



## PhD Course at University of Agder:

### IS-606 Research Issues on eGovernment and ICT for Development

**Course dates:** March 8 - 10, 2010. **Site:** University of Agder (UiA), Kristiansand, Norway

**Instructors:** Professor Maung Sein (UiA) and Professor Rahul De (IIM, Bangalore, India)

**Credits:** 2,5 ECTS

#### Objectives

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to the frontiers of research in two distinct areas that nevertheless have increasingly overlapping aspects and synergy. The areas are Information and Communication Technologies for Development (ICT4D) and eGovernment.

#### Course description

**Research in ICT4D** delves into the complexities and debates surrounding the role of ICT in the development of underdeveloped countries. While ICT is generally accepted to have a key role, the actual process through which development is influenced remains a much debated issue. The literature on conceptual and theoretical frameworks in ICT4D, as well as empirical research seeks to understand the challenges provided by the socio-political context in which ICT is used in developing countries.

**Research in eGovernment** on the other hand examines how ICT can or has the potential to transform the relationship between government and citizens. Specifically, research looks at issues related to better provision of services to the citizens, better governance and increasing citizen participation. The concerns are not just technical, but also include social, organizational, economic, legal and ethical aspects. Moreover, the sheer number of stakeholders involved with varied and often competing objectives and agendas makes eGovernment a challenging but at the same time exciting area of study.

From the preceding sketches, it is quite easy to get the impression that these are diverse areas with little in common. While both research areas may be thought of having originated in the developed world, in emergence they have taken diverse paths. eGovernment concerns have primarily remained those of the “north” while ICT4D by definition took the “south” as its empirical setting. Indeed, it is possible to be interested in one of the areas without paying more than a cursory attention to the other. Research communities in each have developed along those lines with separate conferences and publication fora.

Yet, while understandable, this separation misses out on the vast potential for synergistic learning. First, developing countries are rapidly adopting eGovernment initiatives. These are often out of necessity (admittedly, there are other motivations such as “modernising” or sheer influence of northern funding and aid agencies). The weaker socio-economic context of the developing countries, often coupled with a less open and relatively unstable political climate has fostered many innovative approaches to eGovernment. The more developed countries can learn much from this. At the very least, the more complex context in underdeveloped countries provide an arena for theory building and theory testing for eGovernment researchers. Second, eGovernment is one of the application areas of ICT4D. More importantly, however, the transformational potential of eGovernment could initiate

fundamental and structural changes (the so-called “third order” effect) which could increase our understanding of the role of ICT in development.  
This potential of cross-fertilization is not lost on a small but growing body of researchers. The objective of this course is to foster this understanding on a budding group of researchers – the students in this course.

### **Content**

Students will first be given an overview of core research topics, perspectives, and debates in each area. Next, they will read and critically assess empirical work done in the areas. Specific areas selected will be on the basis of novelty, importance and the research interests of students and course instructors. Finally, students will integrate their understanding and write a term paper. The topic for the term paper may be either strictly from ICT4D, or eGovernment or on the intersection of the two.

### **Intended Learning Outcomes**

On successful completion of the course, the student will be able to:

- identify the major research areas in the ICT4D and eGovernment areas
- compare, appraise and critique theoretical/conceptual frameworks that underpin research in these areas
- explain the connection between different research issues in these areas
- formulate and specify research questions in these areas
- identify, explain and compare different research approaches and methods used in these areas.

### **Assessment**

The course is 2,5 ECTS points. To obtain credits, students are required to write a term paper on topics covered in the course. The term paper, due approximately two months after the course will be graded as *pass* or *fail*, where *pass* is equivalent to a grade B or better.

### **Course format**

The course will be run over 2,5 consecutive days with the following structure:

March 8 (conceptual issues): Fundamental issues in ICT4D (morning session); Fundamental issues in eGovernment (afternoon session)

March 9 (empirical studies): eGovernment in developed countries (morning session); eGovernment in developing countries (afternoon session)

March 10: Student presentation on their term paper proposals (morning session only).

### **Course conduct**

As a PhD course, the primary pedagogic form will be discussions on assigned papers from a literature list. This list will be sent to the students no later than 2 weeks prior to the start of the course. Papers will be assigned to individual students who will prepare short presentations and questions to lead the discussion on their assigned papers. Course instructor(s) will facilitate the discussion and give lectures and presentations.

### **Practicalities and logistics**

**The deadline for registration in the course is February 15.** Students intending to take the course must have been admitted to a PhD program. Contact persons:

- Registration: Målfrid Tangedal (Malfrid.Tangedal@uia.no), tel. 38 14 15 49
- Course contents: Professor Sein (Maung.K.Sein@uia.no), tel. 38 14 16 17
- Information on travel and lodging: Bente E. Holmen (bente.e.holmen@uia.no), tel. 38 14 15 04