



# **Challenges to e-government in Africa South of Sahara**

## **Critique of the program design in The Gambia**

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# Contexts

- ◆ UNECA and the African Information Society Initiative (1996)
- ◆ Africa South of Sahara... conceptually speaking:
  - A geographical area commonly identifiable
  - A “percept” (Deleuze): images and perceptions
  - An empirical concept: a collection of countries sharing certain historical trajectory
  - A theoretical concept: political and cultural theories
    - Extraversion in some constituting processes of political modernity
    - Structures of “commandment” (A. Mbembe)



# Main Research Questions



- ◆ Why does e-government implementation in Africa mostly fail?
- ◆ Heeks 2002: reality-design gap
- ◆ What are the constraints limiting its possible success?
- ◆ How to minimize them to the extent possible?

# Data & Methods

- ◆ Case study: Design of e-government for The Gambia, 2002-03.
- ◆ The Gambia:
  - Country-model as per the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)
  - Illustrative of the “Africa” concept
- ◆ Documentary analysis
- ◆ Data
  - E-Gov Program and Strategy documents
  - ECA policy briefs

# Theoretical frameworks

- ◆ Information ecology
  - “Evolving interactions and relations between a diversity of actors, their practices, values and technology with a specific and local (thus unique) environment.” Bekkers and Homburg 2005
  - Interdependence between, and co-evolution of, the parts
  - Social and technological components are involved in such interdependence and co-evolution

# Theoretical frameworks (cont'd)

Furthermore...

- ◆ Heeks using the contingency model
  - Also emphasizes the need to adapt to an environment
  - Values are one of the seven dimensions identified as independent variables to explicate the “reality-design gap.”

However...

- ◆ We contend that values are a cross-cutting dimension
- ◆ Value is the importance or worth people attribute to things in a given context (things may be objects, subjects, or ideas.)

# Theoretical frameworks (end)

- ◆ Value-sensitive design (Friedman et al.)
  - VSD: conceptual, empirical and technical investigations
  - They are co-reinforcing iterative loops
  - A careful analysis of the stakeholders unveiling and weighting their values -- which ones will be promoted by the technical system to be designed?

# Critique of the case and Discussions

- ◆ Too much emphasis on technical aspects
  - A factor correlating the low response rate (as described in the report...)
- ◆ The terms of public consultations, if any, were not clearly designed or even formulated
- ◆ There's no evidence of a clear stakeholder analysis - their constitution, roles and values

# Critique and Discussions (cont'd)

- ◆ As a result, the e-government strategy appears not as an effort to include the public in the system design, but rather as that of sensitization about government policy or intents
- ◆ This process might have been the occasion for constituencies to raise concerns regarding government procedures, but...
- ◆ How are these reported, tracked and how do they impact design?
- ◆ The system design was considered as given - its assumptions remained unquestioned

# Critique and Discussions (end)

- ◆ The work plan does not specifically spell out the roles of the actors in carrying out the actions items described
- ◆ Those are very broad in scope, and appear to conflate e-government with the national ICT policy and strategic plan (risk of dilution)
- ◆ E-government as government reform for increased transparency and accountability: How is that?

# Modes of e-government

The UN Global e-Government Readiness Report distinguishes four modes of e-government:

- ◆ G2G: Government-to-Government
- ◆ G2B: Government-to-Business
- ◆ G2C: Government-to-Citizens
- ◆ G2X: Government-to-Any

# Stages of e-government

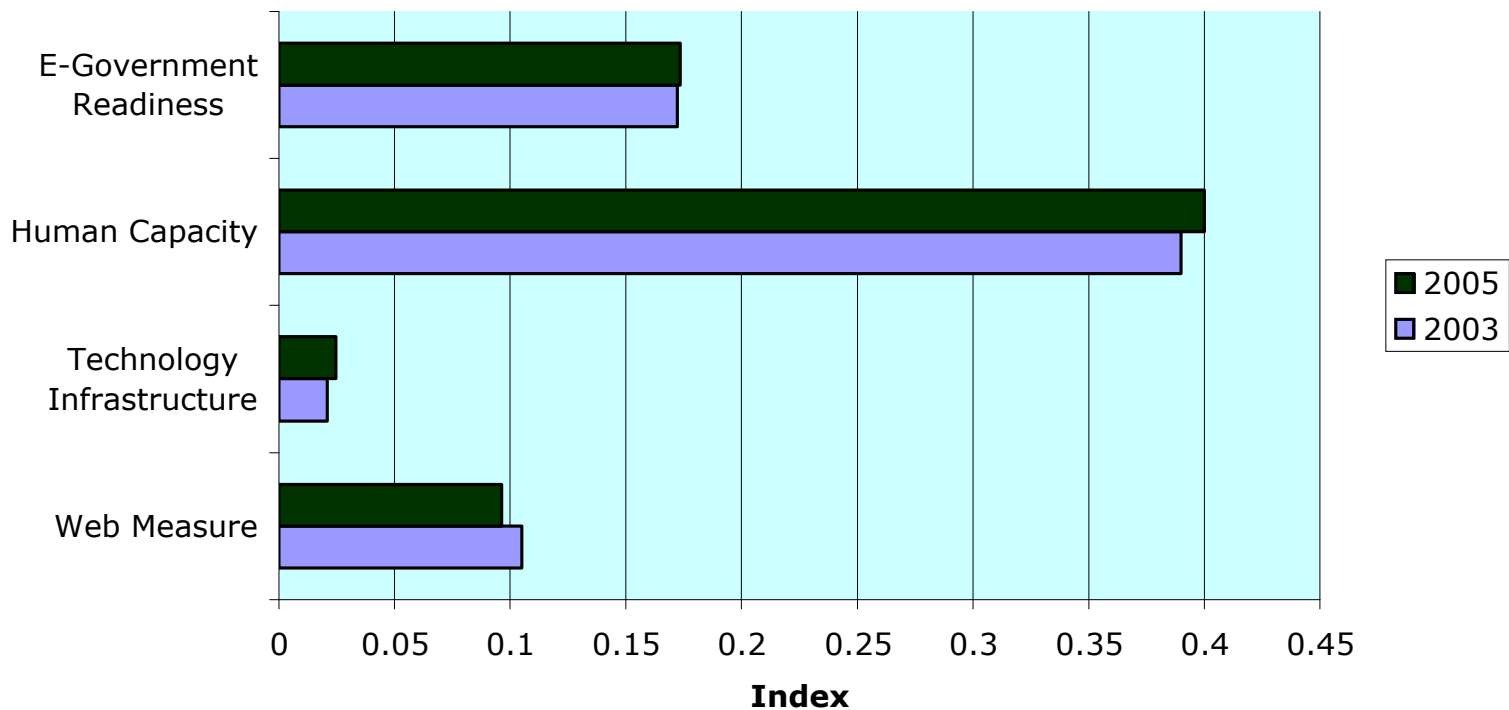
- ◆ Within those modes, readiness is defined by the level of presence at the epitomizing interface of digital life, the WWW:
  - **Emerging:** static, archiving
  - **Enhanced:** site mapping and search capabilities
  - **Interactive:** downloading materials and posting
  - **Transactional:** value-added service with administrative procedures completed online (e.g. tax, applications, etc.)
  - **Networked:** integrated mode, with participatory and deliberative policy processes enabled

# Scoring e-government readiness in Gambia

| Year                           | 2003         | 2005          |
|--------------------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Web Measure                    | 0.105        | 0.0962        |
| Technology infrastructure      | 0.021        | 0.0248        |
| Human capacity                 | 0.39         | 0.4           |
| <b>E-gov. readiness: Index</b> | <b>0.172</b> | <b>0.1736</b> |
| E-gov. readiness: Rank         | 158          | 163           |

# Trends of e-government readiness index

**Evolution of e-Government Readiness in The Gambia, 2003 and 2005**



# Prospects for research and practice

- ◆ Connect communities of practice to research communities
- ◆ Streamline “reflexive practices” in the academia
- ◆ Research must become itself a practice in engaging with local and contemporaneous practices

# Suggesting themes for further research

- ◆ IT adoption and organization change
  - Need for finer grain analysis of IT adoption in public administration settings
  - Suggested development of system life cycle (e.g. three phases: novelty, mainstream and obsolescence) adapted to social contexts
- ◆ IT social and local appropriation
  - Look at the broader ICTs and identify opportunities to blend technologies for integrated multi-platform e-government
- ◆ Norms and values
  - Critically investigate the goals and values that are assumed with technology systems in the light of the social contexts.

# Possible limitations & beyond

- ◆ Secondary data or second level research?
- ◆ Paucity of the data publicly available
  - May be limiting, but...
  - May be data in itself
- ◆ Inclusion of local research teams is more likely to secure opportunities for further follow-up research than any research undertaken as part of project implementation



THANK YOU!

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