has led to more interest in and knowledge of computers; few (3%) disagree.

5. CONCLUSION

The use of C&IT for social networking, for example through access in an IT-Café, is a recent, but rapidly growing phenomenon. It may serve either as a force for further isolation and social differentiation or as a force for enhancing social capital. The question addressed here is how the use of an IT-Café affects social networks, support, trust and solidarity, online as well as offline, in a local community.

5.1 Summary of Results

The case study portrays a community with a relatively low level of social capital. The surveys indicate a high level of distrust, both in other people and in politicians. Additionally, many respondents think that the level of social cohesion is low and are dissatisfied with the availability of local meeting-places. Many respondents also state that there is tension between groups and most respondents seem to be involved in networks, participate in spare-time activities and get support outside the local area.

The sample of Café-users is generally representative of the area. Except for the obvious reasons of getting computer access, respondents visit the Café to attend computer courses, get IT-support and to meet people. The expected and perceived outcomes in terms of social capital of the IT-Café are high. In many aspects there are significantly higher levels of social capital among Café-users than among non-users, e.g. the Café-users have more close friends, are more trusting, think there is less tension between different local groups and feel a stronger sense of local identity. Many respondents claim that they have made new social connections, both bonding and bridging, in the Café.

5.2 Who are the Users?

With an average of 20 users a day, the Café has reached its goal in terms of visits. There has also been a slight increase in visits from the previous year (2000). Most respondents visit the Café about twice a week. Younger visitors and visitors with foreign background tend to visit the Café more often than elderly visitors and visitors with Swedish background.

Most respondents live in the local community of Skarpnäck. Many of them rent their flats from the main housing company, Stockholmshem, but there is a considerable amount living in HSB flats too. According to the survey data, the respondents are representative of the area in terms of gender, ethnicity and handicaps. For example, the fact that the respondents speak fourteen different mother tongues well represents the multi-cultural community of Skarpnäck. However, the manager notes that there are not many physically handicapped in the Café, which he thinks is because the Café is not adapted to handicapped people.

The Café has more old people than the population as a whole. The high level of elderly visitors may be as a result of the determined effort to attract elderly through the senior courses in computing. Another group that is more prominent in the Café sample is the unemployed. As with the elderly visitors it may be assumed that the Café is attractive to the unemployed as a way of 'passing the time' and learning new important skills.

The variety of visitors indicates that the Café attracts 'everyone' in the community and not just traditional computer users. The high levels of elderly people, unemployed, females and people with foreign background supports the aim to include 'disadvantaged' groups in terms C&IT. The public access point hence includes residents in the community as well as into the Information Society, which may lead to a decrease of the 'feared' digital divide.

5.3 What is the Café used for?

Computer experience among the respondents is generally rather high, but there is also quite a large number of respondents with little or no previous experience. Many respondents have computer access at home, but may not have access to Internet. The manager says that even if visitors to the Café have access at home, many of them need the IT-support provided in the Café.

Most people visit the Café to get computer access. Other common reasons are getting IT-support and attending computer courses. Respondents who attend the courses tend to be elderly people without a university degree. In addition, many in the sample with no university degree visit the Café to get IT-support. These results further support the fact that the Café has reached its goal of attracting groups at risk of exclusion from the Information Society. The provision of IT-support and IT-courses help increasing IT-knowledge and interest in the area, especially among groups that may be at risk of exclusion. Many people also state that they visit the Café in order to meet people, for example in the Spanish association. The manager agrees that the social aspect seems to be an important reason for the visits. For example, some people, especially pensioners, visit the Café primarily to socialise. This demonstrates that the IT-Café plays an important role in enhancing social connections and hence social capital in the area.

The most common activities in the Café are to surf on the Web, email and word-processing. According to the survey data, there is not much association between computer usage and demographic factors. Nevertheless, there is a weak association between usage and age: older people tend to use word-processing and search for local information more than younger ones. The manager, however, claims there is a strong relation between usage and demographic factors. He argues that young visitors tend to surf on the web and play games more than older ones; that females use email more than males; that more young males play games than young females and, finally, that many visitors with a foreign background search for information about their home countries. There is little evidence to support these observations in the survey data, but the nature of computer usage will be further investigated in the focus groups.

5.4 To what extent can use of the Internet Café create Social Capital?

The relatively low degree of social capital revealed in the area provides both a challenge and an opportunity for the Internet Café. Almost everyone in the sample is positive towards the Café. Nobody is negative. Some reasons for the positive attitudes are the provision of computer access and the low prices. The most commonly mentioned reason, however, is the provision of IT-support by the manager who is considered as very competent and friendly. In addition, many respondents regard the Café as a social meeting point for different groups (e.g. age groups) as well as people with similar interests (e.g. the Spanish-speaking group). The Café is hence important in the creation of both bridging and bonding social capital.

There are few critical comments in the surveys. Nevertheless, some respondents argue that the working environment is poor in the Café, especially the lighting and the ventilation. In addition, several respondents in the second survey, members, have complained about the opening hours. They demand longer opening hours, which can be regarded as something positive in that it stresses the need and the importance of the IT-Café in the community.

The dissatisfaction with opening hours, reflecting the fact that there is only one person working in the Café, may be an explanation for the respondents' slightly less positive attitudes and fewer regular visits records in the second Café survey as well as the decrease in visits in Nov- Dec 2001. Other reasons for the fewer visits may be lack of time and that many respondents have bought their own computers or have gained access at other places. The latter ones are further indications that the Café has reached its goal in increasing IT-knowledge and interest in the area.

In comparison with non-users, Café-users generally seem to have a higher level of many aspects of social capital. For example, the visitors have more friends in the local community, lower levels of general distrust, are less likely to think there is tension between different groups in the area and express a stronger sense of local identity. The level of local identity among Café-respondents in 2001 is considerably higher than

among non-users, and is also considerably above the average score for residents of the area recorded by USK during the 1990s.

There is not much difference between visitors and non-users in terms of spare time activities. The non-users, though, seem to be slightly more active in spare-time activities: they take part in more sports, they visit local library slightly more and go to the cinema and the theatre outside the area more often. The non-users also claim to be in receipt of more social support, especially outside the local community. The reasons for Café-users being less active non-locally may perhaps be due to lack of time (which they spend in the Café) or perhaps money. The users may partly visit the Café in order to get support there, both off and online. These are factors to be investigated further.

In most aspects, however, social capital is higher among Café-users. Whether people with more social capital tend to visit the Café or the Café creates social capital is difficult to determine. However, the survey does demonstrate that social capital seems to be created in the Café through the development of new contacts. Many in the sample claim to have made new contacts in the Café, both bridging and bonding ones. In addition, both expectations and perceived outcomes of the Café in terms of social capital are very high among the respondents. Most respondents think the Café will increase and that it actually has increased social capital in the area, especially in terms of more contacts, decreased isolation, stronger local identity, a more attractive housing area and more IT-interest and knowledge.

The high level of local identity among Café users may be due to the fact that new contacts, especially bridging ones, are created in the Café. The new contacts increase trust and widen the sense of shared identity: social networks expand to include more diverse people. The residents may realise that they have things in common with each other, e.g. the community itself. The Café provides a meeting-place where people can meet and learn more about the important skills of C&IT, developing new sets of shared interests.

However, local identity is not only created locally. The image of a community, especially a disadvantaged one, is often negatively described from outside, e.g. by the media. Since identity is constructed by self and others, it is important for residents to present their own views of the community and share them with others outside the local community.

The Internet can be used as a tool for communication and information outside the local community. The residents can present and compare their own views of the area online. Hence, they would learn more about their own and other communities, which creates a wider sense of social participation and identity, but also a local pride of the area. Most respondents believe that Café has made the housing area more attractive. As argued by Ivarsson (2000) there is a correlation between attraction of an area and local identity. The existence of the IT-Café may make the residents feel more proud and satisfied with the area, strengthening their sense of local identity.

The belief is that access to an Internet Café can improve the quality of local communication and help to enhance the local community identity as well as making it easier to access opportunities through bridging ties to resources in other areas. Additionally, the online collaboration in Community Portraits may contribute to an extension of networks and exchange of social support within as well as between local communities and therefore, enhance social capital both on a local and a global level. Whether the use of the IT-Café does create social capital in the community, only future research will show. The analysis of the focus groups, focusing on the creation of social capital online, will hopefully give a fuller answer to the question.

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