

INTRODUCTION

We open Chapter One of *Breaking the Digital Divide: Implications for Developing Countries* with an introduction on the Digital Divide. In order to capture the spirit of the Net, in Chapter Two we analyse the problems of valuation of the growth, which started at the beginning of the 1980s, by considering three kinds of studies: one provided by OECD, which every year writes a report about technology; another by the number of on-line users registered by NUA in all continents; and finally, Network Wizard checks on the number of hosts in the world every six months, as reported by RIPE on Europe every month. We will compare the hosts number worldwide with the American and the European hosts in order to underscore the large development of the Internet and its usage in the industrialised countries.

In Chapter Three we introduce the problem of underdevelopment: we identify the countries which fall under this category, so as to reduce the risk of misunderstandings for the reader. Then we focus on the diffusion of the Internet in these areas of the planet by underlining the obstacles to its growth. We then look into the issue of the telecommunications infrastructure, which is essential for the existence of the Net; in particular, we study the world of the satellites, as an alternative to the installation of cables in large areas with really low population density. Then we analyse two other important elements for the access to the cyberspace: Internet Service Providers and the computer industry in the Developing Countries. Finally, we analyse the limits of this market and the economic aspect, by comparing the costs of the various means of telecommunication.

In Chapter Four to Six we analyse the present situation of the Developing Countries from the point of view of the many applications of the Internet in the various economic sectors, applications that are now exploited in some depressed areas of the planet and which could promote the economic and social development of these areas. We examine some of the more significant examples in the education, health, agricultural, industrial and the services sectors, examples which have been chosen according to the large availability of material and by favouring the cases which, in our opinion, are useful to solve the underdevelopment and poverty problems of these countries.

Chapter Seven, finally, deals with the issue of the regulation of the

Internet. In particular, we deal with the problems of *censorship* and *privacy*, which are remarkable, especially in the Developing Countries, because of the influence of the Government on telecommunications and the Internet. Then we consider the various international projects that have been implemented to date, thanks to the collaboration of the industrialised countries with aims to solve problems of isolation and lack of information and of knowledge.

Finally, anticipating just one of the conclusions of this study, we briefly state that the advanced economies have to date contributed a lot to the growth of telecommunications in the Developing Countries. A lot needs to be done, however, in order to provide these countries with the participation and the involvement necessary for the realisation of a 'global village' where poverty and underdevelopment will be just a memory consigned to posterity.