Links *in the* Chain

digital natives

[UPDATE]

Freedom Bus departs 4 May

The LibreBus is a project that will integrate a tour of several countries in Central America and complemented by participation in the Internet space.

Butterfly Works

For the complete toolkit on how to start a web and mobile phone campaign. It included a recently done ushahidi Joomla plugin for easily integrating ushahidi in web campaigns.

Egyptation

## Why are some protest successful and some not?

James Mlambo

Uprisings in north Africa inspired by social media have caused some governments crack down on internet political activism. In Zimbabwe Vilas Mavhudzi made history by becoming Zimbabwe's first "Facebook arrest". His crime was making the following post on the country Prime Minister facebook page, "I am overwhelmed, I don't want to say Mr or PM what happened in Egypt is sending shockwaves to dictators around the world. No weapon but unity of purpose worth emulating, hey." Mavhudzi is now now on bail after spending 35 days in custody.

Across Africa we are hearing sad stories of social media inspired protests that have left many people either injured or in police custody. One such protest is the walk to work campaign in Uganda, to protest the country's soaring fuel and food prices. The protests which were partly driven by social media turned deadly when many people were assaulted and arrested by the country security forces. In addition, the Ugandan government facing all this social unrest over high food and fuel prices, ordered its ISPs to block Twitter and Facebook. This was described as latest move in controlling social media to control a popular social movement.

With the exception of Tunisia and Egypt many social media protests in a number of countries in Africa have failed to attain their desired outcomes. .In most cases they have
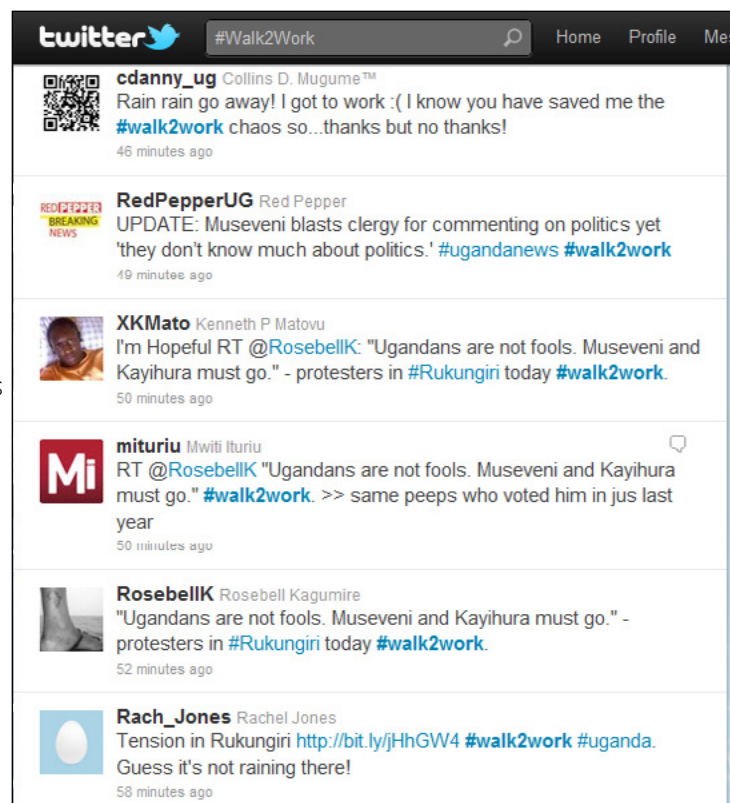
Ugandans turned to Twitter after street protests turned bloody

increased number of corpse in the mortuaries, number of patients in the hospitals and and number of political prisoners in already overcrowded jails.

So why are some protests successful whilst others are not. This is a question this issue attempts to answer. Hope you will enjoy it. If you have your comments, further analysis or anything about contents of this newsletter please do email me at jamesmlambo@gmail.com, so that we can make a second and exhaustive edition.

"Tomorrow I have an open book test where internet access is allowed. Funny that one of the rules is "No Conversations are allowed". Seriously with internet available and even a facebook group I formed for our class; I shall see what happens. My lecturer seems to be a digital immigrant."

via Facebook

Replication of Middle East protests possible in Sub-Saharan Africa

By Paidamoyo Muzulu

Revisiting the 'hypodermic needle theory' in media is a worthy cause in the light of recent uprisings in Middle East and North Africa. The revolutions have largely been sailed by gale forces of social networks, themselves a new phenomenon in media. Governments in Egypt and Tunisia were swept away and the winds are still blowing with varying degrees of destruction on sitting regimes in Algeria, Morocco, Libya, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria among other countries in the Arab world. Replication of these revolutions is possible in sub-Saharan Africa.

The "hypodermic needle theory" implied mass media had a direct, immediate and powerful effect on its audiences. The mass media in the 1940s and 1950s were perceived as a powerful influence on behavior change.

The theory suggests that the mass media could influence a very large group of people directly and uniformly by 'shooting' or 'injecting' them with appropriate messages designed to trigger a desired response.

Social networks sites such as twitter and facebook contributed and supported the uprisings with varying degrees of success. The networks largely fit into the bill of the definition of the hypodermic needle theory. They have the capacity to reach a very large group of people and can uniformly shoot or inject them with appropriate message to trigger a desired response.

Social networks are to begin with a network of 'friends' and therefore have shared interests. The 'friends' know each other and regularly communicate among themselves on matter of common interest. Strangers or unsavoury characters can be 'unistalled' or 'defriended' from the group. What simply matters is that the 'friends' are online or have access to handheld mobile devices to keep in contact.

The swiftness that accompanied the successful protests in Tunisia and Egypt has inspired all the other oppressed people to confront their regimes. Protests in other countries were all planned

Ugandan security forces have implemented a deadly crackdown on protesters after a failed attempt to block Facebook and Twitter

around social networks and replication seems possible.

Any revolution is sustained by open lines of communication and feedback on progress among participants. Countries in sub-Saharan Africa have experienced nearly the same political conditions like those in North Africa. Dictators and family dynasties have ruled with iron-fists and in most instances have been in power for over three decades. Human rights are not respected.

Jack A Goldstone and John T Hazel Jnr argue that, "For a revolution to succeed, a number of factors have to come together. The government must appear so irremediably unjust or inept that it is widely viewed as a threat to the country's future; elites (especially in the military) must be alienated from the state and no longer willing to defend it; a broad-based section of the population, spanning ethnic and religious groups and socioeconomic classes, must mobilize; and international powers must either refuse to step in to defend the government or constrain it from using maximum force to defend itself."

Countries in the south now have a fairly developed digital and mobile communication infrastructure to share information or communicate their views. Nearly in all the countries there are two or more mobile network service providers and several internet service providers.

Like the traditional mass media (print media, radio, television) social networks can be shared. A family or a group of friends can share a single mobile phone with web application capabilities (WAP). So even in poor communities people can be kept informed so long one member of the group is connected. In the past and the present people share newspapers and congregate to listen to radios or to watch television particularly channels by satellite in poor communities.

However, protests without strategy and led by incapacitated people with modern technological tools are doomed to fail. Technology is simply a tool that is good when in the hands of knowledgeable and strategic human resources.

Tweet to impress

Simon Kaheru is an enthusiastic Ugandan who describes himself as a Professional Communicator. As Director of Business Convergence at SMS Media, Simon is presently pursuing business strategy amid a fast-growing and highly dynamic sector.

He is also Lead Analyst with Media Analyst Uganda, a Communications and Image Management Firm; and Secretary to the Governing Council of the Institute of Corporate Governance of Uganda.

He runs a weekly column for PC Tech Magazine is published every Wednesday at: www.pctechmagazine.com/bloggers/simon-kaheru.

This particular post, published in this newsletter with permission from PC Tech was his opinion on the role of Twitter in the Walk-to-Work protests that were happening in Uganda throughout the month of April.

By Simon Kaheru, Uganda

Wednesday, 13 April 2011 — This week did not present the first opportunity for me to benefit from some private foray into territory that anybody else could have gone into.

I recall some time back in the early 80s that my performance in some spelling contest in my class was so outstanding that a girl I had had my eye on couldn't help but pursue me for company whenever the opportunity arose. (No - she did not become my wife). A wide range of opportunities of this nature (the recognition and subsequent benefit, not girls hopping around me) have presented themselves over the years.

This week's was different - it involved Twitter.

The second meeting of the day was with a potentially big, new client or business partner but the atmosphere was tainted with the spectre of the #walk2work protests. I had my iPad open and Evernote running but with quick, regular bursts to Tweetdeck to keep track of the progress of the walkers, and then the info re: arrests popped up.

I quickly declared the position and the room went frantic with demands for more info, which I belted out short and fast with quick glances at the tweets. My audience had no idea how I was doing this, and I began to understand even better why witchdoctors keep going on and on.

During a later meeting that afternoon, a far more serious meeting with one of my biggest clients, the topic of the day came up again and I confounded them with my accurate 'predictions' and the manner in which my ear was so close to the ground.

As soon as the tweet about Besigye being taken to court came in, I declared that he would be taken to court soon - and then told them five minutes later that it was indeed happening as I had predicted.

I was on so much of a roll by the time I left their office that it was all I could do to restrain myself from declaring more of what was coming out of tweetdom to people I met in the lift on the way down.

And that was nothing compared to Thursday's Tweet about Besigye being shot. I was locked up in a meeting with a General and only God knows what made me take a surreptitious peek at the iPhone to see what all the damn vibrations were about, only to declare: "Besigye has been shot!".

The man was impressed with the power of social networking.

The power of social networking, when harnessed by people in the correct profession, is awesome.

It is becoming more and more obvious that journalists who don't tweet today are the 2000 equivalent of journalists who insisted on using typewriters or rejected email.

But they are not just for journalists; Twitter and Facebook should be considered tools of work for almost all professions - especially the politicians who made #walk2work useful for me today. I believe Nobert Mao sent a couple of tweets, but he lost the plot by not handing his phone to a sharp, young assistant to stay ten metres away and keep up the tweeting...

Anybody working and living in Kampala and hereabouts during the elections and right up to the day of #walk2work would have been grateful for the tweets - but even more so if they were tweeting from where they were to update all of us about what was happening where they were.

That's why the crusade right now is - START TWEETING, Y'ALL!

Strong social capital still needed for protest in Sub-Sahara to succeed

By James Mlambo

"Social capital"- the notion that societies succeed, democracy works and thrives when people are bound tightly together in networks of common purpose.

The theory was popularised by Dr. Putman in his book Making Democracy Work. He scrutinised how society and democracy prospered in Northern Italy and the United States in the mid 20th century. Putman argues formation of all manner of clubs, activist groups and voluntary associations were a catalyst.

Putman's ideas go a long way to explain why it took Egyptians and Tunisians more than 30 years to take the giant step towards democracy.

Egypt in the last three decades was a country full of lonely persons. No strong and large networks to talk of. No political grouping strong enough to challenge Hosni Mubarak and his military associates. Thirty years later all has changed, thanks to emergence of mobile technology.

One social observer, Doug Saunders, after his first visit to Egypt said "Life for many (in Egypt) was a lonely oscillation between home, mosque and workplace, with nothing to bind people in a way that could change the country or its society."

On a second visit in Doug's perception had changed. He said, "I noticed something else: Everyone I met under 20, even in fairly poor communities, spent their spare time at the Internet café. In the freedom of those places, in detailed conversations, I found teenagers forming intimate communities online, discussing cars and rap lyrics and sex and especially restrictions on Internet freedoms in neighbouring countries"

Does this not run along Putman's argument? A society need to have networks and associations cementing relationships between its people. Egyptians, in January 2011, started mobilising themselves in their homes, mosques, internet cafes and web spaces to demand political change. They poured themselves into Libera-

An Egyptian during protests earlier in the year

tion Square demanding Mubarak should leave office.

Unprecedented pressure was applied on the dictator by multitude upon multitude in the Square leaving him with no option but to resign. Technology had for the first time been successfully used in Africa to unite people, push demands into public realm and bring about change in a blood less coup.

Egyptian and Tunisian revolutions are not products of overnight design but are a result of a great amount of social capital widely described as being young and connected. For example Sami Ben Gharbia, a Tunisian exile in Berlin who runs Nawaat.org said, "It's very grassroots (Tunisian revolution), in both the online and the offline world," he says, "On the ground people are gathering friends who trust each other. And online people trust each other. "

In short the Egyptian and Tunisian revolution model is not a magic wand to swiftly remove corrupt regimes in Africa or elsewhere. If the model is to be usefully reproduced elsewhere especially in "poor social capitalised nations" a great deal of "editing, resizing or remodifying" is in order. For example in Zimbabwe twitter is less popular than SMS. Hence any campaigns to mobilise people in the country must make use of SMS.

However, use of SMS in Zimbabwe to bring people in the streets is still not possible. The regime is still very strong and a threat to mobile communication operators to the extent that they may switch people off than to be used to carry political messages.

Trevor Ncube, proprietor of Newsday (an independent paper) and CEO of South African based Mail and Guardian weekly expressed a popular view when he said, "Mobile operators are likely to be jittery to be seen to be used by the public to communicate messages that are perceived to be political. But whether they can do anything about people communicating SMSs from person to person, messages that are revolutionary and are seen to be radical is one thing, and whether the government can come in - but Zimbabwe being what it is, you cannot conclude the government coming in and victimising a mobile operator on allegation that subscribers are using your platform to communicate political messages."

It is important to note that dictators also use the internet (they are digital natives with a cause too!), notably in thwarting the formation of strong social capital. Recently a facebook user in Zimbabwe was arrested for simply posting two lines of text deemed critical of the government. In countries like Zimbabwe people are still to understand simple tricks in cyber-subversion like using proxies, encryption, and virtual private networks that help to circumvent censors.

Finally technology mediated revolutions, are different from blocks of text or videos which can be moved willingly through use of the famous Ctrl + C and Ctrl V sequence. Further research is required to identify the cut off region, where, when and how IT can be used to remove an unresponsive government without the code "running into fatal runtime errors". More importantly, although these social networks are responsible for ousting regimes, they solely weren't the catalyst.

SOURCE: http://usefularts.us