# The Shaping Effect of African Contexts on a Digital Library's Accessibility

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## INTRODUCTION

The flow of up-to-date information is vital to educational and local development, in under-resourced parts of the world. I assessed feedback from Field Assistants on the implementation of the **eGranary digital library** in sub-Saharan Africa.

## eGRANARY

1,200+ installations worldwide, millions of cached Internet resources, distributed locally via LAN or Wi-Fi.
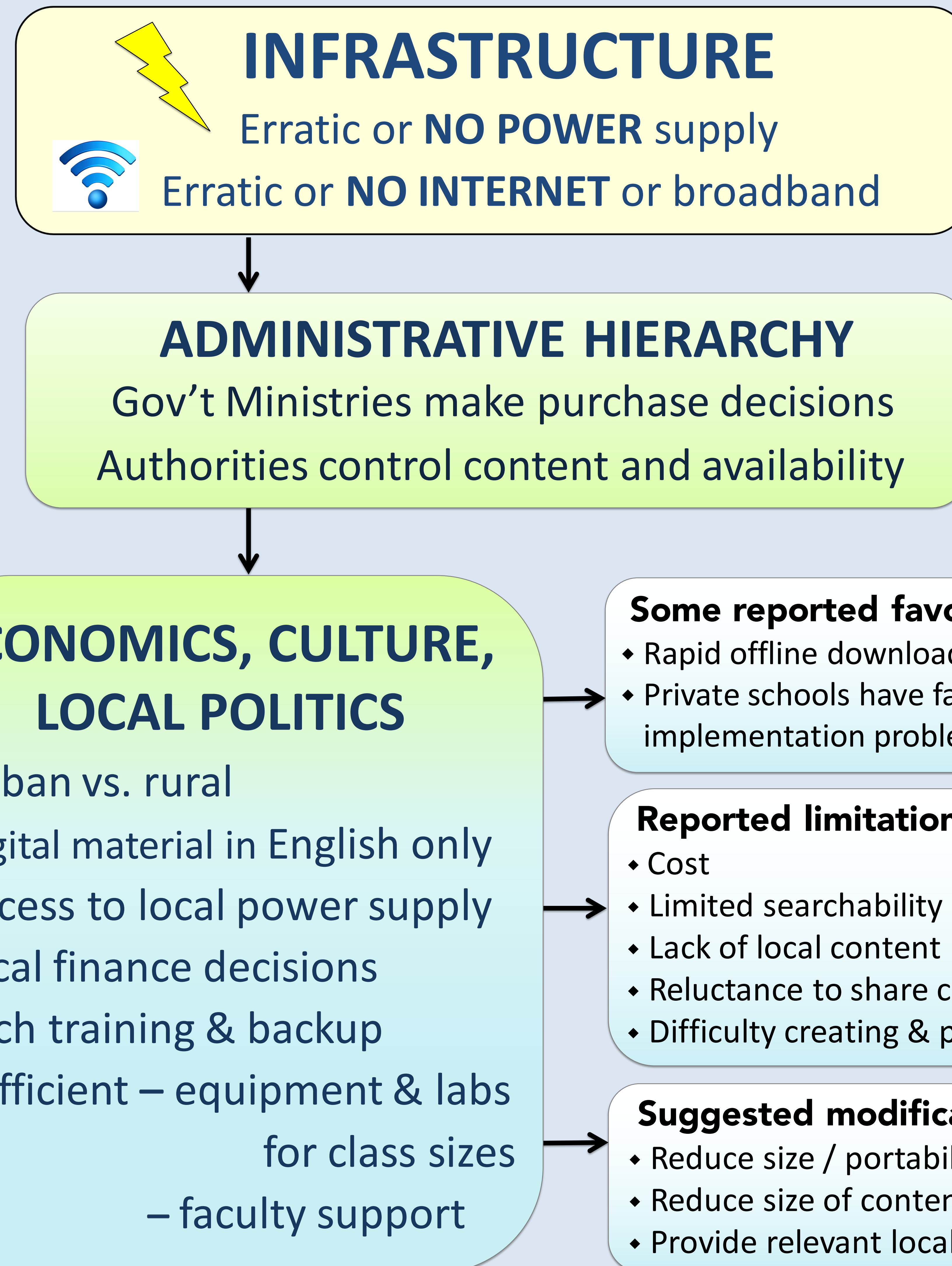
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## METHOD

Content analysis of interviews with agents in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mali, Nigeria, Zambia, Zimbabwe, 3 US donors

## ANALYSIS

Themes: local contexts (culture, infrastructure) approval, limitations

## INFRASTRUCTURE

Erratic or **NO POWER** supply

Erratic or **NO INTERNET** or broadband

## ADMINISTRATIVE HIERARCHY

Gov't Ministries make purchase decisions

Authorities control content and availability

## ECONOMICS, CULTURE, LOCAL POLITICS

- urban vs. rural
- digital material in English only
- access to local power supply
- local finance decisions
- tech training & backup
- sufficient – equipment & labs for class sizes – faculty support

### Some reported favorables
- Rapid offline download speed
- Private schools have far fewer implementation problems

### Reported limitations
- Cost
- Limited searchability
- Lack of local content
- Reluctance to share collections (copyright)
- Difficulty creating & posting own 'Web' collections

### Suggested modifications
- Reduce size / portability of delivery hardware
- Reduce size of content into packages
- Provide relevant local content

## CONCLUSIONS

ICT Implementation is a contextually dynamic negotiated process. In sub-Saharan African countries eGranary users' environments are primarily affected by:
- resource fragility
- hierarchical decision making & budgets affect access to everything
- urban vs. rural location
- availability of technology and training

## FUTURE WORK

UX – Teachers, students
        tech back-up staff
Query format? wording?
SURVEY TOOL?

Log record analysis

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eGRANARY DIGITAL LIBRARY *Storing the Seeds of Knowledge*

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