

Information, communication and freedom of expression in the digital city of Sud Mennucci. A report from the Freedom of Expression Project

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This paper analyses potential challenges to freedom of expression in a 'digital city' in Brazil. It focuses on questions of affordable access to communications, the neutrality of communication networks, and protection for the right to freedom of expression.

The introduction sets out the reasons for focusing on the Municipality of Sud Mennucci, a 'digital city' where the local government provides internet access. The aim is to explore whether and how such 'digital cities' are operating in the public interest, maintaining the neutrality of the network and respecting the right to freedom of expression of those who use its infrastructure. It provides contextual information about Sud Mennucci and its digital programme, and describes the methodology and scope of the research undertaken.

The findings and analysis include discussion of the following areas:

- The Municipality is facing a range of technical priorities and challenges in providing access to its citizens;
- There are service quality problems because the available bandwidth is not sufficient at peak times.
- Users experience low service speeds and high levels of 'down time'.
- The network is not compatible with portable devices.
- The system architecture and equipment are under review.
- The fact that it is a free service appears to discourage competition and may slow down improvements to service quality.
- It depends on one telephone company for its links and the service is therefore vulnerable to technical problems.

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