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Social and Community Media in Poor and Marginalized Urban Communities: A Study of Collective Action in Kiber

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Social and community media in poor and marginalized urban communities: a study of collective action in Kibera

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Abstract

Traditional media is often thought of as a space for resourced storytellers to inform a passive and silent audience. In the Kibera informal settlement, this paradigm has allowed large commercial media houses to misrepresent the realities of everyday life. Community media houses have the opportunity to correct this misrepresentation and redefine who we perceive to be the storyteller. By striving to highlight news and issues affecting the community, media houses such as Pamoja FM radio station and the *Kibera Journal* have given a voice to Kibera. Yet with the introduction of innovative media technologies, the distinction between the storyteller and the audience may become blurred, thus breaking down the idea of traditional media. The Voice of Kibera represents a social media project in which a more participatory form of media is possible. This altered form of media may foster a media democracy and thereby create a platform for collective action.

Pre-Introduction

This project would not have been possible without a series of unfortunate events that inhibited me from conducting my project in Kakuma Refugee Camp, located in the Turkana district of Northwestern Kenya. I had originally planned to study the right to freedom of expression in the camp, with special emphasis on the work of a small independent press called the *Kakuma News Reflector*. Organized and maintained by refugee journalists, this weblog has sought to give a voice to the refugee community amidst the monopoly on information enjoyed by the camp humanitarian agencies. Though I was denied permission to visit the camp (see Appendix 5) on the first day of the Independent Study Project (ISP) period, the mission and ideology behind the existence of an independent press is reflected in the theoretical framework of the project before you. During the ISP period, I was also given the opportunity to write a short opinion article that was submitted to the editor of the *Kakuma News Reflector* for publication in their weblog (see Appendix 6).

Introduction

Though the role of media[1] in our lives has been blurred by the evolution of media technologies, it is still an act of communication between individuals. The origin of "media" comes from the Latin word *medius* meaning middle, thus implying 2 or more poles of engagement. This endeavor is a study of how the storyteller creates this *middle* space and how we as a community decide who shall tell the story. To understand the role of the storyteller, we must explore the ways in which a society can become informed. Dale Peskin

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[1] Media refers to the means of mass communication thought of as a whole. In the context of this study, television, radio, newspaper, and film constitute the most prominent forms of media in Kenya. Mobile phones, Internet, and other communication technologies may also be employed for media purposes.

(2003) of the Media Center explains that there are three ways to look at how society is informed:

1) People are gullible and will read, listen to, or watch just about anything.

2) People require an informed intermediary to tell them what is good, important and meaningful.

3) Given the means, people can sort things out for themselves and find their own version of the truth.

In one urban community described as a "microcosm of Kenya", I explored who has the means to tell the story and how media takes form to influence people's everyday lives. In an industry dominated by large media corporations, this project sought to highlight the role of community media and the possibilities for pragmatic empowerment through the social networks created via media. More specifically, I studied if and how community media could be employed as a means of collective action in a poor and marginalized community such as the Kibera informal settlement.

Bowman and Willis (2003) suggest, "Each time there has been a period of significant social, economic, and technological change, a transformation in news has occurred." As my project progressed, it became clear that the evolution of media technology in Kenya is key to understanding the possibilities for collective action, political or otherwise. How Kenyans perceive the news is changing with this evolution, especially in regards to mobile phone capabilities. This changed perception has the possibility to foster a media democracy[2] in which a mass media system is created that informs and empowers all members of society and enhances democratic values. This study analyzed how a reformed media system may become

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[2] Noam Chomsky (1989) explains that a media democracy is a set of ideas that advocate reforming the mass media, strengthening public service broadcasting, and developing and participating in alternative media and citizen journalism.

a reality in urban Kenya and how the paradigm of the storyteller is changing to embrace or resist this media transformation.

Setting

The Kibera informal settlement

As one of the most studied urban sprawls in the world, there is no shortage of available information about Kibera. Yet for the purposes of this study, a firsthand account of Kibera as a community was more beneficial than an academic paper produced from an outside perspective. To understand media influence in this urban area, it is necessary to understand the origins of Kibera as an informal settlement and how this history has created the hotbed of political and development activities characteristic of Kibera today. If Kibera is to be understood as a flashpoint for the rest of Nairobi and the greater Kenyan landscape, then one must examine how this community has been organized (or not organized) from its inception.

Kibra, meaning "forest" in kinubi, began as a settlement of 500 Nubian warrior families serving in the Anglo-Egyptian Army during the first decade of the 20th century (Ramadhan, discussion, 18 April 2010). Treated well by the British because of their military service, this small group of Nubians lived in the space that is today home to between 600000 and 1 million people (Ramadhan, discussion). The original land area of Kibera is found within Jamhuri Park to the west, Gnong Road to the north, the Coptic Church to the east, and Langata Road to the south. As a subset of property rights, security of tenure in Kibera became an issue when the British-conceived *Kata Land Commission* of 1933 failed to implement any meaningful legislation (Ramadhan, discussion). At the time of national independence Nubians outnumbered Kikuyus, the other major group living in Kibera, by 2:1.

Though the Nubian community in Kibera supported the nationalistic struggle, after independence the newly organized provincial administration became responsible for the exponential population growth in Kibera. Growing ethnic tensions between the Luo and Kikuyu tribes resulted in open animosity after the assassination of the famous politician Tom Mboya in 1969. This animosity led to a massive influx of Luos into Kibera, a place seen as a refuge in the Kikuyu-dominated Nairobi province (Ramadhan, discussion). These past migrations to Kibera have further exacerbated the security of tenure issues, thereby producing the current informal settlement.

Rapid urbanization with a 220% increase in urban populations between 1962 and 1999 has further expanded Kibera (Wairagu, 2003: 4). At least part of this massive urbanization has been influenced by an increased access to services, many of which constitute forms of media. To many political actors, this community is viewed as a sort of voter abyss to exploit during the campaign season. An ex-chief of Kibera summarizes this political atmosphere when he states, "Even MP Raila Odinga does development in his home area, but not in his constituency. It's a story of unfulfilled election promises" (Fatuma, discussion, 15 April 2010).

The current political structure designates Kibera into 4 wards under the power of the Nairobi City Council. According to the Councilor of Saran' gombe ward, politics in Kibera are controlled by 5 ethnic groups (Luo, Kikuyu, Kamba, Kisii, and Luhya), though multiple countries and all of Kenya's 42 ethnic groups are represented (Odiawo, discussion, 14 April 2010). Administratively, D.O. Nyakach acts as one of three chiefs, a position most connected to the citizens in a power link that rises to the Office of the President (D.O. Nyakach, discussion, 14 April 2010). This political environment and diversity of community members creates a hotbed of political activity. It is amongst this political activity and the low-income demographics of Kibera that community media may have an influence.

Media space in Kenya

As a major African communications hub trailing only South Africa and Egypt in regards to information and computer technologies (ICT) infrastructure, Kenya is home to 4 distinct forms of media that will be discussed in this study.

Commercial or industrial media comprises corporations created by hierarchal organizations and built for commerce. Business models of these corporations often focus on advertising and broadcasting (Bowman and Willis 2003: 13). Royal Media Group, the Standard, and the Daily Nation are examples of large commercial media houses, controlling about ¾ of the country's media market (Okina, discussion, 22 April 2010).

Community media refers to any media house that is owned by a community, thus implying that a community controls the content of programs and written stories (Odero, *Kibera Journal*, July 2008). Throughout the course of my project, community media was often highlighted as a media house that addressed issues pertinent to a specific community, though not necessarily a media house owned by the community itself. A community can be defined as a group of people with common goals, objectives, and aspirations. This sense of community focuses largely on common geographic and demographic characteristics rather than ethnic backgrounds.

Vernacular media encompasses media outlets that are spoken in local languages around Kenya. Vernacular radio stations make up the majority of this media form, catering to a very specific group of people often organized along ethnic lines.

Social media describes a type of media that is based on conversation between people online. This is an emerging form of media in Kenya with unknown possibilities, though most Kenyans do not have access to this form of media. Community media, however, may be thought of as a hybrid between commercial and social media.

Media regulation in Kenya is fragmented and exists in different sections of civil and criminal law, of which I have highlighted a few key examples that relate directly to the focus of my study. The *Constitution of Kenya*, the *Statutory Laws*, and the *Common Law* are three sources of press law. The existing *Constitution of Kenya* does not mention freedom of the press or any other media specifically. Furthermore, the qualification of the right to freedom of expression in the constitution allows for abuses in the name of "public interest" (Media Council of Kenya memo, 2010:1). A 1998 Act of Parliament established the Communications Commission of Kenya, which deals with licensing, regulating, and coordination of the telecommunication and radio communication frequencies and apparatus.

The *2008 Media Act* created the Media Council of Kenya, an independent body designed to promote press freedom, responsible journalism, and provide self-regulation of the media (Okina, discussion, 22 April 2010). This *Media Act* does not resolve the issue of media rights and fails to distinguish between vernacular and community forms of media. As the overarching media regulatory body of the government, the Ministry of Information and Communication is charged with regulating the transfer of information in Kenya, amongst other responsibilities.

Community media houses in Kibera

Though there are most likely additional community media projects in Kibera, this study focuses on 3 prominent community media organizations and 1 social media project active in Kibera that either currently reach a wide community audience or have the potential to do so. All of these examples of community media are sustained at least in part by donor contributions. In 2005, there were 2,817 registered non-governmental organization (NGO) projects in Kenya, of which 7 were carrying out projects that qualify as media activity (NGO

Activity, 2005: 37). Kibera offers a unique environment to study community media because there is a vibrant media atmosphere supported by local and international organizations.

Pamoja FM is a radio station based out of Ayany Estate that became licensed as a community-based organization (CBO) in 2006 (Hussein, discussion, 13 April 2010). Labeled as the "Voice of Kibera", this Kiswahili-spoken radio station seeks to air programs pertinent to the needs and desires of the Kibera community. Presenters are thought of as community journalists with a responsibility to uncover issues affecting the community and promote community dialogue through such resources as listener call-in and investigative reporting. The radio station has a partnership with the British Broadcasting Company (BBC), but about 80% of the program content (disregarding music) is produced locally (Omoro, discussion, 21 April 2010). The BBC and a few other international organizations provide financial support for electrical and equipment needs.

The *Kibera Journal* is a community newspaper written in English that operates as a part of the Kibera Community Development Agenda (KCODA) umbrella organization. This organization is located in Olympic Estate. Utilizing the skills of 5 volunteer community journalists, the *Kibera Journal* follows a vision of "an informed society that actively participate in social, economic, and political issues" (Namale, discussion, 16 April 2010). The newspaper is sold for 20 shillings per copy and prints between 1000-3000 copies per issue, with issues published every other month (Namale, discussion). Described as a news source that goes into more detail than commercial media outlets, the *Kibera Journal* attempts to publish news that is generated in the community and directly affects the daily lives of Kibera residents.   KCODA also supports community journalism training and has recently initiated a video training program for 16 students in hopes of starting a television station called the *Kibera News Network*.

The Hot Sun Foundation, also located in Olympic Estate, is an organization designed to empower individuals and the Kibera community through film. The Kibera Film School is a branch of Hot Sun that has trained a group of young adults from Kibera about all aspects of filmmaking, including scriptwriting, acting, casting, camera techniques, production, and distribution practices (Hot Sun Foundation website, retrieved 2 May 2010). The school is planning to enroll its second class later this month, with members from the first graduating class acting as assistant teachers throughout the program. Hot Sun has provided resources for community members to produce a number of short films, including the award-winning film *Kibera Kid*. This organization also has plans to begin a TV news network, which will be separate from the KCODA news project.

The Voice of Kibera is a community media aggregate project that takes form completely online. Relying on an open source[3], open data[4] software platform called Ushahidi, this website currently collects Map of Kibera[5] updates, select *Kibera Journal* articles, Twitter feeds related to Kibera, and SMS reports sent via shortcode. As an application of the Map of Kibera project, this social media outlet is still in beta form and has not been officially introduced into the community. This project and similar social media ideas have the potential to utilize mobile phone and Internet capabilities as tools of participatory media efforts.

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[3] Open source describes practices in production and development that promote access to the end product's source materials (Muffatto, 2006).

[4] Open data refers to the philosophy and practice requiring that certain data are freely available to everyone, without restrictions from copyright, patents, or other mechanisms of control (Veen, 2005).

[5] Map Kibera is the first public digital map of the Kibera informal settlement. The creators state that without basic knowledge of the geography and resources of Kibera it is impossible to have an informed discussion on how to improve the lives of residents (MapKibera website, retrieved 1 May 2010).

2007 Post-Election Violence (PEV)

The events that transpired following the 2007 general elections are too vast to fully summarize here, but a few key aspects of the crisis are pertinent to both the current role of media in Kenya and media possibilities in future times of emergency. The general elections garnered over 14.2 million registered voters (82% of the eligible population) and experienced a 72% overall voter turnout, both historic feats for Kenya as a country (KNCHR report, 2008: 4). They were the first elections in which the presidential incumbent had a real and serious challenger. The 2008 Kenyan National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR) report as well as the government Waki Report cite mismanaged tallying processes as well as underlying issues predating the election as impetus for the post-election crisis (KNCHR report, 2008: 4).

The KNCHR report (2008) states, "broad national socio-political and economic dynamics as well as localized state-society and community contexts interacted to generate conditions germane to the crisis." Furthermore, public perceptions that political leaders were much more interested in their own personal welfare and the pursuit of lavish lifestyles cemented the view that the government was out of touch with the economic reality of the most vulnerable (KNCHR report, 2008: 5). The political tensions in Kibera and its reputation as a hotbed of political activity erupted during this crisis due in part to these factors.

Communication and information technologies in Kenya

Technological advances, especially in regards to Internet and mobile phone access, are inextricably linked to the scope and influence of media anywhere. As of December 2009, an estimated 10% of the Kenyan population had access to Internet (CCK report, 2009: 12). The introduction of 2 submarine fiber optic cables has increased the total international Internet bandwidth (measured in Megabytes/second) by an estimated 226.9%, but this

improvement has not significantly increased Internet capabilities for the majority of Kenyans (CCK report,12).

Mobile phone use has become a ubiquitous network in urban Kenya as over 84% of the population is covered with mobile services (CCK report, 2009: 5). These services were introduced in 1992 with the Extended Total Access Communication analogue system (CCK report, 5). The *Kenya Communications Act of 1998* introduced competition into the cellular industry. In 2008, 77% of the population was covered, corresponding to 28% of the geographic area (CCK report, 10). In Quarter 2 of the annual 2009/2010 period, there were an estimated 19,364,559 mobile subscribers. This reflects a 19.3% yearly increase from 2008/2009 (CCK report, 13).   In the same quarter, there were an estimated 1,981,048 mobile data/Internet subscribers (CCK report, 6). This refers to mobile phone subscribers who also utilized mobile data and Internet capabilities on their mobile devices, usually paying per data-download or by megabytes.

Social networks

To understand how media takes form in Kenya and elsewhere, we must first grasp the relationship between social networks and information dissemination. Granovetter (1973) states, "Studies of diffusion and mass communication have shown that people rarely act on mass-media information unless it is also transmitted through personal ties." Social networks can be defined as "hierarchies of hubs that keep networks together, a heavily connected node[6] closely followed by less connected ones, trailed by dozens of even smaller nodes (Bowman and Willis, 2003: 57). A social network could most simply be described as the spider web of personal ties, both weak and strong, that define our social relationships. Bowman and Willis (2003) explain that real networks are self-organized, offering a vivid example of how the

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[6] Nodes are the individual actors within social networks, and ties are the relationships between actors.

independent actions of millions of nodes and links lead to spectacular emergent behavior. Social networks encompass media because our social networks heavily influence how we perceive and conceptualize information. Social media, and to some degree community media, embrace social network patterns as a means to this collective emergent behavior.

Methodology

Due to the inception of this project on the day our ISP period began, my initial efforts were to simply paint a holistic picture of community media in Kibera and narrow the focus of my study. I also sought to understand how the history of Kibera has influenced the present day settlement and how politics have affected the community. My location in Ayany Estate aided these efforts, as two of the most prominent community media outlets, the *Kibera Journal* and Pamoja FM radio station, were located within a short walk of my homestay. After introductions made possible with the help of George Okewa, this proximity enabled me to be in and out of these organizations with a high degree of frequency. Thereby giving me an opportunity to 'establish' myself.

Though I visited 3 separate community media organizations, Pamoja FM and the *Kibera Journal* provided the majority of my data about existing media outlets in Kibera. I also pursued any and all media contacts suggested to me by journalists, managers, neighbors, etc. Through basic informal interviews and participant observation, this initial phase of my project led to some level of comfort, both on my end and on the part of the individuals working in these organizations.

This comfort allowed me to focus my study and define what was actually important in the realm of community media. This second phase of my research included new, more focused interview prompts designed for specific individuals involved with community media, as well as continued informal participant observation. This informal participant observation

yielded some of the most influential and meaningful information in my project. Sitting in on Pamoja FM radio shows, watching *Kibera Journal* editors and journalists work, and joining journalists or reporters as they worked on stories all constituted this non-interview information gathering.

In the end, I conducted 15 informal interviews, 2 of which required follow-up interviews (see Appendix 1). Two of these interviews focused on the political structure of Kibera and one focused on the history of Kibera from a Nubian elder's perspective. The rest consisted of interviews with a cross-section of what I perceived to be the major players in the community media network. I attended one Kibera News Network video training session, one Voice of Kibera focus group with community leaders, and participated in a Hot Sun Foundation film project about the upcoming World Humanitarian Day.

As stated earlier, I wrote one opinion article for the *Kakuma News Reflector* and drafted a guide about successfully conducting an ISP in Kakuma Refugee Camp. In addition, I wrote one opinion article for the *Kibera Journal* (see Appendix 2). Though it's often the case with many field-based projects, the focus of my study evolved each step of the way, often dramatically, due to the lack of background knowledge from the outset.

Discussion and Analysis

The need for community media in Kibera

The Kibera community experiences no shortage of news coverage at the national and international level, yet in the view of many community leaders, this coverage often misrepresents events and the perceptions of daily life in the slum. Mainstream media houses are scorned for their "in and out" journalism practices and criticized for not getting the whole story (Namale, discussion, 28 April 2010). The Daily Nation and Standard newspapers, for example, are publications cited as negatively portraying news in Kibera. When asked why

there is a need for community media in Kibera, the majority of individuals involved in such projects cited this mainstream "distorted spotlight" as a key misperception that a community media outlet could correct (Hagen, discussion, 30 April 2010).

The centralized power structures of media in Kenya create an atmosphere conducive to this misrepresentation. If we imagine media as an integral aspect of the dissemination of information through social networks, then this system portrays a centralized node that monitors and controls smaller links and nodes. Many of the country's vernacular radio stations that broadcast in rural areas are actually operated from central hubs in Nairobi (Adams, discussion, 29 April 2010). Media houses located in the community embrace a decentralized system in which media is produced in the community where news occurs. In addition, mass media depends on two important characteristics of the audience, size and silence (Bowman and Willis, 2003: 57). This idea of a passive audience requiring an intermediary (the large media houses) to inform them is a widely accepted view that community media have the opportunity to challenge.

The domination of media space by a few large corporations inhibits the ability of diversified opinions and perspectives regarding both national and local issues pertinent to Kibera. A portion of the large media corporations are owned by national politicians, a reality that further inhibits a more general perspective (Okina, discussion, 22 April 2010). This media dominance creates a de facto rule of "no money, no voice" often characteristic of issues revolving freedom of the press. For this reason, freedom of the press cannot be viewed as corollary to the human right to freedom of expression; it must be seen as a form of property rights. As a result of this system, there is no medium for information about local events in Kibera or a source of diversified perspective about local news stories (Namale, discussion, 28 April 2010).

Community stratification along ethnic lines has to a degree inhibited collaboration and community-building efforts in Kibera. In some ways, the diversity of Kibera has sectioned off segments of the community. In times of crisis, this reality has led to violence in and amongst the community. Therefore, community media outlets have the ability to promote community-building efforts and thereby support peace in the slum. Odero (2008) states that community media should not just follow the 5W and H's of reporting, but also add C-conflict resolution. Ideas of "peace journalism", both in broadcast and written form, became a common buzzword during interviews about the differences between commercial and community journalists. Through community media such as the *Kibera Journal*, there is a belief that a culture of peace can be maintained and mainstreamed (Omoro, discussion, 21 April 2010).

Community media, because of their community membership and proximity to the community, also have the ability to serve as watchdogs for government and development projects. Mismanagement of Constituency Development Funds (CDF) has become a large focus of Pamoja FM's daily broadcast as they highlight and discuss failed government projects in the community (Philip, discussion, 20 April 2010). False development projects may also be addressed in the local forum of a community media outlet.

The need for locally produced entertainment is a central niche possibly filled by community media outlets that has the potential to influence social change. In general, interest in media arises out of a desire for entertainment between individuals, whether it's a radio listener hearing a reggae song or a television viewer watching the heartfelt soap opera *Love Spell*. Information transfer through entertainment makes up a large part of our social networks. There is increasing evidence to suggest that the pace of social change is more reliant on these social networks than on any other aspect within a community (Maxson, discussion, 25 April 2010). Though these deficits and voids in regards to the media culture in

Kenya are by no means all encompassing of the potential need for community media sources, they highlight the leading responses by members of the community media outlets in Kibera.

Influence of existing community media organizations

Pamoja FM radio station

Amidst satisfying the desire for locally produced entertainment through music and themed radio talk shows, Pamoja FM serves as a sort of public forum in which to create community dialogue. A February 2009 Awareness and Listenership Survey[7] found that out of 7 competing radio stations, 32% of survey participants listened most to Pamoja FM (see Appendix 3). In addition, 39% of radio listeners tuned in between 2-3 hours per day (Pamoja FM Survey, 2009: Slide 33). With this wide listener base, the radio station incorporates a balanced program schedule, including programs on "youth and politics", Kiswahili education, corruption issues, missing children announcements, and Muslim and Christian-themed music.

Content aired on the radio is created in the community through journalist endeavors and by listener call in abilities (Hussein, discussion, 13 April 2010). The studio is equipped with a call-in transmitter and SMS interface machine that allow listener feedback and suggestions. These tools are used quite extensively, as exemplified during a 1-hour long morning radio program I observed during which 15 people called in commenting on various issues and topics.

The radio station is also in a unique position to be held accountable to its viewers and pursue community issues in a balanced and fair manner. One of my main contacts at the radio station was a presenter and production manager named Philip who is known as the "Lion that eats people" during his morning program. This disc jockey title originates from

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[7] Survey conducted by Pamoja FM staff through semi-structured interviews with approximately 300 Kibera residents over the age of 18. Random sampling utilized via multi-stage techniques. 64% of the participants were male and 46% or the participants were female (Pamoja FM Survey, 2009: Slide 83).

his ability to entertain listeners and "give them the right to watch the material they need" (Philip, discussion, 20 April 2010). This ability is seen as a means of creating awareness and knowledge within the community, a responsibility that he and other presenters are held accountable to because of the proximity of the radio station to the community. Presenters have an incentive to talk about pertinent issues and strive for factual broadcasts because if they don't a listener can call or complain to them in person during non-working hours (Philip, discussion). Essentially, trust and quality is built into the community radio station through the social networks of Kibera residents' position as listeners and presenters.

Pamoja FM also has the ability to serve as a community watchdog, especially in regards to government-funded development projects and issues of local corruption. One morning during the "Breakfast Program" a listener called in to report that her sister was having her National ID card withheld until she paid a 100-shilling bribe. According to the presenter running the program, Philip was charged with following up on the report and discussing his findings in a subsequent broadcast (Dallas, discussion, 15 April 2010). There is also a short weekly program devoted to talking about current CDF projects by highlighting what the mission of the CDF is and how that mission is achieved or not achieved in Kibera.

Due to the high level of NGO activity in Kibera, Pamoja FM features a few different programs dedicated to promoting quality development projects in the area. One such program invites a weekly guest from the International Development Partners organization to discuss an anonymous crime reporting project called "Crimestoppers". This program simultaneously allows the organization to publicize its efforts and educate the community about issues related to security, personal safety, and crime reporting. In the 4th week of this program, "Crimestoppers" has experienced a tripling of crime reports as a result of the publicity (Kalawi, discussion, 15 April 2010).

Kibera Journal community newspaper

As a project within KCODA, the *Kibera Journal* is able to create a loosely organized network of media projects in Kibera. Through the publication, the *Journal* is able to highlight video training projects with the Kibera News Network or discuss ethics of community journalism. The publication also serves as a means of informing the community about national political issues that affect Kibera. In the last issue, the existing *Constitution of Kenya* was printed in its entirety and there are plans to print the draft Constitution in an upcoming issue (Vitus, discussion, 28 April 2010). In terms of ethical journalism, the newspaper is pushing the envelope about what constitutes a meaningful story. Unlike large media corporations, *Kibera Journal* journalists sacrifice expediency in return for a more detailed and holistic portrayal of news in the community.

They are also offering an alternative to the often "distorted spotlight" that Kibera receives in the big media houses by focusing on a variety of news stories and events that occur within the community. This aspect has drawn select Kiberan residents in hopes of contributing to the project (Collins, discussion, 21 April 2010). As volunteers in the organization, journalists and contributions receive training and the resources to learn through experience. All production processes, disregarding publication printing, are performed in the community or at the KCODA office in Olympic Estate, thus giving the *Kibera Journal* a reputation as a locally produced form of media (Namale, discussion, 28 April 2010).

Hot Sun Film Foundation

One of the prime benefits of this organization is its capacity to address local issues through forms of entertainment, namely film. Film bridges the line between a strict definition of media that focuses on information transfer and the aspects of self-expression that arise out of this art form. In a sense, the short films created by Hot Sun comprise a form

of public art because film projects are presented during open-air public film screenings (Hot Sun website, retrieved 1 May 2010). This organization also has the means to broadcast an alternative version of life in Kibera to a national and international audience.

Limitations to community media influence

Though these highlighted community media organizations have challenged the prevailing forms of media production in Kenya, there are some inherent limitations to the scope and influence of these projects and the idea of community media. Because they are operated by trained individuals and draw financial support from organizations, these projects do not deviate from the "no money, no voice" system in which availability of resources govern the power of one's voice. The Kibera residents producing these media outlets are representatives of the community, and as such are elevated to a higher position of storytelling. In this model of community media, informed and resourced individuals act as intermediaries. In an effort to discuss and present issues relevant to the community, these intermediaries decide what is important. These organizations have done far more than any traditional media group to minimize this role of the intermediary, but it is an innate aspect of the system, an aspect that is seemingly irreconcilable.

On the other hand, a lack of financial resources has inhibited these organizations from achieving a broad and holistic audience base within the community. Often with low levels of formal training, journalists and presenters are forced to rely on talent and experiential learning to accomplish their tasks. More formal training was repeatedly cited as a needed improvement when asked how the given media house could change (Namale, discussion, 28 April 2010) (Collins, discussion, 21 April 2010). In addition, when journalists and presenters do become trained through these various organizations, they are often able to move into a more career-based work setting. Pamoja FM relies completely on volunteers, and as such

incorporates a large amount of internship work into their operations. This can be perceived as a negative aspect when the community radio station simply becomes a stepping-stone for individuals aspiring to careers in broadcast journalism (Hagen, discussion, 30 April 2010).

The extensive equipment needs required by a media house also deter from the ability of these community media outlets to influence the community. At Pamoja FM, for example, due to current technical inadequacies, they are only able to receive one call-in at a time (as opposed to multiple call-ins connected to the system) and do not have the capacity to receive SMS messages from listeners (Dallas, discussion, 15 April 2010).

In part due to the dominance of corporate media houses, there is simply a lack of media law supporting community media in Kenya. The idea of community media itself has not permeated into mainstream conscience, as illustrated by a past conversation between the editor of the *Kibera Journal* and a Permanent Secretary (PS) from the Ministry of Information and Communication, in which the PS equated community media and vernacular media as synonymous (Namale, discussion, 28 April 2010). Under existing media laws, community media projects are not allowed to advertise (Okina, discussion, 22 April 2010). In addition, the relatively small coverage area of these community media projects would deter potential advertisers were these prohibitory laws not in place.

The *Preservation of Public Security Act*, Chapter 57 provides for the prohibition of information and gives the President power to detain any person in the interest of public interest (Media Council of Kenya memo, 2010: 2). Prior to the 1991 repeal of Section 2A of the *Constitution*, many journalists were detained under this act as a means of protecting the one-party state (Media Council of Kenya memo, 2). Though this draconian act is obsolete, it has no been repealed and may be called upon to curtail the freedom of expression.

There is an assumption amongst the community media organizations that Kibera is truly a community, thereby legitimizing the local media actions as fostering this sense of

community and expanding its spectrum. Though these media organizations would still serve the same purpose with or without this belief, the idea of Kibera as a community may disregard the divisions present within the slum. A more concise and accepted definition of community is required to address this issue, but it is certainly not a fully accepted truth.

The possibility of a media democracy

Social media as a challenge to the existing media order

As this study progressed, it became apparent that the Voice of Kibera project and its social media applications were key to fully conceptualizing the role of media as a means of collective action in Kibera. Prior to discussing the potential of this social media project, we must first draw a correlation between social media and collective action.

If traditional media organization represents a top-down approach to information dissemination, then social media represents its opposite; a bottom-up approach in which the distinction between the audience and journalist is blurred (see Appendix 4). Citizen or participatory journalism is the vehicle by which this transformation may occur, and may be defined as a "concept of members of the public playing and active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing, and disseminating news and information." (Bowman and Willis, 2003: 9). The intent of this participation is to provide independent, reliable, accurate, wide-ranging, and relevant information that a democracy requires (Bowman and Willis, 9). This practice of media relies upon an open data design, thereby embracing a "publish first, filter later" mentality that is contrary to the traditional media design of "filter first, publish later." As an example, imagine that an article is written and submitted in open data format to an online newspaper. Because it is open data, readers can amend and change the content of the article, with the eventual hope of producing an article that is more complete than the original submission.

In a poor and marginalized community such as Kibera, traditional media that embraces hierarchical organization leaves no space for audience involvement. Members of this community represent an audience that is perceived to be the most passive in society because of their socioeconomic standing. This silent audience thus becomes disenfranchised from the production and dissemination of information, even if that information concerns them as individuals or a community. Bowman and Willis (2003) state "journalism that focuses on the expert elite-the special interests-may be in part responsible for public disillusionment. Such a press does not reflect the world as most people live and experience it." The goal of social media is to reconcile this concern and thereby foster a more democratic system of media. If this can be achieved, then collective action via democratic means can be fostered to promote pro-poor legislation, more accountable government and development organizations, and other social change.

The Voice of Kibera as a social media project
How it works

As stated earlier, the Voice of Kibera is a project that aggregates media sources to a central hub via the Ushahidi open source, open data software platform. This central hub is a community website that currently includes content from the *Kibera Journal*, relevant Twitter feeds, the interactive Map of Kibera complete with space for photographs to mark locations, and community SMS reports. This project is still in beta form because some technological improvements must be made to ensure a viable product is introduced to the public (Hagen, discussion, 30 April 2010). For example, the SMS shortcode issued by the Safaricom telecommunications company has not been compatible with Zain mobile phone subscriptions (Hagen, discussion).

In practice, a mobile phone user could SMS a report to the shortcode and individuals from an organized Editorial Board would approve or reject the message (Media focus group, 23 April 2010). If approved, the SMS would promptly appear on the Voice of Kibera website with the location of the report marked on the digital map. An SMS report could be in regards to anything involving the Kibera community, whether it's advice about which salon to visit or an upcoming youth soccer match. Trust in the system is built through the Editorial Board members who act as moderators, administering incoming content in order to increase the signal-noise ratio and prevent hate speech from uploading to the site. The Editorial Board members are still being organized, but will most likely include community media leaders from the *Kibera Journal*, Hot Sun Foundation, and Pamoja FM radio station.

Though the audience of this project is somewhat unknown, the Voice of Kibera may act as a broadcast on a national and international level. This would enable a more holistic portrayal of the news in Kibera to reach an outside audience that is currently only exposed to the very-limited mainstream media perspective (Hagen, discussion, 30 April 2010). More recently, there has been attention drawn to the local community audience of Kibera. This potential audience will have the ability to influence the content of the site most directly through the SMS reporting feature. It is from this possibility that a realization of a more participatory form of media may be achieved.

Establishment of social media project in Kibera community

Because this innovative project has not been officially launched, we can only offer predictions about how this new technology may be accepted and utilized by the local community. Everett Rogers' (1963) study about the diffusion of innovation produced an idea of this diffusion as an S-curve (see Figure 1). Innovators and early adopters comprise the beginning of the curve, followed by the rapidly growing curve as early and late majority

adopt the innovation (Liebrenz-Himes et al, 2009: 37). The final tip of the curve represents failure to adopt by a small minority. Another aspect of this diffusion is the strength of weak ties phenomenon by which numerous weak ties can be important in seeking new information and innovation (Granovetter 1973: 1630).

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Figure 1. Diffusion of innovation curve and bell-curve distribution of innovation adopters (Liebrenz-Himes et al, 2009).

Thus it becomes necessary to identify the early adopters within the Kibera community that possess many weak ties across different sections of the social networks. Rogers (1963) defines diffusion as "the process by which an innovation is communicated through certain channels over time among members of a social system." Community media leaders represent a segment of the community well connected throughout different social channels. Bowman and Willis (2003) suggest that participatory forms of media attract "movers" and "connectors". Movers are information brokers who share and trade what they know while

connectors are individuals who know a lot of people in diverse settings (Bowman and Willis, 2003: 41). During the Voice of Kibera focus group I attended, community leaders were invited to offer their initial thoughts about the idea in anticipation that they may act as early adopters in this diffusion process (Media focus group, 23 April 2010).

Just as in more technologically equipped societies, there is a need to change how people perceive the Internet if this social media project is to be embraced. On a broad scale in Kenya, the Internet is yet to be viewed as more than a book page to be read (Hagen, discussion, 30 April 2010). This reality may be due to the fact that most Kenyans do not have access to the Internet. Nevertheless, a more interactive perspective must be recognized if the potential of this project is to be reached.

Acceptance of this technology is also dependent on an alternative view of intellectual property rights. This open data design necessarily devalues the intellectual property rights of the individual, rights that are highly esteemed in a traditional media setting. How will this technology be embraced or scourged by traditional media? Community media journalists are in a unique position to support this technology. In the words of the *Kibera Journal* editor, "community media itself is not even traditional media" (Namale, discussion, 28 April 2010).

Possible applications of social media project

The possibilities of this project are largely unknown, but any meaningful benefits are contingent upon wide acceptance and use by members of the Kibera community.

Benefits to local development organizations

As an aggregator of online data, the Voice of Kibera project could serve as a resource pool for information relevant to development organizations working in the slum. The high traffic of research in this community inevitably leads to duplication of data by multiple

organizations and thereby creates inefficiencies within the development system. Say, for example, that a health-based NGO conducts a survey about the presence of malnourished children in one village of Kibera in hopes of starting an after-school feeding program. Another NGO also conducts a survey about the presence of malnourished children in the same village as part of an evaluation and monitoring of their after-school feeding program. In the present system, the results of these surveys stay internal to the organizations that conducted them.

This duplication of data not only produces an inefficient environment but also prevents any future development projects from accessing the data. The Voice of Kibera has broad categories, or themed areas, where data such as results from a survey about malnourished children could be compiled. Because it is open data, anyone with Internet access would be able to view these results and potentially add or expand on the existing information as new research is uncovered (Hagen, discussion, 30 April 2010). This idea of open data for research is fundamental to any meaningful progress. In the natural sciences, it is this idea of expanding on past research that brings about significant changes in greater society.

This project may also provide an open forum in which members of the community may evaluate and monitor development projects in their home areas. Through SMS reports and visual marking on the digital map, Kibera residents may collectively create a ranking system to evaluate the success of development organizations. This ranking system is not currently in place, but as the site is launched it may become a needed aspect. If 100 people SMS reports about their frustrations with a local project, then theoretically the 'rank' of that project's organization drops on the Voice of Kibera site.

If this ranking system influenced the visibility of development organizations on the site, this tool could pragmatically empower Kibera residents to keep development

organizations accountable to the people they serve (Maxson, discussion, 25 April 2010).

This is a form of collective action organized without a central body controlling the direction

or focus of the action. The Google search engine works in this way; when someone searches

for tennis rackets, the order in which sports gear websites appear on the page corresponds to a

highly developed ranking system. Essentially, the visibility of a particular website is based

on its legitimacy and trust as perceived by web users and comparable websites.

In addition to this collective-based monitoring, the aggregator project can highlight

"black holes" in Kibera where fake development projects, either supported by the

government or fake development organizations, are not in existence (Hagen, discussion, 30

April 2010). If there is a supposed CDF-supported toilet building project in Kianda, then

through photographs and digital markings, the Map of Kibera can show if this project has

actually constructed toilets. Individuals or organizations may then use this data as evidence

to appeal the government. KCODA initially became involved in this mapping and website

project because of this application of the technology (Hagen, discussion, 30 April 2010).

Benefits to community media organizations and the community in general
Role of media in 2007 PEV: Voice of Kibera as a crisis reporting mechanism

Media outlets, including social media forms such as the Ushahidi software platform,

were used either for inciting violence or protecting victims of violence during the 2007 PEV.

In an election "characterized by misinformation", the media has been cited in both the

government Waki report and the KNCHR report as a vehicle used to fan the flames of

political tension both before and during the crisis (KNHCR report, 2008: 21). Large media

outlets became contested spaces by the leading parties and in some cases it became difficult

to differentiate between a particular media house's position and that of the party, politician,

orof its chosen political analysts and commentators (KNCHR report, 2008: 21). These

reports also detail the dissemination of hate propaganda via text message, leaflets, religious leaders, gospel singers, and local language media.

Vernacular radio stations were especially utilized as tools to provoke violence between ethnic and/or political groups. Call-in shows on radio stations enabled individuals to make unregulated hateful statements (Iliopoulos 2009). For example, Inooro FM put on air "highly emotional and distraught victims of violence, a factor that tended to whip up the emotions of the audience" Music in the Kikuyu language played on Kaneme FM also stimulated ethnic tensions (Iliopoulos 2009). These acts of incendiary hate speech led to the government ban of all live radio and TV broadcast during the crisis.

SMS also became a means of inciting violence, as evident by an SMS sent out to a large number of Safaricom subscribers that read, "The Minister of Internal Security urges you to desist from sending or forwarding any SMS that may cause public unrest. This may lead to your prosecution" (Ramey 2008). The *National Cohesion and Integration* Act of 2008 addressed these hateful acts as part of the *Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation*. Section 62 of the act explains that it is an offence to incite feelings of hate, hostility, contempt, etc against any person or group on the basis of ethnicity or race (Media Council of Kenya memo, 2010: 4). Similar offenses enacted by newspapers, radio stations, and other media enterprises are also outlined in the legislation.

Though the most widely held opinion is that these forms of media and communication were used solely to arouse violence, there were also a number of instances in which these media technologies were used as a means of protection. The Ushahidi software platform was created in response to the violence as a tool to document and map incidents of violence throughout the country (Media focus group, 23 April 2010). Organized by a few Kenyan expatriates and residents, the software allowed SMS reports of violence to be digitally mapped on a website. This enabled the organizers to map out patterns of violence and

suggest possible means of protection for Kenyans in those areas. This software has since been utilized for various purposes, most recently to monitor the 2010 Sudanese Presidential elections.

The Voice of Kibera project may be utilized in a similar fashion during a crisis affecting the Kibera community. Part of the impetus behind the project is to enact a sort of preemptive crisis reporting mechanism, most notably in anticipation of the upcoming 2012 general elections (Maxson, discussion, 25 April 2010) (Hagen, discussion, 30 April 2010). With the Editorial Board filtering incoming hateful and incendiary content, the site could be used to organize, focus, and broadcast reports of protection and peace during a time of crisis.

Open data as a source of perspective and further collective action

The possible benefits of this technology for Pamoja FM, *Kibera Journal*, and the Hot Sun Foundation will enable these media outlets to more fully achieve their idea of community media as a "voice of the community, by community". Select *Kibera Journal* articles already appear on the website, and it could further be used as means of broadcasting news and publications to a wider audience. The Host Sun Foundation could also utilize this capability by posting short films on the website. The SMS reports from community members are perhaps the signal most important aspect of this project in terms of community media. If these media organizations embrace a more participatory form of media, then these reports could serve as prompts and user-generated content that would influence articles and radio broadcast topics. For example, if 300 people are sending SMS reports about a certain event in Line Saba then the production manager of Pamoja FM, hopefully in an Editorial Board position, will be able to incorporate information about this event into the radio broadcast and thereby more fully discuss topics generated by the community.

In the current media order controlled by a few large corporations, the scope of perspective available is very limited and focused. Social media and its applications to community media will increase the scope of perspective and thereby allow individuals to better make sense of the reality before them. This sort of online community that may appear through Voice of Kibera is an opportunity to view and contribute to locally produced perspectives. The project will also be an archive of perspective, allowing individuals, groups, or organizations to investigate past threads of interest (Bowman and Willis, 2003: 41).

Most of all, this project has the potential to foster collective action, examples of which have been explained in regards to development projects and protection during times of crisis. An act on the part of the collective is dependent on the participation of the younger generation of youth. As the next generation of news consumers, this generation has a more – urbanized and cosmopolitan identity than older generations moving to Nairobi from the rural areas. This cosmopolitanism may provide a common identity conducive to collective action in an urban community such as Kibera.

With this urban identity, and youth in general, comes a desire to utilize new technologies as a means of communication and entertainment. Bowman and Willis (2003) suggest, "online communities draw civic involvement from the young segment of the population that has not typically been drawn to civic activities." The Voice of Kibera project may attract the younger generation of Kiberan residents to the entertainment and communication capabilities, but it may also foster a sense of civic engagement.

Because the technology is relatively new, there may be some unintended consequences of this project. For example, in New Orleans, Louisiana there was an open data-mapping project initiated by the local police to encourage people to report crime. Contributors could send in reports via the Internet that would then get digitally mapped, making the data open and available to Internet users (Maxson, discussion, 25 April 2010).

Real estate agencies in the area began to use the project as a means of marketing. Both real estate agents and potential homebuyers were able to view crime rates for different areas simply by examining the digital map. The project thus gained financial support from real estate agencies that had a stake in its existence. Though this example takes place in a very different setting, it portrays the likelihood of unforeseen consequences, either positive or negative, as a result of this social media project.

Obstacles and considerations to the success of social media project

This social media project represents a very new paradigm of thought regarding media and development work in general. There are numerous obstacles to a realization of its possibilities, the most notable being a lack of Internet accessibility in the Kibera community. Only 10% of Kenyans have access to the web, either because of financial constraints or lack of facilities and ICT infrastructure. The local audience may not be able to view the content of the site and thus forced to rely on an intermediary, in this case any individual with Internet access, to inform them.

There are three aspects to consider in light of this formidable obstacle. The first is that individuals living in the Kibera community will have Internet access; that it is only a matter of time. The project could thus be described as an anticipation of what is to come (Hagen, discussion, 30 April 2010). The second consideration is that many individuals living in Kibera have access to Internet services via their mobile phone, a fact that will continue to become more apparent as mobile phone and service fees decrease amidst rising demand. There may also be mechanisms of feedback sent to SMS contributors, such as a weekly report to different geographic or thematic areas of Kibera.

Barriers to use also exist in terms of fees required to contribute to the project via SMS reports. Discussions at the project focus group led to the conclusion that the report costs

should be equivalent to a regular SMS fee, between 1-3 shillings depending on provider (media focus group, 23 April 2010). Community leaders and project organizers agreed that the SMS report should not be free, a scenario that would create a high amount of useless incoming content.

There are also concerns about the ability of the project to garner wide support due to the fact that it is much more general than other open data design projects. In the US and elsewhere, open data systems have prospered in a specialized niche market. The focus of the site or content is very specific and targets a very narrow spectrum of society. To what degree Kibera fits into this specialized niche market framework is up for consideration.

The Editorial Board serves a very prominent role in this project, a role that is not necessarily conducive to a completely open data project. Some open data and participatory journalism projects draw their value from a continuous and real-time content design. This means that contributions do not need to be approved by an administrator and instead get posted directly to the site. This results in a sense of real-time that is continually in motion. Feedback mechanisms also depend on this real-time capability to operate effectively. These mechanisms become exponentially less useful over time (Maxson, discussion, 25 April 2010).

The alternative to the Editorial Board, real-time contribution and feedback, depends on certain beliefs about how groups organize and function. The creators of the open data site Wikipedia state; "We assume that the world is mostly full of reasonable people and that collectively they can arrive eventually at a reasonable conclusion, despite the worst efforts of a few wreckers" (Bowman and Willis, 2003: 44). The discussion ultimately comes down to whether or not individuals working as a collective can better arrive at a given truth than an intermediary working as an individual.

If the group cannot arrive at a more representative given truth, we need to conclude that the collective simply produces a high noise-to-signal ratio. Do you believe in the wisdom of the crowds or chaos of the masses? Though real-time syndication has many advantages, its applications may not be appropriate to the Voice of Kibera project due to the administrative requirements and the role of media in the 2007 PEV (Hagen, discussion, 30 April 2010).

The ranking system to evaluate and monitor development organizations would also experience some limitations. As opposed to the website market, there is no global ranking system for development organizations. Such a system would encounter heavy opposition because it disrupts the status quo (Maxson, discussion, 25 April 2010). Large development organizations would be especially resistant to this system because they are the chief beneficiaries of the current order of development organizations in which any ideas of competition and market ideals in the industry are scorned.

As a social media project, the Voice of Kibera site may change the way media is perceived and foster a more participatory form of media, thereby taking a major step towards the realization of a media democracy.

Other possibilities for community media in Kibera

Distinct from the Voice of Kibera project, the existing community media organizations are in the process of creating websites to support their work. With the help of Voice of Kibera organizers, these organizations are using new Web 2.0 interactive capabilities such as WordPress[8] and other weblog[9] designs to construct their own websites (Hagen, discussion, 30 April 2010). The *Kakuma News Reflector* is an example of an

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[8] WordPress is a blog publishing application. It is the most popular blog software in use today.

[9] Weblogs are essentially personal publishing systems for Internet users. With the advent of more interactive web capabilities, weblogs are becoming more available and easier to use.

organization's website design that utilizes WordPress. Because they are free and open to anyone with Internet access, these weblogs are easy to maintain by the organizations. There are also possibilities for the content from these independent sites to aggregate to the Voice of Kibera site (Hagen, discussion, 30 April 2010).

The entry of competition into the Kibera community media space may also change how the existing media outlets operate. This introduction may create economic incentives for community media organizations to further pursue their goals of acting as voices of the community. On a theoretical basis, a clandestine radio station located in Kibera may serve as a means of competition to Pamoja FM, especially if the pirate radio claims to be a community media source (Maxson, discussion, 25 April 2010). In the northern state of Bihar in India, a local radio mechanic has constructed a radio station at a cost of US$1 for the basic transmitter kit (Tewary, 2006). The radio station has gained popularity and currently reaches an area within 12 miles of the signal. Though illegal, such a project would be a very grassroots means of disseminating information to the Kibera community. With production costs of US$1 and radio costs of about US$5, this form of media may be available to many.

The existing community media organizations in Kibera, especially the Hot Sun Foundation and the Kibera New Network branch of KCODA, may also benefit from distributing their content online. A24 Media group is a media content aggregation company that partners with African-based companies and organizations to generate a substantial stock of video, written, and photographic content (Chaudhry, discussion, 29 April 2010). If an individual or company has content they want to market online, A24 Media takes the content and advertises it on their site. If a company purchases this content, the producer gets 60% of the revenue while A24 gets 40% (Chaudhry, discussion, 29 April 2010). This financial partnership holds true each time the content is sold on the web. If the Kibera News Network were to utilize this aggregator, they could market their locally produced news to large

Kenyan broadcasters such as Citizen in hopes of generating a more holistic view of news within Kibera. A24 also has a large amount of equipment and training resources at their disposal. These resources could be utilized by community media organizations that don't necessarily own the necessary equipment to fulfill their goals.

Community media needs to become mainstreamed in the sense that the broader public is aware and supportive of such endeavors. A legal framework needs to be in place that creates space for community media and actively encourages their work with support from the national government. The current draft constitution seeks to remedy the lack of legal space for any media by guaranteeing freedom of the media (Article 34) and media free from government interference (Media Council of Kenya memo, 2010: 1). The draft also provides for an independent media regulator and redefines the State broadcaster to be independent and accommodative of divergent views (Media Council of Kenya, 1). Adequate legal space for community media efforts would allow organizations such as the *Kibera Journal* and Pamoja FM to better encourage participation from the community and thereby more fully accomplish their goals and those of the greater Kibera community.

Conclusion

The role of the storyteller changes as we begin to question the supposed pillars of traditional media. Nowhere is this media transformation more apparent than in the realm of community or social media. In Kibera, community media organizations have filled a void that large commercial media houses are unable to satisfy. They are given the opportunity to challenge the "distorted spotlight" that characterizes commercial news about Kibera. Serving as watchdogs for government and development organizations, these media houses strive to be a voice in the community. They are voices and they do have an impact. Yet they are still individual voices, storytellers with an investment in the community rather than a stake in finding the most popular story.

With the advent of new technologies, how society becomes informed may begin to change. Social media technologies are giving individuals the means to develop their own version of the truth. The Voice of Kibera project represents an opportunity for the community to become both the storyteller and the audience. In this participatory form of media, the act of contributing takes on new value. As a tool of social networks, participatory journalism allows individuals to work as a collective towards a common goal. This is what matters. What users do with content is more important than how content may affect users (Bowman and Willis, 2003: 55).

Whether or not Voice of Kibera fulfills these possibilities in the community can only be measured over time. Systems that rely on the participation of large numbers of individuals accumulate trust simply by operating effectively over time (Bowman and Willis, 2003: 46). The value of the story must change if a sort of media democracy is to be established. The story cannot be viewed as the final product. The goal of a story must be seen as a prompt by which discussion begins.

Recommendations

This study would benefit from a more in-depth analysis of how Kiberan residents perceive media and how much value members of the community place on community media. My project, partly due to the lack of background research, focused solely on players involved in the community media field. A well-designed interview prompt as well as the ability to talk with a representative sample of the community would greatly improve the implications of this work.

Another option that I fell short of was the opportunity to actually contribute to the different community media organizations working in Kibera. A more focused project may be able to expand on the possibilities for community media by simply participating in community media creation. Whether its designing a weekly radio show or writing and editing for the *Kibera Journal*, an opportunity like this would enable a student to better grasp the daily workings of community media.

If given more time, I would have continued to explore the work of the Voice of Kibera project to see how it would be utilized following the official launch. A large degree of uncertainty revolves around the idea of empowerment as an intellectual scheme and its everyday pragmatic applications. Is empowerment through participatory media something that really matters? Again, this exploration would entail a lot of discussion with Kiberan residents, preferably after the Voice of Kibera project has been in operation for some time. The world of media in Kenya is unique because of the role of government and corporation control amidst the introduction of new technologies designed to circumvent these power structures. This unique environment provides a plethora of project possibilities.

Appendix 1. Interview prompts

Prompt 1-*Kibera Journal* staff and contributors

1) What is your role within *Kibera Journal*? How long have you been involved?

2) What do you think is the main goal of *Kibera Journal*?

3) What influence can the *Kibera Journal* have on the community? What impact do you think it has had already?

4) How is the *Kibera Journal* different than a mainstream newspaper?

5) How is "community journalism" different than mainstream journalism?

6) How can the *Kibera Journal* serve as a means of community-building and/or political empowerment?

7) How do you think the *Kibera Journal* could be improved to reach a wider audience?

8) Why is the *Kibera Journal* in English?

9) What is the focus of the *Kibera Journal*? What kinds of articles does the newspaper run?

10) Does the newspaper run politically minded articles? Why or why not? Ask for an example.

11) How does the *Kibera Journal* fit into the overall community media in Kibera?

12) What ethics of journalism do you follow? How might these ethics differ from national media journalists?

Prompt 2-Pamoja FM staff and contributors

1) What do you think is the main goal of Pamoja FM?

2) Why are Pamoja FM and other community media important in Kibera?

3) What influence can Pamoja FM have on the community?

4) How is a community radio station unique to other mediums?

5) How is a community radio station different than mainstream radio stations?

6) How can Pamoja FM serve as a means of community building and/or political empowerment?

7) How do you think Pamoja FM could be improved to reach a wider audience?

8) What is the focus of Pamoja FM?

9) How do you decide what programs to air?

10) What politically minded programs are on air?

11) How does Pamoja FM fit into the overall community media in Kibera? What do you think of the Voice of Kibera project?

12) What are some of the techniques used when presenting a program?

13) Why is the radio station aired in Kiswahili?

14) How do you prepare for your program?

Prompt 3-Voice of Kibera contributors

1) Why chose Kibera to implement this project?

2) What are other examples of community media in Kibera?

3) What are the benefits and downsides to the administrative role?

4) What do you see as the potential of Voice of Kibera?

5) How is technology being used in similar ways in the US?

6) How will you go about introducing this project?

7) Who is supporting Voice of Kibera?

8) How can Facebook and Twitter be incorporated into Voice of Kibera?

9) How do people see what is up on the Voice of Kibera website?

10) What are some possible extraneous consequences of this technology?

11) What are the benefits of this project for NGOs?

Prompt 4-miscellaneous media players

1) What is the difference between community, vernacular, and commercial media in Kenya?

2) How do you define community, media, and news?

3) What is the role of community media in poor communities such as Kibera?

4) What is the current state of community media in Kenya? How does that compare to other

African countries?

5) How does community journalism differ from commercial journalism?

6) What are some obstacles for community media?

7) What are some of the main aspects of media law that govern community media in Kenya?

8) How could the laws change to better accommodate community media?

9) What is the potential for community media in Kibera?

10) What is the role of community media in building a unified Kibera?

Appendix 2. Opinion article submitted to the *Kibera Journal*

Idolized politics: a case of misplaced support.
By John Perkins

I could feel a sense of excitement, a sense that we could change, our politics could change, and that our country could change. As I sat reading President Obama's Presidential Acceptance Speech in an old issue of the Kibera Journal, I felt the same excitement that was so powerful nearly a year and half ago when my country's first African-American President spoke to over 125,000 people in Chicago, Illinois.

I could hear his confident voice echoing as the printed words seemed to reproduce some of his powerful political rhetoric that drew the support of so many, including myself, during a political campaign rooted in a hope for change. At times, Obama drew fad-esque support for his campaign as millions of young Americans began to idolize Obama the Person rather than Obama as a symbol of the hope and change our country needed. The famous Shepard Fairey Obama HOPE poster portrayed the young leader as an almost diety-like figure. Obama became branded as change and hope, almost as if his victory at the polls would accomplish the goal of change. President Obama himself acknowledged this phenomenon in his Presidential Acceptance Speech when he stated; "What began 21 months ago in the depths of winter cannot end on this autumn night. The victory alone is not what we seek. It is only the chance for us to make that change."

Obama should be supported or opposed because of what he represents as a political leader, not just because of his charisma. This social phenomenon of idolizing leaders is not unique to one aspect of society (politics) and one generation of Americans.

In Kenya, politics often become entangled with ethnic identity, but how do idolized politics play into this sense of political tribalism? Idolization occurs when a citizen's political choices become linked to a certain individual or the identity the individual represents. Support is placed on the individual's identity rather than on the views and leadership that individual represents. This question becomes integral to answering the greater question of how the people of Kenya can create a new political system in which politicians are responsive to their constituencies and leadership in the government is valued by a sense of civic service. Kenyan citizens do not deserve to have government service be likened to another business opportunity.

Kenya needs new leaders and a new system in which to accept those leaders, and that trend can begin with the people. We need to elect leaders based on what they think and how our ideas coincide with those opinions. Obviously charisma and political skills are characteristics of any successful politician, but we tend to place too much value on the politician as a person rather than a representation of a certain ideology.

This process of creating a new system of Kenyan political leadership can only begin if Kenyan citizens are informed about political issues and are able to vote with that knowledge. What are the issues and what do you think should be done about them? It's a seemingly simple question, but idolized politics (and the media) have caused many to stray from this idea of decision-making based on the issues. In the US, many of us supported Obama

without even knowing his stance on the issues and how he would address those issues in office.

The big media houses have been central in fostering this system of misplaced support. Political-related news often features bickering between this politician and that politician or the recent antics of that high-profile Member of Parliament. Politicians become portrayed as popular movie stars. And that stardom detracts focus from what really matters-what a politician thinks about a given issue and what they're doing about it.

Kenyan citizens have the opportunity to reject a political system in which its leaders are heroes or villains to be adored or despised.
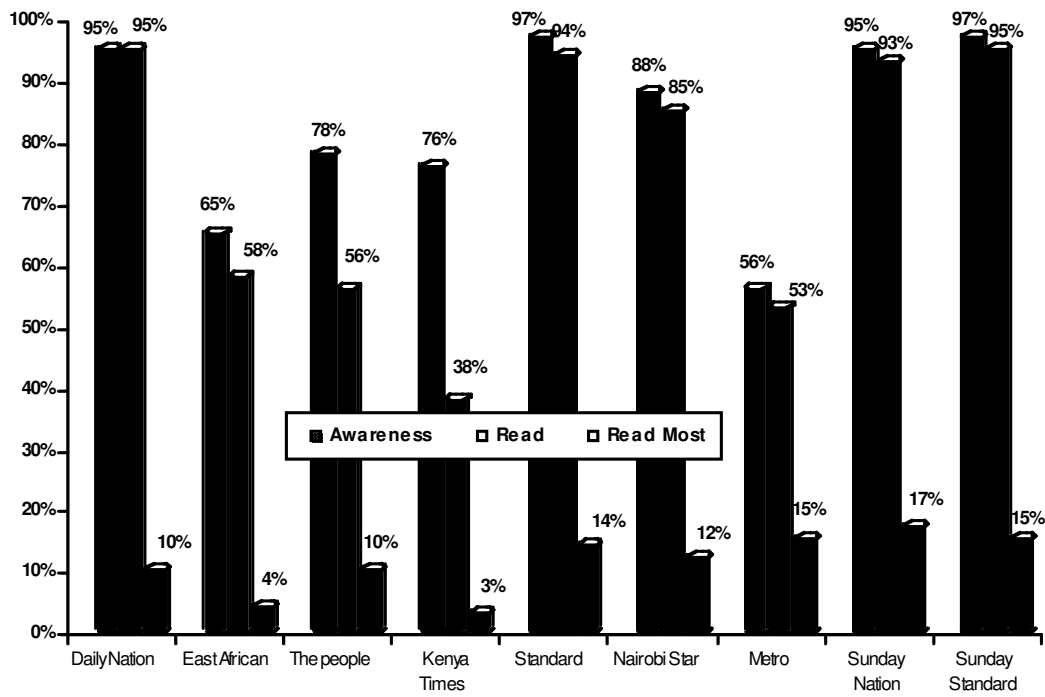
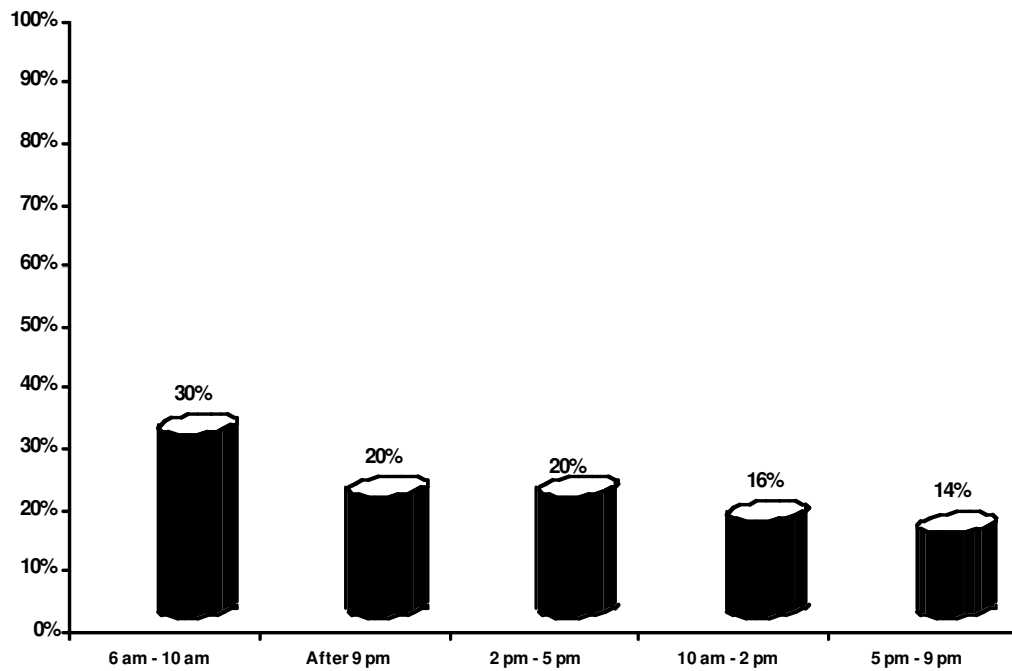# Appendix 3. Select "Awareness and Listenership Survey" results
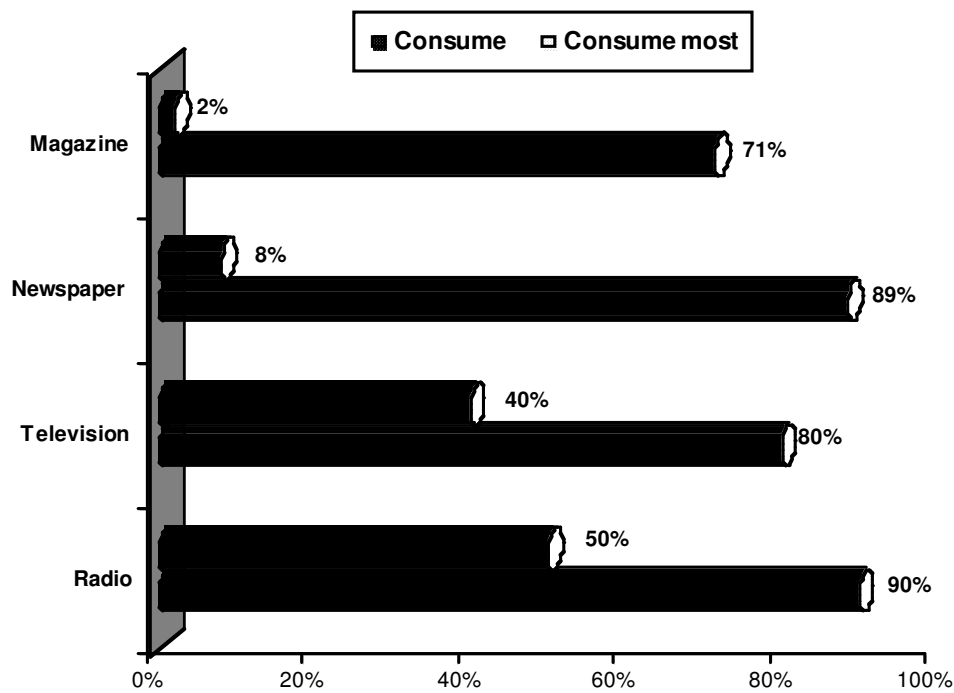
Survey question-What media do you consume and consume most? (Pamoja FM Survey,

2009: Slide 7)
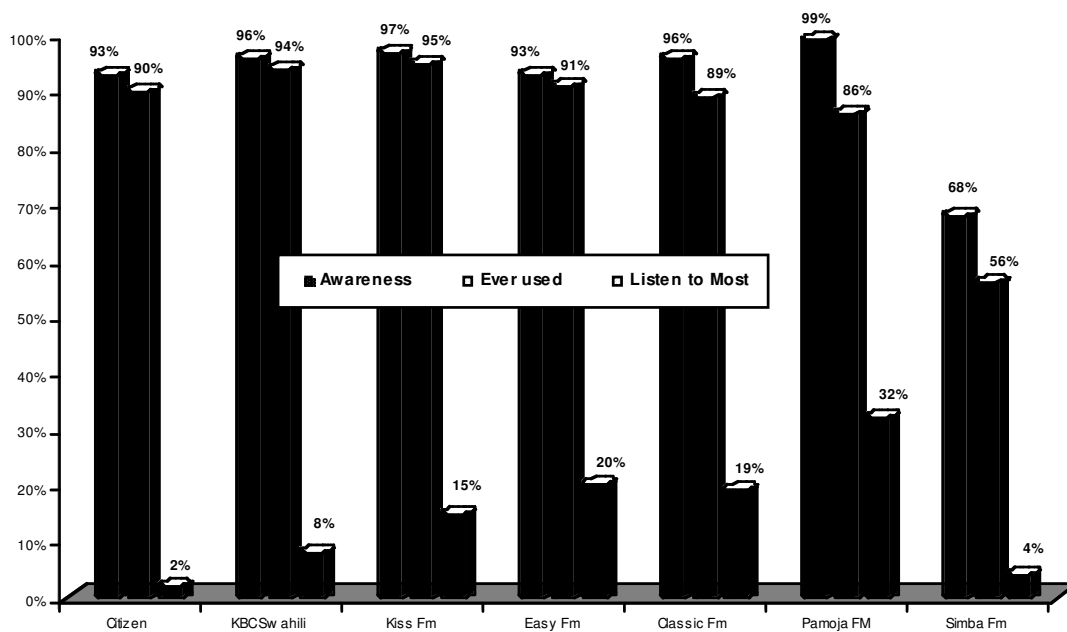
Survey question-Awareness and Listenership (Pamoja FM Survey, 2009: Slide 8)
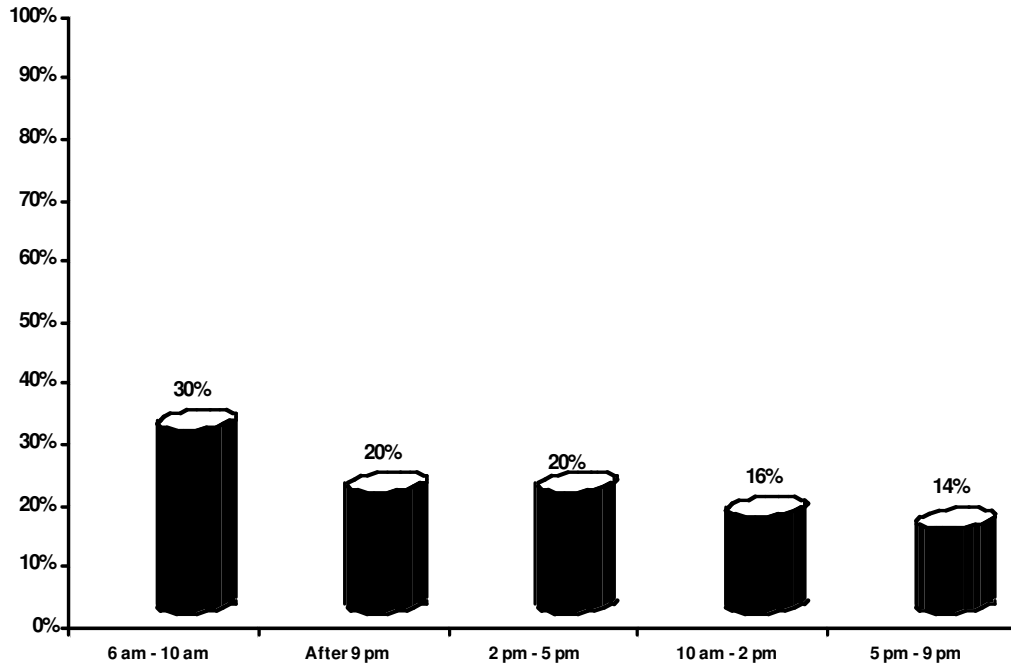
Survey question-print media consumption (Pamoja FM Survey, 2009: Slide 14)

Survey question-In a typical day, approximately how many hours do you listen to Pamoja FM? (Pamoja FM Survey, 2009: Slide 33)

Survey question-Between what hours do you listen to Pamoja FM? (Pamoja FM Survey, 2009: Slide 34)

Appendix 4. Traditional vs participatory media

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (LZW) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Appendix 5. Kakuma Refugee Camp ISP Guide (not including referenced appendices specific to guide)

John Perkins & Ann Symonds
Spring 2010
SIT Kenya: Development and Community Health

How to pursue an Independent Study Project in Kakuma Refugee Camp

Introduction

Please read this document if you're even slightly interested in conducting your ISP in Kakuma Refugee Camp. There are currently two international refugee camps in Kenya, the Kakuma and Daadab Camps. Unless things change, don't even think about going to Daadab. You'll run into resistance from the Academic Directors and organizations because it's just too dangerous for Americans. Just focus on Kakuma. What follows is a somewhat organized game plan for how to make it work. It's not easy mind you. Ann and I are writing this guide because we couldn't make it work. The SIT Academic Directors (Jamal and Odoch) can be great resources, but there really isn't any overarching guidance about what steps to take and when. In addition to the Academic Directors and your own experience, this guide can help make the process possible. It's not a guarantee though. Ann and I did everything below, but we were still not allowed to conduct our studies in the camp. Keep in mind that the contacts and steps we outline below are specific to our time in Kenya (February-May 2010). Things may, and probably will, change in the future.

Though this process may seem a bit overwhelming, we think the tough stuff is worth it if you have the opportunity to spend a month living and studying in Kakuma Refugee Camp. It's an opportunity that may be hard to come by in the future. Kenya is a unique country when it comes to international asylum seekers. Due to conflicts in Somalia, the Sudan, Northern Uganda, Ethiopia, and the DRC, Kenya is home to more refugees (about 340000) than most other countries in the world. So go for it. Try to make it work.

Step 1: Think about what you want to do.

The Academic Directors will tell you this from the beginning. You need to think about what it is you want to do almost as soon as you're in Kenya. The earlier the better. Granted this idea will probably change drastically as you get to know Kenya and the world of asylum seekers, but it will help your odds if you've got some sort of concrete idea early on in the program. Just thinking that you want to go to Kakuma may not be worth all the work it'll take. Think of an idea that is specific to Kakuma; a project that can't really be replicated elsewhere in Kenya. As soon as the ADs feel that you've got something legitimate, they'll agree to start you going on the process of obtaining permission to go to the camp. Having a concrete idea with some degree of detail will also help you when meeting with different organizations.

Hints:

1) Online research, talk with ADs, read past ISPs

2) Meet with organizations that either work in the camp or work with refugees in Kenya (see Appendix 1). Ask them what they think you could do or what they might like you to do. Don't get too committed early though.
3) Possible areas of study: Host community (Turkana peoples) relationship with refugee community, health-related projects, urban/camp refugee differences, studying the role of humanitarian agencies/Kenyan government in the camp.

Step 2: Gain permission to stay in the camp and conduct your study

Alright then. Here's the big hurdle. We've split this step into a few parts in roughly chronological order. Please keep in mind that you can go about this process in a different manner. However, the Kenyan government, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), and other humanitarian relief agencies working in the camp require these steps.

Step 2A: Find a host organization

Once you've got a semi-solid idea, you need to find a host organization. We started this step about 1-½ months before ISP started and it wasn't early enough. In theory, the Department of Refugee Affairs (DRA) branch of the Kenyan federal government manages the refugee camp. However, the DRA delegates practical management and operation of the camp to the UNHCR and Lutheran World Federation (LWF). There are also a number of other humanitarian relief agencies that have key roles in the camp (see Appendix 1). In the camp, for example, there are 3 different compounds for organizations. Compound 2 is home to the UNHCR. Compound 3 is home to the World Food Programme. Compound 1 is home to all of the other organizations working in the camp. *It's important to understand this because in order to go stay in the camp you need to have a host organization.* At the most minimal level, this means an organization agrees to provide you with accommodation (most likely through LWF in Compound 1), food options, and general security while in the camp. Depending on your project, this could also mean working with the organization or accessing resources through your host organization. Besides the UNHCR, you can find a list of possible host organizations in Appendix 1.

Begin contacting organizations as soon as possible. The best way to get things done in Kenya is to walk in the front door and ask to speak with such and such about conducting a student project in Kakuma. Email doesn't work. It's easy for people not to return phone calls. Set up meetings, dress professionally, come equipped with CVs, a brief cover letter explaining who you are and what you want to do (on SIT letterhead), and a letter of introduction from one of the Academic Directors. See how it goes, but this may be the time to alter your project idea to better fit into the organization's goals. Many of these organizations need to know what they're getting out of your project. Will it improve their communication networks? Will you be establishing a new school-feeding program? Whatever you actually intend to do, frame your project as something that has implications for that organization. If you have a controversial project idea (ie-critiquing the UNHCR as an organization with absolutely no accountability) don't say that when you're trying to find a host organization. Just be smart.

Ann and I both tried to work with the International Rescue Committee. We put all our beans in one basket and they strung us out then cut us off at the last minute. I would suggest talking to multiple organizations simultaneously and following up on emails, phone conversations, and meetings. If you can get a host organization confirmed early on, then the process will go smoothly from there. This is where Ann and I failed, and it's the toughest

part. Commitment is hard to come by for whatever reason. Many of the organizations don't want someone coming to the camp with an outside perspective.

Step 2B: Obtain DRA approval

In a perfect world, you would get a host organization confirmed and then proceed with this step. In reality, you may need to seek DRA approval before your host organization has committed to hosting you. That's okay. During this step, the Academic Directors can help a lot. See Appendix 2 for required DRA documents. If you nag them enough, you'll get a brief letter from the DRA stating whom you are and when you are allowed to stay in the camp. Be sure to bring your CV, cover letter, and letter of introduction from SIT to your first meeting. Again, walking through the front door (the DRA is in a castle by the way) and asking to speak with such and such will yield you better results than phone or email communication.

Step 2C: Obtain UNHCR permission to interview refugees

If your project requires that you interview refugees, then you should obtain a letter from the Deputy Representative of UNHCR-Nairobi allowing you to interview refugees during your stay in the camp. I believe you need DRA approval before you can obtain this letter. Ideally, you would already have a host organization and DRA approval before you requested this permission. However, in order to persuade a potential host organization that you're legit, it may help to have the DRA approval and UNHCR letter to show them. I would highly suggest contacting James Karanja from the UNHCR very early on in this whole process. He is an extremely genuine man who will help you get through this whole deal. He can also talk with you about your projects (if they're uncontroversial) and tell you about living in the camp. Great guy.

Hints:

1) In addition to your CV, cover letter, and letter of introduction, it may be helpful to bring a copy of your Pupil Pass and Research Authorization letter with you to these various meetings.

2) Refine your research methods and be able to talk about them with these various organizations

3) Always have a copy of your passport with you. The UNHCR requires this and you never know when someone may ask for it.

4) Never say that you're doing "research" project. These organizations don't like the implications of that word.

Step 3: Getting to the camp.

Once you've got a host organization squared away, they should be able to help you get to the camp. Due to safety concerns, SIT will probably not allow you to go via ground transportation, so you'll either fly into Lodwar, Lokichoggio, or directly to the camp via UNHCR plane (this is rare). The airline company ALS flies to Lokichoggio (see Appendix 3). You'll most likely fly into Lokichoggio or Lodwar and then take a bus or arrange private transportation with your host organization to the camp.

Step 4: Preparation

Project Prep

In the midst of all these steps, it's a good idea to refine, edit, critique, etc your project to prepare for your time in the camp. How will you obtain information? Schmoozing is the best way. It's a whole different ball game when you're interviewing refugees in a camp where there are so many different ethnic groups represented. Learn about the different ethnic groups living in the camp. Ethnographic background research is absolutely crucial if you want any hope of creating a meaningful project. If Donna Pido is still involved with SIT, talk with her about this part early on. And don't be afraid of her; just keep asking questions and nodding you head as if you know exactly what she's talking about. Also do some background research about refugee law in the context of international institutions (read: Refugee Status Determination, UN Convention on Refugees, Kenyan refugee law, etc).

Miscellaneous

James Karanja and your host organization will be able to tell you a lot about food, internet access, and expenses. But just to give you a rough idea:

1) Expect at least US$300 (22500 Ksh) for round-trip plane ticket
2) About 1000 Ksh/night for accommodation (You need to be in the organization's compound between 6pm-6am everyday)
3) 800 Ksh for food per day if you eat every meal in the organization compound

Remember that Kakuma Refugee Camp has been in existence for 20 years. It is a city. They'll be cyber cafes, a few restaurants, schools, libraries, etc. On average, SIT provides you with 60000 Ksh for the ISP period. Good night and good luck.

Appendix 6. Opinion article submitted to *Kakuma News Reflector*

for publication in weblog

Rescuing Agency?
A look at the quest of an asylum seeker.
By John Perkins

Writing as a non-Kenyan and non-refugee, the author nevertheless offers some thoughts about the process of becoming a refugee in Kenya.

In any governed community there exists a fine line between maintaining the peace and restricting an individual's rights. As national citizens, we forgo certain rights in return for the peace and prosperity of a stable community. Slander and libel, for example, have forced even the most liberated national governments to curtail the right to freedom of expression. In Rwanda, the recent arrest of Victoire Ingabire, a leader of the United Democratic Forces opposition party, represents an approach to governance in which many civil rights are curtailed in an effort to foster peace and security. In the context of a developing country such as Rwanda, this peace and security creates a favorable atmosphere for prudent international integration and increased economic growth. The news of hate mail in Kenya serves as another example. Legislation has been enacted to punish those individuals who propagate incendiary or hateful messages regarding the draft constitution.

The benefits of these examples are easy to recognize-peace and security or avoiding discrimination of certain groups through inciting speech-but the negative consequences of inhibiting certain rights are more vague. In Rwanda, citizens may lose the right to oppose the government through political means. In Kenya, the ambiguity of what constitutes 'hate mail' may enable government officials to consider anything in opposition to their views as hateful and incendiary. The power of the opposition lies in its ability to serve as a check on the governing body; a means of accountability and transparency regardless of whether or not the grievances of the opposition are legitimate and accurate.

Yet the ambiguity of what we lose as citizens by forgoing certain rights takes on a whole new meaning when perceived through the lens of an asylum seeker in Kenya.

Camp refugees often come to mind when we think of someone considered to be a 'refugee', yet they are only one subgroup of the broader category of displaced persons, essential noncitizens considered asylum seekers until a request for refugee status has been accepted by a host country or international humanitarian relief agency. Until then, the only right enjoyed by a displaced person is the right to seek asylum.

In a country such as Kenya, the right to seek asylum means you have the right to wait. An asylum seeker has the right to wait for their identity to be determined for them through the Department of Refugee Affairs' (DRA) refugee status determination process. Formerly under the authority of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), refugee status determination comprises a lengthy multi-stage process conducted at a DRA office, though limited resources have led to continued UNHCR involvement. A 2008 Human

Rights Watch report[10] on the Somali refugee crisis in Kenya highlights the de facto encampment policy of creating disincentives for refugees to seek status as an urban refugee in Kenya. Some of these disincentives arise from the treacherous atmosphere created by the governance of displaced persons while they wait for their refugee status appeal to be heard.

In Nairobi, police harassment and a lack of legal status place asylum seekers in a precarious position as persons deprived of their own agency. They are deprived of the agency to determine their own identity and control their own situation. Asylum seekers wait as their identities are subject to the whims of an appointment slip or Mandate Refugee Certificate.

Seeking refuge in Kenya should not be likened to refoulement of asylum seekers. Displaced persons come to Kenya seeking shelter, food, health, and education that have been seized from them in their home countries. Yet they are also running from human rights abuses associated with conflict, abuses that deprive a citizen of their identity.

The process of refugee status determination should focus on returning this sense of identity. An asylum seeker should not be forced to relinquish that which makes them human simply because they have no legal citizenship. Kenya is home to more than 340,000 refugees and in the midst of a region suffering from seemingly endless conflict. The Kenyan government and collaborative humanitarian relief agencies have a unique opportunity to change how we view asylum seekers and the greater refugee community in general.

By refocusing refugee law implementation to better host asylum seekers, Kenya can be an example to the world of how things could be. In writing, the Kenyan government adheres to international and national refugee law securing the rights and protection of asylum seekers. With talks of regional integration into an East African Federation, Kenya needs to model the difference between political rhetoric and successful policy implementation, especially in regard to accepted refugee law.

And for an asylum seeker, a more welcoming refugee determination process has the potential to rescue one's agency and identity. Amongst the restriction of rights an asylum seeker (or refugee) inherently faces, owning one's identity can be instrumental in fostering a hope for a future different than the past they have left. That's something a displaced person can hold onto, something anyone can hold onto.

There's a realization of what could be, and that realization of possibility nourishes reality. It nourishes life, whether in the bustling streets of Nairobi or the classroom of Kakuma Refugee Secondary School. It's a realization that camp warehousing can be addressed; that humanitarian relief agencies can be made accountable to those they serve. A realization of what could be is something that drives all of us, refugee and citizen alike.

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[10] "From Horror to Hopelessness: Kenya's Forgotten Somali Refugee Crisis." Human Rights Watch Report. 2009.

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