

## Kenya Connected: Mobile Technology is linking Journalists to Local Sources



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## **Abstract**

This study explores how news journalists' working conditions are changing in an African developing country due to the growth in information communication technologies (ICTs). The special focus is set on news journalists' use of mobile technology because the rate of mobile penetration in to Africa is so significant these years that the region is actually driving the mobile market's growth worldwide with a teledensity of over 50%. Although mobile technology has been in the Africa continent for almost two decades it is only within the last two to five years that people have made regular use of these technologies due to recent improvements in accessibility and cost-efficiency.

Interviews with several Kenyan news journalists and other media actors conducted in January and February 2010 were used as the prime empirical data in the study. Thus, to the extent that mobile technology has an effect on the journalistic working process, the following problem statement and research questions served as a guide for this study and were answered in the analysis that drew upon the theoretical framework of journalistic working processes, gatekeeping theory, disruptive technologies, and ICT for development (ICT4D):

- PS: How do Kenyan news journalists use mobile phones in their work?
- RQ1: In which ways does mobile technology affect the journalistic working process?
- RQ2: How does mobile technology affect public interaction with the news media?

The findings suggest that Kenyan news journalists use mobile technology in several ways in their work: they set up interview appointments by calling their sources; they conduct telephone interviews; they record interviews using the mobile phone's microphone which is particularly useful in conflict-sensitive reporting; they send Internet links to their sources whom can read the online news from their mobile phone's browser. The consequences of journalists' use of mobile phones are, for instance, that in the past two to five years mobile technology has linked journalists with sources from Kenya's remote areas and enabled the news media to publish reliable stories which would have been difficult to verify a few years ago. Also, the Kenyan public has gained easy access to the news media, for example by participating in radio call-in shows and the information they provide is sometimes researched by journalists and turned into news stories. The traditional gatekeeper role of the press has changed to fact controller, and it is likely that the public's knowledge contribution can help to promote democracy in the country.

## Dansk resume

Dette speciale undersøger, hvordan ny teknologi i øjeblikket ændrer den journalistiske arbejdsproces for nyhedsjournalister i udviklingslande. Opgavens særlige fokus er rettet mod journalisternes brug af mobiltelefoni, fordi denne teknologi spreder sig med galoperende hast i disse år, og i udviklingslande er mobiltelefoner ved at blive allemandseje. De følgende arbejdsspørgsmål er anvendt som rød tråd gennem opgaven: "På hvilke måder påvirker mobilteknologi den journalistiske arbejdsproces?" og "Hvordan påvirker mobilteknologi offentlighedens samspil med nyhedsmedierne?" Det primære empiriske datamateriale, der er anvendt til at besvare disse spørgsmål, bygger på interviews med adskillige nyhedsjournalister og mediefolk foretaget i Kenya i januar og februar 2010.

Opgavens resultater viser, at inden for de seneste to til fem år har mobilteknologi været med til at give nyhedsjournalisterne adgang til en række kilder, som de førhen ikke har kunnet få fat i. Den øgede adgang til kilder har betydet, at nyhedsmedierne har været i stand til at offentliggøre historier, som før var vanskelige at få verificeret. Desuden har almindelige kenyanere fået øget adgang til nyhedsmedierne, blandt andet kan de bruge deres mobiltelefon til at ringe ind til debatprogrammer i radioen. Sommetider bliver de oplysninger, som personen bidrager med i radioprogrammet, researchet af journalister og anvendt som nyhedshistorie. Befolkningens nye mulighed for at tage aktivt del i nyheds- og vidensformidlingen i det kenyanske samfund – og dens øjensynlige vilje til at udnytte den – vil utvivlsomt komme til at bidrage væsentligt til landets demokratiske udvikling. I denne proces vil journalisternes klassiske rolle som gatekeeper blive ændret til at være kontrollør af fakta.

## Foreword

My MA in Journalism (Cand.public) was orchestrated as a dual-degree in international politics and new media between Columbia University, New York (2008-2009), and University of Southern Denmark. This thesis is the final paper.

As agreed with my advisor David Nicolas Hoppman, the original language of the literature has not been translated into English, which means that a few phrases are written in Danish and Norwegian.

I would like to express my gratitude to all media actors and journalists who took their time to meet with me in Kenya, and to Danida Fellowship Centre for financial support of this project. Also I would like to thank advisor David Nicolas Hopmann, English editor Jaime Vickers, my sister Christina and my parents for constantly encouraging me with this study.

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*Front page picture by Camilla Karlsen, February 2010.*

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## Chapter 1 – Introduction

News media play a vital role in educating and informing people in developing regions<sup>1</sup> such as Africa, Asia, and South America. In the past fifteen years many countries in these regions have progressed from one-party governance systems toward multi-party democracies. These new fragile democracies that build on the principles of equality and freedom pay tribute to freedom of speech and expression for the public and the news media. The emergence of a free and partly independent press can contribute to good governance by filling in the gaps as the society's watchdogs: hunting for important information from the government and disseminating it for the benefit of the general public (West, 2008).

In the past decades, journalists in the Western World have benefited from the tremendous growth in information communication technologies – ICTs – and in the last ten years the ICTs have also penetrated the developing world and have made available computers, Internet access, and mobile technology (Teltscher, 2009). This development has probably eased journalistic working procedures in these parts of the world. Research in the field is still limited and it is the special purpose of this paper to investigate how new technology is being used by journalists in developing countries; particularly journalists' use of mobile technology in their work is interesting to study because it has become the most rapidly adopted communication technology in history. While the number of mobiles in the Western developed world has been increasing since the 1980s, the important trend today is how the striking growth is to be found in the developing world: at the end of 2009 there were an estimated 4.6 billion mobile phone subscribers in the world, 3.2 billion<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper, the term *developing countries* refers to countries classified by UNESCO as "low- and middle-income countries in which most people have a lower standard of living with access to fewer goods and services than do most people in high-income countries" (UNESCO, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> These numbers are not meant to suggest that every second person in the world owns a mobile phone; the number point to mobile phone subscriptions, and sometimes an individual is likely to have multiple subscriptions for instance for his or her company.

of those were registered in the developing world (Castells, et al., 2007; International Telecommunication Union, 2009). No matter where an individual lives his or her life today, he or she probably has easy access to a mobile phone. In short, the mobile phone is about to become ubiquitous (West, 2009).

Among developing regions one should pay attention to Africa. Not because of the ICT penetration level – that is still far behind the rest of the world including other developing regions – but because the rate of mobile penetration into Africa is so significant these years that the region is actually driving the mobile market's growth worldwide.

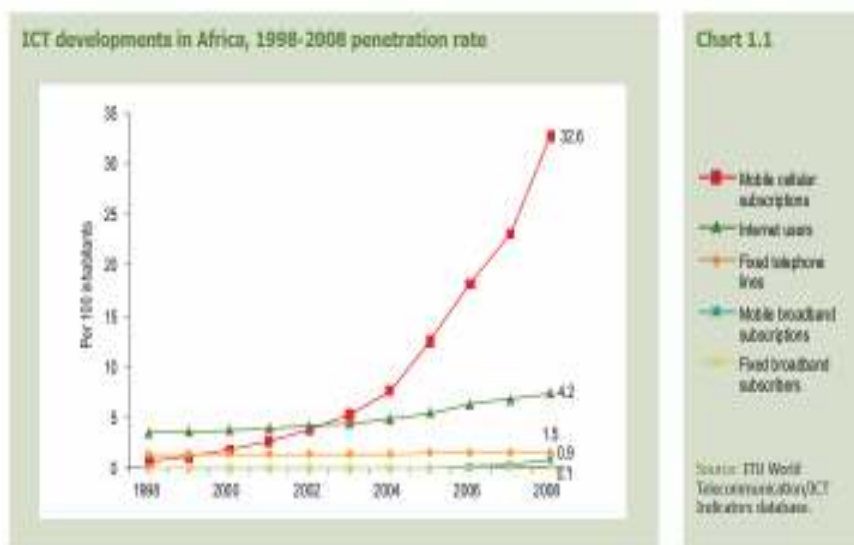


Figure 1.A: The growth in mobile phone subscribers has accelerated in Africa since 2004. (Teltscher, 2009:1)

An interesting point to notice is how *fast* the spread of mobile technology has moved. Twenty years ago, in 1989, the only mobile cellular network in the region operated from South Africa<sup>3</sup> with 4,000 subscribers. Seven years later, in 1996, Africa had 1 million subscribers. Figure 1.A shows that according to statistics provided by the International Telecommunication Union, the leading United Nations agency for information and communication technology issues, the number of mobile telephone subscribers has expanded a great deal in Africa: from 11 million mobile subscribers in 2000 to 246 million in 2008 (Teltscher, 2009:1-13). However, recent research from several providers of consulting services to the technology and telecoms sector shows, that the mobile usage ballooned in 2009 and in the second quarter of 2009 there were around 420-450 million mobile subscribers (Hash, 2009; ITNewsAfrica, 2010; Wray, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> South Africa has been the leading country in the mobile market, but today many other countries are also adding subscribers to the continent. The biggest telecom market in Africa is currently Nigeria. The latest figures from the Nigerian Communications Commission of January 2010 show that the mobile market has moved from 42 million mobile phone subscribers in 2007 to 67 million in 2009. Keeping in mind that Nigeria is the largest country in the region with 140 million people, this equals a teledensity of over 54% (Nigerian Communications Commission, 2010).

For many of the 850 million Africans living in one of the 53 countries in the region it is most likely that they will get a mobile phone before they get electricity as shown in figure 1.B. It is also likely that the mobile phone will be the first electronic screen they ever become acquainted with as well as the only form of telephone communications they may ever know (Joubert, 2010). Fixed line telephony has always been a sort of extravagant tool most likely to be found in offices. In villages, people had to line up in front of the local telephone booth and often had to wait for hours before they could make their call. Of course it was not certain that the person they were calling would be in the office, so the hours of waiting could be wasted (WOJ, 2010). In 2008, Africa had 10.8 million fixed lines, up from 8.4 million in 1998 (corresponding to a 1.4% penetration). On the contrary, the mobile penetration rate in 2000 was 2 in 100 inhabitants; eight years later, the number was 33 in 100 (International Telecommunication Union, 2009:2-3). This is the highest ratio of mobile to total telephone subscribers of any region in the world.

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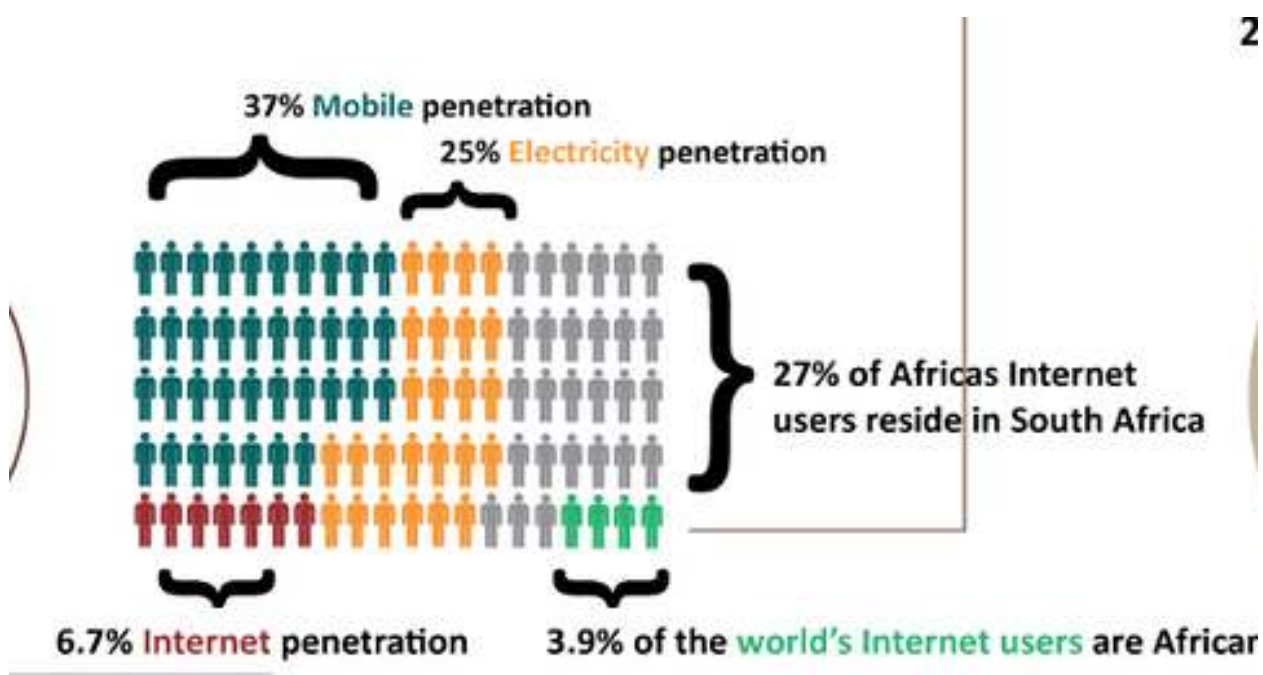


Figure 1.B: On the African continent, the penetration of mobile phones is higher than the penetration of electricity. Graphic by Gosier (2009).

That mobile technology may enhance the African development has already been recognized by non-governmental organizations and private partners: a Danish led project in Zanzibar dubbed "Wired Mothers" is using mobile phones to connect pregnant women and new mothers with health care providers. The project has improved maternal and neonatal health in



rural areas and significantly lowered the rate of death (Lund, 2009). The financial markets have also made use of mobile technology and scoped out the market for m-commerce, a technology for buying and selling goods using a mobile phone. M-commerce is beneficial to rural farmers who are using the mobile phone's text message system to gather the latest market price information. Another m-commerce technology is to use mobile phones for cash transfers. The first reliable system for this use was first launched in Kenya in March 2007 under the name M-Pesa. M-Pesa has created a platform for rural poor to access wireless banking systems and to transfer money with the speed of a text message. Today the mobile money transfer system also exists in developing countries such as Afghanistan and Tanzania (Standage, 2009).

While several examples are available on how mobile technology is linking business to costumers and patients to doctors, the influence of mobile phone penetration upon the journalistic working process (Kramhøft, 2000) is still unknown as are the potential consequences for the media market in the developing world. In *theory*, increased access to mobile phones changes the work of journalists: on the one hand, they can access sources easier. They can be contacted anonymous by whistle-blowers and they can get in contact with individuals in isolated areas. On the other hand, journalists can push back the information to their audience. Whether these hypotheses are true or not is the purpose of the investigation of this thesis. I will connect the perspectives through the case of Kenya that has a multi-party democracy and is known for its vibrant and relatively healthy media environment (Maina, 2006). Furthermore Kenya's official political approach since 2007 has been to advance the development of the ICT sector and to turn the country in to a regional ICT hub. In the past two years these initiatives have attracted strong international companies such as Nokia (Impiö, 2010; Kukubo, 2010:4). Interviews with Kenyan media actors will be used as the prime empirical data to substantiate my claims and will help me answer my problem statement:

**How do Kenyan news journalists use mobile phones in their work?**

The aim of this paper is to describe the direction that the use of mobile phones is heading among news journalists in a developing country. Here it is important to mention that the research conducted is focused on developing countries with established democratic systems. Of course, it is also interesting to note how mobile technology is affecting journalists who are working in highly censored countries with high mobile phone penetration. For instance, the Western World became aware of the "Saffron Revolution" in 2007 when mobile technology played a crucial role in

informing the international audience of the Burmese military's violence against Buddhist monks dressed in saffron colored robes. Journalists as well as citizens began to shoot photos, sound bites, and video and using their mobile phones they sent the pieces to the international press (Columbia University, 2007). However, for the purpose of this paper I find it relevant to focus on democratic developing countries because these political environments demands some kind of press freedom which allow the news media to make use of new technologies without limitations.

Also, I want to note that mobile phones do not have a record of being used only for positive development; in some cases they have been the primary instrument to incite hate speech for instance by circulating text messages with harsh propaganda (BBC World Service Trust, 2008). Despite the weaknesses, mobile technology still has the potential to make new demands on journalists, media companies, as well as Western NGOs working with journalist training, and it is the hope that the findings of this study will create useful knowledge for donor organizations and politicians, and scholars in the field of development communication.

Throughout the thesis different definitions will be used. *News journalists* or *journalists* are in this context individuals who are occupied in the journalistic working process on a daily basis. They can be freelancers or contract employees with media companies. I use the definition set forth by Weaver, et al. (cited in Shoemaker, et al., 2009, p. 77) that journalists are "those who have editorial responsibility for the preparation or transmission of news stories or other information, including full-time reporters, writers, correspondents, columnists, news people, and editors." *New media* and *new technologies* refer to technological developments in communication such as the Internet and mobile phones.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: the following chapter presents the theoretical framework, and then chapter three discusses the methodology being used in the study. Chapter four provides results and analyzes the findings. Chapter five accounts for the possible bias within this study, and the paper is concluded in chapter six.

## Chapter 2 – Theoretical Framework

In this section I will present the different theories which are relevant to understand and delve in to the field of journalists' use of mobile technology. The theoretical framework which is necessarily for utilizing the analysis will account for theories on the purpose of journalism in democracies and journalistic working processes, and then explore theories on technical developments' influence on developing countries.

### 2.1 Ideals for Public Debate

A basic attribute of a well functioning society is that people have the right to express themselves without penalties; this notion has been recognized as a universal human right by the United Nations (OHCHR, 2010). One of the advocates for freedom of opinion and freedom of speech was the British economist and philosopher John Stuart Mill (1869). His work "On Liberty" from 1859 has influenced liberal politics ever since. In it, he argued that an individual is sovereign over himself and can do what he likes as long as the action does not harm other people (Mill, 1869:26). Hence human liberty can only be fully achieved when individuals are free to have his or her own opinion and share this with others. A public debate is a manifestation of this liberty: it is only when people are able to share their views that they have the opportunity to create new knowledge. Thereby a society with free individuals who are not living under the tyranny of public authorities will develop in a positive manner (Mill, 1869:71).

Just like Mill, the German sociologist Jürgen Habermas (1991) "pinned his faith on the liberating potential of public discourse" (Garner & Lawson, 2010). In his work "Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit" he presented a range of conditions which are crucial to make social changes in modern societies. Most important with regard to the news media is his concept of the *public sphere* that can be considered an open marketplace for arguments, where all citizens can freely contribute and where debates can be held that criticize authorities. A structural transformation of the public sphere that appears over time is what Habermas describes as a key dimension to changes in the society (Habermas, 1991).

My understanding of the theories from Mill and Habermas is that civil society with inputs from citizens is of great importance for a society that has the political will to develop in a democratic way.

### 2.2 News Media's Role in a Society

In the view of Habermas' theory, news media are crucial in carrying out the ideals for a healthy debate in a democracy where citizens are expected to keep informed of any possible changes in the society (Lund, 2002:13). This idea is elaborated upon by the Danish media scholar Peter Kramhøft

(2000), who adds that the news media are responsible for social cohesion by creating a channel for public speech as well as by reporting on local, national, and global concerns that reflect upon cultural, social, and political issues (Kramhøft, 2000:15).

Consequently, the news media ideally function as a watch dog that controls the three traditional estates of political powers –executive, legislative, and judicial – as a precaution against tyranny; in this way the news media could be thought of as the fourth estate of political power (Lund, 2002:14). Although the power of the news media does not have legacy in elections or the rule of law, its influence on society is so massive that the news media itself is recognizable as a political institution (Cook, 1998; Kramhøft, 2000; Norris, 2000). From this view, I consider the penetration of new technology to be a way to enhance the opportunities citizens have to interact with – and possibly affect – the news media, and thereby the political institution they constitute.

### 2.3 The Journalistic Working Process

For a journalist there are some basic tasks that need to be accomplished in the construction of news. Journalists rely on daily routines to cope with their heavy workloads, and these routines are related to how news is selected, constructed, and produced (Becker & Vlad, 2009; Shoemaker, et al., 2001). Integrated in the routines is the concept of *news beats*, the term journalists use when they talk about places to go and people to see in order to keep abreast of the topics they are covering. A good foundation of knowledge in a beat makes it easier for a journalist to sort out new information and collect raw material that can become news (Becker & Vlad, 2009:64; Kruuse, in Kramhøft, 2000:147).

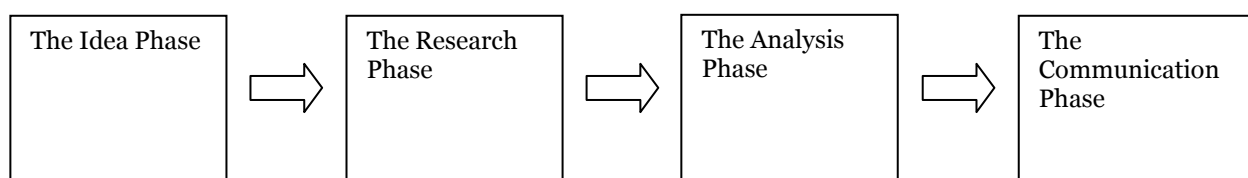


Figure 2.A: The four main phases in the journalistic working process (Kramhøft, 2000).

The routines are institutionalized in the journalistic working process. The Danish media scholar Kramhøft (2000, p. 30) has identified four main phases in this process as shown in figure 2.A.

*The Idea Phase:* As a part of the daily routine a journalist collects information from different sources. News is mainly based on either events or idea development.

*The Research Phase:* A journalist identifies and chooses the relevant sources for the story. Written sources are read and collected, oral sources are interviewed.

*The Analysis Phase:* A journalist measures the relevance and authenticity of the raw material and carries out a thorough source criticism. The story's angle is chosen and the story is produced. Eventually, the product is submitted to the editor.

*The Communication Phase:* Publication of the journalistic product to the public.

## 2.4 Journalists' Reliance on Sources

The difference between a journalist and an author is the journalist's important use of sources. Facts and evidence are provided from a pool of sources that reporters turn to for their information (Berkowitz, 2009:102). In the work of Kruuse (2000, p. 147) it is shown that sources traditionally belong to one of the four categories:

- Written sources (newspapers, books, reports, documents from the central administration, etc.)
- Oral sources (provided through interviews)
- Observations made by the journalist himself
- Electronic and digital sources (television, radio, the Internet)

However, Kruuse (2000) states, it is no longer possible to distinguish these categories strictly in a new media environment, for instance, written sources such as journal articles and official documents are often accessible from the Internet.

## 2.5 Journalists as Gatekeepers

Traditionally, in the blueprint of Habermas' theory, journalists have the role of gatekeepers in the public sphere. Because the level of information from different sources far exceeds the room for news available at the different media platforms, the need for sorting out information<sup>4</sup> is a vital skill in the journalistic working process (Lund, 2002:14).

In media research, the theory of gatekeeping has been used to describe news flow since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is one of the oldest theories used in journalism. Shoemaker, et al. (2001, p. 235) describes gates as "decision points at which items may be stopped or moved from section to section or channel to channel. Gatekeepers are either the individuals or the sets of routine procedures that determine whether items pass through the gates."

Originally the theory was invented by Kurt Lewin, who studied how to change people's eating habits due to shortages in the aftermath of World War II. He used the term *gatekeeping* to describe a wife's role of deciding which kind of food would end up at the table (Shoemaker, et al., 2009; University of Twente, 2010). In 1950, the theory was adapted by Lewin's assistant David

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<sup>4</sup> The information that journalists consider newsworthy is often graded and selected with regard to news criteria such as materiality, conflict, proximity (the closer the story is to the community the more likely it is to be published), human interest, and prominence (for instance famous people are covered just because they are famous) (Meilby, 1996:55).

White who studied a news editor (coined Mr. Gate), and his analyzing decisions in selecting news for publishing. The study showed that Mr. Gate often chose news according to his own interest in a specific topic with reducing the volume of information to fit in the newspaper as the main reason for controlling incoming information (Shoemaker, et al., 2009).

Figure 2.B shows the process of gatekeeping. The inflow of information from N is controlled by the gatekeepers who select which type of information is considered sufficiently relevant to pass through the gate and be communicated to the public M (University of Twente, 2010).

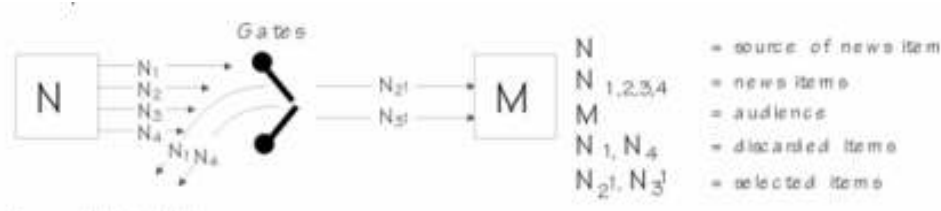


Figure 2.B: This figure, showing the basic elements of gatekeeping studies, is adapted from University of Twente (2010).

In their research, Williams & Carpini (2000) have set forth that journalists' role as gatekeepers has "collapsed" in the age of new media because an environment with multiple gates has emerged. To substantiate their claims, they used the example of the political sex scandal between American President Bill Clinton and his assistant Monica Lewinsky and showed that the allegations were downplayed by the traditional mainstream news media and even sorted out as rumours by editors (Williams & Carpini, 2000:70). However, the stories continued to live their own life in what was – at that time – non-traditional media. It was not until all evidence pointed against Clinton's statement of being innocent that the mainstream news media jumped on the bandwagon and reacted upon the facts provided by web pages. Eventually, after heavy media coverage, Clinton admitted his sexual affair with Monica Lewinsky in August 1998. Williams & Carpini (2000, p. 67) explained the possible consequences in this way: "the collapse of gatekeeping represents a direct attack on the elites – journalists, policy experts, public officials, academics, and the like – who have served as the arbiters of social and political meaning under the social responsibility theory."

It is my understanding that since the affair took place new media have become even more ubiquitous in the Western World and changed the media environment radically. This change has only recently begun in Africa and the African news media may be about to face the same challenges in news production and changes in their role as gatekeepers as their colleagues in the West.

## **2.6 ICT Penetration in Africa**

When I assume that the journalistic working processes are likely to be influenced by mobile technology at all, it has something to do with the general development of ICT in the region in the past ten years. Until recently, Africa was a black spot on the map when it came to connection with other parts of the world. As a result countries rely heavily on slow and expensive satellite connections for Internet and telephone calls, but this is subject to change even as this text is being written. As shown in figure 2.C fiber optic cables that transform signals into light and beam traffic back and forth to the rest of the world at high speeds are currently being rolled out undersea by telecom companies and supported by governments. Last year alone three cables were connected to East Africa and Africa as a region now has ten cables. Of course this is far from the Western developed world which boasts more than 500 cables (Makeni, 2009) and the difference reminds us that there is still a long way to go before the widening gap between developed and developing parts of the world will be significantly narrowed (UNCTAD, 2009).

As a consequence of the investments, the growth of the mobile market in Africa is twice as fast as the global market and today, Africa is one of the world's most GSM-oriented<sup>5</sup> markets outside Europe where that technology was mandated (Berger, 2004). Odds are good that the mobile industry will connect Africa, bringing not only voice but also affordable data communications to the continent (Castell, et al., 2007).

The mobile industry is performing so well, that mobile operators that provide and charge for mobile phone connectivity such as MTN and Kuwait-based Zain (formerly known as Celtel) have become the new mobile multinationals – not only in Africa but also in other emerging markets. For instance, the South Africa rooted MTN Group operates in 21 countries from Africa to the Middle East. The company expanded by 48% to 90.7 million users in 2008 and revenue increased from 2 billion South Africa Rand in 1997 to 102.5 billion (from 270 million to 14 billion \$US) in 2008 (MTN Group, 2009).

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<sup>5</sup> The appendix explains more about the GSM system.

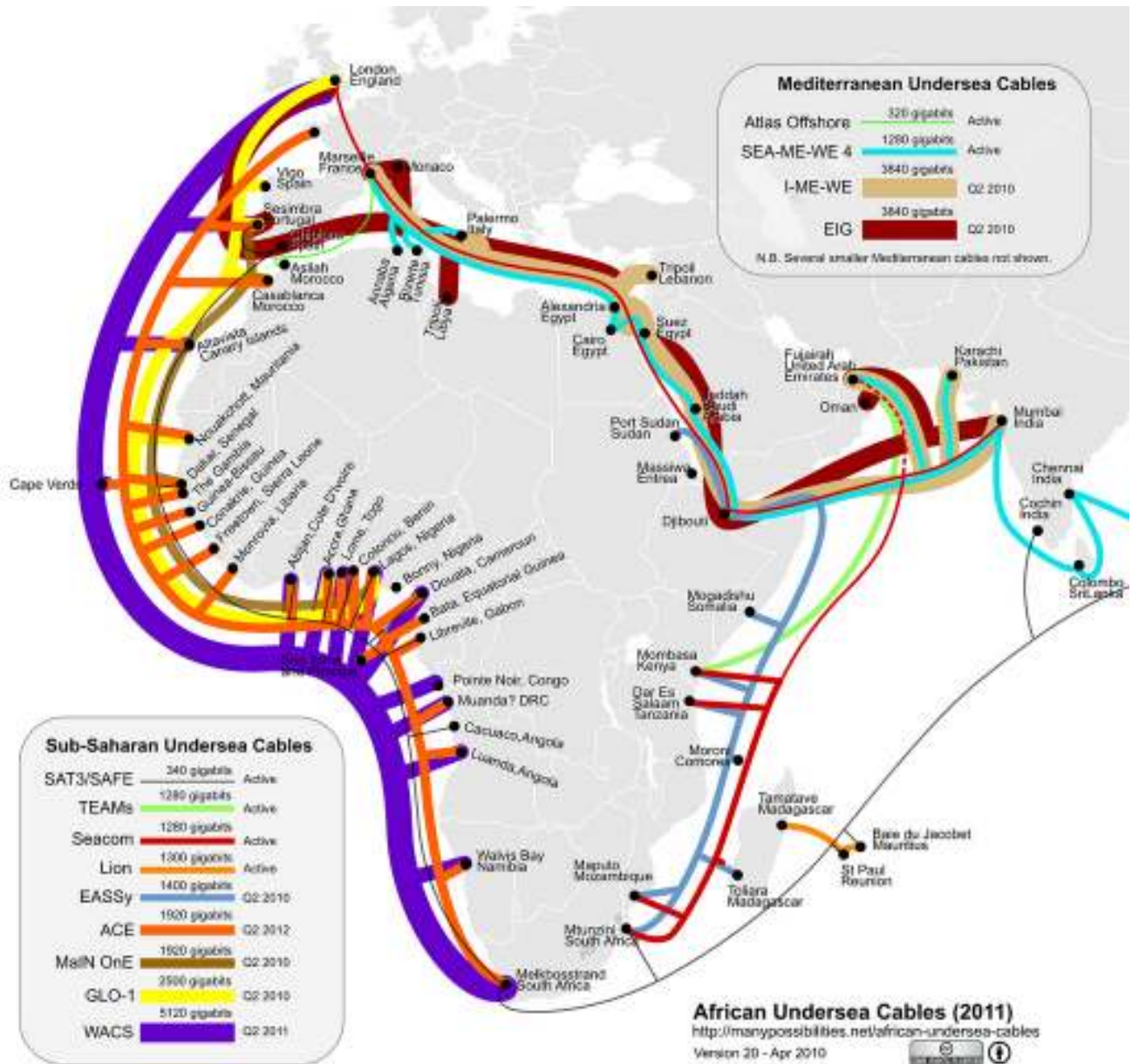


Figure 2.C: This map shows how the undersea cost cables will link Africa with Europe and the Middle East in 2011. Some cables are online already while others are about to come online. A research group at Stanford University in England is monitoring the impact of the cables as they come online on the East coast of Africa (Cottrell, 2009). So far the speed of the Internet and telephony has been supercharged and prices have lowered: “This means not only that broadband will be much more easily available at a cheaper cost – bringing with it access to telephone services , film and audio downloads – but that online services such as mobile banking can grow” (Makeni, 2009).

Graphic by Song, 2010.



Access to the Internet has also developed fast in the last decade. In its report “*Information Society Statistical Profiles 2009: Africa*” the International Telecommunication Union says that Africa had eight times as many users in 2008 than in 2000, but “in the majority of African countries, less than 5% of the population use the Internet” (Teltscher, 2009:5). However, the ICT sector makes progress much faster than the reports can be written, and therefore these Internet figures are not able to reflect the reality of Africa in the year 2010.

Due to the limited and often complete lack of fixed-line infrastructure, the mobile networks are now playing an increasing role in Internet service provision, and today it is important to distinguish between accessing the Internet from a laptop or a mobile phone. In other words, the mobile phone is the pc of Africa; more and more people use e-mail and the Internet on a daily basis accessing the services from the browser on their mobile phone<sup>6</sup> (Joubert, 2010). Opera Mini is the most popular mobile phone browser, probably because it is free to download and capable of being running on most handsets. Interestingly, according to the latest State of the Mobile Web report published by Opera in November 2009 the most popular sites visited by Opera Mini users are American-owned sites like the social networking site Facebook, the search engines Google and Yahoo, and the lexicon Wikipedia (Opera, 2009).

The mobility Africans lose due to poor roads they win in connectivity because mobile telephony has provided access to remote areas. Although mobile signal coverage is not yet complete for the whole region it still has moved up from 25% in 2000 to 58.5% in 2008 (Teltscher, 2009:13). This number is likely to be significantly higher now.

The explosive growth of the mobile market has also been fuelled by constantly falling prices on handsets. While smartphones like Blackberry and iPhone are still very expensive in Kenya (in February 2010 they were sold for Kenyan Shillings (KSH) 30,000-40,000, approximately US \$390-520), decent GSM mobile phones can be purchased for KSH 2,000-5,000 (US \$25-65). Of course this can be a lot of money for the poor people, but since a simcard is sold for KSH 100 (approximately US \$1) it is common practice to borrow a handset from a friend and insert one’s own simcard into the phone (Castells, et al., 2007:65). Often people buy more than one brand of simcard for their mobile phone simply because the operators charge different prices depending on whether or not the person being called belongs to the same company. For example Zain, a telecompany based in Kuwait and operating in more than 22 countries, introduced a

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<sup>6</sup> Finding evidence of the exact number of Africans who are using the Internet on their mobile phone is a bit tricky, but one can study the mobile web market in Africa by looking at the developers of mobile solutions. Today the browser Opera developed by the Norwegian company Opera is estimated to account for almost half of the web browser market in Africa, with the number of handsets utilizing the browser increasing 177% from 2008 to 2009. It is difficult to depict the exact numbers hiding behind the 177%, because the company refuses to give overall customer numbers for the region (Wray, 2009). Nevertheless, the Chief Strategy Officer for Opera Software, Rolf Assev, announced in November 2009 that Opera has 1.5 million unique users in its largest market in Africa, South Africa (Kleynhans, 2009). A rough assumption suggests that these users make up 3% of the country’s 50 million mobile subscribers.

“pricing policy” some years ago. In short, this policy is beneficial for costumers because they are not charged for roaming, which means they can use their phone access across several countries and receive calls for free as well as make calls at local rates (Zain, 2010). At the same time, the price of calling a friend in the same country can actually be more expensive if the caller does not use the same operator as the receiver of the call, hence the purchase of a variety of simcards. Recent research has found that the majority of Africans spent much of their income on communication needs. Castells, et al., (2007, p. 57) write that “in South Africa 10-15 percent of income is spent on mobile phones”.

Besides from being usable for communication, the mobile phone does also meet other needs from the citizens that top-up their mobile phone accounts with scratch cards (see figure 2.D). Due to lack of electricity and periodic unavailability of electricity two of the most attractive technical specifications for a mobile phone are:

- Increased battery life
- A built-in flash light

Also important is the capability to receive FM signals with the phone. According to Nokia’s research center leader Jussi Impiö, listening to FM radio is the second most popular feature a mobile phone is used for in Africa; the most popular is talking (Impiö, 2010). Particularly Nokia 3110 and Samsung E250 fulfill these expectations, and by the beginning of 2010 these models became the most common on the continent (Joubert, 2010).



Figure 2.D: Prepaid services are popular in Africa (Castells, et al., 2007:62). Before making a call the mobile subscriber must “top-up” his account with a prepaid card, which can be purchased on almost every street corner. The card has a scratch-off patch covering twelve digits and the subscriber simply dials the number to load the account. It takes less than two minutes to top-up a mobile phone. The picture shows Safaricom top-up cards. Each card represents KSH 100 (US \$1.3).

## **2.7 ICT as a Tool for Delivering Information to the Poor**

Looking at the data provided in the last section, it is clear that access to new technology is making it easier for the people in Africa to communicate with one another and probably also to access the news media. Before elaborating on this statement it is important to look at how the emergence of new technologies over the past several decades has received attention from researchers and NGOs working with developing countries. Despite the claim that ICTs “could improve communication, access to information, research, distance learning, and teacher education” (Adeya, 2001:5), critics point out that more of the praised technology projects have not created sustainable solutions in developing countries (Khiabany, 2003; Morozov, cited in Karlsen, 2008).

A common term used for this field of study is ICT4D, short for information and telecommunication technologies for development. Interest in applying technologies to the developing world has appeared in waves throughout the last century, peaking as new systems have been invented.<sup>7</sup> In the case of Africa, the interest to help these nations catch up with the rest of the world began in the 1960-1970s when the African colonies became independent. Many Western observers spoke about the important roles media play in a developing country. The American scholars Wilbur Schramm and Daniel Lerner (1964) stressed that poor countries need not only water and food but also information in order to develop; this information may come from information technologies such as television and radio. Lerner (cited in Schramm, 1964:247) stated that “mass communication is ‘the great multiplier’ in development, the device that can spread the new ideas, attitudes, and knowledge more rapidly than ever before”. This would encourage the public to enhance the level of literacy and thus create a population that accepts changes in the society, thereby facilitating modern developments in the society.

The view of Schramm and Lerner is shared by Richard Heeks (2008), Professor of Development Informatics at the University of Manchester. Heeks (2008, p. 26) goes a step further by arguing prioritization of the implementation of technology in developing countries:

1. From a moral perspective, the developed world should be concerned about global problems like climate change and terror, which poor countries suffer from the most.
2. Helping poor countries can be a matter of self-interest for the industry in developed countries. When the poor get wealthier and raise their living standards they have more opportunities to buy goods and services from international companies.

According to Heeks the interest of using technology in developing countries has risen exponentially since the first computer was installed in India in 1956. Through the years, the growing

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<sup>7</sup> Although research on ICT4D is not common in Denmark, the field draws a huge amount of international interest from scholars and researchers at renowned institutions such as Columbia University in New York, and the British university London School of Economics. Furthermore, international organizations like the UN and World Bank have specialized departments engaged in the field.

opportunities within ICT4D have been explored not only by agents in the field of development studies but also intermediaries such as representatives from the IT and computer science sector. The latter are seeing business opportunities within the field, due to new aid donors who believe that technology is a key component to achieve the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals<sup>8</sup>.

The Kenyan national Catherine Nyaki Adeya, Ph.D. in Information and Development, has mapped the entire research which has been undertaken on ICT4D in Sub-Saharan Africa between 1990 to 2000 (Adeya, 2001). Her research demonstrated that the major initiatives in implementing ICTs in the region were started in the 1990s most of them with international aid, such as the African Information Society Initiative coordinated by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). The purpose of the society was to improve the African development debate by connecting governmental and nongovernmental partners online. While this initiative still exists today, many projects have failed after NGOs and donors withdrew their aid. Adeya states that constraints to ICT development include “... lack of infrastructure, absence of ICT policy or its implementation, few trained or skilled ICT personnel, poor knowledge of ICT at all levels from suppliers to users, as well as financial constraints.” (Adeya, 2001:5)

These shortcomings are exactly what have fuelled the arguments of ICT4D critics through the years: just because some technical developments have been hailed as powerful instruments of social change in the Western World, they would not necessarily possess the same power in developing countries. Television, as an example, was a tool to make the developed world gain awareness to and react on certain political issues like the war in Vietnam (1959-1975), but though the technology succeeded in making some kind of political change in the West, this was not automatically applicable to the rest of the world, albeit not for lack of trying. In the years following independence, UNESCO, a United Nations specialized agency on education, encouraged African nations to build television stations all in the name of education. In the long run, it did however turn out that entertainment was the cheapest thing to put on, leaving the television as an under-exploited medium (Bourgault, cited in Wilson, 2005). The opportunity for history to repeat itself is obvious, says Hassen Lorgat, Campaigns and Communications Department Manager of the South African NGO Coalition: “I hear people praise the growth of the Internet and how amazing it will be, but it was the same with television” (Hassen, cited in Wilson, 2005). This view has been supported in the work of Dr. Gholam Khiabany (2003) who criticizes the idea of *digital exceptionalism*, the notion that some digital technologies are radically different from what we had before and that they bring in something completely new to our world. Khiabany states that “the idea that information

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<sup>8</sup> The Millennium Development Goals are agreed upon by all 192 members of the United Nation, and they include eight goals, among them reducing poverty, combating diseases, and developing a global partnership for development (United Nations, 2010).

technologies and technological advancements will help developing countries leapfrog many stages of development and catch up with the North and global information society is a big myth” (Khiabany, 2003:151).

Castell, et al. (2007, p. 216) challenge this view in the work "Mobile Communication and Society", stating that precisely the penetration of mobile technology has the potential to make an important impact on development because of its contribution to "moving developing countries as close as possible to a universal telecommunications service." Furthermore, the economic impact on societies of mobile telephony is remarkable. The mobile industry has generated more jobs and boosted the gross domestic product (GDP). A study on four East African countries (Kenya, Rwanda Tanzania, and Uganda) from the international consulting firm Deloitte carried out for the GSM Association in 2008 estimates that the mobile industry contributed close to 5.1% of GDP of those countries in 2008 (Deloitte, 2008:11).

Taken in sum – and with respect to the different technical developments – I will conclude by arguing that mobile technology in development communication is a *disruptive technology*, a term coined by Professor Clayton Christensen of Harvard Business School (1997). Christensen argued that "disruptive technologies bring to a market a very different value proposition than had been available previously ... Products based on disruptive technologies are typically cheaper, simpler, smaller, and, frequently, more convenient to use" (Christensen, 1997:xv). Disruptive technologies improves products in a way the market did not expect, for instance digital computer printing that eliminated offset printing, and paper that eliminated the much more expensive parchment when Gutenberg (1398-1468) introduced the printing press almost 560 years ago (Christensen, 1997:xxv). In this way, mobile telephony is a disruptive technology to landline telephony; however, the mobile phone offers disruption to more than landline telephony because the device also can be used as a radio receiver, an Internet connection, and – as with smartphones – a small television screen.

## 2.8 Research Questions

To address whether mobile technology influences the journalistic working process, I have decided to pose research questions rather than hypotheses because little research has been conducted on this issue. The goal of this study is to determine in which ways mobile technology affects the respondents and to explore the possible consequences of this.

- **RQ1:** In which ways does mobile technology affect the journalistic working process?
- **RQ2:** How does mobile technology affect public interaction with the news media?

The questions as well as the problem statement outlined in the introduction will be answered in the analysis, chapter 4. The succeeding chapter will describe the methodology I have used in this study.

## Chapter 3 – Research of Methodological Issues

To investigate how journalists in a developing country are using mobile phones in their work, I have interviewed various Kenyan journalists. I have attempted to verify my data with other sources such as interviews with media actors other than the respondents and by participating in conferences on mobile technology's penetration in Africa. This chapter will account for the methodology I have used in my research, then move on to reflections on the empirical data, and conclude by explaining the structure of the analysis.

### 3.1 Case Study Methodology

Researchers can successfully enhance their understanding of a complex issue by using the case study research method. This technique is an obvious choice when creating hypotheses and investigating a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context. It can broaden insight into a specific field of study and has the ability to illuminate the shortcomings of a theoretical framework (Yin, 2003). Furthermore, the Norwegian researcher Ottar Hellevik describes case studies as being especially useful when one wants to know something about the development in a given area: “Videre gir casestudier spesielt god mulighet for å danne seg et bilde av utviklingsforløp, av *kronologien* for endringer innenfor et sett med variabler. I ekstensive studier er ofte tidsdimensjonen helt fraværende, eller en har bare grove inntrykk av tidsforhold. Den innsikten i kontekst og kronologi som kan oppnås gjennom casestudier, er en kilde til ideer om påvirkningsforhold mellom variablene” (Hellevik, 1994:81).

At the same time, choosing a single case study gives the researcher an opportunity to have personal contact with the respondents and visit the country where the phenomena are taking place (Hellevik, 1994:81).

The method does, however, also meet harsh criticism from researchers who points out that findings may become biased and that the study of a small number of cases can offer no grounds for establishing reliability or generality of findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Having all this in mind, I consider the case study research method as the optimal choice in a carefully planned study of how mobile technology has influenced the work of news journalists in a developing country.

### 3.2 Kenya as an Interesting Case Study

Due to limited resources of time and money for carrying out this project I find it important to focus on a single country from which others can learn, and I have chosen Kenya as a case study because it is outstanding in terms of media and new technology developments compared to the majority of countries in the region (South Africa remains the leading country of the continent). A multi-party

democracy flourished from 1992 and today the country has a population close to 39 million people, including 42 tribes with different languages. Swahili is the national language, but English is the official language used by the government officials and the national media, and since ICT services are largely based in English, this has been a major factor for the ICT influence and adoption by the inhabitants (Farrell, 2007:5).

The number of mobile costumers in Kenya was around eight million in 2006. Two years later, at the end of 2008, the number of mobile phone subscribers surpassed 16 million and the pattern continues to grow exponentially (Cellular News, 2009; Mageria, 2007). Until the telecommunications sector was liberalized in 2000, Telekom Kenya was the only telephone operator in the country. In the years that followed, mobile technology continued to improve, and while Telekom Kenya's monopoly continued on landline phones, Kenyans moved to the competitive market for mobile operators and swapped their fixed-line phones for mobile phones (IFC, 2008). Besides Safaricom, Kenya's largest mobile operator, three other major players are on the market: Zain, Orange (Telekom Kenya's commercial brand), and Yu. Subscribers have benefited from better quality services and the competition between the operators has significantly lowered the costs of calling within the last few years. As of February 2010, Yu delivered the cheapest options with rates beginning at KSH 6 per minute, approximately USD \$0.08 (AllAfrica, 2009).

The Kenya ICT Board, established in 2007 to advance the development of the ICT sector, has the official goal of turning the country in to a top ten global ICT hub (Kukubo, 2010:4). This approach combined with economic growth and enacting trustworthy property rights laws has created sustainable institutional frames that attract international investors to the country. One of those is the Finnish mobile phone company Nokia which opened a research center in Nairobi in 2008, the only of its kind in Africa. The research carried out from the center concentrates on citizen's use of mobile technology (Impiö, 2010).

Besides from the institutional advantages, foreign telecommunication companies also find Kenya interesting due to its position as being a driving force in the mobile development in Africa. Particularly in the field of mobile money solutions the country has formed a hot spot that can be compared to Silicon Valley's influence on software development. One of the prime examples is the branchless mobile money system M-Pesa (*M* means mobile, *pesa* means money in Swahili). M-Pesa, first launched in Kenya in March 2007 by the mobile operator Safaricom and today available in developing countries such as Afghanistan and Tanzania, allows its users to deposit and withdraw money, and the service creates security for impoverished people who can not afford to open up a standard bank account. As of October 2009, M-Pesa had close to eight million subscribers (Ho-Young, 2009), who are able to pay anything from electricity bills and school fees to goods at a market with their phones. Furthermore, the service allows its users to transfer money between

other M-Pesa accounts which means that urban living people can send money to their family members in other parts of the country within the time of a SMS (to set this in a Western context, it should be noted, that it easily takes one to two days to transfer money between bank accounts in Denmark). With the poor road infrastructure in mind, the mobile money system has transformed the way people do business in Kenya (Standage, 2009).

### **3.2.1 The Kenyan Media Landscape**

Like South Africa, Kenya creates a center of attention in terms of media development and freedom of expression. Although the Kenyan constitution does not guarantee freedom of the press, Kenyan media has generally enjoyed the right to expression without incurring penalties and has the reputation of a fierce defender of democracy and good governance. As a result, Kenya boasts one of the most vibrant and developed media scenes in the region (BBC World Service Trust, 2008:3) and the country has been highlighted as the regional leader in free expression by international journalist organizations like Washington based Freedom House, a non-governmental organization (NGO) supporting the expansion of freedom, and the press freedom advocacy group the Committee to Protect Journalists (Committee to Protect Journalists, 2009; Freedom House, 2010).

The picture of a reliable democracy vanished in the aftermath of the 2007 election. Despite the wide scale suspicion of election fraud, Mwai Kibaki, a member of Kenya's largest tribe the Kikuyus, was sworn in as President by The Election Commission of Kenya. The other candidate running for presidency was Raila Odinga who belongs to the second-largest tribe the Luos, and his supporters were outraged by the decision. Spontaneous violence broke out almost immediately and lasted for months. By February 2008 about 1,100 people were killed and hundred of thousands (several sources mention numbers between 350,000-600,000) were internally displaced (BBC World Service Trust, 2008; Berkowitz, 2010; Namunane & Mathenge, 2010). The Kenyan media, specifically the vernacular radio stations, contributed greatly to the crisis because ethnic hate speech was broadcast on the air. Due to the situation, the government imposed a ban on live broadcasting, and much of the news stream moved from traditional channels like radio and television to chain message news sent to mobile phones via SMS or e-mails; unfortunately, many of the chain messages incited even more hate speech (BBC World Trust Service, 2008:5).

Citizen journalism emerged in the period where an enormous amount of people posted firsthand view stories and uploaded pictures on their Internet blogs that main stream media failed to publish. In this way, the blogosphere created a space to help citizens and the outside world come to understand the reality of what happened (Goldstein & Rotich, 2008:8; Omoro, 2010:[7:45]). Also, the website Ushahidi.com<sup>9</sup> was launched in this period. The initial purpose of the website was to bring awareness to the crisis by mapping all reported incidents of violence. Many reports were

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<sup>9</sup> Ushahidi means "testimony" in Swahili.



submitted by SMS from Kenyan citizens and subsequently validated by Ushahidi and combined with Google Maps. Most recently, Ushahidi has grown from a small group of volunteers to a focused organization which has taken the leading role in tracking down survivors from the devastating earthquake that hit Haiti in January 2010. The reports came from people inside Haiti who used their phones to send text messages, and the information was subsequently mapped by Ushahidi. The map gave rescue workers a good idea about where to find survivors (Hersman, 2010).

Today the media remains vulnerable and although the media environment can be categorized as progressive it is also important to mention, that according to research undertaken in 2008 the media have not yet executed their role as watchdogs: “the Kenyan media suffers from system-wide weaknesses that continue to constrain its full potential ... Journalists often lack basic tools of trade such as pens and note books, tape recorders, live mobile phones and transport for assignments ... There is a link between low pay and rampant corruption among reporters and correspondents” (Mbeke & Mshindi, 2008:7). The freedom supporting NGO Freedom House categorizes the press in Kenya as being “partly free” and points out that shaping the future for democracy in Kenya will continue to be the media's essential role (Freedom House, 2010).

The Kenyan media environment is diluted by the freelance phenomenon. According to chairman of the Kenya Correspondents Association William Oloo Janak Kenya has around 5,000 journalists, and between 70-80% of those are hired without a contract. The salary for journalists who are permanent employed is around KSH 30,000-40,000 monthly (approximately US \$400-500) whereas for freelancers the salary is between KSH 10,000-25,000, less than 300 dollars a month (WOJ, 2010:[part 2, 21.45]).

Kenya's leading news papers are The Daily Nation and The Standard, however, due to poor infrastructure that makes it difficult to secure a sustainable daily circulation in remote areas the news consumption market is mainly driven by broadcasters, particularly radio (BBC News, 2009). Since the airwaves were liberalized in the 1990s, the market of FM radio stations, in particular vernacular (local language) stations, has mushroomed. Currently, the country is likely to have more than 100 stations, and more are about to appear when the country goes digital in 2012 (Oriare, 2010). The government heavily relies on the state-owned Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), a key broadcaster of both radio and television, to cover its activities. Other broadcast corporations and media houses are privately held and several of those provide daily and breaking news sent to people's mobile phones via SMS.

In general, the broadcasters have a massive focus on interacting with their audience. During the day, almost all radio stations have call-in shows where the presenter gives prominence to the listeners' views, often focusing on heavy political and sensitive issues such as corruption and the spread of HIV. Viewers of the Kenya Television Network (KTN) are encouraged to participate in 'yes or no'-polls on the day's political topic, sometimes with a chance to win airtime.

In sum, I choose Kenya as a case-study because the country has a relatively stable democracy where citizens can speak fairly freely compared to other countries in the region, and because political decisions have turned the country in to a regional hub for ICT investments, especially in the field of mobile development. Thereby the foundation for a flourishing media market is well established, creating a case from which other countries can learn what to see in a very near future in other developing countries with democratic multi-party systems.

### **3.3 Generating Qualitative Data**

This study is conducted by qualitative research which, according to researcher Jennifer Mason, has massive potential "to constitute compelling arguments about how things work in particular contexts" (Mason, 2002:1). Since no prior studies have dealt with mobile technology's influence on journalism in developing countries, I consider qualitative interviewing the most appropriate approach for answering my problem statement, mainly because it provided immediately opportunities to ask follow up questions. According to Andersen & Gamdrup (1990, p. 73) this strategy plays a crucial part in the process of qualitative data collection because the researcher may be provided with more knowledge than expected; for instance, some of the interviewees seem not to have realized how ideas for new stories and a diversification of sources were enhanced by people calling in to radio shows until I asked them directly. This connection would probably not have been uncovered if I had chosen to generate quantitative data by asking a number of news journalists to fill in a questionnaire. Moreover, a quantitative method would likely present an unsurmountable obstacle to data collection due to the nature of Kenyan culture: I quickly learned that most people only interact with people they have been introduced to, and chances are that they would not take the time to answer a questionnaire if they did not know me.

My purpose was to make semi-standardized interviews; the nature of this technique would allow me to ask more questions if the respondent said something interesting. Researcher Henning Olsen (2002, pp. 74-75) states that: "... ustrukturerede, ikke-standardiserede interview er at foretrække, når forskeres forhåndskendskab til de sociale fænomener, der søges udforsket, er begrænset. Kvalitative interview kan også være semi-standardiserede, fx når forskere bruger interviewguider med emner og/eller spørgsmål."

The cultural setting also challenged my methodological set up because I could not get access to Kenyan journalists or media actors without being referred to them by other

acquaintances. I wrote a couple of e-mails without any referrals and never received an answer to those inquiries. Relying on referrals is known as the *snowball sampling method*. This method has the expense of introducing bias because the researcher ends up talking with friends of the first people included in the sample (Salganik & Heckathorn, 2004:197). In my study, one of my initial contacts, a radio journalist, referred me to former colleagues, mainly city journalists based in Nairobi, while another contact, who is the chairman of Kenya Correspondent Association, referred me to members of his organization. The problem with this sampling method is, obviously, that the samplings are far from random or representative, however reaching the target population without this form of help would have been difficult if not impossible for me. Hence, although not the ideal approach, it nevertheless was the only viable approach. My data now includes representatives from print and broadcast media, and I have some interviews with journalists who are working in remote areas.

### **3.4 Choosing the Interviewees**

Data for the analysis are generated from qualitative interviews with print/on-line, radio, and television journalists who are chosen due to their status as being news journalists (reporters, presenters, and editors) operating in Kenya, with different conditions of employment (contract employees and freelancers), representing various media categories: print and broadcast media from both private as well as state owned companies. The interesting role about news journalists compared to, for example, journalists working on a magazine (I had two possible respondents in this category but I deselected them for interviews) is that they are taking part in the daily news information flow from top stories to breaking news. My assumption is that the mobile phone has particularly been beneficial for this group of journalists since they are working with journalistic procedures including deadlines every day.

Other forms of data were derived from observation at a radio station, participation in conferences, and interviews with actors in the media industry other than news journalists. Further description can be found in paragraph 3.6 Additional Empirical Data.

All respondents have been informed that they are not anonymous and that the thesis will be published. Their names and conditions of employment are listed in table 3.A. A total of thirteen news journalists, five women and eight men, were interviewed (see next page).

- Radio: 10 journalists
- TV: 1 journalist
- Print/on-line: 2 journalists
- The data collection included journalists with different conditions of employment:
  - Six of the respondents were freelancers, seven were contract employed.
  - Eight are working for privately held organizations, one at a community radio, one at an international media station, and three were working for the public state broadcaster KBC.
- Years of experience in the media industry:
  - Less than five years: 5 journalists
  - Five to nine years: 4 journalists
  - Ten years and more: 4 journalists

A possible bias in my data set is the greater number of radio journalists compared to the other media categories. However, this bias may not be severe because radio is the by far most consumed media in Africa and particularly so in Kenya, where listening data has been registered as “heavy listening” (Power, 2006:26).

I tried to get more respondents from television and print media by asking the representatives if they could refer me, but due to the limited time of my field study it turned out not to be possible to set up other interviews with respondents from these branches.

One interview with a woman from Pamoja Radio (Beatrice Maganga) was deselected from the data set because several times during the interview she referred me to another person, whom I subsequently interviewed.

Summing up, the variation of respondents provides a solid foundation to identify how journalists in Kenya are using their mobile phones in their work and subsequently to analyze if journalism has been influenced by mobile technology.

**Table 3.A: Journalist respondents used in the data collection**

	<i>Category</i>	<i>Code</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Years of working with the media</i>	<i>Working for</i>	<i>Interview Date &amp; Place</i>
<i>Freelancers (correspondents)</i>	Print/on-line	WOJ	William Oloo Janak	Associated editor for The Link (also chairman of the Kenya Correspondents Association, KCA)	20 years	The Link The Reject	January 20, 2010 Nairobi
	Print/on-line	FIA	Fauzia Ismail Adan	Reporter	1 year	Online	February 2, 2010 Mobile phone
	Radio	AW	Anthony Wafula	Media Consultant	8 years	Internews (media NGO)	January 21, 2010 Nairobi
	Radio	MM	Mary Mwendwa	Producer Conservation film maker	6 years	Trans World Radio (independent religious station) Also, conservation film producer	February 5, 2010 Mobile phone
	Radio	JM	Jane Mugambi	Reporter	5 years	Radio Group Africa (Kiss FM, Classic FM, East FM, Jambo FM)	February 1, 2010 Mobile phone
	Radio	WR	Wilson Rotich	Editor	5 years	Sema Radio	February 5, 2010 Mobile phone
<i>Contract employed</i>	Radio	RN	Ruth Nesoba	Reporter	10 years	BBC World Service (international station)	February 1, 2010 Nairobi
	Radio	JK	John Kago	Presenter	3 years	Metro FM (KBC)	January 26, 2010 Nairobi
	Radio	MHO	Mohamed Hassan Osman	Reporter	16 years	Star FM (the first and only FM radio station in North Eastern Kenya)	January 28, 2010 Eastleigh, Nairobi
	Radio	BM	Bonnie Musambi	Producer and presenter	2 years	Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) Swahili Service	January 29, 2010 Nairobi
	Radio	LW	Loise Wanyoike	Head of Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) English Service	20 years	KBC Radio	January 29, 2010 Nairobi
	Radio	PM	Philip Muhatia	Presenter	4 years	Pamoja Radio, Kibera	February 8, 2010
	TV	JAN	John Allan-Namu	Reporter	4 years	Kenya Television Network (KTN, a part of Standard Media Group)	January 25, 2010 Nairobi

### **3.4.1 Interview Guide**

The problem statement of this thesis focuses on the journalists' specific use of mobile phones. During the construction of the interview guide, avoiding possible biases was of central interest. First, when I prepared the qualitative interview setup I devised an interview guide using simply worded questions because I wanted to stay away from unnecessary language barriers. Second, to avoid biased answers with respect to journalists' working procedures I did not ask specific questions about their use of mobile phones; instead I asked questions about their way of working in the journalistic process, from idea to product.

Because I wanted to understand the development which mobile phones have caused for news journalism in Kenya I also asked how they used to get ideas and research stories some years ago. Originally, my idea was to ask the respondents about their work with the journalistic processes today versus ten years ago, but soon I realized that more of the respondents had five years or less of experience. Therefore I decided to ask about the difference from today and when the journalist began in the field or attended journalism school. As major enhancements in media credited to mobile phones have occurred only within the last two to four years, this choice of wording still captures the changes perceived by the journalists. The respondents' answers are also supported by statistics that demonstrate how mobile penetration in Kenya raised steeply from 20% in 2006 to almost 50% in 2008 and the number is still growing (Cellular News, 2009; Mageria, 2007). Therefore I considered it appropriate to ask the respondents about their changes in working procedures within the past five years. The journalists who have worked more than five years were still able to offer an excellent view on how the working conditions for a Kenyan journalist used to be less than ten years ago.

I intended to ask questions that would invite the interviewee to speak freely about his journalistic working process; however, I felt compelled to tell the respondent in our initial contact that my thesis focused on Kenyan journalists' use of new technologies. Although this explanation may have led to biased answers because the interviewee might have focused more on technology than if I did not mention the word at all (Kvale, 2002:157), I consider the interviewees trust in me as more important for the outcome of this thesis.

The interview guide questions focused on journalistic procedures derived from the journalistic working procedures as shown by Kramhøft (2000). I am interested in finding out if mobile phone technology has any effect on the journalists' working conditions. As shown below in table 3.B the questions are designed to make the respondents describe how they work in the four main phases in the process.

**Table 3.B: Interview Guide**

1. How do you get ideas for your stories? Can you give examples please?
2. Can you explain to me how you research a typical story? Please give examples.
3. Thinking back to when you started working with the media, can you explain how you got ideas for your stories and researched them? Please give examples.
4. How do you get in contact with your sources? Can you give examples, please.
5. How did you get in contact with your sources back when you started working with the media? Please give examples.
6. Has your choice in sources changed over time? If yes, why?
7. Have you received ideas for a news story from a person who called in to a call-in show? (If yes, will you set me in contact with this person so I can ask why he chooses to call in to a radio program?)

*If the interviewee is working as a radio journalist:*

8. Who decides which persons who are let on air in a call-in radio show (do you make a pre-interview or a pre-recording)?

When I began to analyze my data I realized that it would have been interesting for my project if I had asked more normative questions on how the news journalists thought they *ought to* use new technologies in their work. Probably I would have found evidence for a difference in the respondents' descriptive and normative behavior. However, keeping the physical distance between Denmark and Kenya in mind, I would only be able to get their answers by calling or e-mailing, and I did not find it appropriate to ask the respondents to spare more time for me. Therefore I decided to be content with the existing data.

### **3.4.2 Interview Setup**

In order to get access to more respondents I had to rely on referrals. The initial contact with most of my sources was established on-line, either on e-mail, social network platforms such as Facebook, or SMS. I informed the contact from whom I had been referred and my purpose for making contact. Almost all of the news journalists I contacted agreed to an interview; regarding those who did not answer there does not seem to be a bias because the different media types and the different conditions of employments all are represented by the participating respondents. For the most part, the interviews took place face to face in various places in Nairobi.

Four of the respondents were introduced to me at a Kenyan Correspondents Association's meeting held in Nairobi at the end of January 2010. These four individuals were interviewed the following weeks using my mobile phone. This setup was not the optimal solution due to some

language misunderstandings and the difficulty of recording the interview, but I considered the sources as important for my work because they are working in other areas of Kenya than Nairobi. Additionally, they brought in some new interesting perspectives on the use of mobile phones and therefore I have chosen to keep them in my data set.

Shortly after the interview was held I wrote out most parts of the recording. Enclosed this thesis is a CD-ROM with the audio versions of the interviews.

### 3.4.3 Potential Problems

Due to the snowball sampling method I have produced data with persons who probably only elected to participate in my study because I was referred by someone they knew.

One of the obstacles in electing qualitative interviewing as my method was the language barriers. English is not my native tongue, and although Kenyans have English as their mother tongue, the pronunciation is slightly differently than British and American English. This encountered some minor problems with understanding each other perfectly during some of the interviews. Furthermore, at times when I listened to the recordings, I had problems distinguishing all of the words from the respondents, but my solution on the problem was to ask for help from English native speakers, living at the same hotel as I did in Nairobi, in case of unclarity. An inclusive methodology critique will follow in chapter 5.

## 3.5 The Case of Migingo Island



*Picture 3.C: From a distance the disputed Migingo Island looks like a whale covered with iron. The real wealth for the fishermen lies in the deep water which is rich on Nile perch.*

*Photo by Sand Dollar Expeditions' photostream (2009).*

When I did the interviews with the Kenyan journalists I became aware that certain stories have become significantly easier to cover with the aid of new technology. The story of Migingo Island is an example of a news story that new technology has helped to keep on the media agenda. Chairman of the Kenya Correspondents Association William Oloo Janak introduced me to three news journalists who have been covering the story and I made a group interview with them. The interview took place at the Migori Media Content Generation Center in February 2010 and their names are provided in table 3.D.

Migingo Island pops out of the middle of Lake Victoria, the largest tropical lake in the world Lake Victoria. The one acre island (approximately the size of a football field) lies six hours by motor boat from Kenya and eight hours from Uganda, and so the two countries have disputed their right to it for several years. The island creates a strategic spot to net a large catch of Nile perch, a



highly valuable freshwater fish exported to the European market: everyday up to one ton of fish are brought in, worth KSH 1.2 million (USD 15,500). Between 500-800 fishermen, 80% of those are Kenyan the 20% are Ugandan, depend upon Migingo for their livelihood (Group Interview on Migingo Island, 2010; Howden, 2009; Otieno, 2009).

The problem began in 2004 when Ugandan and Kenyan fishermen at Migingo had appealed to their governments for help against piracy. Because of the huge amount of fish landed everyday, the island attracted attention from pirates who paid regular visits to steal fish and engines, and to collect tax from the fishermen. Uganda answered the fishermen's call by sending out executive forces to the island. The intention was to provide security for the fishermen, but over time they realized that the place was a real treasure trove and they took over control and hoisted their national flag over the island. This was done despite the fact that Migingo has officially belonged to Kenya since 1926 and the currency used at the island is Kenyan Shillings. Between 2004 and 2009 Migingo became "home to Africa's smallest war, a conflict fought in advances of three soldiers, a dozen policemen and eight marines. Any more than that and they would not fit" (Howden, 2009). The authorities declared the Kenyan fishermen aliens and collected taxes from them. The fishermen complained about regular incidents of being arrested, assaulted, harassed, and tortured by the Ugandan authorities (Howden, 2009).

The fishermen continued to protest, but they did not get more than local interest, until the beginning of March 2009 when four journalists from the Nation Media Group armed only with cameras went by boat to Migingo to report about the Ugandan forces harassing Kenyans. Five kilometers away from the island, the journalists were stopped by the Ugandan forces. They were arrested and taken to the island where they were interrogated for one hour. One of the arrested journalists was Elisha Otieno who participated in the group interview for this paper. He said they had prepared for the situation:

"We already told our driver who we left in Muru (Muru is the nearest mainland before you take a boat to Migingo): 'The moment you realize our phones go off you know we have been arrested, so tell the guys in Kisumu and Nairobi that things are not good, so that they can start communicating'. When we were arrested our driver quickly realized it, and upon arrival of the island Kenyan fishermen quickly noticed because we carried our TV branding logo so they realized we had been arrested, and the fishermen themselves were also making calls. Within very few minutes the story was on FM stations, everywhere. It was an issue in the country" (Group Interview on Migingo Island, 2010:[11.10-12.10]).

Subsequently Elisha Otieno spoke on the phone with the commissioner of the Ugandan police who said there should be no more problems. The journalists were released and also allowed to take photos and interview people before they left Migingo. According to Etieno, these pictures were the first on Kenyan television (Group Interview on Migingo Island, 2010). Although Ugandan

President Yoweri Museveni and Kenyan President Kibaki have announced the intention to survey the border to determine Migingo’s real owner, the battle still rages as of April 2010 (Ngirachu, 2010). The case has become a part of the journalists’ regular beat and frequently they make calls to the fishermen at Migingo to cover the ongoing development of the situation (Group Interview on Migingo Island, 2010; Ombuor, 2010). Although the official governmental goal is to solve the situation at Migingo Island, the problem persists. A recent development came in April 2010, when Kenyan and Ugandan governments made fresh efforts to determine the ownership of the dispute with a KSH 140 million survey, approximately US \$1.8 million (Otieno, 2010).

It should be noted that while the official dispute still concentrates on fishing rights, there are also other interests involved: Migingo and other islands in Lake Victoria have turned into strategic spots for drug traffickers and smugglers who want to hide their shady deals and take advantage of the lapse in policing far away from the mainland (Moturi & Oywa, 2009).

In the analysis I will discuss how new technology has influenced the Migingo story.

**Table 3.D: Journalists covering the case of Migingo Island**

<i>Category</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Working for</i>	<i>Interview Date &amp; Place</i>
Print	Nick Oluoch	The Standard	February 13, 2010 <i>held at the media center in Migori.</i>
Television	James Nolati	Citizen TV	
Print	Elisha Otieno	Nation Media Group	

### 3.6 Additional Empirical Data

Given that my main data source consists of personal interviews, I have aimed to validate my data set as much as possible by interviewing and networking with several sources, and the trend emerging showed a convergence of opinions between the representatives. As additional empirical data I have four sources: Interviews with Kenyan media actors, an observation session at a radio station, a visit to a media center for journalists operating in remote areas, and participation in two conferences on mobile technology in Africa:

First, I had six interviews with media actors representing respectively the journalist education, the private mobile industry, two African associations for journalists, and the Good Governance Program from the Danish Embassy (see table 3.E). These interviews have not been transcribed, because they are not used as primary data, but the audio files are enclosed on the CD-ROM. Second, I did my own observations at the Somali language radio station Star FM where I spent a couple of hours listening to a morning show and talking with the presenters. I did this to get a better understanding of the presenters’ interactions with the persons calling in to the call-in shows.

Third, at the end of my study trip, I visited a small media center in Migori, near the Tanzanian border, where freelance journalists – correspondents – in remote areas can borrow a computer for free to type their stories and send the piece via e-mail to the media they are working for. Fourth, to explore the direction where the mobile phone business industry in Africa is heading, I also participated in the one day conference “Not Only for Talking – Mobile Phones are Changing Africa” held in Copenhagen, November 2009, and the two day conference “Mobile Web East Africa” held in Nairobi, February 2010. These conferences provided me some current perspectives regarding Africa's current use of mobile technology, which in particular provides a host of innovative services in the health and financial sectors (see table 3.F). Furthermore, I would have liked to include interviews with international media NGOs operating in Africa who could tell me how they train news journalists in using new technologies, but unfortunately my interview requests to International Media Support and Internews were not answered. A comprehensive source list follows below:

**Table 3.E: Interviewed Media Actors**

<i>Name</i>	<i>Organization/Company</i>	<i>Interview Date</i>
Osendo Con Omoro	Governance Program Officer at the Royal Danish Embassy in Nairobi	January 19, 2010
William Oloo Janak (WOJ)	Chairman of the Kenya Correspondents Association	January 20, 2010
Patrick Maluki	Lecturer at Department of School of Journalism, University of Nairobi	January 27, 2010
Jussi Impiö	Leader of Nokia's Research Center in Nairobi	January 28, 2010
Peter Oriare	Lecturer at Department of School of Journalism, University of Nairobi	February 1, 2010
Tervil Okoko	Regional coordinator Eastern Africa Journalists Association	February 3, 2010

**Table 3.F: Conferences**

Conference on mobile phones in Africa: “Not Only for Talking – Mobile Phones are Changing Africa” held in Copenhagen, November 13, 2009, organized by the Danish Society of Engineers in cooperation with International Media Support. Ten speakers, among them:		
<i>Name</i>	<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Speech On</i>
Knud Erik Skouby	Professor at Aalborg University Centre	Mobile Phones – a general overview
Herman Kojo Chinery-Hesse	Chairman Black Star Line, Ghana	The reality and perspectives in trade via mobile phones.
Jussi Impiö	Leader of Nokia's Research Centre in Nairobi	Bright and dark visions on mobiles for development.
John West	Institute of War and Peace Reporting, London	The promise of ubiquity: mobiles as media platform in the South.

**Table 3.F: Conferences (cont.)**

Conference on “Mobile Web East Africa” held in Nairobi, February 3. and 4., 2010, organized by the British conference planning company All Amber and hosted in cooperation with Kenya ICT Board. Eighteen speakers, among them:		
<i>Name</i>	<i>Organisation</i>	<i>Speech On</i>
Paul Kukubo	Chief Executive Officer, Kenya ICT Board	The Kenyan Government’s approach to driving the expansion of the mobile sector for the benefit of the populace
Erik Hersman	Director of Operations, Ushahidi	An examination into the potential that exists in the mobile web in transforming the lives in individual lives.
Rick Joubert	Executive Chairman, Yonder Mobile Media, South Africa Mobile Marketing Association	Mobile as the 7 <sup>th</sup> mass media, the 1 <sup>st</sup> screen and the most ubiquitous consumer technology that has ever existed
Eric Cantor	Director, AppLab Uganda, Grameen Foundation	Taking advantage of the mobile opportunity to reach out to the hardest to reach: Best practices in mob app development for low-income communities

### 3.7 Analysis Strategy

My ambition with this paper is to describe how mobile phones are being used by Kenyan journalists, and to analyze how mobile technology has influenced journalistic working processes and to point toward possible consequences.

After concluding the interviews, I used an open code strategy to identify various ways that different types of technologies have influenced the journalistic working process. Through this, I will be able to compare the development of mobile technology with other technical developments and thereby discuss whether or not this specific technology adds something new to the daily work of journalists in Kenya.

The analysis will be structured after the four main phases in the journalistic working process as described by Kramhøft (2000). My purpose is to outline those changes and developments in the journalistic processes for which mobile technology is responsible. Each section will begin with a short presentation of the most interesting points made by the interviewees, and then move to an analysis based on the theoretical framework. Frequent use of quotes from the interviewees will be used to put emphasis on the points I want to draw out. By describing how technology is being used at each step I will be able to answer the problem statement: *How do Kenyan news journalists use mobile phones in their work?* After having outlined the usages, I will move on to answer the two research questions and discuss how mobile technology affects the journalistic working process and the journalists' relationships with their sources.

Due to the nature of qualitative interview methodology, which includes large amounts of speech, Professor Peter Dahler-Larsen of the University of Southern Denmark suggests that the researcher presents data schematically. This method will make my findings more transparent and at the same time it will be easier for the reader to get an overview of the data collection (Dahler-Larsen, 2005:37). In table 3.G I have provided an overview of the way I operationalized the problem statement.

**Table 3.G: Overview of Problem Statement, the Research Questions, the theoretical themes, and the purpose of the analysis.**

Problem Statement	Changes in the Journalistic Working Processes	Theoretical Framework	Purpose of Analysis
How do Kenyan journalists use mobile phones in their work?	RQ1: In which ways does mobile technology affect the journalistic working process?  RQ2: How does mobile technology affect public interaction with the news media?	Journalistic Working Process  Gatekeeping Theory  ICT4D  Disruptive Technologies	My purpose is to outline the changes and developments in the journalistic processes for which new technology is responsible.  Looking at the general technical development help contextualizing and understand if mobile technology differs from other technologies.

## Chapter 4 – Analysis

This section of the thesis will in a systematic manner connect the statements from the thirteen interviewees and the case study on Migingo Island. As shown by several scholars, for example Becker & Vlad (2009) and Kramhøft (2000), journalists follow certain procedures in the process of newsgathering. Therefore, to identify how mobile technology influences the work of journalists, the analysis is structured after the four different steps in the journalistic working process as outlined in section 2.3: The Idea Phase, The Research Phase, The Analysis Phase, and The Communication Phase.

The following sections 4.1 to 4.4 are descriptive and will focus upon how mobile technology is involved in each step of the process. Additionally, the empirical data suggests that access to computers with an Internet connection also has influenced the journalistic working process and therefore the sections will include a description of this influence. Each section will present the key points made by the interviewees and the case of Migingo Island, and be wrapped up by a concise conclusion. Because the interview respondents mentioned the general influence of new technology upon the journalistic working process, I have provided a schematic overview of the various usages in table 4.A and 4.B. This will help me to answer the problem statement:

- How do Kenyan journalists use mobile phones in their work?

Mobile technology's exclusive influence on the four steps in the journalistic working process is depicted in table 4.D and discussed in section 4.5. This section will thereby account for answering the two research questions:

- **RQ1:** In which ways does mobile technology affect the journalistic working process?
- **RQ2:** How does mobile technology affect public interaction with the news media?

**Table 4.A: New Technology's influence on the Idea and the Research Phases**

	JAN	WOJ	FIA	AW	MM	JM	WR	RN	JK	MHO	BM	LW	PM	Group Interview Mingingo Island	Total
<b>The Idea Phase</b>															
New channels for story ideas (for instance from call-in shows and social networks such as Facebook)	√			√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√		10
Following political blogs on the Internet	√			√											2
Generating story ideas from international web pages	√			√			√	√	√		√				6
Ability to develop and carry out ideas on risky events with the mobile phone as a lifeline														√	1
<b>The Research Phase</b>															
Fieldwork has decreased		√		√	√	√	√	√		√		√		√	9
Easy to contact sources	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	13
Diversified pool of sources and access to more people	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	13
Immediate contact with the right source					√										1
Background research is conducted on the Internet	√	√		√	√	√	√	√	√		√	√		√	11
The methods available for sources to contact journalists have increased	√	√		√	√		√		√	√		√			8
People are generally more willing to participate as sources in journalism									√	√					2
Ability to conduct telephone interviews	√	√	√*	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√*	√	14
Recording interviews using the mobile phone's microphone		√							√						2

\* FIA and PM stressed that they would never conduct telephone interviews with sources from their respective areas; only officials are interviewed on the phone.

**Table 4.B: New Technology's influence on the Analysis and the Communication Phases**

	JAN	WOJ	FIA	AW	MM	JM	WR	RN	JK	MHO	BM	LW	PM	Group Interview Migingo Island	Total
<b>The Analysis Phase</b>															
The Internet has streamlined the process of producing and submitting a journalistic package to a media house		√		√							√			√	4
Briefings between city media houses and remote area journalists	√			√										√	3
<b>The Communication Phase</b>															
Individuals in rural areas can access information about an online story by using the mobile phone's browser to open the web page					√										1
Interest in a particular story can be peaked by posting promos on a service like Youtube and then posting links to the promos on social networks.	√														1
Breaking news on mobile phones	√	√		√											3
Immediate interaction with and reactions from the audience through radio call-in shows, Facebook, and Twitter	√			√	√			√	√	√	√	√	√		9



## 4.1 The Idea Phase

According to Kramhøft (2000) the basis of creating news can fundamentally be divided in two groups. On the one hand, news stories run on events: they can happen suddenly such as plane crashes or other accidents, they can be scheduled like national and international summits, and they can come about in the presence of movie premiers and publication of books or music. An event is likely to get media coverage if journalists find it newsworthy and with relevance for the society. On the other hand, news stories can be generated from idea development. Idea-based stories can use events as a starting point, but they generate out of the journalist being puzzled about something. Stories solely based on autonomous ideas are more seldom than stories based on events, but they are crucial for journalism because the research carried out is more thorough and thereby the stories provide more in-depth analysis for the audience (Kramhøft, 2000:78-79).

When I interviewed the Kenyan journalists I asked them how they get ideas for their stories today and how they used to get the ideas when they started working with the media (see question number 1 and 3 in table 3.4.1). My purpose with these questions was to understand if mobile technology is being used in the phase of getting ideas and if the journalists' have changed the way they get ideas over time.

A few years ago, before access to the Internet and mobile phones was possible, journalists attained most of their ideas for news stories from events while ideas for self-generated stories often developed in the field and by face to face conversations with sources (LW, 2010; RN, 2010; WOJ, 2010). Today new technology has influenced the way they are getting ideas: “[previously] we would get a lot of information from press conferences. Rather than being investigating we relied on conferences. Actually the availability of IT has made it even easier for journalists to go that extra mile and there are way more investigating stories. I see a lot of that now, even in Kenya” (LW, 2010:[16.20]).

Ten of the respondents explain that one source that can jump-start the process of getting ideas comes from the popular call-in shows broadcast on almost all FM radio stations (see table 4.A: The Idea Phase). Although the first radio call-in show broadcast by KBC went on the air back in 1996 (LW, 2010), the popularity has risen only within the last five years, partly because the number of vernacular FM radio stations has grown and partly because people are now able to call in using their mobile phone at a reasonable rate (Impiö, 2010; Mbeke & Mshindi, 2008; Oriare, 2010). The opinions and statements from the callers occasionally peak the journalists' interest; journalists can then call back the contributor after the show. The following are some news stories the respondents thought to develop after an idea generated from a call-in show:

- The rate of HIV victims was growing tremendously in a remote area of Kenya. It turned out that poor women ferried by young men on public bicycle taxis (common known as *boda-bodas*) paid with unprotected sexual favours instead of money (AW, 2010).

- A series of serious stomach problems in one small town was caused by butchers' handling of meat. When the media began to cover the hygiene problems the authorities went in and improved standards (JK, 2010).
- The health care system in Uganda lacks basic facilities and as a consequence people are dying. The idea for the story was developed after a woman wrote in to a program broadcast on the BBC's International Radio Station in Africa and told of how the hospital neglected her health care. A man was listening to the program from Belgium and decided to help the woman. BBC reporters followed up the story with a general feature on the topic (RN, 2010).
- A big company was about to be relocated to another city without the public's knowledge (WR, 2010).
- Male children seem to be being marginalized in the countryside with more girls than boys going to school, but in the Central Province the reverse was happening. Why this difference appeared was researched by a journalist. He said: "It took the observation of one teacher to make me follow up. Probably I could have waited for the statistic from the Ministry of Education to get to know that, but that would have taken time. And what if I never got the statistics out to the public? We would never have known" (AW, 2010: [39.30]).

Other journalists get inspiration from the tips and comments they get from their own Facebook friends or the fans of a specific media company on Facebook (although Facebook can be accessed from a computer, the social network is also accessible from mobile phones, either through a browser or as a mobile application, and according to Joubert (2010) and Opera (2010) many Africans access the network from their mobile phone; therefore I have chosen to say that some comments are probably provided by persons using a mobile phone). An employee from the national broadcaster KBC told of how a tip from a Facebook user resulted in a program about the dangers of pharmacies that sell emergency contraception without information on how it (LW, 2010): "People ask us questions about their sexuality and we take up the issues because as a public station we think it is our duty to give them the right information on that ... technology has really helped a lot [to get new ideas] on issues of sexuality or what you would call sensitive topics such as corruption, relationships, or scandals" (LW, 2010: [8.00]).

The case of the Migingo Island demonstrated another example of utilizing mobile technology in the phase of generating ideas. According to Meilby (1996, p. 125) most journalism is generated out of observations and interviews with the involved persons in a case, but occasionally a story can benefit from the journalist's own participation in the event. When the four journalists got the idea to travel to Migingo the diplomatic crisis between Uganda and Kenya had been locked for years and the media relied on fishermen and executive officers as sources for their stories; the most

effective way to advance the story in a journalistic context was to provide firsthand documentation of the Ugandan harassment by visiting Migingo. Because the group expected to get arrested they decided to take some extra precautionary measures. They used their driver at the mainland as their prime lifeline: he was asked to check up on the connectivity to their mobile phones and he was ready to contact selected media persons as soon as he considered the group to be in trouble.

The group of journalists could have paid Migingo a visit few years ago when the area was lacking mobile connection, but because of modern mobile technology the story was immediately available and therefore more newsworthy for other media. The interrogation of the journalists had hardly begun before the story was on the news all over Kenya. It is worthwhile to note that mobile phones also provided the involved journalists some kind of personal security in the situation.

In addition to mobile technology, six of the respondents also mention computers with an Internet connection as a source to getting new ideas (see table 4.A: The Idea Phase). Some are following political blogs like kenyaimagine.com and marsgroupkenya.com, where they gain knowledge about political issues that can not be found elsewhere. The blogging community in Kenya is strong because people can express themselves freely without fearing for the consequences in the anonymous space the Internet creates (AW, 2010; JAN, 2010).

A radio employee from the KBC browses international web pages to find event receiving journalistic attention elsewhere which are occurring also in Kenya but not being reported upon: “Recently I was reading about breast cancer, a very widespread disease in this country, but no one has ever done a radio feature on the topic here in our corporation” (BM, 2010:[5.40]). The journalist did a feature on the topic containing national statistics and interviews with victims of the disease.

#### **4.1.1 Summary: New Technology’s Influence on the Idea Phase**

Like other journalists, Kenyan journalists get their ideas through a variety sources, and within the past two to ten years the methods they use to generate ideas have broadened due to developments in new technology. In the view of John Stuart Mill (1869), the contribution of freedom of expression is significant when Kenyans can meet to discuss and debate in more forums. Mill's ideals are strengthened when the new knowledge they produce is picked up by journalists and used as ideas for news stories.

Mobile technology has been a catalyst on the idea phase, although the usage is often indirect: *Because of* the mobile penetration in Kenya, the journalists are currently:

- Getting ideas from the FM radio stations call-in shows, where people from all over Kenya are contributing to the debate from their mobile phones.
- Picking up tips and comments from friends on the social network Facebook, for example on sensitive issues regarding youth sexuality.

- Able to develop and carry out ideas on risky events because they can make use of mobile technology as a lifeline to the surrounding society such as in the case of Migingo Island.

The Internet is also used by the respondents to develop ideas in the newsgathering process, for instance by:

- Following political blogs like [kenyaimagine.com](http://kenyaimagine.com) and [marsgroupkenya.com](http://marsgroupkenya.com).
- Browsing different international news sites to generate stories with a national angle, for instance on breast cancer.

## **4.2 The Research Phase**

When the journalist has got the story idea the research phase takes over. Almost every journalistic product needs the support of research before the story can be produced and eventually published. Therefore efficient routines are important when a journalist wishes to collect basic information on an issue as fast as possible. For instance, knowledge about accessing written sources as well as developing a network of human sources is beneficial for a studious journalist (Kruuse, 2000: 146). In this phase, the journalist collects more information and gets the facts right on the topic by reading documents and interviewing people. In this process, the journalist carefully considers the different interests the sources are likely to have and chooses various points of views in the journalistic product so the complete package states the problem in natural terms (Becker & Vlad, 2009; Kramhøft, 2010).

I have attempted to examine how this step is being influenced by mobile technology by asking the interviewees to explain the difference in their research today compared with five-ten years ago (see question number 2 and 3 in table 3.4.1). They told me that in the past journalists physically had to leave their desk in this phase: written sources could be studied in libraries and in media organizations' archives; oral sources almost always would be interviewed face to face. The set up of interview appointments was done by writing letters – although poor road infrastructure could make it almost impossible for the letter to reach the recipient – and by literally walking all over the city to where the relevant source was staying and simply asking for an interview (AW, 2010; MHO, 2010). Sometimes the scheduling was done by land-line telephone, but this procedure was only possible if the source had access to a fixed-line telephone, and this was usually only the case if the source worked in an office. To have this kind of access the source was most likely to be working in the central administration, a member of the political elite, or a business person (AW, 2010; MM, 2010; RN, 2010). The scheduling of interviews with Kenyans without land-line access could be done by letter, but the best way for the journalist to get an interview was to search for sources in the field; however due to the expenses and limited funding, more often the journalist would simply opt to not utilize the source:

"Back then you would get most of your sources from others. Maybe if you wanted something from the provinces you would have to go through the district information officer, or call somebody in government who knew certain offices there to get you through, because going to the field would not always be that easy because of funding" (LW, 2010:[36:30]).

Sometimes the journalists would not succeed in finding the relevant persons before deadline, and as a consequence they would "script the story in a way that would avoid having information from that source" (MM, 2010:[09.10]).

A vast majority of the respondents stated, that research has become significantly easier. Today interviews are scheduled either via e-mail, by calling the interviewee using a mobile phone, or through the free Internet communication service Skype<sup>10</sup>. All the interviewees, including the journalists who have been covering the case of Migingo Island, mentioned that the ability to conduct interviews using their mobile phone has improved their working process (see table 4.A: The Research Phase).

Theoretically conducting telephone interviews was also a solution in the past, but this was practically never carried out. AW explained that the price of a call was so expensive that the in-house policy of some media organizations was to save on bills by disrupting the calls after three minutes. After that, the connection was cut off and the journalist either had to call again and repeat the situation or meet with the source face to face (AW, 2010:[15.15]). However some of the respondents emphasized that even today they prefer telephone interviews only with "the people who are the elite of the society" (FIA, 2010:[3.00]) such as experts and employees from the central administration. The importance of meeting people face to face was mentioned by almost all respondents; particularly two journalists who are operating in conflict sensitive areas<sup>11</sup> stressed the importance of gaining people's trust face to face before they will ask them for an interview (FIA, 2010; PM, 2010).

However, once in a while it is not possible for Kenyan journalists to conduct interviews face to face with their source simply because he or she is not reachable. The Migingo case has been running for years and the most crucial documentation on the ongoing development comes from oral sources. In 2009, when Ugandans locked Kenyans out from the island, the information was able to reach the mainland because of mobile technology. The fishermen who paid taxes to the Ugandan security force were allowed to live at the island, and by using their mobile phones they could therefore report the ongoing situation to the media (Group Interview on Migingo Island, 2010). The journalists interviewed for this study are sure that they would have attempted to cover the story before mobile technology penetrated the area less than three years ago, but the coverage would have been difficult. Probably the story would have died out when the Ugandans locked out

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<sup>10</sup> Skype is a free software application that, after being installed on a computer or a smartphone, allows people to make voice calls over the Internet (Skype, 2010).

<sup>11</sup> The two journalists operated respectively in the Kibera slum outside Nairobi, the second largest slum in Africa, and in Isiolo where Somalis have settled due to the ongoing war in their own country (FIA, 2010; PM, 2010).

the Kenyans because there would have been no easy way to provide documentation and interviews. Furthermore, the journalists' choices in sources would have been different:

"The sources would have been there, but getting to the sources would have been a problem because Migingo is far away and has no landline telephone service. So in the absence of mobile it would have been very difficult to talk to them. *'So you would have had to rely more on official sources?'* Yes, mainly, and sometimes official persons are not accurate. Because of the mobiles we talk to the victims. If we were to rely on the official versions – maybe from the Kenyan government – we would not get the final details of what happened" (Otieno, in Group Interview on Migingo Island, 2010:[22.35]).

Another way the mobile phone has influenced the work of journalists in their research phase is by being used as a discrete recorder. Tribal tensions and the political climate in Kenya make reporting on conflict situations a regular part of the work for many Kenyan journalists, and being a journalist is not always something to show off in a sensitive area where safety comes first. Today the mobile phone has become an important practical tool for journalists making it easier to report discretely utilizing the microphone in the mobile phone to record interviews. One respondent said: "Right now you do not have to carry a note book [if you go to a sensitive place]. You could probably be fiddling with the phone and somebody thinks you are just like any other person. So when you want to get information on that kind of thing, you can record it on the phone" (WOJ, 2010:[part 3, 51.05]).

Timothy Cook (1998) states, that journalists are following certain routines in their working process and in their relationship with sources. To maintain and expand the circle of sources, one of these routines can be to have an open mind towards new channels where new sources can be found (Kristensen, 2004). Many of the respondents explained that they are not limited in generating ideas for new stories either from people calling in to radio call-in shows or by interacting with them on social media networks like Facebook; they have also actually used these people as their initial source for a news story (AW, 2010; JAN, 2010; JK, 2010). As a result of the access to new technology, the journalists' pool of sources has diversified. A respondent from KTN, Kenya Television Network which is a part of the Standard Group, explains how that is:

"There were a lot of people that the media depended on as analysts in the news for live interviews, but with mobile telephony as well as the Internet a lot of people are getting their ideas out there, so you don't have to depend on one person anymore. Also on the ground a lot of people have mobile phones so when you go to rural areas it is a lot easier to contact people, so it brings you closer to the story" (JAN, 2010:[18.00]).

Furthermore, the way citizens contact the news media has broadened. Prior to the growth in penetration of mobiles and Internet connections, people might have sent a letter to a media house, or they would have physically walked the distance from their home to the media house, sometimes requiring an entire day. Today some persons still pass by the media house to talk with

the journalist face to face (BM, 2010), but more often the initial contact will begin with a call or an e-mail to the journalist or by responding on Facebook. This speedier method is particularly valuable if events like shootings or violence suddenly break out in an area; now citizens are able to give journalists immediate reports from the conflict area by calling them: “If it is a criminal issue the police will often mislead you. If there are dead bodies they will have collected them, so you go there – to the accident scene, to a place where they have been shooting people – but you do not find the bodies. They [the police] will say nobody died and you have no evidence. But right now the citizens will tell you exactly what happened. So what [the police] wants to be covered up can no longer be covered up. We are always ahead of the police” (WOJ, 2010:[part 3, 13.20]).

Two of the respondents also state that people are more often willing to participate as sources in journalistic stories today than five years ago (JK, 2010; MHO, 2010). Whether this is correct or not is beyond the scope of this paper's investigation, however assuming the statements to be true I will point to technological advantages as bearing an important role in the development: firstly, the number of vernacular FM radio stations has expanded and thereby the knowledge of specific radio stations has been on the rise. According to one respondent, community based stories have grown in number, and because people are listening to radio programs and call-in shows they are realizing that sometimes when an issue has been highlighted the society change for the better. This leads to more trust in journalists (JK, 2010; MHO, 2010). Secondly, the call-in shows have allowed normal citizens to feel they have access to the news media. This accessibility could give prominence to a broader interest from ordinary Kenyan people, allowing them to share their stories with the news media. A respondent from the national broadcaster KBC said:

“Being a public broadcaster with a national reach we have to think about our listeners in the rural areas. Before the on set of IT most of these areas would be forgotten. Maybe the newspapers would reach them in about two days, and they would rely on what they were hearing on the radio, but they could not respond to it all, so there was no interactivity. *But today they have an opportunity to interact?* Yes, because most of the people, even farmers and poor people have mobile phones now, and I am talking out of experience from the calls we get from all over the country. They are willing to contribute to the discussion we are having” (LW, 2010: [17.10]).

Also important for the Research Phase is the ability to conduct background research on the Internet. 11 of the respondents state that the initial research process on written sources has moved from libraries and archives to the Internet, where particularly the search engine Google is pointed out as being important for their subsequent research (table 4.A: The Research Phase).

Additionally, it was stated, getting in touch with the right source straight away has simplified. There are two reasons for that: first, the journalists are often searching contact information on the Internet, which is almost always current and relevant. Prior to the penetration of IT, the journalists could be referred to non-relevant sources by a secretary working in a company. The mistake would not be discovered before the interview was taking place at which time

the journalist could realize that the source was unable to answer the questions. Second, most Kenyans now have their own mobile phone with a private number, so when the journalist rings the contact's phone only the intended contact should answer (MM, 2010:[8.45]).

#### **4.2.1 Summary: New Technology's Influence on the Research Phase**

The respondents in this study point out that the time they spent on research and fieldwork has decreased remarkably within the past two to ten years. Interviews with contacts can be set up either from the Internet, by e-mail or Facebook, or by calling or sending a SMS to the relevant person. Some interviews are conducted on the mobile phone which saves the journalist from unnecessary fieldwork. In sum, mobile technology's influence on the research phase consists of a broader range of possibilities:

- Background interviews as well as interviews with official persons are often conducted as telephone interviews. However, many of the respondents lay emphasis upon the importance of establishing trust between the journalist and the contact, especially when the source is an ordinary citizen; therefore the journalists prefer not to conduct telephone interviews with this group of sources.
- The journalists' pool of sources has been diversified from the very top of society to the masses. Journalists can access new political analysts for live television shows, and the ubiquity of mobile phones influences the research journalists can conduct from hard-to-reach areas. For instance, mainland journalists have conducted interviews with the fishermen from Migingo Island from their mobile phones.
- Accessing the right source straight away is no longer unusual because the mobile phone number or the e-mail address only belongs to one specific person.
- Technological developments such as recording sound using the mobile phone's microphone have advanced interview techniques in the field and have made it fairly easier for a journalist to cover stories from a conflict-sensitive area.
- The way sources contact journalists has changed: just a few years ago they literally had to walk to the media house or send letters; today they call or send an e-mail to the journalist. Common people are more willing to share their stories and participate in journalistic reports as sources because more interaction with the news media has created a sense of trust in journalists to help change society for the better.



The Internet was also mentioned as an important tool in the research phase. With a computer connected to the Internet, Kenyan journalists rarely have to leave their desk anymore when gathering data from written sources: web browsing and search engines such as Google have made it easy to access the information in front of a computer screen. Additionally, the information on the Internet is internationally based, broadening the spectrum of information available to Kenyan journalists.

### **4.3 The Analysis Phase**

The outcome of the research phase includes piles of raw material, and the finest discipline for the journalist is to separate the most relevant information for the public and present the journalistic product in a balanced way. For this, the reporter has to exercise thorough source criticism by carefully determining the credibility of the information and of the sources providing it. When a journalist uses an ordinary citizen as primary source for a story, source criticism is just as important as when the source belongs to a group of experts or politicians (Kramhøft, 2000:143). However, news journalists who take advantage of new technology in their work pay for the speed with which they can access sources by spending more time on verification of the information they provide (Kruuse, 2000:157). For instance, in the group interview on the case of Migingo Island it was mentioned that the problem about relying on getting information from far away with the help of mobile technology is that the journalists are incapable of verifying what the sources choose to tell. Some journalists had a tendency to use one specific fisherman as their source, and as a result this guy became the de facto authority on this issue even though his statements were difficult to verify due to the long distance between the island and the mainland (Oluoch, in Group Interview on Migingo Island, 2010:[23.30]). Today these journalists try to balance the information by calling a variety of sources from the island.

Also when it comes to the use of the Internet verifying written online sources is precisely the problem, as pointed out by many of the respondents when they talk about disadvantages of using new technology in their working process. The shortcomings are that a web page does not provide information about the authenticity of its information, which may or may not be correct (BM, 2010; JAN, 2010; LW, 2010; WOJ, 2010). Many of the respondents state, however, that although the Internet poses a number of challenges the opportunities stand out, and the Internet has become a core source from which to obtain background information, since the reporter will go on to conduct interviews with experts and key figures and thereby verify the data. The access to and inclusion of more types of sources than was possible in the past theoretically allows journalists the possibility of providing more balanced journalism. Whether or not the accuracy in Kenyan journalism has increased is an interesting topic, and new research is needed to explore and understand this development.

A part of the Analysis Phase is the submission of the journalistic product to the editor. To secure high professional standards of the product, it is beneficial for a journalist to communicate

with his or her editor about the story: some sections may be unclear or additional information may be necessary. Two respondents as well as the journalists I interviewed about the case of Migingo Island stressed that this process has been greatly influenced by mobile technology in the last two to three years, because the communication between journalists from remote areas and the city media houses has become easier (see table 4.B: The Analysis Phase). A television journalist who is operating out of Nairobi said that mobile technology has enhanced the communication: "KTN has correspondents in Kapanguria, near the Sudanese border. There is a guy I never have met, but we speak on the phone a lot while he is sending stories from that part of the country. That would not have happened two years ago because there was no connection to that area" (JAN, 2010:[17.00]).

In terms of producing news stories and sending them to the media house, computer technology (with Internet connection) has particularly influenced the speed at which the journalists are able to get the information out. In the group interview on Migingo Island, the journalists described that after having interviewed a fisherman on the mobile phone they can write the story immediately and send it to the media house in Nairobi. When the sub-editor receives the file it can be published online via the media's web page and from there FM radio stations are able to carry the story. The process can take less than one or two hours (Otieno, in Group Interview on Migingo Island, 2010:[21.30]). Regular news and updates on the disputed island has peaked public interest about the case, and the media prominence has helped ease the harassment of the fishermen, said the interview respondents: "The Ugandans now know that everything they do will get into the Kenyan media and once it gets into the Kenyan media the Ugandan officials will get to know about it" (Otieno, in Group Interview on Migingo Island, 2010:[28.00]).

The following bullet points describe how computer technology has streamlined the process of submitting a journalistic package to a media house in the past two to five years, particularly for journalists operating in remote areas (see table 4.B: The Analysis Phase):

- Radio journalists used to use tape recorders for interviewing. The raw material would be handed in or, if the journalist was working from a different province than where the media company was situated, sent by mail. In the media house, the material was prepared for broadcasting by employees who edited the piece by making use of the erase and rewind functions (WR, 2010). Today the audio recording is done digitally and if a journalist has the software for editing installed on his laptop the piece can be sent straight to the studio in a broadcast-ready state (AW, 2010).
- Television journalists used to have the same working conditions as radio journalists did, and as of February 2010 some of them still do: when I conducted the interview with the journalists who are covering the case of Migingo Island, JN from Citizen TV explained that he still sends his footage through a courier to the media house (Group Interview on Migingo Island, 2010:[40.00]). Video-editing software for the computer he uses would probably help ease this process.

- Print journalists, who worked from the field in provinces other than where the media house was situated, would type their stories on a typewriter and would then make a reverse call (the term for a call that charges the person being called) to a copytaker at the media house. Typically, three or four copytakers were ready to answer the phones, but with up to 70 journalists calling from the field it was likely for a journalist to have to wait in line. The copytakers would tell the journalist which number in line he had and ask him to wait by the phone. Sometimes it took hours before the copytaker called back, and then she would sit with the phone between her ear and her shoulder, typing all the words and punctuations the journalist read aloud. Sometimes the copytaker would be so tired and stressed at this moment that she could only receive one story, and the journalist would have to call back the next day to get more stories published in the newspaper (Group Interview on Migingo Island, 2010; WOJ, 2010). Due to the limited landline access, sending a fax was rare; once in a while the journalists sent their stories as a letter, although the unreliable mail service could not guarantee the article would reach the media house within days or even weeks after it was posted. As a consequence the practice of using copytakers was a regular procedure until 2007 (WOJ, 2010). Today, access to a computer with an Internet connection has increased the speed of the process: the journalist simply types the story in a word-processing software program like Microsoft Word, and afterwards the piece is sent by e-mail to the sub-editor. Technical developments have enabled journalists from the provinces to do more stories in a single day than was imagined possible just a few years ago (Otieno, in Group Interview on Migingo Island, 2010).



*Picture 4.C: The group interview with the three news journalists who have been covering the story of Migingo Island took place at the media content generation center in Migori. The computer equipment behind the interviewees is used by freelance journalists to research, write, and submit journalistic pieces. Photo by Camilla Karlsen.*

Although access to a computer with Internet connection eases the process of production and submission, most Kenyan journalists – particularly freelancers working in the provinces – can not afford to purchase the equipment. Typically, journalists will pay from their own pocket to rent a computer in an Internet café, said William Oloo Janak, chairman of Kenya Correspondents Association (KCA), a network of media representatives working as freelancers (WOJ, 2010). As a respond to the poor working conditions for province journalists, KCA has partnered with the Media Diversity Centre, a project from the Nairobi-based media organization African Woman & Child Feature Service, to set up nine Media Content Generation Centers. The project launched in September 2009 is supported by the Ford Foundation, and these centers allow the journalists to use computers for free.

I visited one of these centers in Migori, a town near the Tanzanian border. Basically it consisted of a chair, a desk, a digital camera, and one computer with a modem (see picture 4.C). This modest set up empowers the correspondents to easily generate news from this area by simply visiting the center and using the equipment for free. Freelancers are thereby able to research, write and send their stories to media houses for whom they work (WOJ, 2010:[part 2, 13.00]). All of the data the journalists produce can subsequently be saved on their own removable memory stick. In Migori, the computer provided has audio editing software available to be used by radio freelancers; however television freelancers still have to send their raw material by courier to the media house because funding had not yet been raised for installing this type of software on the computer.

#### **4.3.1 Summary: New Technology's Influence on the Analysis Phase**

The analysis phase is the step in the journalistic working process that comes just before distributing the story to the public. This phase is highly important for the credibility of the story. The journalist carries the responsibility for presenting valid documentation supported by trustworthy sources (Kramhøft, 2000:198). In sum, mobile technology has:

- Enabled Kenyan journalists to research much faster than in the past; however the information they obtain from online sources as well as from telephone interviews must be verified if the goal is to publish credible news.
- Eased the communication between city and country journalists in the submission process. By communicating on the mobile phone, small mistakes and unclear phrasing can be amended before the story is published.

Furthermore the access to computers with Internet connection has improved the process of producing and submitting a journalistic package to a media house. Particularly, freelance journalists operating in remote areas have benefited from the technical developments because they – for the most part – can get their stories out without having to rely on copytakers and couriers.

## 4.4 The Communication Phase

After a journalistic product has been edited, the last step in the journalistic working process is to notify the public about the news. Traditionally, print news was published in news papers and magazines, while radio and television took care of broadcasting audio and motion pictures. Since the 1990s this has changed tremendously due to new technologies in the Western World where the media is now being shaped by the trend of *media convergence* (Kabel, 2002). The term is jargon within the media market used to describe content production which is premised on the mix between old and new media and where outputs are generated for multiple news platforms. For instance, it is possible to read an article from a newspaper on the Internet which provides links to sound bites from the original interview (radio) or a video clip (television).

Although computer-based Internet and mobile technology has been in the Africa continent for almost two decades it is only within the last two to five years that people have made regular use of these technologies due to recent improvements in accessibility and cost-efficiency. As a consequence various forms of media have converged rapidly on the African continent (Mbeke & Mshindi, 2008) and journalists are taking advantage of publishing their products on these platforms. Table 4.B: The Communication Phase shows that three of the respondents mentioned that the prime method for breaking news in Kenya today is by news alerts that the media houses send as text messages to mobile phones (AW, 2010; JAN, 2010; WOJ, 2010). Their observations are supported by James Mbugua, a business writer at Radio Africa operating in Nairobi. In an interview with the British-based newspaper The Guardian in December 2009, Mbugua said that "the majority of people are getting their news with radio as it has a lot of reach in rural areas, or with mobile phones. So quite a few of the media houses send out text messages with breaking news, final scores of sport games and stocks" (Bunz, 2009). Of course, this feature requires that the owner of the mobile number sign up for the free service provided by a media house or a mobile operator. However, since most people carry their phone with them all the time and check immediately if they receive a text message the mobile phone can be considered the best platform for breaking news (Bunz, 2009; JAN, 2010).

Another way to break news or at least catch the audience's attention on a specific issue was pointed out by a television journalist who works with the KTN. He explained that when he has a story coming up he will upload a teaser for it on Youtube and post the link to his profiles on Facebook and Twitter. Thereby the audience is widened because of the increased likelihood that people will see the promo and become interested in seeing the program (JAN, 2010:[30.00]).

An additional use of mobile technology in the communication phase was presented by a respondent who did a piece on renewable energy which was published on a web page (MM, 2010). One of her important sources had implemented solar energy in a rural village which is hard to reach and where it is not possible to access a computer. However, the source still got to see the web-based story the journalist wrote, because the journalist simply sent him an e-mail that

included the webpage's link. Using his mobile phone's e-mail client he could receive the e-mail, click on the link, and access the web page through the browser on his mobile phone. In fact this way of communicating enlightens the people in the villages, the journalist said, because she will also send links to other stories about renewable energy so they can learn from what other people have said (MM, 2010:[11.00]).

In sum, mobile technology as well as computer technology has improved communication between journalists and the public. WR (2010) explained what happens different media are used in the journalistic process; first, journalists use computer technology to search the Internet for international news; second, they broadcast their findings on air using radio technology; and finally, with mobile technology the listeners can respond to what they are listening to: "Using the Internet we can see what they are talking about in America and in Europe. I can pick a story that is running somewhere in America and allow our listeners to give their views. A very good example is when Obama was running for president. Even in the villages Kenyans knew exactly what was happening" (WR, 2010:[23.15]).

Besides from using new technologies in the Communication Phase, Kenyan journalists can also take advantage of new opportunities to earn revenue provided by Internet platforms. In Kenya, freelancers are the most recruited in media houses for generating media content (WOJ, 2010:[part 2, 21.00]), and if they produce content that the media house has no interest in buying, the content can be stored with online platforms such as The Reject or A24 Media which will try to market it:

- The Reject, an online publication launched in December 2009, was initially started as an alternative avenue for politically risky stories rejected by media houses. As a provocative greeting it runs the slogan: "Unfiltered, uninhibited ... just the gruesome truth" (African Woman & Child Feature Service, 2010). The Media Diversity Centre, part of the organization African Woman & Child Feature Service, is the publisher of the Reject and receives funds from the Ford Foundation. Today different NGOs make use of the publication as a means of generating documentation for political issues (WOJ, 2010:[part 2, 13.30]).
- A24 Media is a Nairobi-based company that sells video for broadcast on television channels. The footage material comes from freelance African journalists who keep 60% of the revenue and maintain ownership of the copyright on the raw material. The company is able to sell stories to broadcast corporations worldwide and challenge the way Western television stations buy news about Africa from news services like Reuters (A24 Media, 2010).

Since Kenyans use English as their official language, the content they produce and publish online has potential to reach a broad audience from all over the world.

#### **4.4.1 Summary: New Technology's Influence on the Communication Phase**

In terms of distributing journalistic products to the public new media has developed the following opportunities:

- The prime way for the public to receive breaking news is to sign up for news alerts send by the media houses or mobile operators as SMS messages to a mobile phone.
- Interest in a particular story can be peaked by posting promos on a service like Youtube and then posting links to the promos on social networks.
- Even in rural areas with no computer access an individual can access information about an online story in which he appears as source by using his mobile phone's browser to open the web page.
- Online platforms such as The Reject and A24 Media provide new opportunities for Kenyan journalists to sell their journalistic products internationally.

#### **4.5 Mobile Technology's Affect on Journalism**

In the previous sections I have documented how new technology has influenced the four stages in the journalistic working process within the past two to ten years and how it now helps journalists perform their duties more efficiently. For instance, the use of new technology has made it feasible to generate credible stories without having to make a physical appearance at the location where the news is taking place, allowing stories to be generated and published much faster than just few years back.

In this section I will discuss the findings and show how the journalistic working process and the public's interaction with the media are affected by mobile technology and put forth the argument that this technology provides Kenyan journalism something that other technologies cannot offer. Table 4.D on the following page provides an overview of the various ways mobile technology is affecting each step in the journalistic working process.

**Table 4.D:**  
**Mobile Technology's Affect on the Journalistic Working Process and the Public's Interaction with the Media**



<b>M1</b> ↓		<b>M2</b> ↓		<b>M3</b> ↓		<b>M4</b> ↓	People from all over Kenya are contributing to the debate from their mobile phones when FM radio stations broadcast call-in shows.
The Idea Phase	→	The Research Phase	→	The Analysis Phase	→	The Communication Phase	The Public
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ideas from the public's contribution to call-in shows</li> <li>- Ideas from the public's contribution to Facebook-groups</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Schedule interviews</li> <li>- Conduct interviews</li> <li>- Record sound using the mobile phone's microphone</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Documentation from the research can be verified by calling other sources</li> <li>- Contact between city and country journalists when the product is submitted</li> </ul>	<b>Traditional gate keeping</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- News is sent as SMS</li> <li>- News can be read online from the browser on a mobile phone</li> </ul>	



All four of the main phases in the journalistic working process are affected directly and indirectly by mobile technology:

*The Idea Phase:* In this step, the process is affected indirectly by mobile technology, because the journalists get ideas from radio stations' call-in shows or contributions to Facebook-groups.

*Because* the number of radio stations has grown in Kenya and *because* the mobile phone penetration has become almost ubiquitous, new platforms have been created for journalists to get ideas for news stories (see table 4.D: M1).

*The Research Phase:* The crucial role of mobile phones in this phase is that journalists have gained opportunity to schedule and conduct interviews with the most relevant sources possible; even sources that live in hard to reach areas are now accessible. Just a few years ago a journalist would have to be content with substandard local sources or if necessary spend time on traveling to a remote area. Additionally, a mobile phone can be used as a tool for recording which is particularly useful in conflict-sensitive reporting (see table 4.D: M2).

*The Analysis Phase:* Journalists can easily crosscheck information by calling other sources. More importantly, a new level of communication between city and country journalists has become possible, which is particularly vital once the product has been submitted. The immediate contact creates an opportunity to clear potential questions before publishing the product. In theory, this contact could also be established by using a chat-program on a computer with an Internet connection, however, it is not obvious that the country journalist has access to a computer or can afford the cost of using one in an Internet café (see table 4.D: M3).

*The Communication Phase:* Mobile technology also plays an important part in the last step of the journalistic working process, because news headlines can be sent as SMS to the mobile phones of people who have signed up for the service. The service is beneficial for people living in remote areas where radio can be cut off because of power black outs and where it might take two days for a newspaper to reach the area due to poor road infrastructure. Also, online news can be read from a mobile phone's browser (see table 4.D: M4).

#### **4.5.1 Five Crucial Reasons That Mobile Technology is Outstanding**

The findings of this study seem to document that mobile technology has provided an opportunity for Kenyan journalists to reach people within the country no matter their location. A possible objection to this is that a computer with an Internet connection is able to provide some of the same features as those attributed to the mobile phone. I will argue that the difference consists of five crucial parts:

1. First, a mobile phone runs on a battery and is not subject to being cut off in a power blackout. Kenya is a developing country, and daily power black outs are common: in remote areas most families use a generator as a supplier and because of the expenses the generator only runs a couple of hours each day. If the electricity

- goes off the computer will immediately do the same, but a mobile phone runs on battery and thereby the conversation will not be affected.
2. Second, a handset is much cheaper to purchase than is a computer, and the costs for making calls or using data to access the mobile phone's browser are low.
  3. Third, a mobile phone is affordable for all social groups in the Kenyan society, which means that even people living in the Kibera slum can now contact and be contacted by journalists. Of course, journalists can pick up story ideas from Kenyan bloggers, however bloggers are generally able to afford a computer with an Internet connection.
  4. Fourth, many Kenyans have their own mobile phone and it is near them all the time; they can easily pick it up and immediately respond to a discussion on the radio or in a Facebook group. A few years back, the flow of information went from the media to the public; today the public can contribute with their viewpoints. Of course, it is also possible to make contributions to Facebook groups from a computer with an Internet connection, however due to shortages of electricity it will take several years before all villages have reliable computer access.
  5. Finally, according to statistics from the World Factbook provided by The Central Intelligence Agency (2010) Kenya has a literacy rate of 85.1%. Mobile technology provides people the opportunity to interact with the media and speak up although they do not have the capacity to write a letter to the editor.

These five aspects are essential in the way mobile phones differ from other media platforms. In the optic of Mill's (1869) advocacy for free discussion and Habermas' (1991) public sphere, the public's extended access to the media is crucial in the developing process for Kenya. Habermas' stressed that ideally the public sphere should be open and accessible for all people. Although in the past Kenyans have had access to different media types, the mobile phone is the first medium that accounts for fast reception of news and gives groups of people who have not previously had access to the media an opportunity to participate.

Furthermore, the widespread use of mobile telephony gives the media a chance to utilize sources that are not working in the central administration or members of the political elite. Certainly it does not necessarily follow that a person will begin to contribute to the political debate just because he or she has the opportunity to do so, but my argument here is that mobile technology has provided a communication tool for Kenyans that enables them to speak up regardless of which part of society they belong to. In Habermas' view this is the most important factor for a society that has the political will to transform in to a modern society with a sustainable democracy (Habermas, 1991).

The public's opportunity to speak up and reach the news media is likely to change the gatekeeper role traditionally held by Kenyan journalists. A few years ago the flow of information primarily moved *from* the media *to* the public. Today, the flow is two-ways as shown in figure 4.E, because the media is affected by the flow of information that is provided by the public.

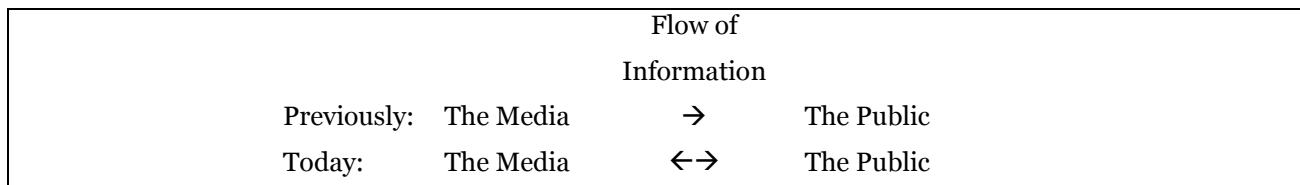


Figure 4.E: The flow of information is also provided by the public nowadays.

Williams & Carpini (2000) stated in their work on the Clinton-Lewinsky sex scandal that new technology has made the journalistic role of traditional gatekeepers collapse in the Western World. This trend seems to be emerging in Kenya also, beginning two years ago in the post-election violence that traditional news media denied to publish pictures of; the blogosphere, on the contrary did not hesitate to publish photos and videos no matter the content and thus brought more attention to what actually was happening on the streets (Goldstein & Rotich, 2008:8; Omoro, 2010:[7:45]). Now mobile telephony will probably push the limits even more and continue to challenge the media's role in controlling the flow of information. Today people can contribute freely with their comments if they participate in a radio call-in program; most of the interview-respondents who work with radio production declared that there is no pre-interview with callers before they are put on the air. The likelihood of the emergence of more projects combining the use of mobile telephony and citizen journalism within the next few years is quite obvious. Besides Ushahidi's projects on mapping violence in Kenya (see section 3.2.1), also Nokia has ongoing projects that enable Kenyans to use their mobile phones on different issues that relate to their everyday needs (Impiö, 2010). Although I do expect traditional journalism in Kenya to be challenged even more by new technology in the next couple of years, I will not go so far as to proclaim that journalists' role as gatekeepers has died out completely. In fact, it has been pointed out by the American philosopher Alvin Goldman (1999) that the massive input of information that is contributed to the different media platforms is difficult for the public to navigate in and needs to be regulated by professionals. Therefore it continues to be important for journalists to control facts and provide clear overviews of information.

For supporters of the theory behind ICT4D the development of mobile technology is good news. Through the years, different ICT projects have brought about changes in developing countries; sometimes the projects have succeeded but often they have failed abruptly when the donors stopped contributing funds. Particularly, lack of training of staff members and lack of basic infrastructure such as electricity have slowly but surely put an end to projects that started with the best of intentions. Though the initiative has been there, the time is simply not right to implement

certain technological developments due to the current political climate (Morozov, cited in Karlsen, 2008:11). However, proponents of the ICT4D theory like Jeffrey Sachs (2008), Professor of Economic Development at Columbia University, New York, insist that mobile technology is different from other technologies because it is the first one ever to become ubiquitous and therefore the digital divide between the continents is beginning to close: "Extreme poverty is almost synonymous with extreme isolation, especially rural isolation. But mobile phones and wireless Internet end isolation, and will therefore prove to be the most transformative technology of economic development of our time" (Sachs, 2008).

With the findings of this study I will agree to a certain extent with the proponents of ICT4D that mobile technology does provide communication to the most remote areas and enables people who normally do not have access to the media to contribute to social and political discussions. In the view of Lerner and Schramm (1964) knowledge can be spread more rapidly with platforms for mass communication; however, one has to remember that a mobile phone is first and foremost used for communication. The handset is indispensable in emergency situations as well as it provides easy contact to family members who live far away, and the idea that a huge group of people will only use the mobile phone for purposes such as calling and texting friends or posting status updates on Facebook and Twitter can be expected. However, mobile technology has enhanced the opportunities that citizens have to interact with the news media, and thereby extended the public's chances to affect the political institution they constitute (Cook, 1998; Kramhøft, 2000; Norris, 2000) and provided them with a tool for raising their voice in the political debate.

Furthermore, mobile technology has affected the routines in Kenyan journalists' everyday work. The most interesting aspect is how mobile technology differs from a computer with an Internet connection: while the use of mobile phones has opened a window to local sources from all social groups within the country, the Internet (used from a computer) has broadened the international level of information available to Kenyan journalists and simultaneously increased the voice of Kenya's media so that it can be heard all over the world.

The possible social consequences of mobile technology are as unpredictable now as was the future impact of mechanical type printing in Gutenberg's time; my prediction, however, is that mobile technology will be playing a crucial role in the future media and social development in Kenya and probably also the rest of Africa.

## Chapter 5 – Methodology Critique

In this section, reflections on limitations and critical issues of the methodology approach will be viewed through perspectives on generalizability, reliability, and validity (Kvale, 2002:225). In section 3.4.3 Potential Problems I have already outlined a few obstacles such as the communication in a second language and reliance upon referrals to respondents.

In this study, the primary source of choice has been interview respondents. The fact that they were generally positive about the technological developments in Kenya and the use of it in their work may have influenced my opinion also. However, I have tried to keep a professional distance from the respondents' statements by having them verified by other sources such as scholarly articles, interviews with Kenyan media actors other than journalists, and participation in two conferences. It turned out that there was agreement between the different sources' assessments which indicates a high level of reliability. Furthermore, it strengthens the study that the qualitative interviews are supported with the example of Migingo Island.

The question is whether the statements of the thirteen interviewed journalists and the case of Migingo Island can be generalized to the rest of the Kenya media market and to other democratic African countries. According to Lincoln & Guba (1985) the findings in a case study may be biased and the study only says something about the specific case the researcher has looked at. However, I will argue that the respondents, with their different conditions of employment and years of working with the media, represent the Kenyan press accurately. This suggests that mobile technology as well as other technological developments have influenced not only the working conditions of the thirteen respondents but also the rest of Kenya's journalists. Kenya is an African pioneer country in the fields of mobile technology and freedom of the press. However, the spread of mobile technology is ubiquitous in all African countries and plenty of the mobile companies operate across borders. Therefore I also expect that journalists in other countries to have already – or will soon – benefited from the ability to utilize mobile telephones in their work and for instance reach sources in remote areas. Or course, journalists' use of new technologies may be politically problematic in African countries such as Somalia and Zimbabwe where there is strong censorship.

## Chapter 6 – Conclusion

With this paper I have shown that new technology has had a tremendous influence on the working process of Kenyan journalists in the past two to ten years, and the case study provides significant insight about the changes to which the Kenyan media environment has been subjected. The following problem statement served as a guide for this study and was answered in the analysis that drew upon the theoretical framework of journalistic working processes, gatekeeping theory, disruptive technologies, and ICT for development (ICT4D):

- How do Kenyan news journalists use mobile phones in their work?

Kenyan news journalists use mobile technology in several ways in their work: they set up interview appointments by calling their sources; they conduct telephone interviews; they record interviews using the mobile phone's microphone which is particularly useful in conflict-sensitive reporting; they send Internet links to their sources whom can read the online news from their mobile phone's browser.

The consequences of the use of mobile technology in journalism were discussed through the two research questions:

- RQ1: In which ways does mobile technology affect the journalistic working process?
- RQ2: How does mobile technology affect public interaction with the news media?

The Danish media scholar Kramhøft (2000, p. 30) has identified four main phases in the journalistic working process – the Idea Phase, the Research Phase, the Analysis Phase, and the Communication Phase – and the findings of this study suggest that each stage is affected by the mobile phone penetration in Kenya. For instance, *because* Kenyans use mobile phones to participate in radio stations' call-in shows or contribute to Facebook-groups, journalists get ideas for news stories. Furthermore, journalists' use of mobile technology to schedule and conduct interviews have made it easier to contact sources all over Kenya and enabled the news media to publish reliable stories which would have been difficult to verify a few years ago. At the same time fieldwork has decreased.

The working conditions for journalists have been improved in general by mobile technology, and while computers with an Internet connection have opened a window in Kenya to international sources, mobile technology has been of vital importance in making sources inside the country available to the news media. It is vital to understand that the population's access to the media has been very limited before mobile phone growth set in a couple of years ago. Today Kenyan journalists have an opportunity to interact more with their audiences than before, and they can do this by, for instance, encouraging the audience to share views on political issues on radio call-in programs, and by becoming friends with the audience on social networks such as Facebook.

According to some of the respondents in this study, a consequence of the increased media awareness is that it has influenced many people's interest in being sources in journalism. In the past, the vast majority of information used by the Kenyan press was contributed by governmental officials; today, local people (some even illiterate) may also contribute knowledge and information to the society. The media's access to the local communities and vice versa makes a huge contribution to the democratic development in Kenya. The case of Migingo Island also showed that ongoing media attention on an issue provides security for inhabitants who would otherwise be vulnerable to violations of basic human rights.

From a global perspective, the technological improvements in a developing country such as Kenya can be essential for international journalists who want to gain access to sources beyond those provided by NGOs. Also, online initiatives such as The Reject and A24 Media make African stories available to the rest of the world.

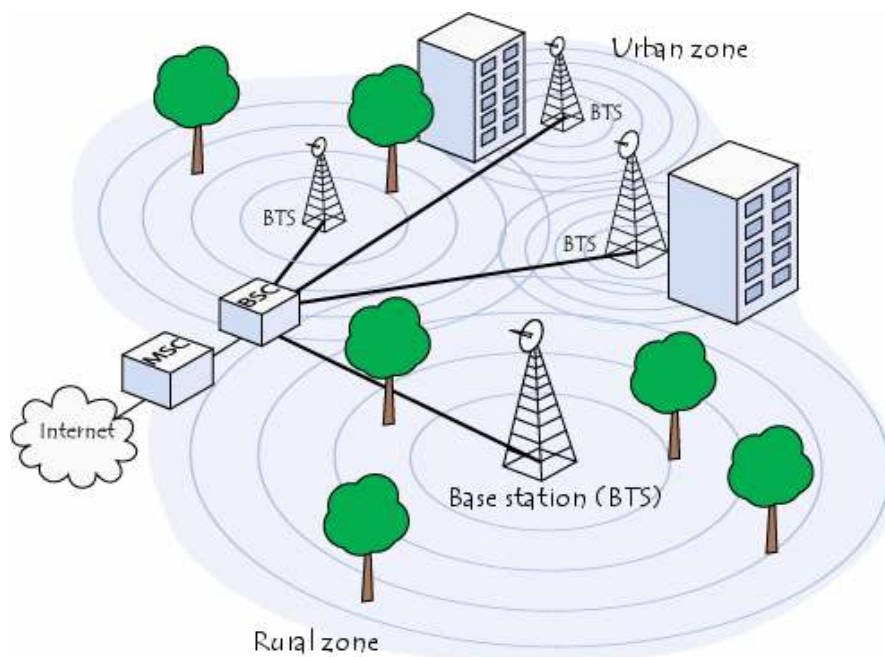
## **6.1 Challenges for Future Research**

A very interesting aspect about this study is how the Kenyans themselves view their increased access to the media. A possible way to investigate this would be to interview some of the persons who contact the radio call-in shows and ask them how they participated in the political debate before they got a mobile phone and began to contribute their views on air.

Some of the journalist respondents in this study mentioned that easier access to information has increased accuracy in Kenyan journalism. New research is needed to understand if this development is true or not.

Future research could also be conducted regarding what initiatives the media houses have established to take advantage of development in mobile technology. West (2009) has said that media in the West were inert and passive in developing the Internet, but what would have happened if the British based news service Reuters had been innovative and engaged with their customers in the late nineties? Could they have created online interaction with their audience? Could it have worked? Questions like these are important to consider when talking about mobile phones: maybe the news media in developing countries can learn some lessons about the mobile market from the Western media market's lack of an innovative entrance in the Internet industry (West, 2009).

## Appendix – The GSM System



*Figure A.A: When a person switches on his phone the mobile will start searching for cells or Base Stations (BTS) in the surrounding area. The different cells are connected to a Base Station Controller (BSC) which is physically connected to a Mobile Switching Centre (MSC). This center is managed by the telephone network operator. The MSC routes all incoming and outgoing calls no matter if they are from fixed line or mobile networks. The technology enables mobile phones to be used across national boundaries.*

*Graphic by Kioskea (2008)*

GSM is short for Groupe Spécial Mobile (or in English, Global System for Mobile Communications) and is the operating standard for the current generation of digital cellular mobile communications. Worldwide GSM accounts for 80% of the mobile phone market (GSM Association, 2010). GSM is based on the concept of a cellular network where cells overlap each other to cover a given area (see figure A.A). The vast majority of Africans use 2G (second generation) technology phones, which allow a person to make voice calls, send SMS (Short Message System text messages, and transfer data such as browsing the Internet. Mobile phones using 3G or third generation services, allowing much higher data rates, are on the rise in the continent. Smartphones such as Blackberry and iPhone use 3G technology which allows much higher data rates. With this technology it is possible to run video calls and watch television or Youtube videos (GSM Association, 2010).



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