WHAT CAN I DO?

An exploration of the various projects of Riley Davidson

Ethiopia

- Summer study abroad program
- Spent three weeks in the capital, Addis Ababa
- Design intensive, examining the process of designing information spaces
- My area of focus: houselessness and poverty
- Spoke with many business owners and NGO organizers
- All expressed similar needs:
  - Fundraising
  - Communications Support
  - International Market Options

Conception

- Agreed to design websites for three NGOs based in Addis Ababa
- These are: Bete Saida, Mella Post-Adoption Services, and Addis Amba
- Did I have any experience with web design?

No

Opportunity

- Designing a web site for the first time seemed the perfect tool to:
  - Gain experience with the design lessons of the study abroad
  - Apply lessons in data curation, information architecture, and other iSchool lessons from previous classes
  - Have an actual positive impact on the real world

- Plus: I needed an interesting Capstone project

Philanthropic Informatics

- Jaimie Snyder agreed to sponsor my capstone project
- Covered web design, information architecture, and informatics
- Suggested the work of Prof. Amy Voida of UC Boulder, pioneering the field of Philanthropic Informatics
- Original project included
  - Literature review of Philanthropic Informatics
  - Three Websites
  - Set of Recommendations for NGOs to maximize visibility in online spaces

Problems

Designing websites turned out to be really simple and straightforward. Online tools abound

No way to accept or send donations from the USA to Ethiopia

Problems

-No online payment processor would recognize an Ethiopian bank

-No web design platform I found could work around this issue

-None of the experienced web designers I spoke to could help

-Even my local bank couldn’t clarify the issue

Project 2: Why is it So Hard to Send Money to Ethiopia?

-Finished one website without donate capability

-Worked around by including bank details for wire transfers

-The question framing all of the work so far: why is it so complicated to send money to Ethiopia?

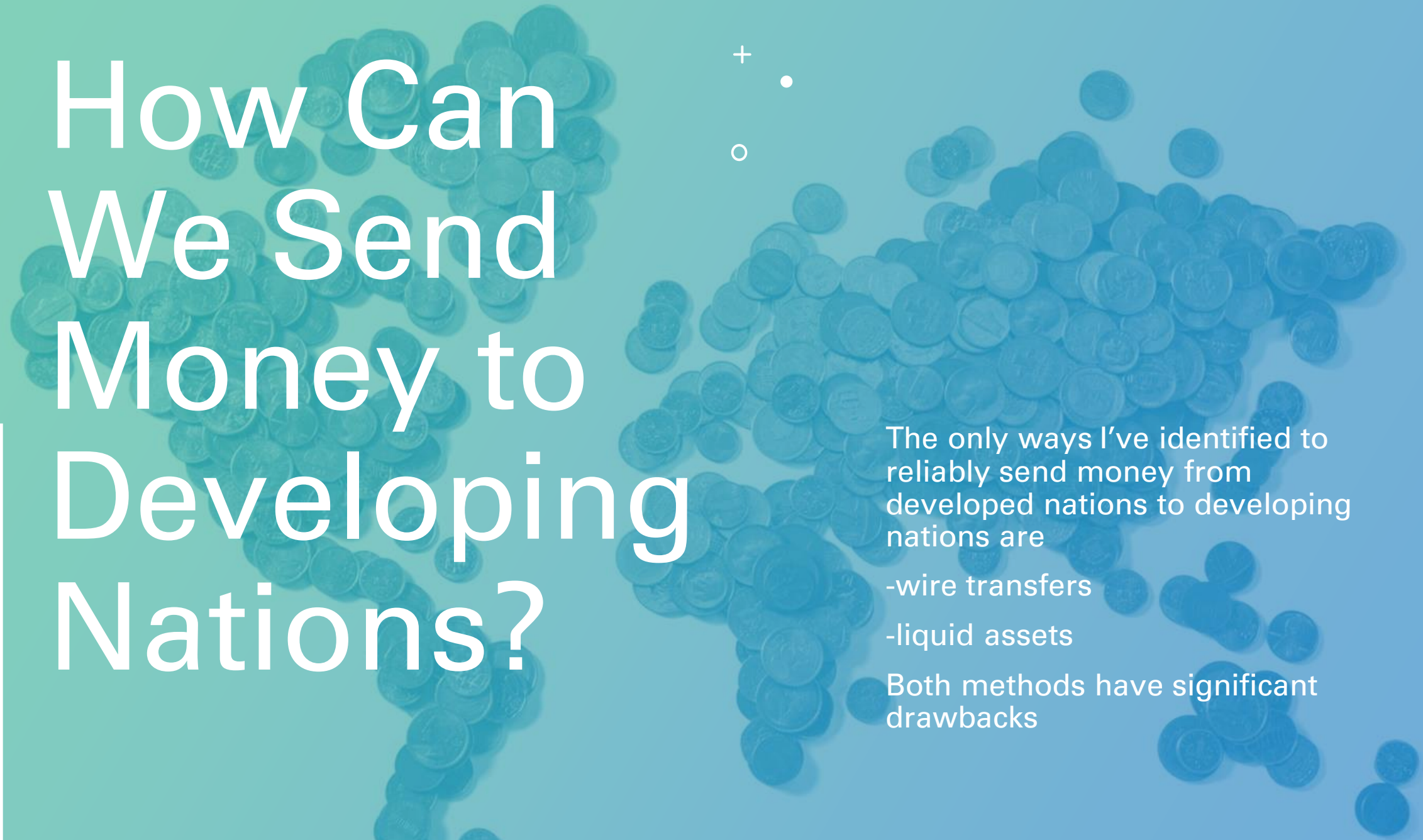
How Can We Send Money to Developing Nations?

-The need is well-established

-The USA and Europe are the wealthiest areas of the world and thus the best to collect donations from

-Sourcing donations from developed nations to developing nations has proved very difficult in every case I've examined. Why?

How Can We Send Money to Developing Nations?



The only ways I've identified to reliably send money from developed nations to developing nations are

-wire transfers

-liquid assets

Both methods have significant drawbacks

As it Stands

-USA and EU bankers have an impression of developing nation banks as unreliable partners

-Suspicions of money laundering and other criminal activity, whether founded or unfounded, hound any international fundraising effort

-Technological differences are less of a factor than I expected- most developing nation banks have access to the same internet as the rest of us

-Limiting factors are human

An Option

In interviewing an NGO operator in Addis Ababa, I learned of the organization called Wonfel, which sources donations from the United States and sends them to Ethiopia.

What separates this organization from others is that Wonfel collects funds meant for a variety of NGOs in Ethiopia, packages them all as one wire transfer, and separates out each allocation at the other end. This approach circumvents many of the downsides of wire transfers.

Downsides

The Wonfel approach, while a nice step forward, will not necessarily have broad applicability everywhere

-Requires organizations to cooperate and divide funds

-Requires a robust presence in two countries

-Still requires a collegial relationship between financial institutions of different nations

Next Steps

-More interviews, both with NGO operators and with those in the financial industry, will reveal more workarounds to this problem

-Emerging technologies such as blockchain and AI might be leveraged to engender trust between financial institutions and clients

-Further examination of the information problem of charity, and how NGOs and community support organizations communicate the value of their work will help increase donations overall

THANK YOU