HOW DIGITAL MEDIA ARE INFLUENCING POLITICS AND POLITICAL DISCOURSES IN KENYA

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Résumé

Dans le discours occidental, les médias numériques dans les pays africains sont souvent associés à la fracture dite numérique. Cet article montre comment les médias numériques ont été adoptés dans le discours politique kenyan et comment les Kenyans ont utilisé les médias numériques pour les discussions politiques pendant les élections de 2013. Les médias numériques jouent un rôle crucial dans la société kenyane; les discussions sur la fracture numérique étant périmées, de nouvelles perspectives doivent être développées.

Mots-clés

Abstract

In western discourse, digital media in African countries are often associated with the so-called digital divide. This article shows how digital media have been adopted in the Kenyan political discourse and how Kenyans used digital media for political discussions during the elections of 2013. Digital media play a crucial role in the Kenyan society; discussions about the digital divide are out-dated, new perspectives must be developed.

Keywords

INTRODUCTION

In western discourse digital media in African countries are mostly associated with the so-called "digital divide". In the 1990s, digital media started to become a topic in the developmental discourse under the heading of digital divide. The idea of the digital divide is based on the concept of the so-called knowledge gap hypothesis. Philip J. Tichenor, George A. Donohue, and Clarice N. Olien from the University of Minnesota developed the hypothesis based on mass media developments in the 1970s (cf. Tichenor 1970). The definition of the knowledge gap is that some population groups which are better off and more educated have better opportunities to adopt new technologies and the related information. Poorer and less educated population groups are disadvantaged in the possibilities of adopting media. These relationships also apply to the adoption of digital media and this is why it is called digital divide. The digital divide characterizes a phenomenon that originally was valid for the countries of the Global South as well as for those of the Global North. But in the development discourse the term digital divide is used to describe the disadvantaged countries of the Global South in contrast to the countries of the Global North with regard to digital media from a global perspective. The developmental term digital divide was not defined by unequal possibilities of adoption but mainly in regard to the availability of or access to digital media, and was therefore reduced to material aspects[1]. Limiting the term to the material aspects implies that everybody has the same possibility of usage as soon as access is granted. The digital divide is most often conceptualised in binary terms: someone either has access to the medium or does not; someone either uses the internet or does not. The narratives of the digital divide are narratives of the Have and Have Not, of active and passive participants, of donors and recipients[2]. The assumption of a digital divide creates the idea that the divide is a given fact and must be overcome. A divide allows only two options: the existence of a divide or its overcoming, the process of change remains invisible. Another criticism concerning the idea of a digital divide is its technology-centred approach. It implies that access to the internet will simply solve a lot of problems. This approach neglects social realities and the individual aspects of the users. "And it is recognition of this complexity and imaginative capability in people´s object relations that needs to be extended from northern digital culture to thinking new media in development and globalization, rather than continuing to try to settle, once and for all, what ICTs `really are` and how they can best be ´used` by the people we deign to `help`." (Slater 2013: 10) This article argues that Kenya, which is often counted as a Have Not, has been in the process of changing for a long time; Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) are already a central part of Kenyan society. Therefore, the idea of a general global digital divide between the countries of the Global North and Global South is no longer adequate. Technical improvements and cheaper access are helping increase the significance of the internet in Kenya today.

My work is based on nine months of fieldwork in Nairobi/Kenya. Via participatory observation in three different cyber cafés in various districts of Nairobi and semi-structured interviews with users, I studied the cyber cafés themselves as well as the internet and computer adoption of the users. I also conducted expert interviews and collected an article archive with over 32,000 articles on the topic of Information and Communication Technology

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1 Also "academics have generally defined the digital divide as being primarily about the gap that exists between people who have access to digital media and the internet and those who do not". (Creeber 2009: 123)

2 "…most poorer societies, lagging far behind, plagued by multiple burdens of debt, disease, and ignorance, may join the digital world decades later and, in the long-term, may ultimately fail to catch up." (Norris 2001: 5)

from different sources. This article is partly based on archive articles that are the basis of a historical perspective on the development of ICTs in Kenya, but also on data I collected in Kenya during the election time in 2013. For years, cyber cafés were the most important and popular means of accessing the internet. Today a number of people own PCs or notebook computers or are able to access the internet at work. However, the most important change is the rapid spread of mobile internet use in Kenya. The Kenyan internet and mobile phone market is growing at breakneck pace and there is no denying that Kenyan society is rapidly changing as a result. Mobile phone shops, cyber cafés, computer and mobile phone repair services and private computer colleges are an integral part of the nation's infrastructure. M-Pesa[3] is an accepted form of payment just about everywhere and practically every Kenyan has a mobile phone. Young people find it very important to have a Facebook account. While in 2007 just 7.9 % of Kenyans who had access to the internet, in 2013 already 39.0 % of the Kenyan population could use the internet.[4] Also, with regard to the possession of mobile phones, a tremendous increase can be observed over the last few years. In 2007 30.1% of Kenyans were in possession of a mobile phone, in 2013 this had risen to 70.6%. Nowadays, more and more people even own a smartphone.[5] Internet-enabled mobile phones and smartphones are becoming more and more relevant regarding the access to and usage of the internet. Whereas in earlier texts about the digital divide, access is mostly via computers and fixed-line connections[6], nowadays the mobile usage possibilities of the internet are blurring these conceptual lines and cannot be easily captured by previous concepts. Therefore the previous definition of digital divide must be reconsidered and adapted to new developments in the field of digital media. The preoccupation with developments in the field of digital media on the African continent also reveals that the developments are quite unequal in different countries. Kenya with 39%, Nigeria with 38%, South Africa with 48.9% or Egypt with 49.56% clearly do have more intense internet usage than countries such as Congo with 2.2% or Niger with 1.7%[7]. Therefore, it is difficult to speak about a global digital divide between the Global North and the Global South because country-specific differences of African countries are not taken into account.

My work shows that the digital divide between the countries of the Global North and the Global South no longer exists in the way previous definitions have suggested, but has become more complex. Glen Creeber and Martin Royston note that in "the debate about the digital divide is no longer necessarily about universalizing access to computers, but about how and why people use new technologies and the Internet." (Creeber 2009: 124). On the users level it is more about internal Kenyan digital divides that can no longer be described in terms of access, educated/uneducated or poor/rich, but must also include aspects such as social

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3 M-pesa ("M" for mobile and "pesa" for Kiswahili money) is a cell phone-based money transfer system that was introduced by cell phone provider Safaricom in 2007.

4http://worldstatistics.org/result.php?code=IT.NET.USER.P2?name=Internet%20users%20(per%20100%20people) _ 11.01.2015

5 The mobile devices enable many more people to use the internet. Kenyan mobile provider Safaricon has realized the trend to smartphones and removed nearly all internets enabled "normal" mobile phones from its range. All mobile providers have different offers for the mobile usage of the internet. Users can buy so-called bundles and use the internet with specific timings or with data packets. There are no monthly contracts, but bundles that are bought according to the needs of different users.

6 "(...) the internet itself is capital-intensive and subsequently poorer people are kept in its fringes, because computers, modems, software and Internet Provider monthly subscriptions may not be affordable to them." (Moyo 2009: 127)

7http://worldstatistics.org/result.php?code=IT.NET.USER.P2?name=Internet%20users%20(per%20100%20people) _11.01.2015

environment, urban/rural, gender and age[8]. Graham notes that: "There is no singular floating cyberspace, in the sense that a person is either inside or outside, separated by a 'digital divide'. There are rather countless small (although often insurmountable) 'digital divides' preventing movement through the topologies of the internet and limiting access to cyberspaces." (Graham 2011: 223) These digital divides have to be researched.

This article deals with the questions of how ICTs were and are adopted and innovated in Kenya in a process-oriented way. It also shows how different politicians used social future concepts for political campaigning that were highly influenced by the idea of digitization. But social media are also changing the political discussions on the user level. During the 2013 election, Facebook became an important platform for political expression in Kenya.

The Digitization of Kenyan Society

Initially,[9] foreign aid organizations[10] especially needed computers and the internet because of the need to communicate with their home countries. With time, computers and the internet increasingly became part of Kenyan society. The reason was the development of specific ICT needs in the private and public sectors, and also the growing popularity of ICT in the Kenyan population, mainly via computer training centres, e-touch centres and cyber cafés, and revolutionary technical developments. With time, the interest and awareness of the Kenyan government also started to increase, but as long as there was no genuine interest in the ICT market, development of the sector remained quite slow. Until the Government really took over the digitization of society, the discourse about ICT was partly influenced by western discourse, but Kenyan computer experts and the Kenyan Indian community also played a crucial role by spreading computer and internet technology.

Nowadays, the debate within Kenya about the future path of the country is highly influenced by the idea of digitization and therefore by the possibilities of ICT. The utopia of digitization in a Kenyan context is strongly connected to the idea of improving the quality of life of

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8 In some academic works, such as Manuel Castell's book "The Internet Galaxy" from 2001 or in Glen Creebers and Martin Royston's "Digital Cultures. Understanding New Media." from 2009 they criticise the concept of a digital divide that focuses only on the aspect of access. Castell argues that there are many influences which are relevant for a phenomenon such as the digital divide, but access is still relevant: "(…) access alone does not solve the problem, but it is a prerequisite for overcoming the inequality in a society whose dominant functions and social groups are increasingly organized around the Internet.."(Castells 2001: 248) Castells was primarily referring to the digital divide as a phenomenon in the Global North. Creeber and Royston argue that there are at least three divides: the geographic divide, the social divide and the democratic divide. Therefore, they argue there is not just the problem of access and not just one simple solution to it. "Solutions to the problems of access, infrastructure, content, technological literacy and various forms of discrimination must take a multi-stakeholder approach in terms of the crafting of policy responses and the implementation of agreed strategies." (Creeber 2009: 130)

9 In the late 1970s and at the beginning of the 1980s the first computers came to Kenya as complete systems. In 1987 a Nairobi-based firm, "Kenya Microcomputers Ltd.", started its business by innovating the Kenyan computer market, importing different computer parts like the central processing unit (CPU) or the keyboards from different counties, e.g. Taiwan, Japan and the USA. The computer, bearing the name "Neptune", was then assembled in Kenya. Later the brand name changed to "Harvard" to emphasise improvements in quality. The aim of importing different parts from different countries was to reduce the cost of the computer by reducing import taxes.

10 Many aid organisations use Kenya´s main city Nairobi as headquarters for the East Africa region nowadays.

Kenyan citizens, the idea of political empowerment and economic growth. Research shows that the main push for the digitization of Kenyan society to become a knowledge-based society was initiated by the former government under president Mwai Kibaki around 2005/2006. In his speech "ICT holds the key to Kenya´s future", former president Mwai Kibaki said in 2006: "The development of any country today is dependent on accessibility to knowledge, information, and communication. Therefore, investment in ICT infrastructure and appropriate human skills are critical in establishing a digital society. In pursuing this objective, we realise that digital technology is only a means to an end. The ultimate goal of embracing ICT is to open up opportunities that will facilitate rapid economic development and a secure future for our country." (Kibaki, 2006) ICTs are playing a crucial role in the construction of the future and future generations in Kenya. In the "Vision 2030" of the former government of Mwai Kibaki, ICT plays a central role in the development of Kenya becoming a middle-income country[11]. On 31st October 2006 Mwai Kibaki launched his Vision 2030, a 25-year plan with a prosperity-creating strategy and the aim of transforming Kenya into a middle-income country. The exploitation of science, technology and innovation was one of the key elements of the strategy.[12] The shaping of society into a middle-income society was, among other things, to be managed with the help of technology. With Permanent Secretary of Information and Communication Dr. Bitange Ndemo, a former lecturer at the University of Nairobi who joined the civil service under Kibaki in 2005, the Kenyan ambition for digitization became more effective. Ndemo said about himself and his political aim: "I´m determined to drive the country into the digital information age." (Omondi, 2006) Ndemo stood more than anyone before for the faith in Kenyan potential to become an ICT hub, especially for Nairobi to become a central ICT city. "With the right sets of action plans it will be possible for Kenya to embark on an alternative socio-economic development path, that is guided by the development, deployment and exploitation of ICTs within the different sectors for the economy, without going through an extensive and tedious industrialization process." (Ndemo, 2006) In his speeches[13] digitization is directly connected to a genuine future vision of how to shape Kenyan society, to the youth to profit from the growth of the market and to a secure economic future. A society based on ICT ceases to depend on the idea of industrialized societies. Digitization here is an alternative to the industrialization process and is connected to a new future model of society based on knowledge and information. The role models of the

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11 On the 30th of September 2014 new statistics were released, officially declaring that Kenya had achieved lower middle income status in 2012: "The economy is 25% larger than earlier estimated, and Kenya is now the ninth largest African country with a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of $55.2 billion. The Kenya National Bureau of Statistics revised the economy's growth rate for 2013 to 5.7% and the government projects it will be the same in 2014. The World Bank Group (WBG), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the African Development Bank (ADB) provided technical support for the "rebasing" of the national accounts." (http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/kenya/overview _ 09.10.2014)

12 Kenya had previously had two long-term policies: "Sessional Paper No 10 1965, African Socialism and its Application on Kenya, and Sessional Paper 1 in 1986, Economic Management for Renewed Growth." (Mwai, 2006)

13 Also Minister for Information and Communication Muthai Kagwe described at the 2006 "Kenya ICT Strategy Conference: Collaboration and Outsourcing for Economic Growth" what Kenyan society should be aiming for. "The publications, Kenya´s National ICT strategy (2005) and ICT Strategy for Economic Growth (2006), are the start of a journey that represents our nation´s vision in the information age. (…) Kenya has reached a point where she must shift from depending on an agricultural base which is characterised by a relatively weak industrial foundation and embrace a knowledge economy." (Kagwe, Muthai: ICT plays Major Role in Enhancing Development. in: Daily Nation (2006), 28th February)

future society are no longer influenced by the idea of becoming like a western society, but rather take India, Costa Rica and Mauritius as alternative examples to follow.[14]

But the attempt at a politically-controlled implementation of ICT and its effect on Kenyan society is connected to many unforeseeable risks and side effects. These factors present an unprecedented dilemma: The implementation of ICT and its consolidation in a society has no guaranteed outcome. It may well be closely linked to potential reversals of desired effects. Thus, these competing realities between the poles of realistic expectations (when it comes to politically-navigated digitization efforts) and of unrealistic hopes are part of what shapes the world view in the debate surrounding the realization of the digitization process - from its inception to the present. The idea of a digitized[15] society is like an ideal model where social realities are not necessarily included. In this context, people are seen purely as human capital with entrepreneurial skills and are equipped with rational thoughts, always with an eye on capitalizing on the possibilities of digitization. There is an implied automatism when it comes to a discourse about ICTs, that people will benefit in many ways from the implementation of ICTs and thus, in this context, the contemporary model of digitization is seen as an opportunity for the transformation of people's lives, enhancing political empowerment and triggering economic growth. The proliferation of interest groups in Kenya, which formed among the pioneers who were involved in the widespread propagation of the internet and the digitization efforts as part of the transformation to an "information society", has changed over time[16]. However, their engagement has attracted unprecedented attention from politicians and interest groups, concerning mobilization of support on e-governance, e-health and e-education. In theory, the e-ideas sound politically very promising but it is not always easy to determine the viability of these ideas. It is not easy to assess whether these ideas are realistic or whether they are part of the e-fashion that is strongly influenced by a political elite and a political direction of the last few years that has pushed more and more for digitization.

The concept of "being digital" in political campaigning

But the idea of digitization or being "digital" goes beyond the terminology in a strictly technical understanding. During the pre-election campaign of March 2013, presidential candidate Uhuru Kenyatta and his running mate William Ruto from the newly-founded party "The National Alliance" (TNA) presented themselves as "The Digital Team" in an attempt to win over the electorate while strategically repackaging the ethnic nationalism used in every election cycle as a winning formula.

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14 Taking this into consideration, it becomes more understandable why young people in Nairobi feel so attracted to the idea of "being digital" and for having a "digital president".

15 The debate about digitization is also connected to the idea of trying to implement a neoliberal economy. This can also be seen as social engineering. The rhetoric of the social engineering of neoliberalism and social engineering of digitization is quite similar. That is not very surprising: The idea of digitization is just a different form of the realization of neoliberal ideas.

16 The question is: Did the internet change the life of the people and did the internet really improve the life of the people as politics promised? Or asked in a more neutral way: What do people do with the internet and what role does it play in their daily lives? My hypothesis is that the internet is both helping and harming people in individual and unexpected ways.

Picture 1: Canvassing of TNA during the election campaign 2013

Source: Photo from a canvassing flyer

To shape this worldview in the context of politicization of the digitization process, "The Digital Team" crafted their campaign strategy, branding their leading political opponent, the party leader of the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM) Raila Odinga and his political team, as an "analogue team". Despite the emergence of a new digital political identity in electoral politics during the election campaign, all the presidential candidates had a Facebook profile[17]. After Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto were elected and continued using Facebook and Twitter to report about their political activities, a newspaper article labelled them as really "digital". (Shiundu, 2013) But the expression "digital" stands not only for Uhuru Kenyatta and his Digital Team being associated with technology, but also for being the youngest president Kenya ever had, having another political style, doing things differently. In an online article in *The Kenyan Daily Post,* for example, Uhuru Kenyatta was called a "digital president" because he used his motorcycle to drive from the airport to the state house instead of using his limousine. The title of the article was: "UHURU KENYATTA is really a digital President and Man of the People" (The Kenyan Daily Post f. 25.11.2013) Digital means here also to be "a man of the people" and in that sense to be different from the presidents before him.[18] Some users commented on the article. One comment ran: "That was really clever instead of inconveniencing other road users. Way to go Mister President! Show the analogue team how things are done!". And another: "This must be a very wise President who is simple & caring for common man". This digital narrative was aimed at creating a perception among his supporters that President Uhuru is a down-to-earth and caring human being. But not all commenters agreed with the idea of having a "digital president". They used the commenting function to criticise Kenyatta for his politics. Nevertheless, most comments had a positive attitude towards the "digital president". "Being digital" is a future promise of a better Kenya and a different political style.

In contrast, one of Uhuru Kenyatta´s most serious competitors, Raila Odinga and his political team from the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), were called the "analogue team". The "analogue" stands here more for the old, traditional way of making politics, for old "mzees"[19] who are backward-looking, tired and cannot change the life of the people, whereas the

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17 The intensity of usage varied greatly. Martha Karua, the first female president candidate from the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC), started first.

18 http://www.kenyan-post.com/2013/07/uhuru-kenyatta-is-really-digital.html - 25.11.2013

19 Kiswahili for "old men"

"digital" stands for young and fresh ideas of younger politicians who were expected to introduce a new style of politics. The contrast of being "digital" or "analogue" also stands in this sense for a generational change. Uhuru Kenyatta was also associated with fresh ideas and a different political style when he presented a new cabinet after the elections. He actually exchanged most of the well-known political faces and replaced them with almost unknown people.

In an article in the Standard Online, the four presidents of Kenya were pictured. Every president was depicted with his personal symbol of power. (cf. Mkawale, Protus, 2014).

Picture 2: Kenya's presidents from left to right: Jomo Kenyatta, Daniel Moi, Mwai Kibaki and Uhuru Kenyatta
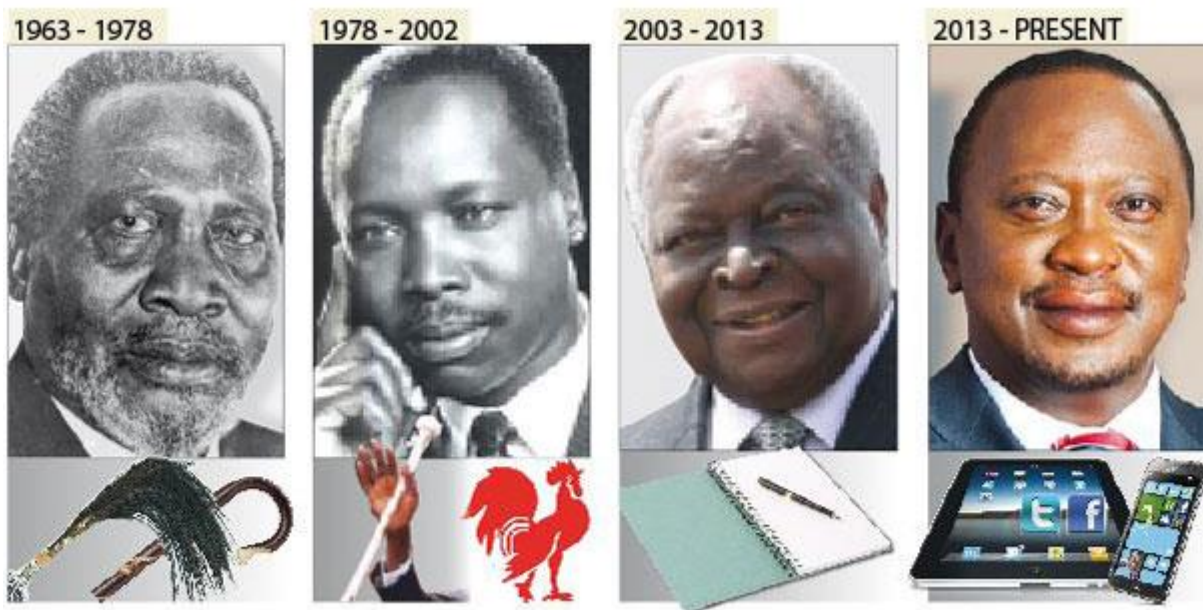
Source:http://www.standardmedia.co.ke/?articleID=2000099294&story_title=the-clashing-styles-of-kenya-s-four-presidents&pageNo=1

In the post-KANU period, politics was highly ethicised and politicised and therefore the first two presidents, Jomo Kenyatta and Daniel Arap Moi, are associated with traditional political symbols and artefacts according to their Kikuyu and Kalenjin culture. The third president, Mwai Kibaki, is represented with a notepad and a pen, consistent with his scholarly nature as an academic before becoming the third president of Kenya. He was known as a more technocratic figure. Uhuru Kenyatta´s symbols are a cell phone and a tablet computer. In the article stands: "President Uhuru Kenyatta exhibits the easy-going and free spirit of young 'digital age'".(cf. Mkawale, Protus, 2014) He is no longer associated with the "traditional fathers of the nation", although Mwai Kibaki already had a different attitude and political style. Uhuru Kenyatta stands for a nationalistic populism and participatory attempts in politics. He is connected to the Kenyan citizens (as long as they have internet access) via Twitter and Facebook, he opens up the political sphere for the ordinary Kenyan to participate in. This is where his reputation to be a man of the people might have originated. Uhuru Kenyatta uses social media like Facebook and Twitter intensively as a communication means

with potential voters. However, this picture can be quite misleading, because Uhuru Kenyatta is associated with "digital" attributes, but a lot of projects, such as Konza City (aimed at transforming Kenya into an ICT and sustainable world-class technology hub) and the undersea cable TEAM, were already initiated by the former government, starting around 2005 when Dr. Bitange Ndemo became Permanent Secretary of Information and Communication. It could be said that Uhuru Kenyatta hijacked the ownership of the digital push as his own initiative.

"Being digital" gives a new socio-cultural self-awareness to a younger generation in a society where almost all spheres of life are dominated by the older generation, including politics and the public sector. The generational change, as aided by the concept of being digital, sometimes even goes beyond ethnical and economical divisions.
In some of the interviews I conducted it became apparent that, because of ethnical prejudices, some interviewees would not normally have voted for Kenyatta, but eventually accepted him as a new president because of his "digital ideas". Jason from the NGA Trick Cyber Café from Mathare said: "He is an old guy being called a young president by the way he is digital. (...) The whole Facebook thing, Facebook government, I can feel like he is talking to me instead of a speech on the TV (…) you know the way you feel like he is connecting to me like when he got back to my post, he filled it and then it makes him look younger. That is cool of him. That is one of the things I like about him but I really don't like the fact that he is the president, he has a case to answer that is wrong." Having "digital power" also means having better chances in the job market, being modern and urban. It is viewed that the "digital world" opens up new perspectives for the younger generation: new concepts, new chances, and new self-images. Now the youth know something that most of the older people cannot control.

Social media usage during election time 2013

The political usage of social media during the election time in 2013 is essential to understanding Kenyan sensitivities. The rather apolitical social media platform Facebook became highly politicised before, during and after the elections in 2013.

Following the violent aftermath of the elections in 2007/2008, the so-called post-election violence where nearly 1500 people were killed, the 2013 election was eagerly awaited. Many NGOs initiated projects to support peaceful co-existence between different ethnic groups, especially before the election in March 2013. The concerns of the NGOs and also the Kenyan government were not entirely groundless and these efforts should not be criticised lightly, but the peace messages tended to simplify the complex and historically-grown ethnical relationships. There was hardly any space left to discuss the ethnical gaps still in existence. Rather, many people were afraid of criticizing something for fear of being accused of so-called hate speeches.[20] During the 2013 election time, people had to fear being punished legally for using hate speeches. Under this threat of punishment many people felt more compelled to behave peacefully than did so voluntarily.

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20 The phrase "hate speech" in Kenya is used in a common and in a legal sense. In law, hate speech is any speech, gesture or conduct, writing, or display which is forbidden because it may incite violence or prejudicial action against or by a protected individual or group.

The Kenyan government also tried to control different media. During the post-election violence, people sent text messages via their cell phones to propagate ethnical messages[21]. Also during the 2013 election time, the government announced that a governmental group, in cooperation with different cell phone operators, would use specific software to track hate messages spread by SMS.[22] Because some vernacular radio stations had been involved in propagating hate messages during the post election violence in 2007/2008, mass media were also under observation. Journalists were quite anxious about how and what to report. So the common Kenyan system of self-censorship was reinforced. To prevent violence, some riots in the so-called slum areas remained unmentioned in the media.[23]

So the expression of existing ethnical prejudices still in existence shifted to the social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. Although the government and other organizations also tried to control the use of social media[24], it became clear that the internet tracking did not work. The government could not provide enough technical equipment to control the large amount of internet data. Although some people had already used Facebook before the election for posting ethnical comments, the most intensive conflict on Facebook started with the announcement of the election results. Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto from the "digital team" were announced as the winners of the election. Political opponent Raila Odinga, who accused the election committee of manipulation, went to court to challenge the results. The intensity of the ensuing outbreak of social media conflicts was not a complete surprise. Ethnical prejudices were exchanged, mainly between Luos and the Kikujus as far as I was able to observe, e.g.: "Jalous wil neva rule kenya! smely fish!" or "the fuckin kikuyuz with their fuckin president in a fuckin country...bunch of thieves". Common stereotypes such as Luos being a fishing tribe, Kikujus as thieves and many more were articulated in ethnical Facebook comments.

It was not just another proof of the inner strife of Kenyan society, it also revealed that the ethnical prejudices could not just be associated with uneducated people and be dismissed as economical dissatisfaction. Macharia Gaitho from the Daily Nation wrote: "This violence is not being fought on bloody streets: it is warfare waged on the pristine, modern, middle-class avenues of Twitter and Facebook". (Gaitho, 2013) But the assumption that the conflict on Facebook was mainly a middle-class phenomenon cannot be completely confirmed because internet access via cyber cafés and cell or smart phones are also widespread in the so-called slum areas. It is not even easy to argue that this was mainly an urban phenomenon. People in

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21 cf. BBC World Service Trust, 2008: The Kenyan 2007 elections and their aftermath: the role of media and communication.

22 Later it was reported that during the election time an average of 300,000 hate text messages were blocked per day.

23 Ironically, afterwards the Kenyan journalists were criticised for failing to have conducted investigative journalism during the election time.

24 Social media also played a role during the post-election violence: "The social media were not politically innocent. Although some weblogs aimed to promote peace and justice, others were used as channels for biased information, tribal prejudices, and hate speech. The online sphere may foster the formation and strengthening of like-minded people and add to the fragmentation of opinions and views, rather than building compromises. Many bloggers took sides, and the discussion could be ethnically tense. Similarly, while SMS has been a powerful tool for good during and after the elections, it was also used to spread rumors and messages laden with ethnic hatred. It was reported that SMS predicted attacks and called recipients to act on the basis of their ethnicity" (Mäkinen, Kuira 2008: 331)

the rural areas also use their cell or smart phones in connection with an internet bundle to visit Facebook and Twitter.[25]

It is important not only to look at the ethnical comments but also at the dynamic of communications on Facebook. In nearly every ethnical conversation one could find mediating comments, for example: "Lets shun our tribal affiliation fo national unity bt remain partisan in ideology fo political diversity...Lets gve hatred a break" or "Admin stop speading statements which may trigger violence, this is not the appropriate time for make such comments. Solve the problem don´t be a problem." A lot of users tried to pacify the arguments and to mediate between the commenters.

People used Facebook as a platform to articulate their political opinion in not only ethnical but also mediating and peaceful ways.[26] Social media platforms at least gave an opportunity for political expression when governmental forces controlled many other possibilities. The social media platform Facebook opened up the change for mediating statements to become more visible in the ethicised political discussion, and it gave an insight into the Kenyan sensitivities as a clear sign that ethnical gaps in Kenyan society cannot be covered by force nor by simple peace and unity messages.

Conclusion

Politically implemented ICT strategies are changing the idea of Kenyan society becoming a digital society, the concept of "being digital" points beyond its strictly technical meaning in the context of the 2013 election in Kenya, and social media platforms are changing the possibilities of political discussions in multi-ethnic Kenya. These are just a few examples of changes caused by the adoption of digital media in Kenya.

But it remains to be seen if president Uhuru Kenyatta will follow up his "digital ideas", or if the success of the digitalization was rather connected to political personalities like the Permanent Secretary of Information and Communication, Bitange Ndmeo, and former president Mwai Kibaki. One of Uhuru Kenyatta's digital projects, the "one laptop per child" project, has already failed. The promise of "one laptop per child" politics was one of the political flagships of Uhuru Kenyatta during the time before the election in March 2013. Kenyatta promised that every pupil joining Standard One would get a solar-powered laptop to ensure that every Kenyan child had the possibility of working with computers from an early age. After his election, Uhuru Kenyatta tried to implement his promise but failed because of underestimated costs.

Just as Africa's viability as a continent on its path to digitization is hard to determine, as is the argument that African countries are on their way to an "internet boom",[27] the idea of a digital

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25 A lot of people told me that they blocked many "Facebook friends" during the elections because many people started to articulate their ethnical prejudices in the form of so-called hate speeches.

26 Interestingly, the mass media reported about the conflicts on the social media platforms in complaining statements, not asking the 'why' question. In an article from the Daily Nation, John Osoro stated: "Kenya should now embark on a journey of self-examination to find out why negative ethnicity pervades all aspects of political, social, and economic life". (Osoro, B. John: Strong-arm tactics simply won´t work. in: Daily Nation (2013), 21st March)

27 http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2013/11/22/africa-on-the-vergeofinternetboom.html (01.04.14)

divide between the countries of the Global South and the Global North – something which affects many African countries - also has to be rethought. The still widespread view of a digital divide ignores the multi-level historical adoption and innovation processes of digital media in African countries. This article shows that it is no longer about one general global digital divide between the countries of the Global North and the Global South, but rather about different digital divides in different countries of the Global South and between them.

ICTs are clearly playing a crucial role in the construction of the future and future generations in Kenya.[28] M-pesa and the so-called iHub[29] in Nairobi are indicators of an innovative strength that comes from a younger generation, which has already started to shape the Kenyan future.

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28 In the "Vision 2030" of the former government of Mwai Kibaki, ICT plays a central role in the development of the country to a middle-income country.

29 The iHub is an attempt to support young people's entrepreneurship in becoming successful in the ICT sector. This concept is becoming more and more successful in different African countries.

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