Sensation or Mediation? (guest blog)

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This guest blog by Summer School student Martin Bader looks at some examples of using new communications platforms to deliver humanitarian news in a more engaging and thoughtful way.

Sensation or Mediation

By Martin Bader

Today's lecture by the LSE's Dr Shani Orgad raised many key questions of how distant suffrering can and should be reported and one answer by the guest lecturer from The Guardian, Liz Ford.
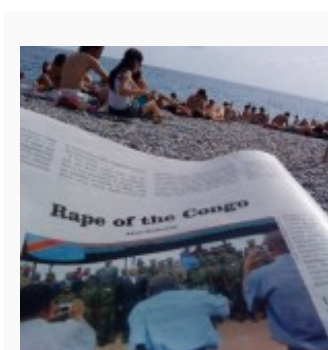
I Can Help

First of all one can separate *facts* (like the sheer amount of atrocities-reports competing for a place in the media and the heads of its audiences and the difficulties of acting in this distance), from questionably sustained *routines*. Examples for the latter seem the need for sensational pictures and a mediator, who "should" be as prominent as possible to raise attention to a cause.

This, map of the world reorganised to reflect celebrity recolonisation of Africa, however, is an example of the cynicism Dr. Orgad wants us to be cautious of.

So how to move beyond this kind of sensationalism? One example showed us Liz Ford from the Guardian as already blogged here before. The Katine Project is a three year old cooperation between the Guardian and the development organization AMREF, focusing on development, reporting and *mediation* of and with a particular region in Uganda.

Therefore Liz Ford could present us the challenges to bring Journalism, Development aid and the people on both continents together. This project certainly moved *one step* beyond the normal modes of instant reporting.

They employed a Ugandan reporter on the ground to continuously follow up the status and raising passionate empathy by depicting every day life.

The homepage provides a *global* platform for debates in narrow and broader contexts, such as Uganda and development in general.

Moreover it is sets an example in the transparency, from financial reports to the ongoing outcome.

Kenyan Cyber Cafe

As there is much discussion about the use of media *in* a country for the sake of its development, most noteworthy seems the establishing of a community controlled cyber café, which nudges users to visit the projects website, before being providing general internet access. Even a transcontinental live conversation between classrooms took place, breaking not only the ice, but preoccupation and disinformation.

What's next? A sheer amount of possibilities in mediating in innumerable contexts is yet to be established and explored. Katine is an outstanding model for enabling *many-to-many* communication and action *embedded* in an organizational cooperation.

Another step further one may see the more direct *peer-to-peer* aid and information on it: Open platforms such as Global Giving that enable everybody to find donors for a

particular cause.