The Web of African Radios
Community Radio Stations
Entering the Digital Information Age
Why Radio Stations? Why Now?

- The world is digitizing rapidly
- Africa started later,
  - Technological not behind!
  - Skipping intermediary stages.
  - Internet/web, mobile digital environment.
- Community Radio in Africa
  - Most important information and communication technology.
  - Reach the most people.
  - Most influential media outlet.
- Existence is essential
  - Only knowledge, information, news resource

Leapfrogging: “Skipping intermediate development stages and move directly to a state of art technology”
General/main research question:
“What can we learn from studying the rapid digitalization process (leapfrogging) that is taking place in Africa?”

• Exploratory case-study,
• Study the digitalization of a community radio station in Mali,
• Better understanding.

Sub-questions:
What 1) requirements, 2) opportunities and 3) constraints are encountered and observed while participating in digitizing a community radio stations in Mali?”

Dive in the process, be part of it and experience it yourself!
ICT4D Methodology

Collaborative, iterative, participatory research method

Development and design of an IT artefact,
The website for Radio Sikidolo

Design cycles of the website:
1) First website (key idea)
   - Interviews, collaborative workshops, domain experts
   - Iteratively, develop, and assess sustainability of features, E3 value
   - Requirements, opportunities, and constraints
2) New website (user-centred, new income sources)
Interviews and workshops

- 4 Interviews with 4 different radio stations,
- Weekly workshops, domain experts,
- WhatsApp group from Radio Sikidolo,
- Direct contact with client about new features/use-cases for the website, evaluation.
Requirements, Opportunities

**Financial**
- Cost efficient
- Local advertisement
- Paid/subscription-based content

**Usability**
- Smartphone optimization
- Visual guides
- Multi-language

**Maintainability**
- Organization of audio files
- Documentation

**Interaction/engagement**
- Voice comments
- Social media/chat integration
  - Post automation
- Voting polls
- Live-stream
Sustainability and Constraints

- **IP license is expensive**
  - €57,-
- **Hosting + domain + WordPress**
  - €2-3 + free
- **Internet**
  - 1,5-hour rec → 15MB → 1 rec/day
    - 500MB/p/m = €7,-
  - Live stream
    - 6 hours/day = 10GB/p/m = €75,-
- **Third-party service (Theme, plugins)**
  - For free? You're the product!
  - Versioned - €10/m/plugin
  - Free plugins, less supported and outdated
  - unsustainable, conflicting, Voice comments
- **More financial sustainable**
  - Paid/subscription-based content/service
  - Advertisement
Discussion & future work

WordPress
- Is it really that easy?
- Digital, organizational skills

Multi-language
- Manual string translations

WhatsApp integration
- Closed source
- Monetized by third parties

Voice enabled features
- Not sufficient
- Yet to be developed

Advertisements
- Who makes the advertisement?

Paid/subscription-based content
- Telegram channel subscription, and bots
- How to do online payment methods.
- M-Pesa, Orange money, Paystack

African Radio and social media platform?
Conclusion

Having a website is not a problem, maintaining one is!
• Expensive when large amount of content is updated daily.
• Financial sustainability is depended on visitors/customers.

Requirements:
• Implement mentioned features
• Data package
• Daily updates → sustainability
  • Organized and structured working methods → documentation

Opportunities:
• More different sources of income
• New audience interaction

Constraints:
• Updating the website is dependent on size of the data package
• No voice enabled discussion platform
• Inability to do online mobile money payments
• Internet is still expensive

“The sustainability of a website in general is completely depended on the number of visitors the website can keep.”