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**Makutano Junction: A Village Soap Opera for Kenyan TV. An
Interview with Producer and Mediae.org Director and Co-founder
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Title: *Makutano Junction: A village soap opera for Kenyan TV. An interview with producer and Mediae.org director and co-founder David Campbell*

Ben Stringer in conversation with David Campbell

Makutano Junction is an 'edutainment' soap opera made for local TV stations in Kenya and other East African countries. The show is about a fictional peri-urban village and the people who live in it. The program is made in Kenya, but was devised and is produced by Mediae, a UK based company that works with the support and collaboration of some major Kenyan and international NGOs. Mediae was founded by the producers David Campbell and Kate Lloyd Morgan. Since it began broadcasting in 2007 *Makutano Junction* has become one of the most popular shows on Kenyan TV; currently around 8 million viewers watch it every week, which is about 20% of the country's entire population.

Mediae have created a small stable of TV and radio shows mostly for Kenya, but also for Tanzania, Uganda and Rwanda. They all give rural Africans access to the latest information and discussions about issues that concern them. The themes and plotlines for these shows are informed by extensive and careful research in the field, conducted by themselves or partner organisations.

Some of Mediae's work is highly innovative. An example of this is the show *Shamba Shape Up*, which is also a major hit in Kenya and neighbouring countries. Shamba means 'farm' in Swahili, and as the title suggests it's a kind of small farm makeover show. So presenters and experts visit smallholding farmers, and on camera, discuss problems that they might be having, with animal health, crop yield, market strategies etc, and consider solutions and strategies. Then they put a plan into action, and have a follow up show to see the results. Some 10 million viewers across East Africa view this show every week, even more than *Makutano Junction*. A very important aspect of this show is its associated app; *I-Shamba*, with which farmers are able to use mobile phones to access a database of up to the minute information and advice. Once remote smallholding farmers are increasingly connecting, interacting and educating themselves through this special show and app.

Kenya is still predominantly rural; statistics from the World Bank¹ show a decline in the percentage of Kenyans living in rural territories from about 90% in 1970 to around 75% now, meaning that at current rates Kenya will become predominantly urban in 25 years or so.² It remains to be seen though, whether the potential for improved rural resilience that new communications technologies, such as those exploited by Mediae's projects, will alter this pattern of urbanisation.

Why should the readers of *Architecture and Culture Journal* be interested in learning about a Kenyan TV soap opera? It's because like architecture and planning, TV has an important, though very different, role in shaping cities and landscapes. Would American style suburbia be so influential around the world without US sitcoms and soap operas? Would more social housing estates in the UK be surviving if there had been fewer violent movies and TV shows situated in them? In East Africa, *Makutano Junction* has a reach far beyond that of architects and planners in terms of getting ordinary Kenyan villagers to discuss and think about their situation, about their village or town, and how things could be made better, or indeed how things could be worse.

The Interviewer is Ben Stringer who lectures in architecture at the University of Westminster in London. Ben learnt about the work of Mediae whilst setting up an exhibition and conference called 'Re-imagining Rurality' in London, which included a presentation of footage from Mediae's shows.

This interview took place in the rural Oxfordshire office of Mediae.org. It was set up and edited by Ben Stringer and Igea Troiani (A+C editor, architect and academic).

Ben Stringer (BS): The first questions I wanted to ask you was what is your role in the making of *Makutano Junction* and why did you create it?

David Campbell (DC): Okay, well, I'm one of the joint directors of Mediae, and we look at the way media is used to support education and development, that's what our objective is. And we're based in Kenya. I went out there in 1979 to look at the way media could be used to reach rural people. Back then we were working for the British government and we were funded by them, but within the Kenyan government. We set up something called the Agriculture Information Centre. One of the best ways we could see that media would reach people, was through radio, because at that time television was not being watched very much and hardly anybody could get hold of print, but radio had a lot of people using it, and it was government controlled.

One of our objectives, right from the beginning, was to get as big an audience as we could, and to build dedicated audiences; instead of making documentaries or making programmes about single issues, we thought, right from the early days. I had come across *The Archers* in Britain at the Royal Agricultural Society just after leaving university and I saw just how big an audience could be hooked into something and how you can keep growing it, and that one could use it as a teaching tool³.

I was working with Kate Lloyd Morgan who's the other director of Mediae now, and she was doing some research up on the eastern side of Mount Kenya and there was some funding available through her project to do some research on this question of media. So Kate and I did that research and we discovered that there was a large audience listening to radio and a particularly large women's audience (which was exciting because we thought women were a hard target audience to reach). And so we piloted a soap; we got one of the producer / directors from *The Archers* to come out and help us design the program, she was fantastic. Kate then came back to England and spent three months working with the BBC, including some work on *The Archers*, and so we learnt how to put together a Kenyan version of *The Archers*, in Kimeru, a sort of vernacular language. It was hugely popular. It was really amazing. I'm not sure what the audience would have been in Kimeru but probably in the region of four or five hundred thousand people listening. After a year of that we moved it on to the Kenyan Broadcast Corporation's Swahili station, and at that time it was totally controlled by the government, there were no other FM stations. It reached the whole country and was a hugely powerful political tool. Moi, who was then president, used that to reach the villages through radio, and every other program would start off with; 'Today, President Daniel Arap Moi said...' but not ours. We were eventually put on at 8 pm on Sunday, and it was hugely popular, in fact we had the top audience in the country. We ran a 20-minute drama, followed by a 15-minute question and answer (session) around the issues in each episode. We covered health issues, we covered agricultural issues, we covered everything for rural people. That's what our objective was. It was said that if you wanted to have an affair, it was best to have it on Sunday evening at 8:00 pm because no one would see you crossing the village because they'd all be at home listening to their radios.

What happened then was interesting; we noticed in 1998 we had 8 million listeners, by 2000 we had four million, by 2001 to 2003 I think it was about 2.4 million. What had happened was, through pressure from outside governments and inside from the public, they had finally opened up the airwaves to FM stations. The first ones were in the cities, so we still had our

rural reach, but gradually, once the flow started then all the vernacular, university and religious stations just blossomed. I think we now have something like 180 different FM stations in Kenya, all in different languages. So we saw this drop in the audience and the British government DFID (Department for International Development) funded us to look at why this happened and what was happening in the media and what we discovered was that as well as the fragmentation of all these different radio stations starting up, there was an incredible growth of TV that nobody had really understood. It was partly because of the 'Great Wall of China TV set'; fifty dollars for a black and white set which you could plug in with a battery connector or run off a generator or plug into some other system, whatever it was, and it worked.

We were surprised at that, so then we decided to move from radio to TV. Another reason for this move was that a lot of our radio listeners were at a socio-economic level where they were finding it very difficult to adopt to change because they just didn't have the levels of income. They weren't really in the cash economy. They might be in and out of the cash economy when they'd harvested something, but the traditional rural setting was much more about subsistence. What we realized though was that we could reach our target audience through TV even though not everyone had a set, because the data showed about a 70 percent rural TV viewership. People were going into villages and watching or talking to people who were watching. So we said; 'let's do a TV version of *The Archers*.

BS: Where does the name, *Makutano Junction*, come from?

DC: Well we actually first called it *The EastEnders of Embu*. Embu is a small town, not far from where we did our radio research, then it became Makutano, which as you know, means a meeting place, which is the whole purpose of the show.

BS: I didn't know that, tell us more.

DC: Okay, so our thinking was let's talk to people on TV: Where are they? Where are the rural TV viewers? And if you look at it, where the rural road meets the main road is where the small towns and the bigger villages have developed in Kenya over the last 40, 50 years. And that is partly because the electricity runs down the main road so they could be serviced. And where the rural roads come up to this is where all the rural people and their products come up from the villages to the main road to market their wares. And so our thinking then became; okay let's try TV and let's see if we can reach people who are in the cash economy and who can make changes, then those other people who are finding it difficult to adopt to change can see the changes happen in their community; they can see different crops growing, they can see people and women going to have their child born in the health centre rather than at home, they can see people voting for women politically rather than men, you know, they could see the things that we were recommending, happening in their own environment, and therefore they would be more likely to adopt (change). When you ask them; where in the lower socio-economy do you get your information from? Their most trusted principal source of information is friends and family, whereas if you go to TV audiences, their most trusted source of information is TV.

BS: So the kind of village that *Makutano Junction* is based on is probably only 40 or 50 years old. That's interesting and I suppose explains why the show gives a sense of a rural environment that is very dynamic, and not at all a settled or traditional sort of environment. Is that way it is in Kenya for most people? Are they taking part in creating an existence and environment for themselves?

DC: Well I think probably what happened back in time, a hundred years or so, you'd have

had small villages and you'd have had patriarchs who had wives and family, and they farmed their land, and they were basically subsistence farmers, not marketing much, there weren't really markets. And I think then the colonial expansion came, and people moved in to grow tea, coffee, these kinds of things, and people then started to work for these businesses. Many people didn't own their land, it wasn't until later, I think between the First and Second World Wars that people began to be allocated land that they owned. Before that there were subsistence farmers moving, farming here and there, and if you had four or five wives that was quite useful, and some children, you know, you could farm more, but you weren't really looking at markets, you were looking after the family. Then after the First and Second World Wars, many Kenyans, who'd been fighting in the wars and had earned money, went back and began to demand that they should own some land, and as a result the allocation of land began to happen. So if you look at Kenya today, there are villages or small townships at junctions, but pretty well everybody lives on their own plot, a small plot where your house is. The problem is, as time's gone on, that you've subdivided that plot amongst your children to the point where it's quite hard for a child to actually make enough money to live on their much smaller plots, and therefore they move to town to look for a living. The culture or the tradition in the home now is for the old folk of the family to stay on the farm: it's like a pension. They can grow enough to eat, and to go to market occasionally, but they're not farming as a commercial proposition really, I mean I would say up to a half the land is not farmed at a really high level. There are bigger ranches and farms owned by some ex-patriots, some ex-Brits, they're Kenyans now, you know; wheat farms, barley farms. Some Kenyans are farming big farms in a similar way. There are big tea estates and coffee estates, but 70 per cent of the population is living singly on their plot. They'll have a village where they go to, where there are small shops rather like Makutano, where there's maybe a bar, there could be a small bank or some kind of facility like that. That's really what Makutano is, there are 138 Makutanos in Kenya; they are those junctions.

BS: So how many people would live in an average kind of Makutano type of junction?

DC: It varies considerably. The one that I named it after is on the road north from Nairobi where you turn right to go to Meru and Embu. It's probably the most well known; there's a big sign that everyone kind of calls 'the junction', 'the place', or they say 'there's the 'Makutano'.

BS: Oh, so they recognise the connection with a real place?

DC: Yes. It's the meeting place. It's where the road meets the road, or it's where track meets track, where your farmer's group is made, a place to meet.

BS: The main setting for the show is a wide compacted red earth market square or 'strip', surrounded by single storey painted wood or breeze-block, tin roofed buildings. Most of the shops and offices have brightly coloured, hand painted signs and a lot of improvised DIY construction. Is the layout and architecture of *Makutano Junction* typical or generic of all Kenya, or a particular part of the country? Is there a lot of regional variation in the way that villages are laid out and constructed in Kenya?

DC: Makutano as a village is, I think, fairly genuine. The painting and the colourfulness of it all, is very similar throughout Kenya, if it's a market place, or a junction of that size. You can go off the road and into more remote areas and find much more basic villages where there's no shops, or maybe just a little, what they call 'duka', which is an Indian word, from when the Indians came to build the railway, because they were originally the principal traders. And that will be a store, which will sell; probably time for mobile probably, sweets, washing powder maybe, and some fruit and veg, that kind of thing, very basic.

BS: But the Makutano in the show, that's a stage set right?

DC: That's a set yes. And that set was built from photographs taken at the Makutano, the one I just explained on the main road. I went and took photographs of the whole scene there. There are different stories for every series, and the real stars are the market women, three market women. But there's also the guy who owns the bar, and the hotel, and the other guy who runs the, sort of, agro-dealer shop. They've been there a long time. They are second generation and reasonably wealthy traders. Then there's a health centre, and other people live in their houses in the plots and come to the Makutano to market their products and do whatever they want to do.

BS: If I went to a real Makutano, would I see a lot more poverty that I see on your TV show?

DC: It depends what you're looking at when you say; 'Would I see?' In Kenya, we have huge containers-full of second-hand clothing coming in, and Kenya's changed since I first went there. Everyone can buy, you know, a shirt. This pair of jeans by the way, cost me three quid, and they're pretty well a brand new pair of Marks and Spencer's jeans. What do they cost here? Forty quid? Something like that. So people can dress quite smart in Kenya, although it didn't cost them very much money. And you know in a way we make the program purposefully aspirational. There needs to be some inspiration. It needs to be realistic, and it is, but it needs to be aspirational too. So it's slightly above the average level, but it depends which part of town, you are in. I would say Kenyans would say it's realistic if you ask them.

BS: I suppose there's part of you that wants to portray village life as something that's desirable, and that you can have a good life in a village and not necessarily have to migrate into a shanty town outside Nairobi.

DC: That's really important, yes.

BS: Are people in Nairobi watching *Makutano Junction* and *Shamba Shape Up* as much as rural people?

DC: Oh yeah, the urban audience is huge too. There's a big connection between urban and rural in Kenya because it's only a hundred years since development occurred and almost everybody has roots in the family 'shamba', or farm, so the urban people are the children of the people living out there. We're trying to do a piece of research to look at how much information travels from urban to rural. Many people in Nairobi were not born there; they come from somewhere in the rural areas, so there's a strong connection.

BS: Even for *Shamba Shape Up*?

DC: For *Shamba Shape Up* it's just as much because Mum and Dad are back on the farm. A brother or uncle, someone you know, is communicating that information to her or him.

There's one thing about architecture I'd like to mention: In a village, traditionally a person would be considered to be wealthy or important, if he had many, wives and huts and children. Well if you look at houses in Nairobi, in a high end suburb like Karen where we live, you will find houses with many, many, roofs; architecturally ridiculous but they've got lots of roofs and that indicates that you are a wealthy man, maybe an MP or something like that, that's my theory and I think it's true.

BS: In *Makutano Junction* three of the women are key to the plot narratives, and a lot of the plots revolve around them, why is that?

DC: Trying to focus on development issues that relate to women has always been of great interest to Kate and me, especially with media because people can access that information in their own homes without any break, without any influence. We have managed to address a huge range of issues to help women; from health through to helping them become more financially included, because less women are included in the cash economy they tend not to have enough influence. Men tend to be very dominant, especially in agriculture. The women do a lot of the work, the money goes to the man, and he manages it, so that puts a whole lot of insecurities in the family because the women look after the children, make sure they go to school, and if the husband's being difficult or is a drunk, or whatever it might be, the whole family can fall apart. So we've really focused on women throughout the whole series.

BS: So you want women to have a bigger say in the rural cash economy and I assume that by helping women you help rural communities as a whole to become more resilient.

DC: Yes. It's very important because it is a very patriarchal arrangement, you know. It's the man in charge and he has the wives and then he can have as many wives as he likes and he may treat them well or not, but that's his business and that's not questioned. Whereas what we're doing is questioning a whole lot of those issues. We have done a lot about violence against women. We've done programs about female genital mutilation. We've been challenging these issues and showing alternative ways of approaching them.

The series of *Makutano Junction* that you were watching has a governance issue in that it had an election storyline that actually came out during the week of the real election, and that program was trying to show how ethnic violence can be reduced by the community and how to identify and see corruption occurring or political power trying to generate problems in your community, and what you can do about it, now, to solve it. That's a big, big issue. As you know we had terrible violence during that election. We had already known that was going to happen and that the dangers that were there. It may have been even worse if some of the communities hadn't made deals with each other.

BS: One of the things that I noticed with *Makutano Junction* is that not a lot of the storylines are focused on agriculture, it portrays a diverse economy and social life, is that something you're trying to reflect?

DC: We started off thinking agriculture was a key issue for rural people, but what became very clear when the research was done was that yes agriculture was, but then governance became a big issue because of the political violence. When we started, HIV AIDS was the biggest concern of the developing world, and it had a direct effect on people who didn't have the knowledge or the attitude to approach it in a way that would change their behaviour. Funding was made available to us to run HIV story lines and so we went straight in with that, and we helped to make dramatic changes.

There was confusion around all sorts of issues, one example I often give is between TB and HIV because most people in Kenya who got HIV AIDS at that time, their immune system went down and they actually died from getting TB, because people thought TB was a symptom of HIV AIDS. But you can be treated for TB with a very low cost drug. That's something that you can tell viewers in a drama: We can show one of the market women who doesn't understand this, so you know, her child dies, whereas the other one goes to the health centre, takes a bit of time to understand it, gets the drug for the TB and then treats her child for TB, because it's not HIV after all. But then she discovers she's has HIV herself and she gets TB, but she treats herself for TB, so then she can go onto the antiretroviral drugs. That's a really complicated story to get over to people, but it's explained by the three

different women, so we always know there's this one woman who doesn't take notice and goes the traditional way, you know, argues and is quite aggressive and has lots of problems, and there's one woman who's good fun and everything like that and takes up some of the ideas and partly takes up others and then there's this one woman who becomes the chief's wife and gets HIV AIDS but now lives with it because she's on the antiretrovirals because she makes the necessary changes to her life. Your characters are known to viewers who begin to listen to that one, and start to think what the other one is saying may not be right and pay back is when a viewer is thinking who is right and who is wrong, because that's when one really starts learning.

The next huge issue that everyone wanted to know more about when we asked them, in our pre and post researches of the series, was education. A few years back, Kenya declared that they would have free primary education for everybody, and it was pumped and funded by donors like the World Bank, the British government, and other organizations. Well the problem was that so many people were signed up that there were up to 70 kids in the classrooms, and there weren't enough teachers. The quality that had been there before, for those that paid and came from educated families, dropped. It became a big, big, issue. But most parents didn't know they could be on the school committee, or be part of the management of the school committees. Some of the government run schools were pretty corrupt, and parents were kept out of the school committees. So we did a whole series which focused on; 'Did you know you can be on the school committee? No I didn't: Well you can' and we saw a change. I can't remember the exact figures, but there was something like a 60 per cent change pre, and post the program. People know now that they can be on committees and that when you're on the committee, there are lots of issues you can tackle, and also people know how as a community they can influence that committee, and that's knowledge that can make a dramatic change and that's what it's about really.

BS: Have you noticed similar impacts from other stories? For example; the story about women's banking?

DC: Well yes, that was a fantastic one because we could measure the effects, and we used a different approach. So getting women banked; setting up a savings account was the objective, so that when women did get income they didn't hide it under the beds so the husband could take it or something, so they could actually start to take control; not only get some cash, but keep some cash and actually manage it so that when some problem occurs, a health issue for the child, or themselves, for example, they could manage the situation, that was the idea. For this series we worked with Women's World Banking, an extremely good organization promoting financial inclusion for women. The story we used had the manager of a small, rural bank walking through the marketplace, and the market's humming, and then he saw the three ladies and he says 'ladies you're doing so well, come on get banked'.

BS: He gets into trouble for that doesn't he?

DC: Yeah, they say 'Ah you and your smart suit, you and your fancy place. I'll give you my money and never see it, and I'll have to wait in a queue to get it, I won't know where it is, I'll keep it under my bed, thank you'.

BS: And one of the guys thinks he's trying to chat up his wife.

DC: Yes, that's another story, anyway they say, 'you go back to your bank' and he goes back to the bank and there's a very attractive new young lady who's the tea lady in the bank (about to have an affair with the doctor, but that's something else), and she says 'God those

market women are dumb'. and she says, 'you've approached it all wrong, you know what you've got to do, is have a tea party, invite them all along one day, you know, and they'll come and you'll be able to talk to them, but do it on a day when they're not working, when the market's not open and I think you'll get results'. So he then puts up a sign outside the bank saying 'nawiri dada' which means 'grow sisters'. And at the same time, in reality on twenty five high street banks in Kenya, the same sign went up.

We got a hundred and thirty eight thousand women banked in three months, and at that point in time the women getting banked had actually been going down, and many women's accounts were not being used. Then those accounts were tracked because we could, because they'd come in and there'd be a sign above the tills you know we don't sign and they. So when they signed up for their bank account it was on a special, we had a special 'Nawiri Dada' ('Sisters achieve' in Swahili) sign up over the tills, and the special accounts could be tracked for the WWB. And we saw dramatic figures showing not only that more women were opening accounts but those who had 'Nawiri Dada' accounts were far less likely to withdraw money from their savings, than the women with other accounts. Because we could track what was happening on these accounts, we could see the effects the stories were having as they went on. Normally it is very hard in media and communications to get exact data, almost impossible I'd say in most cases.

BS: How do you prepare your stories?

DC: A lot of research comes from the partners we have; people who've been working in NGO's, societies, organizations, experts, research people who come in to help work with us to do the right stories. We do KAP studies (Knowledge, Attitude and Practice); What do you know? What do you think? What are you doing? Before a series starts, and when we're writing we're thinking 'okay what's the existing knowledge on this? What are people thinking at the moment? What are the practices? And what are the changes that we're trying to make?' That's what we do, and then we try to measure what change we managed to get on each issue, and we can get big changes on knowledge, I don't know what the exact figures are, I think it's maybe about a 36 per cent average increase in knowledge when we run a series of *Shamba Shape Up* and for *Makutano Junction* I think it's probably a bit lower, probably about 26 per cent, that's average reported behaviour change. We've recently done a huge piece of research on *Shamba Shape Up*, the farmer's series, with Reading University and that, for example, helped a lot in learning about the effects our shows have.

BS: One of the series of *Makutano Junction* ends quite dramatically with a cliff-hanger when a bulldozer comes down the street and guys with baseball bats retaliate....

DC: Yes, to clear the high street, to put a road through. And the corrupt MP.

BS: How often in reality might a village in Kenya get knocked down, to provide land for a big multinational agri-business or some giant infrastructural project?

DC: Quite a few villages can get damaged by road improvement works, and that's what that story was about. Also there's a lot of villages unknowingly built into the designated land area for the road. So you know, they just built along the road haphazardly, the chief didn't know the rules and regulations, or whatever and the police have just turned a blind eye to him. That's happened a lot in Kenya, a lot. And suddenly the road is now going to be bigger because it's got to reach another market further up. But actually knocking down villages for industry I don't think happens very often at all.

BS: You've got quite a big audience in Tanzania as well, and one reads in the papers and things, about quite dramatic land grabs by foreign multinationals and even governments of

big tracts of land to grow crops on an industrial scale. But one gets a sense that this isn't happening so much in Kenya.

DC: I think there is definitely land grabbing in Kenya. It's probably more around urban areas. There's been a big incident in Nairobi recently where a school playing field was grabbed for a car park for a hotel which belonged to a politician.

BS: I was thinking more of the giant farm type of development.

DC: Not so much. I think people were moved off land because of disorganization perhaps in the earlier days in some of the rural areas where there was misunderstanding as to who owned land and who didn't own land. In some areas where people are just subsistence farmers and they don't own the land. They're just itinerant farmers, as they're called, grazing their cattle here and there and suddenly it's been stopped, and now it belongs to someone else, I think that's happened on occasion. And there were many British people who owned big farms who had their lands bought from them post-independence and then reallocated as research stations, to senior government people who were considered to be reliable in terms of being able to manage it. I think that happened, and some of those research stations have had their land since grabbed and used for other purposes, that goes on to a certain extent.

BS: How many programs are there like *Makutano Junction* or *Shamba Shape Up* around the world working for small villagers and farmers?

DC: There are still radio programs going on, often more targeted in a specific language. In South Africa, there's *Heart and Soul* which is about health and is very much focused on women's and gender issues. It's a really good program.

Occasionally donors will come in with a one-off series, a big AIDS program, you know, but they rarely build their position in the way we do. By building these audiences, we end up at the top slot. 7.30 on a Sunday evening, and by being there we've got our audience, we grew there, we built that, whereas many, or some of the aid organisations will come in and do a 13 part series and buy that slot. They didn't, as it were, earn that slot. It's a 13 part series and then it goes away, and it's only dealing probably with HIV AIDS whereas our program was designed to deal with two to three different subjects that our audience had told us; 'these are the things we want to know'.

BS: So it becomes much more ingrained?

DC: Yes, so maybe you're watching because you're interested in how to get into agri-business and then suddenly you realize there's something about HIV AIDS which you never even knew about. So the different stories and issues weave through the episodes. The top story, the AIDS story for example may be every second or third episode, but you come back to other stories, so we keep the audience hooked, sort of like that.

BS: *Shamba Shape Up* must be quite original.

DC: *Shamba Shape Up* is a complete original, I don't know anyone who's done a reality farming program and in fact Myanmar, and southwestern Australia, have been in touch with us asking whether we can do *Shamba Shape Up* there. We have someone coming out from the BBC *Countryfile* to see how we do it. So that is an original idea that has worked incredibly well. *Shamba Shape Up* is hugely popular and aimed at getting people into farming as a business because if we don't we're in trouble.

BS: *Shamba Shape Up* is totally dependent on new technologies isn't it?

DC: Well it's like this; you're using a mobile phone to get a loan, to get an account, to find out what market prices are. We have *I-shamba* our mobile app with its call centre. You can sign up and get information about your crops, get market prices and all sorts of information. We've now got 350,000 people on that and we're growing all the time. It started with Makutano; we said 'if you want more information, about whatever the subject was; TB or HIV for example, send us an SMS, and then we'll send leaflets back'. And then we'd mail them a leaflet about the issue which had a lot more contact information people could get about organisations involved in the issue. And that gave information about where people are calling us from and all that kind of thing, so we now can map where people are for our research. We can also send research questionnaires to those people, and we say 'fill it out, send it back and we'll pay you some credit to your mobile phone. So we do all that kind of stuff. We've got everything on African Knowledge Zone. AKZ. We've also just signed an agreement with Safaricom, the big mobile company and Citizen the biggest TV company, for a mobile based TV channel and we are providing *Shamba Shape Up* and *Makutano Junction* as shortened programs as a download for mobiles. You can also just have the TB and HIV down to a two minute animated clip which costs very little money.

BS: It's been very interesting talking to you, thank you.

DC: OK Thank you.

BS, a postscript: One of the many striking aspects of *Makutano Junction* is the extent to which the show is set up as a kind of dialogue between rural people and the program makers. A dialogue which has been built up through constant research into what's going on in the villages and countryside. What people are watching here, is not a rural stereotype, or a re-working or commentary on the rural idyll or anything like that. Makutano has a formula which to some extent allows rural people to influence the portrayal of their own society. At the same time the show is educating rural people about issues they want to know more about, and enabling them to make more informed choices about their lives.

Another very striking aspect of Mediae's work is in the way that they explore the possibilities of new technologies; their use of mobile phone apps combined with TV broadcasts to deliver information to rural people is especially interesting. New technology here is bringing knowledge, empowerment and resilience to small farmers and communities. The knowledge for example that is shared through the *Shamba Shape Up* show and phone app must make it much easier for smallholding farmers to make ends meet, and thereby actually make life in the countryside seem like a viable alternative to finding a job in the city. I would also imagine that further empowerment comes through the sense of connection with other small farmers or villagers, who until recently were much more isolated

¹ World Bank... Not sure what this note should read as.

² It should be noted that Kenya's rural population is also increasing, but at a much slower rate than the cities.

³ Broadcast in the UK since 1951, *The Archers* is the world's longest running radio soap opera. It is set in the fictional English midlands village of Ambridge. One of its key original roles was to inform Britain's post-war farming community about issues and developments within their sector, but it soon appealed to a very large and wide audience in cities and countryside alike, and continues to do so.

Figure 1. Ben Stringer (left) and David Campbell (right), in the Oxfordshire office of Mediae.org.

Figure 2. Filming on the set of 'Makutano Junction'.

Figure 3. Three Makutano Junction characters, from left to right; Margaret Matano, played by Caroline Midimo, Mama Mboga played by Naomi Kamau and Anna Matendechele played Louisa Sialo.

Figure 4. Shamba Shape Up co-presenter Naomi Kamau demonstrates how to access the 'I-Shamba' call centre and SMS information services.