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Ushahidi Case Study

The stakeholders of in the Ushahidi case were the Help International volunteers, the developers of Ushahidi, the Torabian citizens and government, the Red Cross, and Part-3. Aside from Part-3, the interests of the stakeholders were the same: utilizing Ushahidi's software to best support Torabia and protect their citizens through spreading information. Part-3, however, used Ushahidi to "hunt foreigners and all they wanted to punish" (Ushahidi 7).

Ushahidi is a forum for citizens to share information with each other in traumatic circumstances. Originally built to track the 2007 Kenyan elections, the platform grew into an open-source platform that receives real-time data for mapping and analysis. While Ushahidi was successful in the monitoring of multiple elections, the flaws in the information infrastructure were exposed during the Torabian Earthquake.

The unrestricted access of Ushahidi was the flaw in the software's information infrastructure, creating chaos for its users and allowing opposing forces to use infrastructure inversion to push their hostile agenda. First, because anyone in Torabia can upload information to Ushahidi, aid workers experienced information overload. This overload consisted of incorrect information and contradicting reports that made providing aid to the appropriate areas a challenge. And, because of the urgent nature of the situation, remedying this chaos was in the hands of untrained volunteers. Unrestricted uploading of information poses a verification process; the information offered to users was never screened and may be incorrect. More importantly, unrestricted access means that the users of the application are not screened either. Part-3, a Torabian rebel group, had just as much information as the citizens of Torabia had. Now that the group had a crowdsourced map of Help International's effort in Torabia, they posed a great threat to citizens and volunteers alike. Part-3 used infrastructure inversion to transform software designed for disaster relief into reconnaissance for a hostile revolution.

When developing requirements for software, like Ushahidi, it is important to consider the relationship between the software's information infrastructure and the infrastructure of the intended setting of the software. Ushahidi was not specifically designed for Torabia and the infrastructure of the country caused issues. For example, a large amount of information was initially uploaded by citizens, but the inputs could not be understood due to the language barrier. Translation is a

requirement for Ushahidi that was not originally considered, but became a serious problem. Before implementing something, like Ushahidi, into a region, it is important to tailor the requirements to the landscape it is intended for.