Is it Good to Share? A Case Study of the FON and Meraki Approaches to Broadband Provision

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What is this paper about?

- Case study of two organized efforts to develop 'user generated' infrastructure
- Assessment in terms of development of good public broadband infrastructure
- Conclusion that these sorts of approaches, while beneficial in the short to medium term, are not able to deliver robust, reliable, high quality infrastructure
The Case for Shared Infrastructure

- **Efficiency**
  - use excess capacity in installed broadband connections

- **Alternative to existing operators**
  - develop a parallel infrastructure
  - VoIP instead of calls through mobile operators

- **Revenue generation**

- **Cooperation**
  - Community Wireless Networks (e.g. Île Sans Fil here in Montréal)
## Requirements for Good Infrastructure

- Usable
- Useful
- Reliable
- High quality
- Sustainable
- Ubiquitous
- Secure
- Affordable
- The 'Wi-Fi revolution'
- 'Community' for Wi-Fi sharing
- Build a better internet, on a person by person basis
- Pay for broadband at home, use it everywhere (reciprocity)
- Make a little money selling your connection to non-'Foneros'
- 830,000 Foneros
- 332,000 *registered* hotspots
- 212,000 *active* hotspots

- These figures are hotly disputed in the blogosphere
Example: FON in Linz, Austria
Visible FON hotspot, can't connect
Non-existent FON hotspot?
'Usable' FON hotspot
FON in downtown Montréal
Compare: Île Sans Fil (www.ilesansfil.org)
- "Bringing affordable Internet access to the next billion people"
- "Address the needs of the underserved market worldwide"
- Micro Internet service provider approach
- Community-based
- Legally share broadband connections
- Mesh networks
- Designed to work inside and outside
- Reliant upon goodwill of participants to host equipment
So Cal Free Net.org

What We Do

We make wireless internet work for low income communities. We work with building owners to survey and prepare a property, and then organize an installation day. Our volunteers work with local residents and staff to create the network. Then we help residents get their computers online. Afterwards we continue to monitor and maintain the network using state of the art technologies.
## Case Studies

**Moderators:** Chase, matt, mtechw, bue, aguayo, gsopp, haner, lwrye, allan, danelasner, cooper@meraki

Users browsing this forum: None

### Meraki Forum Index -> Case Studies

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<th>Topic Description</th>
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Assessing User Generated Infrastructure

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Conclusions

Is it good to share?

- Both FON and Meraki provide some benefits
- Meraki's approach is likely to be more successful
- FON appears to be on shaky ground, model is unworkable
- As 'interim' infrastructures, these efforts are useful, but scale, central coordination are not easily achieved in community-centric models
Contact Information

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- ameliabpotter@gmail.com
- For case studies of other wireless networks and detailed information on 'desiderata' for good public broadband information, visit the Community Wireless Infrastructure Research Project site: www.cwirp.org