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The Role of New and Social Media in Tanzanian Hip-Hop Production*

The Tanzanian hip-hop community is part of a global hip-hop community and culture, and artists often adopt global hip-hop identities that link them to hip-hop communities in the diaspora, and across Africa. Tanzanian hip-hop has offered commentary on society and politics in Tanzania, and globally. Dynamic and continuously evolving, hip-hop in Tanzania is very much tied to hip-hop music and culture in the United States in terms of identity, style, innovation, and structure; but it is also firmly placed within Tanzanian society in terms of content and commentary. Tanzanian emcees identify with artists in the diaspora as sharing a common culture, and also recognize that within hip-hop it is essential to tell their own stories. Over time, with local limitations and advances in technology, Tanzanian hip-hop artists, following the lead of artists in the diaspora, have increasingly turned to social media to disseminate their music, engage their fans, and connect with hip-hop communities in the diaspora. Social media, evolving at a critical time for Tanzanian hip-hop, has provided important opportunities for fans and artists. The increased reliance on alternatives to traditional media tests the power of social media to challenge established institutions and media houses that have traditionally controlled the music industry. It also allows for greater opportunities for pan African linkages with other African and diaspora hip-hop communities.

Today most hip-hop artists from Tanzania have fan pages on Facebook, have uploaded videos on YouTube, and have active Twitter accounts. This study examines the use and effectiveness of these social media strategies by hip-hop artists in Tanzania, a country where the majority of the population is not online, where hip-hop artists cannot depend on local promoters for work or on radio and television stations for airplay, and where most hip-hop artists are navigating their online space without the help of management

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teams. This study determines how effective the use of social media has been in expanding the artist's reach and fan engagement, as well as implications for engagement with the African diaspora. This study was carried out over the course of one year, and included surveys and interviews with key informants. It was also done in part through a review of dozens of social media sites and pages in an attempt to understand how artists and fans create and, share content, and participate in online conversations.

Using models based on the idea of participatory culture and the concept of "listening" to understand online participation, this study reveals the effectiveness of social media in engaging participants. Social media creates an environment where participants (fans and artists) communicate, exchange and share. This environment empowers artists and content creators, and allows for direct engagement with participants (users).

Jenkins (*et al.* 2009: § 1) defines participatory culture as having "relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing creations, and some type of informal mentorship [...]". Social media creates a space for participants, allowing them to not be limited to traditional media. This has been revolutionary for independent artists and fans in Tanzania in the face of a music industry that has increasingly favored pop music or Bongo Flava (Perullo & Fenn 2003; Casco 2012; Perullo 2012; Clark 2013; Reuster-Jahn 2014). Bongo Flava is a genre of pop music that blends elements of hip-hop, R&B, Afropop, and dance music, though it has veered increasingly towards West African pop music in its sound and style. With stars like Diamond Platnumz, Bongo Flava has increasingly taken on the sounds of Nigerian pop and Ghanaian Azonto music. Meanwhile, Tanzanian hip-hop linked to global hip-hop culture, with its origins in black urban American counterculture. This includes the utilization of hip-hop rhyme patterns, social and political messages, and the promotion of original lyricism.

While artists have gravitated to social media to countervail the influence of mainstream media, some are critical of the dominance of corporate sponsored content in social media and the corporations (Facebook, Twitter, Google) that operate social media, saying their presence negates the ability of social media to truly empower participants (Fuchs 2014). These criticisms are important to consider, as is the fact that we have been witnessing radical shifts in the ways in which we listen, communicate, and create. These shifts have taken some power from governments and institutions and given it to citizen journalists, bloggers, and anyone with a cell phone camera who can create counter narratives that are then distributed and spread through social media.

Use of Social Media

In Tanzania, hip-hop artists are largely excluded from the mainstream market, with only a few exceptions. Mainstream market access comes with heavy radio airplay, video airplay, and performance bookings. The few major media outlets have control over the market and only promote artists that fit a certain pop formula, effectively stifling creativity while blocking the market from artists that do not adhere to the formula (Casco 2012; Clark 2013; Reuster-Jahn 2014). One of the biggest culprits in this practice is Tanzania media giant Clouds Entertainment. They control a significant share of the entertainment market and use their influence to both create Bongo Flava artists and to ban musicians who are deemed too political or too critical from the airwaves (Perullo 2011; Casco 2012; Clark 2013; Reuster-Jahn 2014).

The characteristics of the music industry in Tanzania are not radically different from that found in the United States, where major media corporations control what songs are played on the radio, what videos are played on the television, and which artists will get mainstream exposure (McLeod 2005; Perullo 2011). The business model used in the US is heavily copied in Tanzania (Clark 2013). Hip-hop artists in Tanzania are learning from the examples of hip-hop artists in the diaspora, where artists have been engaged in struggles with major labels and corporate media for more than a decade.

Hip-hop artists in the US previously used mixtapes sold on urban street corners to gain exposure. With the establishment of digital media and file sharing, artists, new and established, have found that the Internet has given them access to a broader audience, and allowed them a new level of engagement. Tanzanian artists have studied these methods and *via* social media and online file sharing, have collaborated with each other, as well as artists in the diaspora and West Africa. An example includes Zavara Mponjika (aka Rhymson) from the hip-hop group Kwanza Unit, who in 2013 produced the song "In The Congo". The song featured African American artists Toni Blackman and the group Rhyme Like a Girl, as well as LA-based Kenyan artist Nasambu. Social media allowed for the project to come together, as vocals and video footage were exchanged online. The song and video were then posted to several blogs and social media sites, including Bongo5 and TZhiphop.com. The impact of social media on the music industry has been critical for independent and international artists.

One of the earliest clues that new media would signal revolutionary change in the dissemination of hip-hop worldwide was the launch of MySpace in 2003. Shortly thereafter artists began to set up pages where visitors to the site could hear their music, watch their videos, learn of upcoming performances, and get band profiles. Suddenly there was a space to

hear hip-hop music from all over the world. During MySpace's height of popularity the site was a place for hip-hop artists in both the diaspora and Africa to have a visible presence. It was initially artists based in the diaspora that had their profiles on MySpace. Later, other Africa-based hip-hop artists had profiles on MySpace. After 2008 Facebook surpassed MySpace in popularity, but the shift from MySpace to Facebook was slower among musicians (McCarthy 2008; Schonfeld 2009). The primary reason for this was that Facebook did not initially have the user interface that would allow musicians to showcase their music. This changed and by 2010 an increasing number of artists had created fan pages on Facebook and had uploaded videos on YouTube. By 2013 most Tanzanian hip-hop artists had an online presence and artists like Fid Q and Nikki Mbishi were reaching out *via* Twitter to communicate with their fans. Hip-hop artists in Africa and the diaspora are also now featured on music streaming sites such as Spotify and Pandora.

During a trip to Tanzania in 2010 few hip-hop artists had an online presence, by 2014 that number had increased. There are varying degrees of social media usage among hip-hop artists in Tanzania. There is also a relationship between level of social media participation and an artist's popularity. Artists that opened Facebook pages in 2009 include Professor Jay, Fid Q, and Wakazi, followed by Nikki Mbishi in 2010, and Songa and Witnesz in 2012. Fid Q and Professor Jay opened their Twitter accounts in 2010, followed by Songa in 2011. These artists vary in their popularity, which may be directly linked to their level of participation. In other words, do those that post and tweet more often gain more fans because of it? Or do they tweet more often as they get more fans?

This section will look at the five artists mentioned (Fid Q, Professor Jay, Nikki Mbishi, Songa, and Witnesz) in order to gain an understanding of social media usage among different hip-hop artists in Tanzania. There are hundreds of hip-hop artists in Dar es Salaam, these six represent artists that have the high popularity (based on the survey and on media visibility), international exposure, and/or an online presence. Table 1 focuses on the number of Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook followers the artists have. Fid Q, the most popular hip-hop artists in Tanzania, has more Facebook and Instagram followers than most other artists. While Professor Jay, who has had one of the longest and most successful careers in hip-hop, has the highest number of Twitter followers. Meanwhile, Witnesz is a female hip-hop artists who has had a more than 10 years career, but has few followers on Facebook and Twitter. A study of female hip-hop artists reveals that there are social barriers within hip-hop and within Tanzanian society that often presents barriers for their full participation in hip-hop, as well as their ability to earn a living from those careers (Clark 2014).

GRAPHIC 1. — NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS BY ARTIST (AS OF JULY 2014)

Table 2 examines how active these artists are in an average month on Twitter and Facebook. The chart looks at original tweets (not including re-tweets), artist Facebook posts, and fan posts to an artist’s Facebook fan page. Most artists average several tweets a day, while posting fewer Facebook posts. Fid Q and Professor Jay have the highest number of followers,

GRAPHIC 2. — AVERAGE MONTHLY POSTS PER ARTIST (BETWEEN FEBRUARY TO JULY 2014)

and they also have fans that frequently participate on their social media pages. Both artists have fans that comment on their Facebook posts, post on their Facebook fan pages, and re-tweet their messages. On the other hand, Witnesz, who has the least number of fans, posts the least of the six artists. Wakazi, who has more fans on Twitter than on Facebook, tweets significantly more than he posts on Facebook.

There is a market that allows customers to buy Facebook and Twitter followers. There is no way to tell which artists may pad their numbers in order to seem more popular. However, the artists with the highest number of social media followers also have high numbers of fan posts and comments. In addition, the artists with the higher number of followers are among the artists most named by students as artists that they follow online. Artists use social media sites to let fans into their personal lives; posting pictures of their children, posting likes and dislikes, and posting pictures with other celebrities and friends. These artists also use social media to disseminate their music. Artists post CD release information, music videos, and links to download their music. In return fans share and comment on artists' posts and generate their own content, including images and videos of the artists that users themselves create.

The content created by the six artists examined were put into four categories: 1. posts meant to generate income or buzz (posts about music releases, performances, etc.); 2. posts about an artist's personal life; 3. posts about other artists (generally supportive); 4. and posts in which the artist dispenses advice or critique. Artists tended to mostly create posts that are meant to generate income or buzz. This includes links to music videos, song releases, appearances, and promotional material. Posts about artists' personal lives were the second most common type of post. This included posts of artists "checking in" at various locations and posting pictures of friends and family members. Fid Q was the only artist to post relatively little personal informations, while creating more posts that offered advice or criticism on various topics. Several artists posted a lot about other artists, mainly to promote collaborative or solo projects other artists were doing. Artists had posts offering advice or criticism, but none more than Fid Q. The posts that offered the artists views on certain issues, especially topics relating to the government, corruption, and police brutality, received the most comments. The second category of posts that received a high number of comments was personal posts.

Artists' Social Media Agendas

Fid Q is one of the artists that have harnessed the power of social media the most. He has used it to engage fans online and in person. With music, video, performance, and educational projects, Fid Q has depended on social

media and used it to get youth engaged. Fid Q uses social media to advertise his spoken word event Poetry Addiction, which showcases artists from around Tanzania. In 2011 Fid Q launched his show Fidstyle Fridays on his YouTube channel CheusidawaTV. With almost 40 episodes, the show featured interviews with hip-hop artists from Tanzania and the Diaspora, highlighting artists and topics not typically covered by traditional media. Fid Q also uses social media to encourage engagement in his Ujamaa hip-hop Darasa (hip-hop Collective Class), a free weekly program held Saturday mornings in Dar es Salaam. The Hip-hop Darasa features classes and workshops on hip-hop, teaching attendants about lyricism, hip-hop culture, and the politics and economics of the music industry.

Other hip-hop artists have also tapped into social media's potential. The hip-hop collective Tamaduni Music (home to Nikki Mbishi and Songa) puts on a free weekly hip-hop program called the hip-hop Kilinge (cypher). Every Saturday about 150 people, mostly men, come from around the city to the New Msasani Club to learn about hip-hop, listen to hip-hop, and to perform. Social media's role is through Tamaduni's use of Facebook and Twitter to promote the event, as well as UStream to live broadcast it on the Internet. This has opened them up to a wider audience who participates in the program from all over the world. In the hip-hop tradition of the cypher, the program allows upcoming artists to test their skills and receive feedback from more established artists. The program features content that is heavy with social critique and direct audience engagement. The program ends with about an hour of music, during which time the DJ plays a mix of socially conscious hip-hop from Tanzanian and African American artists.

In northern Tanzania the city of Arusha is home to a large hip-hop community, with a number of socially conscious artists (Ntarangwi 2009). Artists and activists there have formed an organization called the Okoa Mtaa (Save the Streets) Foundation. The organization was founded in 2012 to support and develop hip-hop culture in Arusha. The group, whose members have worked with the United African Alliance Community Center, take hip-hop's roots in self-education and social commentary seriously. Heavily influenced by revolutionary politics and the New York origins of hip-hop culture, the organization seeks to organize and empower through youth (Bemma 2014). Through their Saving Underground Artists (SUA) program they hold monthly workshops and during their annual Okoa Mtaa festival they hold workshops and events meant to push their mission. At the 2014 festival the concert, which featured local talent, was free and brought a crowd of youth from around the city. Okoa Mtaa, through their SUA social media page, has worked hard using social media as their main means of communicating with their target audience. They get no radio, television, or mainstream media coverage. Yet, their Okoa Mtaa festival saw well over 500 youth come out and participate. Using graphics, digital imagery, and video footage, the Okoa Mtaa foundation promotes all of their events

on social media. Their Facebook page has over 4,000 likes and presents the organizations goals:

“As Okoa Mtaa Foundation, we recognize that a big number youth trying to make it as hip-hop emcee, but due to lack of hip-hop platforms, proper education of hip-hop and poverty is making it difficult for them to make it through. We also recognize the power of hip-hop elements when converted to the society as it’s the voice of the people (Emcee, Graffiti, Dj, Break-dance and knowledge) [...]. The events and workshops have start showing positive effects like building confidence for artists, appearance and language use, and also the gathering of youth from different streets of Arusha to share the knowledge” (Okoa Mtaa, n.d.).

IMAGE 1. — SUA’S AD FOR THEIR JULY 2014 EVENT IN MWANZA.
THE AD APPEARED ALL ACROSS SOCIAL MEDIA

Many hip-hop artists whose music is heavily political no longer attempt to have their music played at the radio stations, and instead invest that money in doing their own marketing. These artists rely heavily on social media. For example, the group Wanaitwa Uhuru is a collective of artists that have rejected traditional media. They record in a home studio in the Kinondoni neighborhood of Dar es Salaam, and use social media to promote their projects. In 2013 the group’s album *Freedom Ain’t Free*, which received no radio play, was listed on world hip-hop market’s best of global hip-hop.

The future impacts of this new model of engaging with fans is unknown, but the ability of artists to directly engage fans seems to have not only resulted in more creative freedom, but also a platform for other projects that may not have been as successful pre-social media.

Effectiveness of Using Social Media

The rapidly developing ways in which hip-hop artists participate in social media is important. The effectiveness of social media in engaging fans and the public is also important. Artists who can generate a following and engage those followers online have unfiltered access to their fans. Crawford's (2009) study of online "listening" reveals the important role social media participants pay. Crawford's study shows that while much attention is paid to content creators, viewers of social media content play important roles as listeners. Crawford (*ibid.*: 526) uses online "listening" as "a metaphor for online activity". Crawford then presents Rosen's 2009 study in which he uses the radio as an analogy for social media, with social media "broadcasting" to an audience (participants). For Crawford (*ibid.*: 527) listeners "directly contribute to the community by acting as a gathered audience". For musicians, capturing the attention of this gathered audience is important. Musicians depend on participants sharing/re-tweeting and commenting on posts, because this raises the visibility of the posts. Due to large numbers of tweets, posts, and videos the average member of social media is inundated with daily, there is a filtering process that happens. Posts that come from people or artists a user is more familiar with, and likes, will receive more attention. In addition, posts that have been re-posted, re-tweeted, or shared are given more prominence on a user's feed when they log into social media. This allows musicians to capture the attention of this "gathered audience".

Out of a population of about 45 million, 20 to 25 million Tanzanians are mobile phone subscribers (Boyle 2012; Kasumuni 2012). Many of these mobile phone subscribers are increasingly using their phones to engage with social media and to download and play music. All of the major mobile phone companies operating in Tanzania offer data plans; and smartphones are readily available, though cost prohibitive for most Tanzanians. Domestically, Internet use in Tanzania has steadily grown, going from just 9% of the population using the Internet in 2009 to more than 13% in 2012 (World Bank 2012). Tanzania, in fact, has one of the fastest rates of increase in the Internet usage in Africa (Sife 2013). Many of these more than 5.9 million Internet users are youth between the ages of 18 and 35. They are the most active users of social media. Many of those Internet users in Tanzania are also on social media sites like Facebook (Adewunmi 2012; Magomba 2014). According to Socialbakers, a social media analytics firm, the majority of Facebook users in Tanzania (71%) are men aged 18 to 34. This data does not include social media use by Tanzanians outside of the country, or of engagement outside of Tanzania with social media content created in Tanzania.

To capitalize on this trend in Tanzania (and East Africa), Facebook launched a Swahili version of their site in 2009. In addition, in 2014 Facebook made a deal with Tigo (one of the largest mobile phone companies

in Tanzania) to allow customers to use Facebook on their phone or tablet for free, without it counting against their data usage (Magomba 2014). This is crucial for customers who cannot afford to maintain a data package, which can cost up to USD\$30 a month. This means that Facebook effectively becomes one of the “only” portals to social media and online content, ensuring that millions of customers in Tanzania use Facebook as their major source of online socializing, entertainment, and information gathering.

The University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM) is a public university situated in the commercial capital. The school, one of the most prestigious in the country, is home to over 20,000 undergraduate students. A ride on the public bus that runs through campus finds riders using smart phones, at a rate higher than that observed on buses that do not service the UDSM campus. Table 3 is a breakdown (by percentage) in popularity of popular social media sites among our respondents.

GRAPHIC 3. — USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AMONG UDSM STUDENTS
(TAKEN BETWEEN NOVEMBER 2013 AND MAY 2014)

Similar to Sife’s (2013) study of *cybercafés* in Morogoro, Tanzania, Facebook was the most popular social media site. In our study 83% of the respondents reported using Facebook, compared to 77% in Sife’s study. Additionally, Sife’s study reported 41% of the respondents using Twitter, while our study found 36% using Twitter.

When asked which sites they went to in order to listen to music, YouTube was the most popular site. Given the prevalence of artists on ReverbNation, relatively few UDSM students used the site. The use of the site by artists

and the non-use of the site by UDSM students may indicate that visitors to ReverbNation may be outside of Tanzania, which offers implications for the international reach of Tanzanian hip-hop artists.

GRAPHIC 4. — POPULAR MUSIC STREAMING SITES AMONG UDSM STUDENTS
(TAKEN BETWEEN NOVEMBER 2013 AND MAY 2014)

Gender and age also played a role in social media usage among UDSM students. According to one UDSM official, the undergraduate student population is slightly more than 70% male, which corresponded with our survey participants, which were 70% male. Many of our user's demographics were also similar to those of the participants in Alfred Sife's (2013) study on cybercafé use in Morogoro, Tanzania. In that study most of the *cybercafé* users were male, in their mid-20s, educated, and used the Internet mostly for social activities. In our survey 83% were between the ages of 21 and 26. Similar to both the Socialbakers and Sife studies, the majority (83%) of our respondents reported using Facebook often or sometimes. Our study also showed that at UDSM men used Facebook more than women.

There were a total of six questions where the subjects indicated that at least 50% of them used the social media item. Those six questions were then analyzed to see if there were significant differences between the use of the items by males and females. Men tended to have higher rates of usage. An example is Facebook. As Table 5 shows, males tended to use Facebook more often than females. In fact 25.85% of females indicated they never used Facebook compared to only 13.71% of males not using it. This difference was significant at the .01 level.

GRAPHIC 5. — HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE FACEBOOK BY GENDER
(TAKEN BETWEEN NOVEMBER 2013 AND MAY 2014)

	Often	Sometimes	Never	Total
Female	47 (31.97%)	62 (42.18%)	38 (25.85%)	147
Male	151 (43.14%)	151 (43.14%)	48 (13.71%)	350
Total	198	213	86	497

Chi-Square = 13.03**, df = 2, $p < .01$.

While many artists make their music available for streaming, few have their music available for purchase. While Fid Q's music can be purchased through sites like iTunes, Nikki Mbishi decided not to sell his 2013 release *Malcolm XI* online. Most Tanzanians are not able to purchase music online. While 82% of survey respondents used their cell phones to listen to music, only 38% indicated that they have purchased music online. Much of this, according to one informant, is *via* subscription to streaming music services offered and paid for monthly through mobile phone credits. This number is relatively low compared to the more than 50% of online users buying music online in the United States, but is significant given the low access to Internet services and online payment mechanisms in Tanzania (Horrigan 2008).

When survey respondents were asked to name the artists that they followed online many listed Western artists, like Rihanna, Beyonce, Jay Z, and Taylor Swift. These artists are international mega stars whose music is often played on the radio and television in Tanzania. These artists also dominate social media. Each of these artists is signed to a major record label with a vested interest in keeping these artists highly visible in social media. Their influence in Tanzania is seen in the constructed images of both pop and hip-hop artists, who often use styles copied from these artists to appeal to both local and international audiences.

Among the top two Tanzanian artists that were mentioned in the survey, one is a hip-hop artist (Fid Q) and one is a Bongo Flava artist (Diamond Platinumz). Among the artists whose social media activity this study traced, Fid Q, Profesa Jay, Nikki Mbishi, and Songa were the only ones mentioned by survey participants. Given Witness' low level of social media activity and low number of followers; it is not surprising that our survey participants did not mention her.

Wakazi is still struggling to establish a fan base in Tanzania, but his visibility outside of Tanzania may surpass many other Tanzania based hip-hop artists. Wakazi spent several years in the United States, he returned recently to focus on developing his career in Tanzania. While he performs

in Swahili and has had modest success, many of his fans are outside of Tanzania. Wakazi has strong links in the diaspora. While living in Chicago, Wakazi regularly performed at events hosted by Tanzanian diaspora communities. He often traveled to Columbus, Ohio, home to a large community of Tanzanians, to perform at events and gatherings. Wakazi also performed and did projects with African and African American artists in the US, working with several emcees and producer. In 2013 he was a part of a track titled “Super MC”, released by US-based record company Nomadic Wax. The track featured artists from all over the world who could rap in multiple languages. The term “super MC” was coined by African American hip-hop legend Chuck D to refer to MCs that can rap in more than two languages (Nomadic Wax 2013). This project further implanted Wakazi in the American underground hip-hop scene. Since his return to Tanzania he has capitalized on those connections and has traveled to South Africa and Nigeria to do projects.

In the survey, replies to the question of which artist respondents followed online revealed some of the strongest evidence for the importance of social media. The artist mentioned more times than any other was Fid Q. The second most popular artist was Diamond Platnumz. Diamond Platnumz is an extremely successful Bongo Flava superstar. He has major corporate backing, heavy radio rotation, and was nominated for a BET award. Nevertheless, his popularity is essentially the same as Fid Q’s. While Fid Q has enjoyed more radio airplay than other hip-hop artist, most of his popularity comes from his use of social media to promote himself.

GRAPHIC 6. — POPULARITY OF TANZANIAN ARTISTS
(TAKEN BETWEEN NOVEMBER 2013 AND MAY 2014)

The use of social media by UDSM students and their choices in artists also reveals that while media backing can bring significant success to artists, the strategic use of social media also plays a major role. As Tanzanians are increasingly online, their access to information and online participation increases. While this has important implications for hip-hop in Tanzania, it is also important for participant's exposure to information, movements, and dialogues from virtual local and diaspora communities that impact their real lives.

Social Media and Pan African Dialogues through Hip-Hop

Social media has helped to establish connections in the Black Atlantic, including the US and European diaspora, as well as West Africa. Three of the six artists in this study (Fid Q, Professor Jay, and Wakazi) have used social media to collaborate with artists in the Black Atlantic. In 2012 Wakazi participated in the collaboration "Proud To Be". The project was put together by African Artist Coalition USA (AACUSA) and featured diaspora artists from Kenya, Sierra Leone, South Sudan, and Zambia. In addition to Wakazi, the project featured Tanzanian artists Gwaii (formerly of XPlastaz) and Albino Flani. In 2011 Fid Q linked up with African American hip-hop activist and artist Toni Blackman, doing an interview with her for an edition of his YouTube series, FidStyle Friday. Fid Q followed that up with an appearance on the mixtape *Internationally Known*, produced by Nomadic Wax. The album was put online for free download and distribution, and mostly featured artists from Africa and the diaspora.

Professor Jay did a collaboration in 2009 with Ghanaian hip-hop artist Kwaw Kese entitled "Who Be You". The song, sung in Swahili (Jay) and Fante (Kese), represented a link between Ghanaian and Tanzanian hip-hop. Five years later underground Ghanaian hip-hop artist Kenzi visited Tanzania, and in an interview indicated that his knowledge of Tanzanian hip-hop was based on the song by Kese and Jay. While in Tanzania Kenzi participated in the hip-hop Kilinge and did collaborations with Tanzanian artists. One of those collaborations included the song "Tagha Flow" with Tanzanian emcee Tifa. As inferred by the song's title, the song was meant to symbolize a union between Tanzanian and Ghanaian hip-hop.

Social media and technology contributed to the production and dissemination of these collaborations. These projects further links between Tanzania, Africa, and the Diaspora *via* hip-hop music and culture. They also strengthen the pan African content of the lyrics, as artists come into contact with influences from the diaspora and other parts of Africa. Much of this has been aided by the presence of hip-hop artists from Africa in the US, as well as diaspora artists in Africa. Social media thus makes these projects easier to realize and becomes the vehicle through which this content is disseminated.

While several Tanzanian artists have traveled abroad to collaborate, artists have also traveled to Tanzania. African American emcee M1 from the politically conscious group Dead Prez traveled to Tanzania in 2008 to participate in a documentary on the ties between hip-hop in East Africa and the Diaspora. The film, *Ni Wakati (It's Time)*, deals with the revolutionary potential of hip-hop and features conversations and collaborations between M1 and hip-hop artists from Kenya and Tanzania. When an artist like M1, who like Toni Blackman, has done projects all over Africa, comes to Tanzania it serves to reaffirm Tanzania's hip-hop authenticity and its place in global hip-hop culture. Dialogues are also happening within Tanzania via the dozens of African Americans living there now. *Ni Wakati* also featured a discussion with M1, artists from Tanzania and Kenya, and Pete and Charlotte O'Neal (former Black Panther Party members & founders of the United African Alliance Community Center [UAACC] in Arusha). The film links the importance of maintaining Pan African identities within hip-hop culture, an argument strengthened by the presence of the O'Neals.

The O'Neals are among the few African American arrivals who came to Tanzania in the 1970s to stay permanently. They have used their center to reach out to artists; working closely with SUA and other hip-hop artists. The UAACC has fostered a sense of a global African identity among Tanzanian artists, with Charlotte O'Neal regularly engaging Tanzanian and diaspora artists through social media. Other African Americans have migrated to Tanzania, both temporarily and permanently. African American music promoter Gaidi Faraj relocated to Tanzania from the US, and has worked with several hip-hop artists in Tanzania. Faraj, together with fellow African American transplant Jennifer Erie, started hosting a regular spoken word and hip-hop event titled Lyricist Lounge in 2014. The name comes from the legendary hip-hop open mic events that took place in New York City in the 1990s. The Tanzanian iteration of Lyricist Lounge features primarily Tanzanian and diaspora artists, and much of the content is political in nature. The event has spread through social media and blogs in Tanzania and signals Tanzania as a location where hip-hop (black) culture is practiced.

Social media also helps spread information. As mentioned earlier, many artists in Tanzania know a great deal about what is happening with hip-hop in the US. Social media is also bringing information on hip-hop in other parts of Africa. While much of the protests around Africa in the past five years have not impacted Tanzania, Tanzanians hip-hop artists are gaining access to information on hip-hop's role in social protest around Africa. In Senegal and in Tunisia hip-hop artists were an important part of revolutionary movements in those countries. Using their music and social media, artists provided not just a soundtrack for the revolution but called on fans to take to the streets, with the artists themselves joining the thousands of Senegalese and Tunisians who came out and protested. In an op-ed in the

New York Times, Fernandes highlights the role of hip-hop in these social movements. He says that Thiat from the group Keur Gui and the Y'en A Marre (Enough is Enough) movement in Senegal and El Général in Tunisia "may be two of the most influential rappers in the history of hip-hop". The events in Senegal and Tunisia reverberated around the African diaspora. In a 2011 post on TZhiphop.com, Bahati, a US-based Tanzanian writer, compared a recent movement against mainstream media in Tanzania with the Y'en A Marre movement in Senegal. The movement in Tanzania launched the Antivirus Mixtape (v1 & v2), which presented the grievances of many artists but fell short of a direct call to action. This, in Bahati's opinion, was a step in the right direction, but compared to Y'en A Marre's success, needed to do more. TZhiphop.com caters mostly to Tanzanians, many of whom find little information regarding hip-hop and social movements in mainstream Tanzanian media.

Social media's influence on Tanzanian hip-hop is clear. Artists are using the platform to reach wider audiences, and they now have an increased ability to circumvent major media houses. The increased use of social media has resulted in numerous projects aimed at empowering artists and developing hip-hop as both a culture and a way for artists to earn a living from their music. The hip-hop Kilinge, SUA, hip-hop Darasa, and FidStyle Fridays all emerged after 2011 and are all products of social media, benefiting from the increased online presence of Tanzanians, inside and outside the country. The survey data and data on the frequency of use of social media by artists and fans is evidence of its effectiveness. Artists and fans spend a great deal of time tweeting, posting, sharing, and otherwise creating content. The data on online followers for the artists in this study steadily shifted upward over the year this study was conducted. In addition, more artists in Tanzania opened social media pages.

In an examination of the role of social media in the Arab Spring and the Occupy Movement, Fuchs (2014) is correct in asserting that social media does not cause revolutionary change. It can, however, allow artists engaged in social change a platform to inform and engage participants. This potential for social media as a platform in Tanzania is helped by the increased number of comments on artist's posts that address social or political issues over other posts. The large number of followers that artists like Fid Q and Nikki Mbishi have on social media has also translated into live bodies at hip-hop related programs, with youth coming from around the city to participate in the Hip-Hop Darasa and the Hip-Hop Kilinge, respectively. Both online and in person these youth are then involved in whatever social or

political education taking place *via* the music or actions of a given artist. These participants become potential agents for change.

Fuchs' criticism of Jenkin's participatory culture asserts that Jenkins idealizes "the political potentials of fan communities and cannot explain why these communities should make fans more interested and active in politics (32. Online Fan Culture and Politics, para 1)". Hip-hop music is not always political, but politics is an essential element of a lot of hip-hop. The use of hip-hop and social commentary or social protest is not new. Before the artists in this study had an online presence they were involved in social critique. Social media has allowed for their messages to spread to the hundreds of thousands of youth that are now online in Tanzania, and the tens of thousands that follow these artists online. The rise of social media has increased the space for artists and their audiences to participate in political commentary and to engage in social protest. Social change or revolution begins with a social problem that needs to be addressed. Music is one way of articulating the problem and possible solutions. Social media spreads these messages and makes them accessible. The streets (or the ballot box) are where actions to bring about solutions occur. Music "may not be enough to start a political overthrow, but it can help set forces into motion which eventually coalesce into revolutionary struggle" (Ingram 2010: 106).

The increasing importance of social media sites that allow for music and video sharing, as well as other user created content sites are

"[...] dominating the way we use the internet, and the leading social platforms like Facebook, MySpace, YouTube, and now Twitter have moved into the mainstream. These sites are the tip of a redefinition of how the internet works, with every site now incorporating the features that allow users to publish opinions, connect, build community, or produce and share content" (Smith 2009: 559).

While social media sites have become mainstream, there remains a problem of visibility in social media. Users of social media are inundated with information daily. The processes of filtering, and active *versus* passive "listening", means that often users pay more attention to information that is given prominence in their social feeds. That prominence can be due to other friends sharing or commenting on posts, or corporations paying for a post to feature on a social media site. Large media corporations have resources to pay for higher visibility for their content on social media, giving them an unfair advantage. A heavy corporate media presence means that the most popular videos on YouTube, the most popular Facebook groups, and the Twitter users with the most followers are often artists with major corporate backing (Fuchs 2014).

This does not negate the importance of social media as a space for artists who do not receive radio and video airplay. Most of the artists in this

study, and throughout Tanzania now depend on social media. Fuchs (2009) is critical of those advancing the argument that assert that the Internet and social media “are participatory, cause revolutions, facilitate democracy, or advance the public sphere” because of corporate, capitalist controls of social media. However, arguing the revolutionary impacts of social media does not mean one ignores or supports the capitalist exploitative structure on which social media stands, it means the revolutionary potentials are there in spite of the capitalist exploitative structure on which social media stands. Hip-hop artists, like those in Tanzania, often use social media to challenge corporate domination in music and mainstream pop culture (McLeod 2005; Haupt 2008). So while corporations use social media networks to maintain their market dominance, those same networks also allow marginalized artists to challenge corporate capitalist structures.

Finally, the increased social media use has also increased the involvement of Tanzanians in a global hip-hop community. Many Tanzanian emcees interviewed saw themselves as students of hip-hop and paid close attention to what was going on globally in hip-hop *via* the Internet. These emcees saw hip-hop in other parts of Africa and the diaspora as being part of the same hip-hop culture. Tanzanian hip-hop is rooted both in a global hip-hop culture and in Tanzanian culture. Discussions of Tanzanian hip-hop cannot be removed from hip-hop studies, and solely looked at from an African studies perspective. The misunderstanding of what hip-hop is, and the distinction between pop music and hip-hop, has been addressed in hip-hop studies, while African studies continues to conflate the two terms. Babalola and Taiwo (2009) discussion of Nigerian hip-hop includes several artists, like D'Banj and P-Square, who are pop musicians. Jesse Shipley's (2013) analysis of Ghanaian hip-hop focuses many on Ghanaian Hiplife musicians, many of whom, like Mzbel, are pop artists. Ntarangwi's (2009) study of East African hip-hop included Bongo Flava and pop artists from Tanzania (like Nakaya) and Kenya. In studies of Tanzanian hip-hop, Bongo Flava and hip-hop are often used synonymously, and in studies by Englert (2003) and Stroeken (2005). This often means that African studies misses the important nuances of hip-hop in Africa, which separate it from other local music genres, but tie it to a broader hip-hop culture, rooted in the African Diaspora.

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ABSTRACT

Tanzanian hip-hop artists are finding ways to use social media and technology to both participate in social discourse and to disseminate their music. The increased reliance on alternatives to traditional media tests the power of new technology and social media to allow artists to successfully bypass established institutions and barriers. Likewise, it tests the importance of social media in creating a space for Pan African dialogues to occur, *via* hip-hop. One of the earliest clues that new and social media would signal revolutionary change in the dissemination of hip-hop worldwide was the launch of MySpace in 2003. By 2010 an increasing number of hip-hop artists from Tanzania had created fan pages on Facebook, uploaded videos on YouTube, and opened Twitter accounts. This research examines the ways in which hip-hop artists in Tanzania use this social media to engage audiences, the effectiveness of these strategies in the face of an increasing number of online Tanzanians, and how social media helps artists bridge barriers to Pan African dialogues with artists across Africa and the Diaspora.

RÉSUMÉ

Le rôle des médias sociaux en Tanzanie en production hip-hop. — Les artistes de hip-hop tanzaniens recherchent des moyens d'utilisation des médias sociaux et des nouvelles technologies qui leur permettent à la fois de participer à des discours sociaux et de diffuser leur musique. Le recours accru à des alternatives aux médias traditionnels questionne le pouvoir qu'ont les nouvelles technologies et les médias sociaux de soutenir les artistes tentant de contourner les institutions et les barrières établies. De même, elle interroge l'importance des médias sociaux dans la création d'un espace où surviendraient des dialogues panafricains, au travers du hip-hop. L'un des premiers indices signalant que les médias sociaux allaient engranger des changements révolutionnaires dans la dissémination mondiale du hip-hop fut le lancement de Myspace en 2003. Avant 2010, un nombre croissant d'artistes hip-hop de Tanzanie avaient créé leurs pages Facebook, téléchargé des vidéos sur Youtube, et ouvert des comptes Twitter. Cette recherche examine les manières dont les artistes de hip-hop en Tanzanie utilisent les médias sociaux pour toucher leurs publics, l'efficacité de ces stratégies auprès du nombre croissant de Tanzaniens connectés au Net, et comment les médias sociaux aident les artistes à vaincre les obstacles qui pourraient s'opposer aux dialogues panafricains avec des artistes de l'Afrique et de la diaspora.

Keywords/Mots-clés: Tanzanie, cultural studies, hip-hop, participatory culture, social media/Tanzania, études culturelles, hip-hop, culture participative, médias sociaux.