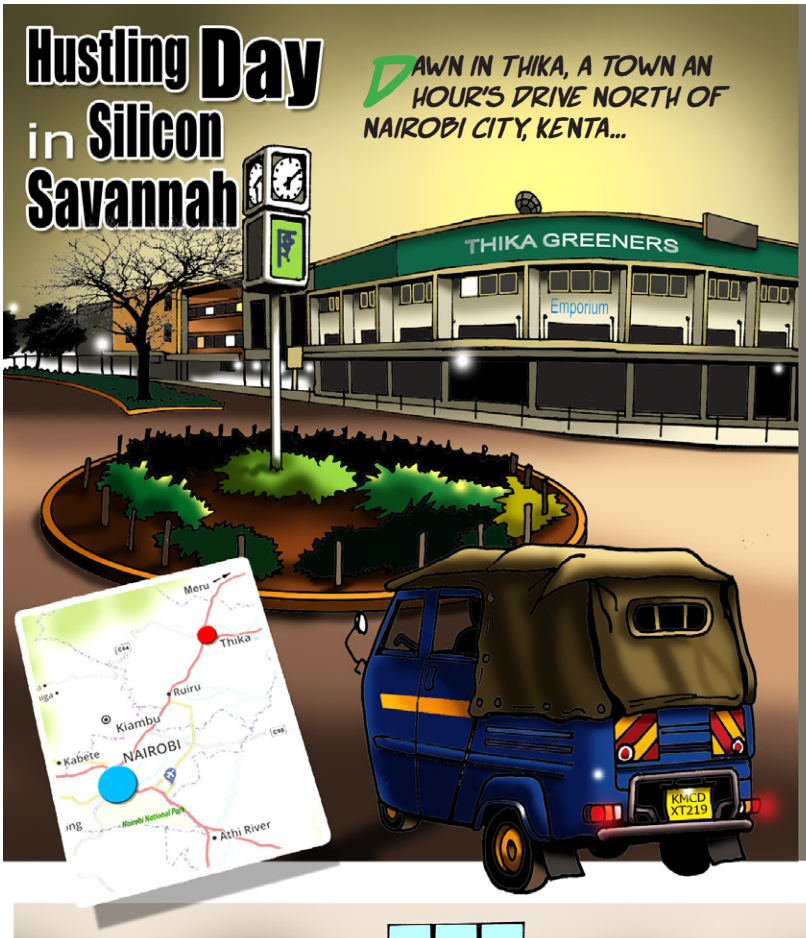
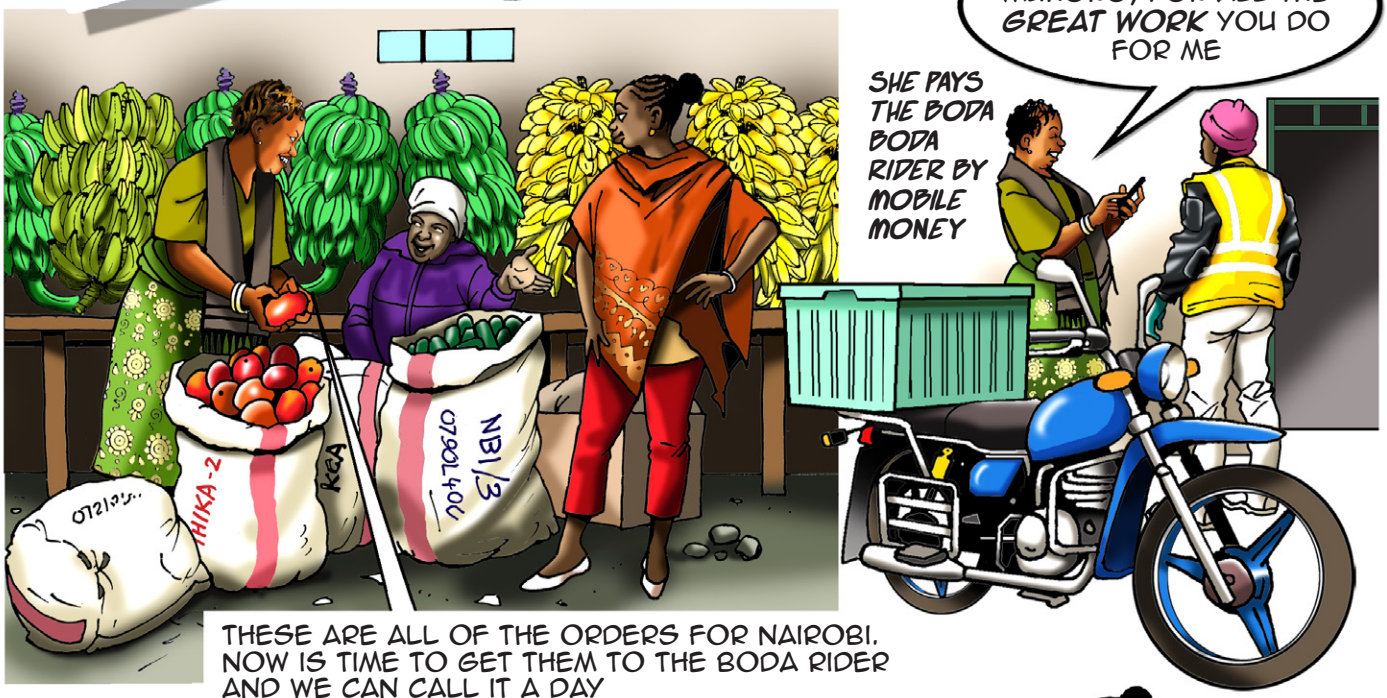
Hustling Day in Silicon Savannah

DAWN IN THIKA, A TOWN AN HOUR'S DRIVE NORTH OF NAIROBI CITY, KENTA...

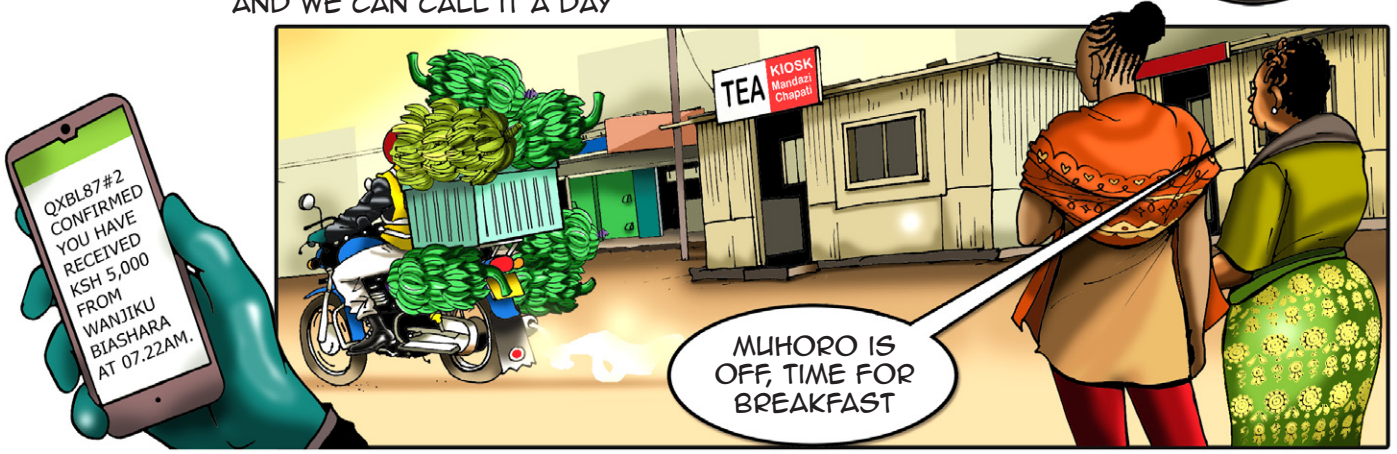


MAMA BIASHARA AND HER NIECE, WAGECI, ARE ALREADY HARD AT WORK...

MAMA BIASHARA SELLS FRUITS AND VEGETABLES TO MARKET SELLER WOMEN (CALLED MAMA MBOGAS*) IN NAIROBI AND THIKA. *mboga means vegetables in Kiswahili.



THESE ARE ALL OF THE ORDERS FOR NAIROBI. NOW IS TIME TO GET THEM TO THE BODA RIDER AND WE CAN CALL IT A DAY



JOMO KENYATTA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, EAST OF NAIROBI...

TERMINAL 1A INTL. ARRIVALS

NAIROBI

JKIA

SUPAtaxi

CONFIRM PICKUP

BZZZP! BZZZP!

KDZ X72T

HI, I'M MAX!

THE NEW ARRIVAL GETS INTO A CAB..

I'M KISADHA. NICE TO MEET YOU! WHAT **BRINGS** YOU TO NAIROBI?

I'M LOOKING TO INVEST IN START-UPS. THE SCENE IN KENYA IS **BOOMING!** AND A LOT OF THEM GET BOUGHT BY LARGE TECH COMPANIES. THERE ARE GREAT INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES **SILICON SAVANNAH** ROCKS!

City Centre A104
Thika Highway A2

I WAS OFFERED TO BE PICKED UP BY A PRIVATE DRIVER BUT I WANTED TO **'GO NATIVE'** AND SEE HOW PEOPLE MOVE AROUND HERE

KDZ X72T

WAIT... YOU WANTED TO GO **NATIVE** WITH **SUPATAXI?!**

MEANWHILE, IN THIKA, MAMA BIASHARA IS SHARING THE TRICKS OF THE TRADE WITH HER NIECE.

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR BANANAS FROM?

Menu
CHAI
MANDAZI
CHAPATI
SOSEJ
UGALI
NYAMA
MANDONDO

Lipa na M-PESA

BLEACH

I GET ALL MY PRODUCTS FROM **MAMA MERU** FROM MERU COUNTY. I PLACE NEW ORDERS WITH HER TWICE A WEEK

MAMA MERU...

SHE SOURCES HER PRODUCTS **DIRECTLY** FROM THE FARMS

NAIROBI COUNTY

THIKA MERU NYERI

NAIROBI A2

MAMA MERU SUPPLIES ME AND **SEVERAL** OTHER MAMA BIASHARA IN DIFFERENT COUNTIES

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT, AUNTIE?

TEA

WELL, I RECEIVE ORDERS FROM MAMA MBOGAS, AND MAKE SURE THESE ARE DELIVERED TO THEM

BUT *HOW* ARE ALL THESE ORDERS DELIVERED IN TIME, AND TO THE *RIGHT* PEOPLE?

WE HAVE A *NET-WORK* OF PEOPLE WHO HELP US DELIVER THE GOODS...

...FOR *SHORTER* DISTANCES, THERE ARE THE BODA BODA RIDERS OR TUK TUKS...

...THEY DELIVER THE GOODS TO THE KIOSKS RUN BY MAMA MBOGAS...

...AND FOR LONGER DISTANCES, THE BODA RIDER DELIVERS THE GOODS TO A MATATU...

ANOTHER BODA BODA OPERA-TOR THEN PICKS IT UP AGAIN...

...AND DELIVERS IT TO THE CLIENT!

JUJA MARKET STALL No. 8C

COME NOW, WE HAVE *MORE* WORK TO DO!

ON THE WAY TO NAIROBI...

KISADHA, TELL ME, ARE YOU *HAPPY* WITH YOUR TAXI HAILING JOB?

IT'S BEEN *HARD* MAKING ENDS MEET IN THIS ECONOMY, ESPECIALLY NOW WITH CORONA, IT'S BECOME MORE DIFFICULT DUE TO *CURFEWS* AND *RESTRICTIONS*

I HAVE TO GET UP *BEFORE DAWN* TO MAKE ENOUGH MONEY TO PAY MY...

Wake up! It's 4am! Wake up!

..RENT...

...FOOD...

WATER BILL
Consumption Dec-Jan
16.07 units
Ksh 1,416
due for disconnection

...LOANS...

...EXPENSES...

..AND *25%* *COMMISSION* TO *SUPATAXI!*

I GET HOME LATE AND TIRED...

WE ALL HAVE TO WORK *HARDER* THAN EVER

SCHOOL IS OUT BECAUSE OF ***CORONA***. WITH ***ALL*** MY CHILDREN AT HOME...

...I HAVE ***MORE*** MOUTHS TO FEED!

WELL, AT LEAST YOU ARE YOUR ***OWN*** BOSS, RIGHT? YOU'RE FREE TO ***DECIDE*** HOW AND WHEN YOU WANT TO WORK...

I'M NOT FREE. MY CONTRACT WITH SUPATAXI SAYS THAT I'M A ***CONTRACTOR***. I'M A ***BUSINESSMAN!*** BUT, IN REALITY, I WORK FOR MY CREDITORS. SUPA REQUIRES ME TO HAVE A CAR NO OLDER THAN 3 YEARS, SO I HAD TO TAKE OUT A LOAN TO BUY A NEW ONE. MEANWHILE, THEY PAY ***LESS AND LESS***, IN ORDER TO COMPETE WITH OTHER COMPANIES

SINCE 2017 WE HAVE GONE ON STRIKE ***SEVERAL*** TIMES FOR BETTER WORKING CONDITIONS.

EACH TIME WE CONVERGED AT THE MAIN INTERSECTIONS IN DOWNTOWN NAIROBI, WE ***GROUND THE RUSH-HOUR TRAFFIC*** TO A HALT!

PEEEP!! POH POH!! HOOOT!!

MANY OF US ***UNINSTALLED*** THE SUPATAXI APP

EACH TIME SOME OF US WERE ARRESTED. BUT IN THE END, NOTHING MUCH CHANGED

THEY ONLY NOTICE US WHEN WE BECOME INVISIBLE!

LET'S GO KARURA!!

25% MORDER!

KARURA? WHAT'S ***THAT?***

DON'T KNOW FOR SURE. WE SAY THAT WHEN WE LOG OFF. LIKE, WHEN YOU GO IN THE ***THICK*** OF A FOREST AND YOU GOT NO NETWORK. KARURA IS A FOREST HERE IN NAIROBI. IT'S ACTUALLY A PLACE WHERE THE ***MAU MAU*** HID DURING THE WAR AGAINST THE BRITISH COLONIALISTS. MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE WE'RE IN ***WAR*** AGAINST NEW COLONILALISTS. ***HEHE HEHE!***

BUT DIGITAL PLATFORMS LIKE SUPATAXI ARE ***CREATING*** JOB OPPORTUNITIES, AREN'T THEY? ESPECIALLY FOR ***YOUNG*** PEOPLE?

THAT MAYBE SO, BUT I AM NOT ***YOUNG*** ANYMORE. ALL I KNOW IS THAT I HAVE TO ***WORK*** HARD WITH LITTLE OR NO CAREER PROSPECT

apprise GROW your MONEY without LEAVING Home!

Apptitude! the app for today's economy

Drive and make millions! taxapp

REALITY CHECK, THIS WAY

Supermar

BACK IN THIKA...

I UNDERSTAND NOW MANY PEOPLE ARE INVOLVED IN MOVING THE GOODS

BUT HOW DO THEY KNOW ***WHICH*** BUNCH OF BANANAS IS FOR ***WHO?***

WE ***CARVE*** INITIALS INTO THE BANANAS, SO THE BODA BODA DRIVERS AND THE MATATU TOUTS KNOW ***EXACTLY*** WHERE IT HAS TO GO...

...AND OUR PHONES ENABLE US TO KEEP IN TOUCH ABOUT WHEN AND WHERE DELIVERIES WILL BE MADE

Mama Meru

Your order is on the way. You can expect the bananas in 2 hours.

Thank you!

MAMA BIASHARA AND HER NIECE ARRIVE AT HER SHOP.

MAMA BIASHARA

DISTRIBUTOR & RETAIL

SHE SORTS OUT THE BANANAS FOR HER DIFFERENT CLIENTS...

MAMA BIASHARA
BANANA SHOP

TECHNOLOGY HAS MADE OUR LIVES EASIER. WE ALSO USE OUR PHONES TO ARRANGE FOR PAYMENT. I USE MY M-PESA WALLET TO PAY MAMA MERU

AND I CONVERT MY DIGITAL MONEY INTO *CASH* AT THE M-PESA AGENT

M-PESA

THE FIRST CUSTOMERS BEGIN TO ARRIVE...

YOU HAVE SENT 6,750
YOU RECEIVED 13,075

HELP ME WEIGH THESE BANANAS AS THE CUSTOMERS COME IN!

AFTER VARIOUS TRANSACTIONS, THE WOMEN BEGIN TO LEAVE

THANK YOU! SEE YOU TOMORROW!

THE ORDERS I SENT THIS MORNING SHOULD ALMOST BE IN NAIROBI BY NOW

REPOSSED VEHICLES YARD

KDZ X72T

THE TAXI CRAWLS PAST NUMEROUS REPOSSED VEHICLE YARDS...

BUT PAYING OFF YOUR LOANS ISN'T POSSIBLE WHEN SUPATAXI *CUTS* YOUR *PAY*, AND THE *AMOUNT* OF *HOURS* YOU CAN WORK AND THE *PRICE* OF FUEL *RISES* DAY BY DAY

KISADHA CONTINUES ADDRESSING HIS PASSENGER MAX...

MANY OF MY FRIENDS HAVE FALLEN INTO *DEBT*, TO PURCHASE A VEHICLE THAT WOULD MEET *SUPATAXI*'S REQUIREMENTS

MAR
FEB
JAN
116
129
134

ON TOP OF THAT, OUR ROADS ARE IN A VERY *BAD* CONDITION AND OUR CARS NEED MORE MAINTENANCE

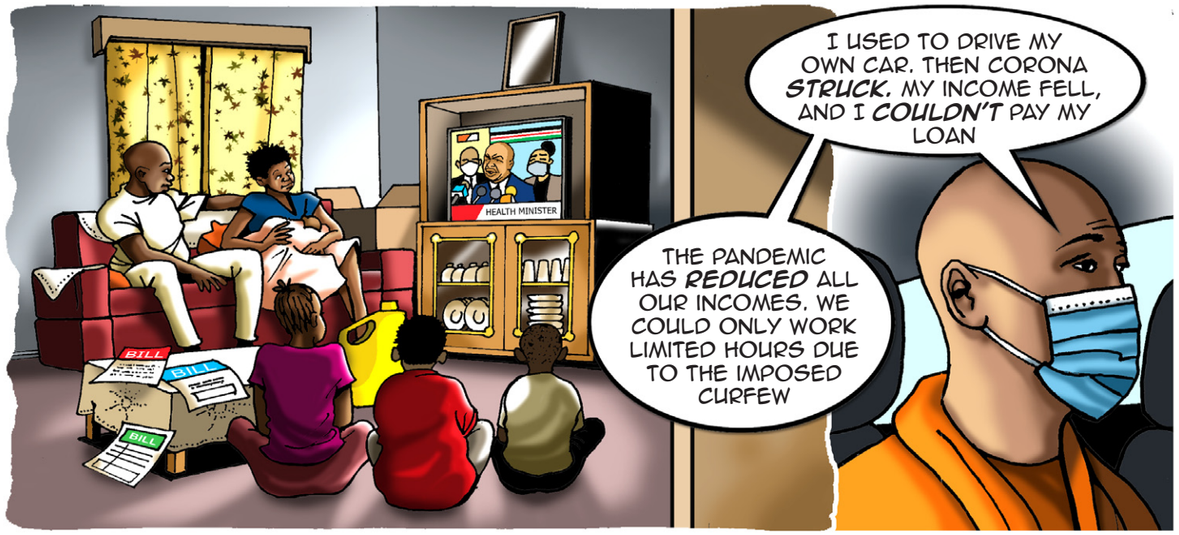
KDZ X72T

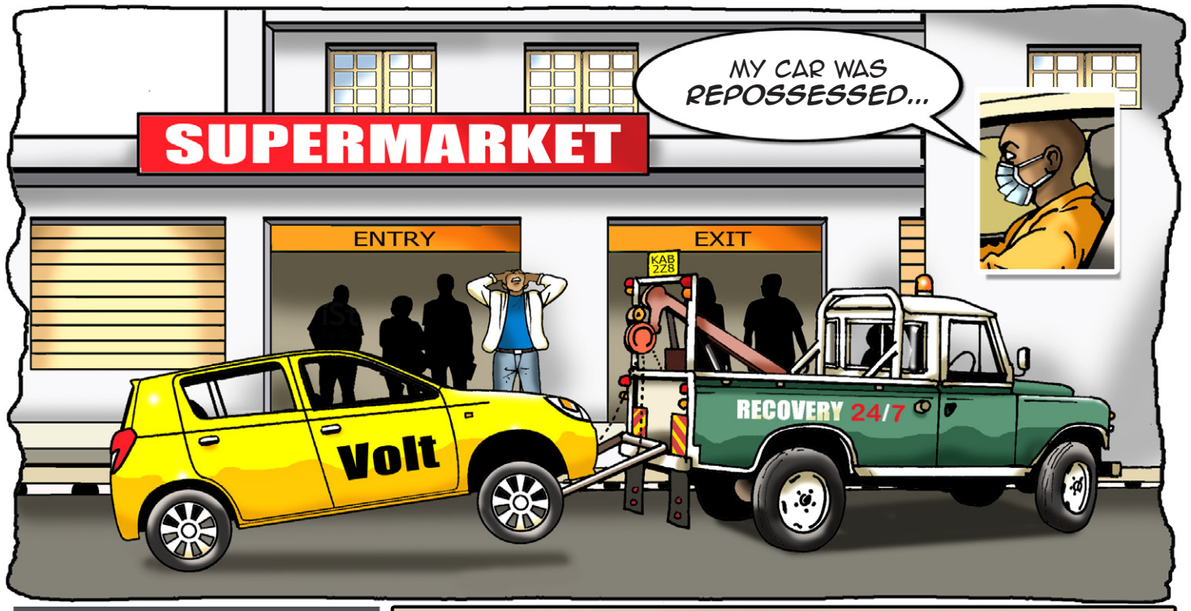
NOW, MANYOF THEM HAVE LOST THEIR VEHICLES, THANKS TO *AUCTIONEERS*

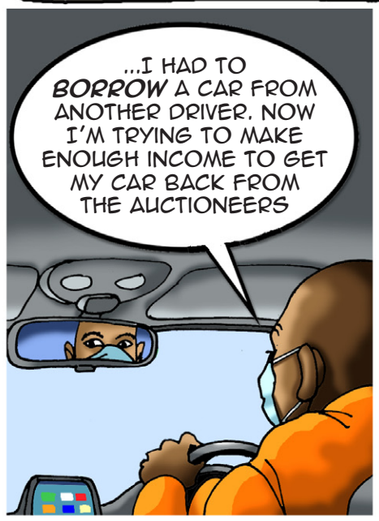
Motor vehicles stored for more than 14 days shall be auctioned

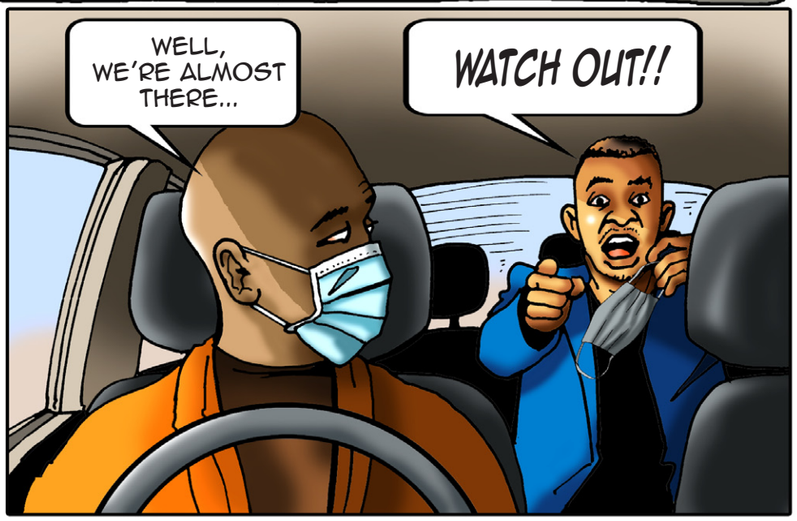
VEHICLE AUCTION YARD

KDZ X72T



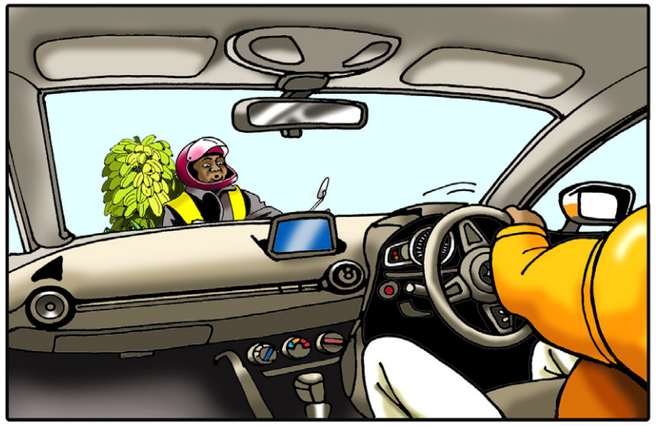


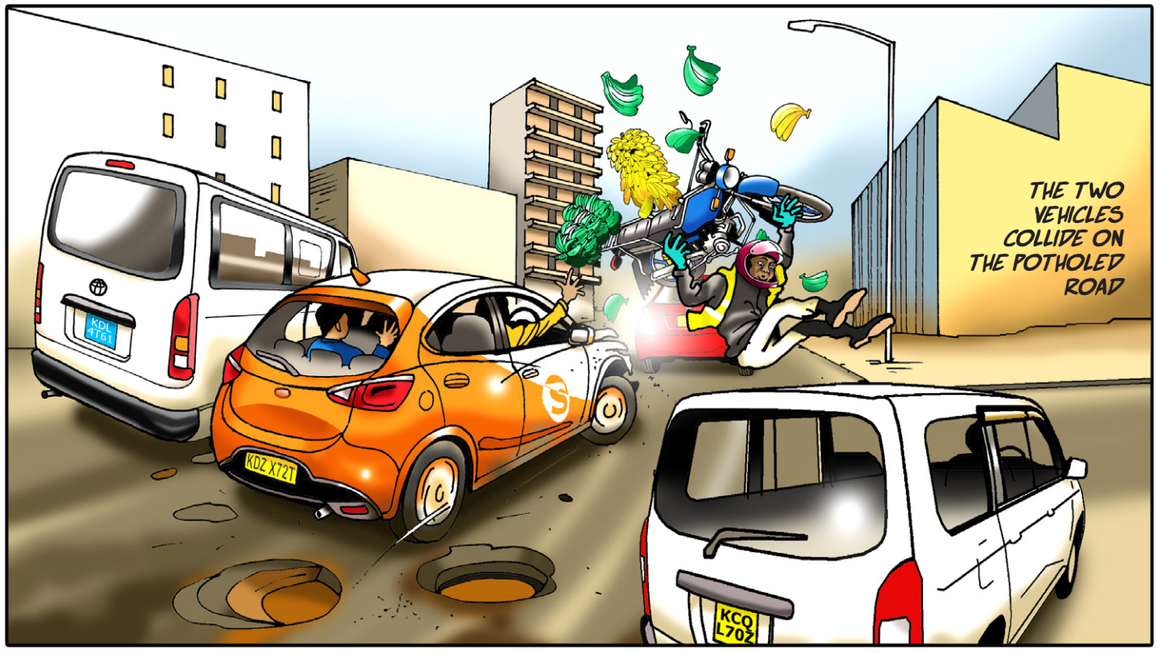




HE LOSES CONTROL...

...AND SWERVES RIGHT INTO THE PATH OF AN ONCOMING BODA BODA





"Silicon Valley rocks!"

says one of the characters in our story.
Well, not for everybody.

With over 56 fintech firms and around eight digital taxi platforms, Kenya's digital ecosystem is breeding local entrepreneurs and luring foreign investors. Yet, the hype conceals a more nuanced picture. Some people have found a way to use digital technologies to their advantage; others feel betrayed by digital platforms that promised them better pay and more freedom.

You can check out other works where we've tried to render these nuances at

http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/110950/
https://datarightsafrica.org/
https://kioneki.com/

Story by **Gianluca Iazzolino** and **Michael Kimani**
Art by **Maddo – Cartoon Network**.

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Our project brought together in 2020/21 a wide range of researchers, civil society organisations and tech-sector representatives who are active in Ethiopian, Kenyan and Somali contexts in order to explore how digitisation and datafication are reshaping public communications and the informal economy. Our network examined how the 'datafication' of everyday experiences and economic activity affects the nature of digital rights for citizens, vis-à-vis states, the market and each other.

Our network project is hosted at the
Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa
and the
London School of Economics

https://www.lse.ac.uk/africa

Datafication and Digital Rights
https://datarightsafrica.org/

UK Research and Innovation

LSE Firoz Lalji Institute for Africa

CARTOON MOVEMENT