

**Multi-stakeholder Partnerships in
ICT policy-making: An examination
of the ICT policy process in Kenya
and an investigation into the
participation of multiple
stakeholders.**

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Abstract

- The use of Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships (MSPs) to facilitate policy development has been used by global organisations and international donors for many years.
- The development of the National ICT Policy of Kenya was regarded as an example of a good MSP by those involved in the process and heralded as an archetype of multi-stakeholder engagement.
- This research is examining whether the platform provided by the KICTANet mailing list for stakeholders in ICT policy was used by different sectors to engage and debate on policy issues in order to ensure policy change.
- In order to do this, a content analysis has been conducted of the KICTANet mailing list over a four year period providing detail of the kinds of topics written about and who contributors to the mailing list were.
- The results of the research show that the mailing list failed to provide a real avenue for engagement by different stakeholders and was contributed most by civil society and private sector individuals. Over the four years, very few emails were sent by other sectors such as the government and real engagement was limited. Beyond a lack of multi-stakeholderism, the mailing list also lacked real debate on content issues and acted more as an avenue for announcements and invitations.
- The sending of electronic mail to develop a nationally significant policy was one small part of the entire process that developed the National ICT Policy and in the case of the mailing list was an avenue for particular sectors and particular people to engage in discussions.

Purpose

- ◎ The aim of this paper is to use the KICTANet mailing list as a case study to examine whether global policy processes and the promotion of MSPs as a means of policy development were able to filter down to local policy development processes.
- ◎ Did the example – whether good or bad – of the WSIS enable a new kind of policy making at the local level in Kenya?
- ◎ The purpose of the paper is to investigate whether stakeholders (government, civil society, the private sector, academia and the media) in the ICT policy were able to engage with each other as ‘equal’ partners in order to ensure an effective policy process.

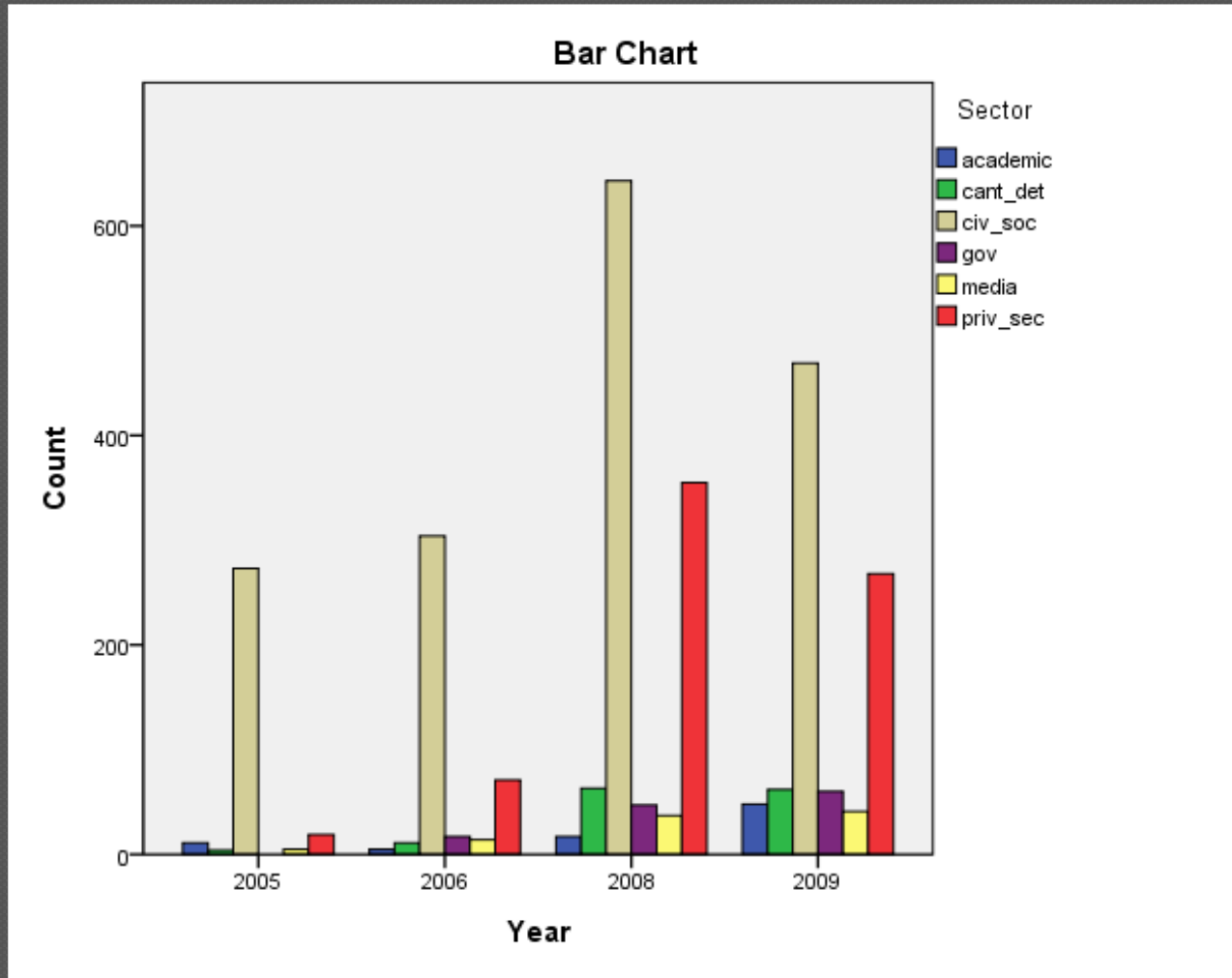
Methodology

- ◉ This research is situated within a political economic perspective of globalisation theory within policy development.
- ◉ A content analysis of the KICTANet mailing list was conducted over a four year period (2005, 2006, 2008 and 2009).
- ◉ Emails were coded based on who sent them, what sector they were from (government, civil society, private sector, academia, media) and the subject of the email.
- ◉ Individual emails which related specifically to the ICT Policy of 2006 were also analysed in a more in depth manner to gain a better understanding of the kinds of issues raised by stakeholders around the policy process and whether this would in fact influence its outcome.

Findings

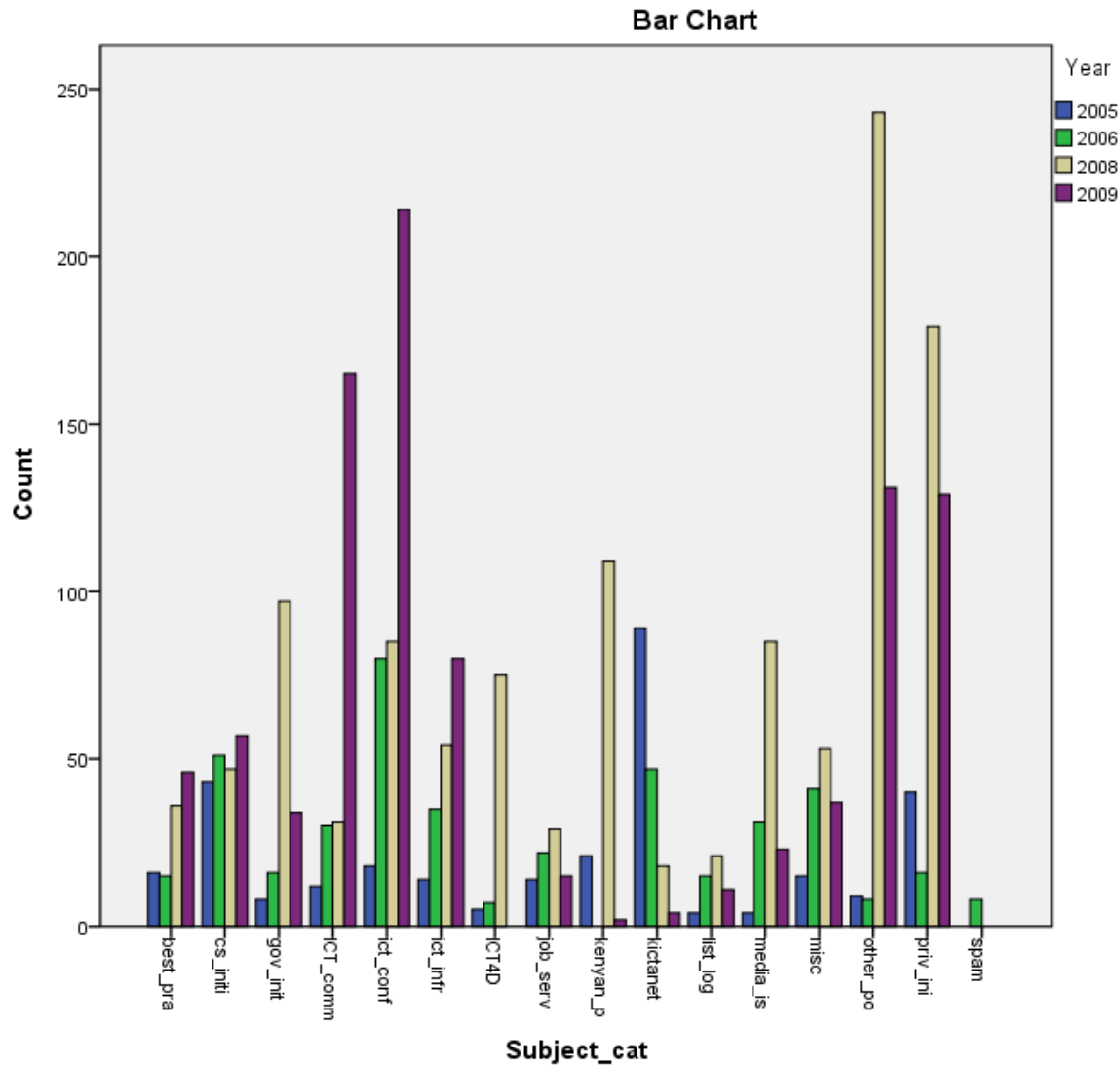
- Analysis of the contributors of the mailing list provides evidence that it falls short of the multi-stakeholder vision that it is purported to provide.
- Most of the contributors are from civil society and often it is the same people who make those contributions. Although there is some engagement by other groups (most notably the private sector), the limited number of contributions from the government, academia and the media in relation to the topics is significant in the fact that it is so small.
- It does illustrate the challenges of both multi-stakeholderism and of ensuring engagement at the virtual level.

Findings



Sector contributions for mailing list 2005 - 2009

Findings



Research limitations

- ◎ It would be worth conducting further research to analyse the emails from all the months over the period studied, as well undertake interviews with selected stakeholders on their perception of the actual influence of the mailing list.
- ◎ The multi-stakeholder nature of the mailing list is in question in this paper, but its influence on the policy process itself would be a further avenue for study.

Practical Implications

- Multi-stakeholderism is fraught with challenges and limitations, but can be a valuable asset in policy formulation. The mailing list may be one avenue for MSPs, but requires resources, management and encouragement to ensure contributions from diverse stakeholders. The level of useful contributions is difficult to assess, but if well moderated and encouraged, would provide stakeholder feedback which could ensure effective and inclusive policy.
- Stakeholders, especially government, could use the KICTANet mailing list to engage with policy partners and allow for participation which may not always be possible in face to face engagement.

Value of Paper

- ◎ This research provides a unique insight into the use of MSPs within an African country with the aim of enabling effective ICT policy. By examining the policy process through the lens of globalisation the research provides a wider perspective on a local process.
- ◎ Although research has been conducted on the ICT policy in Kenya, these historical accounts have taken for granted the multi-stakeholder nature of the policy process without investigating the avenues for real engagement. This research provides the first analysis of the KICTANet mailing list and perhaps the first investigation of an African mailing list and its value to ICT policy-making.