IS Policy in Developing Countries: The South African Experience

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Guest Lecture

dr. Leo Van Audenhove
Leo.Van.Audenhove@vub.ac.be

South Africa's IS policy

- ANC probably first liberation movement to recognize importance of telecommunications and ICTs
  - Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP)
    - election manifesto as blueprint for policy one in power
    - telecommunications and 'information highway'
- Why research on South Africa important
  - In the new dispensation reformulation needed of all policies to correspond with democratic society
  - Comes at time when discussion on ICTs and IS starts
  - Unique position to do something new
  - Unique position to integrate policy in different areas

- Up until today no formal vision or policy on the IS
  - from 1995 onwards ICTs and IS central in lots of speeches
  - from 1995 and 1996 onwards discussion in policy processes
  - around 1996 even talk about dedicated Gr-White paper process
- Reconstruction of a vision
  - on basis of political speeches and documents drafted a vision
    - critique: drafted vision more coherent than in reality
    - answer: policy discourse fairly comprehensive view

Vision on the IS

- Three main interrelated presuppositions
  - belief in the nascent advent of IS and Information Economy
  - rapid convergence of TC-, AV-sector and computing
  - ICTs positive impact on social change and development
    - link between investment in ICTs and economic development
    - ICTs play catalyzing role in in functioning of all sectors

- aware that this will not materialize over night
  - strong emphasis on access (universal service)
  - aware that content predominantly Western
  - aware content production will be important
- Mbeki (when faced with international audience) more critical
  - view which is close to leftist view on IS (Castells, Melody, Mansell,...)
  - but now way to opt out

- belief ICTs alternative means to overcome inequality
  - Important due to enormous disparity between rich and poor
  - South Africa no administrative and state structure in disadvantaged communities
  - Belief that ICTs provide new means to establish contact between state and citizen
    - Information
    - Services (e-health, e-education, e-government)
- South African Vision on IS
  - ICT as enabling technology
  - IS as global competitive society
    - new form of economic growth based on information and knowledge

Translating the vision into action

- What have been the broad evolutions in policy 1994-2000 and beyond
  - From policy formulation to implementation and back again
  - From universal service to universal access
    - The case of telecommunications and telecentres
  - Towards increasing complexity

Formulation, implementation…

- When looking at policy distinct periods
  - Transition 1989 to 1994
  - Transformation 1994- mid 1997
  - Implementation mid 1997-mid 2000
  - Evaluation and reformulation mid 2000-
- Five key areas of policy for IS
  - Infrastructure
  - Infostructure (content & services)
  - Skills and Capabilities
  - Institutional capacity
  - Integration in overall policy

Transformation 1994-97

Policy document or initiative	*Content*	*Department responsible*
OVERALL SOCIO-ECONOMIC POLICY (economy, industry, technology and innovation)		
White Paper on Science and Technology (1996)	Science and technology geared at innovation	Arts, Culture, Science and Technology
RDP Base Document and White Paper (1993-94)	Development policy until 1996	ANC & Ministry without Portfolio
Growth, Employment and reconstruction (1996)	More neoliberal policy 1996	Presidential Office & Finance

Policy document - initiative	*Content*	*Department responsible*
INFRASTRUCTURE		
Telecommunications Act (1996) Telkom License (1997)	Telecommunications policy	Communications
Technology-Enhanced Learning Investigation (1996)	ICTs in education	Education
Library and Information System (1996)	Libraries and ICTs	Education & ACST
INFOSTRUCTURE		
Technology-Enhanced Learning Investigation (1996)	ICTs in education	Education
Library and Information System	Libraries and ICTs	Education & ACST
Comtask-report (1996)	Government and development communication, media ownership	Deputy President
Independent Broadcasting Authority Act (1993)	Responsible for audiovisual in absence of policy after 1993	IBA & Communication

Policy documents and initiatives	*Content*	*Department responsible*
SKILLS & CAPABILITIES		
National Qualifications Framework (1996)	Qualification and certification for education	South African Qualifications Authority
Technology-Enhanced Learning Investigation (1996)	ICTs and education	Education
INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY		
White Paper on Public Service (1995)	Restructuring of public service	Public Service and Administration
Affermative Action (in different documents)	Policy geared at helping disadvantaged into work	Public Service and Administration

- By end of 1996 different policy processes come to end
- Two interesting calls
  - different commissions and policy papers call for better integration of the different policies
  - different parties call for the development of an overall policy on IS
  - call for central steering institution for policy

Implementation mid 1997-mid 2000

Policy document or initiative	*Content*	*Department responsible*
OVERALL SOCIO-ECONOMIC POLICY (economy, industry, technology and innovation)		
White Paper on Science and Technology (1996)	Science and technology geared at innovation	Arts, Culture, Science and Technology
Foresight (June 1999)	Prospective study directed at a long-term economic and industrial growth strategy	Arts, Culture, Science and Technology
South African Information Technology Industry Strategy (2000)	Industrial strategy for IT sector	Trade and Industry
Growth, Employment and reconstruction (1996)	More neoliberal policy 1996	Presidential Office & Finance
e-commerce	Overall policy to stimulate and regulate electronic commerce	Communications

Policy document - initiative	*Content*	*Department responsible*
INFRASTRUCTURE		
Telecommunications Act (1996) Telkom License (1997)	Establishes new framework for for telecommunications	Communications
Technology-Enhanced Learning Strategy (1997)	Strategy to translate the earlier TELI in concrete initiatives	Education
Telkom	Responsible for network extension and universal service	Communication
Satra (1997)	Responsible for regulating the telecommunications sector	Communication
USA (1997)	Responsible for universal service and access	Communication
GCIS (1998)	Responsible implementation of MPCCs and coordination of telecentre activities	President
Comtask-report (1996)	Government and development communication, media ownership	Deputy President
Schoolnet SA (Nov. 1997)	ICT applications for educational sector	Different departments
info.com 2025	Ambitious overall programme to get to IS	Communication

Policy document - initiative	*Content*	*Department responsible*
INFROSTRUCTURE		
Technology-Enhanced Learning Strategy (1997)	Strategy to translate the earlier TELI in concrete initiatives	Education
GCIS	Responsible for the implementation of MPCCs and coordination of telecentre activities	President
Schoolnet SA (Nov. 1997)	ICT applications for educational sector	Different departments
Broadcasting Act (April 1999)	Legislation reforming audio-visual sector	Communication

- By end of 1999 realization serious problems with impementation
  - Telkom facing churn
  - USA problems implementing Telecentres
  - Satra almost all regulations challenged in court
  - tendering process for third cellular license stalled
  - info.com 2025 only partially implemented
- Reasons
  - too ambitious policies
  - no or little integration of policies
  - fights between departments instead of cooperation
  - weak institutions

Evaluation mid 2000

- policy frameworks and implementation reviewed
  - merger of Satra and IBA
  - policy process on convergence
  - telecommunications amendment bill
  - e-commerce
  - presidential national commission on IS
- much more cooperation between departments
- to some extent guidance from presidential office

Main points of critique

- Too little horizontal and vertical integration
  - horizontal: integration between initiatives from different departments
  - vertical: between initiatives from departments and overall national policy

From universal service to access

- access to telecommunications in 1994
  - High inequality in possession of telephone (household)
    - 1994: 31 % households have telephones in house
    - 1994: 87,4 % white - 11,6% black
    - 1994: 50,8 % city - 5,2 % rural area
  - High inequality in access at institutions
    - (see table next page)
- In RDP base document 1994 universal service
  - every household has a telephones
- Telecommunications Act 1996 universal access
  - individuals have access within reasonable reach

Access in institutions

Tabel 1: TELEFOONS IN INSTELLINGEN
GESCHATTE AANTAL OP 30 JUNI 1996

	Totaal	*Dienst aanwezig*	*Dienst afwezig*
Scholen	31.596	12.326	19.270
Ziekenhuizen	3.388	2.761	627
Bibliotheken	1.198	930	268
Lokale autoriteiten	855	774	81
Totaal aantal prioritaire instellingen	**37.037**	**16.791**	**20.246**
Totaal aantal dorpen*	3.767	563	3.204

Bron: Republic of South Africa (7 mei 1997), Schedule D.
* Dorp in Underserviced Area met 100 tot 1.999 inwoners, zonder telefoon.

Universal access

- In Act emphasis on access
  - providing everyone with telephone not realistic
  - universal access possible within reasonable time
- USA broadens interpretation of access
  - not only access to telephone
  - access to wider offer of ICTs and services
- Strategie
  - implementation of telecentres

Telecentres South-Africa: Vision

- public places with access to telecom and ICT
  - telephone, fax, photocopy, projector, PCs with internet
  - 3.000 à 4.000 necessary for geographic coverage
- linked to existing projects
  - multi-purpose community centres
  - expectation would provide new income for community
  - should be managed by the community

Implementation

- Establishment of Universal Service Agency 1997
  - by 2001 only 60 in effect operational
  - problem: capacity of the USA
    - USA political construction
    - most employees background in labour
    - do not have necessary skills
    - very anti-private sector position
  - problem: conceptualization of telecentres
    - have to be sustainable - but placed in poorest areas
    - little support from government
    - little support from Telkom

Use by community

- use remains limited
  - telephone, photocopy and fax regularly used
  - PCs and internet hardly ever used
- reason
  - to expensive - not supported by Satra
    - probably mistake to set up two entities
  - not relevant:
    - content not adapted
    - people don't see relevance
    - support at telecentre often weak or lacking
    - large part of population illiterate
  - problem with personal - ticket to the city

Conclusion

- Access to services depends on access to networks
  - Problems with implementation of telecentres
  - How develop content without network (chicken-egg)
- Large-scale implementation often problem in DC
  - Telecentres often work in individual cases
  - Large-scale roll out
    - Problem of institutional capacity
    - Problem of resources
  - Management by community failed
    - reviews show that privately based telecentres work best

Way forward

- MPCCs embedded in broader social programmes
  - GCIS (2000) seem to be working
- Schools
  - keep open after hours as telecentre
  - no duplication of infrastructure
  - kids can become intermediary experts for parents