

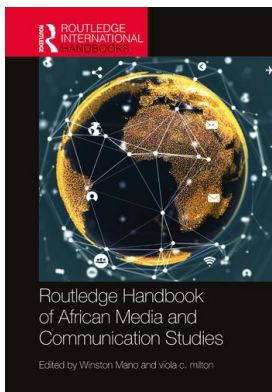
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Citizen journalism and conflict transformation

Exploring netizens' digitized shaping of political crises in Kenya

Toyin Ajao

Introduction

In 2018, the global number of Internet users rose significantly to over 4 billion, in comparison to the 750 million Internet users in view in 2001 (Internet Live Stats 2018). About 453 million of these worldwide Internet users reside in Africa (Internet World Stats 2018). They account for only 35 per cent of the continent's entire population. Nonetheless, the impacts of the African Internet users' sociopolitical engagement, especially through citizen journalism, are telling. The concept of citizen journalism, which is based upon 'ordinary' citizens "playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analysing, and disseminating news and information" (Bowman and Willis 2003), according to Watson and Wadhwa (2014) has moved from its infancy to a matured platform where citizen journalists' multiple roles include conflict management. These amateurs, who sometimes include professional journalists who prefer a less constricting echo chamber in which to air their views, have revolutionized the way in which news is produced and consumed. They have also shown there is inherent democratic power in the user-generated content that has demonopolized traditional media, challenged dictatorial regime, and provided organic realities from peoples' lived-experiences (Banda 2010; Moyo 2011; Mutsaero and Columbus 2012; Allan 2013).

For instance, the Kenyan new media platforms have continued to stand as one of the most vibrant and palpable online communities in Africa with 85 per cent of the population utilizing the Internet (Internet World Stats 2018). Thus, in the age of the new media, where chaos sometimes reigns on the Internet, members of the general public have devised a nonviolent technoresponse to and engagement with violence (Bock 2012). Back in 2008, when the new media were still nascent in Kenya, four Kenyan bloggers engaged in a timely citizen journalism activity by creating the Ushahidi Platform to fill the information void created through the banning of the live broadcasts by the Minister of Internal Security, John Michuki, during the post-election violence (PEV). While both the burgeoning online community and the mass media were criticized for fuelling the embers of violence through ethnicized hate speech, these netizens decided to utilize the ubiquitous new media to provide alternative actions for conciliation and justice

(Jeffery 2011). According to Banda (2010) and Junne (2013), the Ushahidi's open-source software contributes to the significance of citizen journalism platforms for nonviolent technological interventions.

Also, Ushahidi crisis mapping and other relevant information gathered about the hotspot of violence in the Rift Valley were used for Red Cross humanitarian deployment and police intervention. Beyond the mapping, Ushahidi undertook other projects, such as the Uwiano early warning multiagent consortium and the Uchaguzi constitutional referendum and election monitoring mechanism. Furthermore, in a bid to mitigate partisan ethno-nationalism, and demand transformative governance beyond 2008, other nonviolent technological initiatives sprang up among Kenyan netizens. Among which are the Mzalendo platform that keeps a watchful eye on the parliamentarians, Afroes that invests in online games for community peace education, Sisi Ni Amani Kenya (SNA-K) that synergized local peace actors for distribution of peace messages in the 2013 general elections, the Map Kibera that presents verified figures of its inhabitants for political inclusion and the Twitter Chief who governs his community via Twitter.

This chapter is based on interpretivist qualitative research using nonprobability snowball sampling technique. In-depth interviews of 28 research participants, including the Ushahidi platform founders, partnered organizations, and intermediary institutions were carried out in Nairobi from August to November 2016. Data were amassed through semi-structured and unstructured interviews of four members of the Ushahidi platform, six other bloggers/citizen journalists outside the Ushahidi platform, seven civil society organization leaders/workers, three governmental workers, five writers/journalists, two activists and one politician. Two more members of the civil society were interviewed via email exchanges in April 2017 to supplement new questions that emerged during data analysis. The particular interest in Kenya and Ushahidi was as a result of the growing scholarly interest in broadening the new terrain of people-centred approaches to peacemaking in the twenty-first century context.

Data were analyzed with thematic techniques. The data thus revealed a conflict transformation paradigm in the cumulative efforts of Kenyan interventionist netizens who are committed to nonviolent digitized intervention in shaping political crises. In the context of this chapter, how several initiatives of the netizens under discourse are addressing political crises through nonviolent approach is highlighted. Finally, this chapter provides the empirical accounts of Ushahidi, Sisi ni Amani, Mzalendo, Map Kibera, Afroes and the Twitter Chief's post-conflict nonviolent technological interventions and their conflict transformation influences.

The dynamic of the media in the context of Ushahidi in Kenya's 2008 PEV

Owing to election irregularities resulting in the deaths of over 1,000 people and the displacement of another 500,000 (Mwiandi 2008), Kenya witnessed its cruelest bloodbath since independence. According to Mwiandi (2008), the 2008 PEV brought to the fore deep ethnic divisions among the public rooted in socioeconomic and political problems. Other scholars pin the cataclysmic events on generational conflicts around land disputes, unfair distribution of resources, tribalism, human rights abuses, corruption, despotism, oligarchy, and colonial legacy.

The presidential elections that were conducted on the December 27, 2007, with Mwai Kibaki and Raila Odinga as its main contenders, had plunged the country into an unprecedented political, security, and humanitarian crisis. In the accounts of several scholars and human rights reports, the initial violence was spontaneous as a reaction to the perceived rigging of the elections by the government (Kagwanja 2009). Subsequently, while more facts emerged about the election and Kibaki hurried oath taking, more violence erupted in the Nairobi slum

and the Rift Valley province. Odinga's supporters likewise declared him a winner, leading to Kenya contending with two presidents in one political seat. After the double-declarations, the spontaneous pandemonium became retaliatory and later morphed into more organized and state-driven strife.

The mass media houses were alleged to have accelerated the violence by spreading "alarmist information", which further sent the nation into bedlam (Makinen and Kuira 2008). While the divisive nascent online community began to engage in ethnicized tirades, four citizen journalists teamed up to create the Ushahidi (a Kiswahili word for "testimony" or "witness") crowdsourcing platform to document the extent of the violence. This platform emerged as a result of citizens' desire 'to do something' when information became truncated due to the ban of Kenya's broadcasting houses by the Ministry of Internal Security (Makinen and Kuira 2008). The four bloggers, namely, Ory Okolloh, Juilana Rotich, David Kobia, and Erik Hersman, went to work swiftly via the Ushahidi platform to report, document, and provide information to the wider populace and the international community on the extent of the upheavals. This documentation resulted in a 'mashup' of information leading to a graphic representation of the crisis on Google Maps for the purposes of documentation, justice, and conciliation (Jeffery 2011).

On the ground, the Kenyan populace felt betrayed by the national and the international media during the 2008 onslaught (Mackay, Interview by author. Skype Call. Nairobi, October 5, 2016). Several research participants state that the mass media engaged in divisive and biased practices during the 2007 elections. Kenya's mass media, which include the print media, radio, and television, were a triad of complicit professional journalists who fuelled the 2008 PEV with what they reported and how they reported. Their broadcasts and materials were skewed towards agitating one ethnic group against another. For instance, one of the local-language radio stations, Kass FM, was accused of spreading ethnicized messages that fuelled the 2008 PEV. During the International Criminal Court (ICC) investigations and proceedings, Joshua Arap Sang, the head of operations at Kass FM, was arraigned to answer for his instigative role in intensifying the 2008 PEV via ethnicized broadcasts favouring the Kalenjins.

Mochama (Interview by author. Tape recording. Nairobi, September 22, 2016), a Kenyan journalist, puts the situation in this perspective:

Of course, more vernacular radio stations took on even more, should I say violent messaging? We saw that with people like Joshua Arap Sang accused in the ICC. And three days after conflagration began to happen in Kenya, there was a general headline, you know of "We Want Peace" across all the major newspapers in Kenya and that was in 2008; January 3rd actually. Three days after you know, what people now acronym as the PEV, the post-election violence had begun. Which is the media's attempt to overcorrect the situation.

Mochama (Interview by author. Tape recording. Nairobi, September 22, 2016) believes the mass media could do better in scrutinizing what these politicians' intentions are for leading the country by not effectively questioning politicians' agendas and manifestos. Thus, the government gets away with cosmetic truth that contributes to the polarization and convulsion of the country, which is one of the reasons why most interviewees see citizen journalism as a positive platform that brings out hidden truths, exposes injustices, and provides organic realities on different matters. Not that Kenyan society has entirely turned to citizen journalism platform as the main source of information, but the growing consumption of information and netizens' actions are more visible in the Kenyan cyberspace – from the blogosphere of Bikozulu to the Twitter-yard of #KOT. Smart (Interview by author. Tape recording. Nairobi, November 16,

2016), reflects on “Citizen journalism as a platform that has become effective in watching the watchdog, which is the mass media”. Ngito (Interview by author. Tape recording. Nairobi, September 7, 2016), founder of Map Kibera, proclaims that “Citizen journalism works because it is a people-focussed platform”. He explains further that the platform could cut like a knife when taking the government or the mass media to task, even in the face of political oppression and repression. He concludes that it is also a platform burgeoning with divergent representations of the sociopolitical and economic needs of all sectors of society – from the upper elites to the lower working class.

Smart (Interview by author. Tape recording. Nairobi, November 16, 2016) relates to citizen journalists as a community mouthpiece and harbingers of needed information for intervention. To him, it is easier for citizen journalists to bring out the truth as they see it as opposed to the profit-oriented mass media burdened with heavy equipment and different agendas. Mwangi (Interview by author. Tape recording. Nairobi, October 17, 2016) also worries about the tenacity of the mass media to maximize profit, which has changed the way they were the truth-bringers in the Moi political dispensation.

Conversely, the director of the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC), Kegoro (Interview by author. Tape recording. Nairobi, September 29, 2016) underscores the stark division permeating the Kenyan sociopolitical sphere and how the new media helped promote division and hatred in Kenya’s 2007 elections. He blames the mass media for their lack of adherence to the ethics and standards of journalism in the way they had regularly succumbed to government pressure and manipulation, especially in 2008.

By and large, both the online platform and mass media promoted ethnicized biases in the Kenya’s 2008 PEV, which, according to Kobia (Interview by author. Skype Call. Nairobi, October 3, 2016), made the fresh avenue that Ushahidi provided for documentation unique in shifting the people’s attention to do something more positive. Thus, when Ushahidi emerged out of the concern of a few Kenyan bloggers to do something about the violence ravaging Kenya in 2008, it stood out among the polarizing voices on the Internet. Wanyeki (Interview by author. Tape recording. Nairobi, September 15, 2016) illustrates the positive efforts of Ushahidi, as she highlights the two trends of Kenyan netizens during the 2008 PEV. She calls the first, the panicky diaspora, with distorted interpretations of occurrences, and citizens who leaned towards a particular political orientation with a disruptive agenda. The second trend consisted of the progressive voices helping fellow Kenyans through the humanitarian response and offering reflective thoughts on why the violent conflict was raging. Therefore, a citizen journalism platform became an active reporting avenue by the Ushahidi team, in collaboration with other citizen journalists, to crowdsource information on the extent and magnitude of the violence among the Kenyan populace (Goldstein and Rotich 2008; Jewitt 2009; Banda 2010).

Not only did Ushahidi map the 2008 PEV, the platform also went ahead to become a hybrid of citizen journalism and technological platform offering open-source software for crisis and disaster mapping in various countries such as Chile, South Africa, USA, Haiti, India, the Philippines, and Pakistan (Banda 2010, 57). Kobia explains why he thinks the Ushahidi platform is a relevant netizen undertaking:

Initially, I didn’t think Ushahidi would have that big an impact. I was happy we made something and we could record this information but it was quite shocking to see how much impact it had. Almost immediately we were contacted by guys in South Africa, saying the needed a way to record xenophobic violence that was breaking out. So, what did

we achieve? I felt like we went far, above and beyond what we had hoped to do. We actually created a platform that we shared with other people that allow them to create similar communities. We made it easy for people to do what we did. They multiplied that effort. And on 2008 PEV, the immediate impact was having these data informing the Kenyan media and the world what was really going on and how bad the situation was at the time. Again Ushahidi had set out to have this information recorded for posterity, so there was a reference point. So obviously, after the dust had settled, people have a mechanism, a way of looking back to timeline event: a way to perform a post-mortem. Not just policy makers but the average person had finally had a way of looking into how things had played out and why they happened.

Ushahidi did not stop at mapping crises or providing the global community access to its open-source software; it upscaled its efforts by providing the software for the multiagent early warning mechanism platform called Uwiano in Kenya. Formed in 2009, Uwiano (www.nscpeace.go.ke/108/), a multistakeholder consortium, responds to imminent conflict through an early warning mechanism operating on the open-source software of Ushahidi to crowdsourcing information. Funded by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the platform includes the Ushahidi platform, the National Cohesion and Integration Committee (NCIC), the National Steering Committee (NSE) on conflict management and peacebuilding, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Committee (IEBC), and PeaceNet.

Shalakh, the programme manager of PeaceNet (Interview by author. Tape recording. Nairobi, November 21, 2016), elaborates that through the locals the Uwiano platform is able to facilitate information gathering before there is an uncontrollable outbreak of conflict in Kenya's 47 counties. At the grassroots level, the Uwiano platform collaborates with local organizations, as well as individuals, whose roles are dubbed "peace actors". The peace actors consist of the community members (i.e. the district committee members, the police, local NGOs, and inter-religion councils) of each county where the consortium operates. Data collection as well as real-time reportage of brewing disputes or violent conflict are part of the peace actors' mandates. PeaceNet, in which the Ushahidi open-source software is used, mitigates unrest when it is reported to the online alert system through the organization's peace actors. This method assists in notifying the police and dispatches a swift response. With the Uwiano mechanism, the communities are coordinating themselves to reduce violence.

Also, in the 2013 general elections, Ushahidi's Uchaguzi electoral monitoring mechanism was used to monitor the election for transparency, fairness, and tranquility. The members of the public used the platform to report on voting and any suspicious activities. This was in response to the 2007 elections and the violence that occurred. Therefore, no chances were taken, especially where accurate and timely information could save the day. As reported on the Uchaguzi platform, of the 4,964 reports published on the Ushahidi website during deployment 2,699 were swiftly verified (Ushahidi n.d.). He describes this exercise as Ushahidi's way of contributing further to Kenya's political and conflict transformation.

While Ushahidi continues to build technology to elevate human conditions within a local context, several other netizen platforms are matching some of the platform's efforts on the people-centred paradigm. As Map Kibera, Sisi Ni Amani Kenya, Afroes, and the Twitter Chief discussed in the next section show, the nonviolent technological uptakes by Kenyan netizens, be it through citizen journalism or interactive websites, are a force of change that is influencing political crises towards conflict transformation.

The Map Kibera project

Kibera is known as one of the most notorious slums in Nairobi, especially for its allegedly unprecedented crimes rate, unemployment, and extreme poverty. It has been said that Kibera, a slum in the midst the cosmopolitan essence of Nairobi, houses over a million Kenyans. However, Kepha Ngito, who grew up in Kibera, started a mapping project called Map Kibera to ascertain the real number of Kibera residents. He came up with 600,000. The information that Kibera was overpopulated had led to the government underfocusing on infrastructural development and job opportunities for the people of Kibera. Ngito states:

A lot of stories have been told by others not from within, people are not telling their own story; people are spoken about, people are decided for, project are designed by other people for people in Kibera and other slums but not with them in the planning, they don't listen to their side of the story. Of course, when projects are designed like that, they do not work successfully. So, my first question is, could it be because the story of these people have not been heard that things are not working and could it also be that there is a conspiracy to keep them silent or to ignore when they speak or to push down their ambitions and desires?

With Map Kibera, Kepha Ngito showed the real population figure that could assist in facilitating the necessary amenities and employment opportunities for the Kibera populace. Map Kibera is a creative digital tool that presents the voices of the marginalized community of Kibera. This initiative that began in 2007 and launched in 2009 has extended to other slums such as Mathare and Mukuru in Kenya for creative mapping for better representation of these communities to the government. The Ushahidi platform open-source software was used in extending the work of Ngito and his team.

According to Ngito (Interview by author. Tape recording. Nairobi, September 7, 2016), Kibera, a scar in the conscience of Kenyan leaders with its glaring inequality, is no longer a negligible place as a result of the participation of the youth through the new media to speak to their reality. So, the advent of the new media has amplified the voices of the youth through different platforms, including social media and the Kibera News Network and Voice of Kibera, where the youth of the community are documenting and reporting sociopolitical concerns. This way, the government is alerted for immediate actions and the community is participating in its own affairs. Since the 2008 PEV and the Map Kibera project on the government's tail, a few developments have occurred in terms of the provision of amenities such as water and electricity in Kibera.

Mzalendo: interactivity between the people and the parliamentarians

Mzalendo exists to reach out to Kenyan parliamentarians so that they can hear peoples' concerns and act. According to the platform's website, the purpose of Mzalendo is to "keep an eye on the Kenyan parliament" and "promote greater public voice and enhance public participation in politics by providing relevant information about the National Assembly and Senate's activities". Mzalendo (meaning 'Patriot' in Swahili) is a nonpartisan project that began in 2005 and was revamped in 2012. Kenyan activist, blogger, and lawyer, Ory Okolloh, who was also instrumental to the formation of the Ushahidi platform in 2008, started Mzalendo alongside Conrad Akunga, an experienced software architect, engineer, and tech-entrepreneur. Mzalendo became a more effective parliament-monitoring platform after it was relaunched in 2012.

When the political environment was different in 2005 with the Official Secrets Act, information was only leaked to Mzalendo about the deeds and misdeeds of the parliament. But with the 2010 referendum and a new constitution in place, public participation is emphasized and access to information guaranteed. This allows for free flow of information between the citizens and the parliament. On the Mzalendo site, all the parliamentarians' information, including biographic information, contact details, and the committees on which they sit, is made public. This way, the people are able to reach out to their leaders directly. Where a parliamentarian is unreachable, Mzalendo is alerted, and if an issue is controversial, Mzalendo takes up the matter and tries to reach out to the concerned parliamentarian. This is to ensure that the job in which a parliamentarian is voted in to do is prioritized. Soft copies of parliament proceedings are also made available on the Mzalendo site. As an online site that serves as a bridge between the people and the parliament, Mzalendo considers the new media a catalyst for inclusive governance through an avenue that fosters cohesive information and feedback. Mzalendo has been replicated in a few African countries, namely Nigeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Ghana, Zimbabwe, and South Africa.

Mindset education: Afroes Haki 2 online peace game

In the age of Internet games, some violent, some educative, a group of people led by Kenyan-South African Anne Githuku-Shongwe decided to start to unlock the potential of young Africans. Transforming their entrenched belief system and mental model through play, games, and digital interactive media has become Afroes' focus. In 2013, Afroes (short for African Heroes and Heroines), an NGO that runs different transformational programmes both in South Africa and Kenya, decided to develop an online peace game (Afroes 2013). According to the Kenya Programme Manager of Afroes, Mwai Gathoni, local research was conducted, especially in the hotbed of the 2008 PEV, the Kenyan Rift Valley region, to understand where the community needs help in facilitating and nurturing a unified society. The research outcome led to the development of a mobile game called Haki Chaguo Ni Lako (aka Haki 2), designed to educate the players about peace and tolerance (Afroes 2015).

Although it is has not been an easy task to measure the impact of the game, several youths in the targeted communities have acquired information and awareness about the importance of the game as well as its overarching effect in promoting peace during and beyond election times (Gathoni. Interview by author. Note taking. Nairobi, April 19, 2017). Among the games that Afroes has developed for online civic education are Jobhunt (a game that educates players about online jobs), Moraba (used in South Africa to educate the youth audience on sexual health and prevention of gender-based violence), Haki to educate on the danger of depletion of ecosystem (in honour of Kenyan environmental activist and Nobel laureate Wangari Maathai), and Chamchase to educate the audience on child abuse, safety, protection, and rights.

Peace in Our Pockets: the work of Sisi Ni Amani

While Ushahidi's crisis mapping focussed on hotspots of violence to make a difference, Sisi Ni Amani Kenya (SNA-K), a local NGO in Kenya, decided to take it a step further by mapping peace. This is to make several peace initiatives by Kenyans more coordinative and collaborative. Sisi Ni Amani, meaning "We are peace" in Kiswahili, was conceived by undergraduate students at Tufts University, Rachel Brown and Cody Valdes (Parker 2011). The SNA-K programme started out in 2010 standing at a vantage point of consolidating the lessons learnt from the 2008 PEV to make a difference while working with local peace leaders and activists in the 2013

general elections. Using text messaging, SNA-K educates members of several Kenyan communities where its work is located, including Baba Dogo, Mathare, Dandora in Nairobi, and the Rift Valley. Through a USSD code, *762#, a Safaricom subscription donated to the SNA-K project, the SMS-based programming for peace-mapping and civil education for violence prevention is operated (Sisi Ni Amani unknown).

Using similar crowdsourcing technology as Ushahidi, SNA-K provides a leverage-networking platform for Kenyan peace leaders who are members of different communities to better collaborate. Face-to-face peace workshops are organized for sharing experiences, creating synergy, and building skills. One critical way that SNA-K text messaging had worked was in stopping the land dispute in Mulot, Narok County in 2012, where the violent actors received text messages urging them to consider peace. Heeding this advice, the warring factions met with a local religious leader to mediate (PopTech 2012). To this effect, inspired by the SNA-K, SMS-based peace mapping and civic education projects, Groove Productions made a documentary titled *Peace in Our Pockets* in 2012.

The documentary showcases the power of the effective use of mobile devices by Kenyan citizens and peace activists to broker peace (*Peace in Our Pockets* 2012). Through subscriptions to USSD code *762#, community members can access SNA-K's database and send information out to others. The messages are sent out in numerous languages, including English, Kiswahili, and Sheng. With a donation of over 50 million free text messages received from Safaricom to promote SNA-K activities, peace actors were able to send messages such as "let us desist from violence and always embrace peace", "we are brothers and sisters let's stay in peace", "let's build our nation by voting peacefully" to members of their communities. By 2013, over 30,000 members of the targeted communities had subscribed to SNA-K text-messaging services and several influential leaders and peace actors had converged to promote peace. Having 30,000 subscribers to SNA-K text-messaging services is considered an indicator of a community willing to try another alternative to violence. However, research is needed to ascertain to what extent this anecdotal evidence can be applied to broader outcomes.

The Twitter Chief Magic

Chief Francis Kariuki, popularly known in the Rift Valley, Nakuru County, specifically Lanet sub-county, as the "Twitter Chief", is a government administrator handling education, health, and security. Chief Kariuki utilizes Twitter effectively among and within his county. He currently has over 63,000 Twitter followers. When asked why he uses Twitter and the effectiveness of this digital platform in his work, Chief Kariuki states:

Twitter, I think is the best communication tool among the communities. They have two platforms, one is through the Internet and the other one is through the SMS without having to activate their Internet bundles to be able to communicate. Every service provider works by assigning short and long codes that help convert Twitter messages to SMS messages and vice versa without being charged to receive the text messages. This becomes an effective mode of communication especially since not everybody has a smart phone. That's what I have been using in the community to communicate. So, whenever anything happens say may be an outbreak of a disease like polio, I use the platform to mobilise for immunisation.

Through efficient communication with his county, he sees less violence and more cohesion. The use of SMS and Twitter, according to the Chief, has been very resourceful in sharing

information and coordinating for action. Training on the use of social media, most especially on the use of Twitter and Facebook for coordination, sensitization, and sharing of the information, is part of Chief Kariuki's regular engagement across Kenya.

Kenyan netizens' contribution to conflict transformation

Conflict transformation is a concept that “envision[s] and responds to the ebb and flow of social conflict as ‘life-giving opportunities’ to create constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships” (Lederach 2003, 14). Lederach (2003) argues that conflict transformation addresses some of the elements missing in other approaches to peace, including the lack of a bottom-up, durable construction of long-term advocacy and strategic planning, especially in relation to conflict management and conflict resolution.

According to Lederach (2003, 12), conflict transformation is a peacemaking mechanism that is focussed on creating a more holistic framework of addressing the content, context, and structure of a given conflict. Looking at the utilization of new media by the people, it has not only allowed the amplification of peoples' voices to discuss the content, context, and structure of a given conflict, but it has also allowed for conflict-addressing innovations. For instance, through the Uwiano platform, a consortium is organized to see to the prevention of future violent conflict, and through the Sisi Ni Amani project, it is facilitating a solution-orientated process whereby relational coexistence is preached via text messaging. In addition, Mzalendo and the Kibera projects are not only intensifying the voices of the marginalized, but they are also providing evidence on the perennial sociopolitical and economic inequalities and injustices yet to be addressed.

Lederach (2003, 14) envisions conflict as “life-giving opportunities” to create “constructive change processes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interaction and social structures, and respond to real-life problems in human relationships”. In this case, Lederach (2003, 27) offers four levels of constructive change processes that must be engaged in to rebuild relationships and failed institutions, including personal, relational, structural, and cultural. The personal as minimizing the destructive effects of social conflict and maximizing the potential for the person's holistic growth and well-being; the relational hinges on minimizing poorly functioning communication and maximizing understanding; the structural as uprooting causes and conditions creating violent conflicts to promote nonviolent mechanisms for long-term peace and foster the necessary development structures to meet basic human needs; and lastly the cultural identifies and understands the contributing patterns in the rise of violence, which in itself assists in building mechanisms for constructive responses to conflict.

Since 2008, from Ushahidi to SNA-K, some Kenyan netizens have continued to converge as nonviolent digital interventionists. Several of the initiatives of these platforms have become proactive in creating a bidirectional if not multidirectional flow of information. Although, further research is needed to measure how increased access to information gathering and sharing have continued to amplify the concerns of marginalized communities for tangible political inclusion, nonetheless these platforms have shown that change can happen through nonviolent technological uptakes that focus on structural, cultural, relational, and personal issues that obstruct human development and coexistence. From the Uwiano early warning system, to keeping a watchful eye on the parliamentarians, to mapping Kibera for sociopolitical inclusion and the synergy of peace actors to utilize the new media for peace, Kenyan netizens are investing in ground-up conflict transformation.

Conclusion

People-centred digital platforms such as SNA-K, Mzalendo, the Ushahidi citizen journalism platform and netizens' nonviolent endeavours such as Map Kibera are highlighting important sociopolitical issues and empowering the public to take charge of their own peace and invest in a model of governance that serves them. The nonviolent technological interventionists platforms of several Kenyan netizens presented in this chapter illuminate a ground-up conflict transformation endeavour. These netizens are using the new media to lead crucial conversations, share significant information, and develop innovations to prevent violent conflicts in direct response to real-life problems, which is important in addressing structural, cultural, and relational injustices that affect human development and peace. Conflict transformation, as Lederach (2003) posits, is a long-term venture, which enables continual voicing of concerns and innovations of the public. Therefore, the nonviolent digitized efforts of several of these platforms, including the Ushahidi, SNAK-K, the Twitter Chief and Afroes, have continued to engage and challenge the media, the government, and the public to not only invest in sociopolitical transformation and better governance but also to collectively participate in conflict transformation.

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