Nordicom Review 33 (2012) Special Issue, pp. 163-176

The Globalization of the Pavement

A Tanzanian Case Study

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Abstract

This article investigates examples of citizen media production and communication (blogs and social media sites in Tanzania and its diasporas) in the immediate aftermath of the Gongo la Mboto blasts in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, February 2011.

At the centre is the relationship between media use and communication practices of the *pavement* – drawing from the notion of *pavement radio* – and the *spaceship*, i.e. a metaphor for traditional mass media, exemplified by policies and practices of the BBC and its World Service.

We argue that new social media practices as *digital pavement radio* are converging with traditional forms of street buzz and media use. Forms of oral communication are adapting towards the digital and filling information voids in an informal economy of news and stories in which media practices are stimulated by already ingrained traditions. An existing oral culture is paving the way for a globalization of the pavement.

Keywords: social media, rumour, pavement (radio/media), spaceship (media), news, diasporas

> *Alhamdullilah Alhamdullilah! Just spoke to mum, she is ok but very shaky after the bombs explosions in Dar es Salaam. She had to run for her life, thanks mum for being brave..! We r still not sure of my aunt's whereabouts. Praying for Allah protection n guidance! Sorry for the victims wat an agony!* (status update on Facebook by Tanzanian in Birmingham, UK, 16 February 2011)

Introduction[2]

On the evening of February 16th 2011, Tanzanians around the world were posting worried and upset status updates on Facebook and Twitter, searching for information about the whereabouts of their families and friends after what seemed to have been a bomb blast somewhere in Dar es Salaam. In the absence of news from established media institutions, Tanzanians began browsing online communities and blogs where pictures, videos and bits and pieces of information about the explosions were being posted throughout the night. Using the internet, and with important input through text message and phone calls from those not able to get online themselves, people in the diaspora could engage in a form of user-generated news production together with those on location in Dar es Salaam. The exchange and discussions were soon heated and filled with rumour,

partly as a result of the lack of information available in the established news media. Memories from previous explosions in the city were awoken – the blasts in a military ammunition depot in the suburb Mbagala in April 2009, and the simultaneous bombings of the American Embassies in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi in August 1998. Rumour and speculation quickly filled the news vacuum. Online and offline communication merged, exemplified by a story told by a Tanzanian woman living in Copenhagen, whose worried relative, living close to the explosion site, called to ask her to get online in order to find information about what was going on. The relative in Copenhagen browsed the net and sent a text message back with the latest updates to the mobile phone of her worried relative in Dar es Salaam.[3] In this way, the initial deficiencies in access to information were bridged transnationally.

Social Media Filling an Information Void?

By the morning of February 17th, it had become clear that the series of explosions that had shaken Dar es Salaam the night before had also started in an ammunition depot in a military base. This time, the one located next door to the high-density residential area Gongo la Mboto, on the outskirts of Dar es Salaam. The news was on the front page of most national newspapers, and national radio and television stations reported from the scene of the tragedy. For a short time even international media -including the BBC- picked up the story and reported the incident[4].

While the follow-up in the global mediascape was brief, and the national media seemed unwilling, or at least slow to ask the critical questions[5], the discussions in a variety of online forums – closely interconnected with offline discussions on the streets of Dar es Salaam – grew intense in the days following the explosions. We argue that this can be seen as a process of citizen media production – social in character and transnational in scope – that was filling an information void. Although media and ICT do not have the same penetration in Tanzania as in many other parts of the world, the rising involvement in so-called 'social media' contributes to what we in the following will call "the globalization of the pavement".

A preliminary analysis of the discussions in the social media forums during the night of the Gongo la Mboto blasts and the following weeks indicates that these could roughly be divided into four broad themes[6].

Firstly, the social media forums tended to be used as a way of *mobilizing help for the victims*. As an example, the very popular Tanzanian discussion platform *JamiiForums* – that calls itself a "user generated content site" and "the home of great thinkers", and claims to be a space "where we dare to speak openly"[7] – became an arena for attempts to activate relief efforts and assist the victims in various ways. The Facebook group *Take action for Gongo la Mboto Families and Friends* serves as another example of this theme:

> The aim of this page is to create awareness and to encourage people to get involved and TAKE ACTION. Donate blood, donate clothes, donate sleeping nets, donate basic needs, donate anything that will make a difference in the lives of other human beings…give your time and remember the families and friend's in prayers.[8]

Twitter was used for the same purpose, as we can see in the following tweets:

> @Tandile We are setting up a help centre and Mzambarauni Primary school, Gongolamboto (near the sight of the bombs) for people who are looking for missing persons and for children that are lost
>
> @Shurufu via @Sashaissa:,At Muhimbili, they need blood ASAP. The number to call: 0713-######. Ask for Mrs. Maya Hilda all types required #bombsindar
>
> @mtage @iUwesu @Mbergsma #bombsindar go to national stadium, tazara or unicef offices..food,water,blankets,tents, clothes needed[9]

Additionally, a number of NGOs, as for instance the Tanzanian Red Cross[10] and AMREF[11], used Internet channels to inform about their actions, as well as to try to organize help activities and collect money for the people in need.

Secondly, and to an even larger extent, the forums were used as a way to search for answers and *to share information and rumour*. Questions and answers about what happened on the evening of the explosions and its aftermath were posted on Facebook and Twitter. Facebook pages, such as the community *Mbagala, gongo-la-mboto. where next? Poor Dar*[12], were opened. Popular blogs, such as *BongoCelebrity*[13] and *Michuzi*[14], published images of the explosions, damaged houses, wounded people, people sheltering in tents, President Kikwete and CCM officials dressed in green uniforms visiting the site, and empty shell casings left on the ground of the densely populated suburb. On *JamiiForums* information about the explosions was being posted already on the evening of February 16th[15]. Within two days the thread got 1109 comments, and by mid June it had been viewed 37,248 times. The comments included re-circulation of news, questions and answers mixed with rumour and speculation.

As discussions on blogs and social networking sites began to develop a third theme could be detected: the sites carried *criticism of the government and the military*; criticizing their poor safety record and demanding that the Minister of Defence resign. The lack of clarity from the leaders, and the fact that this tragedy could have been prevented had one only learned from the similar disaster in Mbagala in 2009, was also a topic that was discussed seriously in the Tanzanian blogosphere, for instance by *Swahili Street*[16].

On *JamiiForums* a heated discussion about responsibility and accountability emerged:

> You, since when do you listen to their [the government's] words? Don't trust them even a little. The president in 2009 said an event like that in Mbagala wouldn't happen again – did it happen or did it not happen? […] Never trust any statement from this government, never.[17]

These threads of discussion became increasingly intertwined with rumour and conspiracy theory, and a fourth theme that emerged already on the night of the events was connected to the lack of information and *the failure of the established news media* to conduct a serious and trustworthy job in covering the "biggest news event of the year"[18]. The absence of coverage from international news was not as widely discussed as the apparent inability of national media houses to provide the public with proper and critical information. Tweets on this topic were plenty:

> @JMakamba On TBC now: Boda2Boda music show. I thought it is public broadcaster, and should be on the streets helping out. #bombsindar" (Twitter, 17 February 2011)

> @Sajjo Media in Tanzania needs to learn the art of reporting. They are disorganized and their reports are totally unreliable #Bombsindar" (Twitter, 17 February 2011)
>
> "@Davidogillo And the stupid Television stations are showing what happened last night as breaking news.. It already broke last night assholes! #Bombsindar" (Twitter, 17 February 2011)[19]

After a few days, the *Daraja* blog summarized the critical Twitter discussion "#bombsindar":

> The explosions at Gongo la Mboto on Wednesday were a huge tragedy in human terms and a huge embarrassment for the government in general and the army in particular. But they also showed up the state of the Tanzanian media in a less-than-positive light. Coverage of what's probably Tanzania's biggest news event of the year has been disappointing. […] Overall, the traditional media's coverage of the explosions smacks of complacency. Poor pre-planning and no real striving to catch up. In comparison, coverage on Twitter, Facebook, blogs and Jamii Forums was miles ahead.[20]

These four themes of discussion were intertwined, and on most platforms genres were blurred; news and entertainment, seriousness and humour, private and public, and reposting of news bulletins from international news sites all brought together and circulated in conjunction with satirical comic strips commenting upon the events. Critical discussions about the explosions mixed together with calls for people to join Big Brother Africa 2011 and wedding pictures from local celebrities. The convergence of different modes of communication (see e.g. Jenkins 2006) – oral, printed, broadcast and digital – could be a suitable way of describing news production in Tanzania, thus illustrating old and new media practices in conjunction. Wendy Willems (2011) argues:

> [i]n the African context, popular culture and media have been essential means through which ordinary people have sought to engage, debate and contest the state. (Willems 2011: 48) […] While old media – i.e. oral culture, rumours and jokes – have always played a crucial role in enabling participatory media cultures in Africa, new media are also increasingly being used to comment upon state media discourse. It is at the intersection of old, older and the new that convergence culture is created. (Willems 2011: 52)

The Tanzanian mediascape has certainly expanded, become more diverse and informative, and less censored and controlled by the state since the introduction of a new constitution in 1992.[21] However, many would argue that nearly twenty years after the liberalisation of the media "steps towards a free press are still gradual," as Tanzanian media critic Lawrence Kilimwiko (2007:78) puts it, pointing to the concentration of ownership and lack of journalist professionalism, and to continuous self-regulation and state interference. The experience of the complexly intertwined glocal networks of communication that were quickly activated by the Gongo la Mboto explosions clearly demonstrates that despite an increasingly plural media market there is still room for – and a need for – informal channels, such as what in the African context has been referred to as *pavement radio*.

Pavement Radio, Digital Media Engagement and the Diaspora

Experience and research show that what we were witnessing during the evening of February 16th and the following days is a process of information gathering and sharing that is nothing new in the Tanzanian – or African[22] – context.

We argue that contemporary so-called social media usage could be seen as an extension of already existing Tanzanian, and African, communication patterns and cultures, and that an emerging engagement in various digital media forms could serve to contribute to the globalization of what in the African post-colonial urban context has been termed *pavement radio* (or *radio trottoir* in French; cf e.g. Bourgault 1995; Ellis 1989; Nyamnjoh 2005; Spitulnik 2002 and Triulzi 1996).

> Pavement radio […] refers to the circulation of lively news through unofficial oral channels of interpersonal communication which penetrate African cities. The stories which circulate typically treat topics of interest that the official press ignores or covers scantily in coded language. Thus, radio trottoir is underground news, an alternative to the official press, which is tedious, censored, uninformative, and often unintelligible. (Bourgault 1995: 202)

In an attempt to silence so-called street tam-tam, the former president of Cameroon, Paul Bya, said in 1984: "truths come from above, rumour from below" (quoted by Triulzi 1996: 86). This quote may reveal how rumour and talk of the street fill a gap to create an informal economy of news and stories when 'the truths from above' are not trusted, and when a silence or vacuum of 'no news' needs to be filled. *Pavement radio* can be argued to be a consequence of either the monopoly or an absence of a plural debate in the official channels, to build on Triulzi's argument (1996: 88). The notion of *pavement radio* (allegedly a few examples of real radio in former Zaire, but in principle understood as a metaphor) can be related to the phenomenon of the *grapevine telegraph* as well as the *jungle drums*, although these terms carry connotations from slavery (Washington 1901) as well as colonialism.[23] These different traditions of rumour and information spreading leading to public discussions can be understood as forms of 'oral postal services' (Briggs and Burke 2005: 24), but operating rapidly and in chains, with in theory an infinite network of post-men and -women.

The communication may appear to be of a spontaneous nature. However, a history of social and political agendas is ingrained or habitual in all of them. *Pavement radio* has become the preferable term in our research. It refers to communication in the post-colonial city and beyond, where fast global information sharing and appropriation of electronic and print media mingle with well-known oral practices.

Related to pavement radio, the notion of *rumour* could be a vehicle to explore formats of communication where many of the participants become the 'researchers', the delivery men/women, as well as the receivers of information (although some of course choose to participate only as observers). Together they form a collective spiderweb of memory and experience -circles of shared information. These structures may be temporary and fragile in nature, but easily accumulate and spread information, with some rumours surviving while others are dismissed. Rumour sharing practices on the street and in social media assure quick public appropriation of recent interpretations and events.

Humans remember individually, but rely on conversation, sharing and hearsay with which we shape and interpret what we have gathered or heard. Rumour, we argue, is

affiliated with the domain that Jan Assmann names *communicative memory* (Assmann 1995: 115-123 and 2010: 109-118), a daily, living, interactive, non-formal, and not institutionalised mode of information sharing. *Communicative memory*, i.e. those "memories that an individual shares with his contemporaries" (2010: 112), are contrasted by Assmann with another form called *cultural memory* (ibid: 109-118), created and sustained by specialists and established or canonized over a longer time span, often far beyond a generation or two.

The daily and interactive socialization of memory (communicative memory) offers an alternative narrative to rooted myths and history (cultural memory). If we conceptualize the rumour and speculation of pavement radio in these terms, it becomes an important corrective to any official version of events that may circulate within the institutional channels.

The social, instant and interactive examples from the Tanzanian case speak to the continuous making and unmaking, quick elaboration and dismissal of rumour and information. In much social media news feeding, it is unclear who is giving birth. Where does the information come from, who started? Information is continuously being modified. Rumour can thereby also be seen as a means of advancing or developing an idea without taking responsibility (Mains 2004: 347). Rumour can transport a myth (communicative memory relies on cultural memory, they are entangled), but can also be a critical reply to myths, or present counter-myths. In a time of crisis, a piece of crucial information (true or not) has the potential to quickly evolve into a collective rumour/panic, but rumour can also function as a more reflective vehicle of satire and resistance (as also elaborated by Arntsen 2011 and Willems 2011).

The practice of online rumour, news exchange and elaboration in Tanzania and its diasporas, which our case study here serves to illustrate, can thus be argued to build on an oral tradition. More specifically, an oral tradition where socially ingrained communication practices – like street corner gossiping, frequent group socializing, and talk of the pavement – are now adapting towards the digital domain. The rapid expansion of mobile telephony and the increasing number of those online in Tanzania, however slowly, provide an environment where the oral traditions of pavement radio can start to move into a different sphere.[24] Research on how the Internet and social media are used in the Tanzanian context is scarce, but digital anthropologist Paula Uimonen (2009, 2011) observes in her analysis of Internet engagement among arts students, that social media connect Tanzanians transnationally as well as within the nation, and that youth engage in what she calls "hybrid media engagement". By this Uimonen means that young Tanzanians find creative ways of participating in the emerging digitalised mediascape even if they do not have direct personal access to connected computers[25]. They blend different modes of communication and media engagement as a way of negotiating "the digital divide, with one foot in a state of digital inclusion, the other in digital exclusion [… combining] digital and analogue forms of culture and knowledge production, mixing techniques and instruments that are high-tech and low-tech, electronic and acoustic, handmade and machine-made" (Uimonen 2011: 14). These modes of "creative appropriation" of new media technologies are also discussed by Nyamnjoh (2005) in the Cameroon context, where he concludes that "it is much more meaningful to study what Africans *do with* ICTs through enculturation, rather than simply to focus what ICTs *do to* Africans" (Nyamnjoh 2005: 205).

Similarly, we argue that the 'digital pavement radio' and traditional forms of street buzz complement and converge with each other. Some may only be voyeurs peeking into the exchange, while others hand over hearsay or links, or appropriate or produce data. "Sometimes there is no one on Facebook on Sundays", as an MA student from Tanzania in Copenhagen said (Singu 2011). At the weekend, students have left the university internet connection area and gone back to the village or suburb. But come Monday morning, Facebook is full of what happened offline that Sunday – and in the vacuum, the phone and other messengers keep the raving *radio trottoir* alive. The circuit can include off-liners as well, and is dependent on those too, to dismiss or 'modify government releases' (Triulzi 1996: 84). The modern street version of pavement radio, as well as social media, comments on those in power and on many other things. Celebrity fashion and the mocking of leaders go hand in hand (cf e.g. Willems 2011; Ekström 2010). Content is blended on blogs and feeds, as we saw in the examples above. Pavement radio is underground rumour and news, alternatives to the press; mockery, legend and argumentative criticism on the same page or stream. It provides room for mystification and de-mystification (Ellis 1989; see also Truilzi quoting Nkanga 1996). Rosnow and Fine (*Rumor and Gossip* 1976) note that rumour and gossip are not always equivalent concepts. Rumour is information neither substantiated nor refuted, while gossip is small talk. Rumours are often fueled by a desire for clarification and closure, while gossip is motivated primarily by ego and status needs of the gossipers (1976: 4).

Importantly, our understanding of social media as an extension of pavement radio emphasises the possibility for people in the diaspora to be engaged in the process of user-generated news production. The ways in which people who have left their home countries engage in media practices of various kinds to keep themselves informed about and to stay in touch with the homeland has been dealt with extensively in the area of diaspora studies. In African media studies, it has been noted by many scholars that the Internet plays an important role in creating possibilities for Africans in the diaspora to participate in the public debate in and about the homeland (cf e.g. Tomaselli 2009).

What our case study here suggests is that so-called social media may supplement and enhance street corner communication, expanding everyday private and public spaces, and opening street corners abuzz with rumour and gossip to global audiences and other media producers. Importantly, we have observed that many of the important bloggers, tweeters and *JamiiForums* users/contributors are residing outside Tanzania. Digital pavement radio shapes popular discourse, commenting on those in power -an informal economy, in movements that come and go, building and breaking down interaction, with people coming in and out of the streams. During and after the Gongo la Mboto explosions, the fast moving grassroots citizen news production of pavement radio seemed to offer an exciting alternative when contrasted with international broadcast news media like the BBC, that still has large audiences in Tanzania[26] and a very different conventions and news gathering agenda.

International Broadcasting as Spaceship Radio?

While social media with its multitude of reporters and its consumers/producers is the radio of the pavement, fleet footed, irreverent and close to the ground, conventional international public service radio looks increasingly like 'spaceship radio', distant and

removed: in the case of the BBC's African Service, beaming its programmes to Africa from London while receiving reports on the Dar es Salaam explosions via a crackly phone line.

An initial impression might be that the rumour and speculation that make up much of social media's 'globalized pavement' is diametrically opposed to the values of accuracy, impartiality and fairness that are core to a traditional international public service broadcaster like the BBC World Service. However, to see only the differences between these two modes of news production would be to ignore the many threads that bind together the 'spaceship' and the 'globalized pavement'.

The BBC clearly recognizes the value of social media as a tool for building a closer relationship with its audience and increasing participation. One of the BBC World Service's stated aims is to facilitate a 'Global Conversation'; Twitter and Facebook offer a convenient vehicle for doing just this. Producers and senior editors are acutely aware that increased participation and interaction will enrich programmes and bring them closer to the street.

Although the BBC's African Service clearly sees the benefit of participating in and making use of the 'globalized pavement' as a source for stories and to enhance interaction with listeners, its raucous and unpredictable nature make it a problematic partner. BBC producers are careful to sift contributions received via social media through the same filter of traditional news values that is used to assess the accuracy and newsworthiness of all sources. Producers wary of being hoaxed or broadcasting inaccurate information are negotiating on a day-to-day basis how social media and user generated content can be incorporated into a system of news production that views journalism as a "professional discipline for verifying information" (Project for Excellence in Journalism quoted in Hermida 2010: 300).

Information flows both ways in this symbiotic relationship, with 'spaceship' broadcasters providing a source of material that comes to be incorporated and re-versioned within the oral exchange of 'pavement radio' and its digitally mediated descendent the 'globalized pavement'. Bourgault observes that "[s]ome of the rumours circulating through *radio trottoir* […] no doubt begin through foreign shortwave broadcasts, only partially understood" (Bourgault 1995: 202). Following this tradition, we saw how pictures of the Gongo la Mboto explosions originally broadcast by the BBC were posted on Facebook by one Tanzanian user with an additional text and became part of a social media stream with the potential to carry a new set of meanings different from the ones originally intended. Rather than noting a dichotomy between these forms of communication, the point is to shed light on how the pavement and the spaceships are interrelated and interdependent on each other, feeding each other with content and comments. [27]

We could also see that at some level the BBC perceives the 'globalized pavement' of social media to be a competitor, possibly even a threat[28]. If the 'globalized pavement' of social media is now beginning to fulfil the role once played by the BBC's African Service, perhaps we should not be unduly concerned that rural areas in Tanzania will no longer receive broadcasts in Swahili from London[29]. A contrary view, however, would be that the 'globalized pavement' of social media, a space full of rumour and inaccuracy, can never fulfil the role of a public service broadcaster and 'proper' journalism.

Re-thinking 'Proper' Journalism from an African Perspective

However, a crucial question that needs to be asked is that of what we mean by 'proper journalism', 'reliable media production' and 'democratic media'. Criticisms often rest on a normative view of what a democratic media society should look like. A model that includes 'universal' ideas of freedom of speech and freedom of the press, as well as ideas of journalistic values such as accuracy and accountability. Although these frames are founded in the Western notion of a liberal democracy, Herman Wasserman (2011: 5) argues that media research in Africa has also been using them as "dominant frames for investigation" (see also Willems 2011 and Nyamnjoh 2011). However, such frames may neglect the role of popular media culture as mentioned by Willems (2011) above, as well as important informal communication/media practices outside the institutionalised forms of 'traditional' media, as Debra Spitulnik (2002) points out:

> by what criteria do we assess the presence or absence of communicative democracy in a given situation? Should we look only to the mainstream media, the independent press, and community radio for signs of open public debate, diverse political representation, and absence of censorship? Are these always the sole and legitimate arenas of the construction of a civil society? In many cases these arenas are dominated by the literate, the urban, the elite, and the male. They are also strongly influenced by Eurocentric models of what counts as democracy, development, and freedom of speech. (Spitulnik 2002)

In her article, Spitulnik addresses the various forms of 'small media', which play a particularly big role in African societies[30]. According to Spitulnik, small media are understood as those communication media that are not traditional 'mass media' nor pure 'interpersonal communication', but rather inhabiting a space in-between, using other communication technologies than the dominant media or hybrid versions, opening a space for participatory communication and blurring the distinction between producer and consumer (2002). Among small media forms such as posters, flyers, audiotapes and jokes, Spitulnik also lists pavement radio and web pages in her article. Following Spitulnik's (2002) and Willems' (2011) arguments, we suggest that the eyewitness accounts that were added to Facebook status updates and *JamiiForums* during the Gongo la Mboto explosions should not be judged according to traditional news values. They are not an attempt to present an accurate and verified account of a specific event. Rather, each small piece of information should be understood as a fragment that contributes to a whole, and the process of 'writing' the story becomes an important part of the process of news production and consumption. Each small piece of information is a part of the story that we witness unfolding and in which, if we choose, we can work together with others to establish the veracity or otherwise of the information presented.

This mode of collaborative news production/consumption is particularly interesting in the context of sub-Saharan Africa because, as we have discussed above, it represents the continuation of a long tradition of communal media consumption and collaborative news production. "Before citizen journalism came to the West, you had citizen journalism all over Africa", as Francis B. Nyamnjoh puts it, also referring to pavement radio as a crucial way of sharing information (2011: 29).[31]

Summing Up, Looking Ahead

The discussion in this article took as its point of departure our observations of social media use prompted by a series of explosions at an army depot in the Gongo la Mboto district of Dar es Salaam, in February 2011. During the explosions and in the following days, we saw how complexly intertwined glocal networks of communication were quickly activated involving people on the streets of Dar es Salaam and Tanzanians in Birmingham, Uppsala and Copenhagen, developing content much faster and with more nuances than any government or major news Internet site.

This media production practice seemed to demonstrate how the emerging engagement in social media in Tanzania and its diasporas contributes to a form of user-generated news production – or citizen journalism – that people in the Tanzanian diaspora could engage in together with those on the streets of Dar es Salaam. Rather than illustrating a new phenomenon that has occurred with the coming of new media and communication technologies, we argue that our case study serves as an example of how Tanzanian engagement in 'new media' can be seen as an extension and amplification of traditional modes of information sharing and news production. In particular, we relate our case to the oral tradition of street rumour that in the postcolonial urban African setting has been referred to as *pavement radio*.

Our case study indicates that, despite an increasingly plural established mediascape, in Tanzania there is still a strong desire to use informal media, or so called 'small media'. Our investigation finds patterns of 'convergence culture' and 'user-generated news production' that are a continuation of the oral traditions of pavement radio and street rumour. Our observations suggest that the way social media was used to tell the story of the Gongo la Mboto explosions demonstrates a sophisticated use of 'news-gathering skills' that many Tanzanians have developed through the process of informing themselves, communicating about, critically assessing and scrutinizing content and sources, and at the same time collectively producing news and engaging in important political discourse.

Our main argument in this article has been that these oral and collaborative processes of news production are adapting towards the digital. New media and communication technologies are paving the way for the 'globalization of the pavement', a form of news production in which those in the diaspora can collaborate.

Importantly, in order for media researchers, media practitioners and institutions (such as the BBC) to fully comprehend the particularities of contemporary mediascapes and the ways in which news, information and rumour travel between urban Africa -Tanzania in our case- and its diasporas, future research needs to investigate these complexly intertwined glocal networks of communication critically and in depth. Research needs to look into the relationship between different forms of communication, the oral and interpersonal, small media and mass media, the mediatised and the digital, popular and formal, between the diaspora and those on the streets, online and offline, as well as between the spaceship and the pavement.

Notes

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2. This article is based on work in progress. For an earlier piece in the immediate aftermath of the event, see MA *Communication for Development* weblog http://www.mah.se/comdev. Preliminary findings were presented during 2011 in Sweden, Denmark and Iceland (at the Nordmedia Conference).
3. Happy Singu, 16-17 February 2011, using Facebook newsfeed and chat where information or links to other sites with information quickly surfaced. She also visited a variety of blogs. In addition, but just as importantly, telephone calls, SMS/texting, emailing, and yahoo chat were also used.
4. See e.g. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12490089, 17 February 2011
5. This in turn should be understood against the backdrop of a Tanzanian media that historically has been strictly controlled. Since reforms in the early 1990's it appears more democratic on paper, but is still governed through "self-censorship" (cf e.g. Kilimwiko 2002 and 2007, Hydén et al. 2002)
6. In addition to material from a variety of sites/forums, at the time of the explosions and in its aftermath, we relied upon observing a few members of the Tananian diaspiora 'in action'. In Denmark, Happy Singu and in Sweden, Alex Mwingira.
7. http://www.jamiiforums.com/
8. Facebook group "Take action for Gongo la Mboto families and friends", 7 March 2011 (https://www.facebook.com/home.php?sk=group_200901013271502)
9. Twitter feed saved from 17 february 2011, and published by blogger J. Nambiza Tungaraza on Global Voices (http://globalvoicesonline.org/2011/02/20/tanzania-bomb-explosions-bloggers-and-twitterers-speak-out/)
10. http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/where-we-work/africa/tanzania-red-cross-national-society/
11. http://www.amref.org/news/healing-invisible-wounds-in-dar-es-salaam/
12. https://www.facebook.com/pages/Mbagala-gongo-la-mboto-where-next-Poor-Dar/201366466545408
13. http://www.bongocelebrity.com/2011/02/17/watu-10-wameuawa60-wamejuruhiwa-kwenye-milipuko-ya-mabomu-dar/#axzz1QOUSOevj
14. http://issamichuzi.blogspot.com/
15. A thread called "Ghala la silaha Gongo la Mboto lalipuka!" (Warehouse of Arms in Gongo la Mboto rushed off) started by a member called 'fangfangjt', initially included three photos and a video of the explosions seen from a distance, and a list of 11 points of information about the incident, originating from Radio One, the police and apparently people on the spot (http://www.jamiiforums.com/jukwaa-la-siasa/111041-ghala-la-silaha-gongo-la-mboto-lalipuka.html)
16. https://swahilistreet.wordpress.com/2011/02/19/gongo-la-mboto-reading-list/
17. From JamiiForums, the thread "Ghala la silaha Gongo la Mboto lalipuka!", 17 February 2011. Original text in Swahili: "Wewe bado huwa unasikiliza maneno yao? Usiwaamini hata kidogo. Rais mwaka 2009 alisema tukio kama lile la Mbagala halitatokea tena – limetokea au halijatokea? […] Never trust any statement from this government, never."
18. http://blog.daraja.org/2011/02/bombsindar-gongo-la-mboto-media-event.html
19. Twitter feed saved and published by Daraja Blog: http://blog.daraja.org/2011/02/bombsindar-gongo-la-mboto-media-event.html
20. Daraja is an NGO based in southern Tanzania working with issues around community media and sustainability http://blog.daraja.org/2011/02/bombsindar-gongo-la-mboto-media-event.html
21. Television was introduced in Tanzania in 1994. There are plenty of radio stations, and a myriad of newspapers and tabloids. International programs and news are mixed with more and more local production. In theory, the media is democratic and free, but this has been seriously problematised (see e.g. Kilimwiko 2002, Ekström 2010).
22. It is of course impossible – and dangerous – to generalise about 'African media', 'African experience' and 'Africa', a continent with 54 countries, a myriad of cultures, languages and experiences. But as has been pointed out in several discussions, African countries do have a history of colonialism and post-colonialism, dominance and resistance in common, which have contributed to shape some similar patterns and tendencies (see e.g. Wasserman 2011, Nyamnjoh 2005 and 2011). Among those are media and communication structures and cultures that we touch upon in this paper. Having said that, it is important to emphasise that our case study is Tanzanian, and that Tanzania is also the African country that we have most experience from and knowledge about.
23. Booker Washington writes in his biography *Up From Slavery*: "I now recall the many late-at-night whispered discussions that I heard my mother and the other slaves on the plantation indulge in. These discussions showed that they understood the situation, and that they kept themselves informed by what was termed the "grape-vine" telegraph" (1901: 10).
24. According to International Telecommunication Union (ITU), there were 676,000 Internet users in Tanzania as of June 2010 (1.6% of the population). There were 259,120 Facebook users in March 2011

(0.6% penetration rate). Mobile phone subscriptions were estimated to 46.80% (http://www.itu.int/). The high mobile phone penetration is relevant here, as more and more people are using smart phones through which they can also access the Internet.

25. Similarly to the argument made by Ekström (2010) about media engagement in general in urban Tanzania. A social activity, often performed in groups rather than individually, and in public rather than in private, where even those who do not have direct access to the various formal media channels cannot escape the discourses of the media as talk of the media, as well as talk about what is missing in the formal media, becomes talk of the street.
26. The BBC World Service Trust African Media Development Initiative calculated that the BBC had a 19% share of all radio listeners in Tanzania (Muthee Jones and Mhando 2005: 25). The BBC's audience in Tanzania was continuing to grow in 2009/2010 when it increased by 1.4 million compared to the previous year (BBC World Service annual report 2009/2010)
27. As also Annabelle Sreberny points out in relation to the events during the Arab Spring: "But perhaps as significant as the new social media platforms has been the role of broadcasting, especially Al Jazeera Arabic and English. The Arabic channel and BBC Arabic played a multiplier role in articulating the diverse events across the region. Al Jazeera English kept the rest of the world enthralled, with strong on-the ground coverage and moments of brilliant television direction." (http://mediasocialchange.net/2011/05/12/a-social-media-revolution/)
28. In the introduction to a 2010 strategy review document BBC Director General Mark Thompson states "New categories of public content providers have emerged at community, national and international level, driven more than ever by their users. Wikipedia, Twitter and many other websites broaden and enrich public space in new ways that can be very close to the spirit of public service broadcasting" (Thompson 2010).
29. In 2011 BBC broadcasts via short wave in Swahili ceased when BBC World Service funding was cut by 16% http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2011/01_january/26/worldservice.shtml
30. Like Annabelle Sreberni-Mohammadi & Ali Mohammadi (1994) argued they did (and do) in Iran. Spitulnik (2002) developed the concept 'small media' drawing on their work.
31. In relation to Nyamnjoh's point on the importance of the pavement, Alfred Hermida argues that a fragment of information may be insignificant on its own, but crucial in combination with other fragments. Sites as Twitter may facilitate this mode of combined news production, he argues (2010: 301)

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