Digipolities in Africa: Public action and the moral economy of ICT

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Research question

• Does the use of Internet, and of social media in particular, represent a radical change in African political systems, namely in the way any political entity (polity) is formed and, more generally, in the way national democracies develop?
Hypothesis

• No, although it could have (and may in the future?)
• Key is how technologies (here ICT) are designed.
• Their ‘inner culture’ (cf Feenberg) is malleable, produced at the node of stakeholders (designers, policy-makers and users), but these censor themselves.
  -> action-research needed of social media
To discover these technologies’ *moral economy*
= interplay between cultural beliefs and the production/consumption of goods, services and ideas
Specific hypothesis (1) on moral economy of social media

• While Internet raises the possibilities of political information and participation, thus unfortunately widening the gap with the ICT-nonliterate, its *open*, *inclusive* and *individual user-oriented* moral economy tends to obfuscate political goals and action.

• *open*: mostly anyone can check your website (global market vs local)

• *Inclusive*: language addressing newcomers/outsiders
  Research indicator: less deictic, more referentialist discourse -> CDA

• *Individualist*: verbal cues at user’s will (autonomy sells)
Specific hypothesis (2) on moral economy of social media

- ICT is designed to lower the requirement of nativeness by users, so is an *unguided missile*
  
  Cf. ‘Arab spring’: what started off as a pro-democracy movement can become change towards anti-democratic regime

- More fragmented news channeling (no one community spanning) -> inflation and overload pacify, *de-activate* potential for political change (‘good to know’ but no action)

- But also check integration of ICT within larger political system: discuss models of *digipolity*
Content

• Intro: Internet in Africa (afrobarometer survey), with special attention to community & ethnicity
• 7 Models of digipolity
• The referentialist moral economy of Ushahidi/Uchaguzi (CDA study)
• Action-research: zone-it
1. Africa & social media

1.A Intro
Fb global friendship ties
**Fb proportion of African ICT users**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Internet Users (Jun 2011)</th>
<th>Facebook Users (Dec 2011)</th>
<th>FB Users % Internet Users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>43,982,200</td>
<td>4,369,740</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>20,136,000</td>
<td>9,391,580</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>13,213,000</td>
<td>4,075,500</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>6,800,000</td>
<td>4,822,820</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Algeria</td>
<td>4,700,000</td>
<td>2,835,740</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>3,995,500</td>
<td>1,298,560</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>3,600,000</td>
<td>2,799,260</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>3,200,000</td>
<td>346,980</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Average FB Percentage**: 42%
Proportion social media users on the rise but slow to general population
Intellectual e-participation is unequal (data by OII)
Discrepancies in density tweets

How Africa Tweets
9 months of geo-located Tweets from Africa

- 57% of Tweets sent from mobile phones
- 11,518,582 total number of Tweets analyzed

Top 20 countries based on a 3 month analysis of geo-located Twitter traffic in Africa conducted during Q4 2011:

- Kenya
- South Africa
- Nigeria
- Egypt
- Ethiopia
- Tanzania
- Morocco
- Zambia
- Ethiopia
- Uganda
- Botswana
- Ghana
- Angola
- Senegal
- Malawi
- Cote d’Ivoire
- Cameroon
- Libya
- Zimbabwe
- Mozambique
- Cameroon

Powered by Twillio
Afrobarometer - recent round

# Internet & age

How often do you use: The Internet?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Less than once a month</th>
<th>A few times a month</th>
<th>A few times a week</th>
<th>Every day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15-29</td>
<td>13,810</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-49</td>
<td>15,234</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 and more</td>
<td>6,974</td>
<td>93%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>36,017</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Source: Afrobarometer
Internet use & edu
Internet news & edu

How often do you get news from the following sources: Internet by Education of respondent

Show Column % (all responses) N=37,198; Weighted results

- No formal schooling
- Primary school completed
- Secondary school / high school completed
- Post-graduate
- Informal schooling only (including Koranic schooling)
- Post-secondary qualifications, other than university e.g. a
- Missing; Unknown
- Some primary schooling
- Some secondary school / high school
- Some university
- University completed
- Don’t know
Internet & gender

How often do you get news from the following sources: Internet

Showing Row % (excluding DK/NA) N=36,387; Weighted results
1.b Community, urbanity & ICT
Rural = more physical meeting
Urban women seek community

Attend a community meeting by Urban or Rural Primary Sampling Unit for Gender of respondent=FEMALE

Show Column % (all responses) FEMALEN=18,697; Weighted results

Urban Rural
Urban Africa: much text message & occasionally discuss politics
Rural Africa: less text & rural texters discuss politics more
Urban texters want to attend community meetings
Research indicator:
Deictic (native in a community) vs referentialist (individual user on global market)

- Deictic acts of meaning: shared frame of reference and experience, hence one understands ‘this’ or ‘that’ or ‘yonder’ (distal deixis) because one is native (born of same tradition) in the open sense: humans are multi-native, ethnographers (‘become part of the barrio’), ‘my life = microcosm’

- Referentialist: explain thru elaborate system of references, explicit, explanations, focused on non-local, add members without nativeness (rather clients on market)
Country’s present economic condition by Your living conditions vs. others for How often use the internet=NEVER

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Much worse</th>
<th>Worse</th>
<th>Same</th>
<th>Better</th>
<th>Much better</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very bad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly bad</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither good nor bad</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly good</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Country's present economic condition by Your living conditions vs. others for How often use the internet=EVERY DAY
Country’s economic condition compared to 12 months ago by Your living conditions compared to 12 months ago for Discuss politics=FREQUENTLY.
ICT -> wish Pol but unable? 1st<->2nd column
1.c Violence, ethnicity & ICT
Internet everyday = anti-violence
Looking at four countries scoring less than 30% on national identification: Nigeria, Togo, Kenya, Uganda
Political violence is most likely among those identifying only with their ‘often unfairly treated’ ethnic group (Ni, To, Kn, Ug)
Almost all of everyday Internet-news users who identify only with their ethnic group will often or several times opted for political violence (Ni, To, Kn, Ug)
Everyday internet-news users who have often opted for political violence demand equal treatment, not ethnic partisanship.
Ethnicity is intersubjective!
2. digipolity

• What is wikileaks, ushahidi, Fb, Foursquare,...?
• A digipolity: any digital system of power (influencing behavior)
• But digital is not technology only; science is a digipolity, as are present forms of advocacy
• Initial goal (Man ’99): apply anthropology’s traditional theories of magic and bewitchment to current technologies and emotions
• Core-idea: parallel with network/web as two sides of Internet. Multi-nativeness (vs ethnicity)
Fung et al (2013): 6 models of ICT impact on politics

Stylized political model: *Conveyor belt*
Fung et al (2013): 6 models of ICT impact on politics

Two poles: politics & technology

Stylized political model: *Conveyor belt*
1. Muscular Public Sphere: anti-MSM

Fung et al (2013): 6 models
Fung et al (2013): 6 models

1. Muscular Public Sphere: echo-chamber?

Diagram:
- Citizens
- Civil society
- Politicians
- Policy
- Public action
- ICT

Public sphere

ICT
Fung et al (2013): 6 models

2. Here comes everybody

- citizens
- civil society
- ICT
- policy
- politicians
- public action
2. Here comes everybody: SeeClickFix
Fung et al (2013): 6 models

2. Here comes everybody: SeeClick(Fix)?

[Diagram with nodes for citizens, civil society, politicians, policy, public action, and sphere connected by arrows labeled ICT]
Fung et al (2013): 6 models

3. Direct Digital Democracy

- citizens
- civil society
- ICT
- public sphere
- politicians
- policy
- public action
Fung et al (2013): 6 models

3. Direct Digital Democracy: politicians like?

- ICT
- Civil society
- Public sphere
- Politicians
- Policy
- Public action
- Citizens
4. Truth-based advocacy

Fung et al (2013): 6 models
Fung et al (2013): 6 models

4. Truth-based advocacy: Wikileaks, KBTT

Diagram showing connections between citizens, ICT, public sphere, civil society, politicians, policy, and public action.
Fung et al (2013): 6 models

5. Constituent Mobilization
5. Constituent Mobilization: Cidade democratica

- Citizens
- Public sphere
- Civil society
- Politicians
- Policy
- Public action

ICT connects all the elements.
Fung et al (2013): 6 models

6. Social monitoring: crowd-sourced

- civil society
- citizens
- public sphere
- politicians
- ICT
- policy
- public action
6. Social monitoring: ushahidi -> uchaguzi
1st critique on Fung:

- Too institutionally oriented: ‘Politicians’ as inevitable bottleneck. Only the first two models overshadow their role (check)
- These 2 models are deemed ‘unrealistic’. Why? Starting from logic of POWER > digital logic
- Constructivism (Feenberg, Latour): technology, design has culture (value-laden) => assemblage ‘digipolicy’
- What then is culture in ICT (now)? Can be shaped but starting from logic of NETWORK
CDA preliminary results...

Violence outbreak in Nakuru Areas

LOCATION: Kaptembwa, Githima, Mwariki, Kenya
DATE: Friday, January 25, 2008
TIME: 06:00 am (Approximate)
CATEGORY: RIOTS, DEATHS, PROPERTY,

Incident Report Description:

Violence Outbreak occurs in Nakuru Town in the areas, The violence is tribal linked. reports of People being burnt in there homesteads, and Bows and Arrows being shipped into the areas to fuel the violence.

The outbreak of violence begun last night and does not seem to cease as per today 25/01/2008.
Anonymous = advantage, but language is often neither testimony nor report

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NAMES OF PEOPLE:
VERIFIED? 

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The outbreak of violence begun last night and does not seem to cease as per today 25/01/2008.
Discomfort: Ngo’s free to advertise their ideology?
Last post before offline: contrasts with riots-then-peace scenario?

Anxiety increases in IDP Camps as supplies dwindle

LOCATION: Mathare, Kenya
DATE: Monday, April 07, 2008
TIME: 9:00 am (Approximate)
CATEGORY:
NAMES OF PEOPLE: Kenya Red Cross,
VERIFIED? ✓

Incident Report Description:

Food and other essential supplies are fast dwindling in the camps for Internally Displaced People (IDP) in Nairobi without any significant promise of further donations from the well wishers. According to Mr Mohammed Swaleh, the Red Cross official in charge of the camps situated in Mathare, all the five camps in the area had not received any significant donation in the last one month. He says although other supplies were essential, food shortage was the most worrying.

In some of the camps, the IDPs were forced to seek for menial jobs within their camps in order to earn some income to supplement the inadequate food rations. Other than food, other urgent needs in the camp include medical/clinical supplies/services, including special attention for people living with HIV/AIDS, especially those on Antiretroviral (ARV) drugs who require special diets to accompany the medication.
Ushahidi -> uchaguzi

- more Ngo-based
- Ushahidi 2.0 offers platform worldwide
- General e-participation? Sobering figures as yet (according to Peixot)
Uchaguzi Kenya Winds Down

With the declaration, this afternoon, of the final results in the Kenyan General Election our Uchaguzi deployment will officially come to an end at 18:00 EAT (15:00 GMT) today.

Uchaguzi was a deployment focusing primarily on the election process, we have done that. The legal process that follows goes beyond our mandate. So far Kenya is largely peaceful, we anticipate that it will remain that way. Together with our partners we will remain watchful. We’d like to thank you all for sending in your reports, for taking time to visit the Uchaguzi website, for your support out on the ground and online. We appreciate you.

We also appreciate that our amazing team of volunteers; globally, across Kenya and in our situation room at the iHub; have extended themselves far beyond what we asked them to commit to. A very special thank you to all the Uchaguzi volunteers and partners! Your commitment, your patience, your passion, your excellence is the stuff of legends! We asked you to help us help Kenyans protect their vote and we are amazed at how enthusiastically you responded to that call. We appreciate all of you and look forward to working next to you again.

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Alison B Lowndes 15:57 on 9 March 2013

Thank you so much for all your efforts. I hope it stays peaceful after you close down

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Mkenya-Political Forum 16:04 on 24 March 2013

Hi, what the fuss was uchaguzi for? if there was some kind of report that was written about the elections did you make it public, I’d wish to read your reports.
Relatively few interactions, comments on reports

Unverified

**Tension In Kibera (Gatwekera)**

15:13 Mar 9 2013 Gatwekera, Kibera, Nairobi, Kenya

There is tension in kibera and youths are rioting but the police is following what is happening.
This is happening in gatwekera time 330pm

- Demonstrations
- Riots
- Unresolved

**Action taken**

**Summary:** Escalated to NSC who confirm that law enforcement agencies are aware
and on the ground. We are also monitoring the situation with our partners on the
ground who inform us power outage is increasing tension as they can not watch the
announcements on TV.

**Comments**

Anitononmew (Mar 14 2013)
I'm impressed, I should say. Definitely rarely do I encounter a weblog that is both
educative and entertaining, and let me tell you, you might have hit the nail on the head.
Your thought is outstanding: the issue is some thing that not enough individuals are
speaking intelligently about. I'm quite happy that I stumbled across this in my search for
some thing relating to this. michael kors bags

Opimaniatut (Mar 16 2013)
Aw, this was a genuinely nice post. In idea I would like to put in writing like this in addition-
taking time and actual effort to make a fairly very good article? - but what can I say? - I
procrastinate alot and by no indicates seem to get some thing carried out. jordans outlet

Piommannerime (Mar 19 2013)
The next time I read a weblog, I hope that it doesnt disappoint me as a lot as this 1. I
mean, I know it was my option to read, but I essentially thought youd have some thing
intriguing to say. All I hear can be a bunch of whining about something which you could fix
in case you werent too busy looking for attention. mitchell and ness jerseys
http://cheapchinajordans.roundandabout-mul.com
Avoid use of ‘ethnic’ (9 on 4747 reports), ‘tribal’,...
Politically correct but rather referentialist (globalist) than deictic (multi-native) hence less action-potential?
2\textsuperscript{nd} Critique on Fung

- Separates citizen from action. View on digipolities from ‘politics’ > ‘network’ of actions/ events (cf Luhmann on society). Thus again...
- Lacks the law of the network (2\textsuperscript{nd} pole of ICT): moral economy (care for group, living tradition, collective good, identity) reproduces community
- Without community... deserted websites (Internet is littered with), no nativeness (cf infra), referentialism (vs deictic force)
7th model of digipolity

- citizens
- civil society
- public sphere
- politicians
- policy
- public action

ICT
7th model of digipolity

Fb & Twitter! Hence used for civil action... but conflicts with ME of individualism (not nativeness, no ‘local’ community; not anonymous): unguided missile
Community-based Anonymous Located Interactions (CALI)

- One example: Zone-it, a location-based app, virtual billboard for trusting community (Fb\(^{-1}\): goal-oriented, no biostress)

- [http://vimeo.com/43656071](http://vimeo.com/43656071)

- Action-research: synergy of 3 faculties convinced UGent

- Next step in research: respond to request by Mzumbe U (VLIR-IUS) but adapted via south-south collaboration with UWC
Als kersverse U Gent’er maak jij deel uit van onze community, en dat heeft zo zijn voordelen! Met de app Zone-it ben je als eerste op de hoogte van nieuwttjes zoals concerttickets, koten te huur, U Gent-faciliteiten, enzovoort.

Heb je dringend iets nodig? Post je vraag op Zone-it en word snel geholpen door een andere U Gent’er in de buurt!

Hoe van start gaan? Scan de QR-code met je smartphone of download de app Zone-it.
Thanks...

• To be continued from July onwards: Research on zone-it