The WhatsApp of Neighbors

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A lot is said, and rightly so, about how in many cases social media contributes to the worst causes, from spreading lies, slandering people, filling people's heads with nonsense, to feeding false egos... and there are even more bad ones.

But there are also many good examples in Cuba of how social media serves many good causes.

I know one very close by, at the neighborhood level, in a building, that helps things run much more smoothly: it helps multiply useful information, a wide variety of notifications, and also solidarity among neighbors.

I wish this experience could be replicated in many Cuban neighborhoods, because it fuels neighbor exchanges in this digital space: from job postings for those seeking employment, to the arrival of rations to the neighborhood’s store, to the alert of a suspicious person wandering the halls, to the time of each day's blackout, to the garbage can that's running out of space, to a lost or found key, to who needs a certain medication or got sick the other night.

Of course, there's no shortage of memes, good jokes, and sharp or bitter comments; at the same time, there's a space for important information from the country and the world, especially related to the daily lives of Cubans.

It's great that some media outlets enjoy similar utility and popularity to that WhatsApp group—very local, of course—which has become almost a habit and necessity for the building's residents, because you find out what you need and more; at the same time, it provides an excellent portrait of the daily life of Cubans, of our times.

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