

Dr. A.G. Hamilton-Taylor

Dept. of Mathematics and Computer Science, U.W.I., Mona

ashley.taylor@uwimona.edu.jm

The Potential Role of Information and Communications Technology in Undevelopment

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) is trumpeted as a means that can fast-track developing countries into the twenty-first century, creating new knowledge-and culture-based industries. While there are a few developing countries that have achieved this dream, for many others ICT has become a route to import finished technological products from developed countries at great cost, rather than a means to develop new industries. In addition, ICT threatens to become an avenue for the invasion of the worst aspects of Western culture, with accompanying negative socio-cultural effects, rather than a primary medium for indigenous cultural expression.

We believe that if strong proactive action is not taken to guide the development and use of ICT, it has the potential to become a force for underdevelopment in much of the developing world, a tool for external information control and domination, and a serious threat to the survival of indigenous cultures. This may be particularly true in Africa and the Diaspora, given the history of colonial and post-colonial exploitation and accompanying social upheaval that is well documented by Walter Rodney and others. A new Pan-Africanist agenda must seriously consider these issues in the wider context of science, technology, media and development.