

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Background information

Africa is the second largest continent in the world with over an estimation of 920 million people www.internetworldstats.com/stats/africa.html. Africa's way forward requires integration, democracy, good governance, participation and inclusive communication of all issues. The establishment of regional organizations evidences the desire of Africa to unite and interact among its member states¹. Although most regional organization commenced for economical reasons, most of them now consider political activities. Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of West African states (ECOWAS) are cases in point. These examples of regional integration arrangements reflect prospects for deepening political and economic integration and unity building (Chrysochoou, 2001: 9-30). Raising globalization trends and deepening regionalization in the world, might have influenced this renewed interests of reinvigorating Africa and fostering unification through continental governance².

There is a growing recognition among African leaders and scholars that Africa's integration will achieve significant potential gains for social, political and economic revival (Kiguwa, 1999: 70). This current outlook of Africa is usually embedded within the term African renaissance. According to Kiguwa (1999: 65) "renaissance in ordinary sense means 'rebirth', 'reawakening' or 'relearning'". In that sense, renaissance is about rejuvenating history, politics, governance, economics and society in a process to rediscover a new civilization and an African citizen³.

¹ Such as the South African Development Coordinating Conference (SADCC), Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Economic Union of Central Africa (UDEAC) later known as East African Community, South African Customs Union (SACU), Common Market for Eastern and South Africa (COMESA), The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), New African Development Program (NEPAD) and many others www.africa-union.org.za.

² European Union (EU), the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the North America Free Trade Area (NAFTA) serve as appropriate examples.

³ For more discussion of African renaissance, please see Kiguwa (1999: 60-70), Lungu (1999: 110-120) and Mbeki (1998: 15).

New thinking highlights the role of new media especially the Internet in development, democracy and in governance. In an increasingly globalizing world, the Internet is one of the key determinants of conceiving and maintaining global and African governance. 'New media' technologies are believed to harbor capabilities to facilitate an interactive Africa. Sharing this incentive is Ng'etich (2001: 80) who eloquently argues that with the supremacy of information technologies, such as the Internet, countries of the west are unifying and collaborating for greater political and economic gains and Africa has to balance such geopolitics.

Indeed, if Africa desires to create a self-reliant continent autonomous of outside political pressures and interventions, it will most certainly need to envisage a communication strategy that will incorporate the whole of Africa in African governance and renaissance [(Ng'etich (2001), Adesida (2000), Bounemra et al (1999) and Sonaike (2004)]. The relationship between good governance and African resurgence is reciprocal. In this case, new communication tools such the Internet somehow affect the development and maintenance of an interdependent Africa (Langmia, 2006: 144).

The above argument necessitates the following questions: Can e-governance systems facilitate continental governance and under what circumstances would this be possible? Moreover, are African intergovernmental organizations such as the AU and Nepad employing e-governance facilities to the benefit of African citizens? These questions are not easy to answer but are inexorable if Africa is going to effectively and productively utilize e-governance systems.

1.2 Aim and Focus of research

The emergence of "new media", most particularly, the Internet spawned a plethora of studies with regard to society, politics and democratization. However, most researchers have overlooked the impact that new media, particularly websites, might have on Africa's inter-governance systems. The central purpose of this study is to examine the extent to which the Internet (websites) facilitates continental governance. In general, the research examines the practices and workings of e-governance portraits that are continentally

based (inter-governance). E-governance is defined as a way of co-coordinating, planning, implementing decisions, delivering services as well as performing all transactions and activities necessary for the benefit of citizens through new media, most particularly through web-based communication (Fang, 2002: 2). Basu (2004: 110) agrees that e-governance is “the use of information and communication technologies and particularly the Internet as a tool to achieve better government”.

1.3 Rationale

With the strengthening of regional and continental intergovernmental organizations and deepening regional and continental integration in Africa (political, economical and otherwise), it becomes fundamental that communication is made more accessible and effective. It is therefore essential to study the value of new media communication technologies such as the Internet in such intergovernmental organizations. By studying Africa’s intergovernmental websites, specifically AU and Nepad, it is generally anticipated that this study will be able to dictate prospects, challenges and practices of Inter-governmental websites in promoting good continental governance leading towards democracy. The question solicited here is whether e-governance facilitates continental governance in Africa and under what circumstances would this be possible?

African Union (AU) website is chosen for study because it is the only inter-governance organization ratified by all 54 African states. African Union formally commenced in June 2000 at Lome, Togo www.africa-union.org. This marked the official ending of the Organization of African Union (OAU). The vision of the African Union is to enable Africa to define its place in the world and promote the establishment of a unified eternal relation strategy www.africa-union.org. Moreover, it is the responsibility and the role of the AU to promote African governance through integration, interdependence and interaction among all African states and the citizens of Africa (Mbeki, 1998: 9). The AU sees imperative that Africa must communicate among itself. This is all explicit in the website’s tag-word “*Africa must unite*”.

The AU founded Nepad to support integration in Africa. Nepad is a “vision and strategic framework for renewal” under goals designed by the African Union www.nepad.org. This initiative was adopted in July 2001. Two of Nepad’s major goals are to globalize Africa in a manner that halts the marginalisation of Africa globally and to initiate partnerships between and amongst African leaders to accelerate integration both regionally and continentally (Diescho, 2002: 47). The inclusion of Nepad in this study of two continental initiatives (AU and EU) was critical because Nepad seems to be gaining relatively more media momentum than the AU, which gave birth to its existence.

The idea to start the European Union originated in 1952 with the forming of the European coal and steel community (ECSC) between only six members (Lindberg, 1998: 147). This goal proceeded to incorporate almost the whole of Europe and today a single currency (the Euro) is adopted in many European countries (Chryssochoou, 2001). Desmond (1957) De Gaulle Charles (1970) Moravcsik (1998) and Galtung (1973) discuss more about the establishment and general processes of the EU as these shall not be discussed here.

The European Union (EU) as an equivalent to the African Union (AU) is selected for study for the reason that, it harbors more resources and experience than the African Union and Nepad. The EU has a much longer history (than both the AU and Nepad) as an intergovernmental organization and also in using a continental website as a form of e-governance. In overall, the EU is well advanced in utilizing joint media and communications policies, communication technologies and Internet connection and penetration⁴. The idea to include the EU in this analysis is to provide a standard or a benchmark with which to analyze and measure the use of continental e-governance websites. Analyzing only the AU and Nepad websites would have yield almost the same results, as it can be anticipated that they may be in almost similar stages of development (maturity) and also because they operate in almost a comparable environment. However,

⁴ It is noteworthy that this study is by no means an organizational analysis and therefore, some issues about organizations, most particularly the EU will be disregarded and only noted as they relate to the websites.

the EU will not be taken in total supremacy because it too, contains flaws and faces considerable challenges regarding the use of the websites to unite and govern Europe. For this reason, the theoretical framework will substantiate this limitation by providing a standard for good practice of e-governance websites as well as general shortcomings that can be expected from an e-governance website. The theoretical framework and the literature would have been adequate on its own to provide such a benchmark, but the inclusion of the EU provides a further advantage as a practical operative benchmark for comparison.

The disparities between the EU, AU and Nepad extend beyond just variations of websites development and experience to a much more sensitive area such as the differences in Internet penetration and connectivity between Africa and Europe. It is an undisputable fact that Africa lingers behind most western countries including Europe in terms of Internet connectivity, Internet penetration and Internet adoption (uses). There is a significant lack of connectivity in Africa due to deficiencies in of bandwidth, high price of both technology and Internet connection and slow speed of connection. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), it is true that “broadband penetration is below one percent in Africa compared to about 30 percent in some high income places like Europe” (African competitive report, 2007).

It is worth noting that Africa is enduring in a process to curb this digital divide by initiating observable programmes to improve broadband for Internet connection, accelerate Internet penetration and adoption by enhancing accessibility to the technology and heightening training for Internet related skills through the African Regional Action Plan on the Knowledge Economy (ARAPKE) framework among others⁵. Investment in

⁵ The ARAPKE framework is made up of the following eleven (11) programmes (www.itu.org):

1. Nepad Broadband Initiative- a platform developed to provide Africa with incentives to develop applications, make content available and work towards reducing cost of connectivity.
2. Nepad e-schools Initiative- deals with increasing the overall application of e-education and access to knowledge through ICTs
3. African Internet Exchange Systems (AXIS)- concerned with consensus and cooperation
4. African Digital Initiatives and Financing agency (ADIFA)
5. ICT based distance learning capacity building- for promoting e-education in Africa
6. DIDActiciel et Dictionnaire Multi;inguet Multimedia (DIDADI)
7. Harnessing Information to empower youth leadership and employment programme

ICT infrastructure has improved dramatically in recent years. “African governments have made considerable headway in opening up telecommunication markets to greater competitive measures to encourage investment and build local capabilities” (www.itu.org). According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), this form of liberalization has resulted in lower prices for users and thus has most generally widened access (African competitive report, 2007). An increase in access may have a positive impact of the adoption and uses of the Internet to a point where these continental e-governance websites are known and used by a larger number of African citizens. The situation in Africa is far from perfection. However, it is a commendable process towards improvement.

1.4 Problem Statement

The African Union (AU) and the New Partnership for Africa’s development (Nepad) are two Intergovernmental institutions that most appropriately show the purpose and significance of Africa’s continental governance. Intergovernmental organizations most certainly cannot escape complex issues concerning good governance such as information diffusion, service-delivery, and participation in all its forms, transparency and accountability. The media is clearly central to the deliverance and maintenance of all the above-mentioned conditions of good governance. Good governance and democratic practices are essential for Africa’s survival.

The founders and subsequent leaders of the AU are conscious of the need for effective communication strategies. This is made apparent by their communication strategic document that reads:

Africans are seeking to build structures of information and communication for sharing the common visions, aspirations and programs that they have jointly defined and accepted. The meaning and value of the African Union, of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, NEPAD, of the African Peer Review Mechanism, of the Peace and Security Council, all of these

-
8. Classes Preparatoratoires Virtuelles pour les lyceens
 9. Women’s mediated access to rural areas
 10. E-learning Networks
 11. Africa’s Leadership in ICT professional Development Program.

need to be made broadly available throughout the continent, as a rallying point for reinforcing and driving future development

(Paper presented by the African Union: Towards a Pan African Radio and Television channel, Nov 2005: 2)

AU and Nepad occasionally criticize the mass media for not granting enough coverage and leverage to their cause. Such low media coverage has led to misinformed and uninformed African citizens. Kupe (2005) concurs with the general rhetoric that AU and Nepad are not well covered by African mass media systems. First, Kupe (2005: 194) argues that the tendency of African media is to portray imbalances within the organizations without manifest assessments and analyses. Secondly, he perceives that the coverage of the AU and Nepad are event-driven and therefore lack debate and discussion. Blatantly, he writes “The news media have tended to report Nepad and the AU as events and not processes” (Kupe, 2005: 196). As such, coverage is predictably high around scheduled meetings of Nepad leadership or structures and AU events. This kind of parachute journalism, Kupe (2005: 196) adds, “contributes to the lack of knowledge about Nepad and the AU”.

The problem defined by Kupe (2005) is not significant to Africa alone. The same problem is noticeable in the European Union. “Media coverage of European issues remains limited and fragmented. Regular major events such as European Council meetings do attract coverage in national newspapers, but during the intervening periods there is no comprehensive cover of EU affairs” (White Paper on EU communication policy, 2006: 9).

Kupe (2005) concludes that the current state of mass media coverage of AU and Nepad in print and broadcast is not enough to facilitate a participatory public sphere for Africa’s continental governance. Keane (1999) illustrates that geographical boundaries of the mass media and the commercialization of such media leave little prospects for rational debate and diffusion of relevant information. Kupe (2005) argues that the success of AU and Nepad will be determined by the dissemination of broad analytical information and participatory communication. Participatory communication according to Kupe (2005:

194) means “the ability of the media to play two critical roles: to provide the public with information and analysis and to be an open forum for debate and discussion”. According to many “new media” scholars, this void can only be filled by the Internet (websites), which arguably provides prospects and refinements to Habermas’ public sphere (e.g. Malina 1999, Axford, 2001, Flew 2002 and Poster 2005).

It is conventionally understood that we now live in the information society where everything involves information and information technologies [(Jones (1998) Van Dijk (1999), Castells (2001), Flew (2002) Croteau and Hoynes (2003), Poster (2003), Lieurouw and Livingstone (2002)]. The hype around new media technologies such as the Internet and most particularly websites can no longer be disregarded. In recent years, institutional websites have increased in significant numbers and Africa has not been left out in this phenomenon. E-commerce websites (websites for sales, advertising and consumption) and political websites, mostly e-government websites, are now more pervasive than before.

In government and inter-governmental institutions, websites are critical for creating awareness by providing information relating to underlying goals and roles of the institution. Equally important, the website forms a bridge between the organization, other stakeholders and the society in which the institution functions. This is well put by, Adesida (2001: 9) who writes “not only do ICT (websites) facilitate information exchange; they are deepening the process, creating new models of sharing ideas and reducing the cost of collecting and analyzing information”. Panganiban (2004: 9-12) further argues that the reason behind e-governance websites is simply to improve the quality of governance, service and increase knowledge about the institution and its goals.

Clearly, websites have precisely positioned themselves as momentous and distinct medium of communication. African Union and Nepal intergovernmental institutions use websites as one medium of communication in order to communicate with the general public, the international community, and any other audiences envisioned by these institutions. It is thus opportune to study Nepal and AU websites as appropriate samples

towards researching e-governance systems incorporating the whole continent. The study does not reflect on smaller African projects such as the African Peer Review Mechanism because the focus is not specifically on integration projects, but more on trying to establish the character and practices of a more general and unified e-government website such as the AU. At the sometime, a narrower focus on a specific country like South Africa for instance, would not reflect results that delineate the entire African character for the simple reason that different countries may have different strategies and forms of e-governance which are not necessarily unified.

In summary, this research aims to understand the extent to which websites as distinct medium of communication (e-governance) can advance Africa's continental governance. The main focus is to examine if integration, equal participation and interaction can be achieved by use of websites. These ultimately include analysis of service delivery, interaction and interactivity, information communication flows, information transfer and exchange in e-governance portraits⁶. This research explores these questions by analyzing African Union website (www.africa-union.org), Nepad website (www.nepad.org) and European Union website (www.europa.eu) as case studies. It should be noted from the outset that neither the EU organization, nor the process of European Union integration is the focus of this research because this research centers extensively on Africa's continental governance. The EU website is only used as an experienced (but not entirely ideal) website in continental governance.

⁶ These concepts are discussed in subsequent chapters.

1.5 Research Question

- To what extent can e-governance facilitate Africa's continental governance? And under what circumstances would this be possible?

Research sub-questions:

- To what extent do e-governance websites, particularly debating forums, facilitate a rational public sphere?
- What is the nature of information diffusion, service delivery and interaction in major African governance institutions (Nepad and AU websites)?
- Which model of e-governance is evident in e-governance portraits of major African governance institutions such as Nepad and the AU? And on what stage of maturity are those websites?
- What kind of relationship exists between institutional communication goals and the structure (features) of the e-governance websites?

1.6 The niche of the study

In overall, this study is intrinsically ingrained in functionalist studies of the media. Traditionally, functionalism attempts to understand the relationship and the role of the media in society (McQuail 2000: 53)⁷. Ostensibly, this research attempts to understand the role of the media in continental governance. This study is also founded on the emerging or strengthening field of 'new media'. The study of 'new media' is not quite divorced from the functional role of the media. This is because 'new media' studies also concentrate on the role of the media in society (Silverstone and Mansell, 1996: 12). It is worth noting that the study of 'new media' is an extension to 'functionalism studies' for it acknowledges that new media technologies bring forth new prospects and challenges to the role of the media in society that need to be taken into account (Preston, 2001: 12).

⁷ Functionalism is herein in reference to a niche of the media field rather than a theory employed in this research.

1.7 Research structure

There has been a continuous advancement of communication technologies from the first printing press to the current development of the Internet. These mediums infused differing impacts and demanded different responses from the society. Chapter 2 delineates two theories that seek to explain the relationship between communication technologies and society. Theories discussed in this chapter comprise of technological determinism and the social shaping of technology. This chapter also outlines scholarly definition of new media and introduces the Internet as a distinct medium of communications with distinct characteristics and features. A number of scholars argue that the Internet as a distinct medium of communication can better facilitate the democratizing role of the media in society. Hence, prospects and challenges of the Internet in the performance of politics are discussed.

Chapter 3 describes how government institutions are using websites as distinct medium of communication to further the course of good governance leading to democracy. This chapter seeks to understand the definition of e-governance and the nature of its practices and performance. Here, trends and dominant models of e-governance are illustrated. It was moreover deemed essential to describe patterns and uses of government websites by citizens. Equally important, chapter three discusses the distinct nature of the African context in relation to e-governance. This includes discussion of prospects and challenges that exist for Africa's utilization of e-governance.

Chapter 4 proceeds to discuss general methodologies dominant in web-studies and debates the effectiveness and limitations of these methods. A methodology for this research was developed by adopting three different methodologies generally able to explain specific issues within e-governance websites. For the purpose of this study, three issues are investigated. First, we investigate technical features of the website, second we investigate debating forums and lastly we investigate (AU, Nepad and EU) inter-governance institutions in order to understand the relationship between institutional (communication) goals and the structure (features and performance) of e-governance websites.

Chapter 5 focuses on data analysis. The data is extracted from African Union website: www.africa-union.org. Nepad website: www.nepad.org and European Union website: www.europa.eu. This data is a product of critical analysis that commenced from the beginning of June till the end of August 2006. Appendix 2 provides examples of specific web pages analyzed. Finally, chapter 6 hosts the conclusion for study and recommendation reached by the study.

CHAPTER 2

The Internet's promise of ubiquitous information makes it a perfect screen for projecting the hopes and fears of a society. Nowhere are these projected hopes and fears more elaborate than with regard to politics....the political process is being intensively re-imagined in the context of new information and communication technologies.

(Agre, 2002: 311)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

According to functionalism study of the media, communication is the foundation of all realms of society⁸. Schramm (1977: 465) argues, "Political candidates and parties are constantly trying to find out how they can communicate with people so as to win votes". Advertisers and advertising agencies conduct research into people's buying habits, trying to find out what kind of advert will raise sells (Schramm, 1977: 465). Non Governmental Organizations are more interested in communicating with people to persuade them to adopt better social practices. "Propaganda agencies of governments are studying the ways in which their messages may influence the attitudes and opinions of the people of other countries" (Schramm (1977: 465). Clearly, communications have shaped societies for centuries. There has been much scholarly coverage of how communication affects social, economical, cultural and political proceedings. The less understood area, but equally important, is the relationship between communication technologies and social practices. This is discussed next.

2.2 Communication technologies and society

There has been a continuous line of development of communication technologies from the first printing press to the current development of the Internet. Newspapers were developed for multipurpose communication including information dissemination, gossip and advertising. It was frequent to find state or party newspapers that plainly reinforce certain ideological standings than the case is for today's newspapers (McQuail. 2000: 17). Commercial press followed and became more dominant than other forms of newspapers. Radio and television grew out of pre-existing technologies such as the

⁸ Functionalism as a theory of media studies is beyond the scope of this research and shall not be deliberated here. See McQuail (2000: 52-55)

telephone, telegraph, moving and still photography and sound recording. Television and radio were normally limited to national centers. But with developments in satellite television, geographical boundaries have been reduced (Dimbleby and Burton, 2000: 159). New media technologies such as the Internet are the latest developments in (mass) communications.

The rise of new media technologies and the availability or the abundance of information itself has led media researchers, academics and people to confidently declare the existence of an information society that is ubiquitously apparent. As a result, interactivity, new media, globalization and information society are current buzzwords of the 21st century. Definition of the information society is frequently credited to the increasing availability of information and communication technologies (Webster, 2002). For instance, Gauntlett (2000: 16) argues that “by increasing access to information or propaganda, the Internet may bring a greater engagement and interaction between the individual and larger political processes”. In this case, it is argued (Lyon, 1995: 54) that success in any field of enquiry has become impossible without information technologies.

New media are increasingly becoming more pervasive and significant to contemporary everyday life affecting all areas of politics, governance, economics and commerce. Hamelink (1987: 8) predicts three major areas in which communication technological developments such as the Internet will affect society. In terms of *economics*, the Internet decentralizes and opens markets across the globe while Internet *politics* shifts power from the monopolistic power of the elite towards a more participatory democratic society. Thirdly, the Internet ensures that *cultural* consumption can be made available worldwide (Hamelink: 1987: 8). These developments of new communication technologies initiate new understanding of the relationship between the media and society prompting researchers to ask a new set of questions regarding this relationship (Lievrouw and Livingstone, 2002: 1). Such analysis is essential in understanding how social processes, actions, structures and institutions affect or are been affected by technological innovations. This research however, only focuses on the political side of Hamelink’s

(1987: 8) predictions. The research debates the extent to which new communication technologies affect the nature of politics.

Webster (2002) disagrees with the whole conceptualization of the information-society and more especially, with the conceptualization of the information society that is intensely based on quantitative assessments. The supposition of information society theories that quantitative increases in information automatically translate to social changes is not accurate. “The central criticism is that quantitative indices of the spread of information and information technologies cannot be interpreted as evidence of any deep-seated social change” (Webster, 2002: 23). In support of Webster (2002), Lax (2000) argues that a mere expansion of the quantity of information or range of information is not enough to change a society. How then do we explain the relationship between communication technologies and society?

This chapter delineates two theories that seek to explain the relationship between communication technologies and changes in social practices. Social practices of significance here are governance and political interactions. Theories discussed in this chapter comprise of technological determinism and the social shaping of technology. These two theories are selected because they argue for social change from contending standpoints.

Analysis of the relationship between society and communication technology comes from various and often contending media perspectives. The liberal focus on global economical and political liberation made possible by the Internet (Agre, 2002: 314). The flaw noticeable from liberals is that they do not reckon or address the digital divide perpetuated by market forces (Castells, 2004). Radical scholars focus largely on grass-roots radicalism established by subordinated groups (feminist, trade unions and so on) and the Internets’ potential in networking and facilitating their growth (eg Knudson 1998 and Atton 2001)⁹. However, missing on radical analysis is the issue of access. As a result,

⁹ Knudson, W (1998) “Rebellion in Chiapas: Insurrection by Internet and public relations” in *Media, Culture and Society*. London: Sage publications. – Atton, C. (2001). *An alternative Internet: Radical media, politics and creativity*. London: Sage publications.

even subordinated groups still do not address the daunting challenge of exclusion. Singh (2003) argues that postmodernism scholars who focus on the development and innovation of new communication technologies must not only focus on the enthusiasm about the technology but rather they have to question the flaws that are apparent in all communication technologies such as access issues and power dynamics that lessen equal participation. There are other two major schools that argue for social change from contending standpoints. These two theories dispute the link between (new) communication technologies and social change (political transformation). Those are technological determinism (TD) and the social shaping of technology (SST), which are detailed next.

2.3 Technological determinism

Technology has become autonomous that no human activity escapes this technological imperative and human race has been swept up in the all-encompassing power of technique

Smith (1995: 30)

A large number of early studies in the field of new media focused on the impact of new media technologies on social life. Most of these analyses were inclined to technological determinism theory. According to Smith (1995: 5), technological determinism emphasizes that technology is an agent of social change, an autonomous force liberated from social pressures and human agency. Smith's (1995: 16) conception of technological determinism "refers to the human tendency to create the kind of society that invests technologies with enough power to drive history".

Technological determinism argues that when technology is introduced in a society, there is bound to be social changes (Poster, 2001: 23). "This perspective reflects a long tradition of theories based on the assumption that technology shapes society more than society shapes technology" (Norris, 2001: 106). Technology is viewed as an external force impelling changes to a social condition to which it is introduced. "From this perspective, technology causes things to happen" (Croteau and Hoynes, 2002: 306).

Society is therefore transformed by technical aspirations, not by human or societal agency and agenda.

Smith (1995: 12) argues that technological determinism is inherently characterized by enthusiasm and faith in the technology as a liberating force. Advocates of this theory according to Flew (2002: 31) “point to the possibility of a new age of increased personal freedom, reduced social hierarchy, enhanced leisure and a greater quality of social interaction and communication resulting from new media technologies”.

Marshall McLuhan who pioneered the theory has gained considerable status as a profound technological determinist, starting with his work in *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (1962), followed by *The medium is the message* (1964) and *The global village*. McLuhan argued that each new medium disrupts tradition and reshapes social life. Central to McLuhan’s argument is the view that the medium determines the message and the contents of those messages (Burnett and Marshall, 2003: 17). Contemporary theorists that are influenced by or simply write about technological determinism include Merrit (1979), Heilbroner (1967), Castells (1985), Smith and Marx (1995), Poster (2003), and Croteau D and Hoynes W (2003). Another noticeable technological determinist, Brand (1987: 255) articulates that, “technology machines are either on, over you or through you, take your pick”. This reiterates the intensity of technology in all realms of society.

Technological determinism ascribes a technological fix to societal (economics/politics) problems. As a result, technological determinism is traced by before and after discourse, explaining the problems before the technological fix and the solution after the technological fix (Smith, 1995:12). With the emergence of the Internet, Flew (2001: 184) argues that technological determinism now ascribes a technological fix to contemporary politics. In this case, it is believed that the Internet will address the crisis in democracy. For instance, the Internet discourages declining participation in politics, increase the level of accountability and legitimacy to governance and thus contribute to a vibrant public sphere (Flew, 2001: 184). In short, this argument holds that new communication technologies (internet and the web) enable greater transparency in policymaking, allow

for greater citizens' participation in government decision-making and increase interactions between the ruled and the rulers thereby nurturing democracy.

In terms of governance and e-governance, technological determinism maintains that the structure and the availability of specific features of communication in the portraits determine the performance of e-governance. "Technological developments directly influences how far political organizations can go to provide online services and information, and indirectly produces greater incentives for political organizations to do so, as the general public gradually becomes wired" (Norris, 2001: 106). Norris (2001: 106) argues that in this case, the performance and the success of an e-governance initiative are measured by technical indicators such as Internet access and website features.

According to Singh (2003), technological determinist only acknowledges the potential of the Internet in vitalizing society and sanctions possible effects that may be caused by the political, social, cultural, and economical structure of a given society. Criticizing technological determinism, Croteau and Hoynes (2003) illustrate that the shortcoming of technological determinism is that it only credits the technology with causal factors and in the process ignores human agency that makes use of such technologies. According to other critics, technological determinism unfairly treats society and audience as passive users who are subjected to technological powers (Burnett and Marshall, 2003: 17).

2.4 The Social Shaping of Technology

The social shaping of technology (SST) in accordance to Lieverouw (2002: 185) is a combination of theories that emphasise that "technological determinism is an inadequate description or explanation of technological innovation and development or social change more generally". According to this theory, society shapes the uses and effect of a technology (Edge, 1995: 14). For this reason, Lieverouw (2002) and Edge (1995) deny effects assumed by technological determinists. SST maintains that institutional, social, political and economical factors shape and direct the uses, content and effects of a media technology in society. For Lieverouw (2002: 186), new information technology is not a

hammer that nails political, social, cultural or economical ramifications on the society in which it is introduced. In other words, information communication technologies cannot solely drive social change of any kind.

The social shaping of technology studies the relationship between information technologies and social or political change. However, this theory does not establish the causal factor between the two. For instance, Edge (1995: 15) writes that “it is a basic assumption of this approach that the relationship between technology and society is genuinely an interaction, a recursive process: causes and effects stand in a complex relationship”. Nevertheless, the theory emphasises that communication technologies are flexible in that they are embedded in constantly changing socio-technical networks. “Technologies... tend to become embedded and stabilised within institutional and social structures and influence” which determine subsequent technological choices (Lieverouw, 2002: 186).

Edge (1995: 14) claims that social factors do not only shape the uses and the implementation of communication technologies but also shape the designs of such technologies. In essence, technologies are developed as responses to social needs and renovation. “Technology is designed, consciously or otherwise, to secure particular social or political objectives” (Mackey, 1995: 43). As a result, communication technologies will be shaped by the uses and the needs of a given society. SST perspective therefore maintains that social factors and communication goals determine the nature of web-design such as content, website presentation and structure of e-government portrait.

Though it is true that communication technologies such as the web and the Internet enable a more democratic society, Norris (2001: 107) argues, “Whether these potentials are realized depends on how the technology is employed”. The performance of an e-governance website reflects the nature of information diffusion, transparency and participation desired by the political organization hosting the website. “In this account, virtual politics will mirror the traditional political system” (Norris, 2001: 107). Therefore,

this research questions if institutional communication goals reflect on the structure and features of the website. It is essential at this point to define and discuss new media.

2.5 Defining new media technologies

No consensus exists yet on the definition of new media. It is not enough to simply say that “new media” concerns new communication technologies. However, some “new media” scholars provide a definition of new media that is oriented towards system features. For instance, Rice (1984: 35) argues that “new media” are “those communications technology typically involving computer capabilities (micro-processor or mainframe), that allow or facilitate interactivity among users or between users and information” (Lievrouw and Livingstone, 2002: 6). Some scholars see convergence as a basic defining characteristic of new media, while others simply list terms closely associated with “new media” such as “hyper-reality”, “virtual reality”, “anonymity”, “interactivity”, “information society” and so on (Flew, 2002: 10).

New media are often associated with the World Wide Web (websites) and the Internet. “The Internet represents the newest, most widely discussed and perhaps most significant manifestation of new media” (Flew, 2002: 11). Castells (2004: 10) notes that the Internet is an enormous global network of computers called the network of networks which integrates thousand and thousands of computers worldwide. However, the Internet is not tantamount to websites as it carries a lot of data including websites. In simple terms, websites are only a significant part of the Internet. This is well established by Burnett and Marshall (2003) who argue that:

The Internet as we know it today includes informational services such as file transfer (ftp), remote login (telnet), location and retrieval (gopher) and the World Wide Web. The Internet also includes communication services such as electronic mail (e-mail), mailing listd (listserv), Internet relay chat (IRC) and multi-user domains (MUDs).

Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) conceived by links, graphics and multimedia protocols of hyperlinks, supports individual websites, while the Internet connects all websites of the world (Herman and Swiss, 2000: 3). This research focuses only on the

World Wide Web (websites) section of the Internet. However, the two terms are used interchangeably.

Croteau and Hoynes (2003: 303) and Van Dijk, (1991) highlight a distinct feature of new media, namely, interactivity, which enhances interaction between senders and receivers. However, Lievrouw and Livingstone (2002) are wary of such definitions. For them, definitions of this nature are not appropriate for they lack social implications and consequences of technological features to human life, a definition of new media must incorporate more than technological characteristics. Lievrouw and Livingstone (2002: 7) argue:

Therefore, by new media we mean information and communication and their associated social contexts incorporating (1) the artifacts or devices that enable and extend our abilities to communicate. (2) The communication activities or practices we engage in to develop and use these devices and (3) the social arrangements or organizations that form around the devices and practices.

Jones also argues that new media are not just tools. “It is once technology, medium and engine of social relations”: To elaborate on this, Jones (1998: 11) quotes Terry and Culvert (1997: 3):

Defining technology strictly in terms of objects, such as tools, machines as appliances, implies fundamental (but ultimately illusory) distinctions between the technology, its designer, and its user. In the formulation of them, technology, then, has been described as a neutral autonomous, having no inherent or built-in moral or political qualities. In other words, a tool can be used for good or for bad.

This research adopts a definition of “new media” advocated by Jones (1998) and Lievrouw and Livingstone (2002) that not only illustrates technological feature, but also incorporates its uses, role and social implications.

2.6 The web as a distinct medium of communication

Giltelmal and Pingree (2003) ask *what’s new about new media* and what constitutes “newness”? Their argument is that all media were once ‘new media’. The only evolution is that new media questions the mythical character and conventions of existing media, while they pose potentials to be better than the previous or existing communication mediums (Giltelmal and Pingree, 2003). Flew (2002) asked the exact same question.

According to him, “digitalization” and “convergence” are two terms that constitute “newness” in new media (Flew, 2002: 17). Digitalization exist when text, sound and images are compounded, encoded and reduced to a single binary code that can be accessed by all users (Burnett and Marshall, 2004: 24). Convergence on the other hand, means the bringing together of the computing, telecommunications, media and information sectors. This includes the integration of text, visual and sound in a single system of communications.

The web is a hybrid of all mediums of communications. In that case, it has become a “distinct” and essential medium of communications (Burnett and Marshall, 2003: 21). The Internet (web) provides new modes of communication that requires new ways of producing, distributing and receiving information. This is clearly written by Croteau and Hoynes (2002: 322) who argue, “Digital media do, indeed, provide resources and opportunities for new forms of social interaction and new ways of relating to, or even manipulating, the limitation of time and space”.

Various mediums of communications have distinct ways of communicating, which often incorporates different technological capabilities, either for the delivery of text (newspapers), sound (radio) or visuals (television). However, convergence in the Internet makes certain that all these varieties of communication are incorporated in one medium. Unlike the mass media, the Internet facilitates all forms of communications, mainly: interpersonal (one-to-one), mass (one-to-many), computing (many-to-one) and many-to-many (Croteau and Hoynes, 2002: 300). As a result, “there is an abundance of speculation and claims that the Internet will replace traditional media and that old media, are dinosaurs on their way to extinction, soon to be replaced with new web-based delivery systems” (Burnett and Marshall, 2003: 1).

Croteau and Hoynes (2003: 302-303) describe the extent to which new media technologies reinvigorate and challenge the meaning of “mass communication” and conventional norms of traditional or mainstream media. For starters, the word ‘mass’ can no longer be appropriately applied to new media since it inherently implies that the

message is directed to many people. This is no more the case since with new media; messages can be personalized to a particular receiver who may be known to the sender. Moreover, communication in the web is not necessarily one-way (Croteau and Hoynes, 2003: 302-303).

Other scholars such as McQuail (2000) see new media as an addition to other mediums of communication, not one that will supersede other mediums. McQuail (2000: 118) argues that “the new electronic media can be viewed initially as an addition to the existing spectrum rather than as a replacement”. He further argues that the Internet is “neither clearly distinct from ordinary mass media, nor itself a mass medium as usually defined”. In this case, McQuail (2002: 136-137) proposes that the Internet should be conceptualized as a mass medium because it is a hybrid of all mass media technologies that precede it. However, for this purpose, the conceptualization of mass media and current theories have to be adjusted to fit new realities rather than establishing new theories specifically for the analysis of new media technologies.

Although Jankowski and Hanssen (2002: 7) believe that there is value to be gained from existing theories of mass communication, they argue that mass communication theories and their definitions are not inclusive to the characteristics and new environment of communication facilitated by the Internet and the World Wide Web and as such, these theories fail to consider the distinct features of this new communication medium. Following McQuail (2002), Jankowski and Hanssen (2002: 7) concur that it is not appropriate to view the Internet as detached from other communication technologies. Nonetheless, it is essential to acknowledge that the Internet and the web demonstrate characteristics and advantages that are distinct from other mass media technologies. These features and prospects are discussed next.

According to Bentivegna (2002: 54), the Internet does reveal traits of old mainstream media such as radio, television and newspapers. However, it holds potentials different and more refined than those embodied in old communication technologies. The potential attributes of the Internet, as articulated by Bentivegna (2002) and others include

interactivity, co-presence of vertical and horizontal communications, disintermediation in the communication process, speed of communication, and an absence of boundaries.

First, Bentivegna (2002: 55) argues that the co-presence of horizontal (one-way or top-down communication) and vertical communications (two-way) reflects two equally important forms of web-based communication. With references to Rafaeli (1998: 119), Schultz (2000: 210) shows the distinctions between, horizontal and vertical communication:

In one-way communication (vertical), one source sets the agenda, receive no feedback or very indirect feedback. Eventually, in two-way, or reactive communication (horizontal), one side responds to the other, but such communication remains reactive unless later messages in any sequence take into account not just messages preceded them, but the manner in which previous messages were reactive.

Horizontal communication involves reciprocal communication. Lievrouw and Livingstone (2002) argue that the Internet better facilitates horizontal communication, because unlike the mainstream media and the telephone which provides top-down communication, the Internet allows information to instantaneously flow back and forth among a number of receivers and senders. New media technologies such as websites allow for users' participation since they are no longer seen as passive audiences and receivers of information. Users "respond to messages they receive, select which images they want to receive, or even send out their own messages" (Hoynes and Hoynes, 2002: 321). This kind of horizontal communication embodies characteristics of a fully interactive communication.

Vertical communication on the other hand (one-way) is synonymous to mainstream model of communication where the sender creates a flow of information to the receiver. Here, the role of the Internet or websites is to provide a constant flow of information to the masses (Bentivegna, 2002: 55). Information storage potentials present in new media technologies enables governments, politicians, and businesses to disseminate information about themselves and their organizations (Van Dijk, 1999:17). Such information has the advantage to be accessed 24-hours-a-day, which renders information presented in websites regularly current and timely.

Secondly, interactivity represents one of the most cited potentials of the Internet and web-based communications. McMillian (2002: 163-165) chronicles different contending definitions of interactivity as offered by various scholars. Most of these scholars generally agree or at least partially agree that interactivity in new media is characterized by users' choice, control and participation. Bentivegna (2002: 54) sees interactivity as the relationship between the user and the communication system and between the user and other users. "Williams, Rice and Rogers (1998:10) define interactivity as the degree to which participants in a communication process have control over, and can exchange roles in, their mutual discourse" (Hanssen et al, 2000: 117). These descriptions suggest that interactivity takes place when the user seeks information on the website and also when a user participates in discussion in the website. "By providing opportunities for both information and participation, the Internet may be seen as putting the user in a position to exercise a form of control" (Flew, 2002).

McMillian (2002: 165) proposes that interactivity is a personal thing which depends on the eyes of the beholder. In contrast, Rafaeli (1998: 120) maintains that interactivity should be most noted by a substantial degree of reciprocity. Reciprocity in accordance to Rafaeli (1998: 119) is measured by the degree of role exchange between senders and receivers, as it is dependent on the quality and quantity of response between senders and receivers. Reciprocal interactivity is characterised by feedback relating to previous messages and to the way previous messages related to those preceding them. "Although reciprocity or role exchange may not be self-evident in communication settings, it is a condition for achieving interactivity" (Hanssen et al, 2000: 67). The Internet (website) is highly interactive in this respect, since access of contents and communication online creates archives, databases and new forms of content that allow for knowledgeable contributions and debate.

There are three basic traditions of interactivity: user-to-user, user-to-documents and user-to-system interactivity. First, *user-to-user tradition* is one that focuses on human communications (McMillian, 2002: 165). This tradition is also widely known as

computer mediated communications. Examples for this type of interaction include electronic mail (e-mail) and chat forums. Schultz (2000: 211) argues that email can serve as a fast and direct channel between users and between users and documents producers. *User-to-documents* interaction conveys users' interactions with documents and content producers to a point where full control of content presentation is subjected to users. Flew (2002: 100) argues that this model is therefore beyond simple navigation because the presentation and the flow of information must be responsive to users' actions. Perfect examples of user-to-documents interaction are hypertexts (that give power of navigation to users) and e-mails directed to content creators. Third, but not least, is *user-to-system* interaction. Here, interaction between people and computers is illustrated. Examples of this would be web-based forms, web polls, games and others that require direct communication with a computer system.

Before McMillian (2002), Williams, Rice and Rogers (1998) also describe three levels of interactivity. Face-to-face conversation between users is argued to be the highest form of interactivity. Interaction between people and a medium is deemed a second level of interactivity while they argue that interactivity experienced with information retrieval systems such as teletext (or websites) allows for the least amount of interactivity.¹⁰

There are a large number of interactive features that can be found in websites and on the Internet in general. These features include, navigational links to related information, hypertexts and hyperlinks, direct or indirect electronic mails, send a friend this page link, discussion forums, searchable databases, multimedia options to view pictures, video and audio, archived news and searchable online press releases (Dibeau and Garrison, 1999: 3).¹¹ These features facilitate greater interaction between senders and receivers and position the user to exercise a degree of control over the information and its presentation.

The third exclusive feature of the World Wide Web is disintermediation. Disintermediation "refers to the emergence of a new communication model based on the

¹⁰ In support of this argument, see Van Dijk (1991: 9) and Burnett and Marshall (2003)

¹¹ See glossary for more of these features.

disappearance of, or at least a significant reduction in, the role of the storyteller” (Bentivegna, 2002: 55). This shows the diminished role of journalists who construct a particular angle of information presentation from raw material such as documents speeches and others. With hypertexts in websites, users construct their own set of information in accordance to their agenda and desires. Hypertext web structure enables users to access multiple, interconnected and related information (Flew, 2002: 16). The processes of disintermediation permit users the freedom of choice and control of information presentation.

The fourth feature of web-based communication is the speed of bridging geographical distance. This is arguably one of the strongest advantages of the Internet (Van Dijk, 1999: 17). For this reason, Hanssen et al (2000: 65) argue that web users are no longer bound by geographical boundaries since their search for information, communication and participation are based on specific shared interests rather than geography.

In summary, the argument here is that the definition and description of new media should not be based only on system features and general technological characteristics, but it must also incorporate the uses, roles and social implications of the new communication medium. We also described the Internet, particularly the web as a distinct medium of communications with distinct characteristics. “It is indeed undisputable that the Internet appears to offer the best available opportunity (as compared to mainstream media) for the consultation of texts and gathering of consensus for initiatives, in other words for the mobilization of subjects sharing the same concerns” (Bentivegna, 2002: 65). Therefore, it is worth questioning the extent to which the above-mentioned Internet potentials translate to politics.

2.7 New Era of Politics: Transformation of politics to e-politics

In recent years, there has been a growth of number of scholars who argue that the mass media is unable to adequately perform its political and democratic role in society. For instance scholars such as Elliott (1982), Garnham (1986), Keane (1993) and Boyd-Barrett (1995) criticize the commercialization of the “mass media”, which they believe

consequentially reduces the public sphere's role of the mass media in society. In this regard, Malina (1999: 23) argues that "notions of political freedom and citizenship are rooted in the idea of the public sphere. Whilst commentators over time have defended the (mass) media as a sphere of public debate, our traditional media have been accompanied by notions of top-down, paternalistic, one-to-many, non-democratic invisibility".

Boyd-Barrett (1995: 231) argues that the commodification and the desire thereof to attract advertisers and maximize profit distanced the "mass media" from effectively furthering the aspirations of democracy. This waning role of the mass media as a form of public sphere is well documented by Garnham (1986: 245) who proved that even the so-called public media such as the BBC (or SABC) are intensely infringed by commercial interests and thence no longer make a "noble effort to address their listeners as rational political beings rather than as consumers"¹². Elliot (1982) argues that the basic role of the press was based on two roles: to provide useful information and highlight political controversy. For Elliot (1982: 246), "Print was the medium, which underpinned the concept of the public sphere by providing an arena for political debate". However, over time, both these functions have been utterly transformed and "with the transformation of news into a commodity, the political function has been eclipsed".

A number of scholars argue that the Internet as a distinct medium of communication can better facilitate the democratizing role of the media in society (e.g. Malina 1999, Papachirssi (2004), Flew 2002 and Poster 2005). This argument is encouraged by the existence of distinct Internet characteristics that are relatively absent in other communication mediums. As a result, this section questions and debates the extent to which the Internet (the web) as a distinct medium of communication facilitates a new era of politics better or worse than the one provided by the "mainstream", "mass" or "old" media.

Writing about the emergence of a new era in politics, Axford (2001) argues that the media drives politics and politics is equally driven by the media, so the causal factor

¹² Terms BBC- British Broadcasting Corporation, SABC- South African Broadcasting Corporation.

thereof is increasingly elusive. Nevertheless, Axford (2001) reminds us of theoretical perspectives that explain the relationship between new media and politics. Technological determinism credits new media with the powers to reconstruct politics for the better. On the contrary, the social shaping of technology perspective or “skeptics” as Axford calls them, trust in human agency and social structures and therefore resist that new media change politics. “In fact skeptics tend to view new media as instrumentalities for the more-or-less efficient delivery of usual politics” (Axford, 2001: 9).

Although Flew (2002: 110) does not endorse a technological fix to politics as most technological determinist thinkers, he identifies a void which new media can fill. He argues that “the Internet has been seen as a means, by which the decline in political participation can be addressed, and a new, more egalitarian and participatory form of citizenship and politics can evolve”. This is supported by Norris (2001: 98) who argues that the Internet offers prospects to reconnect people to the political process.

First, there have been arguments that the Internet revitalizes Habermas’ (1989) public sphere. The Internet gets credit for its ability to support a pluralistic diversity of intersecting public sphere (Agre, 2002: 311).¹³ Habermas’s (1989) attempt was to conceptualize a forum for rational public debate free from ideological pressures and commercial motives entrenched by self-gains. The notion of the public sphere is about public opinion formation that guarantees access of all and freedom of expression. Habermas (1989: 153) illustrate his point:

By the end of the eighteenth century there had emerged, in Germany, a public sphere, although a small one, where critical-rational discussions was carried on...The societies for enlightenment, cultural associations, secret freemasonry lodges, and orders of *illuminati* were associations constituted by the free, that is, private, decisions of their founding members, based on voluntary membership, and characterized internally by egalitarian practices of sociability, free discussion and decision by majority.

¹³ It should be noted that discussions on the public sphere are heavily summarised for the basic fact that the public sphere is a very broad area of study, which is beyond the scope of this research. Besides, discussion on the public sphere are here taken less as theory and more as generally agreed ideals of participatory democracy.

According to Habermas (2004: 350), during the eighteenth century, coffee houses and saloons facilitated the political public sphere and represented a critical voice that analyzed and often opposed government actions. The debates were traditionally between the bourgeoisies and gained independence from all institutions. “The bourgeois public sphere created a forum in which the authority of the state could be criticized and called upon to justify itself before an informed and reasoning public” (Thomson, 1991: 109). These discussions were later in the seventeenth century facilitated by the development of the newspaper industry.

Boyd- Barrett (1995) argues that discussions in coffee houses were purely on behalf of the broader social and political interests than about self-interests of those who were physically present. Therefore, the bourgeois public sphere could be understood as the sphere of private individuals assembled into a public body (Boyd- Barrett, 1995: 231). “The public sphere takes place when citizens, exercising the rights of assembly and association, gather as public bodies to discuss issues of the day, specifically those of political concern” (McQuail, 2002: 197). In this case, the Internet reinvigorates Habermas’ public sphere since online forums provide this space for rational debate.

Considering that the mass media fails to effectively perform its democratic role of the public sphere, it is observable that renewed attention on the revitalization of the public sphere is currently directed to the Internet (Malina, 1999: 23). In this era of politics, the Internet enhances the rationalization of power through public discussions and thus, public opinion emerges as an outcome of rational critical debates. The existence of a democratically adequate public sphere depends both on the quality of information (discussions) and quantity of participation in cyberspace (McQuail, 2002: 197).

There is a growing body of thought that articulates the belief that recent developments in communications technologies contain within them the potential to enhance democratic politics (Hague and Loader, 1999: 1). Norris (2001: 97) supposes that such rhetoric are influenced by perceptible powers of the Internet in “facilitating the ability of citizens to gather information about campaign issues, to mobilize community networks, to network

diverse coalitions around policy problems, and to lobby elected representatives. Bulleting board systems, chat groups, listservs, email, and multi-user domains represent a new public sphere available to exchange ideas, debate issues, and mobilize opinion”.

Websites have indeed become powerful political tools because of their inherent potentials that are not apparent in mainstream mass media. Flew (2002: 185) and Rice (2002) see numerous advantages that web-based communication have on the Internet era of politics. To recapitulate, these are as follows: first, there is a greater scope of horizontal communication that supersedes top-down communication, which makes many-to-many political interaction possible (Rice, 2002: 111). Lack of territorial barriers increases the amount of information now accessible on online websites, which is direct and not filtered by the news media and spin-doctors. Third, the Internet raises the capacity to challenge elite politicians like presidents and directors by grassroots mobilization of groups and citizens. Castells (2002) also cited interactivity and improved information diffusion as the highest of the advantages pivoted by the Internet to heighten politics and make possible rational and knowledgeable citizens. These advantages are discerned and discussed next.

The foundation of a democratic society rests in the availability of information and the formation of knowledge. Digital information diffusion making political and social information flexible in terms of how it can be stored, used and manipulated has become an apparent feature of web-based communication. Sharing this enthusiasm is Richard (1999: 74) who argues that the Internet provides easy, quick and updated information that can also be retrieved upon request. “More information, and easier access to it, would lead to communicative possibilities of the Internet, wield power through more frequent and more thorough forms of consultations” (Hirschkop, 1999: 215). Access to reliable and diverse information from a variety of political perspectives encourages citizens to make sound decision about important political issues and thus prepare them for sound political participation.

Government and institutional websites provide information and tools to equip the public with the capacity to participate in the public sphere. It is hoped that information available

via the Internet has the potential to allow the public to become more knowledgeable about political affairs. “Surfing the web not only makes it possible to read all the periodicals one wishes but also permits access to un-bridged text of a statement made by a specific institution or individual on a specific occasion” (Bentivegna, 2002, 51). Therefore, websites allow for growth and expansion of information available to politicians and the citizens at large. Information provision, according to Norris (2001: 102) increases transparency in government decision-making and promotes accountability because it clarifies who is responsible for what issues and services.

Websites also have potentials to promote interaction among political leaders and between them and citizens. Castells (2001) argues that the Internet is emancipating in nature because it mitigates centralized hierarchies, which thence facilitates flexible and coordinated decision-making and horizontal communications. Also noticeable is the leverage that is created by websites where citizens can raise their concerns and have their concerns reciprocally addressed in the website by political leaders or debated by other citizens. “The most technologically striking interactivity consists of ‘real-time’ conversations conducted over the screen, where contributions appear instantly and are responded to instantly as well” (Hirschkop, 1999: 211). Citizens can send e-mails to organizations or government thereby presumably contributing to the processes of decision-making.

Norris (2002) argues that mass participation is viewed as the core or most valued democratic function in politics. “Many conclude that if the Internet fails in these regards, then digital technologies will have minimal impact on democracy and democratization” (Norris, 2002: 103). The Internet is able to provide more information with speed and therefore provide the bases (knowledge) for citizens’ involvement in political discussions. Communication and discussions are at the basics of participation that contribute towards democracy.

The Internet provides a new political era because it makes possible the inclusion of many in political discussions. It is a “communication medium that allows, for the first time, the

communication of many-to-many, in chosen time, on a global scale” (Castells, 2004: 12). Websites do show greater potential for an inclusive public sphere than that provided by the old media because geographical boundaries are mitigated. Moreover, websites make it financially viable for the public to familiarize themselves with political proceedings without baring the problem of establishing where political meetings are held (Poster, 1995).

Dominick (2002: 309) argues that citizens connected on the Internet can participate in many political deliberations. They can exchange electronic mails, participate in online political discussions through chat rooms, download information and utilize links to other sites and more information of similar interests and scan through complex political documents through use of hypertext. Web-based communication will inevitably provide more power to the average person to make greater inputs and impacts to political issues (Gauntlett, 2000).

2.8 Challenges to the Internet era of politics

Postmodernism brings forth the argument that a subsequent number of new communication technologies have been developed, and the development of the Internet and the web is only a continuation which might or might not change the nature of politics. According to Bell (1976: 467), postmodernism is the perspective that “information is becoming the strategic resource and transforming agent of the post-industrial society...just as the combination of energy, resources and machine technology were the transforming agent of industrial society”. Concentrating on the “old media”, Mosco (2004) explains why he asserts that the excitement over “new media” technologies is an ‘ever-ending story’:

Cyberspace enthusiasts encourage us to think that we have reached the end of history, the end of geography and the end of politics. Everything has changed. So we can apply the mute button to whatever has come before. After all, history has nothing to say to us because it knows nothing of cyberspace. But quite to the contrary, history is filled with myth making about technology and has more to say than ever before about how we invent myth whenever we invent technology

(Mosco 2004: 117)

This enthusiasm of new media and declared possibilities of social and political transformation is not a new phenomenon. In his chapter '*when old media were new*' Mosco (2004: 119-140) argues that the Internet and the web is not looming the change of politics anymore than previously discovered communication technologies. For him, new media is a never-ending story because other new media technologies are still yet to be discovered and again, media academics and other stakeholders will yet sing the same over optimistic tune. Poster (2001) is also skeptical of postmodern enthusiasm for e-politics as he argues that a simple extension of existing political institutions to a new medium of communication such as websites in the absence of a coherent alternative political program "that does not only involve instruction but also acknowledges participation of all and new political actors, is a fatal attempt of reviving politics".

Axford (2001) and Poster (2001) affirm that politics has not yet been revitalized, let alone refined by the emergence of new media technologies such as the Internet and websites. In addition, Bentavegna (2002: 50) argues, "If anything, ordinary politics in all its complexity and vitality has invaded and captured cyberspace". Rather than reinvigorating and rearranging political powers either nationally or internationally, the Internet has remained dominated by the same actors and ideology currently dominating other mediums of communications. Hague and Loader (1999: 6) argue "ICTs are often used to augment existing practice rather than revolutionize institutions". For this reason, Halloran (2002, 50) suggests that it is paramount that the nature of politics itself be altered to a point where power dynamics are resolved and top-down governance is mitigated before employing the Internet (websites) to facilitate political integration between citizens, political structures and social actors.

Although the advantages of the Internet are indisputable, Papachirssi (2004: 388) believes that they do not instantaneously guarantee a fair, representative and egalitarian public sphere. This is because various factors such as access and lack of participation have negative implications to the public sphere. Poster (2005) argues that "the public sphere has ceased to be a space open to the members of a society and has acquired instead the

features of a place in which different organizations represent interests and attempts to achieve a consensus among themselves”.

Access to the Internet is one of the preliminary requirements for political interaction or any other interaction on the Internet. Access or lack of access to the Internet either bridges the digital divide or widens it. Therefore, it is imperative to understand how the digital divide impacts the nature of e-politics and participation thereof. The term “digital divide” is marked by differential and unequal access and use of information technologies. According to Rowena (2001: 10) “digital divide” is a term that describes the disadvantage of those who are unable or chose not to use information technologies. Rowena (2001: 2) elaborates that:

In the global digital information age, those who are either unable to access the Internet and the World Wide Web through the application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) are increasingly disadvantaged in their access to information.

Internet access may vary according to specific needs and the degree of access. Selwyn, (2004: 848) suggests “two types of access: whether people have access at all and the hierarchy of access amongst those that do”. The digital divide may be in terms of information, resources, applications and services (Selwyn, 2004: 347). For this reason, Internet access cannot be defined solely in terms of the availability or the unavailability of the physical technology. Such a definition should also include access to information and access to particular content.

Rowen (2001: 4) illustrates four potential causes of the digital divide that must be taken into account if the digital divide is to be addressed. The four issues are: Lack of physical access to the Internet, inadequate computing skills, attitudes and content of the technology. Lack of physical access to the Internet is caused by lack of robust telecommunications infrastructure, cost of the technology, insufficient bandwidth for Internet connection, while lack of skills and attitude is often perpetuated by low level of computing skills and illiteracy. “Material access to a technology is useless without the requisite skills, knowledge and support to use it effectively” (Selwyn, 2004: 348). The

skills related problem can only be addressed by investing in education and programs intended to upgrade computing skills. Selwyn (2004: 348) believes that content contribute towards the divide. For instance, if users log into the Internet only to find the same kind of information diffusion and content available from other communication medium, they may lose faith in the technology. Language used in the websites and the Internet at large can also act as a barring factor to those who do not understand the English language which is dominant in many websites.

According to Garnham (2004: 360), the successes of the bourgeoisies' public sphere depended on one preliminary principle, namely, equal access. He further explains, "all participants within the public sphere were on terms of equal power because costs of participation were widely and evenly spread and because social wealth within the bourgeoisies was evenly distributed" (Garnham, 2004: 360). Castells (2004: 206-207) argues that this is no more the case, because the geography of Internet diffusion, productions and access largely rest at the hands of the rich few nations. Uneven distribution of wealth in today's world raises the stakes and cost of access, which consequently equates to uneven access to the public sphere. Differential power relations and resource distribution were causes of unequal access to the bourgeoisies' public sphere and continue to be barrier-factors to the Internet public sphere today (Garnham, 2004: 361)¹⁴.

Access to the Internet is not the only problem leading to poor political participation in the Internet era. Access to the Internet does not guarantee enhanced political participation or enlightened political discourse. This is because "organizing, tracking and going through information may be a task that requires skills and time that several do not possess" (Papachirissi, 2004: 383). The convenience of fast and cheap access to more information does not necessarily render all citizens more informed, or more willing to engage in political discussions. The Internet does not plant any political interest to those who are generally uninterested (Bentivegna, 2002: 59). Therefore, only those who are already

¹⁴ The digital divide and issues relating to Internet access contain extensive literature and arguments that are not discussed here. For a further study on these issues see Campbell (2001), Norris (2001), Gillward (2005)

politically active will dominate this new medium. Another challenge highlighted by Croteau and Hoynes (2003: 322) is the use of websites for entertainment purposes and not strictly for information or political purposes. Croteau and Hoynes (2003: 326) see the problem as caused by commercialism that perpetuates trivial citizens' participation in political-related matters because they are increasingly demanded elsewhere as consumers.

2.9 Conclusions

This chapter defined “new media” and introduced the web as a distinct medium of communication with distinct characteristics to facilitate a new era of politics. Potentials and challenges perceptible in this era of Internet politics are highlighted. Reflecting on this era of politics, Bentivegna (2002: 52) likens the Internet to a two-headed image with one face representing the technology of freedom and another representing the technology of control. Here, the potential of the Internet to foster pro-democratic implications of politics by increasing public access to information and heightening participation is recognized, but with equal vintage, the re-launch of existing model of top-down political communication characterized by normative structures of control is also preserved. From this view, it is often argued that the Internet and web-based political communication have not and cannot revolutionize politics because it is currently not accessible to a large number of potential users.

Do communication technologies shape society or does society shape communication technologies? If technological determinism is right, then, it can be anticipated that the Internet will revolutionaries politics and eventually lead to a democratic society. On the other hand, if the social shaping of technology is right in its analysis then, the Internet will just add number of communication technologies without changing politics and governance unless the conduct of politics itself is altered. In this case, institutions and individuals drive political changes and then use the Internet to assist in defined goals.

While new media offer useful ways for communication within societies, there are questions relating to how new media can respond to such challenges as the digital divide, participation (or lack of participation) and the issue of inclusion and exclusion in the

public sphere. These questions are necessary to understand the role and impact of new media in transforming politics to e-politics and e-governance.

In order to gauge the impacts of communication technologies (Internet) in politics and to answer the above questions, it is often advisable (Agre, 2002: 316) to take an institutional or application approach. Governance is chosen here because it is centrally concerned with information dissemination and feedback, participation and control and other political issues. The next chapter proceeds to describe the role and uses of this new communication medium (websites) in facilitating good governance in a way that leads to democracy. The section describes definition, practices and models of e-governance. Potentials and good practice in e-governance, uses and participation of e-governance portraits' are also discussed.

CHAPTER 3

E-governance

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter described the changing era of politics as affected by new communication technologies (Internet and the web). It was argued that the web is providing a new political landscape with both potentials and challenges to facilitate a democratic society. Hague and Loader (1999: 3) argue that a variety of models, experiments and initiatives are emerging in response to the challenge of (re) invigorating democratic institutions and democratic practices by utilizing new media technologies. This chapter describes how government institutions are using websites as distinct medium of communication to further the course of democracy within this new political landscape.

Hamdok (2001: 4) defines governance as “the science of government behavior and performance, including the exercise of economics and political and administrative authority to manage a country’s affairs in all levels”. Most political systems of governance that are local, national, continental and even global in scope are increasingly embracing the Internet and the web as a form of direct political communication with citizens using e-governance systems.

E-governance is defined (Fang, 2002: 2) as a way of co-coordinating, planning, implementing decisions, delivering services as well as performing all transactions and activities necessary for the benefit of citizens through new media, most particularly through web-based communication. Panganiban (2004: 11) defines e-governance as “the use of information and communication technologies to transform government by making it more accessible, effective and accountable”. The role of e-governance websites is to support and simplify governance for the stimulation of good governance (Basu, 2004: 10).

Fang (2002: 5) and Panganiban (2004: 7) distinguish between e-governance and e-government. They argue that e-government concerns mere delivery of government services and information that is not different from traditional systems offline. E-governance on the contrary, concerns refined form of governance that allows for citizens' direct participation and choice of information presentation that is horizontal in nature (Fang, 2002: 5). This paper maintains that e-democracy exists following the success of e-governance. In this case, e-governance is seen as a process in the right direction towards e-democracy, which is hence seen as an end. This research explores the practices of e-governance rather than the outcome of "e-democracy". This section takes into account general trends regarding technological, institutional and participatory terms and conditions of e-governance successes and failures.

The role of institutional and governmental websites, according to Gil-Garcia (2006: 1), is threefold: for service provision, communication improvement and citizen engagement with organizational policies and programs. The benefit of website service delivery is that services are accessible 24 hours a day rather than being constrained by normal working (office) hours. Other, significant advantages associated with websites include cost reduction in organizing and information diffusion expenditure (Basu, 2004: 114). Operation integration, organizational control and power reinforcement can also improve because of the introduction of an e-governance website (Gil-Garcia, 2006: 3). Websites have the power to promote administrative reform within government structures and departments in such a way that service and information delivery is improved.

This kind of direct politics, facilitated by web-based communication permits political organization the leverage to freely propagate and disseminate information of desire without having information scrutinized and filtered by journalists. Richards (1999: 74) argues that through this channel (institutional website), governments are able to bypass the media and tell their story directly to the public, which therefore makes possible favorable news-spin and information management. The Internet becomes a "tool to send unfiltered messages to the public, keeping intact the departmental view" (Richards, 1999: 80). The advantage of direct communication is that government is now able to

disseminate all information without the limitation of space or mediation that may cut relevant information. However, unfiltered information may impact negatively on democracy if it is designed mainly as propaganda to deceive and twist the truth.

Fang (2002: 2) outlines a multidirectional model of communication and interaction in e-governance systems. Communication and interaction, according to Fang (2002) is supposed to flow equally as follows: from Government-to-Citizens (G2C); Citizens-to-Government (C2G); Government-to-Business (G2B); Business-to-Government (B2G); Government-to-Government (G2G); Government-to-Nonprofit-Organizations (G2N), Nonprofit organizations-to-Government (N2G) and Government-to-Employees (G2E). Unlike models developed by other scholars such as Jaeger (2003) and Basu (2004), Fang's (2002) model of communication and interaction is two-way and horizontal. The model shows interaction and communication from government to diverse stakeholders such as citizens, business and nonprofit organizations. Most importantly the model allows for communication and interaction to also flow from these stakeholders heading back to the government, which hence proves some degree of reciprocity.

Heeks (2002) defines three domains of e-government, namely e-administration, e-citizens and e-society¹⁵. Although these models focus on different aspects of e-governance, their functions and activities cannot be completely separated (Jansen, 2005: 4). E-administration deals with improving the internal workings of the government (Heeks, 2002: 4). This may include cutting both financial and time constraints involved in government management and administration. In this way, a website acts as an organization tool to assist in administrations such as planning, monitoring, controlling and connecting government structures and organs. Milner (1999: 74) argues that such a stakeholder-driven initiative focuses on ensuring better communication and administration between internal stakeholders and internal structures.

¹⁵ These three domains of e-governance has been developed by many scholars under slightly different names e.g, see Basu (2004), Jansen (2005), Milner (1999: 74), Backus (2000: 5-7)

A website can act as an organizational tool by allowing government the ability to organize activities and inform citizens, staff and stakeholders about coming meetings and other critical information. Norris (2001: 103) argues that governments and political organizations can use the Internet and their websites as tools for “mobilizing civic society, promoting transparency and accountability in the decision making process, and strengthening the effective delivery of government services to citizens”. This is because the availability of the website makes government more accessible and transparent for public scrutiny (Malina, 1999: 31). For this matter Castells, (2002: 137) argues that the web has maintained its image as a tool for organizing, informing and action, dominating and counter-dominating.

Carley (2002: 207-217) illustrates the advantages associated with e-administration. Communications among networks of organizations is likely to be improved by use of e-mails and other Internet tools (Constructor, 2002: 202). For instance, interaction network, particularly communication between organs of the organization will be positively affected and therefore increase the speed of providing and circulating knowledge and information (data and other information including documents). Access to increased information will lead to greater transparency, accountability and trust among organizational members and the public (Carley, 2002: 211).

E-citizens’ initiative enhances the relationship between government and the governed. Websites make it easy for governments to talk to citizens (information diffusion) and to listen to citizens by making space for citizens’ input (participation), thereby limiting the conventional way of using top-down approach (Heeks, 2002: 6). Such citizen-centric initiative takes into account “the interests, needs, experiences and expectations of the private citizen” in a manner that simplifies the process of service delivery through institutional websites (Milner, 1999: 74).

E-society is a domain of e-governance that assists in building external relations and interactions with other institutions such as Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs), international communities, partners and other external stakeholders. Basu (2004: 113)

summarises all these domains as he argues that government's websites intend to interact with citizens and internal and external stakeholders.

Backus (2001) believes that the division between e-administration, e-citizens and e-society is perpetuated by exclusive focuses on either internal or external objectives of the e-governance initiative. The external objective is usually to fulfill the public's needs through "speedy, transparent, accountable, efficient and effective interaction with citizens" (Backus, 2000: 2). This model also focuses on enhancing government's public image and legitimacy (Milner, 1999: 64). On the other hand, the internal objective of e-government is to refine the performance of government administration and activities. There have been arguments and disagreements among scholars with regard to what constitute good practice in e-governance systems. This is what we turn to next.

3.2 Good Practice in e-governance

According to (Fang, 2002: 12), a successful e-government system is one that is comprehensive, meaning that citizens are able to do everything they need in one e-government website. In this case, an e-government website must be integrated to avoid duplication of services and data in different websites. Moreover, a successful system must be easily accessible from various search engines and must provide up-to-date links to other related sites that may further the cause of a citizen (Fang, 2002: 12). An e-government website that is bound to succeed is one that is transparent and accessible to all, meaning that digital divide should not negatively impact the equality of access. It is essential that the site also caters for the disabled and the less literate (Fang, 2002: 12).

Gil-Garcia (2006) explored integrated relationships between organizational, institutional and contextual factors integral to the success or failure of state websites in the United States. He found that organizational factors such as institutional goals, the size of the organization, computer related skills and marketing strategy (to promote the website) directly determined the success or failure of the websites. On the other hand, the socio-political context of the organization, such as Internet access, indirectly influenced the efficiency of the state website. In this case, Gil-Garcia (2006) asserts that both

organizational factors and socio-political factors impact and determine the uses of technology. Hence, all these factors must be taken into account in order to develop an effective e-governance system.

The challenge of developing and implementing new architectures of governance is daunting. Brewer et al (2006) argue that designing and implementing e-governance systems involves more than just improving the instrumental processes of governance. It also involves applying democratic values and developing system features to uphold these values. “Design decisions are not merely technical or even merely administrative. They are political acts that have important implications for conduct of public administration and democracy” (Brewer et al, 2006: 473).

Hacker (1999) measured the goals of the US White House Computer Mediated Communication CMC (e-governance) system (www.whitehouse.gov) and correlated the achievements of the e-government program on the website. His conclusion focused widely on “what the system planners promised and what the system has delivered as a means of political communication” (Hacker, 1999: 108). The White House claimed that the e-governance website would connect government and people, ensure accessibility of government information, increase citizen participation in governance, lessen top-down political information dissemination and hence minimize political disaffection and dissatisfaction (Hacker, 1999). In this study, Hacker (1999: 113) found evidence that the White House system of e-governance was facilitating the ability of users to contact government officials and agencies, to retrieve information, to conduct online petitioning, to coordinate political activities and to help people locate others with similar interests (in discussion forums).

In summary, Hacker (1999) concluded that the e-governance website promoted greater connectivity between government and citizens (through e-mails) and increased government information accessible to citizens. However, these did not enhance democracy or reduce political disaffection since top-down information diffusion prolonged and citizens’ participation in government was not affected by the new medium

of communication (Hacker, 1999: 108). The example of the White House system of e-governance shows that the success of an e-governance initiative depends on providing both vertical and horizontal communication, rather than just one¹⁶.

Flew (2002) argues that distinctions between e-administration, e-citizens and e-services produce either e-governance or e-democracy, noting that e-governance involves top-down transfer of information from the government to the governed. Here, “the government enhances the efficiency and effectiveness of their existing operations through online service delivery” on the website (Flew, 2002, 186). On the other hand, e-democracy constitutes engagement of citizens in decision-making processes with broadened scope of public participation rather than “preferred outcomes dictated from above” (Flew, 2002, 186). Backus (2001:1) also notes similar distinctions as he argues that “e-democracy refers to the processes and structures that encompass all forms of electronic interaction between government (elected) and the citizen (electorate)”: However, Flew (2002, 188) concludes that most political organizations and government websites facilitate solitary e-governance (top down information) at the expense of e-democracy involving citizen participation or acknowledgement of such participation by the government.

In support of Flew’s (2002) hypothesis, Hague and Loader (1999: 13) argue that there is a noticeable increase in local, regional, states and inter-governmental websites. Nevertheless, they suggest that such initiatives display three common traits: First, Hague and Loader (1999: 13) argue that there is a great propensity of using websites for information delivery rather than as a medium of citizens’ participation and a means of receiving feedback. There is “a tendency to focus on providing public service information to “users” or “customers” as opposed to outlining information and justifying policies for citizens” (Hague and Loader, 1999: 13). Thirdly, a large number of governments still emphasise on setting the agenda for public deliberation (on predetermined issues) rather than encouraging the public to set the agenda and decide on issues of public discourse and deliberation (Hague and Loader, 1999: 13).

¹⁶ Both these concepts have been covered in the previous chapter (page 22).

Norris (2002) assessed performances of e-government systems across the globe, examining *content* and *communication interactivity* in the websites. Content or information transparency was examined using indicators such as contact details, organizational information and frequency of updates, while the extent of communication interactivity was measured by the availability of links and opportunities for citizens' input and participation (Norris, 2002: 120). The study found that e-government websites scored twice in information provision than they did in communication interactivity. Moreover, governments used websites "as top-down mechanism for posting information such as mission statements, details about the structure and activities of the organization, and official reports, rather than providing clickable links to email officials" (Norris, 2002: 120). This duplicates existing channels and forms of governance rather than redefining and refining the nature of governance and politics necessary for democracy.

Although the Internet provides options of one-to-one, many-to-many and one-to-many, flow of communications, Castells (2001: 137) argues that most communication researches conclude that governments remain focused on one-to-many flow of traditional political communications which can still be equated to mass media. This form of communication, according to Castells (2001: 156) resembles traditional form of governance "where relevant diffusion of political information reaches a large number of citizens in innumerable capacity but with not real interaction and feedback". Lax (2000: 159) poses these questions: "If information provision is central to a better-informed electorate, should we be concerned about the quality or veracity of that information?" More fundamentally, is provision of information the sole determinant of more exerted political participation and influence? Although these questions shall not be answered here, the role of information in governance is addressed.

One use of websites for governmental or intergovernmental organizations is to deliver information from the organization to the people. This is predominantly one-way flow of information that has been apparent in mainstream media. Stipulation of government documents, speeches, new legislation and other information is increasingly apparent in

such websites (Norris, 2001: 113). Hence, in this case, websites still serve the role previously facilitated by mainstream media, although it becomes sophisticated to navigate, organize materials and search for specific information through search engines. Lax (2000, 161) however, argues that websites are supposed to serve not one, but both roles of one-way (information dissemination) and two-way (information recipient) for the best of political relations to be maintained and the content of such information should be empowering rather than only informative.

Hirschkop (1999: 214) argues that access to information was never the defining problem because it is already available (in print and broadcast) but power still remains centralized. “Knowledge is a great thing and its pursuit a noble act. But lack of it is not the cause of our undemocratic life, and more of it whether on the screen or in print, will not make for a more democratic polity” (Hirschkop, 1999: 214). The focus should not only be on the information accessible, but must also be on the kind of content, existing information needs, patterns of information delivery and retrieval. “The value of ICTs to citizens is heavily contingent upon the type and quality of content to which they (government and institutions) provide access” (Hague and Loader, 1999: 11).

Information diffusion cannot guarantee proper usage of e-governance websites. It is essential that the kind of information diffused is not only of large quantity (mostly about the government institution itself) but also of high quality. It remains that the government as an institution determines the kind of information to be diffused. For that matter, Governments must be encouraged by the need not only to inform, but also to educate and empower citizens into action. Information diffusion, according to Basu (2004), is determined by the stage of the e-governance website. This is discussed next.

3.3 Stages involved in e-governance transformation

Basu (2004) argues that e-governance is not a static operation but a process with different asymmetric levels. Over time, e-governance websites evolve and mature in almost a similar pattern “which starts with broadcasting, then, interaction, followed by

transformation and finally, integration” (Basu, 2004: 113)¹⁷. According to this pattern, in the broadcasting mode, the government provides one-way (vertical) flow of communications. “The value to the public is that government information is publicly accessible, processes are described and become more transparent, which improves democracy and services” (Basu, 2004: 113). The interactive mode, that is the second stage of progress in e-governance websites, strives for interaction with citizens to a point “where people can ask questions via e-mail, use search engines, and download forms and documents” (Basu, 2004: 113). Within this type of website, citizens have relative control over information presentation. The transaction stage is a more in-depth attempt of service delivery where citizens can make all transactions (e.g. applying for identification documents, pay taxes online, online voting and etc) within the website. The final stage of e-governance evolution would mean that a one-stop contact point is created. This resembles the success of the e-government website due to the fact that this type of website is characterized by both vertical and horizontal communication to a point where integration is three-way, between citizens, government internal structures and external stakeholders. Basu (2004: 114-115) argues that “in this phase, cost savings, efficiency and customer satisfaction are at the highest possible levels”.

Davison, Wagner and Ma (2005: 284) developed a similar line of e-government maturity model. The transformation begins with online presence, followed by a second stage of basic capabilities (ability to integrate departments), service availability usually in a form of information diffusion, followed by a more mature delivery of services, and then ends with the final stage of service transformation that integrates all of the above stages. Fang (2002: 9-10) argues that e-government progress should be measured by taking into consideration different stages of development. According to him, the first stage is the emergence of web presence, which is marked by the availability of the website, followed by more “enhanced web presence” with an increased number of websites belonging to different departments. The third stage is characterized by interactive web presence that allows for communicative exchange between users and government, while the

¹⁷ See also Kaaya (2004: 42-44) and Brewer et al (2006: 484-486) for progress stages involved in e-governance.

transactional web presence deepens integration, information control and interaction. A fully integrated web presence is one that includes a one-stop-shop of e-governance (Fang (2002: 9-10). An integrated e-governance website will most likely have a discussion forum as this is essential for online interaction.

3.4 Online Debating forums

One most important democratic feature in e-governance websites is online debating forums. Debating forums and their nature of deliberation are very essential for the facilitation of the public sphere. The notion of deliberative democracy fosters a strong public sphere, and a vibrant form of public discussion. Jassen and Kies (2005) define online political forums as a space for discussion provided by the World Wide Web that can be hosted on a local national and international level. Debating forums are a type of communication that is characterized by conversation, response, suggestions, persuasions, collective decision-making and participation of will. Bohman (1996: 5) argues “political decision-making is legitimate insofar as its policies are produced in a process of public discussion and debate”. Only at the presence of such deliberation will citizens render policies, strategies and laws legitimate and acceptable (Witschege, 2003: 4).

There are a number of prerequisites necessary for an effective online deliberation process. It is essential that there should exist: equality of participants and influences, rationality of the debate, an absence of an influential judge rather than the participants themselves and no restrictions on individual perspectives which thus creates diversity of views (Jassen and Kies (2005). These prerequisites have to be present in order for a public sphere to be functional and successful.

According to Witschege (2002: 9), “aspects like fear of the consequences of politics and its controversies, fear of isolation, feeling of inadequacy, perceived lack of knowledge, unwillingness to challenge group norms, fear of harming others and the fear of contradicting a majority all contribute to a general avoidance of genuine political participation”. However, the Internet has potentials to heighten political deliberation by first reducing the psychological barriers mentioned above. It makes political deliberation

possible by mitigating constraints of time and distance and by increasing the level of knowledge (by information diffusion of all necessary documents) and access (Witschge, 2002: 9). These encourage people into political discourse who under circumstances of face-to-face interaction, would otherwise not participate.

Heterogeneity is one essential aspect of online forums that increases the diversity of ideas, views and participation (Witschge, 2002: 10). One other encouraging character of online debating forums is anonymity. Here, people feel free to contribute, criticize and complain without fear of isolation, disapproval or humiliation because their true identity is withheld (Jasses and Kies, 2005: 319). In this case, the Internet reduces political and social hierarchies that exist offline. Therefore, the Internet offers greater prospects for equal participation in the public sphere, to a point where power, gender, age and race disappears.

Jasses and Kies (2005: 319) argue that although the purpose of online political forums is to enable political interaction with the government, studies suggest that “debates were not as constructive as expected and that government representatives did not participate”. The quality of participation can be irrational since most participants in forums post messages that simply demonstrate their personal opinion rather than political and policy orientated discussions and facts. Anonymity further raises the stakes of irrationality since, participants cannot be held accountable for their contributions. As a remedy towards this problem, Jassen and Kies’s (2005: 320) suggestion is that “if a political debating forum is well organized, by offering, for instance, relevant information and updated summaries, it can be successful in terms of its impacts”. Participation in e-governance is depended on the functionality of the online forum, but other issues are also at play.

For example, Georgia City in the United States is divided by of race, economic class and urban/rural areas. With this case study, Thomas and Streit (2003) examine what proportion of the population uses governmental websites and why they use those websites? What are the impacts of digital divide in e-governance? (Thomas and Streit,

2003: 84). In short Thomas and Streit (2003) seek to understand patterns of citizens usage of governmental websites.

Citizens contact government in web-based settings for the same reasons they do in traditional government offices. Usually, citizens contact government offices mainly for needs of particular information or assistance rather than large-scale policy issues (Thomas and Strait, 2003: 85). In this case, 64 percent visit government websites to obtain information while 47 percent seek contact information for particular issues. So it was concluded that citizens access governmental websites fundamentally for information retrieval. Similar conclusions have been reached by Hacker's (1999: 112) study of the US White House system of e-governance. He concludes that only 35 percent of citizen use the websites to get more information about political processes while the rest used the e-government websites to redistribute documents online (68 percent) and for current affairs (48 percent).

Thomas and Streit (2003) and Hacker (1999) found noticeable differences between experienced users and less experienced users. They explain these differences as follows:

This difference is caused by the "digital divide" since less experienced users are usually better educated, urban based, wealthier and younger than the less experienced, while experienced users may use e-governance to (1) get information, (2) get contact information and (3) express their opinion, less experienced users are more likely to use e-governance predominately to get particular information about services.

(Thomas and Streit, 2003: 99)

According to Rice (2002), Internet access and use varies and this is most definitely influenced by gender, age, demographic, education levels and so on. In a study done the White House CMC system (e-governance), Hacker (1999: 111) found that users of the system were young, educated and wealthier than the general population. Rice (2002) also cited lack of user friendliness as one of the barriers to Internet use. Other additional barriers to Internet use may be lack of computers, illiteracy and the rising price of Internet access.

There is a relationship between digital divide and democracy. The digital divide has an impact on the range of service delivery in e-governance because service delivery would be unfair as it promotes unequal access to services, benefiting only those who have access to the Internet (Tambini, 1998: 105). In addition, digital divide reduces the impacts made on debating forums because the debates would involve a small and selective “sample” of debaters, since not all those affected by the topic of debate are included in such debates. Tambini (1998: 105), suggest that only until universal access is a reality will there be reason to listen to debating forums. An e-governance program, accessible only to a few, immediately leads to divisions between the informed and the uninformed, rendering the informed with more power to participate and make knowledgeable and informed inputs than the less informed. In such a way, digital divide reduces the performance of the e-governance system since it would not guarantee a fair, representative and egalitarian public sphere (Tambini, 1998: 105).

Clearly the initiation of e-governance systems has great and rewarding impacts to governance and democracy. For instance, increased amount of information is now accessible to the public who can use such information to make knowledgeable input to decision-making and receive service delivery through the system. However, there are challenges such as digital divide and misuse of e-governance systems that have negative impacts on democracy. How then is e-governance applicable to Africa within its own context of governance and democracy? This is discussed next.

3.5 E-governance in Africa

Since this study examines the role and the extent to which the Internet (websites) facilitates continental governance in Africa, it is important to highlight literature concerning the distinct nature of the African context in relation to e-governance: uses/applications and prospects/challenges. This chapter highlights debates concerning the digital divide, connectivity and enthusiasm about the uses of the Internet in Africa’s governance. It is worth noting that a general discussion of e-governance and relating concepts has already been covered and shall not be repeated here.

Africa is a developing continent. The process of development and the media's role in it, is an essential component of debate among African Scholars. It is widely generalized that current developments of communication technologies such as the Internet are the last hope for Africa's development (Alzouma, 2005: 339). Adam (1997: 96) emphasizes the role of the Internet in heightening all forms of development in Africa as he suggests that "Internet connections will enhance the opportunities for new ways of accessing and providing information" about development (Adam, 1997: 96). The same has been said by Langmia (2006: 144) who argues that "the Internet has become an invaluable bridge for Africans to regroup and discuss social, political, cultural and economic issues facing them at home and abroad". Kofi Annan (UN secretary general) acknowledges that "while ICTs cannot address all of Africa's problems; they can do much to place Africa on a firmer industrial footing... and strengthen the continent's human resources, with training that leads to sustainable livelihoods" www.ist-1frica.org/conference2006

Boateng (1999) argues that there is a dire need for Africa to manage information purposefully to create knowledge about Africa to itself. This will resolve conflicts between countries and forge purposeful political partnership based on mutual understanding. One of the major causes contributing towards underdevelopment in Africa is the lack of both qualitative and quantitative information (Adama, 1997: 93). Quantitative information is measured by the availability of the technology while qualitative information concerns the kind of information available. Mutula (2006: 596) believes that Africa still lacks its own information systems because much Internet content is still in foreign languages and largely from western countries.

The Internet has the potential to enhance qualitative information necessary for Africa's development. "ICTs have transformed information and knowledge as the most critical factor in business as well as in political decision-making" (Mohiddin, 2002: 3). The Internet allows for the integration of information and communication between policy-makers, politicians, bureaucrats, civil society, the private sector and the public. Such integration of information speeds the process of development since all sectors of the

society are able to work together (Mohiddin, 2002: 3). Democracy and good governance are integral part of development (Hamdok, 2001:3). This research focuses on e-governance in Africa.

The challenge for Africa's traditional governance entails the maintenance of law and order, creating transparent administrative systems, protecting the poor and extending infrastructure to rural places as well as including the masses in decision-making (Fosu at al, 2006: 4).

Africa's nature of governance has been characterized by continued institutional weaknesses and absence of political pluralism (Fosu at al, 2006: 2). Good governance requires participation and inclusive politics, but these have been limited in Africa (Hamdok, 2001: 3). Governance involves the accountability of the governor to the governed. The bases of good governance according to Adesida (2001) entail increased legitimacy, transparency, and service delivery, effective and inclusive public participation. "Governors can be held accountable by the governed only when publicity, transparency, and critical scrutiny provide bases for an informed citizenry" (Salih, 2003: 13).

The 1990s represented a unique period in Africa's democracy. The major political change in Africa in the 1990s was the reintroduction of multiparty systems of government. "This included the holding of multiparty elections, adoption of new pluralist constitutions and the legalization of opposition party activities" (Hamdok, 2001: 6). The current state of democratization demands inclusive participation in decision-making processes, institutional reforms and new constitutions to highlight the prevailing democratic situation. This would render African leaders more accountable, transparent, and competent and committed. In recent years, e-governance systems were implemented to respond to the needs and the maintenance of a democratic society (Mohiddin, 2002: 3).

Governance is a highly information intensive project that is costly and time consuming, the nature of e-governance reduces the cost and time involved in service delivery,

information diffusion and citizen participation in African governments (Mutula, 2006: 597)¹⁸. As already argued, e-governance enhances transparency and accountability by the government, while correspondingly increasing public confidence in governance and therefore declining cynicism (Basu, 2004: 113).

According to the UN Economic Commission of Africa (2003), e-governance has a role to play in enhancing the efficiency of all levels of governance in Africa in a manner that improves the delivery of public service adapted to the needs of African citizens rather than states. Adam (1997: 95-96) argues that African institutional websites should not build information for internal consumption before providing information to external users. This means that African governments should not only use e-governance for their own benefits, but must use such systems to benefit the citizen. Neither should they only provide narrative information systems rather than interactive transaction of information (Adam, 1997: 95). The commission also highlighted the need for e-governance to remove bureaucratic obstacles in decision-making process at political, social and economical levels.

E-governance is still in its early stages in most African countries. This makes it difficult to cite what could be seen as best practices in sustainable e-governance portraits in Africa because there is no one model that has been proven to work yet. Mutula (2006: 8) notes that most e-governance portraits in Africa are static, information orientated and less interactive. The UN Economic Commission of Africa recommended that African models of e-governance should move away from statistical web presence and internal automation (Creation of databases, statistical and financial systems) towards a more interactive system that enhances citizens' participation.

For Africa, the challenge of heightening public participation in policy drafting and decision-making is daunting. Salih (2003: 14) argues that information provision alone is not enough to guarantee citizens' participation in political processes and decision-making

¹⁸ Prospects, models, progresses and other general issues concerning e-governance are generally well covered in page (35 to 48) and shall not be repeated in this section.

in Africa. Citizens have to be empowered if they are to make significant contribution to government. Empowerment according to Salih (2003: 14) is potentially achievable through increased knowledge and freedom of information.

Misuraca (2006) analyzed the process of initiating an e-governance program at a national level, of which he focused on four case studies in Africa. He concluded that even though African governments make numerous initiatives to raise awareness about the potential of using websites for community development and delivery of certain services, participation still remains low. "Finding ways to involve large segments of the population still constitutes a real problem, even when people are aware of the potential usefulness of ICTs" (Misuraca, 2006: 217). Lack of computer related skills, the digital divide and language differentiations are some of the problems leading towards slow adoption and uses of e-governance portraits by African citizens.

Alzouma (2005) asserts that the current optimism encouraged by a dogmatic technological fix to Africa's political problems is nothing more than an un-qualifying myth which holds no solutions to Africa's political governance. One of the main characteristics of this rhetoric is a belief that communication technologies such as the Internet are a last hope for Africa to fix its political problems. "However, it is not the first time that grandiose hopes to leap fogging development have been attached to new technology" (Alzouma, 2005: 340). The same has been said about print, satellite broadcasting and now the Internet. This enthusiasm is made apparent by the increasing speed of e-governance adoption by many African governments (Kaaya, 2004: 30).

Akpan (2000) argues that there is little chance that e-governance will enhance political participation among citizen of Africa. He further argues that that even if the whole of Africa could be connected to the Internet, this would not have serious impact on positive political development since a greater number of Africans are still more concerned about having something to eat than having a say on political issues. This supported by Leslie (2003: 109). Although these challenges abound, recent scholars such as Langmia (2006:

144-156) are more optimistic arguing that governors need to invest first in technology so that technology will in turn assist in development issues.

Netchaev (2002: 471) argues that developed countries have a greater advantage for e-governance because they enjoy a tradition of openness, which is relatively limited in Africa. “The lack of tradition of intercommunication, and public discussion as well as the lack of culture of openness and the skills to obtain personal information from the public sphere are barring the development of e-governments in African countries” (Netchaev, 2002: 475). Akpan (2000) on the other hand, supposes that the socio-economical and political structure of Africa is currently not conducive to host major developments initiated by the Internet. For him, illiteracy, high cost of Internet connection and low diffusion characterize the most apparent constraints to an Internet led development.

E-government initiatives in Africa fail because of poor e-readiness (Heek, 2002: 9). E-readiness according to Heek, is measured by data (information) quality, availability of infrastructure and level of computer related skills. Infinedo’s (2005: 19) study on e-readiness in Africa concluded that “Africa’s e-readiness was seen to be uncompetitive vis-à-vis other economies”. On the contrary, Basu (2004:114) argues that there is no standard of e-readiness. “Each society’s and government’s readiness for e-governance would depend upon which objectives and specific sectors it chooses as priorities as well as the resources available at a given point in time”.

According to Heek (2002: 13), organizational factors such as the perception and goals of governmental institutions do determine the success or failure of e-government initiatives. “A successful African e-government system will be one that tends to match its environment in relation to technical, social and organizational factors” (Heeks, 2002: 13). In this case, the success or the failure depends on the size of the gap that exists between “current realities” in the website and design conceptions of the e-government system. For instance, in terms of information, the design conception or the organizational goal might be to diffuse information to a large number of citizens, while the current realities might be that only a few access such information because of the digital gap. Heek (2002: 19)

suggests that the challenges could only be addressed through adoption of identified best practice in design and reality gap closure. In this case, African governments must design of e-government portraits that match African realities.

The main obstacle for an effective e-governance system in Africa is the digital divide. For illustration, according to Internet-world-stats, Africa has a population of 915.2 million people. However, the latest data, updated on 30 June 2006 depicts that African Internet users are 23.6 million people, which shows a total of 2.6 percent in internet/population penetration. Nevertheless, the situation has improved from year 2000, because a total number of Internet users then were 4.5 million, which hence depicts a 19.2 percentage of growth (www.internetworldstats.com/stats/africa.html).

According to Alzouma (2005: 345), “Africans are far from bridging the digital divide because it is not only a gap between countries, it is also a gap inside countries, with disparities existing between rural and urban settings, men and women and the educated and uneducated”.. Concentrating solely on a materialistic aspect of access (such as attaining computers and internet access) disregards other implications of access noticeably, psychological access (lack of digital experience), skills access (insufficient user- friendly systems) and usage access (lack of significant usage opportunities) (Mutula, 2006: 593).

African states are currently in different stages of Internet connectivity with divisions between the highly connected countries such as South Africa, Nigeria, Egypt and the poorly connected countries such as Ethiopia, Gambia and others (www.african-union.org.za). If Africans permit great digital divide between African states and regions, then the promised benefits of the information revolution will lead to even deeper inequalities and disadvantages (Wilson and Wong, 2003: 157. As a result, the provision of e-government services would be biased, favoring educated, urban residents in exclusion of the rural poor.

Language issues further complicate the digital divide. Mutula (2006: 595) argues, “Africa has many languages with virtually none constituting the language of the Internet and computing”. In his study, Kaaya (2004: 42-40) found that almost the entire content in East African e-governments portraits were in English. A large number of indigenous language speakers in Africa can neither read nor write English so they are automatically disadvantaged as potential users of the Internet. “It would be difficult to develop e-government or e-governance in Africa by using European languages while the majority of citizens on the continent were excluded from these debates” (Economic Commission of Africa, 2004: 3)

The cost of the technology is a problem, not a prospect in Africa. For instance, Leslie (2003: 109) argues “the price of a computer in Africa is several times higher than the average per capita income of most countries”. Among the highest of constrains leading to poor connectivity and Internet uses in Africa is high cost of computer hardware, Internet charges and low bandwidth which causes poor transmission quality (Jansen, 2005: 16). According to Mutula (2006: 595), this situation remains unaltered. For him, the digital divide is widening, not narrowing. “This situation is worsened by the high cost of access, inappropriate or weak policy regimes, inefficient telecommunication services and a lack of locally created content” (Mutula, 2006: 595).

Gyamfi (2005: 28) suggests areas that need to be addressed in order to reduce the digital gap that hampers the Internet’s ability to enhance political development. Africa must strive to enhance literacy rates and improve computer literacy by creating easier use of communication system by creating user-friendly systems (Gyamfi, 2005: 28). Because of low Internet connectivity and access in Africa, it is necessary for African governments to use community-oriented model of e-governance in order to make e-governance portraits publicly available. “Governments in the developing countries will be successful only if these countries are able to provide universal access for the majority of their population through establishing community centers, telecentres, post offices, terminals or other centers of public access, which can ensure collective use of ICT” (Netchaeve, 1996: 467-477).

Mutula (2006: 560) suggests that a partnership between the government and libraries might reduce the impacts of digital divide and thereby enhance the efficiency of the e-governance system. In this case, libraries can provide a public space to access the e-governance system, and provide government with information concerning national history, heritage and tradition which reserves national identity and knowledge.

Most Internet studies done on Africa are deeply embedded on diffusion model of communication discussed in previous chapters (e.g. Audenhove (1999), Sonaike (2004), Yo'u (2001) and (Ng'etich, 2001: 82)¹⁹. These studies focus extensively on the connectivity of Africa, highlighting the lack and the need of sustainable and adequate connection of the Internet and the diffusion of the technology itself. This is not to insinuate that such studies are less important, but rather to illustrate that there are other issues involved in e-governance and the Internet in Africa that also need to be debated. One of such issues concerns the uses of the technology (Internet) of which this particular study is based.

This trend is also apparent in policy formulation progressions and policy assessment processes where the question is 'how much bandwidth and broadband is available and how many are connected to the Internet? Sonaike (2004) argues that the lack of appropriate telecommunication infrastructure and high costs of connections contribute to the limitation of Africa's political development. The solution to this problem is similarly outlined or recommended in a materialistic view, where the solution is either more privatization of the Internet infrastructure or more government and global assistance to increase Africa's Internet connectivity. For instance, Africa and a number of International organizations such as the World Bank and Unesco have initiated a multitude of programs

¹⁹ Diffusion model takes as its starting point the fact that access to media is a sole precondition for participation in modern society or politics. Mowlana (1997) accentuated that diffusion theory assumes that diffusion by itself can generate development regardless of social-economic and political conditions.

geared for technological diffusion and Internet connection incentives in Africa. Programs such as Unesca led I-connect Africa and the Nepad led e-schools initiatives prove point².

Modon (1999) on the contrary argues that “Connecting countries (with Internet access) is just the beginning and though expensive, perhaps the easiest part”. Individuals and organizations must be accustomed to use knowledge and information effectively. Africa’s effective e-governance programs do not only depend on the state of Internet connections but also on the usage and the dissemination of relevant information. Although connectivity and physical diffusion of the Internet technology is paramount, this is not an end in itself, but merely a good beginning (Modon, 1999: 11). “The plea here is not for piecemeal access to information, but for deliberately and systematically integrating information into the debate on fundamental public issues, such as human right, elections, budget, court reports and parliamentary proceedings” (Salih, 2003: 15).

3.6 Conclusions

This section highlighted issues involved in the application and uses of e-governance in Africa. It was shown that Africa stands in a unique position concerning the prospects and challenges of e-governance. Mohiddin (2002: 14) concluded that the theoretical possibilities for promoting e-governance in Africa exist. However, there are specific challenges that Africa faces in this endeavour. For starters, the digital divide and all its implications (leading to lessened civil participation) is more of a constrain in Africa than elsewhere. As noted, a large number of African e-governance portraits are very new and largely remain static, information-based and less interactive operations. Understanding the nature of e-governance portraits and finding ways in which they can be improved is one critical area of research in Africa.

² Other related programs include: The Africa Network Initiative sponsored by the United Nations Development program (UNDP), the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), The United States Agency for International development, Leland Initiative, The Africa One Project, and the High Level Working group on African Information Superhighway (Adam, 1997:91)

3.7 Summary and development of research questions

Chapter two introduced the Internet and the web as a distinct medium of communications with distinctive characteristics to facilitate a new era of politics (e-politics). The changing nature of politics along with potentials and challenges concerning e-politics (and the internet public sphere) were highlighted. For the purpose of this study, it is necessary to raise the following questions:

- What is the role for new media in the transformation of politics to e-politics and e-governance?
- To what extent do e-governance websites, particularly debating forums, facilitate a rational public sphere?

Having introduced the Internet (the web) as a distinct medium of communication and discussed the changing nature of politics, chapter three proceeded to describe the role and uses of this “distinct medium” and how governments are either capitalizing or lagging behind in utilizing its features for the benefit of governance, citizens and democracy. This chapter sought to understand the definition of e-governance and the nature of its practices and performance. Here, trends and dominant models of e-governance were illustrated. It was moreover deemed essential to describe patterns and uses of government websites by citizens. Research questions emerging from the e-governance chapter are:

- Which models of e-governance are evident in e-governance portraits of major Africa governance institutions such as Nepad and the AU? And at what stage of maturity are those websites?
- What is the nature of information diffusion, service delivery and interaction on the websites of major Africa governance institutions?
- Is there a relationship between institutional communication goals and the design strategy (features) apparent in e-government websites in Africa?

CHAPTER 4

Methodology

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The core focus of this study is to examine the processes and workings of e-governance portraits that are continentally based (intergovernmental organisations) in Africa. In general, the research attempts to understand the extent to which the Internet (websites) facilitates continental governance. This chapter examines the general methodologies dominant in web-studies and debates the effectiveness and limitations of these methods. A methodology effective for this research is developed by adopting three different methodologies specific for the explanation of particular issues within e-governance websites.

The web has emerged as a distinct medium of communications. This practice poses significant challenges to the process of developing a methodological approach, which is distinct to web-studies in general, and web-based communications in particular. It is argued (Hanssen et al, 2002) in the literature that “new media” challenge the word “mass media” and render most mass media theories obsolete to the study of new media technologies. There are a number of characteristics that are distinct to websites in comparison to other media products. This distinctiveness of technical features requires data collection, which may be different from those dominant in mainstream media. Wakeford (2003: 33) highlights distinctive features:

First, it (internet) is overtly intertextual through the presence of links. Second, it rarely has the linearity of more conventional texts. Third, the reader becomes the author, in a sense, as he or she actively selects which links to follow. Fourth, the web is a multimedia text. Fifth, it has a global reach, albeit constrained by access and language. Six, the web is characterized by the ephemeral and impermanent nature of many of its texts, files and filenames.

In addition, Schneider and Foot (2004: 115) argue that web content are ephemeral in nature because they usually last for a relatively brief period but also contain a

permanence feature since new contents can be added to a website while a few other aspects remain the same. For this reason, Schneider and Foot (2004: 116) suggest, “web-based media require new method of analyzing form and content, along with processes and patterns of production, distribution, usage and interpretation”.

A large number of early web-studies (research) concentrated on the social aspects of “computer mediated communications (eg, Jones (1995) and Howard 1998)²⁰. Counting access “hits” on a site via URL was also one dominant and simple way of studying the web. This is still dominant for the analysis of commercial sites (e-commerce). Wakeford (2000: 35) argues that data collection on website researches needs to go beyond textual feature analysis and must include analysis of the social and political structure involved in production and consumption. This will include research on web designers, users and goals behind developing institutional websites. An ease way of investigating these socio-political issues is by merging web studies with offline interviews (Wakeford, 2000: 34-40). For the purpose of this study, a web-study is merged with documents analysis in order to identify the aims behind the development of intergovernmental websites.

This paper is a comparative investigation of three websites, namely the European Union (EU) website (www.europa.eu), the African Union (www.africa-union.org) and Nepad website (www.nepad.org). “One of the main preliminary task in any comparative research exercise would be to identify, analyze and interpret the relevant social trends in each country (organization) being studied in relation to which communication development would then be examined and its implications assessed” (Halloran, 1988: 49). “Comparative communication research”, Edelstein (1982: 14) asserts, “is a study that compares two or more nations (organizations) with respect to some common activity”²¹. The common activity induced here is transnational governance. Within, this comparative outlook, it becomes possible to list and define communication issues and problems within each studied website. This is done by content analysis.

²⁰ Howard. S. 1998. *Wired-up: Young people and the electronic media*. London: UCL Press.

²¹ For a fuller discussion, please see Edelstein (1982) *Comparative Communication research*

4.2 Content Analysis

This study employs content analysis on three websites, specifically, the European Union, African Union and Nepad website. Content analysis studies media products as texts. In conceptualizing content analysis, Berelson (1952: 147) says “is a research technique for the objective, systematic and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication” (Golding, Deacon et al, 1999). This definition, however, no longer holds ground for media studies no longer solely rely on quantitative methods of analysis. A more recent definition of content analysis from the view of Krippendorff (2004: 18) states “content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use”. In critique of Berelson’s (1952) definition, Krippendorff (2004, 19-20) argues, “Our definition of content analysis omits three of Berelson’s requirements”. Krippendorff’s antipathy is directed to the inclusion of the words, ‘quantitative’, ‘objective’ and ‘manifest’. According to him, content analysis cannot be contained in quantitative ‘objective’ methodologies of which coding is precisely manifest to the next researcher.

Quantitative and qualitative methodologies are two dominant methods of content analysis. Some Media studies researchers have often rendered these two methods relatively incompatible and therefore unethical to merge the two in any study. For instance, Deacon et al (1999: 119) argue that this meant that “advocates of qualitative forms of analysis have dismissed quantitative methods of content analysis as irremediable positivist, obsessed with frequency counts”. Here, Gunter (2000: 82) notes the difference:

A fundamental distinction between qualitative and quantitative methodologies can be found in the location of meaning in media texts. Quantitative content analysis emphasizes a fixed meaning of media texts that can be repeatedly identified by different readers using the same analytical framework. Qualitative content analysis procedures emphasize the capacity of texts to convey multiple meaning, depending upon the receiver.

Generally speaking, when quantitative content analysis is conducted, the researcher tries to obtain a substantial amount of material to examine and this is always done from a comparative point of view (Burger, 1999: 29). In overall, quantitative content analysis

involves counting and therefore looks at trends and patterns. Stempel (1981: 122) argues that the successes of content analysis lay in determining categories and defining those categories in a manner that they may not overlap. Therefore, researchers working with quantitative content analysis must set out “measurable units”, that is, some standard way of analyzing data material (Stempel, 1981: 122). Thus, quantitative method deals well with large volumes (masses) of study.

It is generally taken as an orthodox that quantitative content analysis brings forth empirical results that are relatively objective. In truth, quantitative analysis is also subjective since sampling, categories and what’s counted and coded depends on the subjective judgment of the researcher (Deacon et al, (1998: 104). Moreover, the major down fall of quantitative content analysis is that it is generally limited to counting phenomena and restraining the explanations and implications of the results. This research seeks to understand the uses, the applications and implications of e-governance in continental governance (Africa). For that matter, quantitative content analysis will not suffice to transcript such phenomenon. “The method is not well suited to studying deep questions about textual and discursive forms. It is not good at exposing aesthetic or rhetorical nuances within texts” (Deacon et al, 1999: 105). For this reason, this study is predominantly qualitative in nature. This is discussed next.

4.3 Qualitative content analysis

Qualitative research methodology in media studies is heterogeneous in nature. Jensen (2005: 236) outlines three niches that distinguish qualitative media research. First, qualitative methods investigate *meaning* of media texts or documents. Secondly, Jensen, (2005: 236) suggests that this should be investigated in their *naturalistic contexts* (observation) that include the social, cultural, political and economic structure in which meaning is elusively embedded. Contrary to quantitative scholars, qualitative analyzers acknowledge the *interpretive* role or consequences of the presence (and subjectivity) of the researcher (Jensen, 2005: 236).

Within the realm of qualitative methodology, most widely used method of data analysis is discourse analysis (the study of language). Discourse analyses, according to Krippendorff (2004: 16) “tend to focus on how particular phenomena are represented in text to manifest a particular intention or ideology. Structuralism or rhetorical analysis (study of text structures) focus on the presentation of the message and the effect of the message intended or unintended. Semiotics (the study of signs and the signified), document or policy analysis and thematic studies are other dominant methodologies used in qualitative media analysis (Jensen 2005, Hansen et al 1998, Deacon, et al 1999, Gunter 2004).

Qualitative methodology might be used to compare and contrast two or more different media products. This categorization must be additionally coded in a uniform standard measure, only this way will qualitative analysis include code reliability that would eventually make the study replicable to researchers wishing to redo or test the study at hand (Burger, 1999: 29). It is appropriate according to Stempel (1981: 122) that a researcher uses category systems already developed by other researchers. For the purpose of this study, this researcher combines a number of categories developed by a number of different scholars. Because this study is apparently multifaceted, other categories shall not be predetermined but should arise from the data itself. The advantage of the former is that the identified units of categorization are workable systems that have been tried and tested, whereas the advantage of the latter is that paramount categories are instantaneously added as they manifest themselves from the data.

In web studies, quantitative analysis (counting) of the availability of interactive tools, number of hits (users) and number of participants in Internet discussion forums is not enough on its own, it is more imperative to study the applications and the uses thereof (Wakeford, 2000: 34-40). This will in turn require a qualitative outlook. Qualitative methodologies can be used for textual analysis of documents, press releases, policy documents, strategy documents and analysis undertaken to investigate themes arising from the documents and online forums and to study the nature of participation and participants (Hasen, 1998). It is also not appropriate to study the web in isolation of the underlying system in which its bases is formed. For instance, the general character of

African politics offline, goals for developing the website and resulting design strategy employed in the websites and consequences of use need also to be explored.

Although qualitative content analysis is a prominent method of analysis, its disadvantages should not be undermined. The method depends on the views of the analyzer (Stokes, 2000:53). It is highly unlikely that the same study duplicated by a different researcher results in the same findings. It is subjective in that the data cannot easily be quantified and measured. Therefore, qualitative analysis may be unreliable to some context, but still appropriate for this particular case, since its limitations are balanced by the use of other methodologies.

4.3 Limitation of general methodologies

Conducting studies with international implications and technological ramifications is more challenging than simply studying the content of the media (website) in isolation of the forces behind the contents. Halloran (1988: 53) argues that studies influenced by the social shaping of technology (looking at socio-political phenomenon) have led to criticism that (web-studies) tends to verge on “journalistic and speculative” results. Most often than not, this kind of research turns to produce results that is characterized by oversimplification which are “the same inadequacies which have characterized mainstream and conventional mass communication research over the past thirty years” (Halloran, 1988: 53).

However, recognizing these flaws and mistakes, it becomes viable that a researcher becomes cautious not to make the same shortcomings. It is therefore imperative that a methodology capable of justifying the complexity of a research of this nature is established. For Deacon et al, (1998: 119-120), the only fruitful way towards solving this problem is through the implementation of a range of complementary approaches appropriate in dealing with the complexity of social (political) communications and communication technologies. Flew (2002), Deacon et al (1998) and Bertrang and Hughes (2005) argue that the plural, complementary approach from different perspectives should be adopted, significantly because it is the only one which can do justice to the complex

processes and multi-faceted objects (e-governance) that we seek to explain and understand. Such combination of methodologies is called triangulation.

4.4 Triangulation

Wakeford (2002: 31) argues, “There is no standard technique, in communication studies or in allied social science disciplines, for studying the web”. In this case, one cannot restrain web research to one methodology. A multiplicity of methodologies seems to be essential for a comprehensive web study.

Triangulation, say Bertrand and Hughes (2005: 239) “is the use of two or more, usually three different research approaches of data gathering or analysis and interpretation to the same question”. “So triangulation will just require the researcher to test the validity of three separate pieces of research” (Bertrand and Hughes, 2005: 239). In that case, different methods and theories are used because each adds a different dimension to the research at hand. “The use of more than one analytical method has the advantage that weaknesses of any single method, qualitative or quantitative are balanced by the strengths of other methods” (Deacon et al, 1999: 115). For this reason, Deacon et al (1999) calls for media analysis, which is ‘against academic apartheid’²². Hence, triangulation is an incentive methodology proudly endorsed for this multifaceted study presented here. This triangulation of methodology is obliged by theories presented for this study. Such theories require us to study different aspects in e-governance websites. Theories discussed are Technological determinism and The Social Shaping of Technology²³.

To recapitulate Technological determinism argues that technology, particularly website’s features have the power to drive change in political processes and in governance (Smith and Marx, 1995). In that case, features such as navigation tools, interactive tools, presentation, hyperlinks, connectivity links and other Internet web-based potentials are scrutinized for in order to understand how they ease-up the processes of e-governance. On the other hand, the *social shaping of technology perspective* requires us to study the

²² This case for eclecticism and triangulation is outlined in Deacon et al (1999: 115-120).

²³ These theories are discussed in chapter 2. See chapter for more details.

society in which a communication technology is introduced (Lievrouw and Livingstone, 2002). It is therefore imperative to study if and how institutional (communication) goals influence the use and the design strategy (features) employed in e-governance websites.

Having shown that our two theories focus on different aspects of e-governance, it is obvious that this will necessitate different methodologies. This research is therefore divided into three categories of data analysis. What follows are methodologies and data analysis procedure sought by this study. In short we adopt Schneider and Foot (2004) method for studying websites features which is deeply influenced by technological determinism. Schneider (1996, 1997) four categories are essential for the analysis of online debating forums. Lastly, document analysis is then used to study policy documents pertaining to the development and the design strategy of e-governance websites.

4.6 Technological features

In their article “*the web as an object of study*”, Schneider and Foot (2004) described three dominant methods of analyzing websites. First, they argue that the discursive or rhetorical analysis is concerned with the content of a website rather than the underlying structural elements (Schneider and Foot, 2004: 117). Taking texts and images into consideration, this approach focuses largely on the performance and features of an individual website or a few sets of websites. In this case, a website is treated as a text and links between websites are treated merely as connectives that are not very significant to the website. However, the approach provides insights on how and why a website is created and how they are perceived by both producers and users. For instance, Sonderling and Bothma (2004) relied primarily on *rhetorical analysis* for their study undertaken to understand online service delivery by the South African police service (SAPS) by means of websites. Here, Sonderling and Bothma (2004) investigated the SAPC website as an individual text and examined features and navigational structures present and those ought to be present in order for an effective e-government portrait to be achieved. They also studied the production process of the SAPS website through the perspectives and goals of the SAPC department.

Like discursive method of analysis, the second method, *structural or feature analysis* is also preoccupied with individual websites as distinct unit of analysis (Schneider and Foot, 2004: 117). The point of departure here is that structural analysis focuses on the structure and features found on the websites and the linkages of individual webpages. In short, structural analysis studies links between individual webpages and also count features that are present (or not present) in a specific website. Most commercial websites are investigated through this method.

The third method of analysis is called the *socio-cultural analysis* of the web that takes into account the nature and significance of hyperlinks between a specific website and the larger web. This cross-site model of analysis envisions understanding of “the aim, strategies and identity and the construction processes of website producers, as sites are produced, maintained and mediated through links” (Schneider and Foot, 2004: 117). This looks mostly into external links in a website. An example of this kind of methodology can be observed on Halavias (2000) study. Halavias (2000) sought to understand the impacts of national borders on the World Wide Web. He conducted a network (external links) analysis on 4000 sites in twelve 12 countries in order to determine how websites links are connected. In conclusion, Halavias (2000: 7) argued that “Although geographic borders may be removed from cyberspace, the social structure found in the real world is inscribed in online networks”. In short, Halavias (2000) confirms that online politics follow general practices offline.

This research adopts Schneider and Foot (2004) method of web-analysis, which is a combination of all of the above three approaches. Schneider and Foot (2004) term this particular multi-method (hybrid) approach “web-sphere” analyses. “Web-sphere analysis is an analytic strategy that includes relations between producers and users of web materials, as potentate and mediated by the structural and feature elements of websites, hypertexts and the link between them” (Schneider and Foot, 2004: 118). This method is chosen here because it apparently supports triangulation by taking into account different aspects of analysis in order to achieve the best results in website analysis. Categories or

themes of analysis in this research are as follows: Information, flow of communication, interactivity, navigation and diversity of languages.

1. Information

A website is a site of information and therefore contents of the information (documents, press releases and other sources of information) must be studied with particular interest of determining the kind of information presented in the website. For the purpose of this research, information is divided into four broad categories that are subjected to critical analysis. Here, information is discerned into 1.1, Institutional information, 1.2 Current affairs and 1.3. Update information and 1.4 media related information (press releases). Institutional information represent information about the organization itself, ranging from the history of the organization, goals, structure and general proceedings of the organization.

Flow of communication

Websites allows for the co-presence of horizontal (one-way or top-down communication) and vertical communications (two-way). Vertical communication (one-way) is synonymous to mainstream model of communication where the government creates a flow of information to the receiver with modest need of response (Van Dijk, 1999:17). Horizontal communication on the other hand allows for users participation since they are no longer seen as passive audiences and receivers of information. Users' response to political matters is seen as a necessary precondition for good governance (Hoynes and Hoynes, 2002: 321). Examining the flow of communication in e-governance websites helps understand if there is any change in government communication. Moreover, model of e-governance (e-administration, e-citizen or e-society) and stages of e-governance maturity for a particular website can be delineated by such an investigation.²⁴

2. Interactivity

²⁴ Please see page 27 for models e-governance websites and page 30 for stages of e-governance progress.

Interactivity is one of the most cited potential of the Internet and web-based communications. Interactivity is characterized by users' choice, control and participation. McMillan (1002: 165) outlined three traditions of interactivity, mainly: user-to-user, user-to-documents and user-to-system interactivity. User-to-user interactivity includes communication among users or citizens (e.g discussion forms). User-to-documents interactivity shows interaction between citizens, documents and e-governmental organizations. User-to system interaction is characterized by communication between the user and the computer system.

In order to examine the level of interactivity in each e-governance website, objects of measurement were as follows: First, the availability of interactive tools that facilitates user-to-user, user-to- documents and user-to-systems interaction were investigated. Second, we investigate users control of information through search engines. Thirdly, the easiness of communication between the organization and the people was measured by the availability of contacts details and functional e-mail links. This also included the relationship between online and offline interaction.

3. Navigation

Navigation is one other prospect of web-based communication. MacMillan (2002) argues that this form of interactivity is characterized by users' control and participation in the presentation and seeking of information. The exploration of navigation is done by investigating the extent of user friendliness (or lack of), users control of information presentation, an investigation of internal and external links inside and within websites.

5. Diversity of Languages

This section measures the diversity, plurality and relevance of the languages used in the websites. Moreover, the language style (English) of the information is measured in terms of accessibility. Is it simple to understand for everyone, or is too elitist and designed only for the privileged few?

4.7 Testing Participation: Online discussion forums

This part discusses the role and prospect of rational debates as facilitated by the Internet in general and online debating forum in specialty. Participatory communication is characterized by diversity and pluralism of dialogic discussions and debates essential for sharing knowledge and opinion about political matters (Huesca, 2003: 217). The issue of political participation is well explored by contemporary writings concerning Habermas' public sphere. The argument is that the Internet and the web offer greater prospects for political participation and rational debates in the public sphere (see Norries, 2000: 103, Castells, 2001, Bentivegna, 2002: 51 and Hirschkop, 1997: 218). Next, we briefly highlight dominant methodologies used in examining online forums,

Jassen and Kies (2005) developed a methodology of analyzing online forums by discerning three variables of measurements, particularly: the communication structure of the discussion forum, the political or the ideological structure and binary codes between strong and weak discussion forums. The *communication structure* deals with the technical and the organizational architecture (features and navigation) of the discussion forums. This questions implications of the guiding rules, the presence of the moderator and the request of identification. With regard to the *political or ideological structure*, Jassen and Kies (2005: 322) argue that "the socio political context in which the online discussion space is introduced is an important factor for explaining divergence observed in deliberation quality". Such studies take into consideration geography, culture and the political institution hosting the forum. For instance, an institutional online forum hosted by NGOs, political parties or government will have different goals and design strategy and will also have different participants and themes of debate.

Fraser (1992) defines weak public spheres (discussion forums) as those deliberative practices consisting exclusively of opinion formation and does not also encompass decision-making. Strong public sphere on the contrary, involves a debating forum, which encompasses opinion formation, decision-making, rational themes, and diverse and plural participants. In short, an effective debating forum is one that makes an effect in political

decision-making. This kind of analysis looms a binary conclusion between weak and strong online forum with no acknowledgement to the gray area in between.

Various scholars have different recommendations regarding measuring units and variables in analyzing online forums. Jansen (2003) focused on: form, dialogue, openness, tone, argumentation, debate and reciprocity. Granham (2002) investigated: the extent of rational-critical debate, reciprocity, reflexivity, sincerity, equality and freedom of expression. Dehlberg (2002) recommendations included analysis of reciprocity, justification, reflexivity, ideal role taking, inclusion and the degree of autonomy from the host (Jassen and Kies, 2005: 319-320).

In order to study political participation in e-governance websites (discussion forums), this study adopts Schneider (1996, 1997) four dimensions central to Habermas notion of the public sphere. Schneider used the following categories to investigate a user-net discussion group concerned with abortion. Categories developed are as follows: *equality* of access to the arena of debate, *diversify* of opinions and topics relevant to a particular debate, *reciprocity* or degree of *interactivity* between persons involved in a debate and the *quality* to which participants contribute information relevant to the topic (Hanssen, Jankowski, and Etienne, 2002: 43).

The total number of messages posted in the Nepad online debating forum from its inception to the last day of analysis (09, August, 2006) had accumulated to a total of 213 messages including replies and 60 sent comments in exclusion of replies. The same number of messages (excluding replies) had to be evaluated from the EU debating forum. In that case, analysis of the EU forum include the most recent twenty (20) messages from each cluster of debate in order to form a total of 60 messages which will hence mean that the same amount of messages from Nepad and EU forums are analyzed²⁵. African Union is excluded from this analysis because it bases no debating forum in its website.

Unites of measurements are as follows:

- a. Structure and navigation of the debating forum: this present either the opportunity or the limitation of the technology (websites) to allow and encourage participation
- b. Plurality and diversity of participants
- c. Diversity and rationality of themes of debate
- d. Reciprocity and frequency of response
- e. Diversity of country of origin

Institutional (communication) goals

Document analyses as part of qualitative methodology in media studies, scrutinizes how organizations document their major activities, strategies and decisions executed by the organization²⁶. Documents, by definition, are all forms of unmediated texts. In Bertrand and Hughes (2005) definition, documents are written, printed or web-based information left by institutions about themselves and their role in society. Such documents, be it policy, strategic or any other, are usually produced in a particular condition, perhaps even shaped by certain pressures of the political and socio-economical content in which the organization is embedded. When dealing with documents, Halloran (2002: 18) suggests that “Intentions, aims, purposes, policies, organizational framework, modes of operation, professional values, funding, general circumscriptions, external pressures and ideological considerations all need to be taken into account”.

This study entails a simple document analysis of the EU, AU and Nepad documents. Such documents include communication policy, strategic documents and other related documents. These documents grant insight on the communication goals and strategies of the above organizations. Consequently, the role and performance of e-governance as perceived by the institutions in question can be delineated and these can therefore be correlated to the real roles and guidelines for an effective e-governance portrait that are discussed in the literature.

This section tackles the question: what kind of relationship exists between Institutional (communication) and the design strategy (features) apparent in e-government websites?

²⁶ For advantages and disadvantages of documents study see Bertrand and Hughes (2005)

In order to understand communication goals of the three studied intergovernmental institutions, one strategic document from each institution was analyzed. **Data:**

1. AU- strategic plan for the Commission of the African Union 2004-2007 action plan
2. Nepad: Nepad advocacy strategic document 2005
3. EU: *White paper on a European Communication policy*

At the absence of communication policies belonging to the three studied intergovernmental organizations, other documents were sought in order to highlight these institutions' communication goals in governance. For the EU, the White Paper on a European communication policy is selected for documents analysis. The document is appropriate for our purpose because it delineates the goals of the EU and what the institution hopes to achieve by the europa website. In case of the AU, a *strategic plan for the Commission of the African Union 2004-2007* action plan was analyzed. This document is relevant here because it presents goals that the organization wishes to have implemented by 2007. Similarly, *Nepad advocacy strategic document of 2005* was examined. The document is proposed for the advocacy of Nepad communication campaign to support its implementation. This document is deemed necessary by the institution as it "intensify activities and programmes in order to take advantage of this unique opportunity to secure wider support within the continent and outside". All mentioned documents are critically examined through document analysis as part of qualitative studies. It is envisioned that goals, visions, role and communication strategy of the websites in accordance to these institutions will be delineated. In this way, it can be understood why certain features are apparent and not others and why particular models of e-governance exist.

4.9 Data collection

Data collections for this study commenced on June 2006 until the end of August 2006. During this period, three websites were investigated on a daily basis. Websites consulted for that three months are European Union (EU) www.europa.eu, African Union (AU): www.africa-union.org and New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) website: www.nepad.org. Equally important has been the collection of documents as part of data

for this research. Such documents include the Commission of the African Union strategic document, White paper on a European Communication, and Napad communication strategy document. These documents will shed light to communication goals of the above organizations whose e-governance sites are studied.

4.10 Data coding and analysis (in brief)

Figure 1.1 Example of Data analyses for websites

Website	Information	Access	Interactive tools	Structure/ Navigation	Flow of information	Language
EU						
AU						
Napad						

Notes: R.F Mukhudwana 2006

1. **Information:** Institutional information, current affairs and media directed information (press release), interpretation, debate, explanation, and analysis
2. **Access:** How many people have access in a given country, how many are participating? This can be studied from statistics that already exist.²⁷
3. **Interactivity:** user-to-user, user-to-documents, and user-to-system interactivity (McMillan, 2002).
4. **Interactive Tools:** please see appendix 1
5. **Structure and Navigation:** hyperlinks to individual WebPages and external organizations websites and degree of choice of information presentation.
6. **Flow of Information:** horizontal, vertical or both?
7. **Language:** basic use of language (since there are many in the continent), professionalism of language (accessible to an ordinary man?)
8. **Participants:** diversity, reciprocity, dominant country and frequency of response.

4.11 Limitation of the study

There are a number of noticeable limitations in this study. Such limitations somehow reduce the firmness in which rigid conclusions are based. The first problem contended in this study concerns lack of precise literature and previous studies that could have served

²⁷ See chapter 3 page 39-44 for debates on the digital divide and issues of access.

as pilot studies or models in guidance of this research. At the absence of such literature, this researcher had to rely on general literature concerning new media, e-governance and a few journals concerning the role of ICTs in Africa's development. That indeed proved helpful.

The second problem experienced by the researcher was the unfeasibility to find hits (number of users' visits in a website) for both Nepad and African Unions and as such, it was useless to analyze EU's hits on its on. Websites hits would have made it possible to count the number of people visiting the websites. The number of websites hits can show if these continental e-governance initiatives are influential or well received among citizens. By so doing, it would have been conclusive to argue for or against the assumption that e-governance facilitates Africa's continental governance.

The third limitation sprang from the second one mentioned above. At the absence of information about users' participation in the websites (hits) or any other information concerning audiences, we were not able to trace users' countries of origins. This means that it was inconclusive how many people are using the sites for what purposes.

4.12 Conclusions

This methodology chapter discussed methodologies in web studies. It can be concluded that a website is a site of information and therefore contents of the information (documents, press releases and other sources of information) must be studied with particular interest of determining the kind of information available in the websites. Content analysis of the AU and Nepad websites is conducted with the mentality that the website is not only a site of information, but also a site of interaction. For that reason, interactive tools such e-mails (contact and subscription), chat forums, online news center and hypertext links, navigation and user friendliness of the website are objects of study.

For the purpose of this study, three issues are investigated, first, we investigate technical features of the website, second we investigate debating forums and lastly we investigate (AU, Nepad and EU) intergovernmental institutional documents in order to understand

the relationship between institutional (communication) goals and features in e-governance websites. This is done by document analysis and not interviews, as it is believed that institutional documents say much about the institution than what representatives of the institution might be able to say.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Websites have emerged as a distinct medium of communications. The purpose of this study is to understand the extent to which the Internet (websites) facilitates continental governance. By studying African intergovernmental websites, specifically AU and Nepad, it is generally anticipated that this study will be able to dictate prospects, challenges and processes of websites in promoting good governance. The question fundamental in this study is: “can websites advance Africa’s continental governance? And under what circumstances is this possible? It should be noted that the europa website is only used as an experienced website for EU governance and integration. For this reason, not much reference will be given to the process of European integration.

The data that follows is extracted from African Union website: www.africa-union.org, Nepad website: www.nepad.org and European Union website: www.europa.eu. This data is a product of critical analysis that commenced from the beginning of June till the end of August 2006. First, data findings summary is tabulated and then explanation is presented as it stands without any subjection to critical analysis. Then, analysis will follow after the presentation of finding in relation to the issue at hand.

5.2 Data Findings: Characteristics of EU, AU and Nepad Websites

Websites	European Union	African Union	Nepad
1. Information			
1.1 Institutional Information	History, role, goals and performance of major structures	History, role, goals and performance of major structures	History, role, goals and performance of major structures
1.2 Current Affairs	Current affairs and background information is well presented	Current affairs not well organized. There is background information but hard to follow.	Current affairs are presented on front page. Little background information.
1.3 Update Information	Poor- no calendar	Frequent updates and calendar	Frequent updates and calendar
1.4 Media related information	Excellent/ linked to issue at hand	Excellent one stop link	Excellent one stop link
1.5 Policy issues	Excellent/ links to original policy documents	Excellent/ links to original policy documents	Excellent/ links to original policy documents
1.6 Flow of information	Co-presence of horizontal & vertical	Dominantly Vertical (top-down)	Co-presence, but needs more work
2 Interactivity			
2.1 user-to-user	Functional online forum.	No tools for user-to-user interaction. No online forum.	Functional online forum. Send-a-friend this page mechanism
2.2 user-to-documents			Easy navigation
2.3 user-to-system	Easy navigation and interactive web-based forms.	Easy navigation.	Easy navigation and interactive web-based forms.
3. Interactive Tools			
3.1 Emails	Functional	None functional	Functional
3.2 contact us	Present- direct e-mail links.	Present- nonfunctional direct e-mail links.	Present- direct e-mail links.
3.3 search engines	Functional	Present- nonfunctional	Not present
3.4 send a friend	Functional	Not present	Functional

this page link			
3.5 online polls	Present	Not present	Not present
3.6 discussion forums	Functional	None functional	Functional
3.7 Choice of language	20 languages choice	4 languages choice	2 language choice
4 Navigation			
4.1 Internal links	Easy navigation within the website	Easy navigation within the website	Easy navigation within the website
4.2 External links	Not easy to follows. Placed on different webpages	One webpage for external links-functional.	One webpage for external links-functional.
4.3 Site maps	Functional	None functional	Not present
4.4 Navigation help	Functional	Not Present	Not present
5 Participation			
5.1 users' plurality	Plural users	N/A	Few users
5.2 users' diversity	Not diverse	N/A	Not diverse
5.3 Rational themes	Rational	N/A	Rational
5.4 Diverse themes	Diverse	N/A	Diverse
6.Modes of e-gov			
6.1 e-administration	Poor	Excellent	Good
6.2 e-citizens	Excellent	Poor	Good
6.3 e-society	Poor	Poor	Excellent
7. Progress Stage			
7.1 Broadcasting	N/A	N/A	N/A
7.2 Interaction	N/A	Interaction mode	N/A
7.3 Transformation	N/A	N/A	Transformation
7.4 Integration	Integration	N/A	N/A

Features of the technology (websites)

Technological Determinism (TD)

Axford (2001: 21) argues that “the means of communication shape the communication itself”. Technological determinism argues that communication technologies are agents of social change, and as such, websites as new mediums of communication are able to uplift intergovernmental governance and hence enhance political interaction in Africa. It is alleged that technological features such as interactive tools, co-presence of horizontal and vertical flow of communication, navigation, website presentation, hyperlinks, connectivity links and other Internet related potentials are enough on their own to insure a good environment for an effective e-governance system. This section tests the extent to which this assumption is true.

5.3 Information Analysis

Web-based systems in particular, are becoming increasingly important as tools for user-driven access to information with navigational freedom. A website is a site of information and therefore contents of the information (documents, press releases and other sources of information) must be studied with particular interest of determining the kind of information is presented in the website. For the purpose of this research, information is divided into four broad categories that are subjected to critical analysis: institutional information, current affairs, update information and media related information.

5.3.1 Institutional Information: European Union online

Institutional information represents information about the organization itself, ranging from the history of the organization, goals, structure, leadership and general proceedings of the organization. Such information is necessitated by the need to inform the public about the organization and its role in the integration process. This is essential for the preservation of good governance because institutional information in e-governance informs citizens about the kind services offered and elucidates who is accountable for what services.

The gateway to the European Union (www.europa.eu) is the portal for the European Union, which ‘provides up-to-date coverage of European Union affairs and essential information on European integration’. See figure 1.1 for the EU homepage. European Union as an organization embraces a long history that will not be discussed through the scope of this research. Currently the EU is an intergovernmental organization consisting of 25 independent states adhering to a common market and a single currency²⁸. The organization aims to create a political and economical alliance among its member states to integrate Europe. “European Union's activities cover all areas of public policy, from health and economic policy to foreign affairs and defense” www.europa.eu. EU institutional information is unpacked as it appears in the europa website. See figure 1.2 for a general insight.

Activities: *What the European Union does by subject* presents an alphabetical list of the entire subject matter, which the EU is involved. This catalog contains links to particular webpages delineating in details the processes and the basics of that subject matter. For instance, clicking on ‘development’ will result in a general explanation of all proceedings concerning EU developmental agenda such as grants, documents (and press releases) and key sites that cover different aspects about EU ‘development’ in details.

Institutions: *How the European Union works* is a citizens’ guide to various EU institutions. This provides in-depth knowledge about various roles performed by different institutions. The European Parliament, council of the European Union presidency and European commission are examples of major institutions while financial bodies, Interinstitutional bodies and decentralize bodies of the European Union (agencies) are outlined as individual entities with sub-clusters underneath. Clicking on the European commission for example, will provide information about key people in the EU and its commission such as the president and the commissioners. Their roles, profile and picture gallery is provided. This webpage includes an entire scope of EU policies as they relate to various subject matters (whose webpages and documents are linked). Moreover, policies are further divided into different categories such as economics and society, international

²⁸ This is in exclusion of Britain which still maintains the Pound

affairs, institutional affairs (dealing with EU constitution, government and codecision) and finance. A summary statement is triggered by a move of a mouse to a subject matter, showing brief enlightenment of what the topic or theme deals with. In this case, a user does not have to first open the link in order to find out about the information contained within the webpage.

Documents: *Where to find EU documents*, shows an online library available on the EU website. This webpage outlines major documents in the European Union sub-categorized into three groups. First, *European laws* outlines laws similar to the Pre-lex monitoring and other decision-making processes between institutions. Then, there are *documents common to all the institutions* and *documents of individual institutions*. This has further subcategories of individual institutions (with links provided). For instance, a link clicked on European parliament under documents of individual institutions, will highlight official transcripts containing various types of documents such as “agendas, draft reports and opinions, reports adopted in committee, part session minutes, texts adopted by Parliament, resolutions, debates in plenary, parliamentary questions, etc”. Generally, all the policy documents are downloadable from here.

Service (delivery): *At your service* section illustrates services provided by the EU to organizations or person seeking information about the European Union as an organization and also a consortium of people. The section features transcripts and documents incorporating statistics, opinion polls, EU bookshop, interactive policy making, contacts, working for the European institutions (job search server), central library and access to internal documents. More essentially, this section informs citizens of their political and civic rights.

The above analysis proves that information of all range is well presented and organised. As such, information about institution is well documented in the EU website. This kind of information ensures that EU citizens are kept knowledgeable about the role performed by the European Union in different accounts of their lives. In addition, alphabetical listing of these activities by subjects makes it easy to locate the right information desired by the

user without having to search through many redundant subjects. Online information about EU top individuals such as directors' roles and portfolios enhances perceived relations between the people and EU leadership. This element of top-down (vertical) communication is worth commendation.

Current Affairs: In the "Spotlight"

In the spotlight contains current affairs that are of interest to EU citizens. For example, a link from spotlight news concerning the Israeli- Lebanon crises of 2006 leads to a complete overview of European Union and Middle East foreign policy (see figure 1.3 and 1.4). This not only informs the reader about current information and legislations involving the issue, but also provides background information that insures that a reader understands a folder of information in a linear sequence. Included in the information folder are EU policies towards Lebanon and Israel, the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, the EU-Lebanon Association agreements and others. Treaties and legislation signed for the above purposes are also incorporated with links leading to original policy documents presented in acrobat reader.

On the right side of the webpage, there are obtainable press releases for the same issue (Lebanon crisis), while on the left side of the webpage, exists a user control information bar. Clicking on any link on the control bar, results in additional information about the issue of deliberation and other links highlighting related information. For example, see also figure 1.4. For those seeking fast and succinct information, a shortened summery and basic data is provided (For this example, see figure 1.5)

5.3.2 Institutional Information: African Union

www.africa-union.org is a websites designed for the African Union organization with the tag phrase "*Africa must unite*". Please see figure 2.1 for this homepage. The AU organization aims "to accelerate the process of integration in the continent to enable it to play its rightful role in the global economy while addressing multifaceted social, economic and political problems compounded as they are by certain negative aspects of

globalization” www.africa-union.org. The AU is an African intergovernmental organization with visions of hastening political and socio-economic integration of the continent with aspirations for greater unity and solidarity between African countries and the people. The study serves to comprehend how AU uses web-based communication to enhance continental governance through its website: www.africa-union.org. African Union website was officially inaugurated in 2002, marked by the executive obliteration of the OAU website: www.oau.oua.org. What follows is an analysis of AU institutional information.

Activities: *About the AU* link provides a threshold to information about the African Union as an organization. AU mission, vision, advent, goals are briefly outlined and introduced. AU organs are presented in the ‘AU in a nutshell’. This website section delineates the history of the organization such as the inception period and reasons for the establishment of the Organization of Africa’s Union (OAU) and information about AU founders and former secretaries. Clicking further on this, will result in a webpage containing pictures and a short bibliography of AU founders while the other link presents information about AU former secretaries. The constitution Act and an online oath by African Union member states in agreement to the AU constitutions is presented and comprised with all its articles in the website. Constitution articles are explained briefly and succinctly to the point.

Institutions (AU organs): There are ten organs that form the whole African Union organization namely: the assemble of the union, the executive council, the Pan African Parliament, the court of justice, the commission, the permanent representatives committees, the specialized technical committees, the Economic, social and cultural council, the peace and security council and financial Institutions. Clicking on any link or each organ, a resulting web page presents concise explanation of the role, function and latest information about that specified institution. At times, supporting documents relating to a selected institution are provided, providing policy related information about that institution.

Member states link- provides insights to African members' states and their individual country's profile. For instance, the country's profile will automatically arise on the top of the webpage (as an example is depicted for South Africa in figure 2.3) as triggers by push of a mouse near a specific country. It is interesting to note that every country's profile is written on its own dominant language (example English, French or Portuguese). However, a further click on a country permitting in-depth information about that particular country is nonfunctional. Head of states profile is compiled under head of states and government link. There are links, which are supposedly under construction. Those are dates of elections and constitutions of each member state and a directory providing details about embassies and foreign ministers in every African country.

Documents are divided into five categories approximating: speech and statements, discussion and declarations, treaties, conventions and protocols, reports and other documents. Presented speech and statements are those belonging to high-ranking AU chairpersons while the rest are redundantly compacted as "other speeches". There are division of speeches belonging to president J Chissano of Mozambique (current AU chairperson), President T. Mbeki of South Africa (former chairperson of the AU), Omer Konare (chair of the commission) and Amara Essy (interim chair of the AU commission). Document and declaration webpage contain all declaration and documents from 1963 when the organization was still called OAU until the present year 2006. Please see figure 2.4 to view example of decisions and declaration web-screen. Such provision of treaties and policy declaration enhances knowledge in which informed and knowledgeable participation in decision-making and policy debates is based.

Services delivery illustrates online services executed by the AU for the benefit of citizens of Africa. The website provides direct access to AU employment opportunities. Information about employments opportunities and job description are provided. Adding to this are direct e-mail links to make applications. Furthermore, the AU website also provides information about tenders and competitions. These are useful initiatives to interact with the public. Call for nomination for African Union award for children's champions in Africa is an example in point. The closing date for the nomination is given.

Moreover, there are connecting links to the actual detailed advert. Here, responses are to be made by none linked e-mail or post. Unfortunately, the AU website contains no links to Africa's statistical resources or simplified public services as available in the EU website.

Current Affairs: African Union

Because of the abundance of current affairs in which the AU is involved, for the purpose of this research only one issue is put in the sport light in attempt to uncover how the website presented and covered that specific issue. The Darfur crisis is chosen for analysis because it is the most recent emergency. However, it has been found that the AU website only had a handful of press releases, a communiqué on the inter-Sudanese peace-talks concerning the conflict and a document highlighting the Darfur peace-agreement. Not much background and linking information is achievable from the website. It is very difficult to accesses information in an understandable manner provided that information posted in the website is scatted in nature and presented mostly as updates of proceedings of talks, meetings and signed agreements about the crisis rather than an analysis of what is happening in the ground and what legislations has been adopted towards resolving the conflict.

News and information about events is presented on the center of the webpage (AU, Figure 2.2). This is structured with the most recent updates on top and the oldest news on the bottom of the webpage. Ideally this should contain the day-to-day operation of the AU organization and enlighten the masses about new developments. However, information presented here is merely about the proceedings of meetings, conferences and sessions. For instance, on 18-22 September 2006, a special session of the conference of African Union ministers of health was held in Maputo, Mozambique. There are added documents (hypertexts) containing previous years' sessions and discussion documents for the pending session that resembles a proposal for that meeting. In short, all necessary information about the conference is eloquently documented. It should be noted that all conferences and sessions are presented in this manner where information, linking documents and updates are provided.

Daily processes of the AU such as sessions and meetings are undoubtedly necessary information that the website now make available to the citizens of Africa and thus should indeed be appreciated. But, how important is detailing this information to non-participants who are neither experts, scholars nor ministers involved in these sessions. Above that, the language employed is not accommodating to an ordinary man. A large number of documents are hard to understand for the partial reason that the address is intended for those attending the meetings. This goes to prove that the AU website is an information shop for those directly involved in the processes and leadership of the intergovernmental organization. As guided by the literature (Basu, 2004), it is convincing, at this point, that the AU uses the website primarily for e-administration, given that much of the information is directed at internal stakeholders.

In short, the AU website fails dismally when to present current information, most particularly about the daily process which organization is involved. It is not that information is not made available, but rather the problem is that such information is unstructured and hard to follow. The other shortcoming in the AU website is that policy documents are all presented but there is no attempt of explaining and justifying such documents to the citizens. This has been warned by Salih (2003:15) who argues that it is essential that information is presented in a manner that is accessible to the citizens. This means that information and issues should be discerned and debated to the understanding of the citizen. However, it is worth mentioning that information regarding meetings and conferences is well articulated, presented and better organized. Moreover, it is also appreciative that institutional news is well presented and documented, which therefore informs AU citizens about the role and goals of the AU intergovernmental organization in Africa.

5.3.3 Institutional Information: Nepad

The Nepad organization is a product of a merge between the Millennium Partnership for Africa's recovery Program (MAP) and the Omega Plan. Nepad is not entirely new; it is however the latest joint initiatives by African leaders to deal with national, regional and continental socio-economic and political problems that may hamper Africa's development. "What is true is that previous attempts did not succeed and therefore Africa has every reason to want Nepad to succeed where others have failed" (Diescho, 2002, 10). Nepad affirmed goals are identified as follows: To promote accelerated growth and sustainable development to eradicate widespread and severe poverty and to halt the marginalisation of Africa in the global world through African unified goals of peace, security, democracy and political governance initiatives lead by the African Union. Diescho (2002) argues, "Nepad is the socio-economic development blueprint for the AU to implement its objectives". This segment deals with Nepad information provision in its website: www.nepad.org. The website is designed by Touch-tech-e and commenced in 2005. See Nepad home page on figure 3.1.

Activities: *About Nepad*, answers questions such as what is Nepad, what is the need for Nepad, the origins, primary objectives and principles. This webpage also incorporates information concerning priorities and immediate and long-term desired outcomes of the Nepad program. In addition, the website provides an option to download the Nepad framework document. The 63 paged acrobat downloadable document contains all necessary information about Nepad, from inception, processes and prospectus related to the organization. The foundation of Nepad has been a complicated one, given that it was not a completely new initiative. Thus, the history of the inauguration, merge and drafting of the Nepad document is deemed important by the organization. As such, historical phases of the drafting of the Nepad document and adoption of the legislation are provided in Nepad history and background webpage. Here the Omega plan for Africa, the Millennium Partnership for African recovery program (Map) and the new African Initiative, all of which paved way for Nepad are listed with links to original documents.

Nepad has eight priority areas which are covered in details within the website. These are African Peer review mechanism, economic governance, market access and agriculture, human development, infrastructure, science and technology, environment and tourism and Aprm forum. Clicking one of the above links (as presented on the left side of the web page in figure 3.2) will make connection to a webpage containing all necessary communiqué, press releases and updates about a particular area of priority. For instance, clicking on Economic governance will provide a webpage containing four subjects, such as: the capital flow initiative, core principles for effective banking supervision, economic and corporate governance initiative and economic and corporate governance. A further click on any of the subject will portray a document containing necessary information about the subject in hand.

Institutions: Nepad is composed of four institutions (structures). The Assemble of the African Union is at the top of the ladder; followed by Nepad HSGIC and Nepad steering committee which is followed by Nepad secretariat. Please consult figure 3.3 for an example of the discussed web page. Unfortunately, none of the institutions are explained or even introduced in this website. This makes it unintelligible to understand the abbreviations used, let alone institutional roles and performance of Nepad organs (or which segment is responsible for what services). According extant literature, the role of e-governance portraits is to make governments more accountable and transparent. Without information regarding the roles and performance of Nepad institutions, it is difficult for citizens the level of accountability and transparency of these institutions. For instance, Modon (1999:11) argued that “information is one of the most important determinants of good governance and without it, the level of accountability, transparency and legitimacy will be reduced”.

Documents: Nepad documents in the website are divided into six collections, beginning with core documents which focus on communiqués, reports and action plans documents. Following this, come projects documents, workshops documents, speeches, electronic Nepad dialogues and press releases. All this contains online links to original documents in relation to them. Workshop documents are documents agreed upon in different

workshops. These documents are additionally divided into communications, civil society forum, market access, and agriculture and private sector workshop documents. Like the AU website, Napad speeches are categorized by heads of states speeches, steering committee, Napad chairman and the African Union documents.

Services Delivery: Napad website makes attempts to provide African citizens with information about the organization and general information about the proceedings of Africa's political and economical development. The website provides contact information for all African states grouped between North Africa, Southern African, West and East Africa. The website also serves as a portal to access Napad employment opportunities. Clicking on the vacancies makes automatic connections to the employment opportunity webpage. Considering that that information about the post is illustrated and a direct e-mail link for application is provided, it becomes easy to make applications directly online.

Current affairs

News updates and current information are incorporated in their distinctive area of priority. For instance, if the issue concerns agriculture, it will be attainable from the agricultural related webpages. Only very recent information is presented in the home page, making it easy to access. Clicking on one of this (current affairs issue) makes connection to the initial detailed document. It was found that a large number of Napad documents linked to Adobe (PDF) reader are online versions of printed booklets. Like, AU, the language used on the documents is not accessible to ordinary citizens. Information presented here is un-summarized and unmediated online copy of whatever hard copies the organization possesses. It would have been wise to follow on EU trend of shortening and making simple information for the purpose of citizens and instantaneously providing links to initial unmediated documents for those seeking in-depth information.

5.4 Media Links: EU, AU and Nepad

The EU does not have a “one-stop” media hyperlink like the AU and Nepad websites. Every issue at hand (within that particular web page) is presented with options of finding press releases specific to that issue. The Lebanon example demonstrates that press releases were accessible from various webpages. For instance, if the issue of deliberation is EU and the Middle East in general, then press releases and multi media (photos and videos and audio) will as a result, conform to those issues. On the contrary, AU and Nepad provide a one-stop link to all press releases containing different issues. The only difference is dates. So, basically, the most recent press release will be on top. In this case, the mainstream media would not have to go through various webpages for press release.

The AU provides press releases, multi-media, and communiqués serving as invitations for press conference or for the simple presence of the media at major meetings and verbales for all meetings. Online press releases simplify the process of the mass media in accessing accurate and unambiguous information, which will in turn result in the mainstream media assisting in the process of inter-governance and continental integration by providing necessary information to those without Internet access. This is more useful in Africa as extent literature shows that there is a large gap between those who have Internet access and those without the internet. This is called the digital divide.

Although most AU documents are not shortened, the documents and language designed for the media is precisely easy to understand, shortened and ready for use. Documents are shorted and summarized with major points and verbales that are ready for cut and paste. Clearly, information is well finished for the media to enable speedy access to information. However, this is not the case for most information directed to citizens.

5.5 Update Information

Update information is information largely directed to those who are involved with the organization or those who have a role to play. Nonetheless, this type of information is also significant for the citizens of Africa, provided that they are interested in also finding

out the proceedings, conferences and meetings of the intergovernmental organization. This demonstrates an e-administration model of e-governance, which particularly deals with improving the internal workings of the government organization (Heeks, 2002). Herein, the website also serves as an organizational tool (Gil-Gaecia, 2006:3).

The AU website provide a calendar of meetings (conferences and events) informing stakeholders about impending meeting schedules. Figure 2.5 demonstrates an example of AU calendar webpage. Information provided includes titles of meetings, numbers of days of the meeting, date, proposed venue, invited participants and the concerned organizing department. Participants range from all members states, members of the bureau, military staff committee, independent experts and civil society organizations. Nepad website also have an event calendar, which contains scheduled meetings for whichever month in question. However, unlike the AU that makes available all information pertaining to upcoming and previous meetings, Nepad simply informs about the date and venues of meetings. Nevertheless, Nepad website provides an option to print the meeting calendar.

This kind of e-administration provides evidence that websites purvey links between online and offline politics. The calendar example proves evidence because invited members are equipped with enough and adequate information about upcoming meetings taking place offline. Hence, this proves existing literature right that online politics (website) makes possible and efficient offline politics by serving as a perfect organizational and mobilization tool.

Frequency of website update.

According to the EU, “the information on Europa is revised when necessary – depending on treaties, council meetings and other events. However, many pages, such as ‘EU News’, are updated every day”. The same trend is apparent on AU and Nepad. However, for the AU information such as current news is not totally deleted, but simply shift further and further down as new information is added. This proves Schneider and Foot’s (2004) argument that websites have both ephemeral and permanence features. It is conclusive to

argue that information updates in websites is ephemeral in nature because contents usually last for a relatively brief period but also contain a permanence feature since new contents can be added to a website while a few other aspects remain the same. This prolongs access to particular issues than the case would have been for traditional media such as broadcast and print media.

In summary, the presentation of information in the EU, AU and Nepad intergovernmental websites leads toward the conclusion that top-down (vertical communication) is presented with excellence in all three websites. Information about institutions, directors and role of these intergovernmental organizations in continental governance and integration is well covered. There cannot be integration and good governance without the acquaintance and knowledge thereof. This kind of information generates better-informed citizens who understand the role, importance and process of the organizations in facilitating continental integration. In turn, institutional information develops interest and forms the foundation in which citizens can make knowledgeable and intelligent deliberation in continental politics and governance. Moreover, through current information presented in these websites, citizens gain knowledge about the proceedings of other countries in the continent. Within this role, websites serves the role equally facilitated by mainstream media. The only difference is that (in websites) the organization has total leverage over the information presented and thus can thrust an uncontested ideology of their own, based on institutional goals. For that matter, these three e-governance websites perform the role defined by extent literature of information diffusion and keeping citizens knowledgeable about the performance of government.

5.6 Interactivity

Interactivity is one of the most sited potential of the Internet and web-based communications. Bentivegna (2002: 54) sees interactivity as the relationship between the user and communication system and between the user and other users. Usually the degree of interactivity in a website is measured by the availability or the unavailability of certain interactive tools in the website. The most essential tools necessary for interaction

between the Intergovernmental organization and citizens (Government-to-Citizens (G2C); Citizens-to-Government (C2G) and among citizens themselves are direct e-mails, contact-us measures, search engines, send a friend this link, online polls, online discussion forums, ease of navigation and choice of language (these last two are discussed separately).

A search facility supports a user-centric approach and hence ensures that the user accrue precise information in accordance to his or her needs without having to hunt the entire website. Extensive and adequate contact details should be provided in e-governance portraits. The EU website contains a functional search engine situated on the website's home page. Figure 1.6 illustrates all available options to make contacts with the EU. Most of these links are direct system-response interaction aligned with typical features of user-to-system interaction. Although EU interaction with users embodies considerable features of user-to-systems interaction, it does also equally initiate user-to-documents (producers) interactivity as exemplified by figure 1.7. At this juncture, direct e-mails and telephone numbers are presented. This information is necessary to make interaction with the government either online (emails) or offline (telephone and physical address).

The emails provided connect the user to a computer based-form necessary for inputting either a comment or a question to the EU as showcased by an example in figure 1.8. This form requires a lot of details to be filled before it can be sent. For instance, a user has to fill in his/her name, country of origin, physical address and occupation. According to this researcher, this fill-in pre-requisite reduces the potential feature of fast communication that is inherent in web-based communication because it lessens user's interest.

'Europe direct information relays' further proves the existence of links between online and offline politics. Information relay acts as a offline/online connecting interface between citizens and the EU. This allows citizens to obtain information, ask questions and make comments to the EU and thus promote debates about the EU at a local and a regional physical place. There is a present map on the information-relay webpage. Clicking on one area of the map (e.g Nederland in UK) presents an information network

webpage showing physical address and contact details of the information network in Nederland. Therefore, website diffusion of information about debates taking place offline enables citizens to be more knowledgeable about such debates, thereby rendering links between online and offline politics cooperative.

There are two available search engines in AU website, both of which are nonfunctional. Unfortunately, the page cannot be accessed as it is still supposedly under construction. In addition, links to require 'AU news by e-mail' and the 'discussion' and 'enquiries forum' are also not worth mentioning as they respond, "will be available soon". In short, all interactive tools necessary for user-to-user interaction (debating forum) and user-to-document interaction (enquiry forum and search engines) are latent. Online interaction between the AU and its citizens and among African Union citizens is very poor.

All AU contact measures are positioned at the bottom of the homepage (which is only apparent after a few scrolls down). It is possible that some users may not see the contact measures, given the fact that most recent documents and information is presented at the top of the webpage which makes little need to scroll further down to old information which the user have probably already seen. Nevertheless, AU contact details for the headquarters is made available by a click on 'contacts', making appear a webpage containing physical address, telephone numbers and direct e-mail. All contact details can be viewed in the webpage presented in figure 2.5. At this point, clicking on any link in the right hand-side of the webpage will show the contact details belonging to a set of individuals in that category. Hence, clicking on the commissioners as done in figure 2.5 will show all commissioners' contact details including position held, telephone numbers and direct e-mail address. And thus, clicking on any other category will have the same effect. However, all direct e-mails after frequent tries have failed to link-up. However, citizens can still make considerable interaction with the AU through offline measures like telephone and physical visits to the organization.

There is no available search engine on the Nepad website, but there is one search engine designed to archive messages from the discussion forum. This means that the user may

experience trouble of finding specific information in the Nepad e-governance website. However, the Nepad website has a ‘*send this page to a friend*’ and ‘*send us your comments*’ links. The former encourages user-to-user interactivity while the latter encourages user-to-document interactivity (Citizens-to-Government (C2G)). Users’ interactions through discussion forums exemplify use-to-user interaction, which is adequately pursued by Nepad online.

The contacts details webpage provides Nepad physical address and contact details of Nepad secretariats, coordinators and advisors. Here their names, position and contact details including telephone numbers and e-mail address are provided. However, offered e-mail addresses are not direct links. The user may have to open an external e-mail provider, and only then will he be able to send the e-mail. This is discouraging as it is time consuming and complicated.

Interactivity defined in this section conceptualizes horizontal communication. According to Flew (2002) and Bentivegna (2002), vertical communication is synonymous to mainstream model of communication where information flows one-way from the source (Intergovernmental organization) to the receiver (continental citizens). On the other hand, horizontal communication explicates reciprocity of information between the source, the receiver and between receivers. Inefficiency of AU interactive tools implies that horizontal communication is lessened and somehow latent. Interactivity as a basic prospect of e-governance is still highly uncultivated in the AU website. Nepad, on the contrary makes significant efforts to accommodate citizens’ input to continental inter-governance by enabling rational discussions through the online discussion forum. Such interactivity also makes it possible for citizens to send Nepad webpages to friends and correspond with Nepad people through emails. EU excels in enhancing interaction among users and between users and the EU through use of e-mails and political discussion sessions held offline (e.g. *Europe direct information relays*). The availability of contact details in all websites makes the intergovernmental organization accessible to the people since physical address and telephone numbers of directors and concerned stakeholders are presented in these websites.

5.7 Navigation

Navigation is one other prospect of web-based communication. MacMillan (2002) argues that this form of interactivity is characterized by users' choice, control and participation in the presentation and seeking of information. This section explores navigation matters in all three websites in question. This is done by critically investigating the extent of user friendliness (or lack of), users control of information presentation and an investigation of internal links and external links inside and within websites. User friendliness measures the ability of a user to find necessary information with precision to his or her needs.

Link adaptations function as users guide towards relevant information. This can be done by content-relation, which happens when additional information is presented to ensure that relevant information is shown through related links. Precise example of content relation is one presented in the treatment of Lebanon current affairs, where information is subsequently linked to related information using internal link-adaptations.

Menu-bars function as websites site-maps delegating where to find what kind of information. The EU and AU do not have subsequence menu-bars. A menu-bar exists in the homepage but as subsequent pages are opened, the side menu-bar changes content in relation to related issues at hand. This is different to Nepad, which has one subsequent menu-bar for all webpages. The availability of menu-bars in these websites simplifies navigation and access to relevant information. With hyper-linked menu-bars in websites, users construct their own set of information in accordance to their agenda and desires. Flew (2002: 16) and Bentivegna (2002) argued that this process of disintermediation enables users the opportunity to access multiple, interconnected and related information.

Navigational help

It is apparent, that not everyone has the ability to instinctually navigate websites without finding themselves lost in cyberspace and stuck with an abundance of inconsequential information. Literature in chapter 2 indicates that it might take long for a user to find necessary information in a website containing limited degree of user-friendliness. In

response to this problem, EU strives to provide users with all necessary navigational help. EU direct web assistance service is a tool designed to assist users to easily navigate within the EU website (figure 1.9). This tool provides practical guidance on locating specific EU documents such as legislation, and other publications. EU web assistance is also applicable in tracing general information such as reports, working documents, statistics and other information about Europe's integration. Because, the web assistance tool is only eligible during working hours, alternative navigation assistance can be found on a toll free telephone number, making it assessable to the general public.

African Union has both the help-link and the site-map which are designed to ease the process of navigation within the website. Both these features are situated in the bottom of the home page where the contact details are obtainable. However, the help-link is non-functional and only serves to refresh the webpage and make no outcome. The site-map on the other hand is functional as it opens up a webpage similar to the one presented in figure 2.10. Nevertheless, the site-map is static and does not link to any webpage. In that case the AU website does not ease the process of navigation. Nepal website neither has any navigational-help program nor a site-map from which users can enter significant web pages.

External links and internal links

A website is constituted by many individual webpages of which hyperlinks are a central part. Links within websites function as navigational tools whereas external links between websites allow for extra knowledge and information to be accumulated from related websites in the larger web. In our case, by studying web links, it became critical to trace connectivity within these websites and links to related external websites. Schneider and Foot (2004) argue that it is essential to study hyperlinks within the website and between a specific website and the larger web. The investigation of internal hyperlinks allowed for the examination of the extent of connectivity and integration between various departments of the e-governance website.

Information fragments such as texts, images and video presented in the homepage of the website provides a threshold to the internal structure of such files. EU website contains quick-links to internal webpages which are deemed important. Such fragments include: Europa newsletter, debate Europe, EU communication policy and more. No external links are obtainable from EU homepage. Most external links in the europa website are built in different webpages depending on the kind of issue at hand. In this case, if economic issues are at deliberation, then links to WTO for example will be accessible from there.

External links in the AU website enables a quick link to related websites as seen in figure 2.1. All external links to regional economic communities are obtainable from here. Other external links available from this site are largely international and African organization such as United Nations (UN), World Trade Organization (WTO), African Capacity Building Foundation ([ACBF](#)) and more of such caliber. Nepad provides a hyperlink leading to partners' websites and other external websites. In case of partners' external website, there is an inclusion of AU website, Nepad Egypt, E-Africa commission, Es-Africa commission and investments Climate Facilities (ICF). An example of Nepad external-links webpage is accessible in figure 3.6. Here external links to global, Africa's regional groupings and African development and economic related organization are made available. In this case, clicking in any one of external links sends the user straight to a selected organizational website.

In summary, the availability of external network-links connecting the AU and Nepad websites attests substantial integration between the two institutions. Users are able to navigate from one e-governance website to the next with ease. With the same capacity, external websites linkages make feasible connections to regional economic organizations such SADC and the like. Such external linkages accessible in the AU and Nepad websites facilitate good continental governance and integration because users (citizens) can be transferred to other related organizations that are necessary for the enrichment of African continental governance and unity.

5.8 Diversity of Languages

The European Union has 25 Member States and 20 official languages. “Each member state, when each country joins the union, stipulates which language or languages it wants to have declared official languages of the EU”. The portal is arranged into themes as seen in figure 1.10. Themes are divided as follows: Language diversity, language learning, language teaching, translation, interpretation and language technology. Each of these themes contains hyperlinks. As such, clicking on language diversity for example will result in a webpage highlighting language diversity policy, activities, services and news. In justification of diverse language use, the EU writes “Our policy of official multilingualism as a deliberate tool of government is unique in the world. The EU sees the use of its citizens’ languages as one of the factors which make it more transparent, more legitimate and more efficient” www.europa.eu/languages.

There are four languages in the African Union homepage (an example can be viewed in figure 2.1). Languages in use are English, French, Portuguese, and Arabic. Clicking on any one language switches the entire website into the selected language. However, Portuguese language in the AU website (Bem-Vindo) is still under construction. Although a number of Adobe (PDF) documents, such as linked reports, strategic documents switches to other languages either than English, a large number of such documents remain in English except for cosmetic changes of sub-headings. In fact, approximately 65 percent of linking documents in an Arabic translated website remain in English.

Two languages are operational in the Nepad website, namely, French and English. The entire website changes language as a language cipher is clicked. The majority of linking documents (reports and such) also switch languages as a result. Nepad discussion forum had a total of 200 posted messages on the 5th of August 2006. An instantaneous switch of language to French showed 108 posted messages. This implies that only French messages are accessed from the French translated (Nepad) website. This researcher feels that this kind of action further divides Africa through language divisions that are somehow not

merged. Existing literature argues that the fundamental goal of initiating a discussion forum is to ensure that a public sphere of rational debate that is not limited by language diversity exists. In this case, it is irrational to separate online discussions by language categories. It is rather advisable to unite all the languages by either translating all sent messages into the two languages used in Nepad website or to present them in one webpage in its diverse form of language.

Language division is as follows in Africa: English accommodates the Anglophone section, French for the Francophone, Arabic for countries in the far north of the continent and Portuguese for a smaller section of the continent. The above four mentioned languages are well established to accommodate the whole of Africa. In that case, the idea to employ all four languages in the AU website was well thought. However, Nepad should not contain itself with only two languages. More languages are needed for Nepad website. Nevertheless, it still remains that the above-mentioned languages are not indigenous languages of Africa, and in that regard the exclusive use of those four languages may exclude the less learned citizens of Africa.

A number of African media scholars worry about the use of foreign languages in Africa's media systems. For instance, Mutula (2006:595) argues, "Africa has many languages with virtually none constituting the language of the Internet". The same conclusion is reached by this study that none of Africa's e-governance websites have African indigenous languages.

As stated earlier, the Internet as a distinct medium of communication makes possible the co-presence of vertical and horizontal communication. Existing literature shows that horizontal communication is characterized by interactivity, feedback and reciprocity. For the purpose of this research, interactivity is measured by the existence of interactive tools. Most of the interactive tools present in the AU e-governance portrait are nonfunctional. For instance, the search engine, discussion forum and direct e-mail links are not working. These tools are necessary if the any of these organizations is to improve political interaction with citizens through this channel of direct feedback. Nepad has a

relatively high level of interactivity since most interactive tools are functional. Direct emails, contact us measure and the discussion forum are working. The EU does better than both the AU and Nepad with regard to direct interaction between the organization and its people.

Navigation is one special feature of the Internet that gives power of control to the citizen. User-friendly navigational structures, navigational help features and search engines make it easy for users (citizens) to find what they need from the website. All these features are present in the AU website, but none of them are functional. Nepad does not have navigational help features which means that users can easily get lost in navigation. The existence of these features is essential, most particularly for Nepad and AU since computer skills are low in Africa.

The existence of external links and language diversity depicts prospects associated with web-based communication. Through external links (which are present in Nepad and AU websites), the citizen can be directed to other websites that can further the cause of his needs as a citizen of Africa. E-governance websites also facilitates the process of offline governance and e-administration since the website acts as an organizational tool. This can be proved by the existence of meeting calendars, updates information and addresses to physical debating places in all three websites.

It is worth noting that horizontal communication in AU and Nepad e-governance websites still needs improvement. It is even more so in the AU website, where top-down communication of institutional news and current affairs gain momentum at the expense of horizontal communication that should be intensified by the existence of interactive features such as debating forums and the reciprocal use of direct emails to directors and decision makers.

5.9 Testing participation

This section discusses the role and prospect of rational debates as facilitated by the Internet in general and online debating forums in particular. Habermas' purpose was to conceptualize a forum for rational debate free from ideological pressures and commercial motives. As already argued, the current rhetoric is that the Internet provides a public sphere better than the mainstream media because the Internet arguably enables citizens from different members' states to interact as equals in discussion forums, thereby participating in rational debates concerning matters of mutual concerns and interests. Prospects of universal accessibility and participation are deemed possible because the Internet mitigates geographical boundaries. The question attempted here is: to what extent do e-governance websites, particularly debating forums facilitate a rational public sphere?

As a guiding method of analysis, major themes are as follows. *Diversity* of participants is investigated in order to understand if there is any country (counted by numbers of participants from a specific country) or personas dominating the forums. In order to pin down if there was dominance of persona-participants, the numbers of reoccurring names of participant were counted. Moreover, diversity of topics was also examined. *Reciprocity* between participants themselves and between participants and the intergovernmental organization was another theme of analysis while the *frequency* of responses was analyzed last²⁹.

5.9.1 African Union

The discussion forum for African Union is still supposedly under construction as the response reads "WILL BE AVAILABLE SOON". For that matter, the AU is regrettably excluded from this analysis.

²⁹ Themes adopted from Schneider (1996). See Methodology chapter

5.9.2 European Union

Debate Europe is an online discussion forum established for the European Union website to provide a voice and a platform for EU citizens to raise and share their concerns and opinions. A question posed on the forum web page reads: “what sort of European Union do you want?” “Welcome to debate Europe, our website for the wide debate on the European Union. This website is our invitation to you to discuss with us your ideas, hopes and worries for Europe’s future. With this site, we want to make contact with you and listen to what you think and propose” www.europa.eu/debateeurope/index—en.thmm. This shows EU’s desire for citizens’ participation in policy debates and development. The invitation is accommodating and immediately triggers a response.

There are three categories of major themes (topics) of debate, specifically: (1) ‘*Europe’s economic and social development*’, (2) ‘*feeling towards Europe and union’s tasks*’ and (3) ‘*Europe’s borders and its role in the world*’. These themes serve as recommended guiding principle to the discussion forums’ agenda. In this case, the EU sets (or recommends) the agenda for the debate. There are links to national debates forums, which can be accessed at ease. However, this research only focuses on the European Union continental forum as a whole in exclusion of all national forums.

Debate Europe: structure and navigation

Structure and navigation present either the opportunity or the limitation of the technology (websites) to allow and encourage participation. If these tools are not active or effective then it can be expected that discouraged participation and minimum participation will unfortunately result. EU navigation structure is very accommodating and uncomplicated because of divisions in major issues. It is therefore intelligible to anticipate contents of the agenda even before entering the debating panel. Users can view all contributions in the debate with ease by simply clicking on ‘view all contributions in the debate’. This process can encourage response provided that the user comes across a comment that is provocative in nature. At the same time, a user can contribute to the debate by making

own comments or responding to particular comments made by other participants thorough 'add a contribution to the debate' connection.

In effort to make a contribution to EU debates, the user is required to fill in a computer-based form, which hence provides user-to-system interaction. The user is supposed to fill in the following particulars: Author (name of contributor), E-mail address, language of choice, country of origin, profession, gender, age, range, subject (title) and contribution. This researcher conducted a test to measure the simplicity and the rate of response by contributing comments on the EU debate forum. First, filling in everything with no mistake resulted in an acceptance of the inquiry and the initial contribution was successfully made. Secondly, the form was filled and sent with a number of blank spaces in order to dictate if the computer system would be able to pick it up. As a result, the computer responded with a command that all information be provided. This proves perceptible user-to-system interaction.

On the 9th of August 2006, the first cluster of debate, the '*Europe's economic and social development*' had a total number of 2353 posted messages, whereas, the second cluster titled '*feeling towards Europe and union's tasks*' had the highest amount of deliberation with a total of number of 4415 messages and lastly, the third category came second in terms of prevalence with the accumulation of 2555 posted messages from the inception of the EU debating forum. The number of messages confirms that EU citizens deem pertinent the discussion of *EU tasks* more than other issues.

From the sample of messages scrutinized from the EU forum, it is probable to dictate dominance of participants in all three clusters of the forum. Although a larger number of participants choose to remain anonymous, there are a few leading names that are reoccurring in all clusters of debate. These participants respond to almost all comments and also make significant initiatives to initiate comments of their own. More often that not, their input is meaningful and well thought than the case would otherwise be for a bundle of anonymous participants. In essence, the regular group of participants is well accustomed to the EU forum and typically makes reference to each other's messages of

the past. Accustomed users are of a larger number than those apparent in the Nepad forum, which therefore makes the illusion of diversity possible from a diminutive look.

In terms of quality, there are a number of anonymous participants who choose to remain anonymous for the basic fact that their comments are rebellious and somewhat radical, whereas, there are those who remain anonymous for the simple reason of play and irrational (unserious) comments. This aligns with Jassen and Kies (2005) argument that anonymity in websites increase the level of irrationality since participants cannot be held accountable for their comments.

5.9.3 Nepad Discussion Forum

Structure and Navigation

Method of analysis used for Nepad conforms to that implemented on the EU website. Nepad homepage contains a link to the discussion forum. The connected webpage outlines three operational options; to post a new message, search for a message or to go back to the homepage. Nepad is similar to EU discussion forum site, given that a computer-based form is apparent, when 'post a new message' hyperlink is clicked. This also requires the user to fill in the following: Name, E-mail address, topic and the message (contribution). For instance, having sent the e-mail (message contribution form) with no e-mail address the computer system response reads "we would like to send you an alert when there is a reply to your message, what is your valid e-mail address? The one entered is invalid". This demonstrates some form of (user-to-system) interaction.

Contrary to the EU, Nepad has no limitation or recommended agenda for deliberation and discussion. Users are free to write about whatever they feel interested. Topics range from soccer to politics and development. Nepad forum is also dominated by a number of reoccurring individuals that constantly participate in rational debate. However, these individuals are only a handful and have ostensibly come to be acquainted with each other. At the same time, there are an even larger number of hits and runs. Hits and runs are people who only contributed once to the forum and never to return.

5.9.4 Analysis: Testing Participation

Diversity and rationality of themes of debate

Both EU and Nepad forums demonstrate rationality of debates. Diversity of topics of deliberation and debate is one feature that should be commemorated in the Nepad online forum. Here issues range from soccer, health issues, domestic politics, transnational politics gender and more. The continent (Africa) is one special theme unifying all these dissections.

Division of major area of exploration on the EU forum reminds users about issues they are supposed to rationalize about. As noted earlier, there are three themes in the EU forum: *Europe's economic and social development*, *Feeling towards Europe and the Union tasks* and last but not least, *Europe's borders and its role in the world*. Most often that not, participants respect boundaries between the above set discussion divisions. Nevertheless, this does not mean that such blenders do not exist.

As already mentioned, there are a number of anonymous users that discredit rational debate within the EU forum by simple sending playful comments that by no means relate to the issue of debate or the EU. Official users have complained to the forum moderator about this problem, an example of the moderator response can be viewed in figure 1.11. Nepad forum on the other hand, is more rational and intelligible than it could be said for the EU forum. Formal users attack all kinds of irrational comments. Although, this may not annihilate irrationality, it can at least reduce it. The reason behind this, as this writer personally perceive, is that the Internet is accessible to many ordinary people in Europe, while in Africa, the Internet is still reserved for the most affluent citizens like university students and well employed people who are inherently more learned and thus more rational to politics and economical issues and the world around them.

Reciprocity and frequency of response

Some messages go without comments in the Nepad discussion forum, while others may attract a bundle of responses. Moreover, some comments may be responded to after months. Nepad forum is still very young and in that case, a message might attract a maximum of seven to nine comments whereas one EU comment may contain a maximum of 50 to 70 responses. In that case, responses are more frequent in the EU online forum than the case have been for Nepad. Of all messages and comments in the Nepad online forum, there is not one response from the forum moderator. In fact, even Nepad participants do not include the moderator or Nepad people in debate as done by EU participants. In this case, there is little interactivity and rational debate between Nepad officials and the people. Jassen and Kies (2005) also found that government representatives do not participate in their online forums.

A response from the EU moderator can be seen in figure 1.11. Here, the moderator responds to comments sent to him in the EU forum, to which he responds with reference to a comment made earlier by one of the dominant participant in the forum. This demonstrates acquaintance with dominant users in the forum. Such action of response encourages participants that their inputs are indeed acknowledged in governance.

Diversity of country of origin

Dictating participants' diversity of country of origin is one area in which this research has failed dismally. Nepad forum totally do not provide space to locate country of origin whereas, the EU requires users to write their country of origin. However, with a large number of anonymous users and a lot of users who choose not to bother with specifying country of origin, it was impossible to have a full representation in which analysis could be based. This section was to be completed by dividing and counting how many participants are from a particular country. It was envisioned by this researcher that such transcription allows for the examination of which part or country of the continent is most active or most dominant in continental e-governance.

Intergovernmental online forum such as EU and Nepad facilitate interaction of the continent as a whole. Nevertheless, they also reinforce and cement nationalism. This is

apparent in both EU and Nepad forums. For instance, if someone from a specific country comment about a country of origin, usually only fellow national citizens respond to such comments. Moreover, this discussion spins also to include other issues concerning that particular nationality.

Technological features

It is true that website presentational structure and the availability (or unavailability) of tools for interaction provide prospects for interaction. The example of the AU website proves that the unavailability of interactive tools guaranteed that citizen participation was unattainable no matter what the will of the citizen had been. Even if users have the will to participate or comment in the AU website, the technological system (website) does not accommodate.

Clearly from the above enlightenment, the technology (the website) enables simplicity for maximum participation but there is quite minimum participation. This proves technological determinism wrong for arguing that technological features are preconditions and determining factors for citizen participation. Technological determinism, further advocates that ease of navigation (system friendliness) and website features such as tools of interaction are enough on their own to trigger and hearten participation and rational debates.

As shown by extent literature presented in Chapter 2, online public sphere facilitated by continental intergovernmental websites (e-government portraits) have positive consequences on continental governance. For instance, topics of debates available in Nepad and EU online forums prove that there is concern and rational debates taking place in relation to the efficiency of the continent and its citizens. However, a prerequisite to this outcome is universal access and participation of citizens from diverse countries. From the result manifested in the data (EU and Nepad online forums) it is conclusive that the availability and the creation of the platform for rational debates do not necessarily guarantee virtual integration of citizens among themselves and their leaders. This is due to the fact that fewer and fewer people participate (and dominate) within this continental

public sphere made possible by the websites in question. In such case, e-governance does not generate the will for political participation, but apparently only enhances the capability and the dominance of those already involved in politics. For Nepad in particular, territorial boundaries are rendered obsolete by web-based communication. Nevertheless, fewer and fewer people are taking note of this opportunity. Which, implies that either people are not informed about the existence and importance of the forum or they simply have other issues to worry about (as the social shaping of technology insinuates)? Another major factor contributing to limited participation in Africa is the digital divide and inadequate access³⁰.

5.10 Impacts of Institutional goals on websites

The Social Shaping of Technology

This section tackles the question: To what extent do institutions' communication goals influence the design strategy employed in websites? In order to understand institutional goals of the studied intergovernmental institutions, analysis of strategic documents samples was therefore necessary. First, the *White paper on a European Communication* was scrutinized. In case of the AU, *a strategic plan for the Commission of the African Union 2004-2007 action plane* was analyzed. This document is relevant here because it concerns African integration as its title reads "*Programs to speed up integration of the continent*". The *Nepad advocacy strategic document of 2005* was examined purposefully to comprehend Nepad's institutional goals. All mentioned documents are critically examined through document analysis as part of qualitative studies. It is hoped that that goals, visions, role and communication strategy of the websites in accordance to the perceptions of these institution will be delineated.

European Union

What seems fundamental to EU communication goals is the will and the attempt to close what is perceived as a widening gap between the institution and its citizens. EU recognizes that "communication has remained too much of a 'Brussels affair', It has

³⁰ See Chapter 3 (e-governance in Africa)

focused largely on telling people what the EU does: less attention has been paid to listening to peoples' views...Institutional communication, though essential and steadily improving, has clearly not been sufficient to close the gap" (EU, 2006:4). The White Paper recommends a move away from the above-mentioned decentralized (one-way) communication approach towards a "citizen-centered communication to reinforce dialogue". The document maintains, "Any successful EU communication policy must center on citizens' needs. It should therefore focus on providing the tools and facilities, the forums for debate and the channels of public access to information and the opportunity to make voices heard". The Internet's prospective role in this process is recognized, as it is argued that "the Internet can offer new channels for communication on European issues, new forums for civic debate and new tools for cross-border democracy".

In order for EU citizens to be fully informed about the European Union, and be confident that the views and concerns they express are heard by the Institution, the EU commission has identified five areas of action plans necessary for bridging the gap. These are:

First, the right to information and freedom of expression is seen as the starting point in a process aimed at enhancing citizens' participation in the EU. Second, in terms of inclusiveness, EU recommends that "all citizens should have access in their own language to information about matters of public concern" (This is why EU website has a maximum of 20 languages). Moreover, information should be made available and people should be helped to develop skills they need to access and use that information (more reason why the website has numerous navigational-help programs). Thirdly, EU seeks to encourage diversity of views and people participating in European Union politics (eg online forum). The EU White Paper further argues that "citizens should have a right to express their views, be heard and have the opportunity for dialogue with decision-makers". This can be done by empowerment.

The EU holds that all the above action-plans are essential, but not achievable without citizens' empowerment. This can be done, first by *improving civic education* to enhance

peoples' acknowledgement of their political and civic rights. Second, empowerment comes by *connecting citizens with each other* through online forums in order to build "mutual trust, respect and willingness to work together towards common objectives". For this process, the EU also values face-to-face interaction (eg). Third, EU believes that citizens' empowerment is a result of *connecting the citizens and public institutions*. "Good two-way communication between the citizens and public institutions is essential in a healthy democracy".

The above analyses show that European Union sees value in interacting with its citizens rather than simply providing information. This is manifested in the e-government website. There are many interactive features making possible the advent of Government-to-Citizens (G2C); Citizens-to-Government (C2G) and citizens-to-citizens communications.

African Union

Among the first priorities of the African Union as affirmed in the commission document is to "popularize the AU and make its vision of the future widely shared" and "mobilize the people around this vision". Action plans devoted to such objectives include the formulation of an institutional communication strategy, establishment of African mainstream media such as radio and television and the enhancement of information folders about the AU such as CD-Rom on AU treaties and decisions (AU doc, 6, 2004). All stated communication action-plans show momentum been granted to the maintenance and improvement of vertical (top-down) communication from the AU to the people of Africa. Also pertaining to the superiority of vertical communication is an objective of the AU to "strengthen the leadership role of the African Union in promoting peace and security in the continent" (AU doc, 19, 2004). Fundamental to the above-mentioned goal is the dissemination of information about the process of AU peacekeeping role in conflict ridden places rather than horizontal, citizen participation in such processes.

The other goal worth mentioning is one that endeavors "to enhance the meaning and value of citizenship and accountability of the AU to the African people" (AU doc, 10, 2004). The aspiration of citizen participation to Africa's integration is to be facilitated by

the development and the strengthening of AU networks based in each member state, insuring the availability of AU offices in diverse African places and the establishment of national and regional levels of consultative frameworks. Although all these defined physical presence measures are prominent for the elevation of citizen participation, they do not translate to the website beyond the fact that dates and schedules for such meeting are achievable online. Because of this determination to venerate AU physical presence, the organization sees latent the need to accrue citizen participation online and hence all interactive tools necessary to facilitate citizen participation online are mitigated. In encapsulation, AU goals do not necessitate citizens' participation and hence horizontal interactive tools in the website were not essential since information dissemination about the institution and its role in Africa was the primary reason towards the development of the website.

At the launch of the AU websites, the AU secretary general confirmed that "The website both in English and French will provide services of interactive country map, information about the African Union (AU) document distribution, including the office of the secretary general, AU news, discussions, calendar of events and links, according to organizers of events" www.addistribune.com/archives/2002/03/22. All mentioned services have since been implemented in the AU website except for the discussion forum which is a pre requisite for citizens' participation in e-governance.

(Nepad)

Nepad institutional goals are explicated by the examination of Nepad's advocacy strategic document of 2005. 'This document is a proposed framework for advocacy and communications campaign to support the implementation of Nepad'. According to the document, the main goal as stated by this institution is to accrue and maintain grand international response and support to Africa's development. Diescho (2002) argues that Nepad is too focused on getting international responses. Thus, to some extent, presentation and contents in the website are aimed at the international community. For instance, Nepad website does not employ Arabic and Portuguese languages since its targeted or sought after partnerships are among the west who understand French and

English. The reason behind this phenomenon is the fact that the International community partially, if not largely funds Nepad (Diescho, 2002: 50).

Other underlying goals of Nepad communication are to create and increase awareness, highlight leadership capacity of Africans and mobilize targets audience for action in African integration. The entire stated goals apart from the last one, deeply depend on information dissemination. In that regard, Nepad website excels in providing institutional information designed to enlighten, specifically international donors and people of Africa about the organization. For the facilitation of the second goal to highlight leadership capacity of Africa, conflicts and corrupt or weak governance responsible for underdevelopment in Africa is not entertained in the websites news. The third goal to mobilize African audience to take action in Africa's development and integration is apparent in the website as space for such action and opinion formation is designed and rendered in the Nepad online discussion forum.

The communication strategic document illustrates that communication in the Nepad website is directed to both internal and external audiences. Internal audiences according to the document include: National governments, think tanks, academia, professional organizations, businesses, religious groups and the people. The media constitute a highly plausible internal audience as the document reads: "the media is a crucial partner for building mass public support for Nepad. This strategy stresses the importance of developing proactive relationships with journalists by giving them information they can use". For this reason, both Nepad and AU make certain that media links are functional. External audiences of which Nepad communication is directed include: Nepad partners at UN headquarters, G8, African group of ambassadors and Africans in the Diaspora. This division of audiences complicates the presentation of the website as some information is directed to external audiences and others to internal ones.

Nepad is solemn about selling itself and raising awareness. As such, the message about Nepad seems to be of high regard. "An improper understanding of what Nepad stands for has to be avoided". For this reason, Nepad insures that the first page of the website

contains information about the institution. “All the messages to be communicated have to be succinct, concise and concrete. They must be easily understandable, brief and should be tailored to the specific audience and event”. In this case, Nepad language and presentation of information is more accommodating to ordinary people than the case has been with the AU, which directs its communication to members’ states, secretariats and general people involved with the process of the AU. However, Nepad language and presentation is not yet basic, more simplification is still needed.

The EU seeks to empower citizens by ensuring a recognized, diverse and inclusive participatory public sphere in order to bridge the gap between the institution and its people. These stated goals show a strong inclination to citizens. This is also made apparent in the website where a manifest e-citizen model is noticeable.³¹ African Union is too keen on dissemination information. AU goals seemingly do not necessitate citizens’ participation and hence horizontal interactive tools in the website seem dispensable since information dissemination about the institution and its role in Africa was the primary reason towards the development of the website. Nepad and AU websites excel in providing institutional information designed to enlighten international donors and people of Africa about the organization. These institutions are still in the Public relation (PR) phase of communication, where Nepad seeks to sell its ideas to the International community and AU to the states of Africa (Member states). As a result, the websites are designed more to accommodate the PR role than to facilitate an inclusive public sphere necessary for joint decision-making and closing the gap between the institutions and the people (e-citizen). This makes it evident that institutional communication goals and what the institution aims to accomplish has an influence on how the website is designed and used.

³¹ Unlike the white House goals (as argued in the literature chapter), which never transcribed in the website, the EU goal to bridge the gap proved worthwhile.

CHAPTER 6

Discussions and Conclusions

6.1 Introduction

This study investigated the performance of intergovernmental organization e-governmental websites. The purpose was to examine the extent to which e-governance facilitates Africa's continental governance. Although intergovernmental organizations are not traditional forms of governance, they cannot escape standard values of good governance such as citizens' participation in decision making, service delivery and information dissemination necessary for transparency and accountability of government. The roles of websites in archiving goals associated with good governance are investigated. It is necessary at this point to revisit the research question in order to provide findings and answers.

Research Question

- To what extent can e-governance facilitate Africa's continental governance? And under what circumstances would this be possible?

Research sub-questions:

- To what extent do e-governance websites, particularly debating forums facilitate a rational public sphere?
- What is the nature of information diffusion, service delivery and interaction in major African governance institutions (Nepad and AU websites)?
- Which model of e-governance is evident in e-governance portraits of major African governance institutions such as Nepad and the AU? And on what stage of maturity are those websites?
- What kind of relationship exists between institutional goals and the design strategy (features) apparent in e-government websites?

6.2 Limitation of the study

There are a number of notable limitations in this study. Such limitations somehow reduce the firmness in which rigid conclusions are based. One of the problems experienced by the researcher was the unfeasibility to establish hits (number of users' visits in a website) for both Nepad and African Union. At the absence of information about users' participation in the websites (hits) or any other information concerning audiences, we were not able to trace users' countries of origins. This means that we cannot solidly conclude whether e-governance is indeed facilitating continental governance, but we are able to conclude on the environment in which this is possible. This study is able to confirm whether features and processes in the three e-governance websites are conducive for good governance and political integration in Africa. Prospects and challenges concerning web-based communications in general and e-governance in particular are made apparent. As a result, recommendations about the nature of e-governance practices, models and progressions towards good governance are affirmed. First, we start by summarising prospects and challenges that exist for the AU and Nepad usage of e-governance websites.

6.3 Prospects and practices of continental e-governance

The nature of information diffusion in e-governance websites allows for the co-presence of vertical and horizontal communication. Institutions (AU, EU and Nepad) are more able to inform the public about the intergovernmental organization, its role in the continent and services provided in the process. This resembles top-down communication discussed in the literature chapter. It is worth affirming that all three websites perform well in this regard. It was found that institutional websites (e-governance) still remain adamantly focused on providing institutional information and media directed information such as press releases and communiqués. Current information is only presented as it relates to the institution and its goals. EU does excellent in this section because it provides background information and additional information concerning current issues put in the spotlight. AU on the other hand, does well to provide update-information intended for those directly involved with its operations (e-administration). Such information includes calendars for

future meetings and an abundance of information about meeting proceedings and documents in relation to that.

Horizontal communication is dialogic in nature. Here the public can talk back to these intergovernmental institutions and among themselves about issues concerning the organization, continental integration and other related issues. Interactive features provided by websites aid in facilitating this type of communication. EU scored high in this prospect since most of the e-governance website interactive features were functional. For instance, direct emails to make contacts with the organization were presented. Moreover, search engines, hyperlinks, navigational help and discussion forums were all functional. Nepad ranked second concerning, horizontal communication because it contains a functional debating forum, direct email links and email-a-friend mechanism. AU ranked last, totally failing in horizontal communication since search engines, debating forums and online contact measures were nonfunctional. All three websites have easy navigational structures. For instance, external linkages accessible in the AU and Nepad websites facilitates African integration for the reason that user (citizens) can be directed to other related organizations that are necessary for the enrichment of African citizens. In addition, through external links, users are able to access online services that may benefit his/her role as a citizen.

By serving as an organizational tool, AU and Nepad websites make possible the cooperative connections between online and offline politics in continental governance. Websites provide information about debates taking place offline and provide online calendars containing upcoming meetings, updates information and addresses to physical debating places (e.g EU). Hence, online politics (website) makes possible and efficient offline politics by serving as a perfect organizational tool (e-administration).

6.4 Challenges to continental e-governance

One of the major challenges illustrated by this study is the adherence by these institutions to only give momentum to top-down communication at the expense of horizontal communication. Hague and Loader (1999: 13) among others argue that e-governance

initiatives display three common traits: First, they argue that there is a great propensity of using websites for information delivery rather than as a medium of citizens' participation and a means of receiving feedback. This has been a conclusion reached for the AU website. Second, there is a tendency to focus on providing raw information as opposed to outlining information and justifying policies for citizens. It seems evident that Nepad and AU are guilty of this tendency of providing a lot of information without simplifying and explaining large chunks of documents. Thirdly, a large number of governments still emphasize on setting the agenda for public deliberation on predetermined issues rather than encouraging the public to set the agenda. The EU debating forum has three predetermined categories of agenda. This means that the organization remains in power of agenda setting in this website. Citizens should be allowed to set the agenda and not be lead towards a particular topic. This provides evidence for Castells' (2001: 137) argument that most communication researches conclude that governments remain focused on one-to-many flow of traditional political communications which can still be equated to mass media.

The absence of an agenda setter in websites makes it uneasy for citizens to follow a logical flow of information that is relevant to his specific needs. This is where navigational help becomes essential. However, navigational help such as help-program systems, search engines and site-map are apparently nonfunctional in both Nepad and AU websites. This hence makes disintermediation a problem rather than a prospect of web-based communication³². This process of disintermediation also enhances the power of the organization to set the agenda and instill its own uncontested ideological interpretative framework. This cannot be good for transparency and accountability in governance.

This research also seeks to understand the extent in which e-governance websites particularly debating forums facilitates a rational public sphere. Extant literature shows the potentials of rational online public debates since traditional barring factors such as time and distance are reduced online. This literature also highlights heterogeneity;

³² Disintermediation is discussed in chapter 2, page 25. See Bentivegna (2002:55) and (Flew 2002: 16) for a further discussion.

anonymity and diversity as prospects on online public sphere (Witschge, 2003 and Jassen and Kies 2005). This research found that online debates are often rational with diverse topics of mutual interest. This is essential for good governance, particularly if these discussions are noticed. However, Nepad shows low interaction between the online forum and representatives of the organisation.

One of the greatest challenges to e-governance in Africa is inadequate and asymmetrical Internet access. Extant literature predicts that political interactions will be forged based on these inequalities. This is apparent in discussion forums, where fewer and fewer people are participating in the public sphere provided by the EU and Nepad websites. It can be argued therefore, that e-governance cannot generate the will for political participation. In this regard, it will be important for Nepad to raise awareness for the existence and the importance of its debating forum. This reinforces Bentavegna (2002) argument that online forums generally enhance the capability and the dominance of those already involved in politics. E-governance systems cannot be the same or be at the same stages of progress. In this case, this paper proceeds to discuss models and stages of the e-governance websites in question.

6.5 Models of e-governance

It should be acknowledged that there are no clear distinctions between dominant models of e-governance such as e-administration, e-citizens and e-service as they sometimes overlap. All these concepts are elaborated and discussed in previous chapters and shall only be encapsulated here. E-administration according to Heek (2002) concentrates on internal administrative structures. E-societies communicate with external structures such as the international community and NGOs, while e-citizens concentrate widely on service delivery and citizens and their contribution towards decision making.

E-administration is well explored in the AU and Nepad website For example there are constant up-dates of meetings and scheduling of meetings online. With reference to the AU, e-citizen and e-service is noticeably poor. The only attempt at e-citizen is when providing information about the institution. AU has failed in making possible online

interaction. Nonetheless, it does make significant measures towards utilizing the website as an organizational tool for offline interaction. It can be concluded, from our analysis that AU directs its communication to members' states and other stakeholders directly involved with the organization (e-administration). This is proved by the professionalism of the language used and the information provided.

The EU on the other hand makes fewer endeavors to communicate with stakeholders (e-society) or the international community (e-administration). Most of its communication is in adherence to the citizens of Europe (e-citizens). The voice of the EU website speaks directly to the citizen of the EU.

Although, Nepad seeks to inform African citizens about the organization, it also binds itself to informing the international community, which makes information diffusion two folds (e-citizen and e-society). Nepad e-governance website is more complicated because all the services are moderately explored to a point where it is hard to conclude which one model is dominant than the others. There are features of e-administration, e-citizens and e-society. But, it remains that all the models in the Nepad websites still need to be upgraded.

6.5 Stages of e-governance progress

The African Union e-governance portrait (website) is in the first stage of progress. Here, the AU provides a predominantly vertical flow of information (top-down) where institutional information and other information are made accessible. This highlights and makes transparent the workings of the AU intergovernmental organization to the citizens of Africa. However, this means that online interaction between the people and the organization is latent as it is apparent that most interactive tools are nonfunctional.

Nepad is somewhere in the middle of stage two (interactive mode) and the third stage of e-governance progress (transaction mode). This is because the website has features of the third stage without fulfilling all requirements of the second stage of e-governance progress. For instance, there is no search engine and only a standard automatic response

is displayed for all inquiries. This means that (on the second stage) the Nepad website facilitates interaction among users via e-mails and discussion forums, but there still exist a communication gap between the organization and citizens. On the third stage, Nepad makes service delivery achievable in the websites. In this case, Nepad is caught up between these two stages.

It can be concluded that the European Union website shows features of a fully matured e-governance website. The EU is in the final stage of e-governance progress, known as the integration mode. This stage incorporates the prospects of all stages of e-governance progress. Users have full control over information presentation (through search engines, site maps and navigational help) and observable interaction (ser-to-user, user-to-documents and user-to-system interaction). Basu (2004: 114-115) argues that this resembles the success of the e-government website due to the fact that this type of website is characterized by vertical and horizontal communication to a point where integration is three-way, between citizens, government internal structures and external stakeholders. However, this conclusion is twisted by the fact the EU does not use the e-governance website much for e-administration and e-society, but uses it predominately for e-citizens.

This research provides evidence that institutional communication goals and what the institution aims to accomplish has some influence on how the e-governance website is used and structured. The EU White Paper shows an inclination to citizens' participation and their contribution to decision making. So interaction and feedback is encouraged through functional interactive tools, reciprocity and navigational help (to assist those low in computer skills). The AU document shows emphasis on offline interaction and information diffusion. In this case, interactive tools are not working, but, measures are taken to organize offline interaction through the website. Nepad seeks to sell its ideas to the international community, so information diffusion is emphasized. However, there are significant steps taken towards including citizens in Nepad issues.

6.7 Theoretical conclusions

Do communication technologies shape society or does society shape communication technologies? More directly the question translates, will information technologies such as websites (e-governance) have an influence over Africa's continental governance? Technological determinism ascribes a technological fix to societal problems including politics. If technological determinism is right, then it can be anticipated that major e-governance websites such as AU and Nepad will revolutionaries Africa's nature of continental governance and thus lead to a more democratic and participatory form of continental governance. It is assumed that the notion of continental e-governance in Africa will be possible through AU and Nepad websites regardless of the existing socio-political factors such as low level of inter-Africa integration, lack of good principles of good governance, low internet penetration, adoption and uses. It is undisputable that the mentioned socio-political factors will have some considerable influence on the model of the e-governance program, uses of the e-governmental website and the participation therein.

Taking into account the results of this research, the assumption made by technological determinism can be questioned, if not challenged. Although some technological features are available in e-governance websites, not many alterations are noticeable in the nature of governmental communications. For instance, as argued, top-down communication from government to citizens and a worrying lack of participation still prevail extensively in the websites. For instance, Nepad has a functional debating forum, yet, it is not convincingly productive taking into consideration such low level of participation. This conclusion concurs with Posters (1995) prediction that a fix on the communication tool (website) alone will not impose a fix to the nature of politics. If these socio political problems are not investigated and addressed, the project on continental e-governance systems is likely to be doomed in the long run.

On the other hand, the social shaping of technology assumes that the society shapes the uses and effect of a technology. It has been argued to a limited but convincing extent that social political factors such as the digital divide, illiteracy and low Internet penetration and uses have an impact over the performance, uses and successes of the information technology (website). If the social shaping of technology is right in its analysis, then the initiation of e-government websites with little effort to address the halting socio-political factors will only add number to communication technologies such as radio, television and CDs utilized by AU and Nepad without changing or adding any significant value to the nature of African continental governance.

Considering the results achieved in this research, it is convincing to argue that socio-political factors do not only influence the uses of the technology, but also influence the design of the technology to a certain extent. For instance, it was proved that the organization's communication goals determine the nature of web-design such as content, web-presentation and the structure of the website including the availability of technical features. Hence, if the organization do not wish to ensure interaction and participation in the e-governance website, then these will not be possible as they will not be supported by the technology which is designed by human agency. This is aligned with Norris (2001: 107) assumption that virtual politics mirrors the traditional political system. In this case, if traditional form of governance is not interactional, inclusive and participatory, then it is fruitless to assume that integration and participation will be possible in online governance.

6.8 Conclusion

As already argued, Africa's way forward requires integration, democracy, good governance, participation and inclusive discussions of all issues. Intergovernmental organizations such as African Union and Nepad are crucial in facilitating the nature of governance that is necessary for Africa's revival. The use of websites, e-governance portraits demonstrates that there are many prospects of using e-governance to facilitate continental governance. This highlights the incentive and the steadfast possibility of Africa's governance and integration to be enhanced by web-based communication.

The basic challenge for a continental e-governance initiative is that it is reliant on the availability of the technology and Internet connectivity of which Africa is still struggling to provide, although it should be mentioned that significant initiatives are made. Nevertheless, it still remains that the website, through its feature and user friendly navigation can determine the nature of interaction and governance. It is also concluded that the nature of information presentation and the design of our perspective websites are increasingly being directed by institutional communication goals. It seems true that the performance of an e-governance website reflects the nature of information diffusion, transparency and participation desired by the political organization hosting the website (Mackey, 1995: 43 and Norris, 2001: 107).

With regard to the theories discussed in this research, technological determinism and social shaping of technology perspective, there is no one theory that best explains the relationship between technology (e-governance websites) and society (continental governance). As proved by the division of data analysis in this research, each theory best explains one or a few phenomena better than the other and in the process ignores other issues necessary for analysis. For that matter, by the inclusion of all two theories, this research has been best able to explain the role and effects of e-governance in continental affairs and integration. There is a gray area between these two theories that needs to be accounted for.

6.9 Recommendations

This research has only looked at continental e-governance processes from a citizen outlook, focusing only on how e-governance affects the relationship between the government organization and the citizens and how e-governance can enhance the role of the citizen in continental governance. Future researchers should try to find out in real terms how websites change the performance of governance internally. Moreover, this particular research could have benefited from conducting interviews in addition to the content analyses done on the e-governance websites in order to understand from the horse's mouth how they view and wish to use e-governance portraits. It is therefore recommended for future researchers in this area to correlate content analyses and interview based methods in order to have a more holistic understanding of aim (production) and performance (consumptions).

It is advisable for African Union to take into consideration the value of online interaction. It can be concluded that there is more than enough information in all three websites, but it remains that such information, particularly in AU and Nepad still need to be simplified and better organized. Information dissemination is indeed essential for transparency, but, accountability is unachievable if feedback is not emphasized. For that reason, it seems important that AU must set a functional search engine, discussion forum and other features to ensure reciprocal communication between the organization and citizens of Africa and among citizens themselves. Nepad is on the right direction even though there is a room for improvement. For instance, Nepad need to raise awareness for its discussion forum and communicate the importance of such a forum to citizens. Considering that Nepad is quite a new portrait, it is believed that through experience, it can and will mature to a significant channel of communication, decision making and interaction.

The digital divide is a major problem hampering the performance and effects of e-governance in Africa. As presented in this research, there are significant initiatives undertaken towards closing the digital gap between the information rich and the information poor. Should these initiatives continue to grow and prosper, within a few years the situation in Africa will be improved. In the meantime, it is rather recommended

that measures should be undertaken to reduce the skill gap (usage) in operating e-governance portraits. The 'know how' of using e-governance portraits can be uplifted by navigational help webpages and functional site maps. So it is essential that Nepad and AU focus on initiating these features in the websites.

References

- Adam, L. (1997). Content and the Web for African development in *Journal of Information Science*. Vol. 23 (1).Pp 91 – 97.
- Adesida, O. (2001). Governance in Africa: the role for information and communication technologies' in *Economic Research Papers*. No 65. Cote'd Ivoire: African Bank Press.
- African Union (AU) (2005). Paper presented by the African Union titled “Towards a Pan-Africa Radio and Television Channel: key challenges and opportunities”.
- Akpan, P. (2000). Africa in the age of a global network society: the challenges ahead' *African studies quarterly*. <http://web.Africa.ufl/edu/asp>
- Alzouma, G. (2005). Myth of digital technology: Leapfrogging development in *Global Media and Communication Vol 1*
- Agre, P.E. (2002). Real time politics: The Internet and the political process. *The Information Society*. Vol. 18, No. 3. Pp 311-331.
- Axford, B. (2001) “The transformation of politics or Anti-politics?” In Axford B and Huggins R. *New media and politics*. London: Sage Publications.
- Backus, M. (2002). E-Governance in developing countries in IICD Research Brief. No 9. www.ftpiicd.org
- Basu, S. (2004). E-government and the developing countries: An overview in *International review of low computer and technology*. Vol. 18
- Bell, D. (1976). *The cultural contradiction of capitalism*. London: Heinwmann
- Bentivegna, S. (2002). “Politics and New Media” in Lievrouw, L A and Livingstone S (eds) *Handbook of New Media: social shaping and consequences of ICTs*. London: Thousand Oksa: Sage publications.
- Boateng, E. (1999). “The role of Information in promoting economic development in Sub-Sahara Africa” in Makgoba, M.W 1999 *African renaissance: The new struggle*. Cape Town: Tafelberg.
- Burger, A. A. (1991). Content analysis: newspaper comic pages in *Media research Techniques*. London: Sage Publications.
- Bertrand, I and Hughes (2005). *Media research methods: Audiences, Institutions, and texts*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

- Boyd-Barret, O. and Newbold (1995). "Conceptualizing the public sphere" in *Approaches to media: A reader*. London: Arnold.
- Burnett, R and Marshall, P. D. (2003). *Web Theory: An introduction*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Carley, M.K. (2002). "Smart agents and organizations of the future" in Lievrouw, L A and Livingstone S (eds) *Handbook of New Media: social shaping and consequences of ICTs*. London: Thousand Oksa: Sage Publications.
- Campbell, D. (2001). Can the digital divide be contained? In *International labour Review* Vol 140, no2 Pp 119-141: International labour organization.
- Castells, M. (1985). *High technology, space and society*. London: Sage Publications
- Castells, M. (2001). *The Internet Galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, Business and society*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Chivhanga, B.M. (2000). An Evaluation of the impact of the Internet in Africa. In *Aslib Proceedings*. Vol 52 (18). Pp 373-383.
- Croteau , D. and Hoynes, W. (2002). "Media technology and social change" in *Media/Society: Industries, Images and Audiences*. London: Pine Forge Press.
- Croteau D and Hoynes, W. (2003). *Media /society: Industries, images and audiences*. London: Sage Publications.
- Chrysochoou D.N. (2001). *Theorizing European Integration*. London: Sage Publications.
- Contractor, M.S (2002). "Introduction" in Lievrouw, L. A. and Livingstone, S. (eds) *2002 Handbook of New Media: social shaping and consequences of ICTs*. London: Thousand Oksa: Sage Publications.
- Davison, R.M, Wagner, C and Ma, L.C. (2005). From government to e-government: a transition model in *Information technology and people*: London: West Linn.
- Deacon D, Golding, P. Pickering, M. and Murdock, G. (1999). *Researching Communications: A practical guide to methods in media and cultural analysis*. London: Arnold.
- Debean, W and Garrison, B. (2002) "online newspapers market size and the ise of the world wide web technologies" in MIT communications forum retrieved from www.web.mit.edu/comm.-forum/papers/Dibean_Garrison.html
- Diescho, J. (2002) *Understanding the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad)*. South Africa: Konrad Adenaues Stiflung

- Dimbleby, R. and Burton, G. (1998) *Mass communications. More than words: An introduction to communication*. London: Routledge.
- Edelstein A.S (1982) *Comparative communication research*. London: Sage Publications
- Edge, D. (1995). "The social shaping of technology". In Heap N, Thomas R, Einon G, Mason R and Mackay, H. 1999. *Information Technology and society*. London: Sage Publications.
- Elliott, P (1982). Intellectuals, the information society and the disappearance of the public sphere" in Schlesinger, P and Sparks, C (eds) *Media, Culture and society*. Vol 4, No 3, pp. 244-6. London: Academic Press.
- Fang, Z. (2002) E-government in digital Era: Concept, practice, and development in *International Journal of the computer, the Internet and management*. Pp: 1-22
- Flew, T (2002). *New Media: An introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Fischer, C.S (1985). "Studying technology and the social life" In Castells, M *High technology, space and society*. London: Sage Publications.
- Fosu, A. Bates, R. and Hoeffler, A. (2006) Institutions, Governance and Economic development in Africa: An overview in *Journal of African Economies*. Oxford online journals.
- Gauntlett, D. (2002). *Web studies: Rewiring media studies for the digital age*. London: Arnold.
- Galtung, J. (1973). *The European community: A superpower in the making*. Oslo University: London
- Gil-Garcia R. (2006) 'Enacting state websites: A mixed method study exploring E-Government success in Multi-organizational settings'. The paper appears on HICSS'06 proceedings of the 39th Annual Hawaii International conference on System Science 2006 www.ctg.albany.edu
- Gillward, A. (2005). Towards an African e-Index: ICT access and usage. ReserchICTafrica.net published by The Link Centre, Wits University School of public and development management.
- Gitelman, L and Pingree, G.B (2003) "What's new about new media?" in *New media: 1740-1915*. London: The MIT Press.
- Golding, P. (1998). "Global village or cultural pillage? The unequal inherence of the communication revolution". In McChesney R, Wood E M and Foster B (1998)

Capitalism and the Information Age. The political economy of the global communication revolution. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Gunter, B. (2000). "Overview of media research methodologies: media output" in *Media research methods*. New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Garnham, N. (1986). "The media and the public sphere" in Golding, P, Murdock, G. and Schlesinger, P. (eds) *Communication politics*. Liecester: Liecester University Press. Pp 45-53.

Gyamfi, A. (2005). Closing the digital divide in Sub-Sahara Africa: Meeting the challenges of the information age in *Information development* Pp 22-30. Sage Publications.

Habermas, J (1989). "Institutions of the public sphere" In *The structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Polity, Press, Cambridge.

Hacker, (1999). "The white house computer-mediated communication (CMC) system and political interactivity" in Hague, B.N and Loader, B.D (eds) *Digital Democracy*. London: Routledge.

Hague, N and Loader, D. (1999). *Digital democracy: Discourse and decision making in the Information Age*. London and New York: Routledge.

Halavais, A. (2000) National Borders on the World Wide Web in *New Media and Society* Vol 2. Sage Publications.

Halloran, J.D. (1986). The social implications of technological innovations in communication in Traber, M *The myth of the information revolution: social and ethical implications of communication technology*. London: Sage Publications.

Hamdok, A. (2001). Governance and policy in Africa: Recent experiences. Discussion Paper No 2001/126.

Hasen A, Cottle S, Nigeline, R and NewBold, C. (1998). *Mass Communication research Methods*. London: MacMillian

Hanssen, L, Jankowski, N.W and Etienne, R. (2002). "Multimedia come of Age" in *The contours of multimedia and interactivity from the perspective of communication studies: Recent technological, theoretical and empirical development*. Luton university: Luton Press.

Heap N, Thomas R, Eion G, Mason R and Mackay H. "Differing Perspectives". *Information Technology and society*. London: Sage Publications.

Hamadoun. I Toure (Secretary general of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) (2007) “Competitiveness and ICTs.” Extract from *The African Competitiveness Report 2007*. www.itu.org

Heeks, R. (2002) E-government in Africa: promise and practice. In *Information Polity*: IOS Press. vol & (2-3), Pp: 07-114. Retrieved from [Http://iospress.metapress.com](http://iospress.metapress.com)

Heilbroner R.L (1967) “Do machines make history” in Smith and Marx (1995) In *Does technology drive history: The dilemma of technological determinism*. MIT press: Cambridge

Heilbroner R.L. (1995). “Technological determinism revisited” in Smith and Marx’s *Does technology drive history: The dilemma of technological determinism*. MIT press: Cambridge.

Herman and Swiss (ed) (2000) *The World Wide Web and contemporary cultural theory* New York and London: Routledge

Hirschkop, K. (1999). “Democracy and the New Technologies” in McChesney, R. Wood, E.M and Foster’s *Capitalism and the Information Age: The political economy of the global communication revolution*. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Huesca, R. (2003). “Participatory Approaches to communication for development Communication” in Mody B (ed) *International and development communication*. London: Sage Publications.

Infinedo (2005). Measuring Africa’s e-readiness in the global networked economy: A nine-country data analysis in *International Journal of education and development using ICT*. Vol. 1 no.1

Jaeger, P.T. (2003).The endless wire: e-government as global phenomenon in *Government Information Quarterly*. USA: Pergamon. Pp 323-331.

Jansen, M. (1998). An overview of Internet connectivity in Africa. Retrieved from [Http://www3.sn.apc.org?Africa.afstat.htm](http://www3.sn.apc.org?Africa.afstat.htm).

Jensen, K.B (2002). “The qualitative research process” in *A Handbook of media and communication research: Qualitative and quantitative methodologies*. London: Sage Publications.

Jensen, K.B (2002). “The state of convergence in media and communication research” in *A Handbook of media and communication research: Qualitative and quantitative methodologies*. London: Sage Publications.

Jassen, D and Kies, R. (2005). Online forums and deliberate democracy in *Acta politica*. Vol 40. iss 3.

Jones, S.G. (1998). *Cybersociety 2.0: Revisiting computer-mediated communication and community*. California: Sage Publications.

Kaaya J. (2006). Implementing e-government services in East Africa: Assessing status through content analysis of government websites in *Electronic journal of e-government* Vol 2 issue 1 (Pp 39-54).

Keane, J. (1999). Structural transformation of the public sphere in *Digital democracy discourse and decision making in the Information Age* (eds) Hague B.N and Loader B.D. London: Routledge.

Kiguwa, S.N.W (1999). "African renaissance: what does it mean?" in Venter A (ed) *Towards an African Renaissance*. South Africa: PWPA

Krippendorff, K. (2004) *Content analysis: an introduction to its methodology*. London: sage publications.

Kupe, T. (2005) "A new dawn for Africa? Nepad, the African Union and challenges for Africa media" in Kareithi P and Kariithi, N.K. *untold stories: Economic and Business reporting in African media*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

Langmia, K. (2006). The role of ICTs in the economic development of Africa: The case of South Africa. *International Journal of Education and Development using ICT* [Online], 2(4). Available: <http://ijedict.dec.uwi.edu/viewarticle.php?id=200>.

Leslie, M (2003). The Internet and democratization in Hyden, G. Leslie, M and Ogundimu, F.F (eds) *Media and democracy in Africa*. South Africa: Transactional Publishers.

Lax, S. (2000) "The Internet and Democracy" In Gauntlet, D *Web Studies: Rewiring media studies for the digital age*. London: Hodder.

Lievrouw, L. A. and Livingstone, S. (eds) *2002 Handbook of New Media: social shaping and consequences of ICTs*. London: Thousand Oksa: Sage publications.

Lindberg, (1998) "Political Integration" in Moravcsik A (ed) *Centralization or Fragmentation: Europe facing challenge of deepening, diversity and democracy*. New York: Council on foreign relations

Lyon, D. (1995). "The roots of the information society idea" in Heap, N, Thomas, R. Einon, G, Mason, R and Mackay, H, *Information Technology and Society*. London: Sage Publications.

Lungu, C.B.M (1999). "The transformation revolution and the African renaissance" in Venter A (ed) *Towards an African Renaissance*. South Africa: PWPA

- Mackey, H. (1995). "Theorizing the IT/Society relationship" in Heap N, Thomas R, Einon G, Mason R and Mackay H. *Information Technology and society*. London: Sage Publications.
- Malina, A. (1999). "Perspectives on citizen democratization and alienation in the virtual public sphere" in Hague, N and Loader, D. *Digital democracy: Discourse and decision making in the Information Age*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Madon, S. (1999). "The Internet and social economic development: Exploring the interaction" in Makgoba MW (1999) *African Renaissance: the new struggle*. Cape Town: Tafelberg
- Mbeki, T. (1998). "The African Renaissance". South African Yearbook of International Affairs. www.saiia.org.za
- McMillan S.J. (2002). "Exploring Models of Interactivity from multiple research tradition: users, documents and systems" in Lieurouw, L and Livingstone, S *The handbook of new media*. London: Sage publications.
- McLuhan, M. (1989). *the global village: transformations in world life and media in the 21st century*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- McLuhan, M. (2001). *The medium is the message: an inventory of effects*. London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press.
- McQuail, D. (2000). "New Media- New theory" *Mass Communication Theory: An introduction*. London: Sage publications.
- Melkote, S. R. (2003). "Theories of development communication" in Mody B (ed) *International and development communication*. London: Sage publications.
- Milner, E. (1999) "Electronic government: More than just a good thing? A question of access" in *Digital democracy: Discourse and decision making in the Information Age*. London: Routledge.
- Misuraca, G.C. (2006). E-governance in Africa, from theory to action: A practical-oriented research and case studies on ICT for Local governance. In *ACM International conference Proceeding Series*, San Diego: California. Vol 151, Pp 209-218.
- Mohiddin, A. (2002) "The challenges of e-democracy, opportunities and risks" in United Nations Online network in public administration and finance (UNDP) [http:// UNPAN 1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/CAFRAD?UN007932.pdf](http://UNPAN1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/CAFRAD?UN007932.pdf)

Mosco, V. (2004). "Loose Ends: The death of distance, the end of politics" and "When old myth were new: The ever-ending story" in *The digital Sublime: Myth, power and cyberspace*. The MIT Press: Cambridge.

Mowlana, H. (1997). "Communication and development: The emerging orders" in *The Global Information and world communication (second edition)* London: Sage Publications.

Mutula, S.M. (2006). Bridging the digital divide through e-governance in *Electronic library*. www.emeraldinsight.com. Accessed 21 November 2006.

Netchaev, I. (2002). E-Government and e-democracy: A comparison of opportunities in North and South in *Gazette: The International Journal for Communication studies*. London: Sage Publications.

Ng'etich, K. (2001). harnessing computer mediated communication technologies in the unification of Africa: Constraints and Potentials. In Maloka and Le Roux (ed) *Africa in the Millennium*. South Africa: Africa Institute of South Africa.

Norris, P. (2001) "E-governance" in *Digital Divide: Civic engagement, information poverty and the Internet worldwide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University press.

Norris, P. (2001). "Theories of digital democracy" in *Digital Divide: Civic engagement, information poverty and the Internet worldwide*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Paper on "Preliminary reflection to launch and African Action plan on e-governance" (2003) Economic Commission of Africa.

Panganiban, R. (2004). "e-democracy and the United Nations: Using Information Communications Technologies to increase access to information and participation within the UN system". Centre for the United Nations Reform Education. A contribution to the World Summit on the Information Society by the center for United Nations Reform Education.

Papacharissi, Z. (2004). "The virtual sphere: The Internet as a public sphere" in Webster, F. *Information Society*. London: Routledge.

Poster, M. (1995). *The second Media age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Poster, M. (2002). "Cyber-democracy: Internet as a public sphere?" *Cyber-democracy: Internet and the Public Sphere*. California: University of California Press.

Poster, M. (2003). "The being of technology". *What's the matter with the Internet*. London: University of Minnesota Press.

- Preston, P. (2001). *Reshaping communications: technology, information and social change*. London: Sage Publications.
- Richard, R. (1999). "Tools of Governance" in *Digital democracy: discourse and decision making in the Information Age*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Rice R.E. (2002). "Primary issues in internet use: Access, civic and community involvement and social interaction and expression in Lievrouw, L A and Livingstone S (eds) *Handbook of New Media: social shaping and consequences of ICTs*. London: Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Rowena, C. (2001). Addressing the digital divide in libraries and librarians: Making a difference in the knowledge age. 67th IFIA council and general conference. Retrieved from www.ifla.org
- Salih, M. (2003). Governance, information and the public sphere. United Nations Economic and Social Council (April) (conference)
- Singh (2003) Communication technology and development: Instrumental, Institutional, participatory and strategic approaches in Mody B (ed) *International and development communication*. London: Sage publications.
- Schneider, S. M and Foot, A K. (2004). "The web as an object of study" *New Media and Society*. Vol 6 (1) London: Sage Publications.
- Schneider, S.M (1997) exploring the public sphere through computer-mediated-communication: political discussion about abortion in a UseNet newsgroup. Unpublished PhD dissertation, MIT, Cambridge retrieved from www.sunit.edu/steve.
- Schultz, T. 2000 Mass media and the concept of interactivity: an explanatory study online forums and reader email in *Media, culture and society*. Vol.22: 205-221. London: Sage Publications.
- Schramm, W. L (1977). *Big media, little media: tools and technologies for instruction*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.
- Selwyn, N. (2004) Reconsidering political and popular understanding of the digital divide in *New media and society*. Vol 6 (3): 341-362 London: Sage Publications.
- Servaes J (ed) (2002) "By way of introduction" *Approaches to development communication*.
- Smith M. R and Marx, L. (1995). *Does technology drive history: The dilemma of technological determinism*. MIT Press: Cambridge

Stampel III G.H. (1981). "Content analysis" in Stampel III G.H and Wesley B.H (eds) *Research Methods in Mass communication*. Ohio: Ohio University Press.

Silverstone R and Mansell, R. (1996). "The politics of information and communication technologies" *Communication by design: The politics of information and communication technologies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Sonaike, S. A. (2004). "The Internet and the Dilemma of Africa's Development" *Gazette: The International Journal for Communication studies*. 66 (1). London: Sage Publications.

Sonderling N.E and Bothma T.V.D (2004). Developing the SAPS website for optimal service delivery. Department of information science, University of Pretoria

Tambini, D. (1998). "Civic networking and universal rights to connectivity" in Tsagarousianou, R. Tambini, D and Bryan's *Cyberdemocracy*. London and New York: Routledge.

Thomas, C.J. and Streit, G. (2003) The new face of government: Citizens initiated contacts in the era of e-government in *Journal of public Administration research and theory*. London: Sage Publications.

Thompson, J.B (1991). "The concept of ideology and modern culture" in *Ideology and modern culture: critical social theory in the era of mass communication*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Thompson, J. B (1993) "The Theory of the Public sphere" in Featherstone, M (ed) *Theory, Culture and Society*. London: Sage Publications

Tsagarousianou, R. (1998). "Electronic democracy and the public sphere: opportunities and challenges in Tsagarousianou, R. Tambini, D and Bryan (1998). *Cyberdemocracy*. London and New York: Routledge.

Tsagarousianou, R. Tambini, D and Bryan (1998). *Cyberdemocracy*. London and New York: Routledge.

Waisbord, S. (2003). "State, development, and communication" in Mody B (ed) *International and development communication*. London: Sage Publications.

Walker, R. A. (1985) "Technological determination and determinism: Industrial growth and location" in Castells, M. *High technology, space and society*. London: Sage Publications.

Wakeford, N. (2000). "New Media, New Methodologies: Studying the web" in Gauntlett's *Web-Studies: Rewiring media studies for the digital age*. London: Arnold.

Waters, J. and Wilkins, K. (2000). "Current discourse on new technologies in development communication" in *Media development: communication and the globalization of poverty*. London: World Association for Christian communication.

Webster, F. (2002). "Information society revisited" in Lievrouw, L A and Livingstone S (eds) *Handbook of New Media: social shaping and consequences of ICTs*. London: Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Witschge, T. (2001) Online deliberation: Possibilities of the Internet for deliberative democracy. *Paper presented at the Euricon colloquium electronic networks and democracy on Information communication and society*.

Wilson, E.J and Wong, K. (2003). African information revolution: a balance sheet in *Telecommunication policy*. Vol 27, Pp 155-177: Pargamon. Retrieved 18, June, 2006 from www.elevier.com/locate/telpol

Ya'u, Y.Z (2002) Confronting the digital divide: An interrogation of the African Initiative at bridging the gap. Retrieved from www.codesriia.org/links/conferences/nepad/ya'u.pdf

Van Dijk J 1999. *The network society*. London: Sage Publications.

European Union

Figure 1.1 Home page

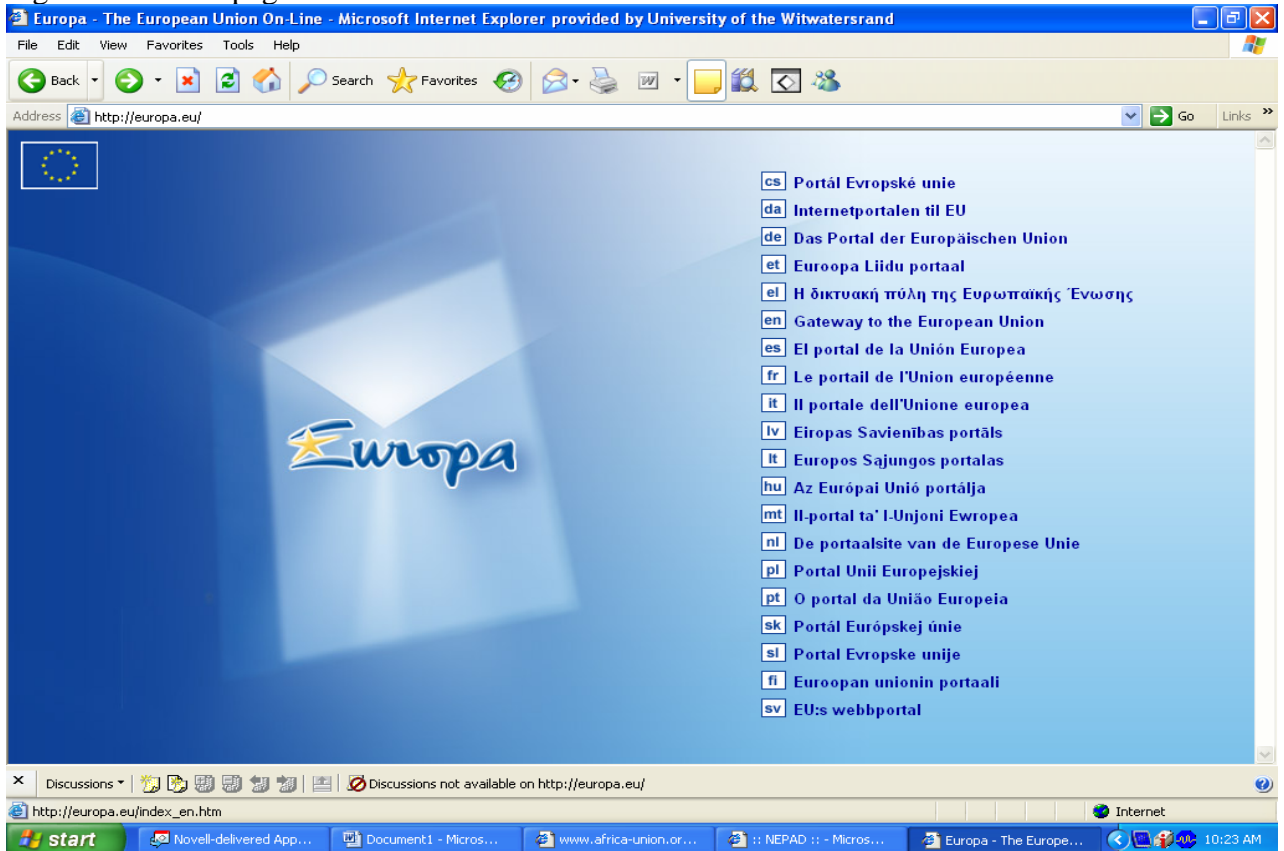
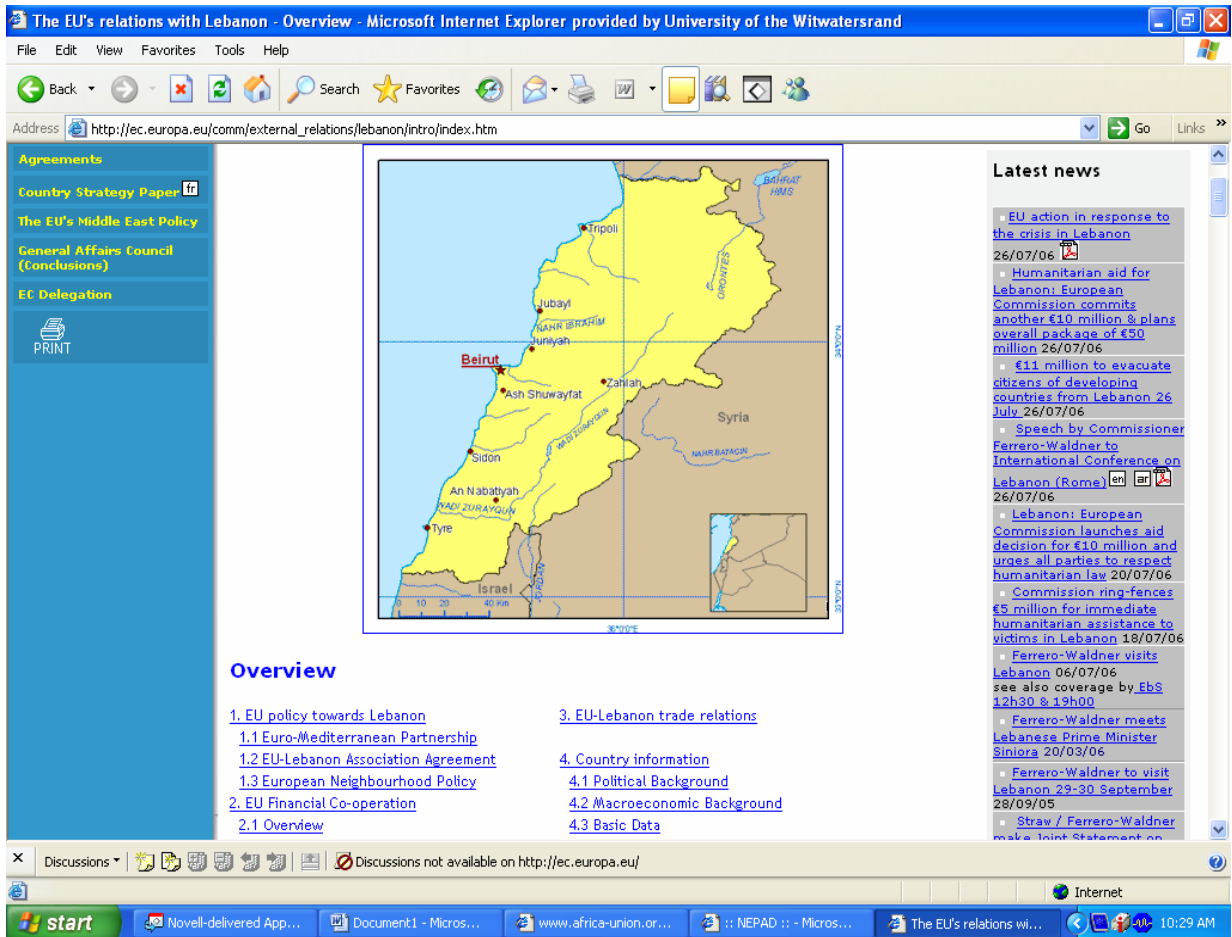


Figure 1.2 Institutional Information



Figure 1.3 current affairs



Left side of the webpage: User control information bar. When clicking on any link results in additional information of the same kind and other links highlighting the same kind of information. For example see also figure....1.4

Figure 1.4. Related information

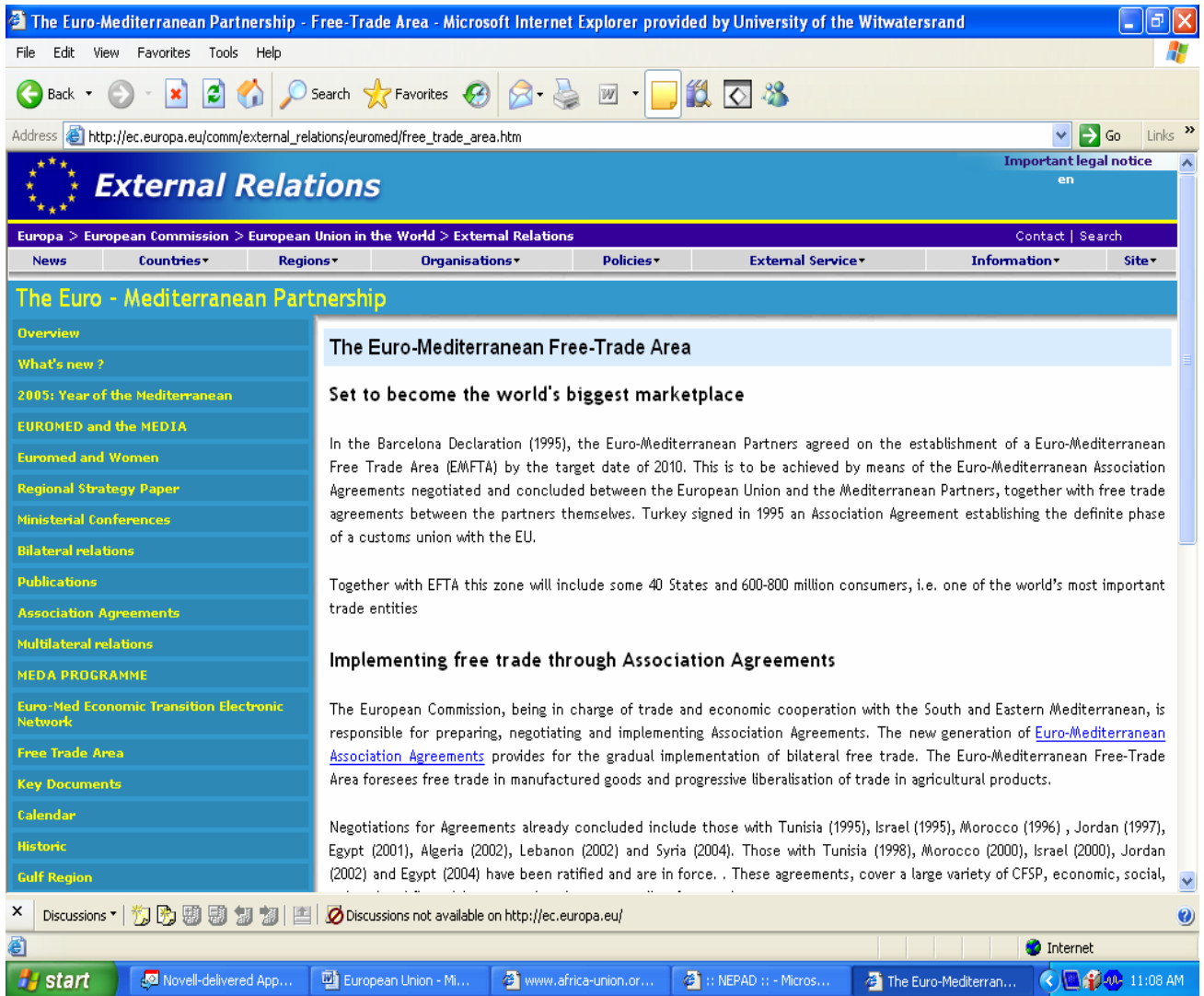


Figure 1.5: Basic Data.

The EU's relations with Lebanon - Overview - Microsoft Internet Explorer provided by University of the Witwatersrand

Address: http://ec.europa.eu/comm/external_relations/lebanon/intro/index.htm

4.3 Basic Data

Head of State	President Emile LAHOUD
Head of Government	Prime Minister Fouad Siniora
Capital	Beirut
Surface	10,452 km ²
Border	452 km (79km with Israel, 375km with Syria)
Population	3,7 million
Population growth	1,26 % (forecast 2005)
Population density	382 inhabitants/km ²
Main religions	59,7% Muslim (Shia, Sunni, Druze, Ishmaelite, Alawite), 39% Christian (Maronite Catholic, Melkite Catholic, Armenian orthodox, Syrian Catholic, Armenian Catholic, Roman Catholic, Protestant), 1,3% other
Unemployment rate	11.5 % (official census 2001), more pessimistic estimates speak of 20 %
Inflation rate	3 % (2004)
GDP	€16 billion (2004)
GDP per capita	€ 4.201 (2004)
Budget deficit	€1.493 million (2004)
Gross Stock of Debt	178 % of GDP (2004)
Foreign reserves	€12.4 billion (11/2003)

Discussions not available on <http://ec.europa.eu/>

start | Novell-delivered App... | Document1 - Micros... | www.africa-union.or... | NEPAD :: - Micros... | The EU's relations wi... | 10:45 AM

1.6 Contacts options

EUROPA - Contact the European Union - Microsoft Internet Explorer provided by University of the Witwatersrand

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Back Forward Stop Home Search Favorites Refresh Print Mail W Stop

Address http://europa.eu/geninfo/mailbox/index_en.htm Go Links

Legal notice | What's new? | Search | Contact | About EUROPA

Europa
Contact the European Union

English (en)

EUROPA > Contact the EU

Thank you for visiting EUROPA, the portal of the European institutions.

If you wish to contact the European institutions, choose the appropriate link from the list below:

- If you have a general question on the EU, contact [Europe Direct](#), a customised response service for general enquiries. If you need help navigating through EUROPA, Europe Direct will help you find the information you need through their [web assistance service](#).
- If you would like to e-mail one of the European institutions or bodies directly, consult the [Contact Guide to the European institutions](#).
- If your query or comment concerns a specific area of activity of the European Commission, you can reach the competent department directly by using this [Contact Guide by Commission Activity](#).
- Finally, if you wish to report a technical problem or comment on the quality of this portal, please contact the [web coordination team](#).

Legal notice | What's new? | Search | Contact | About EUROPA | Top of the page

Discussions not available on <http://europa.eu/>

start Novell-deliv... NEPAD < C... EUROPA - ... http://www... University o... Data Analys... Data Analys... 09:03 PM

This webpage appear as a response to 'contact' link showing all options available to make contacts with the European Union

1.7 Contact details: user-to-document (producers)

Europe Direct - Microsoft Internet Explorer provided by University of the Witwatersrand

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Back Forward Stop Home Search Favorites Refresh Print Mail Stop

Address http://ec.europa.eu/eurodirect/index_en.htm Go Links

Your direct line to the European Union
For your questions on the European Union

Web Assistance
to facilitate on-line research
on the EUROPA site

By e-mail
by completing the
[mailbox form](#)

EUROPE DIRECT
[Info](#) [Contact Europe Direct](#)

EUROPE DIRECT

By telephone
By dialling the single Freephone number*
00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11
from the 25 Member States

Or the chargeable number
+32.2.299.96.96
from other countries
or via certain mobile telephone operators

* - certain mobile telephone operators do not allow access to 00800 numbers or these calls may be billed
- in certain cases, these calls may be chargeable from telephone boxes or hotels

Discussions Discussions not available on <http://ec.europa.eu/>

start Novell-deliv... NEPAD < C... Europe Dire... <http://www...> University o... Data Analys... Data Analys... 09:02 PM

1.8 Contact: user-to-document, computer based form for e-mail

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window titled "EUROPA - Europe Direct - Microsoft Internet Explorer provided by University of the Witwatersrand". The address bar shows the URL "http://europedirect-cc.cec.eu.int/websubmit/?lang=en". The form is titled "Personal Details:" and includes a note "(*) = mandatory data".

Personal Details:
(*) = mandatory data

*First Name:
*Family Name:
*E-mail address:
Country of Residence:
Nationality:
Gender: Male Female
Age:
Economic Category:

Postal Address:
Street:
Town:
Post Code:
Country:
Telephone:

I wish to receive an answer in the following language:
Alternative language(s) I understand:

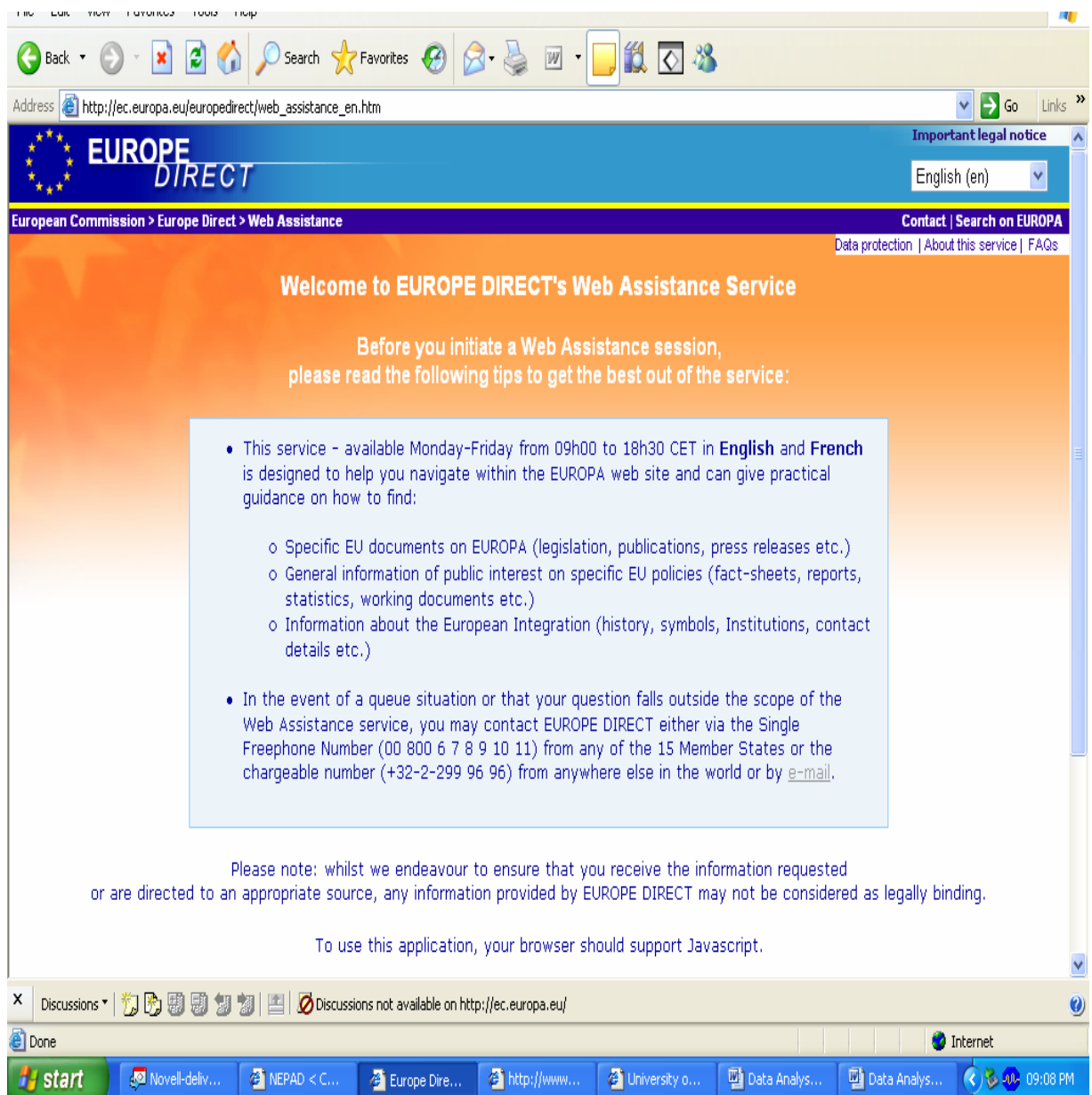
Type your question in this box:
[Guidelines to help ensure you receive the required information](#)
[Disclaimer](#)

Subject:

*Question(s):

The browser's taskbar shows several open applications: Novell-deliv..., NEPAD < C..., EUROPA - E..., http://www..., University o..., Data Analys..., and Data Analys... The system clock shows 09:03 PM.

1.9 Navigation: User friendliness



1.10 EU made easy to understand and navigate

The screenshot displays the Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window. The title bar reads "EUROPA - The European Union at a glance - Microsoft Internet Explorer provided by University of the Witwaters...". The menu bar includes "File", "Edit", "View", "Favorites", "Tools", and "Help". The address bar shows "http://europa.eu/abc/index_en.htm".

The main content area features a large background image of a woman smiling. Overlaid on this are several interactive menu items, each with a small icon and a blue arrow: "Panorama of the EU", "Europe in 12 lessons", "Countries", "2005: A year in the life of Europe", "History", "Travelling in Europe", "Treaties and law", "The symbols of the EU", "Eurojargon", and "Key facts and figures".

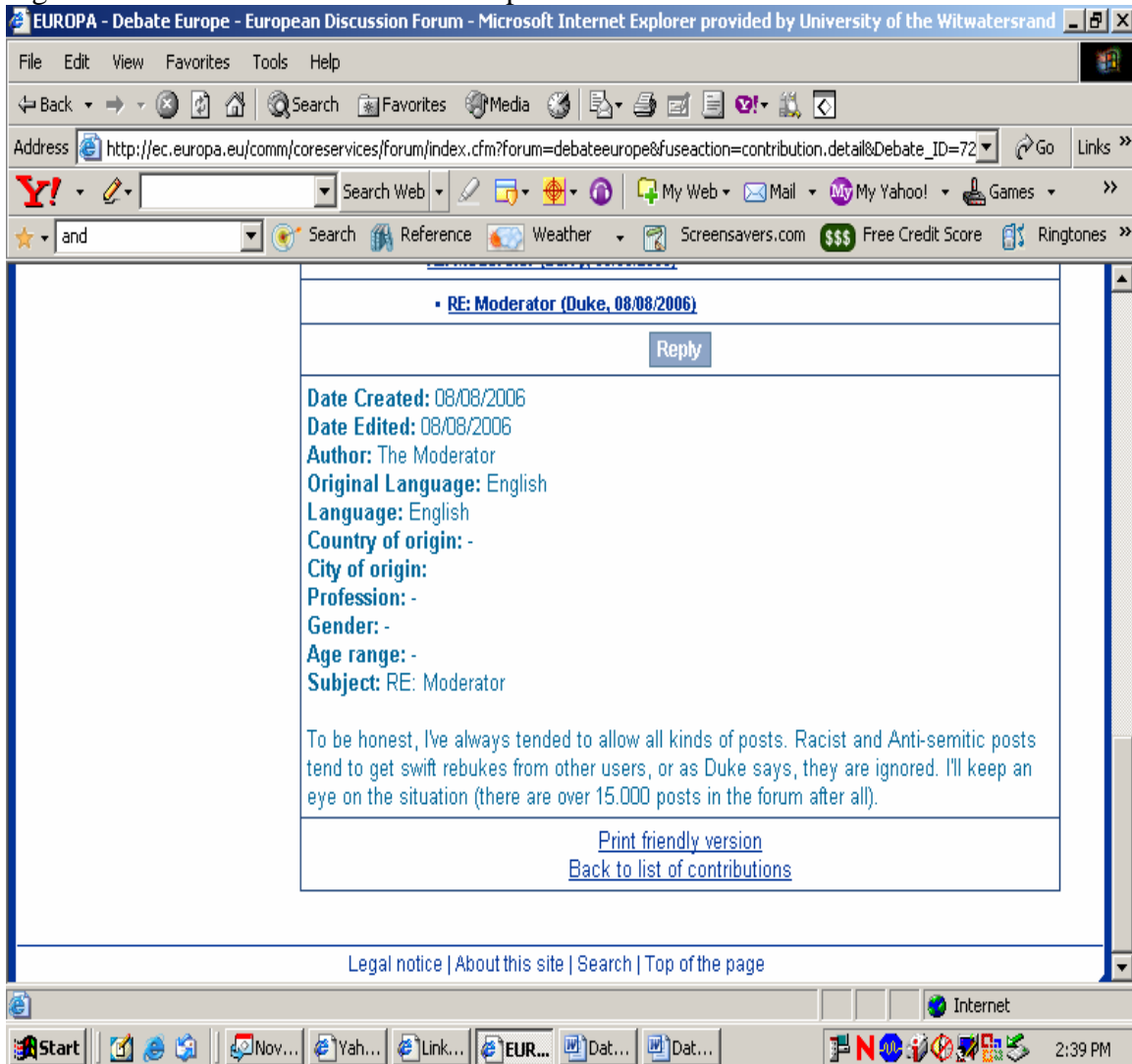
In the bottom-left corner of the content area, there is a text box that reads: "Did you know that the EU allows you to travel, live and work in any EU-country, in most cases without border controls or paperwork?".

The status bar at the bottom shows "Done" and "Internet". The Windows taskbar at the very bottom includes the "start" button, several open applications (Novell-delive..., 3 Internet..., Data only - ..., Document3 - ...), the user name "FELICIA (E:)", and the system clock showing "2:17 AM".

Figure 1.10: Language diversity



Figure 1.11: EU forum moderator's response



1.2 General example of e-citizens

European Commission - Your Europe - Citizens - Microsoft Internet Explorer provided by University of the Witwatersrand

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Back Forward Stop Refresh Home Search Favorites Mail Print Print Preview

Address <http://ec.europa.eu/youreurope/nav/en/citizens/index.html> Go Links

Search Web Search Web Mail My Yahoo! Answers Games Shopping Music

European Commission - Your Eur... Add Tab

Citizens

What is Your Europe - Citizens'?

It provides you with detailed practical **information** on your **rights** and **opportunities** in the EU and its Internal Market plus **advice** on how to exercise these rights in practice. For example, you can learn more about living, working and studying in another EU country.

Information available

- **European General Guides**
These guides give a general overview of your EU-wide rights and opportunities and of how to make effective use of them. To access this information select the "European General Guides" from the "Services for Citizens" section on the right navigation menu.
- **European and National practical information**
More than 90 individual factsheets are giving you detailed practical information about exercising your rights both at EU level and in a specific EU country as well as particular situations you are likely to encounter. To access this information first select the general area and then the specific information available for this area from the corresponding left menu. Information on European level will be presented to you and from there you will be able to select the county and available language so as to view national information on the same area.
- **Useful Links & Addresses**
The "Useful Links & Addresses" section can be accessed from the right navigation menu under the "Services for Citizens" section. It presents EU-wide and country specific information that contain a set of links specific to the currently viewed page as well as country specific information with relevant postal addresses, telephone numbers, websites and email addresses.
- **Available Services for Citizens**
The most useful sites providing services to citizens are available from the corresponding footer area and from the "Get personal advice" section on the right menu. For example, you can ask for advice by accessing the [Citizens Signpost Service](#), or ask for printed versions of any information available on this site by accessing the Europe Direct Service.

Get personal advice
Useful Addresses
European General Guides

Search in Citizens

Advanced Search

Partner 2006
European Year of Workers' Mobility

4 of 24 - Clipboard
Item collected.

start Novell-delivered Appl... 5 Internet Explorer Document1 - Microsof... Initial reserch report ... 05:27 PM

African Union

Figure 2.1 Home Page: African Union

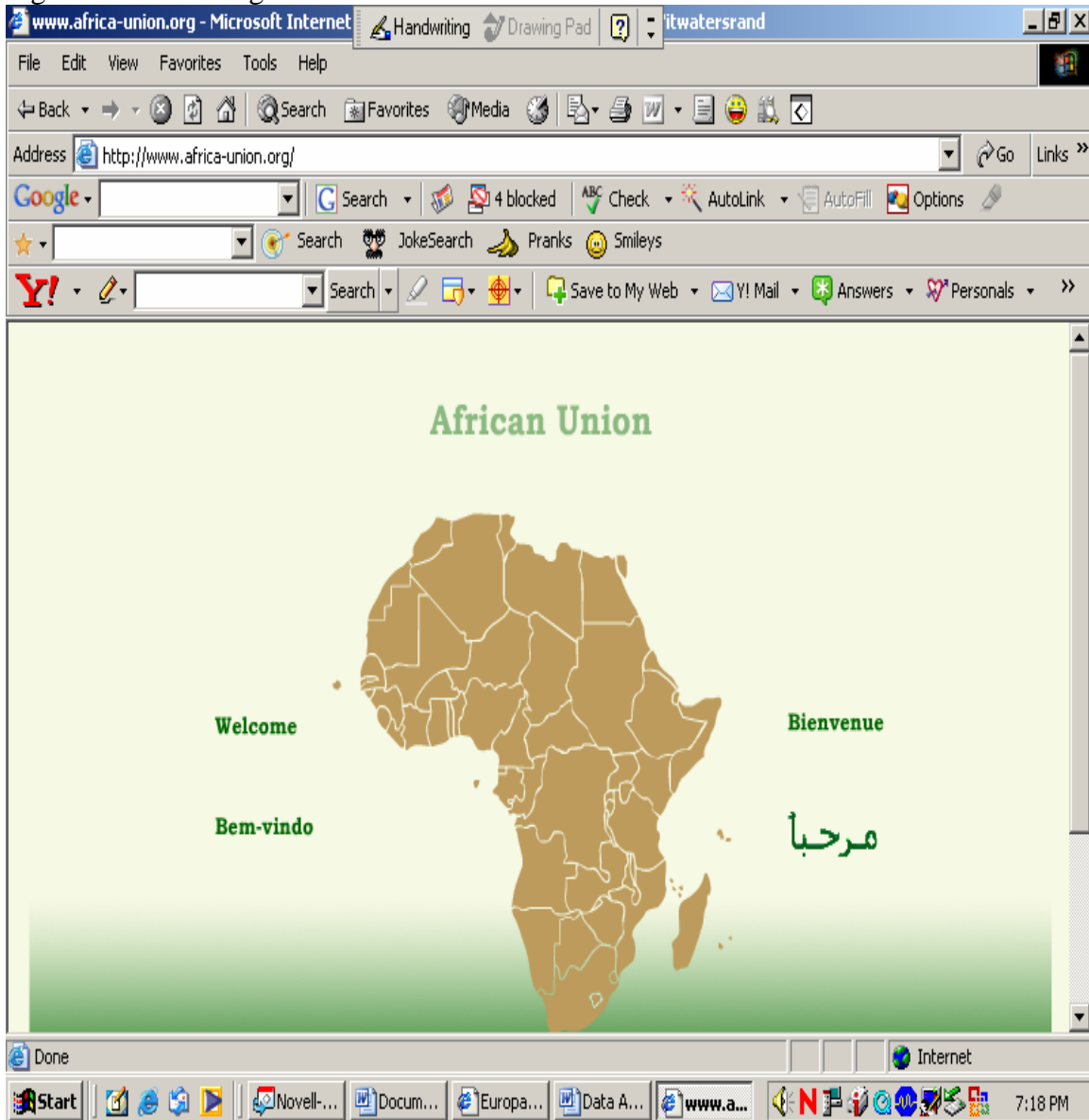


Figure 2.2 Institutional and current affairs information



Figure 2.3 Member states



2.5 Contact details

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window displaying the contact page of the African Union. The browser's address bar shows the URL: <http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/OtherPages/Others/contact.htm>. The browser's menu bar includes File, Edit, View, Favorites, Tools, and Help. The toolbar contains icons for Back, Forward, Stop, Home, Search, Favorites, Print, and other functions. The address bar also includes a Go button and a Links dropdown menu.

The website header features the African Union logo on the left, the text "African Union" in a large green font, and a "Home" link on the right. Below the logo, there are language options: "عربي | Français | Portuguese" and a "Search" button.

The main content area is divided into three columns:

- Chairperson:** H.E. Mr. Alpha Oumar Konare
Tel: (251) 11 5514554 / (251) 11 551 77 00 ext 120
Fax: (251) 11 5513036
e-mail: H.E. Mr. Alpha Oumar Konare
[CURRICULUM VITAE](#)
- Deputy Chairperson:** H.E. Mr. Patrick Mazimhaka
Tel: (251) 11 551 77 00 ext 124
Fax: (251) 11 551 78 44
[CURRICULUM VITAE](#)
- Regional Economic Communities (RECs):**
 - Community of Sahel-Saharan States (CEN-SAD):**
P.O. Box 4041
Tel: (218) 3614832/ (218) 3614833/ (218) 3614834
Fax: (218) 3614832
Website: www.cen-sad.org
 - Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA):**
Ben Bella Road
P.O. Box 30051
Lusaka, Zambia
Tel: (260) 1 22 97 26/29
Fax: (260) 1 22 51 07
E-mail: secgen@comesa.int
Website: www.comesa.int
 - Economic Community of...**

On the right side of the page, there is a vertical menu with the following items: Commissioners, Directors, Bureau of the Chairperson, Bureau of the Deputy Chairperson, Regional, Sub-Regional and Observer Missions of the General Secretariat, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), and African Union Headquarters.

The browser's status bar at the bottom shows a "Discussions" button and a message: "Discussions not available on http://www.africa-union.org/". The taskbar at the very bottom displays the Windows Start button, several open applications (Novell-deliv..., NEPAD < C..., Europe Dire..., http://www..., University o..., Data Analys..., Data Analys...), and the system clock showing 09:14 PM.

2.4 Interactive tools in the bottom of the web page

The screenshot shows a Microsoft Internet Explorer browser window with the address bar displaying <http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/index/index.htm>. The page content is as follows:

30 April, 2006 - UNESCO year 2007 the Man and the Biosphere (MAB) Young Scientists Awards
[more \(www.unesco.org/mab/bursaries/mys.shtml\)](#)

28-29 April, 2006 - Inaugural Meeting of the African Union Women's Committee (AUWC), Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
[Press Release](#)
[Programme](#)

28 April, 2006 - 50th Meeting of the Peace and Security Council, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
[Press Release](#)
[Communiqué on The Inter-Sudanese Peace Talks on the Conflict in Darfur](#)

12-14 April, 2006 - AU CONFERENCE OF MINISTERS OF TRADE 4th ORDINARY SESSION , NAIROBI, KENYA
[THE NAIROBI MINISTERIAL DECLARATION ON THE DOHA WORK PROGRAMME](#)
[NAIROBI DECLARATION ON ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS \(EPAs\)](#)
[RESOLUTION ON THE RATIONALISATION AND THE HARMONISATION OF THE REGIONAL ECONOMIC COMMUNITIES](#)
[AU COMMISSION'S PROPOSAL ON THE WTO "AID FOR TRADE" INITIATIVE](#)

At the bottom of the page, there is a navigation menu with the following links: [Help](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Useful Links](#) | [Databases](#) | [FAQs](#) | [Letter to the Chairperson](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Webmaster](#) | [Email](#) | [Copyrights & Terms of Use](#)

The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows several open applications: start, Novell-deliv..., NEPAD < C..., Europe Dire..., www.africa..., University o..., Data Analys..., and Data Analys... The system clock shows 09:16 PM.

Figure 2.4 documents and declaration

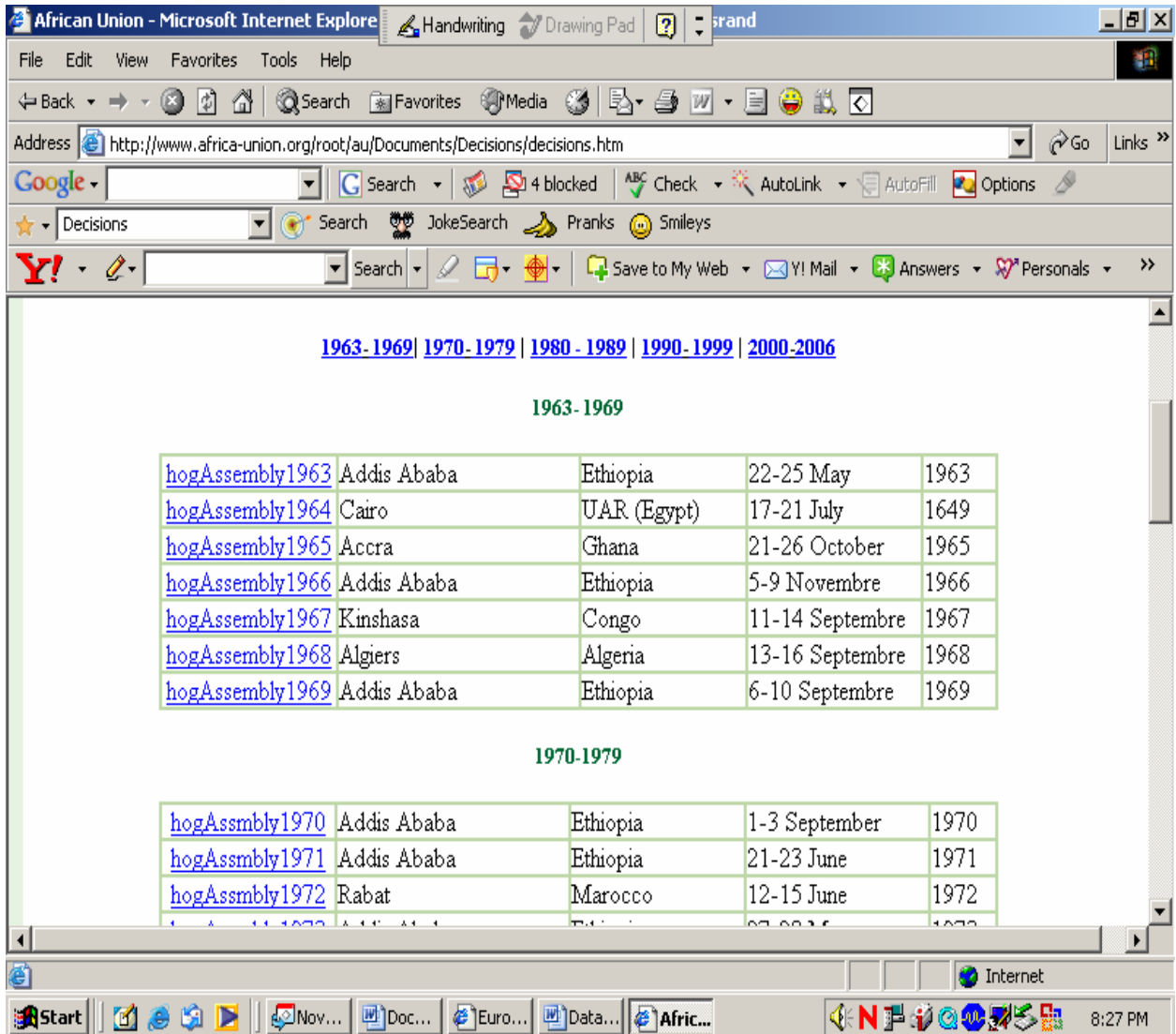


Figure 2.5 Calendar of meetings

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the following content:

CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

[March](#) | [April](#) | [May](#) | June

June 2006

No.	Title of Meeting	No. of Days	Date	Proposed Venue	Participants	Organizing Dept. (Focal Point)
1.	Meeting of the Sub-Committee on Contribution	1	1 st week of June	Addis Ababa	All Member States	P.B.F.A.
2.	CISSA Conference	8	4-11	Windhoek	All Member States	CISSA
3.	Meeting of Experts and Ministers-CAMEF II	2	5-9	Cairo	All Member States	Economic Affairs
4.	African Union and University for Peace Co-organizing Meeting	3	12-14	Addis Ababa	AU and University for Peace	HRST
5.	Meeting of the Infrastructure Consortium for Africa	1	14	Addis-Ababa	G8, WB, AD/EU	Infrastructure & Energy

Figure 2.9. AU useful links: external hyperlinks



Figure 2.10: Site Map

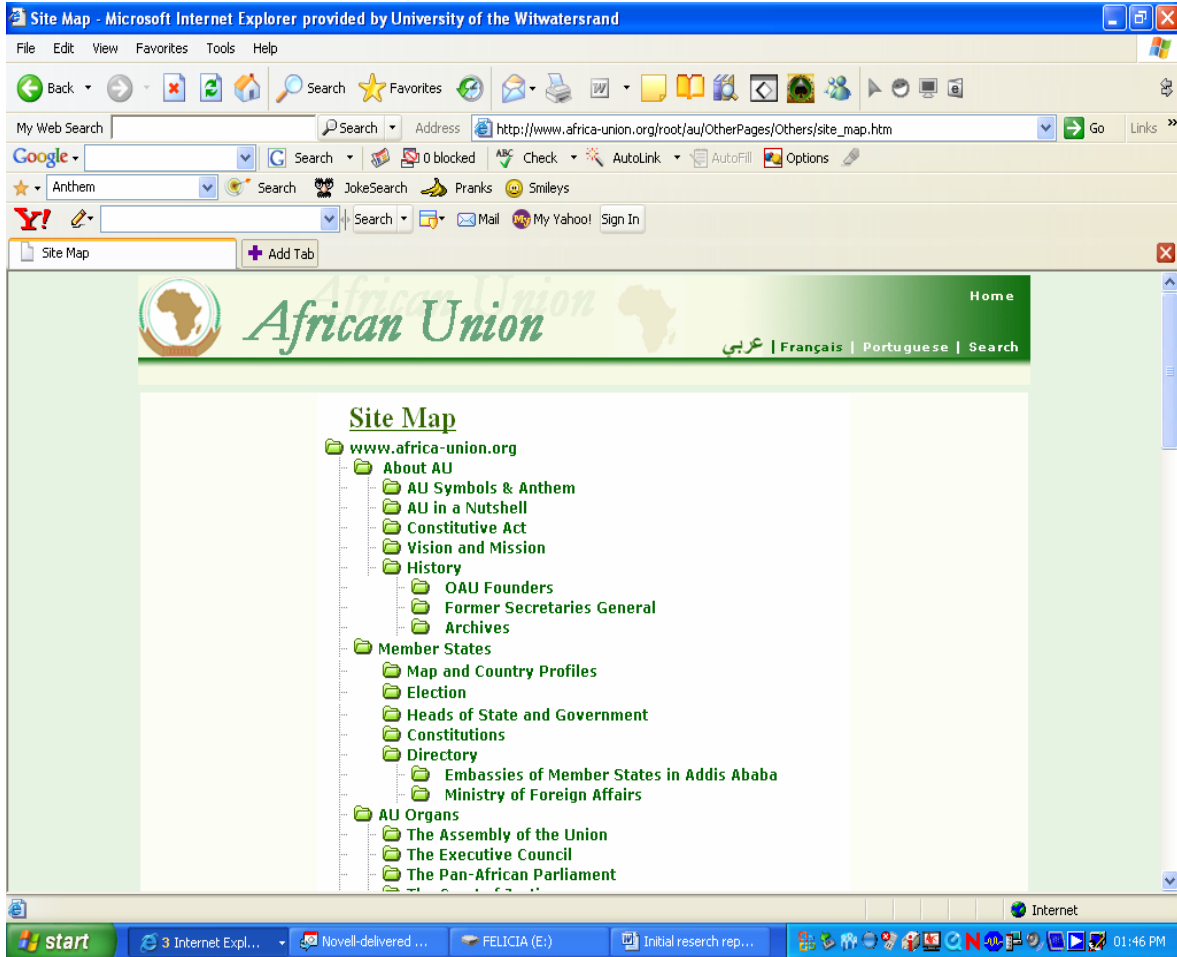
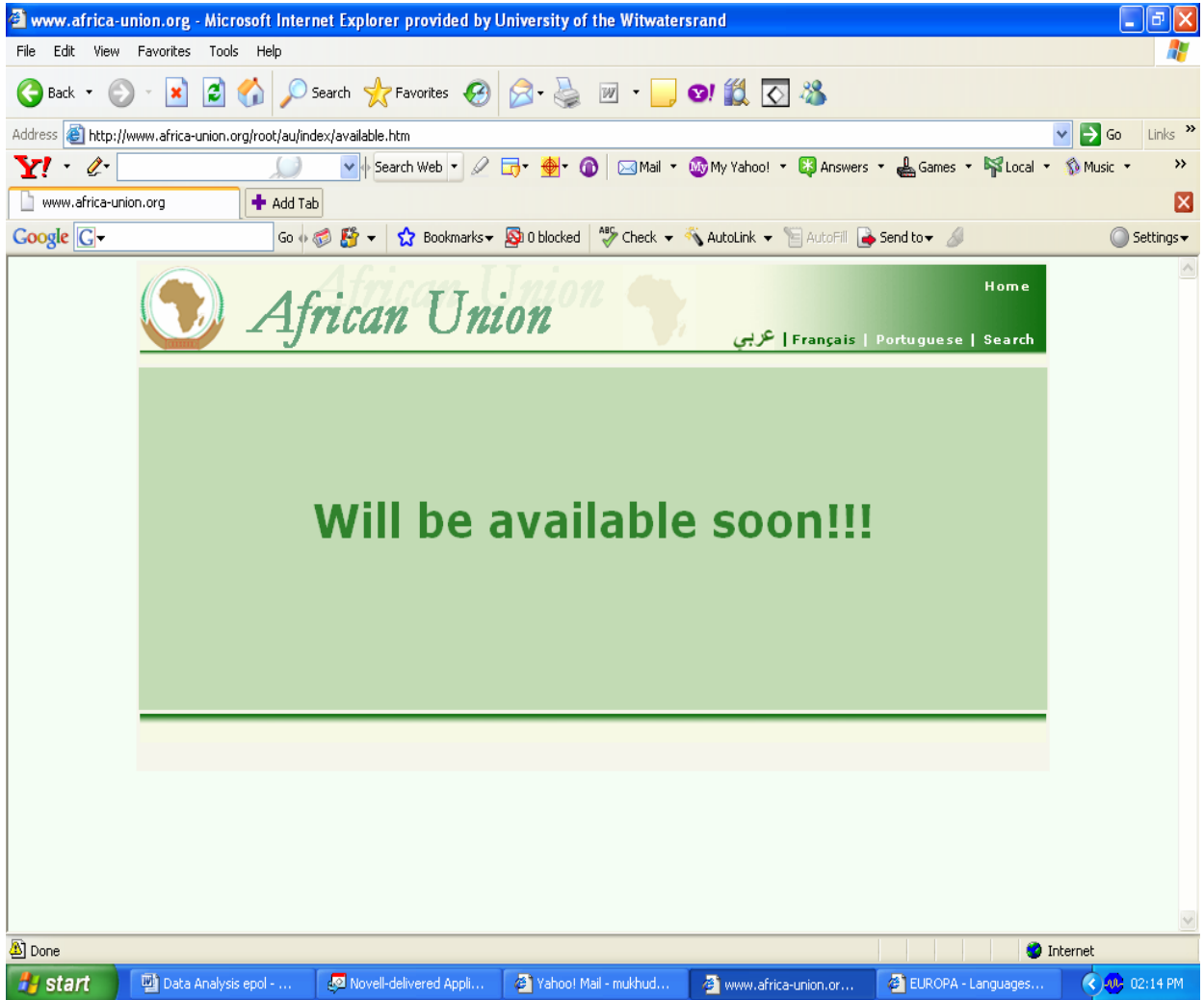


Figure 2.6: AU Language diversity switch: (Arab) -under construction



Nepad

Figure 3.1 Home page: Nepad

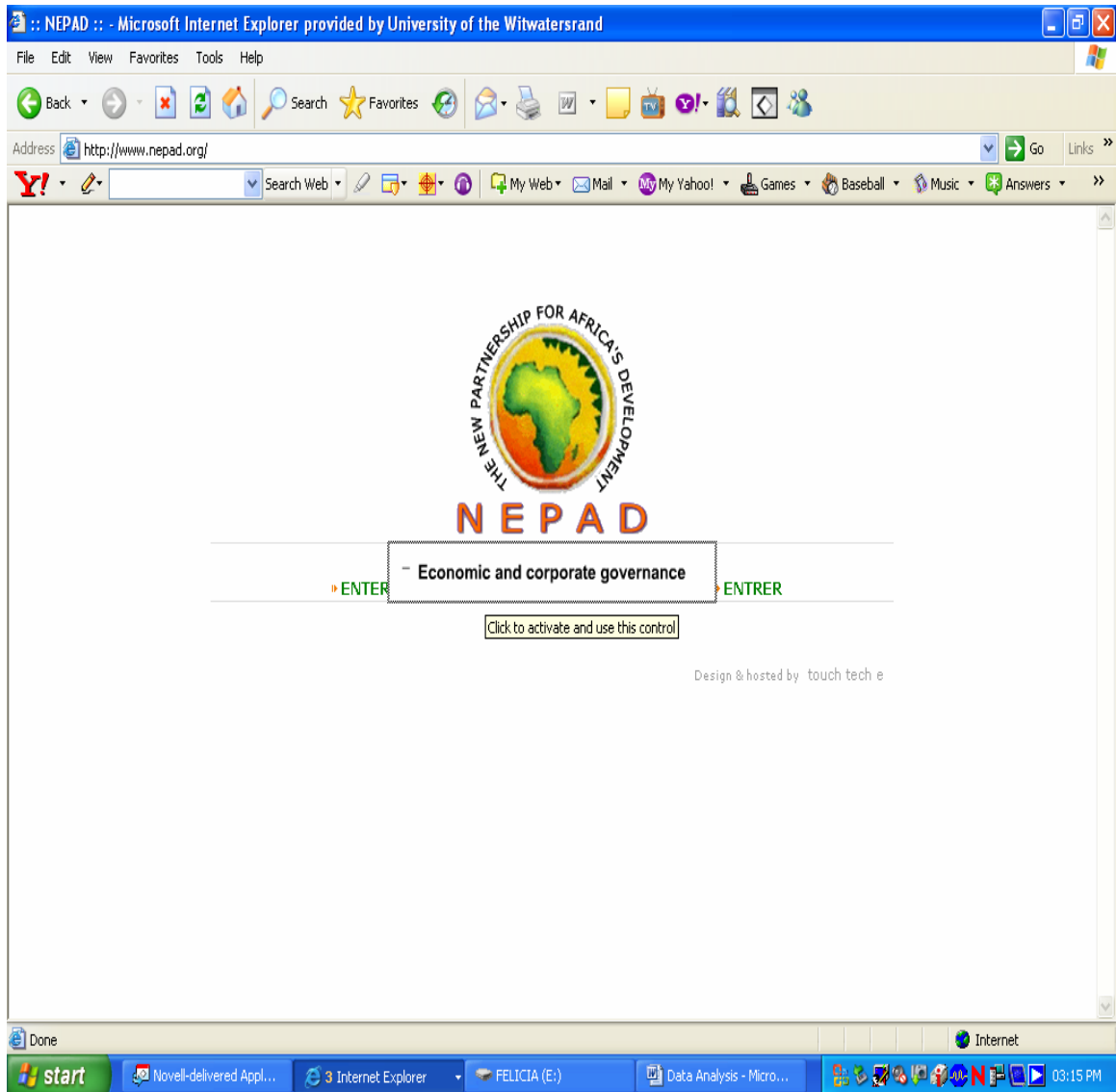


Figure 3.2: Institutional Information

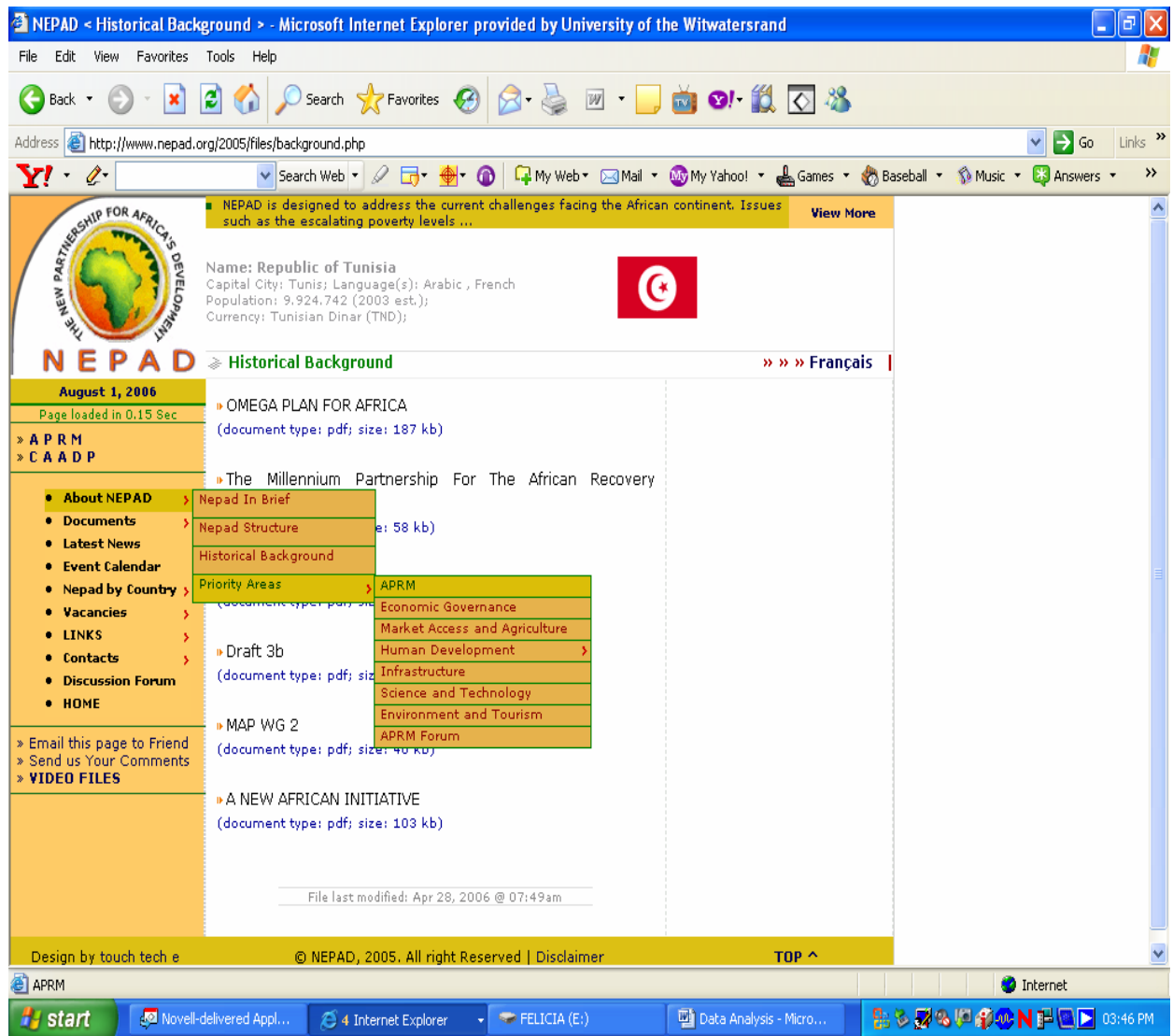


Figure 3.3 Nepad Institutions structure

The screenshot displays the NEPAD website's organizational structure page. The browser window title is "NEPAD < NEPAD structure > - Microsoft Internet Explorer provided by University of the Witwatersrand". The address bar shows the URL "http://www.nepad.org/2005/files/bystructure.php". The page content includes a navigation menu on the left, a central organizational chart, and a footer with copyright information.

NEPAD Structure

- Assembly of the African Union
- NEPAD HSGIC
- NEPAD Steering Committee
- NEPAD Secretariat

File last modified: Apr 28, 2006 @ 07:50am

© NEPAD, 2005. All right Reserved | Disclaimer

3.4 Nepad Contact Details

NEPAD > CONTACTS > Central Secretariat >>> Français

August 3, 2006
Page loaded in 0.57 Sec

> A P R M
> C A A D P

- About NEPAD >
- Documents >
- Latest News
- Event Calendar
- Nepad by Country >
- Vacancies >
- LINKS >
- Contacts >
- Discussion Forum
- HOME

> Email this page to Friend
> Send us Your Comments
> VIDEO FILES

1. Prof. Firmino Mucavele
Executive Head: NEPAD Secretariat
+27 11 313 3716 (tel)
+27 11 313 3684 (fax)
firminom@nepad.org

2. Dr. Hespina Rukato
Deputy Chief Executive
+27 11 313 3461 (tel)
+27 11 313 3450 (fax)
hesphinar@nepad.org

3. Ambassador Olukorede Willoughby
Deputy Chief Executive
+27 11 313 3840 (tel.)
+27 11 313 3450 (fax.)
Olukoredew@nepad.org

4. Ms. Thaninga Shope-Linney
General Manager: Communications & Marketing
+27 11 313 3776 (tel)
+27 11 313 3778 (fax)
thaningas@nepad.org

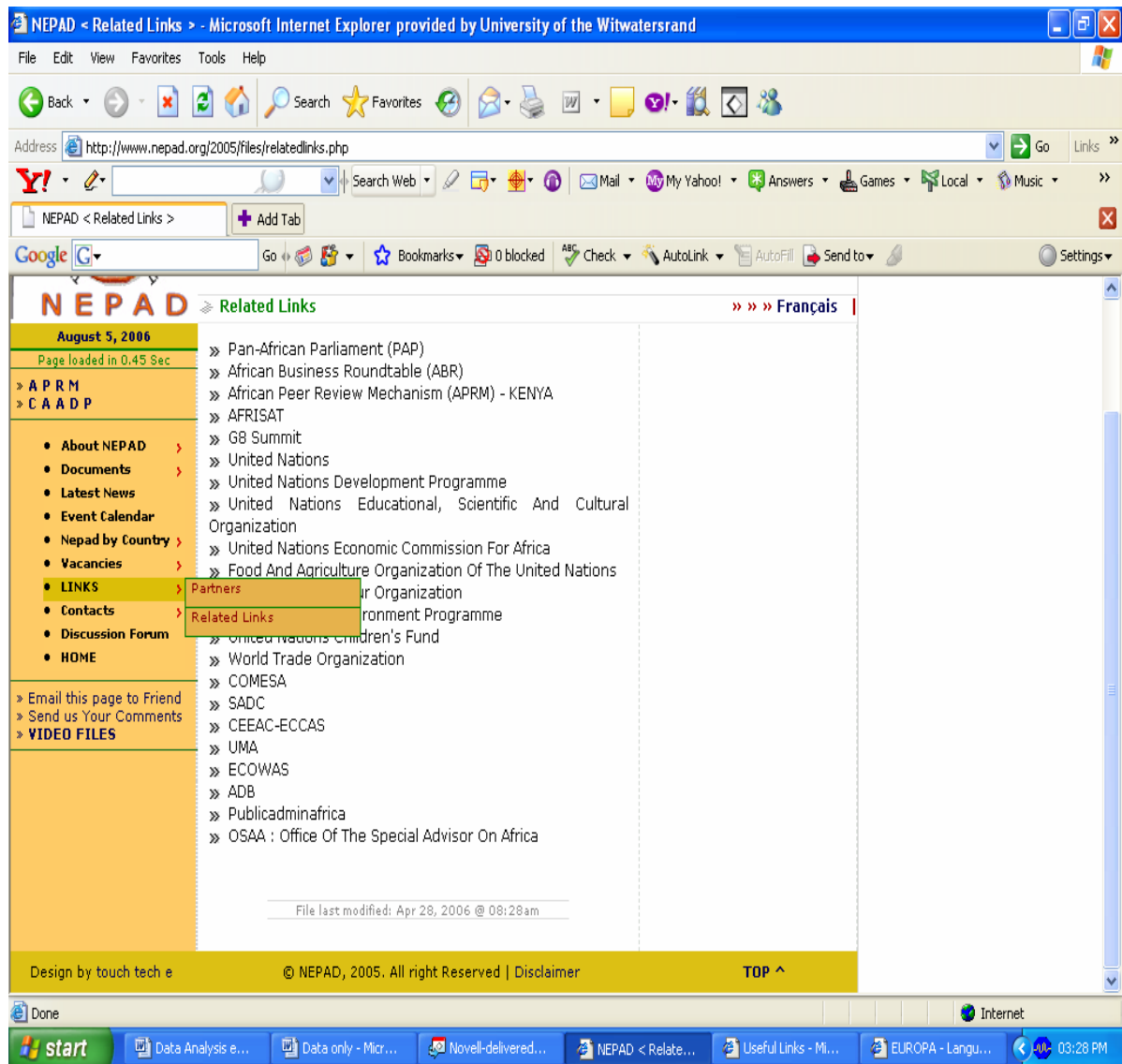
5. Mr Danny Amenigy
General Manager: Administration & Finance
+27 11 313 3058 (tel)
+27 11 313 3778 (fax)
dannya@nepad.org
083 704 4501 (mobile)

Coordinators

1. Mr. Karim Khalil
Market Access and Agriculture

+27 11 313 3625
+27 11 313 3450
karimk@nepad.org

Figure 3.6: Nepad external links



3.7 Discussion Forum: Nepad

Link From NEPAD : ../files/home.php - Microsoft Internet Explorer provided by University of the Witwatersrand

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Back Forward Stop Home Search Favorites Media Print Copy Paste Undo Redo

Address <http://www.nepad.org/2005/linkout/view.php?out=http://www.nepad.org/cgi-bin/forum/forum.cgi> Go Links

Search Web My Web Mail My Yahoo! Games

Discussion Search Reference Weather Screensavers.com

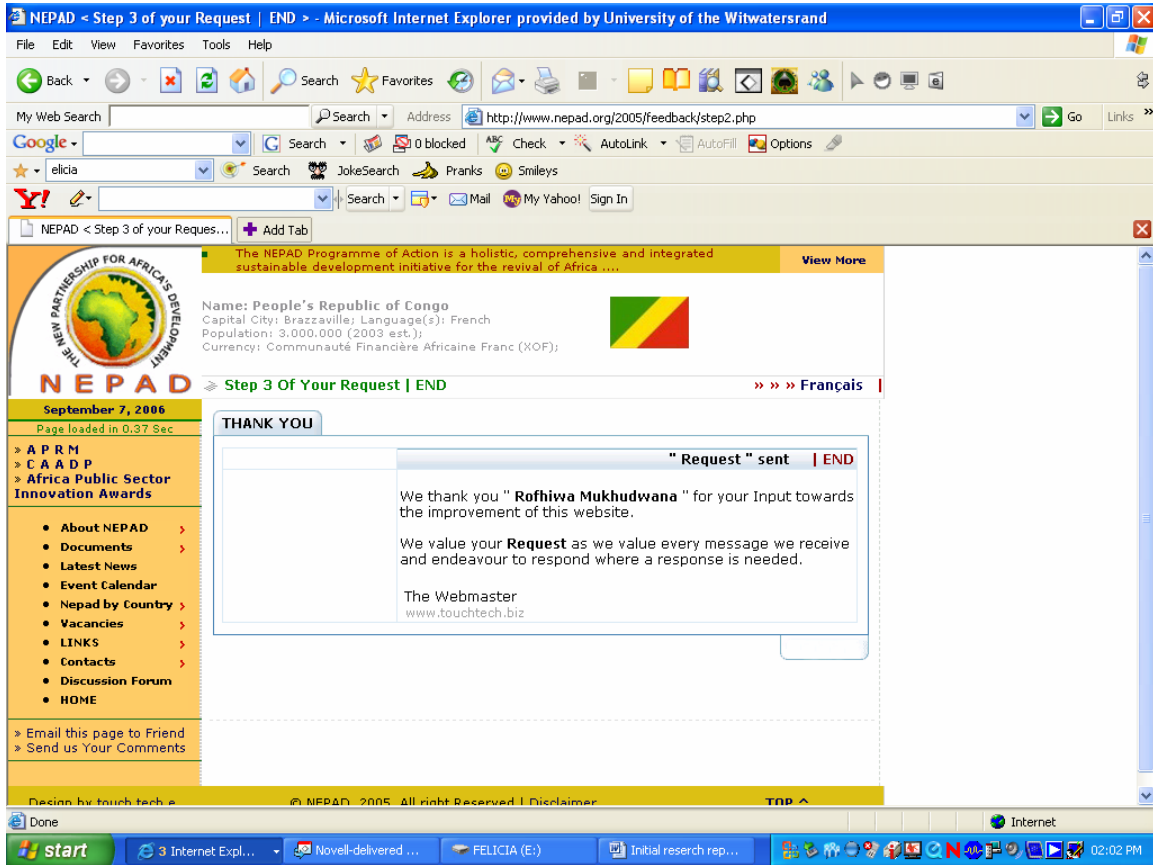
Return to NEPAD

- ✉ **utilities of nepad in african politics** by MICHAELOJEIKPO - 29/06/2006 09:05
- ✉ **utilities of nepad in african politics** by MICHAELOJEIKPO - 29/06/2006 08:53
- ✉ **zambia and children's advocacy** by renata kis - 28/06/2006 15:09
 - ↳ **Re : zambia and children's advocacy** by FT - 28/06/2006 22:22
 - ↳ **Re : zambia and children's advocacy** by renata kis - 30/06/2006 14:52
 - ↳ **Re : zambia and children's advocacy** by FT - 30/06/2006 20:30
 - ↳ **Re : zambia and children's advocacy** by jkamchacha - 01/07/2006 08:56
- ✉ **What Africa needs!** by Otto Beseka Isong - 18/06/2006 12:00
 - ↳ **Re : What Africa needs!** by Haje - 19/06/2006 14:11
 - ↳ **Re : What Africa needs!** by Zipho - 20/06/2006 05:35
 - ↳ **Re : What Africa needs!** by Aminu Wouba - 06/07/2006 01:13
 - ↳ **Re : What Africa needs!** by Isabelle - 23/06/2006 09:20

<http://www.nepad.org/cgi-bin/forum/forum.cgi?message&no=70628150917999999> Internet

Start | Novell... | Yahoo... | Link F... | EURO... | Data ... | 1:20 PM

Figure 3.8: Talk back, feedback from Nepad



APPENDIX 2

Appendix 2: Debating forum topics

New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad)

Dates: 04/05/2006 – 06/ 08/2006

1. The impact of Nepad: 1 response
2. Africa development: 1 response
3. Local government finance: 3 responses
4. Hi: 2 response
5. A tale of two statesmen: 3 responses
6. Meeting with investors: 2 responses
7. Campaign for Africa website exposure: 2 responses
8. Is this feasible: 7 responses
9. The African youth demands and pledges: 3 responses
10. New authoritative African voice
11. IBB, Northern politicians and propaganda against IMT, World Bank
12. What leadership means to me: 2 responses
13. Africa is blessed
14. Is this your address in Senegal
15. Corruption is not an option: 4 responses
16. Africa's Integration: 1 response
17. World cup 2010 in Africa: 7 responses
18. Forum Administration
19. 12 Community development
20. Mogabe the billionaire: 2 responses
21. Honor be to Bill Gates: 2 responses
22. National voters forum: responses
23. Utilities of Nepad in African politics: 8 responses
24. Zambia and children's advocacy: 4 responses
25. What Africa needs: 17 responses
26. Youth Empowerment
27. Recalls in Africa for the independence of Lado: 21 responses by the sender
28. Independence of Lado: 6 responses
29. Political strategies and sustainability survey
30. Friends (Thabo Mbeki and Obsanjo) said to be dictators: 3 responses
31. Zimbabwe is dying: 5 responses
32. Nepad E school initiative
33. Lowest export rates from Indonesia
34. Employment in Nepad
35. First lady in parliament is it okay?: 2 responses
36. How can the Nepad help us

37. Happy African day
38. Congenital birth defects has the
39. The paradoxes of the African status quo
40. African fertilizer summit
41. Home languages in Education
42. Does union des comores take part in Nepad
43. Economic integration in Africa: 1 responses
44. Developing technology in Africa: 9 responses
45. Funds for Kenya office
46. Africa and the law
47. Poverty and children: 4 responses
48. Peace for Sudan-Darfur: 1 responses
49. What's the Nepad objectives: 2 responses
50. Housing get Africa working: responses 11

Debating Forum: European Union

Cluster 1: Europe's economic and social development

1. A well known former EU commissioner recently said that: No username, 40 response
2. Why the EU and Europe needs its own independent industry: Jose Claudio 25
3. Should human rights laws be changed: Marcel, 8 responses
4. Meet industry must be banned: Hari: 75 responses
5. Are labor laws in European countries and the EU just? No Username: 100 responses
6. Moderator: No Username: 9 responses
7. Very funny; Rok 7
8. Dear Username jacker: No username
9. Most European countries lack appreciation of what business is: No username: 1 response
10. Dear Imposter: No username 4 responses
11. Dear moderator: No username: 7 responses
12. Dear moderator: No username: 7 responses
13. Shoe dumping: Tomas R (2 responses)
14. Europe should ban business: Klen user: 1 response
15. EU and food dependency: Max: 8 responses
16. Russian gas and the Gasport Monopoly: Tomas R: 0 response
17. Securing the EU Ets for Europe: Quentin Prideaux: 14 responses
18. The mistakes of the EMU: euro coins and notes: No username: 9 responses
19. Polish president wants EU to lift death penalty ban: Tomas R: 15 responses
20. Better productivity and more immigrants for whose profit: Max

Cluster two: Feeling towards Europe and the union task

1. Moderator
2. On the morning of free democracy and enslaves democracy: Joseph Christos

3. Esperanto is the only solution for a big problem: J Andre: 21 responses
4. Esperanto, a terrible solution for something simple: Kfa: 33 responses
5. Dear fellow dears: priorities, priorities
6. The EU needs more parties
7. Jews “media (TV, etc hypnotizing and robbing sentries: Josheph Christos
8. Dear Comm: new way for the commission to get public feedback: N/A 11 responses
9. Dear moderator: please set up a new channel for all EU citizens
10. UK fuzz over lost sovereignty in EU is hypocrisy: Kfa: 59 responses
11. Eurosceptics sense of humor: JT: 27 responses
12. What language for EU: Tomas R: 13 responses
13. What’s in a name: No username: 1 response
14. The no username solution: 1 response
15. Science talk: can the UK be relocated (moved to USA?)
16. Too much democracy? Metthew wood: 54 responses
17. No need to party over this: angryjohn: 15 responses
18. British migration to the EU: Matthew Woods: 6 responses
19. Do we really need political parties in the EP? Norman: 14 responses
20. 50th anniversary of the treaty of Rome-Eurovision: The Moderator: 13 responses

Cluster three: Europe’s borders and its role in the world

1. More enlightened Turks: Mark: 32 responses
2. I the Human race committing suicide? : Rock: 24 responses
3. Borders? Cagaty Iris: 20 responses
4. Hallow everybody: don’t worry be happy: J Andre: 18 responses
5. EU force in the middle East: Kfa: 50 responses
6. Why Switzerland and Norway are not EU members states? J Dagle: 61 responses
7. Hisbullah are maniacs and Israel is starting to look the same: Rok: 4 responses
8. Europeans are backing up the Israel war policies: Europublic: 2 responses
9. Double moral of the European: Someone: 26 responses
10. How do you define Europe and its borders: Europublic: 0 response
11. Communication is very important: Barkin: 0 response
12. The present situation in the Middle East: Chris: (0 response
13. New EU member states and US visas: Genc: 24 responses
14. To answer the Questions very briefly: Kfa: 51 responses
15. Future of Europe: Chris: 21 responses
16. Hypocrisy: EU blames US for world trade talks collapse: Mercel: 3 responses
17. Why do we people now confuse Europe with the EU: Arnold: 46 responses
18. Turkey’s EU membership: win subject: Dadem: 13 responses
19. EU keeps robbing African fishermen of livelihood: Mercel: 3 responses
20. We are on our way to a European Army: Marcllel: 128 responses