RHODES 25 JOURNALISM

Review

African Journalism in the Information Society

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African Journalism in the Information Society

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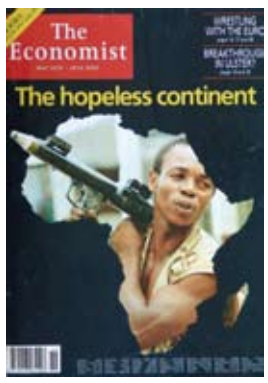
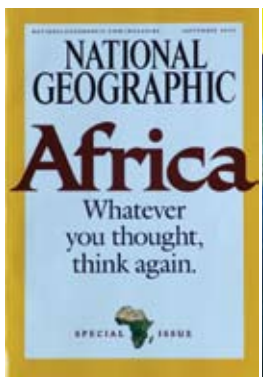
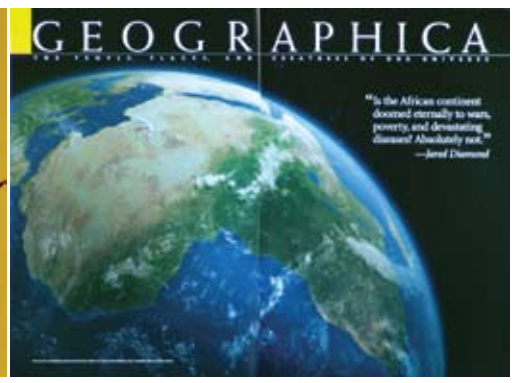
Cover picture: An outdoor church gathering in Mozambique is by ***Chris Kirchhoff***. The pictures in this edition from all over Africa were taken by Kirchhoff during his recent visits through Southern Africa, across the Great Lakes Region and into Ethiopia. The pictures from the Highway Africa conference were taken by ***Paul Greenway***.

Who are these Afros who are so pessimistic?







This edition of *Review* takes its theme from the recent Highway Africa conference in Grahamstown, which in turn has been focusing its conferences, research and news agency reporting on the debates emanating from the World Summit on the Information Society processes for the last two years.

The Highway Africa community has been concerned since 2003 that the World Summit processes are so focused on the technology (ie: the "digital divide") that they forget that the purpose of technology is to enhance our lives with meaningful information (see Modoux's and Chipari's comments below).

Information makes no sense without media and media makes no sense without journalism, so along with those in the media and civil society caucuses making this point in the run-up to WSIS 2 in Tunisia, Review raises its voice on this issue too.

But for Review's purposes, the debate has sparked some good, hard thinking about what African Journalism is, and could be. And so we bring you some of the most perceptive people watching and analysing media on this continent today, not only in Southern Africa but further afield. I hope you enjoy and are provoked by their insights and ideas.

Much of the material we are carrying came out of the talks and discussions at Highway Africa, and the first session inevitably (with the theme "African Journalism") had a strong focus on that brand of reporting which has come to be known as "Afro-pessimism". Christine Qunta, South African lawyer who was a panellist, reminded us of that shameful piece of journalism the Economist carried in May 2000, which called Africa the "hopeless continent" and then went on to detail for four pages what Lars Nord (see page 14) would call an 'interpretive' journalism without solid basis in the usual standards that guide news, and a predictive journalism that takes no responsibility for its star-gazing.

It was instructive for me to get in the post both National Geographic and Newsweek while the conference was on. The two front page cover headlines: "Africa: whatever you thought think again" and "What's right with Africa" seem to indicate a shift in the way the world's journalists are reporting this continent. Both sets of reports came from within the continent, visited several countries and looked for nuance and change. They didn't pontificate from London, based on a world-view that is preset, and assume an entire continent is characterised by one dictator, one war.

So when I heard a conference delegate over tea remark to a fellow attendee: "Who are these Afros who are so pessimistic?" I had to not only laugh at the cleverness but also think what a good motto to adopt. Certainly the conference presenters and the writers for this *Review* are not buying into a passive, hands-wringing anguish, they are doing the hard work of thinking and working through – on multiple levels – how to make the journalism better, more responsive, more attuned. To Africa.

Anthea Garman, Editor.

WSIS 2 and the African media

Speaking at the Highway Africa conference in Grahamstown in September Alain Modoux, Orbicom president, said the Declaration of Principles and Plan of Action from WSIS 1 in Geneva was "poor in terms of media". "There is nothing in the text regarding media except a vague mention of the 'role of the media' without specifying what that is.


Paul Greenway
Luckson Chipari


Paul Greenway
Alain Modoux

"This summit [WSIS 2 in Tunis] is coming at the worst time, it will be affected by the atmosphere of the UN General Assembly in New York [meeting to discuss the Millennium Goals] and will probably achieve very little." However, he said the WSIS process had "triggered a fantastic awareness movement all over the world". It has been an argument to think about, to organise, to reinforce civil society, to get support and funding, and to teach government delegates what they have been signatories to."

Media Institute of Southern Africa Executive Director Luckson Chipari agreed that the timing of WSIS 2, just as the UN was having difficult and contentious meetings over the Millennium Goals, was not good.

He also said that the ITU (the International Telecommunication Union, the world organising body) was so focused on technology, infrastructure and the digital divide issue that it was not engaging seriously with civil society or paying much attention to the founding arrangement of WSIS which was that governments, the ITU and civil societies organisations were to be equal partners.

"Civil society has, however, focused WSIS on processes and content."

He said the ITU had to be reminded that Article 19 [of the UN Declaration of Human Rights], communication rights and gender issues were important.

But he also had sharp words for African journalists who were not covering WSIS and focusing on these issues for Africa. Media in Africa need to follow up on their country government's commitments, track the funding for these and report on key policy markers on ICTs, he said.

Briefing for African journalists

The Media Institute of Southern Africa and the International Institute of Journalism in Berlin (InWent) are holding a seminar with five experts (two from Africa) on Summit on 15 November from 1 to 3pm in Salle Hammamet at WSIS 2 in Tunis. There is space for 100 journalists.

Details from
director@misa.org
www.misa.org
www.inwent.org

The official summit site
http://www.itu.int/wsis/

African Journalism in the Information Society

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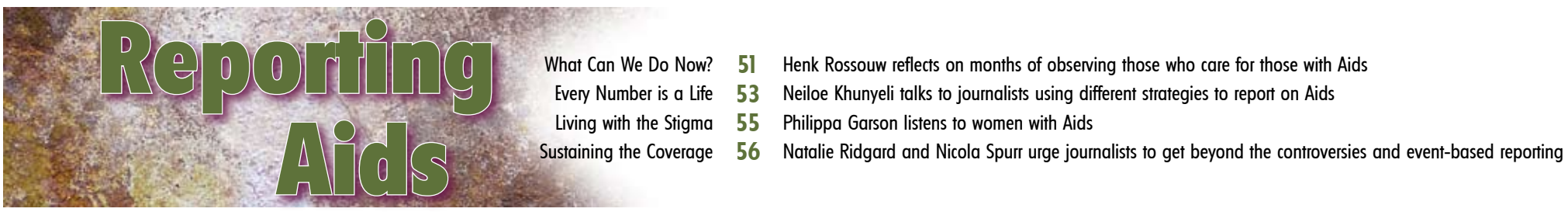

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AFRICAN JOURNALISM

Modernity, Africanity

The basic assumptions underpinning African Journalism in definition and practice, are not informed by the fact that ordinary Africans are busy Africanising their modernity and modernising their Africanity in ways often too complex for simplistic dichotomies to capture, says ***Francis Nyamnjoh***. The precepts of journalism that apply currently in Africa are largely at variance with dominant ideas of personhood and agency (and by extension society, culture and democracy) shared by communities across the continent, as there is an assumption that there is a One-Best-Way of being and doing to which Africans must aspire and be converted to in the name of modernity and civilization. This

An embracing Africanism

by Larry Strelitz

"African journalism" is a composite term, each element of which is problematic, and is open to differing interpretations.

I'll deal with each in turn.

An identity of any sort is always relational.

Thus "Africa" and things "African" have meaning in relation to what is non-African – usually European or American.

Difference is not necessarily absolute. The politics of interpretation is thus about how one understands that relation. Is it oppositional; is it a mimicking; or is it syncretic?

Writing about the Makgoba affair at Wits University in 1997, Mahmood Mamdani suggested that Africanism comes in two types.

The one simply usurps the power and roles occupied by what was non-African, without transforming relationships and practices in any way, and is thus vulnerable to the same pitfalls of exclusivism and racism of the "Europeanism" that it replaces.

"But," he writes, "there is a second type of Africanism, one that repudiates and transcends racism. It heralds an African identity more inclusive than exclusive. Rather than a birthmark, African identity becomes a mark of belonging to a community, a commitment to forging a common future."(*Mail&Guardian*, 5-11 September 1997: 25).

I think it is the anti-essentialism of this second understanding of Africanism that we should hold onto in trying to make sense of the two terms "African" and "journalism" that come together in the phrase "African journalism".

"Journalism" is an equally problematic term – prone to its own essentialist understandings.

But, as a cultural phenomenon, it too cannot but be the product of its social context.

As a form of public communication, it might have a particular site of origin, but its trajectory has been global: European, American, Asian, African.

And as it has travelled, it has kept some founding elements, and transformed and changed others.

In other words, journalism also does not have a unitary, "universal" (European) identity.

Furthermore, all forms of cultural production only make sense in relation to other cultural practices and to the social structures of which they form a part. In this sense, journalism has a profoundly historical identity.

The challenge we face is to see it, and emerging journalisms, in these terms, and to enable or promote the flowering of an "African journalism" that is imbued with the non-essentialist qualities of Africanism described by Mamdani.

So, I am arguing against a singular understanding of "African journalism", particularly when we see forms of media now in Africa that challenge a single understanding – tabloids and blogs to name just a few.

The kinds of media we have are reflective of their social and political contexts and micro and macro struggles occurring within this space.

"There is much in how Africans relate to their cultures and home village to inspire African journalists."

divorce is at the heart of some of the professional and ethical dilemmas that haunt journalism in and on Africa, a journalism whose tendency is to debase and caricature African humanity, creativity and realities. This constraint renders African Journalism a journalism of bandwagonism, where mimicry is the order of the day, as emphasis is less on thinking than on doing, less on leading than on being led.

African Journalism lacks both the power of self-definition and the power to shape the universals that are deaf-and-dumb to the particularities of journalism in and on Africa.

Because journalism has tended to be treated as an attribute of so-called "modern" societies or of "superior" others, it is only proper, so the reasoning goes, that African Journalism and the societies it serves, are taught the principles and professional practices by those who "know" what it means to be civilized and relevant to civilization.

Aspiring journalists in Africa must, like containers, be dewatered of the mud and dirt of culture as tradition and custom, and filled afresh with the tested sparkles of culture as modernity and civilization. African journalists are thus called upon to operate in a world where everything has been predefined for them by others, where they are meant to implement and hardly ever to think or rethink, where what is expected of them is respect for canons, not to question how or why canons are forged, or the extent to which canons are inclusive of the creative diversity of the universe that is purportedly of interest to the journalism of the One-Best-Way.

Humanity, Creativity

How well journalism is relevant to Africa and Africans depends on what value such journalism gives African humanity and creativity.

If a journalism is such that it privileges a hierarchy of humanity and human creativity, and if such journalism believes that African humanity and creativity are at the abyss of that hierarchy, such journalism is bound to be prescriptive, condescending, contrived, caricatured and hardly in tune with the quest by Africans for equality, recognition and representation.

And if African journalists were to, wittingly or unwittingly, buy into that hierarchy, they would in effect be working against the interests of the very African communities they claim to serve with their journalism. And if one convinces one's self that one is at the abyss, at the veritable heart of darkness, one doesn't need much convincing on how to fish one's self out, especially if such prescriptions are by those one has been schooled to recognise and represent as superior.

A closer look at democracy in Africa is a good indicator of how journalism has tended to articulate and appreciate African realities through the prescriptive lenses of those who believe their ideas of humanity and creativity to be sufficiently rich and practised for uncritical adoption by "emerging" others.

In Europe and North America, *liberal democracy* is said to guarantee journalism the best environment it needs to foster freedom and progress. Liberal democracy's colossal investments in the making of the independent individual are projected as the model to be promoted and defended by journalism in and on Africa. Yet the more African Journalism strives to implant liberal democracy, the less the successes it has had to report.

Barbie Doll Democracy

Even the most optimistic of African journalists would hesitate to term liberal democracy and Africa good bedfellows. If African journalists were to scrutinise the democratisation projects with which they've been involved since the early1990s they'd agree that implementing liberal democracy in Africa has been like trying to force onto the body of a full-figured person,

rich in all the cultural indicators of health Africans are familiar with, a dress made to fit the de-fleshed Hollywood consumer model of a Barbie doll-type entertainment icon. They would also agree that, instead of blaming the tiny dress or its designer, the tradition among journalists has been to fault the popular body or the popular ideal of beauty, for emphasising too much bulk, for parading the wrong sizes, for just not being the right thing.

Not often have African journalists questioned the experience and expertise of the liberal democracy designer or dressmaker, nor his/her audacity to assume that the parochial cultural palates that inform his/her peculiar sense of beauty should play God in the lives of Africa and African cultures.

In Africa, the history of difficulty at implementing liberal democracy and the role of journalism therein, attests to this clash of values and attempts to ignore African cultural realities that might well have enriched and domesticated liberal democracy towards greater relevance.

By overstressing individual rights and underplaying the rights of communities (cultural, religious and otherwise), African Journalism and the liberal democracy it has uncritically endorsed, have tended to be more liabilities than assets to the aspirations for recognition and for a voice by the very Africans and communities they target.

Yet, given the fact that Africans (journalists included) in their daily lives continue to emphasise relationships and solidarities over the illusion of autonomy, it is difficult to imagine the future direction of democracy outside a marriage or conviviality between individual aspirations and community interests.

Thus, for democracy and journalism to succeed

Chris Kirchhoff

in the present context, it must recognise the fact that most Africans (and indeed everyone else) are primarily patriotic to their home village (region, province, ethnic, cultural community, etc), to which state and country in the postcolonial sense are only secondary.

It is in acknowledging and providing for the reality of individuals who straddle different forms of identity and belonging, and who are willing or forced to be both "citizens" and "subjects", that democracy stands its greatest chance in Africa, and that journalism can best be relevant to Africa and Africans.

Citizens, Subjects

You, as journalists, would agree that in Africa, we find individuals who are both citizens and subjects, who straddle "cultural" and "civic" citizenships, but who would not accept sacrificing either permanently.

Sometimes they are more the one than the other and sometimes more the other than the one, but certainly not reducible to either. They appropriate both in the most creative and fascinating ways. A democracy or journalism that focuses too narrowly on the individual and is insensitive to the centrality of community interests is likely to impair and frustrate the very recognition and representation it celebrates.

Regardless of the status of those involved in "rights talk" and "culture talk", they all are convinced of one thing: "cultural citizenship" is as integral to democracy as political and economic citizenship. If African philosophies of personhood and agency stress interdependence between the individual and the community and between communities, and if journalists identify with any of the many cultural communities all seeking recognition and representation at local and national levels, they are bound to be torn between serving their communities

"To democratise means to question basic monolithic assumptions."

and serving the "imagined" rights-bearing, autonomous individual "citizen" of the liberal democratic model.

A democracy that stresses independence, in a situation where both the worldview and the material realities emphasise interdependence, is bound to result only in dependence.

The liberal democratic rhetoric of rights dominated by a narrow neo-liberal focus on *the individual*, does not reflect the whole reality of personhood and agency in Africa, which is a lot more complex than provided for in liberal democratic notions of rights and empowerment.

Instead of working for a creative mix with indigenous forms of politics and government, liberal democracy has sought to replace these, posing as the One-Best-Way of modern democratic political organisation, the right way of conducting modern politics.

So also has the journalism it inspires, stayed narrow and asphyxiating to alternative outlooks and practices of sharing news and information, and of entertaining and educating.

Creolising

In the use of language alone, few African journalists have dared to write the way Chinua Achebe suggests is a popular mode of communication among the Igbo, where proverbs are the palm oil with which words are eaten.

Fewer still have dared to contemplate using English, French, Portuguese or Spanish the creative ways that the ordinary Africans, whom they purportedly target with their journalism, do.

While journalists mark time with linguistic orthodoxy, African communities have been busy creolising inherited European languages and enriching local languages through borrowings.

Everywhere the spoken word has also perfected its intermarriage with the unspoken through body language and other nonverbal forms.

When African journalists begin to reflect such popular creativity among Africans, and without a sense of guilt that they are violating journalistic taboos, they would be helping towards a democracy and journalism of relevance to, in and on Africa.

In this, there is much in how Africans relate to their cultures and home village to inspire African journalists. Instead of seeing it as a problem to be defined out of the realm of acceptability, African Journalism must recognise and provide for the fact that, the home village in Africa has retained its appeal both for those who have been disappointed by the town, as well as for those who have found success in the town.

Cosmo-local

It appears that no one is too cosmopolitan not to be local as well. We only have to note the creative ways Africans have harnessed the cellphone to interlink town and home village, to know how disinterested in a culture of winner-takes-all Africans are.

Faced with the temporality or transience of personal success in the context of African modernities, even the most achieving and cosmopolitan of individuals hesitate to sever their rural connections entirely. The city and the "world out there" are perceived as hunting grounds; the home village is the place to return at the end of the day. Investing in one's home village is generally seen as the best insurance policy and a sign of ultimate success, for it guarantees survival even when one has lost everything in the city, and secures and makes manifest a realisation of success through satisfying obligations and fulfilling requests.

Thus, although successful urbanites may not permanently return or retire to the rural area as such, most remain in constant interaction with their home village through all sorts of ways. Some leave express instructions with kin to be buried or re-buried in their home village.

Prescriptive journalism that denounces this reality instead of understanding, adapting and relating to it, is bound to be a liability to Africans and their ways of life. The narrow insistence on individual rights and freedoms has thus impaired understanding of the interconnectedness of peoples, cultures and societies through individuals as products, melting-pots and creative manipulators or jugglers of multiple identities.

Discussing democracy and journalism in Africa calls for scrutiny of the importance of cultural identities in the lives of individuals and groups.

This argument challenges reductionist views of democracy and journalism, acknowledges the fact that democracy and journalism may take different forms, and most particularly, that they are construed and constructed differently in different societies, informed by history, culture and economic factors.

Enriched realities

The way forward is in recognising the creative ways in which Africans merge their traditions with exogenous influences to create realities that are not reducible to either but enriched by both.

The implication of this argument is that how we understand the role of African Journalism depends on what democratic model we draw from.

Under liberal democracy where the individual is perceived and treated as an autonomous agent, and where primary solidarities and cultural identities are discouraged in favour of a national citizenship and culture, journalism is expected to be disinterested, objective, balanced and fair in gathering, processing and disseminating news and information.

➟ The assumption is that since all individuals have equal rights as citizens, there can be no justification for bias among journalists.

But under popular notions of democracy where emphasis is on interdependence and competing cultural solidarities are a reality, journalists and the media are under constant internal and external pressure to promote the interests of the various groups competing for recognition and representation.

The tensions and pressures are even greater in situations where states and governments purport to pursue liberal democracy in principle, while in reality they continue to be high-handed and repressive to their populations.

When this happens, journalists are at risk of employing double-standards by claiming one thing and doing the opposite, or by straddling various identity margins, without always being honest about it, especially if their very survival depends on it. If meaningful democracy and journalism in Africa require fundamental changes, as they should, such changes usually entail a challenge to vested interests, be these local, national or foreign, private or public.

To democratise means to question basic monolithic assumptions, conventional wisdom about democracy, journalism, government, power myths and accepted personality cults, and to suggest and work for the demystification of the state, custom and society.

To democratise African Journalism is to provide the missing cultural link to current efforts, links informed by respect for African humanity and creativity, and by popular ideas of personhood and domesticated agency.

It is to negotiate conviviality between competing ideas of how best to provide for the humanity and dignity of all. It is above all to observe and draw from the predicaments of ordinary Africans forced by culture, history and material realities to live their lives as "subjects" rather than as "citizens", even as liberal democratic rhetoric claims otherwise. The mere call for an exploration of alternatives in African Journalism is bound to be perceived as a threat and a challenge.

A hostile hearing

In particular, such a call would receive a hostile hearing from those who have championed the cause of one-dimensionalism nationally and internationally – those who benefit from the maintenance of the status quo, and who stand to lose from any changes in African Journalism.

They cannot withstand the challenge, stimulation and provocation that a more democratic (as the celebration of difference and diversity) journalism promises. They want life to go on without disturbance or fundamental change. And they are well placed to ensure this, thanks to their power to regulate journalism, the power to accord or to deny a voice to individuals and communities.

Only well-articulated policies informed by public interest, broadly defined to include individual and community expectations, and scrupulously respected, would guarantee against such abuse and misuse of office and privilege.

The future of democracy and the relevance of journalism to Africans and their predicaments will depend very much on how well Africans are able to negotiate recognition and representation for their humanity and creativity beyond the tokenism of prevalent politically-correct rhetoric on equality of humanity and opportunity. ■

Chris Kirchhoff

Nepad is an African story

*Nepad is an African story deserving of African media attention. However, say **Lilian Ndangam** and **Andrew Kanyegirire**, it is perceived and represented as a plan of, for and by the elite, with little ownership from other stakeholders in society.*

On seeing the ubiquitous TV images of waste dumps, sombre-looking black children and dead bodies following the horrors of hurricane Katrina in the US, some bloggers and phone-in enthusiasts in Africa confessed that they initially thought that this was another catastrophe taking place on the continent.

This is not entirely surprising given that Africa is often reduced to disease, famine, war, violence and suffering in the content of most Western media. One could argue that this negative picture is what audiences within and outside Africa have been conditioned to expect of media reportage on Africa.

In attempting to undo this negative reportage, an interesting mix of unlikely bedfellows – journalists, media owners, business, academics, civil society activists and leaders in Africa – have underscored the need for media in Africa to take "ownership of the African story".

This is in line with South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki's 1990s emphasis on the African renaissance in reference to the rebirth of African self-respect and unity – the ideals of which can be found in recent initiatives like the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad) and the transformation of the Organisation for African Unity into the African Union (AU).

It is within this context that during the 2003 South African National Editors' Forum (Sanef) conference, Mbeki called upon African editors to counter negative images and to facilitate knowledge and understanding of the continent by reporting "Africa to Africans" and reporting "Africa as Africans".

Such positions are clearly justified. However, it must be said that inherent in such appeals are the uncritical assumptions that African journalists, by virtue of their being imbued with some self sense of being African – "ubuntu" – and their specific location on the continent, will report on Africa in more positive and informed ways than a European or American journalist.

Yet notions of "telling the African story" and "reporting Africa as Africans" that are central to debates concerning media content on Africa, have not been sufficiently analysed.

Problematising these issues prompts questions such as: What is the African story? What does it mean to report Africa as Africans? In whose interests is it to report Africa as Africans?

Recent reportage

To make sense of these questions we looked at the recent reportage on Nepad by media in Africa. Our interest in Nepad is based on the supposition that it is a pertinent African story among many in as far as it deals with issues of development and democracy.

Briefly, Nepad, which – in its terms – is aimed at poverty eradication and the entry of Africa into the global economy, is the "African-owned" development vision of the AU.

Specific objectives include investment in key sectors such as information and communication technologies (ICTs), good governance through the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) and regional co-operation.

Nepad has been criticised for its neo-liberal ideology and for having excluded civil society groups in drawing up its framework, all of which makes it seen as being elitist and exclusionary (Bond 2002; Adesina 2004).

With regard to the media, although journalists are to be consulted during the peer reviews, Nepad is for the most part silent on media freedoms as key criteria for good governance (Berger 2002; IFEX 2005).

In our content analysis of coverage on Nepad between January and July 2005 based on a sample of English-language African newspapers and news providers available through Allafrica.com, the leading trends in the reportage included:

- event-based coverage predominated;
- a predominant focus on the APRM and
- the dominance of elite, male news sources.

Out of the 101 stories, Nigerian newspapers reported most elaborately on Nepad. This was followed by South Africa, Kenya, Rwanda and Ghana. Nepad was less visible in countries such as Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia and Sierra Leone ("Namibia cautious over peer review" – *New Era*, 14 April 2005; "Guebuza hails Nepad but Mugabe 'looks East'" – *Zimbabwe Standard* 2 May 2005).

The significantly high coverage of Nepad in South Africa and Nigeria is not entirely surprising given that both countries are leading champions of Nepad and key regional political and economic powers ("Nepad: Nigeria continues to play prominent role" – *Nigeria First* 20 April 2005).

Coverage of Nepad was most intense during those periods when there was an event such as a regional summit, national peer review session or project launch.

The APRM was the most frequently-reported topic followed by economic performance and ICTs (e-schools). Topics like poverty (the Millennium Development Goals), agriculture, health and gender issues were least reported.

The focus on the APRM is potentially at the expense of other initiatives. Even the reportage on the APRM was limited to issues of political governance with little focus on corporate and economic governance, which are equally important aspects of the review. While the APRM remains a flagship programme of Nepad, signing up to it is voluntary. By the time of the recent AU summit in Libya in July only 23 out of the 53 member states had signed up to be assessed.

Sources

The most frequent sources relied on were officials attached to the Nepad and APRM secretariats and the various national steering committees.

Heads of state and ministers were for the most part represented as the active parties – doing things, appealing for funds, blasting those standing in the way of Africa's interests – they are the ones who got to "do" Nepad, "advocate" and "speak" out on behalf of and for Nepad's interests ("Obasanjo blasts foreign nations over looted funds" – *Daily Champion* 21 June 2005; "Museveni to launch first e-school" – *New Vision* 15 July 2005).

Business sources in particular – Nepad Business Forums in Nigeria and South Africa, CEOs of ICT and banking firms and potential investors were for the most part represented as voices of and for investment and trade in Africa through Nepad ("NAICOM banks on Nepad for improved Penetration" – *Daily Champion* 10 July 2005; "Nepad: 127 billion pension available in 14 countries" – *The New Times* 29 April 2005).

Civil society organisations and representatives were less visible and frequently represented in a responding rather than defining role. They are the ones who deliberate on the implications of the already made decisions ("Civil society deliberates on AU + Nepad" – *The Standard*, Sierra Leone, 21 January 2005).

In addition, the face of Nepad is predominantly male – 61%. Press releases accounted for 25% of the main sources used in news stories, while only 14% of main sources were women. The absence of women as news actors in the reportage reflects the invisibility of gender issues within Nepad's initiatives. Of all the stories that we examined, only one specifically focused on gender: "Nepad to launch gender task force" – *BuaNews* 10 July 2005).

From our in-depth reading of the news texts on Nepad the bulk of the stories could be read as being "neutral". However, some stories were particularly supportive ("Why Nepad's attempt to eradicate poverty will succeed" – *This Day* 20 January 2005) while others were critical ("Nepad comes up short 3 years later" – *East African Standard* 9 January 2005; "Call for focus on solution to Zimbabwe" – *Business Day* 10 February 2005).

Nepad has expressed concern about its negative portrayal in the African press with strong calls for positive coverage. For instance, following the June 2005 presentation of the review reports for Ghana and Rwanda at the third summit of the APRM forum in Abuja, Nigeria, the APRM secretariat felt that the press had only focused on the "shortcomings identified in the review reports" while ignoring the positives and suggested that the press also lacked a proper understanding of the review process: "The press can and should educate the masses on the positive aspects of the process and highlight the very good and positive developments happening in the African continent." (Nepad 2005:3)

Trends and issues

In light of the aforementioned problematics about reporting Africa and about "reporting Africa as Africans", what can we make of the trends and issues concerning Nepad's reportage?

Arguably, Nepad is an African story deserving of African media attention. However, the implication of the skew in news sources and social actors evidenced in our analysis is for Nepad to remain perceived and represented as a plan of, for and by the elite, with little ownership from other stakeholders in society.

In reporting Nepad the challenge for African journalists is to tell the Nepad story without simply becoming "guard dogs" and "lapdogs" of and for the interests of the elite at the cost of wider African publics.

Another challenge is to be wary of excessive self-congratulation, Afro-optimism and promotional communication, all of which could stifle criticism of the initiative. Being analytical and critical in coverage does not necessarily preclude appealing emotionally to people as Africans or portraying Nepad positively thereby bringing more people on board its "African-owned" credentials.

A key point will be to tell the Nepad story in such a way that is interesting, informative and broad in its range of topics, all of which could help steer clear of the distorted image of Africa, while also pointing out its shortfalls, successes and their implications for the daily lived experiences of the African. ■

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Under-reported and misreported

by Wilfred Kiboro

At a recent meeting of the International Press Institute attended by delegates from 55 countries, the reporting of Africa was given special attention.

Five major issues were discussed:

1. Africa is under-reported and misreported – often in very negative terms.
2. The media in Africa are as much to blame for the bad image in the eyes of the world as the international media.
3. African media don't link their reporting to the issues facing Africa, for example the image created of Africa has a direct link with foreign investment in Africa.
4. Press freedom issues are on the back burner in Africa.
5. African journalists have abdicated the responsibility to be part and parcel of opinion shaping in Africa, and instead are cheerleaders for government and the political class.

Misreporting is key in the poor image of Africa as underdeveloped, poor, corrupt, hungry, illiterate, hopeless and "nothing works". It is our duty as Africans to do something about that. Africa is home to a billion people and has huge resources – this is not taken seriously in journalism. Very often one country's ills are taken as representative of the whole continent. Why is this? Lack of information? Is it the reporting? Africa is often buried in the rubble of the failed states. The foreign media constantly use the stereotypes of Bokassa, Mobutu Sese Seko.

How long do we have to live under that cloud? What should we do about their history and legacy? Many of them were dead before most Africans alive today were born! We are now in the digital age, for heaven's sake! We are caught in the vicious cycle of the negative under the pretext of entertainment.

We do not have any media outlet which talks in depth and intelligently about Africa.

I am offering to put together editors from across Africa to meet and talk about this. I want to suggest that the media in Africa needs to move from a community to a social and economic role.

What do we need to do to put Africa back on the agenda and to bring to account those flouting media freedom?

Language is culture

Linguistic diversity on the Internet is becoming a reality says ***Vanessa Malila****, but how many African languages are represented in that diversity?*

"The future looks good for web multilingualism."

Many of us think that English dominates the web pages we surf each day. Indeed, until recently English was the predominant language for publishing online, but things are slowly changing and the presence of linguistic diversity on the Internet is starting to become a reality in the global village. The question, however, remains: how many African languages are represented in that diversity?

"Our language is our culture" and for many people the Internet is inaccessible because those words written on the millions of web pages and websites are unfamiliar and strange. Let's disregard the fact that millions don't have access to the Internet or the fact that many are illiterate, and simply examine language and, therefore culture, online.

During the 1990s it was estimated that almost 80% of the Internet was dominated by English. Even today, the terms used to identify this sphere are English-born and American-led: "world wide web", "Internet" and the language or script on which the Internet is built (American Standard Code of Information Interchange – ASCII) are all English-centered.

As we become a more globalised society, and boundaries are no longer defined by geography, language becomes a boundary and marker, an identifier of who we are (rather than where we are). While the Internet is able to break physical geographic boundaries of location, it has and still is entrenching many of the boundaries imposed historically on non-English speaking communities. As Gasnet notes in David Crystal's book *English as a Global Language* (1997):

"It is incredible when I hear people talking about how open the web is. It is the ultimate act of intellectual colonialism. The product comes from America so we either must adapt to English or stop using it. That is the right of any business. But if you are talking about a technology that is supposed to open the world to hundreds of millions of people you are joking. This just makes the world into new sorts of haves and have-nots."

So where does this leave the millions of non-English speakers (or readers) who use the Internet daily? Well, the picture is changing as more linguistically-diverse individuals discover the power of publishing online, and businesses, the media, governments and civil society begin to understand the power and value of informing their communities in their indigenous languages.

Today, close to 70% of Internet users are non-English speakers and the percentage of non-English material online is quickly growing.

Crystal (a linguistics professor) acknowledges that "the web is increasingly reflecting the distribution of language presence in the real world, and many sites provide the evidence. They range from individual businesses doing their best to present a multilingual identity to big sites collecting data on many languages".

There are many examples of communities representing their cultural and linguistic diversity online by publishing in their indigenous languages. In Japan for example, it was estimated in 2001 that 90% of web pages were in Japanese (this figure could easily have grown since then).

While English users represent the single biggest language group online, they are only a fraction of the (approximately) 812 million users. In fact, English is spoken by only about a quarter of all Internet users.

In a study done by Internet World Stats it was found that the top 10 languages spoken by users are: English, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, German, French, Korean, Italian, Portuguese and Dutch.

Today it is easy to find millions of websites in any of these 10 languages, and some accommodating more than one. Many online non-English newspapers offer readers a version in their local language as well as an alternative for English speakers.

As Crystal says, "the future looks good for web multilingualism".

So why do we as Africans feel that English is still ruling the roost? Because, while it may not be the only language dominant on the Internet today, most of those top 10 languages are still foreign to the

African news agencies

Allafrica.com
allAfrica.com posts over 1 000 stories daily in English and French and offers multilingual streaming programming as well as 900 000 articles in a searchable archive. Registered in Mauritius, with offices in Johannesburg, Dakar, Lagos and Washington DC, subscriptions cost $95 a year with unlimited access to AllAfrica's archive, the search engine and the option to choose from 15 categories of daily, customised email alerts of top news.

GEM
The Gender Links Gender and Media Opinion and Commentary Service (GEM Service) provides mainstream media with fresh perspectives on the news that affects the everyday lives of women and men in Africa. The GEM Service targets the opinion and commentary pages of mainstream newspapers, radio stations and wire services in Southern Africa, East Africa and globally through Gender Links' partnership with the African Women and Child Feature Service in Nairobi, and Inter Press Service, a global development news agency. It provides on average 10 articles each month from writers across Africa.
Contact Janine Moolman at janinegenderlnks.org.za

HANA
The Highway Africa News Agency is an event-based news dissemination service. It began life in December 2003 at the first WSIS in Geneva with a team of 18 African journalists. Since then HANA has covered the Africa Telecoms Summit in Cairo in May 2004, the WSIS 1st prepcom in Tunisia in June 2004, the Highway Africa conference in Grahamstown in September 2004, the Icann general assembly in December 2004, the WSIS Africa regional meeting in Accra in February and the 2nd WSIS prepcom in Geneva in February. The team will definitely be at WSIS 2 in Tunis in November. HANA has generated more than 250 stories for 162 email subscribers through the website http://www.highwayafrica.ru.ac.za/hana/indx.asp. HANA also serves as a platform to train journalists in the use and knowledge of ICTs.

Health-e
Health-e is a news agency that produces news and in-depth analysis for the print and electronic media. Its particular focus is HIV/Aids, public health and issues regarding health policy and practice in South Africa. The agency provides print features for newspapers and magazines and broadcast packages for national and community radio stations. They also accept commissions.
http://www.health-e.org.za/about_us/index.php

IPS
From its headquarters in Johannesburg, Inter Press Service Africa co-ordinates a network of correspondents and stringers in more than 30 African countries. This network of journalists provides news features and analyses from their own countries. The editorial staff places emphasis not only on hearing the voices of those in positions of power and formal authority, but on providing access for actors in civil society and the majority of the people whose voices have often been silent in the media. The offerings include the website www.ipsnews.net/africa/index.asp, *Terra Viva Africa* – a weekly journal, the *Gender Bulletin* every fortnight and *Focus on Southern Africa*, a bi-weekly e-letter. Regional Director, Africa: Farai Samhungu at farai@ips.org

IRIN
IRIN Networks is a humanitarian news agency

Chris Kirchhoff

African continent, and our cultural and linguistic diversity is not being represented online.

It's easy for languages spoken in developed countries to find a strong presence on the Internet. As businesses, and governments from developed, non-English speaking countries and communities find a stronghold online and a mass of local users, so they begin to switch from publishing in English to publishing in their local languages.

"Access to the Internet is continually broadening to encapsulate speakers of languages other than English, hence empowering these languages as well," note Kaschula and De Vries in a study on the use of Afrikaans online.

Not enough Africans have access to the Internet to create demand for indigenous languages online and of those that are connected, only a small portion are empowered to publish in their local languages.

Until African Internet users begin to demand multilingualism in its absolute form (and not in its current restricted form which accommodates only a small percentage of the hundreds of languages spoken in the world), we will continue to regard the Internet as English-dominated and Western/Eurocentric.

It is not, however, all doom and gloom and as with many things, the media are leading the way in African language publishing online.

Very often examples of non-English websites are those of online media or news organisations. Even in South Africa, the first Zulu website was the online version of South Africa's Zulu newspaper: *Isolezwe.* As Kaschula and De Vries note, "…it is in the realm of news that there has been a recent flourishing of the use of languages other than English… This is also true of Afrikaans speakers who have online access to Afrikaans newspapers from anywhere in the world".

There are also electronic versions of newspapers from Malaysia, Indonesia, Colombia, Turkey, Qatar and about 80 other nations.

African media are a means of allowing for a truly diverse and multilingual Internet by pioneering African-language publishing online and creating the way for government, business, individuals and communities to share their cultures while maintaining their cultural and linguistic integrity and uniqueness.

This means Africans can make a space of their own on the Internet, with material that is culturally, linguistically and practically relevant to them, and also begin to strengthen their cultural and linguistic ties by accessing local language material online. ■

"African media are a means for a truly diverse and multilingual Internet."

covering sub-Saharan Africa. IRIN products include a news services and local radio services and are provided free-of-charge, available in a range of forms, including analytical reports, fact sheets, interviews, daily country updates and weekly summaries in English, French and Kiswahili. These products are available through the IRIN website at www.IRINnews.org and an email distribution service. A growing list of additional products, web specials, audio-visual presentations are also available, including maps, graphics and photographs. Pat Banks, IRIN Co-ordinator, Nairobi irin@ocha.unon.org, or contact subs@ocha.unon.org.

Japan

Zimbabwean journalist Roderick Blackman Ngoro, who has worked in South Africa and Japan, has set up a news agency to supply Japanese media with information from Africa. Ngoro has met with news managers and editors and the Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan to discuss the need to broaden the perspective of and interest in African issues by Japanese media. African ambassadors in Tokyo have supported this initiative.

The website is an attempt to raise the newsworthy level of "Africa" in local Japanese media. The online news agency will be a "small independent news organisation to be run by a two- or three-person news team" providing its own interpretation of African news and issues, and which would field press queries from the Japanese press.

Japanese news media are only represented in Johannesburg, Cairo and Nairobi. Ngoro can be contacted at garikaim@yahoo.co.uk

PANA

With an expanding pool of correspondents continent wide and partnerships with 48 national news agencies, the Panafrican News Agency has the largest news-gathering operation in Africa. It offers:

- Environment Bulletin (Monday) regular update on environmental developments across the continent.
- Economic and Development Bulletin (Tuesday). Stock market performance, commodity prices and production, national debts, trade and investment. Africa's economies are among the fastest growing in the world, attracting new interest from investors and traders worldwide.
- Science and Health Bulletin (Wednesday). From Aids to Ebola, Africa is in the news. But there are many exciting breakthroughs that don't grab headlines, this bulletin gives updates of scientific and medical research, health delivery issues and technological change.
- Africa Press Review (Friday). This weekly survey examines reporting and commentary from a cross section of African periodicals.

email: quoiset@sonatel.senet.net

Panos

Panos London works with journalists in developing countries to produce news, features and analysis about the most critical global issues of today. The website is a source of high quality, independent information. Panos produces material for journalists to use to write their own articles – see Panos Reports and Panos Books – as well as publishing a free monthly package of in-depth articles on issues that matter to people living in developing countries – see Panos Features. Panos pictures is an independent photo agency representing photojournalists worldwide who document issues and geographic areas that are under-reported, misrepresented or ignored. Radio is not excluded from their concerns, see www.interworldradio.net for a selection of Panos programming. www.panos.org.uk/index.asp or contact Mark Covey, External Relations Unit, email info@panos.org.uk

A journalism of purpose

***Nixon Kariithi** says debate over the role of the media in Africa's democratisation places too much emphasis on the actions of the state and too little attention on markets, civil society and media institutions.*

Half a century of political independence in much of Africa has produced remarkably little to be proud of. The clamour for political change that swept through the continent about 15 years ago recorded some modest achievements on the political front, but did little to offset worsening economic and social circumstances. Africa is still faltering under the weight of abject poverty, widespread underdevelopment, mounting foreign debt, and rising economic dependency.

This picture, while gloomy, is an essential backdrop for any substantive discussion of Africa's future. Indeed, Africa is currently faced with some of the biggest challenges in human history. Ironically, these critical times have barely caught the world's attention; and even where genuine concern is noted, it is often short-lived and superficial.

The lesson here – one which a number of African leaders now recognise – is the need for homegrown solutions and the involvement of African people in the design and implementation of such solutions.

This is a call for African media to rise up and claim their place on the high table of furthering national goals via a self-charted course. A second point here is that if Africa's solutions lie within itself, then African people and institutions possess the necessary wherewithal – ideas, manpower, goodwill and commitment – to change the deplorable conditions rampaging on the continent.

Consider African political leadership over the past half-century: it is now well accepted that the leadership was responsible, to a significant extent, for underdevelopment, debt burden and poverty in the continent, through the systematic plunder of national wealth and poor policymaking.

There is now a collective resolve to purge Africa of plundering, elitist political systems. In becoming 'our own world', we set our sights on the future and decide the most judicious way to get there.

We then appoint some among to lead us into the future, with clear expectations based on our specific circumstances. And we hold such leaders accountable for their actions, and especially their moral and ethical judgments regarding use of 'our' public resources.

As institutions central to the democratic process, media serve several critical functions:

1. Comprehensive accounts

They should offer a comprehensive account of the broadest range of events. By doing so, the media service the society with a corpus of information and knowledge sufficient for making informed choices.

2. Wide range of voices

The need is for media institutions to maintain a wide range of opinions and analysis of issues unfolding in society. Here, emphasis must be placed on debating issues exhaustively, while also maintaining relevant contexts. Media scholars have reiterated Karl Popper's thesis that "truth is not manifest", ie: truth does not exist in a pure, unquestionable form; instead, it is socially constructed through discussion, debate, negotiation and consensus building.

These media functions assist in securing tolerance, a critical prerequisite for social stability in modern multi-ethnic societies. Our recent social history – Rwanda, the protracted conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Cote d'Ivoire and Western Sudan – is dominated by events that could have pertinently been reshaped by the broader inclusion of voices and an appreciation of other people's destinies.

> ***"Indeed, African journalists must demonstrate trust in their societies and their people as the key to transformation."***

3. National integration

Under this function, media institutions cut across social divisions at various structural levels – across nationality barriers between different ethnic groups, social classes, ideologies and geographical regions.

The critical point here is to identify and focus on national symbols instead of local or regional symbols, national interests, values and aspirations, instead of particularistic ones, to help create national identification and loyalties. A quick glance across Africa reveals many candidates for such mediation: South Africa, the DRC, Namibia, Sudan, and Cote d'Ivoire.

4. Watchdogs and advocates

The final major function of the media, one that is very close to the *raison d'etre* of the Tunis conference, is to act as watchdogs and advocates on behalf of society. To achieve this, the media are charged with the responsibility of investigating and exposing abuse of power by those in authority in government, other national institutions and even in business. In this regard, the media should uphold the values of an altruistic democracy, and vigorously pursue stories about corruption, conflict, protest and bureaucratic malfunctioning. Other enduring values in the news must include reflective patriotism and responsible capitalism.

The reality of the market

Critical as they may seem, the above media functions remain distant ideals and pipe dreams. African governments have repeatedly acted against independent and critical media organisations. And the realities of the marketplace in many countries play right into this situation. Unlike Nigeria and South Africa, most sub-Saharan economies are small and activity is heavily dominated by the public sector.

The reality emerging from this oddity is that government departments and state corporations are decreed to support state-owned media or media that is overtly seen to "toe the government line". Independent media are given the tough choice of either toeing the ruling party position or getting into cahoots with wealthy opposition politicians.

A critical analysis of the debate over the role of the media in Africa's democratisation highlights one point: there is too much emphasis on the role of the African state and too little attention on the role of markets, civil society and media institutions.

The larger-than-life position assumed by the state presupposes that all else is peripheral and incidental to the state, its activities and its agents. Many studies have warned about the "corporatist" factor in African politics, defined by Julius Nyang'oro as the systematic incorporation of selected social groups into the machinery of the state.

This results in the creation of social hierarchies, with a minority select class reaping a windfall of government contracts, import licences and trade deals, while the majority public are conditioned through wage controls and education to serve as labour for the owners of capital.

The tensions and conflicts precipitated by these blatant class divisions are often resolved through coercion of the working class by state apparatuses. The state moves away from open democratic processes and begins to operate through personnel and organisations which are not part of the governing mechanism.

A journalism of purpose

This paints a grim picture for the involvement of African media in critical national issues. Yet the strength of the African media is premised upon these very problems and challenges. African journalists have cut their teeth in some of the harshest conditions and contexts in modern history and done so with minimal resources. We need to recognise the immense wealth of knowledge bequeathed to us by history and use it to develop new ways of communicating media messages.

This calls for an embracing of what John Hochheimer, has called the "journalism of meaning". A journalism of purpose will secure for us a social connection with communities that are currently feeling underserved and tuning out. As African journalists we must us reconstruct our practice based on own context and experiences, dialogues and life struggles. Such a reorientation could be the humble beginnings of a new consciousness.

Indeed, African journalists must demonstrate trust in their societies and their people as the key to transformation, and use their profession to create societies that celebrate and promote democracy.

Most important, the African journalist must always aspire to capture and highlight people's feelings, remain sensitive to media representations, and develop deeper understanding of media and society.

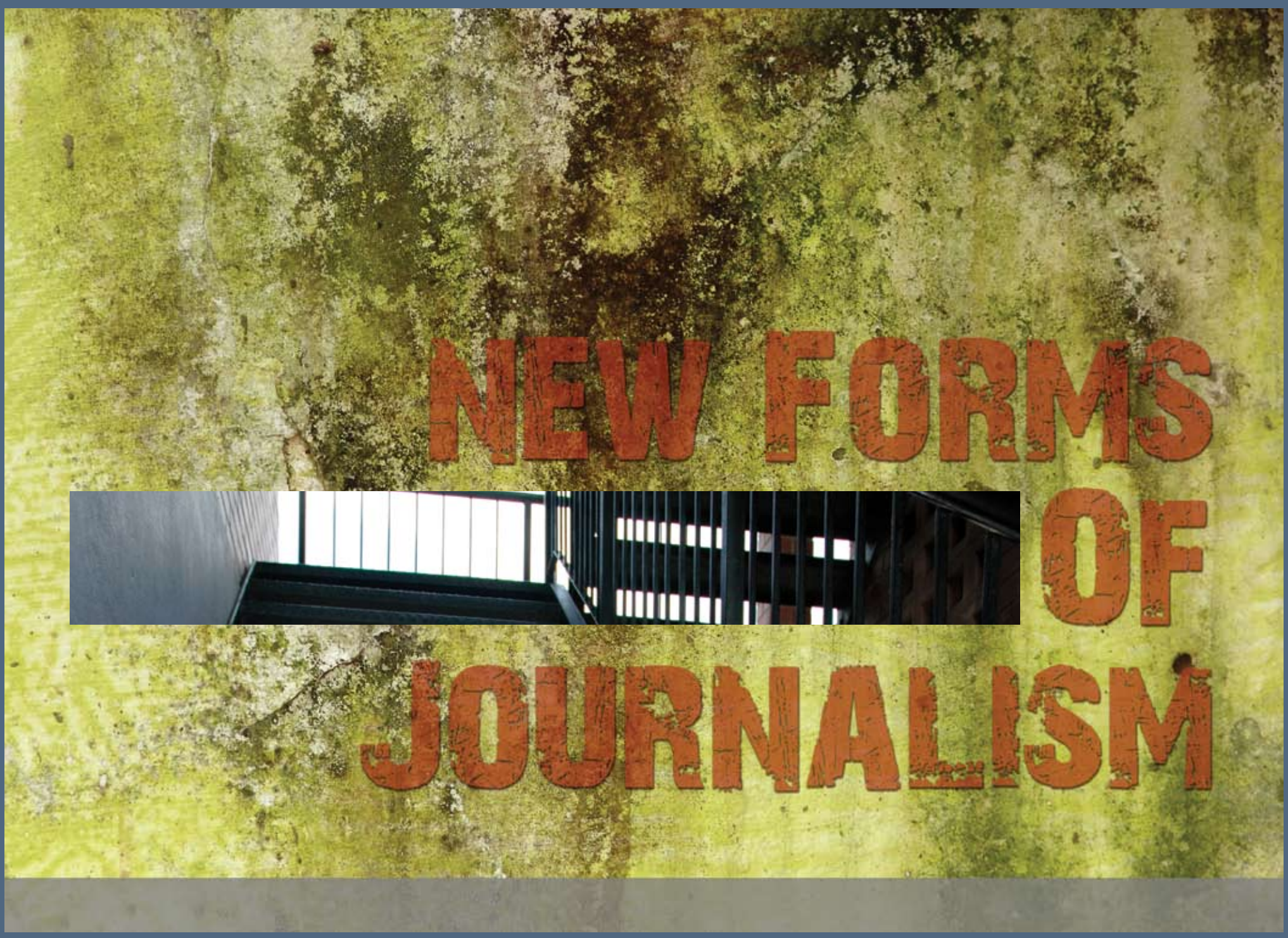
Essentially, the charity begins at home, by embracing purposeful living and creating social relationships based on purpose and trust. A journalism of purpose does not seek 'brown envelopes' or kickbacks and perks to do what is in fact its role in society.

This journalism paradigm aspires to cover issues and not personalities. It is proactive rather than reactive; systematic and strategic rather than erratic and episodic. It highlights processes that lead to outcomes rather than uncritically focusing exclusively on outcomes. The journalism of purpose promotes connectedness, understanding, community and dialogue.

Such purpose-driven media work cannot be done from the back seat. African media must rise up and claim their place on the high table of furthering national goals. This way, the public and ultimately the powerful elite themselves, would cease to perceive the state as the sole crusader for the nation's well-being.

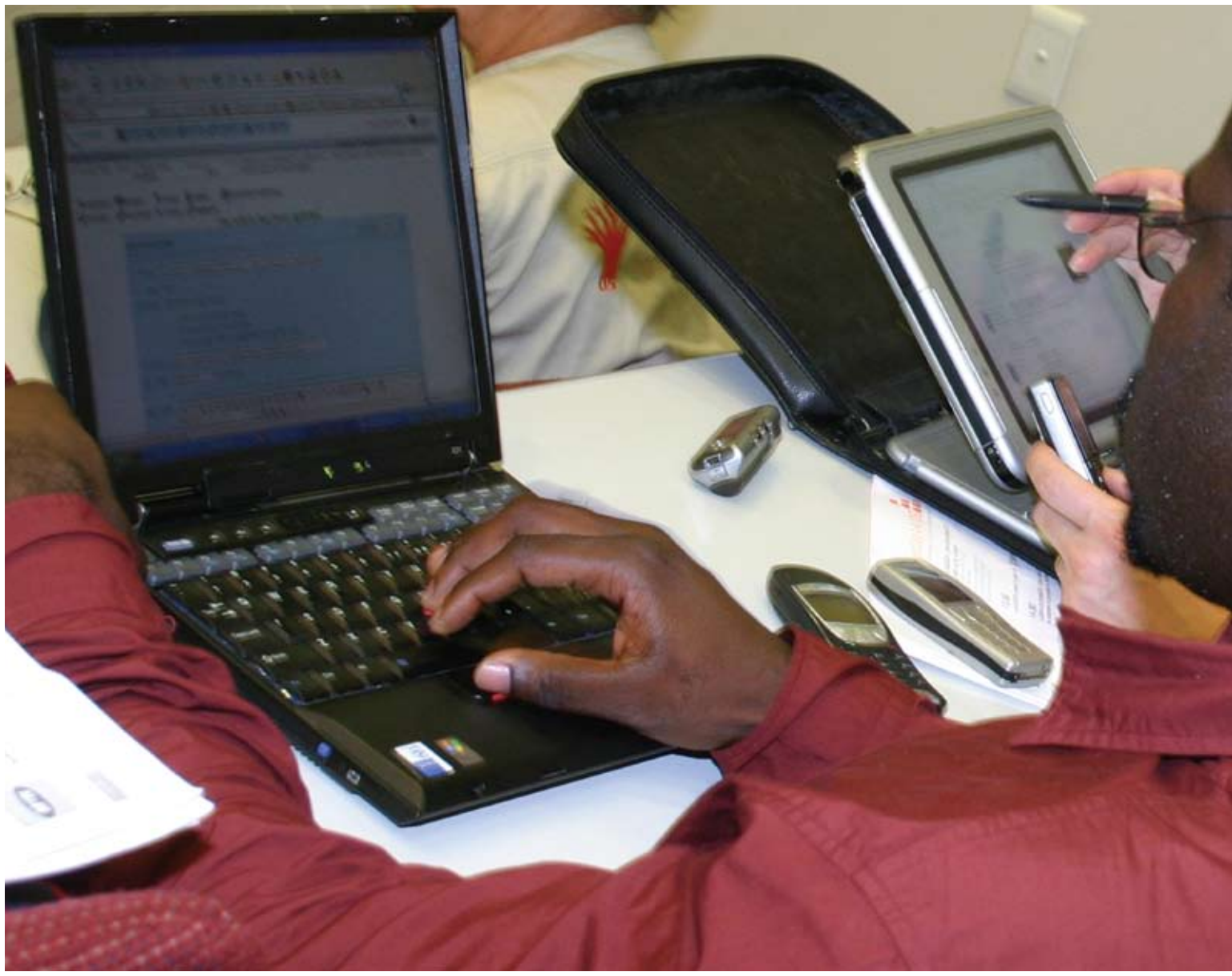
An elevation to the national table of decision-making and governance would earn the African media that vital mileage it requires to secure its position as a national institution against the heavy counter currents of the political establishments that do not want to be held accountable for their actions. ■

Based on the keynote address to the Second Annual Conference of the Nigerian Guild of Editors in Abuja on 24 August.



We, the media

Citizen journalism heralds like Dan Gillmor, JD Lasica and Steve Outing would have us believe that there is a media revolution underway, that the "big media" companies are rapidly losing their audiences to a network of individual publishers who would previously have been their sources. This network, says ***Vincent Maher***, is called the "blogosphere" and consists of a large – as in 15-million-pages large – network of bloggers, mobloggers (bloggers who post multimedia from their mobile phones), public



fora like the *Mail&Guardian* Online's Blogmark (http://blogmark.mg.co.za), blog aggregator sites like Technorati and Google News and RSS (Really Simple Syndication) reader software.

A blog, in its most simple form, is a website that allows its owner to post content in a headline and body form, much like a news story, and then organises these postings into categories and orders them by date.

There is nothing new about the technology that makes blogging possible but there is much more to blogging than immediately meets the eye.

As a technical medium, the blog has played a persuasive part in the formation of the practice of blogging that distinguishes it, for instance, from the practice of writing an article for an online newspaper.

Besides being fuelled by narcissistic assumptions about the global audiences' reading needs that simply cannot be sated without a daily dose of Me and My Opinion, the practice of blogging is a typical example of Western individual endeavour: one person writes, edits and publishes – the lone pamphleteer.

At some point in history though, the lone pamphleteers and their printers decided that they wanted to make money, and money, as we know, changes everything. Hence we have large media conglomerates expanding their media reach while chanting the mantra of convergence, and small media like the bloggers claiming to be moving into the journalistic media space.

This immediately presents several important questions: Firstly, can one really attribute the decline in audience numbers to the emergence of this new everyone-is-a-publisher phenomenon? Secondly, how much truth does one attribute to the journalistic claim made by bloggers? And thirdly, how does one then approach the practice of blogging from a critical standpoint?

The US print media is definitely experiencing a decline. Philip Meyer predicts in *The Vanishing Newspaper* that the last newspaper will be printed on 8 April 2040 based on the current rates of decline in readership. This decline has to do with many things: the increased availability of free content on the web, the increased lack of convenience of getting and then handling a physical artefact, tensions between the need for global and local news, and so on.

It's not a simple matter of blogging being the new journalism of choice, as is often claimed by the bloggers themselves. In fact, the real question is not whether we will stop printing newspapers but rather, whether we will stop the type of journalism that was found in those newspapers.

It is also increasingly difficult to say what is and is not journalism these days. Editorial independence is certainly a key aspect in differentiating journalism from all the other content available to us, the separation of editorial selection from economic or political influence.

With this in mind, let us examine the idea that blogging and citizen journalism somehow pose an alternative to the traditional media.

The examples commonly quoted are the cellphone images of the London bombings this year, or the Baghdad bloggers, or the large-scale citizen journalism initiatives like the South Korean ohmynews, the San Franciso-focused Bayosphere and backfence.com. But each of these represents the exception rather than the rule.

It also becomes clear very quickly that there are three different categories of content creation here:

Firstly, there are those bloggers who simply blog because they like doing it and feel their message and opinions need to be published. They are not journalists but they may occasionally fall into the second category, which is the bloggers who happen to be around when something important happens or who decide to disclose information that they are not supposed to. Suddenly their experiences become relevant and newsworthy because they are eyewitnesses or sources but they too do not see themselves as journalists. The third and much smaller category are those who volunteer, sometimes for small amounts of money, to be part of a loosely-organised network of amateur journalists. Their work is edited and subject to selection based on editorial criteria, and the style of writing is quite different to that of a common or garden blogger.

"The practice of blogging is a typical example of Western individual endeavour: one person writes, edits and publishes – the lone pamphleteer."

This is not to say that bloggers are unimportant. They generate significant amounts of web traffic and the greatest challenge for many successful bloggers is the question of how to make money doing it, and this is where bloggers get onto really shaky ground from a journalistic perspective.

The only real way to make money as a blogger right now is to display advertising on your pages or link to retail sites via a partner programme that would yield a small referral commission. The leader in small-scale advertising is Google AdSense which places ads on a page that match keywords in the content of the page itself. There is no equivalent print media advertising model and it seems fantastic at first because now the advertising seems relevant to the content you are reading.

The danger here is that bloggers begin to tailor

What is and isn't journ

by Adam C. Powell III

Citizen journalism

Shortly after the London explosions happened the BBC invited members of the public to submit their cellphone photos of the blasts to the broadcaster, these people could do this quicker than BBC crews could get to the scenes. (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_pictures/4660563.stm)
In the US the major TV networks are inviting similar submissions. The ABC Eyewitness News Team invites people to "be part of our news team". http://abclocal.go.com/wabc/news/interact/wabc_2005_eyewitnessnewsteam.htm

And recently I heard the News Director at the *New York Times* commenting that this means that media organisations have to check that they are being sent real photos. http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/18/technology/18cellphone.html

In Korea ohmynews.com has 33 000 registered "citizen journalists" http://ohmynews.com/ (But see the *Newsweek* story: Is Ohmynews really news? At http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/5240584/site/newsweek/)

Again in the US, a community in northern Virginia is claiming via their website "we know what is going on in our neighbourhood, not those journalists at the Washington Post". http://www.backfence.com/learnMore.cfm

This is having a major economic impact on the *Washington Post* as the classifieds on the website are free and classified advertising is a newspaper's traditional way of making money.

So what does this mean for journalism?

- Trends from 2005 State of the Media Report just published – items 3 and 4. http://www.stateofthemedia.org/2005/narrative_overview_eight.asp?cat=10&media=1
- From the USC pilot study of the future of news (scroll down to sec 5, p 110) http://ascweb.usc.edu/pubs/powellreport1.pdf


Paul Greenway

their content to the type of stories that generate high levels of ad revenue and they can get away with it because there is no editor and no editorial independence from economic influence. It's like having the same person as business manager and editor at a newspaper.

A further temptation is to begin linking to things like books, DVDs, movie rentals and second-hand toys on amazon.com because money trickles in every time a transaction is referred successfully.

One can see from the three categories of citizen journalist and the blogonomics of content production in this new medium, there are degrees of journalistic integrity. A minority of bloggers fall into a truly journalistic category and even less of them fall into the category of trustworthy and consistent journalism.

This debate will also become less relevant as the traditional media begin assimilating these new media techniques, as Gillmor urges them to do in his book *We The Media*.

Good examples of this are the Guardian NewsBlog and Vaughan Ververs, the CBS TV News Public-Eye. Ververs is a blogger installed at CBS to write about the news in a way that is going to be, in his own words, "un-opinionated" – is that even possible? ■

Ask the right question, stupid

by Mark Comerford

"Is blogging journalism?" is a stupid question. It's like asking "Are telephones journalism?" Both are types of technology.

What we need to talk about is what's **in** it. The stories we have to tell. The most important tool is what's between the ears.

How can mainstream media use new forms and methods of production and distribution to do journalism, which will create new forms of journalism and can also resuscitate old forms of journalism such as storytelling.

One of the crisis issues in journalism right now is the global phenomenon of trust in journalism and the transparency of journalism.

Journalism is not just about getting facts, it's about the interpretation and analysis of those facts.

The public must be given enough detail in order to follow the journalist's trail, and to examine that same data. That's the only way that their right to make up their own minds can be facilitated and informed.

The model cannot be paternalistic or patronising. The mirror is not the right metaphor (you can angle a mirror), but rather the open window.

Journalism should not be a megaphone, but a conversation. Technology is a vehicle.

And new media processes allow for transparency. This can lead to some excellent things – when both disagreeing (with the journalist) and trust (in the journalism) are possible.

The cellphone is going to become central to new media operations.

This will allow for many people to be empowered to get information, but don't forget capitalism will incorporate this technology too. We need a plan and a strategy: don't let the money people take control of the distribution systems.

Lots of local communities have the same problems but the solutions don't get spread around. Cellphone technology and radio can distribute information cheaply.

The system is there and it's possible to use a phone to make a report, send it to a blog and then subscribe and get it delivered to another cellphone or to use community radio to reach an entire community.

alism now?

Blogging

With the destruction of hurricane Katrina in New Orleans the *New York Times* ran a story focusing on the very large impact blogs had on people's understanding of the story. http://www.nytimes.com/cnet/CNET_2100-1028_3-5844419.html

- There was heavy reliance on non-journalists for the "reporting" of this disaster.
- In Saudi Arabia a blogger called "Saudi Girl" is required reading for the Saudi royal family to keep in touch with their citizens. http://saudigirl.blogspot.com
- The Egyptian election was covered by the Big Pharoah, an Egyptian blogger, again this blog is required reading for the rulers of this country. http://bigpharaoh.blogspot.com/
- The Online Journalism Review at USC pays extensive attention to blogs in the Arab world see http://www.ojr.org/ojr/stories/050830glaser/
- Soldiers in Iraq started their own blogs see http://uscpublicdiplomacy.com/index.php/newsroom/worldcast_detail/050906_sgt_lizzie_s_army/

Help for non-journalists!

A journalism site offering help to non-journalists http://www.j-learning.org/. This is "how-to site for community journalism" and offers information on topics from planning websites through to ethics.

Wikis

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikinews and OJR on wikis http://www.ojr.org/ojr/stories/050721gupta/

Smart mobs

http://www.trendbuero.de/trendtag/index.php?f_CategoryId=6‹=en, http://www.ojr.org/ojr/stories/050609Ulmanu/

Robots do news

Another new trend which has become apparent is semi-automated news which has become totally automated news. This is not a blog and there are no journalists compiling this information.

It is a robotic site done by software and automatic programs. See: http://www.topix.net/ and OJR on robot journalism at http://www.ojr.org/ojr/stories/050802glaser/

Experiential journalism

What Integrated Media Systems Centre is already doing. We can already experience three senses across the Internet, and the other two (taste and touch) – not yet. But my centre is working on remote media immersion.

So for example, if a human being cannot physically be near the launch of the space shuttle, it is possible to create a virtual digital experience. http://imsc.usc.edu/research/ offers some examples of this.

Immersipresence

We call it "immersipresence" – you are there, but is it journalism? http://imsc.usc.edu/rmi/

- Immersipresence and the musicians who aren't really there, http://imsc.usc.edu/news/releases/i2_040929.html
- Immersipresence and "walking" through 3D models, http://imsc.usc.edu/research/project/virtcamp/index.html

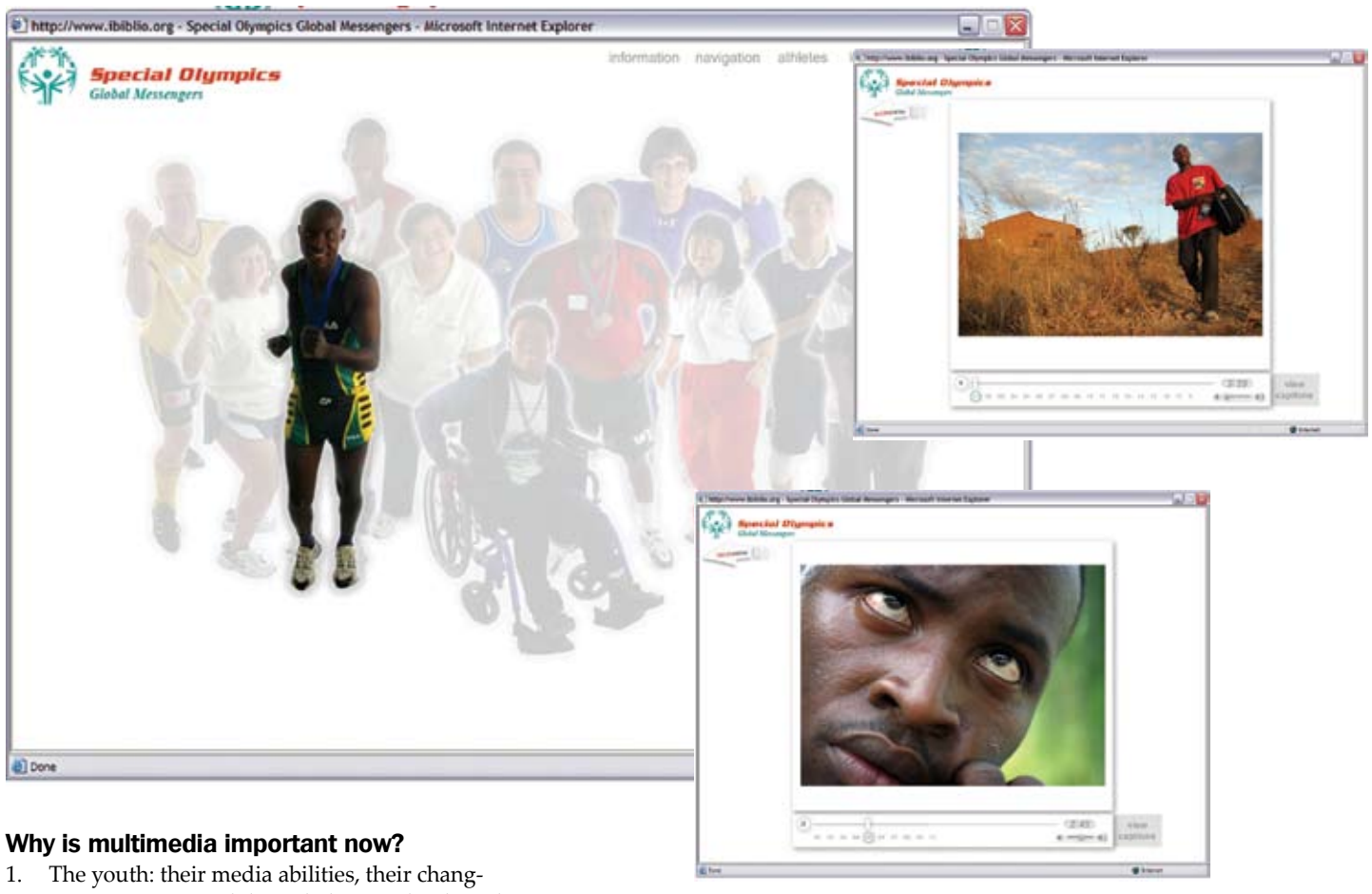
Two-way haptics

You can feel it, but is it journalism? http://imsc.usc.edu/research/project/haptics/

Two-way haptics: already a reality in health care – in this instance a therapist at a terminal can reach through space to help a stroke patient at another location do physical therapy, and the patient can actually feel the therapist's help. http://imsc.usc.edu/news/releases/050526_haptics.html

Multimedia storytelling

Multimedia is a powerful storytelling tool, says ***Rich Beckman****, but is it an appropriate one for Africa?*



When assessing the appropriateness of a new medium, the audience is the most important consideration. But, there is a new definition of audience with multimedia:

- The audience is anywhere, everywhere.
- A local audience might not be able to access the site, but there is an audience who can, and you should decide whether that audience is important.
- Consider: in the US the news on Africa is not sourced from the perspective of those who live in Africa and have grown up with the story. It is a better story if told by those who live in Africa. Therefore, the need and ability to report overshadows the need to be reported on.
- Also consider: the people online in Africa are the children, via their schools. And because they are becoming web literate the way to reach that audience is through multimedia.

What is multimedia?

It consists of several interwoven components:

- Text – concise and descriptive
- Audio – gives a sense of person and place, memories and dreams
- Photography – captures decisive moments
- Video – motion, sequencing, scene-setting, sense of reality
- Animated graphics – to simplify the complex
- Design – a logical ordering of content
- Interactivity – participatory methods to engage the reader

Using the best storytelling tool for each aspect of a story will convey more content, provide better context, create a more personal experience and improve understanding and retention.

Why is multimedia important now?

1. The youth: their media abilities, their changing interaction with knowledge in schools and their ability to learn differently. They have high standards and expectations of information, they expect the visual capabilities of high-end video games and they expect involvement, they are not passive and don't like being lectured to.
2. Enhanced storytelling is better journalism.
3. We now live in a multimedia society – cellphones and MP3 players are everywhere.
4. There is new competition for journalism.
5. There are increased advertising revenues to be made. Advertising on the web is up in the US because websites can target more accurately to individuals that broadcast or print.
6. We have access to databases and digital assets. ■

Multimedia storytelling sites

For good examples of multimedia storytelling, go to the following sites:

www.ibiblio.org/solympics

www.theancientway.org

www.alivingstage.org

www.tenyearson.org

Journalism in the argument culture

by Lars Nord

In our research on media policy we have started to investigate the rise of "interpretive journalism" – argumentative journalism with a lack of transparency (ie: these items are not necessarily marked as containing opinion), a lack of proportion and sometimes even a lack of credibility (especially when they make predictions)..

The research questions we asked were:

- Why is "interpretative journalism" increasing?
- What does it mean to public discourse and the quality of democracy?
- Is it reasonable to label this as "journalism"?

Between news and views

Journalism can be both informative and interpretative. Both information and interpretation are essential for citizens in a democracy. There are broadly-accepted definitions of news journalism and opinion journalism; but few definitions of news analysis and news commentaries exist and these can appear with news information in one article.

The demand

This kind of journalism is on the rise because the 24-hour news cycle increases demand for copy and as a result the "news hole" gets bigger. The media environment is now very competitive and there are limited resources to meet this demand.

In explaining the rise in this kind of journalism two journalists gave these comments:

News analysis is some kind of commentary; it is not a news article. There is often no intention to balance different views or actors. It is a kind of opinion piece and it should basically be an orientation map for the reader, according to a political journalist on the Swedish tabloid *Aftonbladet*.

The purpose is above all to help people understand politics. Politics is perceived by the public to be boring and hard to understand. If you can use news analysis to simplify and explain politics in a more personal way what is happening and why, then people may realise that politics is not so difficult to understand, said a political journalist on the tabloid *Expressen*.

The problems are with an "interpretative journalism" that has a lack of transparency, proportion, and credibility, and especially when it feeds into the "argument culture".

Avoiding pseudo-journalism

Opinion, interpretation and analysis should be carefully labelled and edited. There should be open declarations of policy by media houses. Journalists should admit their mistakes and false predictions. A more deliberative tone (rather than an argumentative tone) is needed in analysis and commentary.

Conclusion

Democracy needs both observers and oracles. Democracy needs accurate journalistic standards for journalists trying to be in both categories at the same time.

Software colonisation

There is a worrying dimension to the uptake of technology in Africa, which is perhaps most vividly illustrated where I live in South Africa, says ***Jarred Cinman***. As sub-Saharan Africa's wealthiest and most technologically-advanced country, South Africa is a good indicator of how Africa is embracing computing and other technologies. The worrying part is that South Africa is a massive net importer of key technologies, and in particular here I refer to software. An owner of a local software development business myself, it is shamefully obvious that despite the benefits accrued through the local utilisation of software, vast sums of money are flowing offshore back into

➡ US and European hands.

I would contend that this is yet another example of Western colonialism, the key ingredient of which is keeping us as "a market" for Western products, instead of encouraging our own intellectual growth, and building our own assets.

In the software world this is already a complex story, despite the relative recent arrival of the Internet age. First, there's the whole issue of what's being called Floss (Free/Libre/Open Source Software). Many developing countries (Brazil is a particularly good example), have embraced Floss with open arms, and the South African government has followed suit by adopting policies which promote the use of Floss at least as an equal to commercial software.

The key principle behind Floss is its greatest strength and its greatest weakness, however. And that is the idea that software somehow intrinsically belongs to all people, propounded by Richard Stallman, "father" of free software, and that keeping the source code private or proprietary is in some sense "wrong". This quickly breaks down into a discussion of the invalidity of "intellectual property" full stop, which argues that both knowledge and software should be free and not respect national borders.

The emotional appeal of this approach is undeniable. And it doesn't stop there. Economically it makes fantastic sense for developing countries to have access to "free" software, and to be able to implement top-notch technology at a fraction of the cost of the proprietary alternatives. And of course there are the arguments about software quality and community development which fall outside the scope of this article.

The problem, I believe, is that African proponents of Floss are glossing over an important subtlety in the rush to be at one with peace, love and the software world. And that is that despite their Stallmanesque views of intellectual property as applied to software, national boundaries do exist in the real world. Software exists within the same global economy and socio-political dynamics that any other kind of property does – be it cash, commodities or equities.

Intellectual property is not just a matter of who owns what, it's also a matter of who has the skills and ability to make, invent and control. Linux is open source, but in fact Linus Torvalds still holds a pre-eminent role in deciding what makes it into the kernel and what doesn't. And Linus is a Fin who lives in California.

Africa, despite benefiting enormously from Linux – don't misunderstand me – is still for the most part a *user* of this technology, not a creator or controller. As much as the free software people want to argue that ownership is irrelevant in their world, my argument is that it's definitely not.

"Witnessing the recent actions of the United States toward Iraq in the name of protecting it's national security should be a loud wake-up call to all of us. When it comes down to the crunch, countries will still look out for themselves first."

Here are some reasons why:

- Because national borders exist, interests are still largely national. It's easy to talk of a global village, but witness the recent actions of the United States toward Iraq in the name of protecting its national security. When it comes down to the crunch, countries will still look out for themselves first.
- While nowhere near as serious in its implications, software betrays national interests too – whether consciously or not. What a piece of software does and doesn't do, what the vision is, even which projects are selected, are defined by needs in the country of origin. To the extent that open source draws in developers from other countries, they are for the large part other First-World countries.
- Even if "intellectual property" is a swear word, intellect, skills, talent and ability are not. By supporting open source projects based in the First World, even just by opting for Drupal or Debian, instead of Cambrient Contentsuite or Ubuntu, Africans are contributing to first world dominance, encouraging more funding of these projects, and the growth of skills and opportunities of developers over there.

Africa's ability to become a technological superpower in its own right is diminished. Our base of genius hackers, our suite of home-grown software remains tiny, and – here's the colonialism – we are pulled along into the Western way of operating.

Here's a hypothetical, though not much of a stretch, example. My business is a content management software developer based in Johannesburg. Content management systems are a dime-a-dozen, and there are several good Floss ones out there. There are also many expensive and proprietary systems from the likes of Microsoft, IBM, Vignette etc.

Let's say an African corporate or government decides to undertake a content management project, and implement a CMS. They have the following broad options:

1. Purchase a US or European product, probably through a localised reseller.
2. Build their own system.
3. Implement the project on a Floss CMS, once again, US- or European-"owned" (where it was made and controlled).
4. Purchase a local proprietary CMS.
5. Utilise a local Floss CMS.

Right now, the reality is that most big corporates in Africa – certainly in South Africa – are making the first choice, and occasionally the second. Government policy in South Africa, Namibia and others means they may opt for choice three. A few are showing faith in local software, and there are no Floss CMS systems based in Africa that I know of.

CMS is just a familiar example to me, but the same is true in many, even most, realms of software. Africa is an importer, a user, an implementer.

Why is that a problem?

- For proprietary systems, cost first and foremost – in terms of direct US dollar or Euro licensing fees, usually with annualised upgrades, as well as the importing of consultants and other skilled professionals to undertake implementations (experience has shown this is just about always required).
- Local ways of doing things are sacrificed, diluted and made subservient in the interests of a bigger "generic", First-World way of doing things.
- Even where Floss systems are selected, little or no intellectual growth takes place in Africa – largely we take offshore systems and implement them, with some tweaks.
- Additional economic growth as represented by a thriving African software development community – either through the purchase of locally developed software, or the funding of local Floss projects – is missed out on.

Now, the African proponents of Floss would argue that I'm missing the underlying principles of Floss to argue for a software Africanism. They would also argue, perhaps validly, that my argument would lead to reinvention of the wheel simply for the sake of having an African wheel. Why not use the best-of-breed system no matter where it's from? The only issue is freedom in the "libre" sense of the word.

They would also argue that encouraging a local proprietary software market is to take one step forward and two steps back.

But this allegiance between the developing world and open source has to be carefully evaluated. I have no doubt that open source people – the Free Software Foundation, the Linux movement and Ubuntu, to name a few – have good intentions. And I have no doubt that they would like to see the developing world uplifted and national borders dissolved.

And I also have no doubt that there are certain types of software – say operating systems – which it would be foolish to write again. Linux probably is about as universal as we need it to be right now, and work by the likes of Ubuntu with translate.org.za makes it suitably localised.

But I do ardently believe that Africa needs to get African about software. That means two things:

First, there should be strong local quotas for local software. This is already in place with content such as radio and television in South Africa, and is stimulating the film and music industries enormously. And yes, this means proprietary software for now.

This is a weakness in the Floss argument as proposed by Africans: they would prefer a US-based Floss system to an investment in an African proprietary system. I say that's just wrong. Even tactically, what we want is to encourage local skills and talent so that we can meaningfully participate in Floss projects. And – most importantly – that we can start spending our software licensing money here.

The fact is Africans are going to be buying software, now and for the foreseeable future. Businesses, in particular, are conservative, and the Open Source message has been poorly tailored to talk to boards of directors. The way corporate spending works, purchasing software is a capital expense, and that's an easy concept to grasp. Getting something for free, paradoxically, is often impossible for a corporation to understand.

Second, there should be passionate funding of African Floss projects. Whether an individual software developer could be encouraged to open source their code in the pursuit of the great free software ideal, or whether new projects have to be identified and initiated, governments and funders should be getting behind African-initiated projects.

I started by saying that Africans being users and implementers of offshore software is a kind of new colonialism. Partly it's draining of cash – in the case of South Africa, something like R8-billion a year in offshore software licensing according to Nhlanhla Mabaso from the Meraka Institute at the recent Go OpenSource conference. Partly it's the stunting of African software development.

This last is a subtle point in some kinds of software, and a lot less subtle in others. Sometimes it's about language, but sometimes it's about a less definable "African-ness" of experience, culture and process, which cannot just be dismissed out of hand.

If this African-ness is not built into software applications where it matters, and if we continue presuming that how a system works in the US and Europe is how it should work here, then we are in fact being colonised in a very real way.

Even if the intentions start far from that place. ■

Chris Kirchhoff

Stimulating the local

Trying to find open content projects in Africa may seem frustrating. There seems to be very little on the Internet written by Africans about Africa. But if you look at the number of Africans that are actually Internet users then things make a little more sense says ***Heather Ford****.*

So what are the factors that inhibit Africans from creating their own content?

1. Low audience levels

If you consider that only 1.7% of Africans are online and that over half of this number resides in South Africa and Egypt, the number of websites developed by Africans is relatively high. Add to that the low literacy levels (about 50% of the population) and you begin to recognise that the Internet is not currently a medium that offers any significant local audiences in Africa.

Many local content developers complain about feelings of isolation when developing content for local audiences – the percentage of the population that are active users is so low that the feedback and interactivity potential that drives non-commercial content is not fully realised.

Of course, if you consider the opportunities presented by a relatively high demand for African content from a large Western audience, it seems to be a good idea for Africans to increase the levels of their content production to meet demand.

It also appears to be a good idea for Africans to open up their knowledge and opinions to a global audience because a closed approach wouldn't necessarily benefit emerging voices.

The problem is that Africans have yet to recognise their active participation or at least presence on the Internet as an opportunity.

2. Africans are afraid of 'theft'

The Internet is a medium where success is determined by the wealth of knowledge that the market perceives you hold in any particular sector. Google is successful because the market perceives it to have the best knowledge about search technology.

The theory is that if you know more than your competitors about a subject – or at least you tell people about how much more you know – you will become a market leader in your field.

The issue here is that you have to share your knowledge in order to grow your reputation, your brand, your perceived wealth.

And newcomers to the field will have to do that better than the others.

But Africans have little faith in sharing knowledge when the local discourse around intellectual property is focused on stories of how Africans' local knowledge has been "stolen" by outsiders.

Add to this the fact that much of the knowledge that is published on the Internet by Africans is actually consumed outside the continent, by a massive, unknown, unseen and largely unregulated community (try suing someone for copyright infringement in the United States), and you begin to realise how content development for international audiences has less appeal – especially for small companies and organisations.

Also, until we dissolve the idea – through popular debate and statistics – that open content is another way to extract value from developing countries and feed new wealth to the West, the ideals of open content will remain isolated to the academic community in Africa.

3. Legal complexities and costs

As Lawrence Lessig argues (Free Culture: 2004), culture and knowledge has never been cheaper, more accessible, but legal issues are so complex – even with licences like Creative Commons that try to make the legal process simpler and cheaper – that copyright can, and does, strangle the potential for more people to engage in sustainable publishing initiatives on the Internet.

There are many possible solutions to this particular set of problems. In order to assist local content developers to navigate the terrain of legal issues on the Internet, a legal advice body, with knowledge of alternative licences such as Creative Commons, could be set up as an accessible point of reference.

The problems with the current complexities of copyright law in the digital age cannot be solved until there is legislative reform, but one thing is certain: without access to the infrastructure and the support to understand how they can protect their intellectual wealth and develop value from it, Africa's forays into the knowledge economy will continue to be isolated to call centre development and low-end technological support.

4. Missing the branding boat

An interesting point about open content in Africa is that many African websites do, in fact, contain most of the elements of "open content" but without a licence or alignment with the open content movement that is characterised by many Western sites.

This scenario plays itself out in many arenas of African trade. Many African products, for example, are essentially "organic" simply because fertilizers and pesticides are too expensive for many farmers. But because Africans are unaware of the popular organic food movement, they are unable to take advantage of branding themselves in line with international trends.

In the same way, many organisations in Africa subscribe to open content principles, with wording on their websites that states what users can do with the material. Because they don't see it as strategic to align themselves with the legal licensing movements, Africa is seen as a "dark continent" when it comes to the uptake of Creative Commons and other open content licences.

If one had to look at a map of the adoption and uptake of Creative Commons licences in Africa (see a post from www.lessig.org/blog), one would think that Africa is, indeed, the "dark continent". But if one had to analyse the percentage of sites that adopt open content principles in some way (most often without the use of a licence) then the picture is not so bleak.

This is not to say that licences are unimportant in Africa – they are, perhaps most important here – but it is critical to recognise that licences are not the only piece in a puzzle where the question is: How do we stimulate the development of local content in Africa?

5. A lack of local applications

Many bandwidth bytes are taken up discussing why Africans have come so late to the blogging table. These debates have been given new direction in relation to South Africa, as blogging recently started to gain popular support. In my opinion, the reason for this sudden change is due to the fact that M&G Online recently released a free, visible platform for bloggers in South Africa. M&G Online's "Blogmark" (licenced under the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 licence) is only a few months old and yet it receives over 1 500 unique users a day and has around 800 local bloggers on its pages. Local bloggers know that over 1 500 could read their blog if they make their mark (the home page lists latest entries rather than most popular) providing huge incentives for new authors and publishers.

The Blogmark case has displayed how the implementation of local software is critical to establishing a local community of content creators and users who can feed off and engage with one another.

6. Lack of infrastructure

Another reason why blogging is catching on in South Africa is because it has relatively low technological requirements – you only need a computer with an Internet connection if you want to blog.

But what about content like video, animation or photography that require relatively large capacity computers, expensive software and high bandwidth to produce and disseminate? Development of this type of content is currently isolated to expensive training centres, and a handful of advertising and private sector entertainment companies.

The opportunity for community access to new media content production is lost in telecentres that operate on thin client machines with limited hardware and facilities, as policy-makers attempt to scale up access to ICTs.

Equipment in African telecentres presumes a user who, typically, wants to learn how to type out a CV and look for jobs online. But the potential for local communities to be producing new media is huge – especially as the costs of producing video and animation decreases.

Countries like Brazil have recognised this potential. The Brazilian Department of Arts and Culture has recently started a project called "Points of culture" (Pontos de Cultura) aimed at creating cultural hotspots throughout the country where local cultural production exists. These hotspots will establish free-software studios in a thousand towns and villages throughout Brazil, enabling people to create culture using alternative intellectual property licenses and broadband connections to the Internet.

Africa can learn some great lessons from Brazil's approach to technology as a way for communities to actively create and share local culture. Instead of sending billions out of the continent every year as consumers of a Coca Cola culture, Africa could be using some of that money to build a local content industry independent from the United States.

The development of such an industry is dependent on the openness of such content – in terms of a) initially competing with imported culture, b) ensuring the rapid spread of local cultural products c) and enabling others to build on, improve and collaborate in the development of local culture. ■

Tsha Tsha!

Despite all predictions about Internet access, this website is a roaring success, says ***Heather Ford****.*

In 2004, the Riverbend Learning Solutions Group was asked to develop a website for an SABC 2 television programme called Tsha Tsha, a weekly television series focused on young people living in a world affected by HIV/Aids and other social problems. The television show reached in excess of two-million viewers per episode, but there was a comprehensive strategy for attracting post-broadcast discussion on radio talk shows (in nine languages), big-screen viewings with facilitated discussions in higher educational institutions and organisations involved in HIV/Aids training and education.

The brief to Riverbend Learning was to target the Tsha Tsha website at young black South Africans. The idea for the website was simple. Each week users would be asked to introduce new characters to Lubisi (the fictional rural town in which Tsha Tsha is based). Users would email scriptwriters (in either English or Sepedi) with a synopsis of their character, choosing one of a range of character photographs from the website to choose from. Each week, users would vote new characters in or out of the story, while scriptwriters wrote in the most popular characters. The person with the best entry was invited to be in the final episode of the series. Despite all predictions that users wouldn't have access to the website and that scriptwriters and other personnel wouldn't be able to integrate into the television timetable, the website was a roaring success.

In retrospect, the Tsha Tsha website had a number of winning ingredients that no predictions about low access levels could have stopped:

- audience engagement – the audience was actively involved in telling their own story;
- dedicated support – a full-time translator and scriptwriter;
- local language support – the website was fully translated into both English and Sepedi;
- medium integration and marketing profile – the website drew audiences from the television programme, from viewings outside of broadcast hours and from training programmes – all contributing towards a very high viewership of the main product.

The television programme advertised the website and television audiences were able to feed back through the website medium, which, in turn, fed back into the television programme (the winner got to be in the final show). This seamless integration of traditional and new media was vital to the success of the website, and required an open approach to copyright.

If content is relevant, immediate and powerful, audiences will find a way to get to it – and even interact with it in powerful ways as this example shows.

Collaborative development

Open content philosophies, such as collaborative development of content presented by projects such as Wikipedia, are critical tools for the development of African content industries.

If one considers the need for relevant content in schools, business, media and popular culture, one realises just how important it is for us to find new ways of producing content more quickly and efficiently. Open content is an important tool, not only to help source the raw materials with which we can build locally-relevant content, but also in order to decrease the time to development of content projects by employing collaborative, community-based efforts of producing knowledge. But how does the idea of open content fit into local content development?

I believe that the priority for open content should be shared equally for local content if we are to see any real benefits to the local economy. Open content from international sources needs to be adapted by local creators, developers, authors and producers to make it relevant to our own needs.

Open content, in this sense, doesn't have to be something that local publishers are afraid of. We need, now more than ever, the local creative industries in order to repurpose textbooks, learning materials and films.

Local open content doesn't necessarily mean cheaper content. The production of local content in the television industry costs more to produce, but because the materials are relevant, local programming is now the most popular, attracts the greatest advertising revenue and has grown a burgeoning film and television production industry in South Africa.

Open content should therefore be seen as "free" only in the sense of freedom from many of copyright's constraints.

The Shuttleworth Foundation, for example, is investing money into projects to develop free, open, local content aligned specifically to the South African national education curriculum. Although some free sources are being used, the materials in the "Copyright, copyleft and everything in between" project had to be developed from scratch.

But because the project applied the Creative Commons Attribution 2.0 licence to the material, and because the raw source files are going to be supplied to the public with the finished movies, thousands of commercial and non-commercial uses could come out of these materials in the future. This means that a product with a nominal cost can go on to be used and re-used thousands more times.

Open content licensing, therefore, needs to be integrated into policies such as local content quotas in the broadcasting industries and the Black Economic Empowerment charter in the technology industry.

By compelling those who produce local content to make that content accessible under open content licences, we will soon see the investments made by the government and by major publishing companies multiply as others are able to re-use that material.

Prioritise open and local

If we don't prioritise the local and the open at the same time, open content will continue to be as irrelevant as the majority of content is currently for African users in education, culture and science.

In conclusion, it is important to note that the tools for open content (ie: licences) are still not sufficient to guarantee this development. Open content licences are just one piece of a puzzle that is fraught with challenges. If our goal is to enhance the presence of Africans on the Internet then one needs to look at the issue holistically in order to arrive at a solution that makes use of a myriad different tools. New media infrastructure, local applications, supportive, open, local content policy, and an awareness of branding and new legal and development models all need to be considered if we are to see the emergence of Africa as a significant presence in the global digital information commons. ■


Chris Kirchhoff

"Open content should be seen as 'free' only in the sense of freedom from many of copyright's constraints."

Deconstruct the geek-speek

by Kerryn Mackay

Open content

The phrase "open content", referring to "freely available and usable", was coined by David Wiley, a graduate from Brigham Young University in the United States. Wiley co-founded the Open Content project and put together the first licence specifically for content (versus the existing licence for software) in 1998. As its name implies, open content refers to material (academic, educational, creative and media) that is free from the restrictions of default copyright. In order for it to be accessible for people to copy, download, share, make derivatives and redistribute, open content often applies a licence that tells others what they can do with the material. This licence specifies the default uses that are allowed without the permission of the copyright holder. If users wish to make other use of the material, they must ask permission of the copyright holder. This could involve monetary compensation.

- The most contentious issue around open content is whether it should only encompass content that allows derivatives and/or commercial use.

Building the African Commons

Only a few months after the launch of Creative Commons South Africa there are already a number of exciting projects that make use of open content licences, says ***Heather Ford****.*

The media's contribution to the digital commons can be tremendous. Take, for example, the Rhodes New Media Lab's coverage of the 2005 National Arts Festival in Grahamstown. Because of their use of the Creative Commons attribution non-commercial share alike licence, 3 400 items of video, photography and reporting can now be re-used by others. According to site editor Vincent Maher the open content model works well since all non-commercial uses are permitted by default and commercial contracts can be entered into with permission from the copyright-holders. http://fest.ru.ac.za/

Highway Africa News Agency

Another example is the Highway Africa News Agency's use of Creative Commons licences to distribute their content. HANA is funded by international donors with the aim of improving the quality of African ICT journalism. Their website explicitly encourages users to re-publish stories on their own website using a simple three-step process. This user-friendly approach to re-use of content is exciting because, by anticipating copying by other sites, HANA can ensure that they are attributed properly. Since attribution is their main requirement and distributing their materials as far as possible is the goal, the open content model has been very relevant and hopefully will prove highly successful. http://www.highwayafrica.ru.ac.za/hana/

Laugh It Off

Laugh It Off, the company that recently won a freedom of expression case against South African Breweries in the Constitutional Court, is another licensee. Laugh It Off's 2005 Annual is licenced under a Creative Commons non-commercial licence which enables free copying, sharing and "re-mixing" of the South African voices of youth culture. Laugh It Off has prided itself in remixing local brands in order to make important socio-political statements. The Annual is full of remixes of South African culture, and so it seemed fitting that the pages should be used as fodder to fuel even more creative output. http://www.laughitoff.co.za/publications/publications.htm

M&G Online

M&G Online has been the first major news company in the South Africa to make use of the Creative Commons licences – if only for their blogging portal Blogmark. Blogmark started off as an experiment in sizing up the blogging phenomenon – it was offered as a free weblogging service where both professional and citizen journalists could publish unlimited views, opinions and reportage in an open, unrestricted format.

According to M&G Online editor Matthew Buckland, the reason for using the Creative Commons licence was twofold: "The cc licence is a perfect way to enable individual artists and writers to add a level of protection to their intellectual property but at the same time allow for the sharing and swapping of creative material on the web." With more than 1 500 users per day and almost a thousand registered bloggers, it's definitely not a relegation.

As the media experiments with more interactive forms of journalism – where commentary from the public doesn't necessarily require strict copyright restrictions – we are bound to see more of this in the future. http://blogspot.mg.co.za/

ccMixter

ccMixter South Africa was launched in September on the back of a competition sponsored by the Go OpenSource campaign to find Jozi's hottest remixers. ccMixter SA is a community music sharing site featuring songs licenced under Creative Commons, where you can listen to, sample, mash-up, or interact with music in whatever way you want. A project of Creative Commons South Africa, ccMixter aims at linking like-minded musicians, encouraging collaborations, evolving ideas and developing technical and creative skills. It is hoped that ccMixter will soon become a platform for new musical talent, a breeding ground for new production ideas and a growing archive of high-quality music from Africa.http://ccmixter.org/

Schools and artists

There are new projects being licenced under Creative Commons in Africa every day. From SchoolNet Namibia and Direq International's "Hai Ti!" comic, to almost every educational technology provider in South Africa – including the recent licencing of the International Computer Driver's Licence (ICDL) materials. From books of poetry by AJ Venter and Netanye Naude, to artists like Roy Blumenthal and Victor Geere – Creative Commons has had an incredible response, especially in South Africa. http://www.schoolnet.na/news/stories/introduction.html; http://www.schoolnetafrica.net/

The guardians

Although response has been good, many of the "guardians" of African culture and knowledge remain distinctly out of this fray. It is the archivists and the leaders of public institutions around Africa who hold the key to making these valuable works accessible.

In the next phase of the African Digital Commons, it is to these key institutions that we must turn. Our local pioneers have led the way. They've shown us how experimentation with new, open approaches can reap great rewards. In this time of change only one thing is certain: those on the cutting edge of intellectual property will perhaps be able to see changes to their industry before they happen.

- Open content licences allow for certain rights to be reserved, compared to default copyright which states that all rights are reserved in terms of copying, distributing or making derivatives.

Floss – Free/Libre Open Source Software.

Richard Stallman, a computer programmer from New York, first developed the Gnu-GPL licence and the Free Software Foundation. The movement began in the mid 1990s and was largely a response against large proprietary companies "hiding" their code in order to sell software for profit. The "libre" part of the acronym was added to distinguish between "free as in freedom" and "free as in free beer".

Free software has made the world five promises:

1. The freedom to run the program for any purpose
2. The freedom to study how the program works and adapt it to your needs
3. The freedom to redistribute copies so you can help your neighbour
4. The freedom to improve the program and release your improvement to the public so that the whole community benefits
5. The ability to have absolute access to the source code of the program

Digital commons

Digital resources which have been recognised as "public". In the same way that the transport system requires a set of road networks maintained by the government, so too does the technology industry require a set of resources held in common in order for innovators to prosper.

The African digital commons

To assist the growth of an African digital commons, key cultural and knowledge products must be made accessible in order to inject shared resources into the development of a culture of innovation. Free and open source software and content which is open are key ingredients in this vision.

What is Creative Commons?

A US-based non-profit organisation working in 31 countries which offers an alternative to default copyright that allows creators of cultural products to both retain control over their works and make explicit how they may be used by a wide community. Creative Commons has created digital licences that can be attached to creative works whereby the author of the work may choose to reserve some rights, rather than the blanket-notion of copyright which states that *all rights are reserved.* The kinds of rights that can be reserved through the use of a Creative Commons' licence are:

- Attribution
- Attribution with non-commercial usage
- Attribution with non-commercial usage and no derivatives allowed
- Attribution with non-commercial usage and share-alike (meaning if any derivative work is made from the original, the same licence must be attached to the new work)
- Attribution and share alike

Creative Commons ZA

South Africa is a recent addition to a growing list of countries that have imported the Creative Commons licences into national jurisdiction. Creative Commons South Africa is a web portal dedicated to showcasing the work of local creators, educators and administrators who use Creative Commons licences. http://za.creativecommons.org/

Here's a sharper tool

African control over intellectual property is critical, says ***Heather Ford****.*


Paul Greenway

Copyright used to be a sharp tool – a tool for awarding and incentivising creators, and creating balance between private rights and the public's rights of access to human knowledge and creativity.

Lawmakers who designed the Statute of Anne, one of the world's first copyright laws, only agreed to allow copyright-holders a monopoly over copies of their work because that monopoly was limited. The Statute of Anne established limited terms and clear fair use rights for both non-commercial and commercial purposes – limitations that gave people like Walt Disney a fair shot in the industry by enabling him to discover and publish new stories based on the raw materials of history.

Over the years, copyright has become a blunt tool. Worn down by the lobbying might of the multinational publishing industry, copyright has become a tool for the advancement of corporations rather than creators; a tool for growing the outrageous wealth of a few established creators, rather than giving platform to the many, skilled creators that populate local culture in every corner of the globe.

Culture and the media, today, have less and less to do with the ability of an artist or creator to connect with an audience, and more to do with how much money and power can be garnered from the sale of consumable products. Nowadays, the media and popular culture are owned by only a few powerful players – a few players who continue to gobble up more of our public space, our public domain, our information commons, and our rights to free expression and a free culture.

And the arrival of the Internet and the revolution in information and communication technologies has seen a rapid decline in fair use rights. As digital rights management (DRM) tools bludgeon our right to copy and share information for fair purposes, the "old guard" has effectively declared war on the public domain and legitimate non-commercial interests.

Intellectual property is facing a crisis around the world. Thousands of people have been sued by the Recording Industry Association of America as the RIAA attempts to "crack down" on Internet music "piracy". Computer patents are strangling entrants to the software market and pharmaceutical companies are using their hold over the market to sit by while millions die of curable diseases.

Although powerful, the backlash against these attacks has been tremendous. The free and open source software movement has grown rapidly so that Floss (Free/Libre Open Source Software) is now being seriously considered for "affirmative action" by developing country governments around the world.

Sixty-five million pages on the Internet link back to Creative Commons licences – all fuelled by the work of hundreds of volunteers around the world. The World Intellectual Property Association (WIPO) is under duress as high profile institutions call for the reform of an intellectual property system that has failed in fulfilling its mandate. And indigenous communities are demanding a greater stake in deciding how intellectual property rights can finally work for their own development instead of being appropriated by outsiders.

Journalists and new media practitioners are in a particularly unique situation in relation to copyright reform. Not only do they have a role in actively reporting on the rapid and massive changes occurring in the intellectual property industries, but as intellectual property "owners" they also have a vested interest in the outcome of this debate.

Will a subscription-based media company, for example, report on research that finds that the paid-for content model on the Internet is a restriction on fair use and that open access is a more sustainable business model? Does the media's stake in this debate mean that it will report fairly on the progress of open access initiatives? And will the media implement open content policies in its own strategic planning?

These are questions that will have an important role in determining who will win this war and what Africa's place in the Information Society will be. Every media organisation needs to determine its position in this debate. The way that the value of intellectual property is distributed is critical to our future.

For the first time in history, Africa has the opportunity to write its own success story. Understanding the possibilities, when one frees intellectual property from the burdens that has weighed it down over the past century, is perhaps our most critical key. ■

"Journalists and new media practitioners are in a particularly unique situation in relation to copyright reform."

A powerful, symbolic victory

Corporations have a great deal of power to speak, says ***Andrew Rens****. Parody of this speech is one of the ways in which the marginalised can make themselves heard.*

The media often lose when taking on powerful corporations in the courts, but in the case of Laugh It Off, a small culture-jamming organisation which uses trademarks to make a social point, the South African Constitutional Court upheld its right to freedom of expression against the corporate control over speech by SAB Miller.

Does a corporation have a legal right to control its public image? And how does freedom of expression affect the legal rights of corporations? In the Laugh It Off case the South African Constitutional Court ruled on the boundary between freedom of expression and a corporation's rights. Historically corporations have deployed an armory of legal claims ranging from defamation, privacy, through to copyright, to silence unwelcome speech.

Prior to the constitutional dispensation in South Africa the *Financial Mail* was prohibited from publishing information which it had obtained by surreptitiously recording a board meeting, on the basis that this act infringed the company's privacy, and that it was not justified by sufficient public interest (*Financial Mail (Pty) Ltd and others vs. Sage Holdings Ltd and another 1993 (2) SA 451 (A)*).

More recently, in May 2005 the *Mail&Guardian* was prohibited from publishing information in the "Oilgate" saga by a court order. The basis of the order was apparently that the information had allegedly been illegally obtained, and publication would violate the privacy and reputation rights of Imvume Management.

One of the reasons given for the judgment was that the *Mail&Guardian* refused to reveal its confidential sources and Imvume alleged this information was obtained illegally.

Although the Constitutional Court has made a number of important decisions on freedom of expression in the past, the LIO case was the first time that it dealt with the clash between corporate image and freedom of expression.

Although rightly regarded as a landmark judgment, it is important to understand the application and limitations of this case, particularly since it dealt with the technicalities of trademark law rather than more notorious issues of privacy or reputation. The Constitutional Court did not find that trademark law infringes freedom of expression but instead that the interpretation and application of trademark law by the lower courts were not in harmony with the right of freedom of expression in the SA Constitution.

The decision

The legal issue that the Constitutional Court had to decide on was whether the previous courts' applications of section 34 (1) (c) of the Trademarks Act infringed freedom of expression granted in the Bill of Rights. Freedom of Expression is guaranteed by section 16 of the Bill of Rights which states:

"Everyone has the right to freedom of expression, which includes:

- freedom of the press and other media;
- freedom to receive or impart information or ideas;
- freedom of artistic creativity; and
- academic freedom and freedom of scientific research."

How does this intersect with trademark law? The relevant portion of Section 34(1) (c) of the South African Trademarks Act no 194 of 1993, Act states: "The rights acquired by registration of a trademark shall be infringed by the unauthorised use in the course of trade in relation to any goods or services of a mark which is identical or similar to a trademark registered, if such trademark is well known in the Republic and the use of the said mark would be likely to take unfair advantage of, or be detrimental to, the distinctive character or the repute of the registered trademark, notwithstanding the absence of confusion or deception."

The correct approach

The Constitutional Court stated that the correct approach is to interpret section 34 (1) (c) in light of the Constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression. Properly interpreted the section requires that there must be "a likelihood of substantial economic harm" to the trademark proprietor.

SAB did not allege any facts from which a substantial likelihood of harm could be deduced. SAB had argued that an association of its trademark with racism made the likelihood of harm "self evident".

The Constitutional Court rejected this argument on the basis that a probability of substantial harm is shown by facts, and not by the discomfort of a trademark proprietor with criticism.

The Constitutional Court also rejected an argument that because the T shirts were sold they were not protected by freedom of expression but were simply a way of making money off of SAB.

The effect of this thinking would be that only the rich could speak extensively, and that freedom of expression would be relegated to the margins of society. Instead the court found that what was being sold was primarily expression.

Justice Albie Sachs, in a separate concurring judgment, discussed the role of parody in free expression. He pointed out that wealthy corporations have a great deal of power to speak, and that parody of this speech is one of the ways in which the marginalised can make themselves heard.

Even if this involves some commercial activity, it receives protection where it is primarily expressive and not commercial, as in this case in which "the parody was a takeoff, not a rip-off" [§102].

The judgment is a powerful, symbolic victory, vindicating the freedom of culture-jammers and parodists to engage consumer culture on their own terms.

It does not however guarantee protection from trademark infringement claims for the mainstream media, where cultural production is primarily for profit. It also does not circumscribe the ambit of corporate efforts to mobilise law against critical speech.

However it may have a wider effect; shortly before deadline for this piece, Telkom which had brought a defamation and copyright infringement claim against Helkom, who publish a website critical of Telkom's high rates at www.helkom.co.za, withdrew the claims. ■

See the arguments presented to the Constitutional Court at http://www.laughitoff.co.za/legal/legal.htm

Laughing It Off

In 1999 a Rhodes journalism student, Justin Nurse, experimenting with various aspects of "culture jamming", sold humorous T shirts incorporating distortions of well known logos at the 1999 National Arts Festival in Grahamstown.

This led to the formation of Laugh it Off Promotions Close Corporation, which began producing satirical T shirts, some of which mimicked trademarks used by international corporation South African Breweries (SAB).

One of the SAB beer trademarks states: "America's lusty, lively beer, Carling Black Label Beer, Brewed in South Africa." The T shirts state: "Africa's lusty, lively exploitation since 1652, Black Labour White Guilt, No regard given worldwide."

SAB applied to the Cape High Court for a court order to prevent LIO from using, making and selling the T shirts. This application was based on the trademark law. SAB claimed that the use of a mark similar to their own trademark, but in connection with accusations of racism, was inherently "likely to be detrimental to the distinctive character or the repute of the registered trademark".

The Cape High Court decided that LIO was infringing section 34 (1) (c) of the Trademarks Act and granted the court order.

LIO appealed to the Supreme Court of Appeal, the highest court in the country on all non-constitutional matters. This court stated that it was not necessary for the trademark proprietor to establish the likelihood of detriment to the repute of the marks, giving as its reason that the section does not require actual proof of financial loss as a result of the offending mark.

After concluding that Laugh it Off violated the section the Supreme Court of Appeal considered whether freedom of expression could serve as a defence and found that it did not because the shirts contained an allegation of racism, which the court likened to hate speech (hate speech is specifically excluded from the freedom of expression provision in the Constitution).

Laugh It Off then appealed to the Constitutional Court on the basis that its freedom of expression was infringed. This court heard the appeal and struck down the court order, leaving Laugh It Off free to continue to make and sell the T shirts. ■

Trademarks – a quick history

Trademarks originated with medieval guilds, which controlled the production of goods within a particular city as an early form of consumer protection.

The mark of a guild or region was an indication not only of place of origin but of quality.

Trademark law evolved so that a consumer could trust that a product came from a particular manufacturer because of the mark.

Because the purpose of trademark is to help consumers know the origin of goods, there are different classes of trademarks for different types of goods, and people can register similar trademarks for different classes of goods, thus "Star" can be used as a trademark for both pilchards and automatic pistols.

Section 34 (1) (a) and (b) prohibits the use of trademarks that are likely to confuse consumers about the origin of a product.

Some trademarks become very well known and people can take advantage of this by offering goods in a different class bearing a similar logo to the well-known mark.

Fear that the distinctiveness of a mark might be lost, even if there is no danger of confusion, gave rise to anti-dilution provisions.

It has subsequently been claimed by some courts that anti-dilution provisions operate to protect the "value" of a trademark, garnered by expensive advertising.

However, although a branding campaign invests "value" in a brand; a "brand" is not a form of intellectual property. The law does not provide any "right" to recoup the value of corporate adspend, this choice is left to the market. At most, anti-dilution provisions operate to prevent unfair free-loading on an advertising campaign.

Harnessing newsroom knowledge

The newsroom's 'memory base' is often in the form of tacit, unrecognised knowledge – which is then lost when clued-up employees move on to other jobs. ***Guy Berger*** *suggests that an appropriate content management system offers a solution.*

Nairobi's *Nation* newspaper has a sophisticated content management system (CMS); Grahamstown's *Grocott's Mail* has a patchwork of paper and computer tech. In Harare, the *Mirror* and the *Independent* newspapers fall somewhere in between.

But what all of them lack is a way to use information communication technologies for knowledgement management.

So what difference does it make? This was the research challenge put to part-time masters students at Rhodes University's School of Journalism and Media Studies.

The theoretical answer is straightforward.

1. Media are vital to the Information Society.
2. Newspapers disseminate text and photographic information – on paper, or online.
3. To convert a mass of data into meaningful information on an ongoing regular basis, they make use of knowledge.
4. This knowledge and what it works on need to be managed.

What's critical, therefore, is the media "know-how" that operates on raw materials to produce news, analysis, comment, photojournalism.

Such knowledge tools include: news sense, judgement and ethics; awareness of media law, company style and editorial policy; finding sources (eg: phone numbers); understanding the where, how and why of research in physical and virtual archives.

Thus, the performance of a media enterprise has much to do with how it manages its knowledge tools and the associated raw materials – and what physical or electronic technologies it adopts in manufacturing the final products.

Linked to this framework of managing knowledge, there are a host of other management considerations:

- workflow management
- performance management
- content management
- asset management
- digital rights management

Without optimum functioning of all these as systems, a news organisation will have a knowledge management system that limps along – at best.

It's worth noting that you can have a CMS – but this does not necessarily include a system for managing performance or assets. Likewise, you can have a workflow system that doesn't provide for content repurposing.

In other words, a media house can have isolated parts of all these management functionalities without the whole package. A total integrated system (sometimes called "enterprise content management") is still lacking in most media worldwide.

Yet knowledge management means exploiting all these management systems. And more.

It often includes – articulated with the other systems – technologies like an intranet which can host editorial policies, style guides or shared contact numbers.

Observes Rhodes MA researcher Brian Garman: "It is the intranet that converts a CMS from a glorified workflow system into a good knowledge management system."

An intranet requires effective capture, storage, retrieval and use of information in such a way that it can be used as knowledge to enrich the organisation. At root, this depends on a knowledge culture in the newsroom.

According to another MA researcher, Rashweat Mukundu: "All these issues border on policy, which should be preceded by consultation and research."

To assess the state-of-play in eight African case studies, with a view to making policy and ICT recommendations, the MA team has been out in the newsrooms doing research. So far they've surveyed *The Post* (Zambia), *Guardian* (Tanzania); *Monitor* (Uganda); *Grocotts Mail* (Grahamstown, SA); *Mirror*; *Independent* (Zimbabwe); *Nation* (Kenya) and *The Namibian* (Windhoek).

This activity, made possible by the FreeVoice Foundation, has found that from a knowledge management point of view, there is a vast store of unrealised value in many newsrooms. But old habits and technologies will need to be changed if knowledge management is to be exploited.

Here are some findings:

Journalistic practice

- Hard copy knowledge resources like style guides are ignored in some newsrooms, and not even online editorial policies are being accessed. The intranet at one paper was found to be "a white elephant" by MA researcher Sizani Weza.
- Journalists seem to make little use of libraries – hard copy or online.
- Journalists are reluctant to pool contact details of some sources.
- Knowledge transfer to new employees is tied to individual mentors, rather than to documented organisational knowledge.
- However, journalists are very keen to see new systems that will improve the management and performance of their media houses.

Editorial origination and quality control

- There are often insufficient computers for journalists to use, inhibiting the use of technology for knowledge management activities such as online communication and research.
- Tools like electronic spellcheckers are not systematically used, and version tracking is often not available.
- Co-ordination between advertising and editorial is often a delayed and paper-based business; with the result that story lengths are not pre-specified in terms of available space.
- Time is then wasted in cutting stories that are too long for layout – although in some cases the longer versions do go online where they make for a website that is richer than the print product.

"It's pure management to ensure that journalists use libraries and style guides."

Storage and retrieval

- Where there is no CMS, information is stored sans "meta-data" – ie: without the categorisations that make for easy retrieval or automated publishing to diverse platforms.
- Some media do not have backup systems for electronically-saved information.
- Electronic indexing of photographs is a problem.
- The newsroom's "memory base" is often in the form of tacit, unrecognised knowledge – which is then lost when clued-up employees move on to other jobs.

Publishing

- Some websites (if they exist at all) are done by hand, through cut-and-paste and via floppy disk transfer. Sometimes these sites have extra information (in that stories are often shortened for the print paper); but there is no sign of pre-planning for special depth or volume treatments of dedicated content.
- The notion that information and images are assets that can be sold online is not being developed.

Of the newsrooms studied, the *Nation* is by far the most elaborated in terms of systems and technologies. But even here, as researcher Aamera Jiwaji notes: "A knowledge management system would build on the current CMS, increase convergence between print and other media outlets, and improve efficiency in the newspaper."

Doing knowledge management is complicated stuff. Consider this definition by PK Ahmed (*Learning through Knowledge Management*, 2002), for whom the term means "the coming together of organisational processes, information processing technologies, organisational strategies and culture for the enhanced management and leverage of human knowledge and learning to the benefit of the company".

Apply that complexity to newsrooms, and to the related management systems which may also draw (at least in part) on technology and you have a hefty matrix to handle.

Meanwhile, the whole panoply is not a panacea for all problems. It's pure management – not specifically knowledge management – to ensure that journalists use libraries and style guides.

On the other hand, if media companies are going to harness the full power of ICTs, knowledge management is an issue whose time is coming as surely as tech up-take continues.

"So what?" – this is one story that needs to be anticipated. ■

For the full research report click on "research" at www.highwayafrica.ru.ac.za

Some definitions

Workflow management systems. The circuit of routines and technologies that move raw data (press releases, interview notes, reports, photo images, etc.) through stages of processing until they reach the target audience.

For example, there are software programmes and places for email, telephony, word-processing, image-editing, layout and design, circulation, web publishing.

Performance management systems. Questions covered here include: who misses deadlines; is the whole paper heading to be late; whose copy needs the most subbing; who forgets to spell-check their work; whose stories consistently score in excellence or make page one?

Content management systems (CMS). When all products are reduced to digital data, the result is generic "content" which can be converted from one format to another and/or automatically output to different platforms like web, cellphone, wire agency, print, etc.

Asset management. What can be valorised, ie: used for commercial transactions to generate money? Archives? Original full-length documents or interviews? Photographs? Syndicatable stories?

Digital rights management. This covers questions of intellectual property and copyright. Can agency copy been included on a website? Do freelancers get paid more for repurposed content?

Diasporic journalism

'The Zimbabwe crisis' since the 1990s has resulted in an estimated three million Zimbabweans leaving for South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and the US, says ***Tawana Kupe***. Among these are many journalists, now operating beyond the borders of the country, but focusing their energies and stories on Zimbabwe, still.

A scene straight out of Animal Farm?

Zimbabwe is one of the few countries in Africa that in 2005 does not have private- and community-owned radio stations despite the Broadcasting Services Act of 2002 which takes into account advances in new technologies and regulates them in advance! Still the only service is state-controlled Zimbabwe Broadcasting Holdings.

In the last three years the government closed down four newspapers including the longest-surviving, privately-owned *Daily News*.

There is strict licensing of publications, media houses and individual journalists under the euphemistically-known Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act! The Act is better known for its protection of government secrecy and the privacy of powerful ruling party and government officials.

And the government has attempted to censor the Internet by procuring monitoring and filtering equipment or asking Internet service providers to play a watchdog role and preserve communications passing through their system in case they are needed for investigation. Indications are that the government has also purchased sophisticated jamming radio jamming equipment from China.

Almost all foreign correspondents have either been deported or have been refused renewal of permits and have had to leave or they are selectively allowed in after hefty accreditation fees for restricted periods and kept under watch.

Zimbabwe also has in place an extensive government-controlled media empire made up of two television channels, four radio stations, two daily newspapers, four weekly newspapers and a few monthly newspapers and magazines.

For much of Zimbabwe's 25 years of independence the government has enjoyed a virtual monopoly over media serving captive publics.

Besides the government-controlled empire there are three privately-owned newspaper groups publishing one daily (with very low circulation), two business and financial weeklies and two Sunday papers.

In price, content and distribution these papers are aimed at affluent audiences and the topics and discursive practices are intended for an audience with high levels of education.

In short, therefore, just in relation to circulation, reach, range of languages used, topics or issues, the government media is the mass media which is accessible to larger publics across the country. The privately-owned media, or "independent" media, is the media for the elite and at the same the public sphere for alternative and critical voices.

Jurgen Habermas, in his work translated into English as *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere,* advanced the notion that for a democracy to function there should be a "public sphere" in which all are equally able to participate through rational discourse on public affairs. This open public sphere should not be controlled by the state or the market and should ideally, allow all rational voices on public matters to be heard, no matter how dissenting.

Habermas has been criticised for idealising the public sphere and critics point out that historically there never was one public sphere for all in a society which operated to include every voice.

Diasporic journalism

What I am calling the "mediated public spheres of the Zimbabwean diaspora" consist of *radio stations* based outside Zimbabwe, *online news sites*, *activist websites* which carry news and advocacy material, *a weekly newspaper* published in Britain and South Africa and distributed formally in Zimbabwe, South Africa, Botswana and the UK.

They essentially aim to provide news and information that the state-controlled media is deemed to suppress; provide a platform for Zimbabweans in the diaspora to debate and discuss the crisis and what needs to be done; to mobilise for democracy and also to provide some arts, music, culture and sport journalism focusing especially on Zimbabwean and South African musicians.

They also set themselves up as "alternative" and "independent" media.

These mediated public spheres have taken or ascribed to themselves the role of being "the voice" of the Zimbabwean diaspora as well of Zimbabweans inside the country. The weekly newspaper, for example, calls itself the "Voice of the Voiceless".

A not unimportant role is of course the quest to present to global publics, including those in Africa who support Mugabe, "what really is happening in Zimbabwe".

Looking particularly at the radio station *SW Radio Africa* based in London, the news websites *NewZimbabwe.Com* hosted from the UK and to a lesser extent *Zimonline* hosted in South Africa and the London based newspaper weekly *The Zimbabwean,* a number of things are common to these "mediated public spheres":

- They are owned by Zimbabweans in the "diaspora" even though they might funded by international NGOs and other aid donors who fund governance and freedom of expression initiatives. They are in a precarious financial position.
- The media is available in Zimbabwe electronically or physically in the case of the paper.
- They have *multiple publics* which include Zimbabweans in Zimbabwe "to cure them from state propaganda", Zimbabweans in the diaspora, Africans in Africa but in particular in South Africa, global publics interested in Zimbabwe and other media/journalists.
- The journalists are Zimbabweans who left Zimbabwe because of the "crisis" and often after political harassment for their journalistic work.
- They have small editorial staffs because of limited resources. To offset this lack of capacity they engage regular columnists and contributors. Males dominate in terms of staff and columnists.
- The content they carry is the typical mix of com-

The Zimbabwe crisis

Politically, the crisis manifests itself in:

- three national elections that have been heavily contested as not free and fair by the most serious nationwide opposition party to emerge since independence in 1980, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), civil society and sections of the international community especially North America and Europe;
- legislated restrictions on civil liberties including the right to free association and assembly;
- political polarisation;
- violence on the opposition and its supporters; and
- the general absence of the rule of law.

To protest what they see as a serious deviation from "democratic norms" and universal human rights the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the European Union countries imposed personal travel restrictions on those top Zanu (PF) leaders it deemed responsible. In its defense the Zimbabwean ruling elite and ruling party claim to be a victim of imperialist aggression because they have dared take back the land seized by colonialists in the 19th century and taken measures to defend sovereignty and self determination. In their words "Zimbabwe will never be a colony again".

Economically the crisis manifests in:

- hyper-inflation, the second highest in the world at 127% (but down from a peak of 623% in 2003);
- lack of foreign currency;
- massive disinvestment;
- collapse of productive industries;
- shortages of basic commodities;
- inability to purchase inputs for manufacturing and industry, including fuel;
- collapse of the agricultural sector because of a "fast track land reform programme which turned into a 'land grab'" from white commercial farmers and multinational corporations. And in turn the land reform programme has lead to a decline in food production and food scarcity;
- withdrawal of donor support.

Socially, the crisis manifests in:

- the high costs of basic necessities when they can be found;
- high costs of collapsing social services including health and education;
- unemployment estimated at abut 70%;
- high prevalence of HIV/Aids and high rate of death.

Chris Kirchhoff

"The government has attempted to censor the Internet... or asked Internet service providers to play a watchdog role..."

mercially-driven mass media news and information, exposés or investigative journalism, analysis and debate, sex, crime, sport, scandal, gossip and music.

- Columnists and contributors generate debates which can often demonstrate a remarkable degree of sustained engagement and presentation of differing views. They also draw a lot of material from NGOs and other organisations that are campaigning for democracy in Zimbabwe.
- Although they claim to proved "factual" and "objective" content they often take up an advocacy role in opposition to the "propaganda" of the state-controlled media. This puts them in line with the MDC and in opposition to Zanu-PF, which at points, contradicts their claims to being sites of independent and professional journalism.
- However, they generate a lot of debate on the issues they cover – particularly online because of the greater access diasporans have to the Internet. To some extent they prove some of the theories about the power of the Internet to act as an arena of the public sphere.
- They break stories which are then picked up by the media in Zimbabwe.
- They have a range of sources in Zimbabwe which include ruling party and government officials as well as the opposition and civil society. As a result their news reports have a great diversity of views and opinions. This is a remarkable achievement made possible by the use of cellphones and email which are not controlled by the state.
- They have a strategy of sustaining critical commentary and through the use of cartoon strips ridicule, lampoon and lambaste the Mugabe government and Mbeki positions.
- They have managed to attain credibility with the mainstream media across the world as sources of news on Zimbabwe. Leading media outlets often quote them as sources. In part this is because foreign media often cannot report from Zimbabwe because of the restrictions on foreign journalists and the expulsions of the last five years. ■

Newspaper, alive and in exile

Every week the 15 000 copies ot the Zimbabwean are snapped up within hours. ***Brett Lock*** *talks to editor Wilf Mbanga in exile in London.*

When shadowy figures started scaling his walls and creeping around his garden in the dead of the night, journalist Wilf Mbanga knew that it was not safe to stay in Zimbabwe much longer. A founder of Associated Newspapers of Zimbabwe (ANZ), he and his reporters had been subject to phone taps, harassment and arrest, and the clampdown on the press by President Robert Mugabe's regime was getting worse. Now, even after he'd left ANZ to become an independent communications consultant, the harassment continued.

It all started in 1999 when Mbanga had become tired and disillusioned with the state-controlled media. So together with a band of investors, he founded the *Daily News*, an independent newspaper which dared to criticise Mubabe's regime. Their motto was "telling it like it is" and the paper's uncompromising commitment to reporting without waivering and embellishment soon saw it become the largest daily newspaper in the country.

Ironically, Mbanga had spent a lot of time with Robert Mugabe in the mid 70s and they'd been on quite friendly terms. Mbanga had been the first journalist to write a biography of Mugabe in the press. He remembers that besides a mutual interest in Elvis Presley's music, he was impressed with Mugabe's vision for a non-racial Zimbabwe based on economic and social justice.

On independence day, 1980, as Prince Charles lowered the British flag and the Zimbabean flag was raised, Mbanga remembers being in tears. Finally, he thought, there will be genuine democracy and respect for human rights. Like others, however, he soon felt betrayed by Zanu-PF's abandonment of these principles.

Veteran British campaigner Peter Tatchell, who once helped fundraise for Zimbabwean liberation groups in the 1970s, but now most famous for his repeated attempted citizens arrests of Mugabe tells a similar story: "I have a copy of Zanu's 1970s political programme," says Tatchell. "Its goals were a socialist democracy with a free press and workers' rights. That is why I supported Mugabe and Zanu in their liberation struggle. It is also why I now oppose the present tyranny. Mugabe has abandoned the left values he once stood for."

As the chaos of social and economic collapse, government corruption and political violence became impossible to ignore, Mugabe realised the media needed to be brought to heel. It started with ➡

arresting the newspaper vendors on the street, and then the journalists and the editors and soon Mbanga himself saw the inside of a jail cell. By 2003 the government closed down Mbanga's paper.

With increasing fears for his safety and that of his family, Mbanga was pleased to take up an offer in 2003 – just a few months before the paper was finally banned – to spend a year in the Netherlands at the Stichting Vrijplaats, an initiative of the city of Tiburg. The Vrijplaats project was set up in the wake of the fatwa against Salman Rushdie as a haven for writers and journalists fleeing persecution in their own countries.

Soon he was writing a column in the local press for *Brabants Dagblad* called, quite aptly, "I write as I please". Everything went smoothly until one of Mbanga's columns about Hilary Anderson, a reporter for the BBC programme *Panorama*, was republished on the Netherlands Institute of Southern Africa (NIZA) website which is monitored by the Zimbabwean government.

Panorama had been critical of the government's apparent hijacking and militarising of the national Your Service training programme. Soon NIZA got a letter from the Zimbabwean government complaining about the story.

"The *Panorama* story was correct," states Mbanga, adding that the *Daily News* had run a similar story during its heyday. It was stories like these that ultimately led to the paper's closure.

Reflecting on the closure in one of his columns, Mbanga noted: "My newspaper was a true mirror of Zimbabwean society, with all its ugly warts. When the government looked in it, they didn't like what they saw. But instead of doing something about themselves, they smashed the mirror."

With the mirror smashed, suddenly Mbanga found himself "an enemy of the people of Zimbabwe" and realised that at the end of his year in the Netherlands it would not be safe to return home. He decided to head to London where he and his wife could get a visa on the basis of her UK ancestry.

It was in the UK that he noticed a gap in the market. He realised, that like himself, thousands of Zimbabweans "in the diaspora", as he puts it, were cut off from the news at home. What's more, since the closure of the *Daily News* the pool of independent news sources in Zimbabwe was getting smaller and smaller. It was in London that he hatched the plan to launch a Zimbabwean newspaper-in-exile: *The Zimbabwean.* The editorial office would be in the UK, but it would also be printed in Johannesburg for distribution in Zimbabwe.

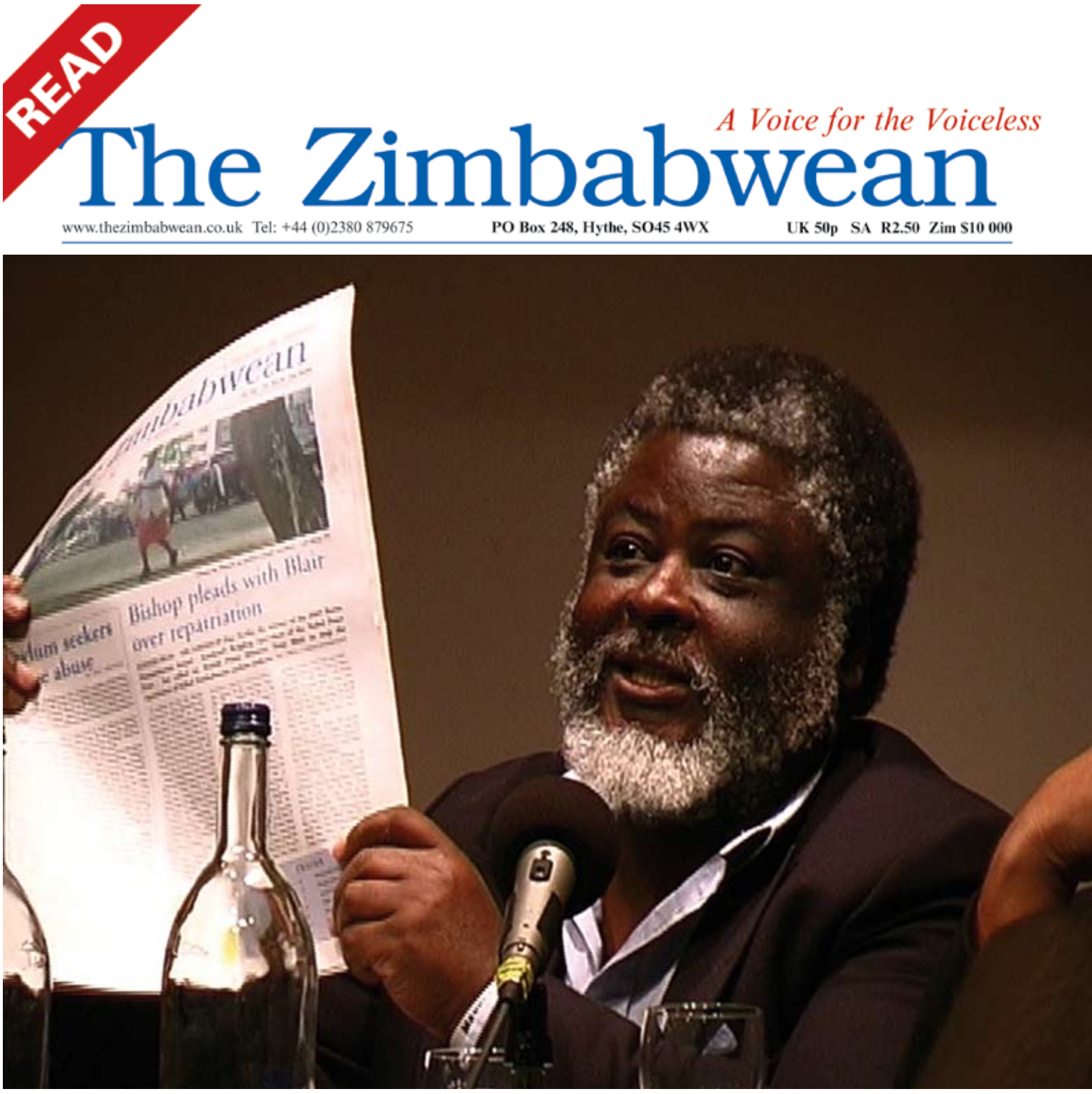
Every week, the 15 000 copies shipped from Jo'burg to Zimbabwe are snapped up within hours, along with the 12 000 held back for distribution in South Africa and 1 000 more sent to Botswana, Swaziland and Mozambique. It is also printed in the UK and is available through selected news agents around the country.

So organised is *The Zimbabwean's* distribution system that when I tell Mbanga my postcode, he taps away at his keyboard and within seconds tells me my nearest stockist. In addition, they have international subscribers and the paper is sent to members of parliament, embassies and universities around the world.

When I mention I'm writing this piece for *Rhodes Journalism Review*, Mbanga quips "ah yes, your Guy Berger was one of our first subscribers". It's as if he's come to knows all his subscribers personally as he's nurtured the paper's circulation.

This is impressive enough, but what really blows one away is that the paper is run almost entirely by volunteers. Over 50 Zimbabwean journalists from around the world have volunteered their services to get the paper off the ground. "Even the accountant volunteers his time," Mbanga tells me.

Of course, none of this would have been possible



"Another benefit to this extended reach is that the information becomes more accessible to the Western media, which Wilf Mbanga (above) says, is not without its faults and blind spots."

a few years ago. The advent of desk top publishing and now the Internet has made things possible today – on a shoestring – that few would have imagined a decade ago.

Mbanga FTPs (file transfer protocol) the finished layouts to the printers in Jo'burg. "I have no idea how it all works," he says, "but hours later the paper is on the streets of Johannesburg and on it way to Harare."

A twist in the law – for now – allows *The Zimbabwean* to be sold in Zimbabwe without a licence. Because the company that owns and prints it is registered in South Africa, it is technically a South African newspaper. "If we tried to register in Zimbabwe, we wouldn't get a license," says Mbanga. He's also not sure how long they'll get away with distributing the paper. Already the state-run media has launched a counter-offensive. Cartoons have been printed depicting Mbanga kneeling in front of (British Prime Minister) Tony Blair.

"They've denounced me, they've denounced the paper," says Mbanga of the Mugabe regime's response to *The Zimbabwean*. "But," he adds proudly, "they've never disputed the facts!"

While it is obvious that the regime would try to characterise the paper as anti-government, Mbanga stresses that this is not the case. "We reserve the right to criticise everybody," he says. "It is the truth that Mugabe is causing the suffering in Zimbabwe. We are by no means an MDC (Movement for Democratic Change, the official opposition) mouthpiece, though because they are denied access to the media in Zimbabwe we try to compensate for that, and for the fact that they're demonised in the government press.

"All we want to do is inform people about what's going on so that they, in turn, can make informed choices. We are merely asserting the right of all Zimbabweans to freedom of expression and access to information. A news blackout is dangerous for any society."

In his efforts to promote the values of a truly free press, Mbanga says he tries to incorporate a wide range of points of view and to guarantee a right of reply – even to the government.

However, concerned that the distribution of the paper in Zimbabwe was always under threat – and of course to extend *The Zimbabwean's* global reach – the paper launched in cyberspace in March this year, with technical assistance from the Guardian Foundation.

"We have purposely kept it simple, quick to download and easy to access – especially for people in Zimbabwe where there is limited bandwidth," he says. "The entire newspaper will be available on the website free of charge."

The website – www.thezimbabwean.co.uk – will

Should governments own newspapers?

by Peter Schellschmidt

Media debates in Africa of the last two decades or so have produced some widely accepted key standards:

- The indispensability of an independent and pluralistic press (Windhoek Delaration of 1991), and
- The need to transform state broadcasters into public broadcasters (African Charter on Broadcasting 2001).

This again has influenced to a large extent the formulation of the "Declaration on Freedom of Expression in Africa", adopted in 2002 by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). This declaration has received much acclaim (although less attention than it deserves) as one of the most comprehensive global documents on freedom of expression and freedom of the media issues.

But, surprisingly, even this document is relatively silent (or vague) on an issue that has received very little attention even in media circles: what to do with state-owned newspapers?

State-owned newspapers are not particular to African countries. They used to be a regular feature in countries of the former communist bloc in Eastern Europe and they still exist in China and North Korea as well as some other authoritarian regimes in Asia. But they never played a significant role in democratic societies in Europe and the Americas. But in quite a number of African countries they still do. Obviously, some parts of the colonial heritage die very hard.

The African Commission's Declaration, mentioned above, makes reference to state-owned print media in just one sentence: "Any print media published by a public authority should be protected adequately against undue political interference."

Measured against the mostly very concise stipulations of the other parts of the declaration this sounds fairly vague: what is "adequate" and what is "undue"? And is there (or should there be) anything like "due" political interference at all?

Even in most of those countries which still maintain state-owned newspapers, the consensus prevails that the print media – as opposed to broadcasting – does need little or no regulation. Basically company legislation and some kind of competition legislation will do, sometimes with some additional restrictions on foreign ownership.

Where print media need to be registered with governments it is just a formal process with no restrictions attached. The famous exception to that rule are the notorious strangulations of the media in Zimbabwe.

But why then do some governments still feel that they should operate print media? Is it an legitimate interest of governments to maintain their own means of communication and should it stay that way?

These were some of the questions that were debated during a brainstorming workshop which took place in May 2005 near Stellenbosch in South Africa. The Media Project for Southern Africa of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation had invited some of the most renowned media scholars and media activists from Southern African countries for that purpose.

The group came up with a joint position paper, called "Memorandum on the transformation of state newspapers", which is quoted in its essential parts here (see column on the right). But the group at the same time cautioned that this "first memorandum… needs further in-depth debate, including on the future role of state-owned news agencies".

And that is exactly what it is: a first position paper for much needed further debate. Or, to put it this way: an invitation to actively participate in that debate, which is still very much in the beginning stages.

Memorandum on the transformation of state newspapers

- State controlled/owned newspapers as a legitimate tool of communication for governments have outlived their purpose in view of the multitude and plurality of independent media voices.
- Governments' responsibility to inform citizens on government issues is best served through their professional public relations departments.
- Governments have the responsibility to create an enabling environment for a free press and must ensure a level playing field for all sectors, eg: in regard to use of government facilities, access to capital, taxation, (duty free) import of newsprint and equipment as well as the widest possible distribution of newspapers. All government advertising should be placed by a commercial agency (selected through a tender process) according to criteria of impact. Government publications should not carry commercial advertising.
- Governments should not own, control or operate newspapers.
- Viable state newspapers should be privatised. This process should be based on:
  - decisions by an institution that operates at arm's length from government;
  - documentation submitted by the bidder in regard to editorial independence;
  - professional quality standards;
  - the avoidance of monopolies and undesirable foreign ownership with a view to increasing media diversity and pluralism.
- The process of privatisation will take different forms according to specific circumstances in the various countries (eg: vibrancy of private market, number and types of state newspapers):
  - State newspapers should not necessarily be sold to the highest bidder.
  - Additional conditions could be set to ensure editorial independence through boards of trustees and/or editorial staff rights in appointing top editorial staff.
  - Shares could be offered to citizens in general in certain (limited) amounts for each individual/group, with restricted rights of resale, to ensure broad-based ownership.
  - Staff and management could be offered a buy out.
  - An appropriate solution might also be a mix of the above options.
- Wherever such a transformation is not possible due to lack of political will, the danger of creating a new (now private) monopoly, or no buyer being found, as a transitional solution state newspapers should be transferred to a public legal entity. This entity must be accountable to the public at large through a board protected against any political or economic influence and appointed in an open and transparent manner involving the participation of civil society.
- Whenever the information needs of citizens are not sufficiently catered for by the mainstream press, media development agencies should be put in place to promote community and local media. Such agencies must be independent even if public funds are used.

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also act as a complementary source of information to the print edition.

Another benefit to this extended reach is that the information becomes more accessible to the Western media, which Mbanga says, is not without its faults and blind spots.

"Since 9/11," Mbanga says, "the world's attention is elsewhere. Nobody's interested in Africa anymore. Mugabe is free to do as he pleases, nobody is watching him."

What's more, Mbanga says, the Western media often get it wrong, or get a distorted perception. Part of the problem is that Western journalists are often banned from Zimbabwe, but even so they've unwittingly helped to perpetuate the myth that Mugabe takes farms away from whites and gives them to blacks.

"It's nothing of the sort," Mbanga exclaims. 'He's taking land from white farmers and giving it to his cronies!"

A free Zimbabwean press operating on the international stage will help to remedy these deficiencies, as the Zimbabwean situation is reported around the world by Zimbaweans.

Their mission?

"To produce and distribute a newspaper dedicated to freedom of expression and access to information for all peoples of Zimbabwe, founded on the sacred principles of journalism – fairness and honesty. To play a role in opposing everything offensive to basic human decency and hostile to peace, in order that Zimbabwe may return to the path of wisdom and sanity, and become once again an honourable nation, governed by honourable people with due respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law."

They appear to be doing a fantastic job – running a world-class newspaper on a shoestring – and FTP! ■

Some useful websites

The following sites offer important information on the state of the media in Zimbabwe:

The Zimbabwean – http://www.thezimbabwean.co.uk/
Stichting Vrijplaats – http://www.koppenhinksteeg.nl/
NIZA – http://www.niza.nl
New Zimbabwe – http://www.newzimbabwe.com/
Wilf Mbanga Profile – http://people.africadatabase.org/en/person/14023.html
Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe – http://www.mmpz.org.zw

Democratising science

Southern Africa is facing important decisions about genetically modified organisms, but how will nonscientists understand their choices if the media don't inform them, asks ***Pascal Mwale****.*


Chris Kirchhoff

In Africa, biotechnology raises hopes, fears and suspicion in both individuals and diverse groups of people because it has enormous implications for the continent.

Africa's involvement in the global biotechnology movement has led to a shift in location, from the periphery to the centre of the global technology movement, making some people nurse the hope that Africa might cease to be an underdog.

Unlike other kinds of science and technology, biotechnology allows Africa to leap-frog; the operating knowledge is not contained only within the Euro-American cluster. African scientists, for example, are investigating various aspects of the 80 000 cells that will collectively define the genetic "characteristics and proclivities" of every person on the globe.

This repositioning of Africa in the global biotechnology movement and on the world market has enormous implications for the development of the continent, potentially leading to significant changes in global power politics and important shifts in international economic and trade relations.

In Southern Africa, South Africa plays a leading role in biotechnology. South Africa is at the centre of the controversy surrounding genetically modified (GM) cropping, stem cell research and cloning, among others, providing a regional platform for public debates that originated outside Africa.

South Africa, as the regional leader of biotechnological innovations, also becomes the crucible for testing new models of international agricultural economics as well as the initial market for multinational companies' ventures into biotechnology in Southern Africa.

South Africa was the first Southern African country to conduct experiments on GM cropping in 1997 where crops, such as GM cotton, have been grown commercially. The South African government gave its approval for commercial activities on GM maize cropping in 1998. The South African National Biosafety Strategy was published in 2001.

Futhi, a much improved South African dairy cow, was the first higher mammal to be cloned on the African continent in 2003. South Africa is currently engaged in cutting edge research on human migration patterns based on tracking of mitochondrial deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA).

In spite of all these life-changing decisions and activities at the level of macro policy and within science communities, Southern African societies – just like their counterparts in the developed world in the post-Human Genome Project era – are yet to fully discover science.

After the dismantling of both dictatorial and racist regimes in Southern Africa, a crucial need arose in new democracies of the region for the democratisation of science. Democracy makes it imperative for whole societies in the region to understand and actively participate in developments in science and technology. For example, the Mandela government in 1994 made the democratisation of science and technology a priority in post-apartheid South Africa (Joubert, 2001: 316). This need necessitates increasing scholarly attention to "the problem of science communication" arising at the intersection between science and democracy in the region.

Public understanding of science

One significant dimension of the problem is how nonscientists can be said to *understand*, and effectively *talk*, or even debate, about developments in science and technology. Various models that assumed scientific literacy have hitherto been tried and discarded because they were misleading. A barrage of criticisms leveled at the "deficit model", the "rational choice model" and the "contextualist model" lead to doubts about these hitherto major models of science communication. In the developed world, such as the US, American laypeople equally exhibit little knowledge and awareness of latest developments in biotechnology and its products.

I think one preliminary task in studies on how nonscientists understand and talk about science would be to look at what goes on behind the scenes, as it were, of science news making. Minimally, such a task would actually involve looking at the relationships between key social actors in science communication such as the laypeople, science news writers, scientists, and, to some extent, public science spokespersons of, say, state-run science institutions, the food and health industry, and multinational biotech companies.

It is the presence of the laypeople that makes these relationships complex, and hence interesting for study. Thus, the question of the democratisation of science is challenging because it is fundamentally about the participation of nonscientists in science and technology. A plethora of somewhat dubious assumptions about the nature and scope of the scientific knowledge of nonscientists and their attitudes towards science are part of the problematic of "public understanding of science". But, we really begin to appreciate the complexity of these relationships when we also bring into the picture the media and scientists, traditionally, two categories of professionals in a paradoxical relationship marked mostly with uneasiness, distrust, and suspicion.

Laypeople and science communication

Laypeople are key social actors in science communication for at least three reasons. First, laypeople are the major consumers of products of science and technology. They ought to have a say in major decisions and activities of scientists and relevant government agencies. Second, scientists need the goodwill of laypeople in order to get public support and secure funding from the public sector for their research. Third, recent surveys have shown that social perceptions of laypeople and those of the media are in approximate alignment with science news stories. In other words, laypeople play an important role in determining which science news stories make it to print or air. On the whole, laypeople, the media, and scientists and government affect each other reciprocally in the making of science news.

But, laypeople's participation in science and science communication is beset by a number of factors, three of which are the most worrisome: ignorance, language barriers, and resource-poverty.

1. In 2004, an HSRC client survey of a representative sample of 7 000 adults showed that about 80% of South African laypeople did not know, or had no knowledge of, biotechnology. An average of 73% did not know if genetic modifications were either positive or negative (*HSRC Review*, 2005, p2). The vast majority of laypeople does not have any science education background. General illiteracy and innumeracy are not uncommon disadvantages of laypeople in Southern Africa, and Africa at large. These disadvantages contribute largely to the laypeople's general lack of interest in things scientific.
2. The language of scientists is alien to most laypeople as well as to journalists. A sociocultural-linguistically diverse country like South Africa, with its 11 official languages, presents a formidable challenge for translators of scientific findings, usually from Latinist English.
3. Apart from these cognitive and linguistic challenges, there are socio-structural obstacles. The majority of laypeople live in poor, remote rural communities that are marked with poor information and communication technologies (ICTs).

Scientists and science communication

Scientists are key social actors in science communication because they are the producers of science. Of direct relevance is the historical fact that it was mostly scientists who initiated science journalism in the United States in the 1920s, in order to advance "public scientific knowledge" and attract more funding for their research. Science journalism is a key component of science communication. Nevertheless, today the role of scientists in science communication is compromised by at least four factors.

1. Scientists are not trained to communicate with nonscientists. Scientists are generally seen as bad, ineffective science communicators "especially when the audience is a general public" (Weigold, 2001, p172).
2. Scientists do not realise, or accept, they have the *responsibility* to communicate their findings to a broader community than the scientific community. They see communication as someone else's responsibility. They are reluctant to talk with nonscientists, afraid of being misunderstood, misquoted or misrepresented. Scientists dread science news writers, fearing the latter might sensationalise and distort scientific findings, and then report them inaccurately. Generally, scientists are concerned that science news writers change scientific findings as they frame stories to make them interesting or entertaining for their usually nonscientist readers. Framing introduces substantial change in scientific findings, leading to bias and error in science stories.
3. Most developing world scientists face the additional challenge of conducting research and communicating in a second or third language.
4. Science institutions are not only resource-poor but also have weak infrastructure. This poses constraints on information-sharing. Moreover, science institutions have the tendency of being aloof and protectionist, sometimes preventing scientists from speaking with laypeople and science news writers. They tend to treat scientific findings as "a precious commodity" (Khanna, 2001: 54-5).

Science writers and science communication

Science news writers are key social actors in science communication for a variety of reasons, chief of which is that they make an effort to explain science

"In spite of all these life-changing decisions and activities, Southern African societies are yet to fully discover science."

to nonscientists. The media are an important source of scientific knowledge and information for nonscientists worldwide. In South Africa, the 2004 HSRC client survey showed that the media comes second to the university as "the most trusted institution to provide reliable information on biotechnology"(*HSRC Review*, 2005: 2). And yet, most developing world media – Southern African media included – lack expertise, interest, commitment and experience in science news writing.

Most science news writers do not have any science education background (Khanna, 2001: 145). Few editors have a science education background. The media depict a general lack of interest in and commitment to science news, as evidenced in poor quality and inadequate coverage of scientific and health issues, and in the virtual absence of science desks in most news organisations. Science news is neither given top priority nor is it focused on nonscientists' concerns. For Marina Joubert, a science communication advocate and consultant with more than 15 years experience in the field, South Africa faces the additional challenge of "apartheid" media: at the one extreme being poor and unsophisticated, catering for large but poor, mainly rural and black audiences, and at the other extreme being rich, sophisticated, catering for a small but affluent, mainly urban and white readership. She says the yearly Science and Technology Journalism Awards have seen "few (and poor quality) entries from community radio, rural press, and black language media… Competition winners thus far come from a relatively small number of media outlets aimed at the country's limited First-World readership."

Conclusion

Thinking like this about the complex interplay of certain key social actors in science communication enables us to begin to see a clearer and broader picture of what is actually implied in the vogue "public understanding of science" – a problematic catchall for effective ways for nonscientists to make sense of and talk about scientific issues. Science communication involves multiple players who use diverse ways to contribute to science knowledge. Science communication is not the prerogative of any one particular group of science stakeholders. It also begins to signal to us what the challenges for science communicators might be in this region. ■

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Chris Kirchhoff

Generating heat

Love them or hate them, the proliferation of tabloids in South Africa has set the cat among the pigeons in the world of media, says ***Ray Joseph****.*

In newsrooms and in the editorial columns of traditional broadsheets, around dinner tables, in pubs, over coffee – in fact, wherever journalists and other media people meet – the subject is the flavour of the month.

It is a debate that has generated more heat – and at times anger – than virtually any other issue for many years. Emotions are running high: there is no ambivalence, with both critics and supporters arguing their points of view with passion and vigour.

Yet what is being forgotten in the middle of this – at times, very elitist – debate are the readers of tabloids.

Editors, journalists, academics and media commentators all have something to say. But all too often their withering and cleverly written commentaries are more concerned with ripping the tabloids apart than trying to interrogate the reasons for their huge sales and ever-growing readerships. Or asking what lessons can be learned by the broadsheets, whose circulations have been stagnant or at best in some cases, risen moderately.

Earlier this year, I worked briefly as newseditor of the *Daily Voice*, a new Independent Newspapers-owned tabloid in the Western Cape.

With a career in the print media spanning over 30 years as a reporter, newseditor, editor, publisher and a teacher of journalism, I jumped at the offer of a short-term contract during the start-up and launch phase, seeing it as an opportunity to learn about the world of tabloids from the inside.

I do not put myself up as an apologist or champion of the tabloids. Nor do I propose to defend some of the excesses that I personally find hard to stomach and impossible to justify.

But, while some of the criticism of some of the tabloids is valid – like topless page three girls and the stereotyping that too often happens – there is far more to the overall package.

In particular, they resonate with millions of ordinary, working-class people. The reason for this, I believe, is simple: the tabloids are talking to ordinary people about their lives and their issues, about things that affect them, often with humour, in a language they understand and can relate to.

They are championing their readers' causes, dealing with things that are important to them, and taking on the authorities on their behalf.

Equally important is that the tabloids are telling these stories through the experiences of ordinary people and using simple devices, like the excellent use of pictures, infographics, boxes and sidebars to break potentially complicated stories into easy-to-digest, bite-sized pieces.

The result is that millions of readers, blissfully unaware of "the great tabloid debate" are voting with their pockets and buying the "red tops" in their millions each week.

The majority of these readers are people who never bought newspapers before. Need proof? Check out the latest ABCs and it is plain to see that while established publications have either held or (generally) enjoyed modest growths in circulation, the new tabloids are booming.

Far from cannibalising readers from existing titles, the tabloids have found new readers, mainly blue-collar, working-class people who have found titles they can relate to and that reflect their worlds and realities.

So, in the middle of all the debate, the most important questions that need to be answered are: Why are people buying the tabloids in such large numbers aAnd what are the secrets of their success?

And, are there lessons for more established media in this?

As newseditor at the *Voice*, the reporting rules were no different to those I applied as an editor and newseditor in previous jobs; like multiple sources,

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The GREAT tabloid

Liz Barratt, an executive editor of *The Star* in Johannesburg and Sanef deputy chair started the debate with these remarks: "There are several examples of tabloid publications in Africa. Is this where papers in Africa are going? Will other papers need to follow this business model to survive? There are many issues around tabloids ranging from their size and political stance, to reporting methods, style, values, voice, sensationalism and language. You even find them across radio and TV in different forms. What they have in common is a strong personalisation of stories. Could this be a new alternate journalism? Is this journalism? And, what makes a good tabloid?"

Phalane Motale, editor of the *Sunday Sun*: "To answer the two questions: 1. Yes, its journalism; and 2. A good example is the *Sunday Sun*! We are seen as pirate taxis. Yet all my staff have signed a journalistic code of conduct. The rules are the same for us (as for the mainstream). The *Sunday Sun* is the mother of current tabloids. It is four years old and has never lost a court case, which illustrates the care we take in checking stories. The difference between a publication like mine and other newspapers lies mainly in the fact that this newspaper is personality-driven. It cannot rely on press releases, but instead has to dig out the stories that celebrities do not want to see being told. The tabloids report stories like 'Gorilla Raped Me' because people genuinely believe in superstition. Readers are the customers, the kings; we give them what they want. My concern is that tabloids are all getting painted with the same brush when they are in fact unique. *The Sun* has columns on woman abuse, man to man talk, a pastor giving advice, careers info, a business page, etc. Broadsheets are stuck in the way they work but tabloids respond to people's requests, for example readers didn't like the naked page three so she was covered up more. And what about [educational] institutions, are we preparing students for this journalism of the future? Getting more new readers can only be good for the media industry as a whole."

Thabo Leshilo, editor of the *Sowetan:* "The difference between my paper and the others is our respect for the Press Ombudsman's Code of Conduct. Sanef should draw the line at publications that do not subscribe to these standards. Not all tabloids should be tarred with the same brush. Tabloid journalism often operates within a racist paradigm whereby black people are presented as primitive, lust-driven and credulous. I expected that such a negative image would catch up with circulations, and be manifest over time in declining sales. Yet the opposite has happened. Clearly, the *Daily Sun* understands some of the black mind, but which black mind?"

Moegsien Williams, editor of *The Star:* "This is the revolution we have been waiting for. The *Daily Sun* should be praised for following up stories, something my own paper does not adequately do. New people are now reading newspapers, thanks to the *Daily Sun's* success."

Paddi Clay, who runs training at media company Johncom: "The tabloids give people something to talk about and they are refreshingly not politically correct. Popular isn't necessarily progressive. There should be a 'popular choice story award' for journalists. But it's usually the bizarre and unusual story that gets people talking. Tabloids are in the storytelling tradition of comics and photo story books. And these are as valid as any [other media]. The development role is often accidental and comes after the need for the wow factor. There are great moments, eg: The *Daily Sun* had a wonderful graphic for "Shark eats gogo". Also a picture of the Battle of Trafalgar and the phrase "U are reading this in English because the French lost" is another excellent example

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ensuring all sides of a story are canvassed and ensuring right of reply.

On a daily basis the tabloids are approached by people who have been badly let down, who often are victims of over-zealous authorities. The difference here, is that now someone is listening and telling their stories.

Tabloids, as a rule, will speak to the people first and officialdom last, an essential element of community journalism.

Another big difference is that, with the new audiences, the tabloids have been forced to trawl for news and build contacts in communities and areas previously ignored, setting new challenges for reporters far too used to sitting back and doing follow ups or waiting for stories to come to them.

It was a challenge for reporters at the *Voice* to change their mindset from reacting to news events – a court case, a robbery or a press conference, for example – to becoming proactive and thinking "out of the box". A general refrain of mine to reporters at the *Voice* – and I'm sure it applies at other tabloids – was: "That's a story the other papers will cover, how can we tell it differently so it is relevant to our readers?"

So when communities all over Cape Town took to the streets to protest at a lack of service delivery – with the police responding with teargas, rubber bullet and baton charges – like the broadsheets, the *Voice* covered the on-day, hard news story.

But we also went into the communities where the protestors lived to hear their side of the story and see first hand the conditions they were so angry about. And when rivals for the leadership of the ANC in the Western Cape went on a hugely expensive advertising spending spree in a transparent attempt to raise their personal profiles – we reported on what was happening. Then we also highlighted the waste by showing how many houses, doses of anti-retrovirals and suchlike the wasted millions could have bought.

Tabloid journalism, is by nature very robust, taking pops at authority and at the high and mighty without fear or favour.

That means tabloids are perfectly placed to run campaigns based on particular issues – advocacy journalism – on behalf of readers. Taking on issues important to readers doesn't mean having to lose objectivity, as long as the research and reporting is properly done – and you don't try to hide what you're up to.

What I believe has happened with the tabloids is that a trust has built up between the papers and their readers – with readers becoming a major source of stories.

As a young cadet reporter on the *Rand Daily Mail*, *Sunday Express* and *Weekend Post*, I often experienced how readers regularly passed on great stories – with the documentary proof to back them up.

Today, at most papers, this source of stories has dried up to a large extent and one reason, I believe, is because of a lack of trust between readers and papers.

Well the good news is that I saw this happening once again at the *Voice*, great stories brought to us by, for example, municipal workers, disgruntled cops and traffic officers, court officials – all backed up with quality leaked documents.

An example was a call I took from a reader who offered us a copy of a videotape showing senior cops and known gangsters partying at a night club. The story resulted in a major investigation, with a police station being raided, several cops being suspended and now facing criminal charges.

Later I asked the source why he had given us the tape and why he had not gone to one of the established broadsheets. His answer was illuminating and holds a clue for how papers should be developing relationships and trust with their readers: "The Voice is on our side, I trusted you to do it properly, not to drop me."

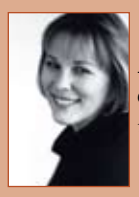
What is clear is that tabloids have resonated with a readership that has found a voice previously denied to them.

The tabloids are not going away. So rather than slag them off, maybe we should also be looking at the reasons for their success – there might just be something we can all learn from them. ■

debate

At its AGM in July the SA National Editors' Forum held an open discussion about the rise of tabloidism, some comments...

[of this type of journalism]. Commercial radio news often verges on the tabloid format. The tabloids are listening to peoples' stories out there and picking up stories which often mainstream papers aren't. Their reporters see stories everywhere and don't have to be told what a story looks like."



Ann Donald, outgoing editor of *Fair Lady*: "The excitement around the tabloids contrasts with the subdued mood in mainstream newsrooms. "

Mathatha Tsedu, *City Press* editor: "Many people with social problems call the *Daily Sun* before they call the police. Sanef shouldn't start from a negative standpoint. But neither the staff on the *Daily Sun* nor the readers actually believe what is in much of their journalism."

Media academic **Francois Nel**: "Tabloid readers are telling us what journalism is."

Journalism educator **Arrie de Beer**: "Tabloid readers won't 'graduate' or 'migrate' to the quality press, this has not happened in the British experience."

Cape Times deputy editor **Tyrone August**: "Presentation is a secondary issue. The matter of factuality is critical to whether tabloidism still counts as journalism."

Mondli Makhanya of the *Sunday Times:* "I don't believe that readers believe the *Daily Sun*. "

Guy Berger, head of the School of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University: "Is the selling of more than 400 000 copies of an 'incredible' *Daily Sun* as significant for South Africa as the 38 000 sales of the influential *Mail&Guardian*?

The popularity of tabloid newspapering should not be at the expense of credible journalism, or of promoting values that are in line with the South African Constitution. 'Progressive' needs to be integrated with 'popular', or else an opportunity for meaningful print journalism catering to the masses will continue to be missed. Some people see tabloids as giving voice to the working class. It must be acknowledged that tabloid journalism is hard to do and it is building circulation. But to maintain that this is fine if it leads to more readers... is this popularity at any price? What about a moral compass?"

Joe Thloloe, Sanef chair: "Sanef is bound to respect freedom of expression and choice and therefore cannot reject the tabloids; yet it also stands for the quality and ethics of journalism. "

Excerpt from the Sanef AGM press statement:
"Tabloids are a vibrant element of the changing media landscape but we reaffirm our commitment to journalistic integrity, tolerance and accountability."


Chris Kirchhoff


Chris Kirchhoff

Taking the gap

The shrinkage of the mainstream press in Zimbabwe has enabled brazen tabloids to fill the space, says ***Hayes Mabweazara****.*

The "tabloidisation" of the press in Zimbabwe is a relatively new trend. The shrinkage of the private press has relegated the mainstream press to the operations of the government-controlled Zimbabwe Newspapers Group (Zimpapers). It is no wonder then that growing attempts at tabloidisation have emerged from within the Zimpapers stable.

One basically notes a sharpening polarisation between tabloid (form) and broadsheet newspapers. The trend has manifested itself through snippets of sensational stories strewn mainly in the Zimpapers' major broadsheets, viz: the *Chronicle, Sunday News, The Herald* and *The Sunday Mail.*

The visibility of the stories has been evident through screaming banner headlines that titillate and sometimes shock the readers. These superficial attempts at tabloidisation can, in many ways, be attributed to desperate attempts at attracting readers given the attenuation of the press market owing mainly to the political and economic situation compounded by the predictability of news items published in virtually all state-controlled newspapers.

In its brazen character, however, tabloidisation emerged with the Zimpapers' vernacular weeklies, *Kwayedza* (Shona) and *uMthunywa* (isiNdebele).

The papers gained popularity by printing gossip and human-interest stories. In recent times however, *uMthunywa* has taken the lead as the prototypical representative of tabloid journalism in Zimbabwe.

First published in 1985, the paper folded in 1993 as it failed to provide an alternative voice to that offered by the mainstream English newspapers. It however, reincarnated on 4 July 2004, with an ostensibly market-driven editorial thrust anchored on the values of tabloid journalism as suggested by Sparks (1992) – giving priority to immediate issues of daily life over those traditionally ascribed to the public sphere.

In its new form the paper has out-competed its Bulawayo-based, sister weekly paper, the *Sunday News* in circulation, which rose from 2 500 in its first week of publication to 30 000 to date.

Of interest though, is the fact that its circulation has not translated into meaningful revenue, as advertising support for the paper has not corresponded to the high circulation figures. Part of the reason for this could be its low cover price $Z5 000 (about R1) and the length of time it takes a paper to recoup investment.

UMthunywa resembles the American *National Enquirer* in its emphasis on township gossip, rumour mongering and other unconventional stories, all of them bursting at the seams with idiomatic and colloquial expression generally reserved for spoken rather than written communication.

The story lines, capitalising on unmitigated exaggerations, characteristic of the yellow journalism of the 1920s in America and evident in the majority of the paper's articles, defy logic and normality.

The paper is thus radically different from other mainstream papers, in terms of its language use and its sensationalism that debases the seriousness of hard news stories.

Of particular note is that the stories bear the hallmarks of a residually oral tradition rooted in folk narrative and are largely drawn from the people who live in the rural areas and in urban high-density areas. This has had effects on conceiving of newspapers as a non-fiction medium.

What is also striking about the paper is that it has a preponderance of negative traumatic stories concerning families. Take a few examples: how a man roams about naked in his garden after a beer drink (4-10 March 2005); how a father-in-law beats up his son-in-law for accidentally spilling his illicit opaque beer (4-10 March 2005); how a woman publicly asks her adulterous husband what is wrong with her "organ" (11-17 March 2005); and how a man caught being intimate with someone's wife flees stark naked on a bicycle (26 June - 1 September 2005). The paper rarely gives advice on how to keep marriages or families intact.

It however, also gives considerable attention to agriculture, education, health and housekeeping issues and carries little about politics, politicians or political parties.

Although the paper is read nationally, its readership is wide in the three Ndebele-speaking provinces, Matabeleland North, Matabeleland South and Bulawayo Metropolitan province where it is based.

The readership cuts across social classes, reaching mainly an audience in the high-density suburbs and the lower echelons of people in administration and government.

Noticeably, it is segments of society that feel drawn to oral and traditional culture that have largely provided a market for the tabloid.

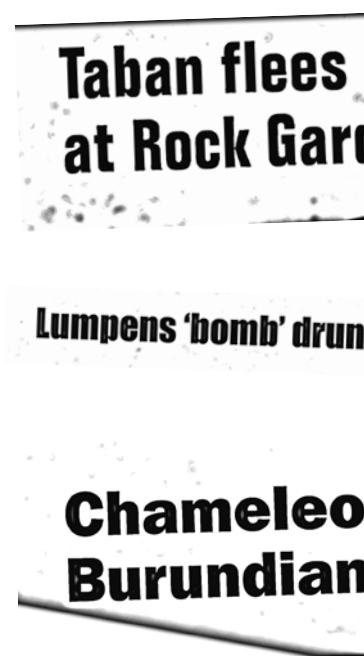
The reading of *uMthunywa* also has to be understood in the context of a reading culture emerging with the socio-political environment obtaining in the country.

As an alternative to the mainstream English papers, *uMthunywa* runs away from the "tired", predictable and politically skewed discourses that occupy the bulk of the space in the mainstream press.

Clearly *uMthunywa* offers thousands of Zimbabweans something they do not find in other media. The cornerstone of its attractiveness is plainly its excessive, formulaic and sensational stories and the fact that it deals with issues affecting people on a daily basis – township experiences, socio-political and economic hardships.

In Zimbabwe the prospects of readers becoming less interested in conventional hard news, and less critical of the techniques typical of the tabloid style, is glaringly significant.

Given that tabloids have the potential of providing an alternative public sphere through giving news access to groups that have not been previously targeted by the prestige press, as suggested by Onerbring and Jonsson (2004), tabloids like *uMthunywa* have the potential of inviting audiences to participate more fully in civic democracy through alerting them on matters of the public sphere requiring critical rational debate. ■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Chris Kirchhoff


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Red and raunchy

One tabloid has lasted for nearly three years in Uganda, ***Ben Opolot*** *looks at why the Red Pepper has achieved longevity.*

The headlines are sensational, exaggerated and yes, loaded with sexual innuendo. And the readers love it. Otherwise how would one explain the rapid growth of Uganda's latest, and by far most successful, tabloid newspaper *Red Pepper*?

Tabloids have been in - and out of - Uganda for quite a while but it was not until 2003 that tabloid journalism took on a different meaning. Up until then, each entrant had come with puff and pomp but often never lived to see its first anniversary.

The *Red Pepper* has been around for nearly three years. This is the longest any raunchy and sensational Ugandan tabloid has lived.

The newspaper market had been dominated by "serious" newspapers that kept away from trivial in favour of serious content. Not so much because they did not believe that the tabloid approach would bring new readers and an extra dollar. It was more the media law and the cultural environment that dictated their content.

The leading media house, The *New Vision* newspaper, was – and still is – fully owned by the state and had a public role mandate. In some ways it was seen as an extension of government, so trivial and sensational reporting or any tendency towards the banal and the emotional was seen as unpatriotic and unprofessional.

Red Pepper hit the streets in 2002 as a weekly. Its success was instant. It moved on to a bi-weekly within a couple of months and it is now a daily, that competes with – if not outcompetes – the mainstream papers. The "highbrow" papers have had to redraw their strategies and have copied most, if not all, of the content and presentation style of the *Red Pepper*. Now the line separating the tabloids and the serious newspapers is ever thinner as each side goes out of its way to capture and retain the readers and the advertiser's dollar.

But what is it in the tabloids that attracts Ugandan readers in droves? And it is not just the young or the middle class that enjoy the *Red Pepper's* fairly predictable sleaze, gossip, sex, celebrity news and scandal. The paper circulates in all parts of the country, including remote rural locations where one would expect folks to be conservative.

Perhaps because poverty and unfulfilled promises from politicians are so pervasive, stories on sports, mating dogs, drunken politicians, half-dressed teenagers, couples having sex at a beach, news of the latest model of a Beamer or Merc, are a welcome diversion.

With its rich mix of content written in a entertaining fashion, complete with local jargon and street language, the readers keep coming back. Crime stories, political stories with a sexual and scandalous spin, anything that digs deep into the personal and private realm is tabloid content. They also pry into the family and portray in-laws as monsters out to snuff out marital bliss. Sex is presented as a militaristic encounter between man and woman. For instance, in the the *Red Pepper,* a man "bombs" and "vanquishes" the woman.

It borrow current concepts and events and gives them a sexual twist. For instance, a woman's breasts are referred to as "the twin towers" (remember September 11 and the World Trade Centre?); her vagina as "Kandahar", that Afghan city that bore the brunt of the American fighter planes after September 11.

A penis is referred to as a "pestle" – the tool that Ugandan rural people use for pounding groundnuts. Alternatively, it is called a "whooper" or a "shaft" that can "drill" the hardest "hole" to draw "water" from a "well" no matter how deep. The man is, of course, the hero in all these stories.

Civil society groups have protested this imagery, arguing that this portrayal of male-female relations promotes violence against women. However, some say the tabloids have lifted the veil off the taboo topic of sex and helped Ugandan society open up the private domain to public scrutiny.

Be that as it may, the Ugandan law is far from embracing tabloids. For instance, a proposed bill on pornography seeks to outlaw publication of any picture that exposes a woman's thighs, breasts, navel, buttocks, and private parts. Publishing a picture of a female athlete will be a breach of law.

That might explain why most tabloids, including *Red Pepper*, have redefined themselves alongside the mainstream newspapers such as the *New Vision*, *The Monitor* and the *Weekly Observer*.

Now *Red Pepper* has relegated "raw" sex stories to the inside pages and put sensational political reports on the front pages. Observers say the paper is relaunching itself as a cross between tabloid and serious newspaper to become a newsloid.

That search for a new identity might explain why the *Red Pepper* appears now to concentrate on politics. Some have even charged that the paper is bankrolled by powerful politicians from the ruling party, the Movement, to publish propaganda and smear campaigns against government opponents. Perhaps that is one reason why sources of its political reports are more likely to be anonymous or "highly-placed".

But how has the public received the tabloids, particularly the arrival of the *Red Pepper*? Yes, when it first hit the streets, an uproar was heard from the moral right, concerned parents associations, from parliament, from the pulpits and from the bench. There were street demonstrations, petitions in court and motions in parliament but they did not last long.

Why? The readers knew what they wanted and no one would tell them what was good for them. So they supported the paper and bought it off the street week in week out.

Red Pepper was also smart in its PR. It presented itself and its message as a moral crusade against sexual hypocrisy and moral corruption. It even ran banners on its pages warning of the dangers of unprotected sex and the virtues of condoms, abstinence and faithfulness.

Media owners have not mounted significant or co-ordinated responses. Most of them simply increased their leisure content and so-called human interest stories to try to claw back their readers. Condemning *Red Pepper* is construed to mean a fear of competition.

Most journalists associations also argued that tabloidisation was an extension of the freedom of expression and would advance the cause of democracy. Any condemnation of tabloid journalism was seen as inviting government to censorship.

Whatever the case, tabloid culture seems to have taken root in Uganda. Although the *Red Pepper* has redesigned itself to look more up-market, and polished its content a little bit, that has only created a gap for readers used to a "red-hot" diet of sexual content. ■

A 'danger to journalism'

The widespread criticism of the SA tabloids, should be seen as 'paradigm repair' by a profession in trouble, says ***Herman Wasserman****.*

Since the introduction of the first tabloid to the South African market in 2001, and seemingly increasing with each subsequent entrant into this burgeoning market, debates about their role, the reasons for their success, their potential, and their ethics (or lack of it) have been raging in the popular press.

The debate has so far been conducted mostly – if not exclusively – in the popular press, even if, paradoxically, academics seem to have been the most vocal participants in those debates.

Without suggesting that popular debate is necessarily inferior to academic work, the choice of platform may suggest a number of things: perhaps that popular journalism (as opposed to "serious" journalism in the mainstream) is now considered worthy of intellectual attention; that the mills of academia – in terms of scholarly publication – move too slowly to keep track of the rapid developments in this area of the media; or significantly, that the questions thrown up by tabloids are of primary concern to producers and consumers of the media itself – in other words, that tabloids need to be dealt with within the domain of the popular press itself.

I'm going to focus on the latter of these possible explanations (or perhaps rather hunches) and assert that these debates have been taking place in the popular media because of the assumption that tabloids pose a danger to the image of journalism in the eyes of the public, and therefore have to be dealt with publicly.

Consider this statement by Herman Manson of Media Toolbox: "We all accept that tabloids will continue to launch and grow in this country. But instead of copying and pasting from the sick British model, why aren't local tabloid owners brave enough to embrace the spirit of our democracy? Why not accept that you can publish a tabloid without sacrificing your sense of social responsibility or the humanity of those you report on, and dare I suggest, that of your writers and editors?"

While these debates are seemingly set on evaluating the tabloid media, they also – and perhaps even more so – tell us what the dominant normative frameworks and professional ideologies in the *mainstream* media are. In other words, the debates about the tabloids reveal the dominant perspectives on the media in general.

Furthermore, I would like to argue that these norms and assumptions are manifested through a function that these debates fulfil, namely that of *paradigm repair*.

In debating and rejecting the journalistic excesses of the tabloids, a discourse is developed that serves to repair the image of an occupation (or "industry" or "profession" or "interpretive community", depending on your perspective) in trouble.

Should the widespread criticism of tabloids be seen as part of journalistic *ritual*, namely the routine application of ethical guidelines and performance of professional standards, or do these debates go deeper to provide a structural critique of the media?

Bitter criticism

Since their inception, South African tabloids have been subjected to constant – and often bitter – criticism from media commentators in the mainstream media.

In turn, publishers (Deon du Plessis, *Sun*) and editors (Ingo Capraro, *Son*; Raymond Joseph, *Daily Voice)* have used public platforms and newspaper columns to defend their publications and articulate their vision.

The bulk of the criticism can be grouped into two main categories, namely the perceived low quality of journalism practised by these publications, and concerns about the lack of ethical standards guiding the actions of tabloid journalists.

In the reactions to tabloid journalism, dichotomies can be seen between ethical and non-ethical journalism, information and entertainment, and high level and low-level journalism, with tabloids consistently being placed at the negative end of the binary.

Little attention is paid to the extent to which mainstream journalism also peddles entertainment, superficial analysis or biased news coverage.

Instead, the status quo of mainstream journalism is to a large degree taken as the defining standard of journalism.

Much of the debate around tabloids serves to police the boundaries of the profession by reiterating accepted definitions of what it is to be a journalist. When these boundaries are overstepped, this paradigm is threatened.

In order to re-establish the hegemony of the dominant professional value system, the culprit(s) are identified, castigated or ostracised from the community and the wrongdoing explained. Berkowitz (2000: 128) calls this "paradigm repair".

At the recent Sanef AGM debate on tabloids several editors of mainstream publications spoke in support of tabloids, mostly on the grounds that tabloid journalism provides popular entertainment that should not be rejected on racist or classist grounds, or that tabloids have rekindled a relationship with communities that mainstream media has lost.

While this discussion indicated that rejection of tabloids is not unanimous throughout the professional community of South African journalists, it does serve to support the notion that the emergence of tabloids has served as an opportunity for debates about professionalism.

Mainstream lack

Significant in the tabloid discussion by Sanef, was the acknowledgement by certain members that the popularity of tabloids may partly be seen as a result of a lack on the part of the mainstream media. What are the points on which tabloids may compel a rethink of the dominant normative frames?

- The liberal democratic view of independence and neutrality currently underpins South African media ethical frameworks. Audience reaction against this limited (or even hypocritical and dishonest) understanding of independence might have been underestimated. Perhaps the tabloids' highly personalised, overtly-subjective approach to news, can – as Larry Strelitz (see article by Strelitz and Steenveld on page 35) has pointed out – be seen as an "oppositional reading" against the mainstream rhetorical strategies of objectivism.
- Part of the success of tabloids might be related to their community orientation and developmental approach. The *Daily Sun* for instance has a regular feature "SunDefender" where a legal expert provides free legal advice; an advice page "Sun Solutions"; features on education and a regular page has news from the rest of the continent "Looking at Africa". The publisher of the *Daily Sun*, Deon du Plessis, has indicated that the lack of community involvement by the mainstream media provided him with a marketing niche (made possible by democratisation) that wasn't recognised by the Independent Group, to whom he first pitched his idea. Although Du Plessis claims to be committed to "the man in the blue overall" and reporting about "people nobody ever heard of", this stance does not necessarily reflect political or societal commitment outside of commercial interests.
- While the concept of the "public interest" is often invoked as a guiding principle for the media, this concept remains vague and has not been defined adequately in terms of the inequalities regarding access to the media. For instance, the impact of (mostly racially-defined) market segmentation and how this is linked to material inequalities and societal polarisations inherited from apartheid, is not considered when the "public" is described in vague

SA's tabloids – some background

The print media landscape in post-1994 South Africa has been an increasingly commercialised one, with stiff competition between market players locally and globally.

The print media has continued to be aimed mostly at an elite that is predominantly white, with voices of the poor largely absent.

The print sector remains dominated by mainstream commercial papers, with community papers mostly following a similar commercial pattern on a smaller scale.

Ostensibly, the introduction in 2001 of tabloids aimed at a mass black (including the section of the black population called "coloured" in apartheid nomenclature) readership, altered this situation.

The first tabloid to hit the shelves in post-apartheid South Africa was the *Sunday Sun*, owned by the conglomerate Naspers and aimed at a mass black readership, it went on sale at the cheap cover price of R1, thereby undercutting its closest rival, the established paper *Sowetan* and its sister publication *Sunday World*, aimed at the black middle class.

This led to an accusation by Saki Macozoma, chairman of the black empowerment consortium Nail, who then controlled New Africa Publications, owners of *Sowetan*, that Naspers was engaging in "uncompetitive behaviour".

The phenomenal commercial success of this tabloid was partly blamed for the huge circulation losses at *Sowetan* and seen as a reason for the appointment of a new editor, Thabo Leshilo, to take over from John Dludlu, with the task of restructuring *Sowetan* and *Sunday World* and reversing their circulation losses.

The following year, the tabloid went daily (titled *Daily Sun*), again growing at an unprecedented pace and increasing its circulation by 228% within the following year.

Naspers sought to replicate this success by launching an Afrikaans-language weekly tabloid in the Western Cape in 2003, titled *Kaapse Son*.

Aimed at "coloured" and white Afrikaans working-class readers, its popularity soon became evident and it changed from a weekly to a daily (titled simply *Son*) in 2005.

Naspers' rival company, Independent, replied by launching an English-language tabloid in the same region in 2005, the *Daily Voice*.

As far as content is concerned, the three tabloids have much in common. They focus on gossip, scandal (in the case of the *Daily Sun* this often takes the form of incidents relating to witchcraft, superstition and the like), sex (with semi-nude "page-three girls"). This feature is central to the *Son's* approach and identity – its website offers more pictures on a pay-per-view basis, and its marketing campaign at an annual Afrikaner cultural festival consisted of a peepshow) and sports and entertainment (horse racing news and entertainment guide).

The tabloids' commercial success does not mean that they were unanimously welcomed. On the contrary...

"The debates about the tabloids reveal the dominant perspectives on the media in general."

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or homogenous terms. If claims are correct that tabloids have provided media access to sections of the community that have been excluded before (as opposed to luring them away from other publications), the tabloids might contribute to a broadening of what passes for "the public" in South African media.

- Ostensibly, tabloids do take an African cultural perspective – but on closer inspection it becomes clear that this remains limited to stories on witchcraft, superstition or miracle cures. While tabloids' attempt to introduce African cultural meanings into a Western-dominated media discourse, these attempts seem to often be reductionist and essentialist.

Conclusion

The debate about tabloids should move beyond the professional ritual of paradigm repair. The emergence and unprecedented success of tabloids provides an opportunity to investigate not only transgressions of the current hegemonic standards of professionalism, but also to interrogate those standards themselves. It provides an occasion to critically examine the dominant normative frameworks of the media in an attempt to find out why they are not broadly accepted and how they may be revised. ■

The full text of this paper was delivered at the Sacomm Conference in Pretoria in September.

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You can't be serious

A popular view of tabloids is that they pander to the lowest common denominator of public taste and simplify complex issues, say ***Larry Strelitz*** *and* ***Lynette Steenveld****.*

Interviewer:
What do you think of the tabloidisation of the media?

André Brink:
Sickening

(Sunday Times Lifestyle June 19, 2005: 14)

As well as pandering to the lowest common denominator and simplifying complex issues, tabloids are also condemned for generally failing to provide information that citizens need in order to make informed political judgements – the latter being the *raison d'etre* of serious newspapers.

In summary, tabloids "lower the standards of public discourse" (Ornerbring and Jonson, 2004: 283).

A different view is taken by critical media scholars. Colin Sparks (1991: 64), for example, suggests that we need to treat tabloid newspapers as extremely important cultural phenomena, "as objects of study in their own right rather than exemplars of the lamentable debasement of popular taste compared with that shown by intellectuals" .

These views provide a useful starting point in our attempts to make sense of the rapid growth of tabloid newspapers in South Africa.

Our task as academics should therefore be to "transcend the futile moralism" (Grisprud, 1992: 84) that characterises much of the local debate, and to account historically and sociologically for their emergence.

An important aspect of this project is to investigate why South African readers with a particular LSM profile are drawn to these new tabloids which are characterised by a particular form and content.

Remaining sensitive to the specificity of the South African socio-political context, and given the current paucity of local theoretically-informed investigations into tabloid newspapers, we will briefly examine some of the issues emerging from international research as pointers to the kinds of issues we should be probing.

In explaining the popularity of the tabloids among the British working classes, Sparks (1988: 216-217) says political and economic power in a stable democracy is far removed from the real lives of the mass of the population.

In other words, he argues, in a stable democracy the popularity of the tabloids says more about the relationship of ordinary working people to the social and political processes that govern their lives, than about the press.

It is not insignificant that during the 1980s, when popular political activity was at its height in South Africa, we witnessed the emergence of the "alternative" press.

This media had an explicitly political purpose, expressed in their aim to "popularise, educate, and organise", and thus focused on social and political issues traditionally defined in relation to the anti-apartheid struggle.

It is noteworthy that the current tabloid ➡

explosion has occurred just 10 years after the first democratic elections in South Africa. It is worth considering whether the growth of the tabloid press is a sign of the alienation felt among the working classes from the formal political processes in this country, or whether it is a sign of "struggle fatigue".

The 10 years of democracy may be significant in another way. The rise of the mass circulation popular press in both America and Europe coincided with the growth of a new reading public, a result of the introduction of mass education and the growth in literacy.

In similar vein, perhaps we are witnessing the growth of new reading publics with their own "specific socio-cultural traits and contingencies" (Dahlgren, 1991: 16). If this is so, we need an understanding of the role of journalism and other entertainment media in this process.

As Ornebring and Jonson (2004: 285) observe, while there is arguably a mainstream mediated public sphere dominated by elite sources, the structural elitism (who is quoted, what kinds of stories are covered) of this sphere in turn creates a need for one, or several, *alternative* public spheres.

Tabloid journalism has the ability to broaden the public, giving news access to groups that have not been previously targeted by the prestige press.

Sparks (1991: 63) notes that the British press consists of different kinds of print media that are produced for different social classes and that they have to be understood as part of the differing cultural lives of those classes.

The place and content of a newspaper in working-class culture is quite different from that in middle-class or ruling-class culture. The press, he argues, is not, and never has been, a single self-evident and undifferentiated category.

What we need to investigate, then, is the role played by tabloids in the social, cultural, and political life of different classes in South Africa.

A textual approach

A textual approach will help us understand what constitutes "news" in tabloids, their sources, their linguistic style, the textual mix they favour, and the visual elements (photographs, graphics, typography, colour) they use in communication with their audience.

Jostein Grisprud (1992) says well-known features of the tabloid press, are sensationalism, personalisation, and the focus on private concerns. He argues that these elements are popular precisely because they provide ways of understanding the world which are different from the way the mainstream press works. However, the mainstream press are increasingly using these same techniques in order to deal with the challenge of television news, and so the lines are becoming increasingly blurred.

Cultural theorist John Fiske (1992: 46) takes a different tack. He says mainstream press in America present information as objective facts selected from an empiricist reality. The tone is serious, official, and impersonal, aimed at producing understanding and belief. In other words they address their readers from the position of one who knows, and is providing information for those who don't.

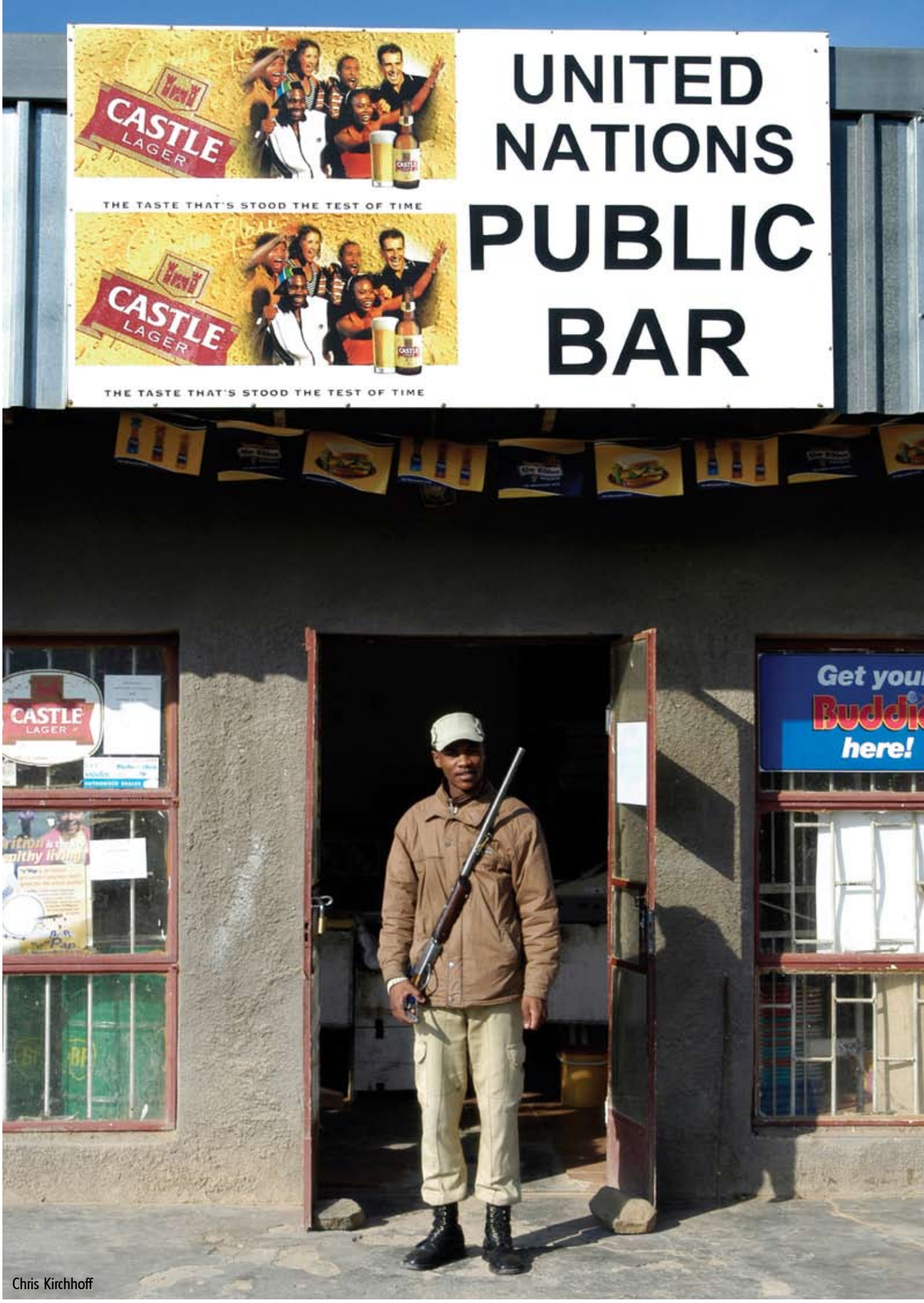
In contrast, the tone of tabloids is more conversational, using the language of its readers. In this way, they set up a more "egalitarian" relationship between themselves and their readers. They don't pontificate.

According to Fiske (48): "One of its most characteristic tones of voice is that of a sceptical laughter which offers the pleasures of disbelief, the pleasures of not being taken in. This popular pleasure of 'seeing through' them (whoever constitutes the powerful *them* of the moment) is the historical result of centuries of subordination which the people have not allowed to develop into subjection."

Do these claims hold true for South African tabloids and their readers? If they do, what does it tell us about the relationship of these readers to the broader political formation?

We would argue that this focus on understanding the reasons behind the popularity of the tabloids should not be confused with the commercial agenda that drives the publishing companies. While their rhetoric may be of "serving the people", and "giving them what they want", this happily coincides with their drive for profits—gained precisely from those very people who formerly were not regarded as significant enough to constitute a viable market. ■

The full paper will appear in the next edition of Ecquid Novi.



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Homegrown standards

Paul Helmuth is a household name in Namibia. Not many people know his face, but says ***Hendrik Bussiek,*** most have heard his voice. "Uncle Paul" is the most regular caller on all of Namibia's radio talk shows – be they conducted in Oshivambo, Oshiherero, English or Afrikaans. And he is not one of those pains in the neck and the bane of all hosts: a man who loves to hear himself speak, full of his own importance. He is an elderly, retired person, blind, and listens to the wireless every day. He takes an interest in a lot of things, is knowledgeable in many aspects of life and can contribute to nearly every topic. He is the quintessential radio listener in Namibia. Which makes

him an ideal candidate to join a group of men and women who came together for two days to discuss and evaluate the state of the media in their country. Among them were a former television star and now university lecturer; a human rights lawyer; a journalist who has worked for private and state media; a leading figure with Women Action for Development; the co-author of a book on media law in Namibia; a cultural activist and a fighter for press freedom. On the invitation of the German Friedrich Ebert Foundation's Southern African Media Project (FES) and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA), four people each from the media field and from wider civil society met at a farm lodge in the countryside to take part in a project which could set an example for the rest of the continent.

There are book shelves full of studies on the media in Africa, many of them written by scholars from America or Europe. "They fly in and out of our country," said one participant in a similar exercise in Kenya, "have interviews with many of us and then write something – we usually don't take these reports seriously." There are freedom of the press surveys such as the one done annually by the New York-based Freedom House. The data for these surveys are collected from foreign correspondents, from international visitors, from human rights and press freedom organisations and a variety of news media. The criteria are set and the data evaluated at headquarters. And they come up with results such as the one in their most recent report which said that the media in Kenya – a vibrant and diverse lot – is "not free", putting it on a par with countries like The Gambia or Zimbabwe.

In order to arrive at a more accurate picture, FES and MISA decided to start the "African Media Barometer", a self-assessment exercise done by concerned and informed citizens in each particular country according to a number of general, homegrown criteria.

Homegrown criteria? Indeed.

It may not be a widely recognised fact, but the continent has over the past few years established considerable consensus on principles of freedom of expression. Most importantly, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights in 2002 adopted a Declaration on Principles of Freedom of Expression in Africa, which is one of the most progressive documents of its kind worldwide. This was largely inspired by the groundbreaking Windhoek Declaration on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press (1991) and the African Charter on Broadcasting (2001). And the commission is not just a talk shop. It is the authoritative organ of the African Union mandated to interpret the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which is binding for all member states.

The benchmarks used for the African Media Barometer have to a large extent been lifted from this declaration. Forty-two indicators were developed: they measure the realisation of the right to freedom of expression, including freedom of the media; the diversity, independence and sustainability of the media landscape; the regulation of broadcasting, including the state of transformation of the state into a public broadcaster; and – of particular importance in a self-assessment exercise – the level of professional standards.

Panels of experts in each country have frank and intensive discussions on a host of pertinent questions: is the right to freedom of expression really practised by their fellow citizens – including journalists – "without fear"; is public information easily accessible; is a wide range of sources of information available and affordable to citizens; is broadcasting regulated by an independent body and is the national broadcaster really accountable to the public (and not the government); do the media follow voluntary codes of professional standards including principles


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of accuracy and fairness? A rapporteur takes detailed notes and compiles the results into a comprehensive report – two days of debate usually produce information and assessments worth weeks of field work by a researcher. Said one panelist during a tea break: "It is as if we are all writing a book together."

One aspect of the exercise that helps to concentrate minds and keeps discussions on track is the scoring. After extensive debate panelists are asked to allocate scores to each of the indicators – in a secret ballot. The scale ranges from a low 1 ("country does not meet indicator") and a medium 3 ("country meets many aspects of indicator but progress may be too recent to judge") to a high of 5 ("country meets all aspects of the indicator and has been doing so over time"). These scores can then be used both as a measurement of development in a given country over time (the plan is to repeat the exercise every two years), as well as to make comparisons between countries.

Up to now, a test run in four countries (Zambia, Namibia, Botswana, Kenya) has been completed. The results of the scoring show that panelists generally took a realistic view – neither attempting to be patriotic and give undue praise, nor being overly critical or cynical. Botswana and Zambia ended up with an equal overall score of 2.2 (countries minimally meet aspects of the indicators), mainly due to the lack of any attempt to reform the broadcasting sector (where both countries scored exactly the same low 1.7).

"Two days of debate usually produce information and assessments worth weeks of field work."

Namibia and Kenya both scored 2.7 overall, meaning that these countries "meet many aspects" of the indicators, with relatively high marks for freedom of expression in general for Namibia (3.2) and professional standards for Kenya (3.2).

These results now make for powerful lobbying tools. As all panelists "have clout in their spheres of influence" (in the words of one participant) they can draw on them in helping to shape opinions inside and outside the political arena.

Take Botswana, for example, the much praised "cradle of democracy in Africa". Its dismal score came as no surprise to the panel, who spoke of their country as a "democracy without democrats", where there is "a lot of fear among citizens, partly due to intimidating threats made by state operatives like the police, security officers and the army".

In Zambia, panelists resolved to work urgently towards the repeal of still existing pieces of colonial legislation, such as sedition laws, that impinge on freedom of expression. And in Namibia there was consensus that a defunct Media Council as a self-regulatory mechanism for the media should be urgently revived.

In Southern Africa, now that the test phase is completed, MISA will continue the process. The plan is to apply the barometer in Swaziland, Angola and Mozambique this year, and in the remaining MISA countries in 2006. Similar processes will start in East and West Africa next year. ■

Don't harm the children

We are all outraged when bad things happen to children, but the very reporting of these outrages can violate children's rights to be protected, say ***Gemma Harries*** *and* ***William Bird****.*

Three key issues can be identified in relation to the representation of children in the news media:

1. children are minimally represented,
2. children are often negatively represented, and
3. children are stereotypically represented.

The Media Monitoring Project (MMP)'s Empowering Children and Media (ECM) project, as well as numerous other pieces of research (both by the MMP and by international researchers) supports these three findings.

The ECM found that stories about children comprise only 6% of the total news coverage, which seems inequitable when it is considered that children comprise 44% of the South African population.

The media's representation of children as victims of war, poverty, disaster, death, and disease is ironic, given that children are afforded special protection throughout the world.

Special protection

Children are protected by international conventions, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), to which all but two countries in the world are signatories. In South Africa they are also protected by numerous pieces of national legislation, special offices and bodies, such as the Office on the Status of the Rights of the Child, policies, guidelines, and cultural practices.

So how can the poor representation of children in the media be explained?

To begin with, good news tends to be bad news; newsworthy content tends to be negative rather than positive in nature. So, on one level, it can be understood that stories about negative things that happen to children are more likely to be newsworthy.

But there is more to the newsworthiness of children than simply negative news content. The special protection afforded to children adds an additional dimension; crimes against children are often represented as being more extreme than crimes against other members of society. For example, a man assaulting another man is seldom as newsworthy as a man assaulting a child. Similarly, a man who rapes his child is seen to be more extreme than a man who rapes his wife.

As a consequence, stories about child abuse often tend to focus on the brutality, details of the incidents, and tend to further victimise the children concerned by emphasising their status as victims, rather than as survivors of the abuse.

In addition, broader questions surrounding the causes, contexts, and prevention of the abuse are not addressed.

While some of the most extreme details about children's experiences are often revealed in the media, their stories are rarely told.

For example, there are numerous images of starving children, children affected by conflict and HIV, and countless stories of children who are abused.

In most instances, however, there are seldom any follow-ups or conclusions to the stories provided.

As a result the stories on children appear to exist in isolation and their resilience is ignored.

Positive values

The representation of children has a further dimension founded on some of the most positive values associated and attributed to children.

Children are also commonly associated with hope, innocence, purity, and happiness. The binary opposites of hope and despair that are associated with children highlight not only the extreme nature of the representation of children, but also the emotions and power inherent in the representations of these extremes.

Thus, while children are afforded the greatest protection, the violation of these protections can, and does, lead to some of the most powerful stories and images in the news. It is common for starving children to be used as the face of famine, and for emaciated, sick children to be used as the face of HIV and other diseases.

Perhaps most powerfully, images of children have been used to demonstrate the horror of war and conflict. For example, the image of Hector Peterson being carried during the 1976 uprisings, or of Kim, running naked down a street during the Vietnam war.

Not only are some of these images among the most powerful news images; they have also become iconic of war and conflict.

The power inherent in images of children presents media with an ethical dilemma. Does the power of the image outweigh the potential harm to the child, and the best interests of the child, as outlined in the UNCRC?

With the exception of some of the stories in the daily tabloids, all of the crimes against children that make the news do actually happen and should be reported.

It is at this point that the majority of media in South Africa fail to consider the special protection afforded to children.

Special protection means that not only government, family members, churches, and civil society bodies need to ensure that children are afforded protection, but so too must the media.

Basic ethics

Often the application of the basic ethical principles not only ensures that children are afforded the special protection that they deserve, but also that the resulting news stories are better.

The basic principles which should guide journalists, according to the Poynter Institute, are:

1. Seek the truth and report it as fully as possible,
2. Maintain your independence, and
3. Minimise harm.

In addition to the further violation of children's rights through the naming and/or identification of children in cases of abuse, for example, the powerful representation of children can also serve to further reinforce negative stereotypes.

The ECM project found that one in every 10 stories on child abuse identifies the children concerned, which is an explicit violation of the child's rights to privacy and dignity, and a contravention of South African law.

Frequently, stereotypes are most powerfully perpetuated through images. While images of children in times of conflict, poverty, and disease are powerful and evocative, they can also be problematic because they not only undermine and demean children, but in many instances, also perpetuate negative gender, racial, and health stereotypes.

Stories and images of starving children, children being abused and violated, children as "Aids orphans", and victims of wars and natural disasters, have clear racial and gender dimensions.

Often these serve to perpetuate stereotypes of African children as poverty- and HIV-stricken, and girl children in particular, as helpless victims.

Many media claim to reflect or hold up a mirror to society, to raise and challenge issues, to give voice to people's concerns.

By and large, the media achieve these aims. So, for example, if the media does a story on government, a government spokesperson or representative is asked to comment or supply an opinion.

Children's voices

However, the same is not true for children. In most instances, the media fails to ask children what they think in those news stories that are specifically about children and children's issues.

The "bad" news stories, such as stories about child abuse, need to be told.

The MMP's work with children during the ECM project demonstrated that children want to know about instances of abuse.

Participants told us:

- "I think it is good to have these articles about abuse and rape, as then grown-ups are made aware. Mothers can warn their children. They will be more careful about sending them out at night in the dark."
- "I don't think most people realise they have to do something about it [abuse]. Parents must stop abusing children because we are the leaders of tomorrow. We need courage from the parent. They must do something and stop abusing us."

It is essential that the media play their part in affording children the special protection that they deserve and which is their right. By asking some of the following simple questions, the media can help to protect and further the rights of children:

- First, do no harm; does your story cause potential harm to the child?
- Is the story in the best interests of the child?
- Does your story meet your usual standards of professional and ethical criteria?
- Have you considered the possible consequences of your story? Children will have to live with it long after you're gone (World Heath Organisation Guidelines).
- Are children's voices and perspectives included?

For further information on these and other issues relating to children and the media, see the MMP's website on www.mediamonitoring.org.za

Chris Kirchhoff

Beyond state and first economy

South Africa needs a social movement around public broadcasting if the people of the second economy are ever going to get the media they deserve, says ***Jane Duncan****.*

"The developmental state has both progressive and repressive impulses."

Recently, advocate Dali Mpofu was appointed as the South African Broadcasting Corporation's seventh Chief Executive Officer since South Africa's democratic elections in 1994. While he takes over an SABC that boasts the highest profits in the past 70 years of its existence, he faces tough challenges given the growing crisis around the independence of the SABC.

The significance of these gains and challenges can best be understood against the background of the SA Cabinet's concept of the "two economies".

According to Cabinet, the first economy has stabilised and is starting to achieve significant levels of growth, so its priority has become delivering to the second economy. This formulation is problematic, as in reality growth in the first economy has been premised on the increased pauperisation of the second economy: a reality that has been captured in the notion of "job-loss growth".

Owing to the commercial nature of its financial base, the SABC has been largely a first-economy broadcaster, and risks marginalising the second economy even further unless prophylactic action is taken to correct this bias.

Since 2001, the government has been attempting to take such action, but in the process is being caught in a web of contradictions generated by its highly-unpopular macro-economic policies.

As a result, it wavers between progressive attempts to extend public broadcasting to the second economy, and reactionary attempts to erode the corporation's independence.

Such are the contradictions of the developmental state in the context of neo-liberalism; it attempts to use its outward-focused growth strategies to generate resources for inward development, yet at the same time it must ensure internal stability to maintain investor confidence.

Hence the developmental state has both progressive and repressive impulses. In a global economic downturn, the latter impulse may override the former, as the state struggles to keep a grip on its increasingly frustrated citizenry. In such circumstances, the repressive impulse can creep like a virus into various levels of the social formation, including public broadcasting.

Most of the public controversies around the SABC's independence have focused on overtly positive coverage of government-related stories on SABC news: an increasing bias that news chief Snuki Zikalala has been blamed for.

Flashes of brilliance

These controversies have overshadowed many flashes of brilliance in the corporation, especially in current affairs. However, it is important not to individualise the independence question, as such an approach masks the extent of the erosion of the SABC's institutional independence since its incorporation as a public company.

According to the corporation's Articles of Association the shareholder (that is, the government) appoints the Group Chief Executive Officer (GCEO), and the Minister approves his or her contract of employment; in addition the Minister must approve the appointment of the Group Chief Financial Officer and the Group Operating Officer.

Particular resolutions of the Board cannot be passed without a representative of the Minister having voted in favour of the resolution. These resolutions include the SABC's business plan, training programme, annual budget or strategic objectives, and the establishment by the SABC of any subsidiary, joint venture or partnership.

So in spite of the fact that the battle was won in 2003 around the right of the SABC to adopt its own editorial policies without ministerial approval, the documents that enable the SABC to give effect to these policies have to be approved by the Minister.

Add to this the problem that the GCEO, as a Cabinet appointee, is in terms of these policies the Editor-in-Chief of the SABC, and it is possible to draw a straight line between the government and the corporation's content.

These developments have also stripped the SABC Board of its ability to take decisions independently of the Minister on the really key issues affecting the corporation.

While it would be silly to argue that the SABC's editorial content is being approved in a smoke-filled backroom of the Department of Communications, the structural conditions now exist for content that puts government in a poor light to be censored in future.

In a climate of rising mass discontent on questions of service delivery, where thousands of people are taking to the streets to protest, these developments do not augur well for the SABC reporting on these matters without fear or favour. In fact it is likely that impartial coverage of these second economy struggles will suffer the most, as they constitute an emergent threat to the ruling party's hold on power.

This shift in the balance of power will most probably be felt first at local government level, where social movements, as well as a host of crisis committees and emergent civics outside the fold of the South African National Civic Organisation (Sanco) may begin to run independent candidates.

After all, it is at local government level where the contradictions of the government's neo-liberal policies are felt the most keenly, as communities reel under ongoing disconnections to basic services, inadequate access to free water, electricity and telecommunications, coupled with the aggressive roll-out of "self-disconnecting" pre-paid technologies.

If these spontaneous struggles were to coalesce into an organised form, then the conditions may be laid for a revolutionary overthrow of the very ruling party that brought about the transformation from apartheid to democracy in 1994.

Already there are worrying indications that the SABC may not be up to the challenge of covering impartially the unfolding contradictions of South Africa's pro-first economy negotiated settlement.

Last year, the Anti-Privatisation Forum won a case against the SABC for skewed coverage of the controversial Johannesburg Water programme to roll out pre-paid water meters in Soweto.

Out of quasi

On the positive side, last year the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (Icasa) released relatively-progressive licence conditions for the SABC. These conditions mark an important step in transforming the SABC into a true public broadcaster, rather than remaining the quasi-commercial, quasi-state broadcaster that it is at the moment.

What is particularly significant about these conditions is that they will make the SABC take its most popular and accessible services much more seriously than was the case in the past: services that target audiences in the second economy specifically. The SABC has tended to segment audiences into what an Umhlobo Wenene programming conference in 2000 termed "Primary one listeners" and "Primary two listeners": the first being urban, upwardly-mobile listeners aged between 16 and 38, and the second mainly rural, poor listeners (usually women) over the age of 39.

When the SABC's profitability has declined – as was the case between 2000 and 2002 – it has prioritised the first set of listeners above the second.

So the SABC's argument that it has succeeded in stabilising and growing the finances of the corporation since these bleak years must be treated with extreme caution, as stabilisation has arguably been achieved on the backs of the poor.

In fact the SABC's 2005 annual report attests to the fact that its profits have been buoyed by a growth in television advertising expenditure following a rise in consumer spending primarily in the first economy.

Icasa's proposed licence conditions set a good basis for addressing some of these first economy biases, as the regulator has lacked an instrument to measure the performance of the SABC in realising its mandate, and to hold it accountable for its decisions. This gap has allowed the SABC to get away with murder, particularly with respect to the services that are supposed to target African-language speakers.

Initially, the SABC fought hard at the time of the public hearings into the licence conditions to prevent Icasa from imposing conditions as it saw fit. What was at stake was the interpretation of section 22 of the Broadcasting Act, which states that within six months of the incorporation of the SABC into a public company, the SABC must apply for amendments to its licences that were necessary to reflect the reorganisation of the corporation into two divisions (public and public commercial).

The SABC interpreted this section in a minimalist way. In fact, it tried to get away with simply writing the designation "public service" or "public commercial service" into the licences, followed by a cut and paste of the requirements for both services in the Act. If the licences merely reflect what the Act says, then why bother to have licences at all?

The problem with this approach was that these requirements were not measurable, as they were broad statements of intent: so for instance the Act requires the SABC to "strive to offer a broad range of services targeting, particularly, women, children, the youth and the disabled".

Icasa, however, wanted specific conditions to be met in the various programming genres to give effect to this statement. Now, public radio must carry at least one hour of childrens' programming per day, five hours of education programming per week, at least 30 minutes of drama per day, and so on.

The setting of such conditions is an extremely important development for public radio, as the SABC will no longer be able to drop programmes or even whole genres simply because they are unprofitable.

The decision to compel SABC1 to provide a minimum of 80% of all programming in Nguni languages, and SABC 2 to do the same with respect to Afrikaans, the seSotho languages xiTsonga and tshiVenda is also very encouraging move, as it will start to break the stranglehold of English on public television.

Possibly the silliest argument the SABC made at the time was that Icasa would violate the SABC's independence by imposing strict licence conditions, and that the SABC Board alone should be left alone to set these conditions through the editorial policies. If Icasa did not treat the SABC like other licencees and impose detailed licence conditions, it would be abdicating its responsibilities and allowing the SABC to infringe on its own independence to regulate the whole broadcasting system in the public interest.

It is instructive to compare the SABC's vigorous defence of its own independence in the hearings with the way that it has accepted without protest the contents of its Articles of Association. Unfortunately, the SABC defends its independence when it shouldn't, but fails to defend its independence when it should.

The second economy stakeholder

The one stakeholder that has largely been absent in what has largely become an elite contest between the government, Icasa and the commercial media is the second economy.

It is time for the second economy – especially the "Primary Two" public with the least to lose and the most to gain from proper public broadcasting – to strike back and contest the SABC to ensure that it is not a mouthpiece either of the state or the first economy.

This is especially important ahead of the local government elections, when struggles around service delivery may well escalate. In short, South Africa needs a social movement around public broadcasting. ■

What is in the public interest?

In a debate hosted by the Harold Wolpe Trust in Johannesburg about the function of the SABC as public broadcaster, ***Tawana Kupe*** *made these points.*

The Public Interest

- Embodies the "national interest" but is not reducible to it and is not to be conflated with it.
- What is in the "public interest" is in the "national interest" but what is in the "national interest" is not always in the "public interest".
- Claims by politicians that some information is not in the "national interest" can often turn out to be an attempt to avoid transparency and accountability.
- The "public interest" is definitely broader than the "national interest" in that it speaks to and reflects the values that no single social organisation or individual or entity can claim sole ownership of.
- The "public interest" embodies values of justice and equality, which individuals and groups seek to attain and engage in struggles to achieve. The "national interest" is often the interests and values appropriate by particular groups in their attempts to achieve hegemonic domination in a society.
- Consequently the "national interest" can often be a narrow set of justifications, policy choices and strategies of implementation that undermine the "public interest".
- With regard to questions of security – especially national security – the "national interest" can often be used as a cover to undermine civil liberties including curtailing freedom of expression and of the media.
- A genuine public broadcaster is therefore the best communicative and discursive space for advancing the "public interest".

Public Service Broadcasting

Defining public broadcasting in the 21st century is a difficult exercise because the broadcasting environment and practices have changed as result of political, economic, cultural and technological changes. These changes are also true of Africa especially since the early 1990s where the "liberalisation" of broadcasting has ushered in an era of, not only new privately-owned broadcasters, but a predominately commercially-driven process of transformation of the broadcasting environment and state broadcasters.

The World Radio and Television Council (2000) defines public service broadcasting thus: "Neither commercial nor state-controlled, public broadcasting's only *raison d' etre* is public service. It is the public's broadcasting organisation; it speaks to everyone as a citizen. Public broadcasters encourage access to and participation in public life."

They develop knowledge, broaden horizons and enable people to better understand themselves by better understanding the world and others.

- A public broadcaster is a means to constitute public communicative space free from political and commercial control. It acts as an open public sphere for debate and discussion.
- A public broadcaster is central to satisfying a range of public information and communication needs in a holistic manner on the broadest possible range of issues and topics.
- A public broadcaster is a means to represent society in all its complexity facilitating desired social goals including promoting freedom of expression and other universal human rights.
- A public broadcaster should address the public as citizens who have rights, duties and responsibilities. (A commercial broadcaster addresses audiences as consumers and delivers them to advertisers.)
- A public broadcaster must allow for multiple communicators across the social spectrum without privileging some voices over others.
- A public broadcaster must allow for meaningful feedback and interactivity in its programming.
- A public broadcaster requires funding which is consistent with its nature as a public service and critically, that does negate its distinctness and identity.

The regional rampage

Are South African companies the Americans of SADC? ***Console Tleane*** *gives some insights out of the research for his forthcoming book The Great Trek North: the Expansion of South African Media and ICT Companies into the SADC Region.*

A decade after the resolution of its political impasse there is evidence that South Africa has evolved into a dominant regional power. South African companies were quick to invest in the region, and media and information communications technology companies have not missed the opportunity.

The most visible of these is the satellite television distributor Multichoice. All countries in the region subscribe to satellite television and radio mainly through Multichoice. The other visible and rapidly expanding entity (also in terms of influence and ambition) is SABC Africa.

SABC Africa's intention to become the continent's only 24-hour news channel that many African countries will subscribe to (through their national broadcasters) was announced at the 2005 Highway Africa conference by its head, Phil Molefe.

Another area in which South African companies are becoming more dominant, and at times even adopting somewhat aggressive tactics, is the mobile telephony market.

Vodacom and MTN are about to annex the entire region. Vodacom, which is part-owned by the SA national operator Telkom, has operations in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Mozambique and Tanzania. MTN, which is linked to Johnnic Communications, has operations in Mauritius, Swaziland, and Zambia.

The Internet market is gradually coming under the control of two giants, M-Web, owned by the Naspers Group, and UUNET SA, a first-tier provider wholly owned by UUNET Technologies, wholly owned by MCI in Fairfax, Virginia, US.

Since 1994 South Africa has also become the launch-pad for North American and European companies that seek to set-up operations in the continent.

This might be due largely to its well-established financial system, advanced transport system, state-of-the-art communications system, plush residential areas for expatriate company executives, and a relatively conducive political and economic climate for doing business.

In the print sector an interesting scene is unfolding which might see a neck-for-neck competition between Media24 and Johnnic Communications. Both companies have announced their intentions to expand into the continent.

Johnnic has a dedicated Africa division. Already some of its products, like the *Sunday Times*, are widely sold in the region. Similarly, Media24 is very active, especially in the magazine sector. Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland get the Media24 magazines *True Love*, *Drum* and *You*.

The strategy adopted by these two companies seems to be that of buying into existing businesses. What is disturbing is that in one case in Tanzania, Media24 is understood to be involved in an attempt to force the government to relax ownership and control laws.

The last category that South African companies have earmarked for aggressive expansion is the fixed-line telephony and satellite markets. In August the outgoing chief executive officer of Telkom, Sizwe Nxasana, announced that the company was going to expand directly into the African market. In the past Telkom has only been active in so far as offering services to incumbent operators in different countries.

The state-owned satellite communications distributor Sentech, has also made known its intention to exploit the African market. Both companies cite low tele-density on the continent as offering huge market opportunities.

While the backward state of communications infrastructure and services in the region offers attractive market opportunities, there is growing anger on the ground from politicians and incumbent businesses through to economic justice activists against what is perceived as South Africa's "total annexation" of the region.

Indeed, apart from the media and ICT sector, South Africa's dominance in some countries is frightening. Cairo Street in Lusaka, Zambia, should be renamed Johannesburg Street, judging by the number of South African retailers dominating it!

There were some commentators who, even before the 1994 political resolution, spoke sceptically about the prospects of the new South Africa aiding the region and taking it out of the misery of the post-Cold War decline.

Writing in the once influential and authoritative *Southern African Political and Economic Monthly* Ibbo Mandaza warned against the new South Africa developing a sub-imperialist project.

And in 1992, academic Robert Davies developed a three-scenario vista for the new South Africa.

1. A "South Africa first" attitude adopted by both the new state and capital.
2. "Regional integration under South African hegemony."
3. "Non-hegemonic regional integration".

Annexation

But how did it come about that South Africa was able to annex the entire region so quickly after 1994? There are a number of factors involved.

- The first one is that South Africa brought into the SADC fold a highly-developed, even if unequal, economy. The mining boom of the late 19th century, the development of a transport infrastructure, and eventually international isolation because of apartheid, led to an advanced inward-looking economic development whose captains were eager to expand their investments after the demise of apartheid.
- Also, South Africa's re-entry into the SADC fold came at the time when neoliberal globalisation was gaining a firm grip on the region, and the world. The region's economies had to open up, resulting in dominant global players, including South Africa, moving in.
- The second factor is that in most African countries there is simply a lack of capital to invest in new ventures. There are a number of reasons for this, one of which, as in the case of the Democratic Republic of Congo, is that the former dictatorships looted the country's resources.
- The third factor, is that with globalisation came forced liberalisation and privatisation. The push for liberalisation and privatisation found fertile ground in instances where the state was perceived as having only produced suppression of diverse ideas.
- But through the back door came the destruction of public services. Add to liberalisation and privatisation the non-existence of capital and the local bourgeoisie class that would ordinarily take advantage of a liberalised market. The result is an open market that can only be exploited by foreign investors. That is where South African companies have moved in.
- The fourth factor is that South African media and ICT products are perceived to be relatively free of controls that are commonplace in a number of countries. For instance, wealthier citizens in most of the countries have resorted to satellite television and audio rather than accept the crude propaganda of the state broadcasters.
- The last factor, as referred to above, is that South Africa is a gateway for other foreign companies.

As indicated earlier, there is a lot of anger, yet also helplessness, against what is clearly an increasing hold on the region by South Africa. The situation can be likened to the relationship that many developing countries have with the United States.

However, South Africa's other activities in the region, and the continent as a whole, make it increasingly difficult for other countries to "free" themselves of this control.

For instance, its enthusiastic peace-building efforts and commission of peace-keeping forces in a number of countries is something that other countries, even the stronger ones like Nigeria cannot match. Yet, as we know, there is no free lunch!

Also used effectively is the New Partnership for Africa's Development (Nepad). While viewed as a continent-wide project there are many who view this initiative as South Africa's foreign policy.

Consequences

For the media and ICT sector the expansion of South African companies has, or will eventually have, a number of consequences.

- Firstly, there are freedom of expression issues. While many believe that South African content is free from political interference recent experiences from elsewhere suggest the potential for this to be otherwise. Not long ago media mogul Rupert Murdoch acceded to pressure from the Chinese authorities against the publishing of a book that was critical of the Chinese government.
- In another incident, also related to China, Yahoo handed the details of a dissident journalist to the authorities. These two examples show that there is no guarantee that freedom of expression will be protected by multinational companies. There is always the consideration of appeasing their hosts so that they can continue doing business.
- The second consequence is that there is likely to

"It is becoming increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to stall the predatory movement of capital."

Chris Kirchhoff

be lack of diversity.

This takes us to the third consequence, shrinking local content. It is highly unlikely that South African companies will be interested, and more importantly invest capital, to promote local content and ensure that there is diversity. It will always be cheaper to import (read "dump") content from elsewhere into these countries.

In the ultimate analysis, the primary motive of South African companies that invest in other SADC countries will be to extract profits back to Johannesburg. As one respondent said during the author's research visits in the region: "It's simple, they take the next SAA plane to here, conclude deals and take the other plane back. The next thing, money is transferred through Stannic or Absa or FNB back to Johannesburg."

This might sound simplistic, but it says volumes about how South African expansion is viewed, and felt. From whichever angle one might want to look at it, and whichever theoretical and ideological lenses one might want to wear when analysing these developments, one thing is clear: South African media and ICT companies are heading towards domination of the regional market. Is this good or bad for the region?

Good or bad for the region?

What is clear thus far is that South African companies seem unable to contribute meaningfully to the economies, and therefore development, of their host countries.

Instead, what is evident is the rampant profit extraction. Also, as expressed by some diplomats at the 2003 SADC heads of states meeting held in Dar es Salaam, South Africa is often accused of urging its neighbours to open their markets whereas it is still reluctant to open its own.

This brings us to pose the question: 11 years after the resolution of its political problem, and its admission into SADC, how has South Africa conducted its regional affairs? Does it only care for its own interests, therefore adopting the "South Africa first" scenario as postulated by Davies?

Or, is it engaged in hegemonic regional integration? Or better still, is it engaged in non-hegemonic regional integration?

Lastly, is South Africa a sub-imperial power as Mandaza predicted, and as some contemporary observers argue?

An examination of all the evidence before us suggests that in terms of the Davies model South Africa has adopted what can be termed a combination of scenario one and two, that is, there are elements of "South Africa first" and "regional integration under South Africa's hegemony".

The emergence of this hybrid scenario is mediated by crude profit extraction on the one hand and the velvet approach such as generous spending and commitment to regional peace and stability.

It is difficult to argue against the assertion that South Africa is a sub-imperial power, no matter how weak that theory is still at the moment. There are signs that the country has adopted an extractionist, big brother attitude towards other countries in the region.

Given the above, is the situation lost?

The harsh reality is that all these developments are taking pace within a highly globalising (and neoliberal) world. It is becoming increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to stall the predatory movement of capital. There are, however, a number of interventions that the countries in the region can make. These would include:

- maintaining high ownership and control quotas for local companies;
- high local content quotas;
- maintaining vigilance with regard to labour and tax practices;
- tightening regulation and strengthening regulators to withstand foreign private capital pressure;
- promoting the independence of public broadcasters;
- adequate funding for public broadcasters; and lastly,
- a vigilant monitoring of South African investments and ensuring that they lead to real development.

There are also possibilities of pressurising some of the initiatives into serving the broader interests of the region, and the continent. One such possibility is SABC Africa and Channel Africa.

It should be possible for there to be some contestation for these two channels, which are undeniably important, at least against the backdrop of domination by the CNNs and BBCs, to begin showcasing Africa in its true form, with some form of independence from both financial and political powers. ■

"South African companies seem unable to contribute to the development, of their host countries."

Africa in the streets

The Med-Lemon advert shows a man seeking help for flu from a traditional healer. The scene opens with bags of traditional medicine lined on the floor of the healer's home. "Makhosi," says the man. Makhosi is a greeting honouring traditional healers. The patient explains his symptoms to the healer. The healer goes into his kitchen (making sure no one sees him), pulls out Med-Lemon from behind a tin on the shelves. He adds hot water to it in a glass and pours the mixture into segong (a natural container made from hollow butternut-like plants). Back in the other room, he instructs the patient to "drink this now, you will sweat the fever and headache away". The advert closes by showing a long queue waiting outside the healer's home for this same remedy.

The Woods Great Peppermint cure advert opens with a young wife, dressed in a suit, buying traditional medicine for coughs from two hawker sangomas. The area seems informal, with bushes in the background. In the next scene she is cooking the medicine in her modern kitchen. The medicine – a brown, bubbly liquid, has overflowed on her stove causing an undesirable mess. As she holds the remedy on a spoon for her husband and two children standing in line, to drink, they refuse. Their facial expressions tell of their unhappiness about the medicine. Her grandmother walks in and asks what she is feeding them. She responds: "It's for the cough Gogo, you said to get a traditional cure." "Not that traditional cure," says the older woman, holding a bottle of Woods Great Peppermint Cure. Suddenly the family all want to be first in line to drink Woods. The closing scene shows the Western, ideal image of a nuclear family, laughing together on a couch in a modern living room – a "reality" that will never be, for many Africans in the face of extended family.

The AVBOB life cover policy advert opens with a scene depicting a busy township market, with hawkers, pedestrians and taxis in the background. Two small boys are playing among the crowd. They buy something from one of the hawkers. Suddenly they see a funeral procession and immediately go to watch as the priest, mourners, and choir walk past, with a few cars behind them. The voice-over relates how with AVBOB one can afford a decent funeral – coffin, busses, even catering. The boys proceed to the funeral home, peeping into a tent where some big mamas are cooking for the mourners. One of the women looks at the boys sympathetically, and dishes them a meal.

***Natalia Molebatsi** looks at how television advertisers use images of African cultural knowledge to sell products to an emerging African audience.*

In our day, elders still influence many aspects of life – for instance in rites of passage such as motherhood, funerals and family gatherings. Traditional healers provide the "other eye" for society, they possess higher spiritual powers. As much as cultural activists keep an eye on the mass media to protect African knowledge against disrespect, there are loopholes – "little" things that are not a train smash, like when a traditional healer removes trust from his medicine to demonstrate the healing powers of Med-Lemon, and being dishonest to his patient. "At least black people's appearance in TV ads has increased," we say, without looking at content and context.

The complaint read: "The ad undermined African tradition, insinuating that African traditional healers are dishonest to patients, presented white medicine as superior and was discriminatory in that it mocked African practices."

Ruling: Dismissed. Reason: "The scenario was a harmless parody and would be seen as such by the reasonable person. It cannot be said that it offended the sensibilities of consumers generally or was discriminatory." (www.dispatch.co.za/2004/07/30/Features/ads.html).

Viewers, similar to the media, fail to see the long-term effects of images created in our minds about tradition – those who complain about these "parodies" are seen as unrealistic. What happens to mindsets, if images degrading cultural practices are reproduced (over and over) through powerful mediums like TV? Perhaps, an even more detached audience will be maintained. Biko says that Africans who do not scrutinise, are not looking at life from within, and are therefore not conscious of their being.

The older woman and the traditional healer in these adverts are used as forces undermining "old ways" or "*that*" tradition. By saying "*not that traditional cure*," the older woman (in the Woods ad) degrades traditional medicine bought from the sangomas. When one consults with a traditional healer, it is the healer who communicates with spirits to inform the patient about their ailment, not the other way around. In the Med-Lemon advert, however, the patient explains his symptoms to the healer. This provides incorrect information about the traditional situation, further discrediting the methods of African healing.

Biko says that people who allow themselves to be degraded, are supporting that oppression – all actors used in these adverts are black people, with the images presented to a predominantly black audience.

"One wonders, how involved is a community in the creation of images meant to reflect their lives?"

# of advertising

When the older woman says "not *that* traditional cure!" culture is placed at two levels. She gives advice to the younger woman about which level to associate with. Knowledge is therefore associated with approval, and approval with power – these are associated with elders. Images where role models are used to lessen African culture remain degrading to anyone who believes in the effectiveness of tradition. "We can no longer afford to frown upon our ways, by trying to fit into other people's perspectives," says Biko.

Elders, death, and traditional healers are significant forces in the African cycle of life. They can however, be used to form incomplete and uninformed images, leading to misrepresentation and misconceptions about culture.

Smoother knowledge

In our everyday lives, Western and African medicine are used interchangeably. It is therefore disrespectful to uplift Western medicine at the expense of traditional remedies – there are many unexplored benefits of traditional medicine, but it doesn't have advertising opportunities.

In these adverts, traditional and Western medicines are compared – with the Western getting the thumbs up. Through these images, traditional healers can also be stereotyped as liars – because some people do tend to have doubts about cures that are "unscientific". Such images become particularly significant during certain health debates – whether or not HIV/Aids patients will derive benefits from traditional methods.

Like Med-Lemon, Woods Peppermint Cure is packaged in a small bottle with a registered label, legitimising it. In the Med-Lemon advert, the scene opens with bags of traditional medicine on the floor before zooming in on the patient. These bags are silenced and defaced because they are not given any attention by the advert maker. The Western medication was smaller and quicker to make – just add water!

The young woman (in the Woods ad) portrays traditional medicine as difficult, messy, and leaving clean up work for her. The medicine looks like muddy water with bubbles – becoming undesirable to the family's (and essentially to viewers') senses.

Are we saying that tradition is out of control, while Western practices are more advanced, well packaged, easily digested and smoother on our throats? Advertisements work on our senses – in these images tradition is given in slow, bitter ingredients packaged in sacks (in a world where everything is shrinking). These images are not only about depicting Western knowledge as desirable, but also about dishonouring and mocking African knowledge and spirituality.

Editing history and tradition's significance

Through images, time can be edited. The AVBOB advert's pay-off line is "*Keeping you at peace for over 80 years*." The fact that AVBOB has been trying to capture the African population for about a decade, (they preferred white clients during the apartheid era) nullifies the line. The advert places children in a funeral scene, whereas in African cultural history, children are kept as far away as possible from funerals.

Africans regenerate by relying on and connecting with tradition. Reproducing themselves through respecting the dead is a form of rebuilding.

When I first saw the AVBOB advert, I was pissed off, as it is common knowledge in our communities that children don't go to funerals, unless it is their next of kin's. In our everyday lives, it's more difficult to physically honour customs such as bowing your head down if a funeral procession passes next to you. These customs, however, are still related by elders – advice on the do's and don'ts regarding tradition. The children in the AVBOB advert peep into the funeral tent and the woman gives them food, which displays an inaccuracy of traditional information and lack of research for the advert.

One wonders, how involved is a community in the creation of images meant to reflect their lives?

Life's contradictions

I had a conversation about these images with a traditional healer I met at an international science community gathering recently. Contradiction struck when we started talking about an African flow of life.

"I am a researcher at an institution where I have to give 'scientific' evidence to my knowledge. I am also a traditional healer entrenched in my spirituality, I am proud of my profession as a healer and trusted by my patients (her wrists and neck display various sangoma beads). I also dress in modern ways," she says about her everyday life

She is married to a white man and says that she lives a traditional and modern life because "it is required of us in our day, we are educated and participate in a global arena with Western influences".

The traditional healing profession is not respected because it is portrayed as "business in the dark" – as in the Med-Lemon advert, the healer's dim-lit home presents an informal, inferior and hidden healing space.

This conversation confirmed that many Africans (even traditionalists) live life holistically – weaving different and relevant experiences into our daily lives, without frowning on our cultural values.

In conclusion

Images portrayed by such adverts (judged as innocent parody) inform how advertising can influence mindsets and prejudice viewers.

These images continue to perpetuate stereotypes of black people as the savage – the traditional healer as dishonest, uninformed, and followers instead of initiators of trends.

As much as depictions from some of these images are classified as positive by people who don't condone traditional beliefs, they undermine viewers who identify with traditional practices.

These considerations raise important questions, such as: How critical is the average television viewer in 2005? Who creates (and packages) images that leave African culture incomplete and barbaric? Who approves TV images that seek to capture our minds? Are we passive, stimulated or ignorant image recipients? Can we invoke a transformation in how we view images – about black people – through social institutions like mass media? ■

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Meanings and messages

Media education and literacy is a must have in a contemporary media environment says ***René Smith****.*

The pervasive nature of the mass media in our everyday lives necessitates the development of skills that will allow recipients of information to actively engage meanings and messages so as to become more discerning viewers.

Audiences need to be equipped with tools that allow them to unpack the ways in which media messages operate within society.

Media education involves education about the ways in which meanings and messages are constructed through codes of form and content as well as the effects of ownership and control on media production and consumption.

Critical consumption of the media implies engagement with production, consumption, regulation and issues related to representation, in both traditional and new media, so as to afford audiences the right to make choices concerning the information sought and/or received.

What we see or hear on television, radio, Internet or in films, DVDs, newspapers and magazines is often taken at face value and accepted as reality. We cannot expect the public to question, decode and deconstruct meanings without having the necessary tools to do so.

Signifiers are an indispensable part of media production – media education and literacy entails reading these texts using media skills used in production and recognises active decoding of the dominant ideologies.

The active audience approach is often used to counter "pessimistic" approaches to media power and passive consumption habits. These debates, however, often neglect to engage the necessity of media literacy skills in fostering critical engagement and independent thinking in democracies where ➡

➟ independence and freedom of expression guarantees are constantly challenged.

Media education and literacy advances information and understanding of our human rights and constitutional guarantees. "Moral regeneration", for example, is dependent on a participatory and free media environment – it requires access and interaction with different forms of media and diverse opinions so as to develop critical literacies conducive to sustaining democracy.

Media education in democratic South Africa necessitates a review of the ways in which the mass media in apartheid South Africa was used to challenge or perpetuate a discriminatory regime through ideological structures.

It must also assess the current status quo of constitutional guarantees around freedom of expression and the many ways in which the media operates in democratic dispensations.

The freedom of expression guarantees enshrined in the Constitution ensure that post-apartheid South Africa's political, social and economic agendas are communicated freely and that citizens have the right to access information.

Media freedom thus provides audiences/media consumers with the right to choose how to engage media messages. Equipped with media literacy skills – the ability to read media texts – individuals will be in a position to make more informed media choices, participate in civil society, and contribute to the development of a local media industry.

More informed audiences

Democracy will benefit from more informed audiences, capacitated educators, and youth who will be better equipped for professional involvement in a dynamic media industry. A more media literate society will demand increased access to media use and media diversity and pluralism.

While media education and literacy is to varying degrees the subject of diverse programs in South Africa and extra curricula activities across the country, it has still not been formally introduced into the national school curriculum.

Claim – everyone Can Learn to Access and Interact with Media – is a programme that promotes and advocates for media literacy and education. It is an outcome of the National Media Education Initiative (NMEI), spearheaded by the Film and Publication Board. Claim and various groups interested in media literacy and education – represented by the NMEI – form an integrated network of media education expertise and resources.

Claim will pilot multimedia toolkits in five sites across the country targeted at learners, their educators, parents, guardians and diverse community groups. The aim is to test an approach and a course that promotes critical and creative media literacy; independent thinking, access to media and use of cultural products (such as media) to get one's voice heard.

It also aims to encourage individuals and various communities to explore careers in the media industry and develop audiences for local productions.

Claim advocates the incorporation of media education into national education curricula and for an integrated approach to promoting dialogue among children, young people and their parents and guardians as well as between media consumers and producers.

The task team includes African Film Research and Outreach (AFRO), which produces educational material on African Films; the Film and Publication Board (FPB), a statutory body; the Film Resource Unit (FRU), which aims to develop audiences and improve distribution channels for independently produced and developmentally appropriate film and video materials; and the South African Chapter of the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA-SA). ■

Chris Kirchhoff

It's the community in community radio

The value and purpose of community broadcasting, says ***Mbuyisi Mgibisa****, is located within its founding philosophy – 'to give a voice to the voiceless'.*

"We don't believe that radio consumption should be a passive process, that's not the type of radio we're about."

Community radio stations in South Africa are mandated by the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (Icasa) to provide members of the community access to the airwaves and to offer them diversified programming that reflects their interests and needs. According to Icasa's regulations, members of the community have to participate at all levels of the community broadcast entity.

But, it is community participation in the selection and provision of programming that underpins the democratic values of community radio. This aspect of participation is not just through letters, phone-ins, musical requests, on-air competitions, greetings and dedications and simple conversations, but the involvement and participation of community members in the actual design, implementation and evaluation of stations' programming schedules.

It is the participation of community members in programming decisions that upholds community radio as a locus of a truly democratic media.

In their written proposals applying to obtain licenses, most stations promise to facilitate methods that ensure that community members participate in the selection and provision of programmes.

They promise to establish programming committees consisting of members of the community. The ideal is that members of the community will be afforded an opportunity to critique the stations' programming and suggest new programming ideas.

ABC Ulwazi, a Johannesburg-based training and production house for educational radio programming, launched a "listener's association" early this year – a unique model developed by community stakeholders and stations.

According to ABC Ulwazi, the short-term goal of the association is to encourage local experts and opinion formers to participate in community radio programming. Adele Mostert, ABC Ulwazi's productions and marketing manager, points out that the long-term objective, however, is "content generation by the community, which is specific to their needs and context".

"We don't believe that radio consumption should be a passive process, that's not the type of radio we're about," she says.

The essential question

The essential question for community radio stations today is not whether community members are able to control the medium technically, culturally and politically, but rather to what extent they are involved in programming decisions at their stations.

Community radio stations, punted as the solution to the problem of reaching and representing communities who are geographically distant, poor and therefore not attractive to advertisers, or which carry content not driven by the primary purpose of providing audiences for advertisers, often struggle to collaborate effectively with community members in the creation of programming that both reflects their interests and development needs.

I spoke to various people working in the community radio sector to gauge what type of barriers stations encounter in their quest to ensure community participation in programming decisions.

I asked four stations the following questions:

- What mechanisms do stations have to ensure access of community members to programmes?
- Do community members have any say in what types of programmes go on air?
- Does the station change and adapt its programmes in response to feedback from the listeners?

Modise Lobelo, station manager at Vryburg Community Radio in North West Province, says the station invites members of the community into meetings where programming issues are to be discussed. According to him, there is low turnout in those meetings despite the fact that the meetings are well publicised.

"There's too much apathy among community members. They show less interest in programming issues. Maybe they don't understanding that programming content affects their own lives. This is very regrettable," he says.

The station decided to review its programmes every six months by offering listeners an opportunity to phone-in on-air and voice their opinions about programmes and presenters.

"This had a positive impact on our programming content and quality of our presenters. We had to respond to the issues raised by our listeners and adapt our programmes according to their needs and wants."

Programme producer at Eastern Cape-based Vukani Community Radio, Siyanda Mdzekeni, says the station's programme team, which is made up of staff and volunteers, does programme planning, action timetable creation, and brainstorming and goal-setting sessions every month.

In short, the programming staff and volunteers are the driving force behind the programming decisions of the station. His case, however, shows that the station finds it difficult to involve rural communities in programming decisions.

"The problem is that many people that the station serves are mostly rural and face severe economic and resource limitations. These people have much to do responding to their hardship rather than waste their time on programming issues, which may not affect their lives directly," he says.

Many people, he says, including staff and volunteers, believe that programming should be the sole responsibility of those who've been around the station for many years.

"People are not necessarily interested in the selection and provision of programmes. Therefore, the main challenge for us is to go directly to the communities and ask them about their communication needs."

Happy Bongoza, a programme manager at Unitra Community Radio, points out that the sole reason for the existence of the station is its listeners. But he agrees that the station, which has 406 000 listeners according to the latest Radio Audience Measurement Survey figures, has paid lip service to the importance of involving community members in the selection and provision of programmes.

"We have not set our priorities right. We fail to initiate mechanisms that would initiate and encourage this form of participation. We need to address the issue because it is critically important.

"We thought that people wouldn't be interested in programming issues, but we now realise that it is a very important legislative requirement," he says.

Crafting rights

Many people, in his opinion, are not aware of their rights to participate in the process of crafting and designing programmes. "It's very important that the station should tell people about their right to participate in programming decisions. The station must deliver a product that meets listener's expectations, needs and wants."

He says the station is involved in a process to gauge the needs and interests of its listeners through a community-mapping exercise and has received practical support from the Department of Communications.

Station manager at Botlokwa Community Radio in Northern Province, Mpho Raphahlelo, says research into the needs and wants of listeners is vitally important, but this usually involves a lot of money which the station doesn't have.

"It is a big challenge to involve members of the community in important issues of the station. People believe that as staff and presenters possess the essential knowledge to craft the programming according to people's interests and needs. We want people to come in and participate, but people generally won't come," he says.

He feels that people's participation in the station is still in traditional form. "People see their role in terms of participation through phone-ins or talk programmes, dedications and greetings, and music requests."

Community participation in the selection and provision of programming is the most distinguishing characteristic of community radio. Community stations can contribute to programme diversity with real alternatives of scope and genre only if members of the community directly influence the programming content. ■

Paul Greenway

Cinderella television

Community TV is poised to become a really important media player, says ***Karen Thorne****.*

I wrote an article on community television for the *Rhodes Journalism Review* in December 1996. Written three years after the promulgation of the Independent Broadcasting Act (IBA) of 1993, which first introduced the notion of community television as a broadcasting service owned and controlled by the community it serves, the article was filled with heady optimism and enthusiasm for the challenges ahead.

It soon became clear that struggle for public access to the powerful medium of television was far from over. For a long time it appeared as if the political will to make community TV a reality was lacking as the IBA and then the Independent Communications Authority (Icasa) sent mixed messages to community TV stakeholders eager to get on air.

Regulatory drags and snags

Rather than developing a holistic broadcasting strategy, taking into account the limited frequencies available and the need to develop a three-tiered broadcasting system, including public, private and community, Icasa adopted a piecemeal approach to broadcasting reform in response to the significant pressures placed on it by powerful interest groups. Very much at the bottom of the pecking order, CTV had to wait patiently at the back of the queue.

Icasa finally released a position paper that enables the establishment of requirements that community-based non-profit groupings will need to meet to get full-time, four-year licences or special-event licences of up to one year in duration. Icasa plans to call for applications sometime in 2005 or 2006.

So what has community TV been doing?

Despite the absence of support from key decision makers, the community TV sector went about building a base for community TV in different parts of the country.

Media activists rallied together to form the Open Window Network (Own) in 1995 to represent the interests of community TV stakeholders nationally. Own established its head office at Cosatu House in Johannesburg alongside the National Community Radio Forum (NCRF) with whom it work closely for many years.

Recognising that it may take many years for community TV to get on air, and that the community TV sector needed some time to develop production capacity, Own lobbied the SABC to sign a declaration of intent supporting the development of community TV through access to production facilities and "public access time slots" on public television.

The declaration was signed in May 1996 and subsequent community TV special events broadcasts have successfully used this partnership to gain access to SABC resources for broadcasting purposes.

Greater Durban Television (GDTV) has been successful at bringing together a number of stakeholder organisations and a large volunteer base to mount no less than four special events broadcasts over the past 10 years and are aiming at applying for a four-year license as soon as this is possible.

Cape Town has seen two special events broadcasts. The first, in 1995, when the Film and Allied Workers Organisation (Fawo) piggy-backed radical, activist programming on the back of a special events broadcast of the Rugby World Cup in 1995, which made for a very interesting programming mix.

Then again in 1998, the Community Broadcast Channel, dominated largely by black independent film makers and producers, broadcast popular local programming for 15 days.

In response to recent regulatory developments, a group of media NGOs, under the auspices of the Cape Town Community TV Collective are spearheading the establishment of a community TV station in Cape Town.

Cue TV, a Rhodes University journalism department media project has successfully broadcast the National Arts Festival via a special events license in 1998.

However, community TV is not only about broadcasting, but is about creating community access to the means to produce and exhibit content by and for the community. Broadcasting will simply add value to these efforts.

The idea of locally based video access centres (VACs) has received much support as a mechanism to promote access to facilities and production-based training to boost the production capacity of community TV.

The Own community video access centre (C-Vac) was piloted in KwaZulu-Natal with great success, including the establishment of a number of community news programming units in and around Durban until its closure in 2001.

Organisations such as the Community Video Education Trust (CVET) in Cape Town and the Newtown Film and Television School (NFTS) in Johannesburg have been around since the 70s and 80s providing entry level training to a generation of emerging filmmakers.

The Film Resource Unit (FRU) may have found the answer to community TV in rural areas through their plan to establish video resource centres in the context of multi-purpose community centres countrywide. The centres would be concerned with both the exhibition of local South African content as well as local production.

In addition to these production, exhibition and broadcasting efforts, much work has been done to research and develop appropriate models for community TV in South Africa.

"Frustrated by lack of access to other broadcasters, untapped creative talent is gravitating to community TV as a potential outlet."

The C-Peg model, developed through research commissioned by Own and conducted by Mike Aldridge in 1997, envisaged a partnership between the public, educational institutions and government, with a commercial programming segment. The consortium model, developed by Own-Gauteng and based on Melbourne Community Television brought media NGOs with production capacity and resources into partnership with community groups.

Research by Mikhail Peppas, a key player in Greater Durban TV, proposes among other things the use of cellphone technology to bounce a signal to one's TV.

The Human Sciences Research Council's Social Integration and Identity Unit is currently working with community TV stakeholders groups nationally to develop business models and other national strategies aimed at promoting the sustainable development of community television. Research findings will be presented at a national consultation workshop in Johannesburg in November 2005.

The future is now

I may be forced to eat my words in another 10 years time but when Icasa finally gets around to licensing community television stations, I believe that South Africa will be taken by surprise.

Frustrated by lack of access to other broadcasters, untapped creative talent is gravitating to community TV as a potential outlet. Community television is in a position to bring together this emerging, local talent with NGOs tackling important social issues, community structures, educational institutions, sports organisations and other stakeholders to create a vision for broadcasting that is uniquely in touch with the communities it serves.

Icasa's planning, or lack thereof, may well turn to our advantage as community TV has virtually no competition in the form of regional commercial or public television, not withstanding the two new SABC "regional" services, if or when they come on stream.

So despite the delays and the regulatory snags the future for community TV looks good. Cinderella has finally arrived at the ball and she is by far the hottest babe in the room. Now would be a jolly good time to notice. ■

Between the Borg and the Big Bang

*South Africa's hundreds of small newspapers are feeling threatened, says **Justin Arenstein**.*

The Association of Independent Publishers in South Africa has been engaged in a census of independent community, small commercial, advocacy (NGO and CBO), and other grassroots print media in the country. Although the full census (jointly funded by the MDDA and NiZA) will only be complete in December, preliminary results provide insight into the nature and extent of the sector, as well as the primary challenges facing grassroots publishers.

The study found

- Roughly 250 "grassroots" publications produced by small commercial publishers, advocacy publishers (NGOs, CBOs, religious, etc), with the smallest sub-sector (by a large measure) being titles that are owned and operated by community trusts and organisations. The highest density is in KwaZulu-Natal with 80 titles. The publications range in size from tabloid (A3) to micro (A5) and mini (A4).
- About 230 conglomerates – Caxton and subsidiary companies own approximately 160 "community" titles, Media24 publishes 41, the Independent Group publishes 14 titles (Western Cape), and Johncom publishes 11 titles. The highest density is in Gauteng, with 117 titles.
- The state owns an estimated 40 titles. Anecdotal evidence is that this sector is growing in the run up to the elections next year. There are also a growing number of "contract publishers" operating on behalf of government and parastatal agencies.

The AIP scoping exercise polled a total of 58 (or roughly 25% of total) grassroots publishers, and found that:

- 96% of respondent publications are tabloid newspapers
- 82% of these publications serve "local" communities
- 80% are based in small towns or townships
- 70% operate as commercial profit-motivated companies
- 60% have no access to national advertising representation
- 55% publish at least once per week
- The 58 publications jointly publish 1,1 million copies per edition

These publications are still largely confined to the margins and fringes of the traditional media markets, in rural, township, and LSM 1 through 5 inner-city districts. Many of these already parochial markets are currently being further fragmented by new state-funded media, new MDDA-sponsored publications, as well as by aggressively expanding conglomerate media.

Other significant trends detected by the scoping study include growth in the number of grassroots vernacular language publications, as well as special interest publications (community of interest as opposed to geographic community), and a massive boom in the number of contract publications designed to serve specific government, niche, or corporate interests.

The current growth in grassroots media appears to be due largely to MDDA and corporate responsibility funding, as well as social education programmes funded in terms of sector charters or social justice (eg: HIV/Aids) programmes.

Most pressing needs

The scoping exercise asked the 58 respondents what their six most pressing needs were. The results were meant to help AIP, MDDA and other media support bodies prioritise their intervention programmes. The results, in order of importance, were:

1. **Advertising:** Systematic and consistent access to local, provincial and national (both government and commercial) advertising, development of new advertising revenue streams (job ads, legals, and classifieds), development of professional sales, training, development of marketing and sponsorship products.
2. **Financial management:** Systematic and timely revenue collection, access to payroll and other resource management software tools, practical technical training on financial planning and budgeting, and guidelines for tax compliance.
3. **Technical systems:** Training in technical production skills, access to cost effective software and equipment and access to competitive print slots.
4. **Distribution systems:** Access to existing distribution networks, access to relevant and up-to-date market research, access to lucrative urban markets.
5. **Management:** Training in technical/practical business management skills, training and ➡

➠ resources on business development skills, actual software management tools, other resources (manuals and tipsheets), and access to business networks/alliances.

6. **Content:** Access to cost effective, original, relevant content and images, training in design skills, access to local journalism manuals and guidelines, and access to (on-site) ongoing basic journalism training.

Eighty percent indicated a preference for physical resources (software tools, manuals and tipsheets) over traditional training. The two primary reasons cited by respondents were:

1. **Headhunting:** Grassroots media expend significant resources training staff – only to have them headhunted by the conglomerate media – without any pay-back or time to recoup the investment.
2. **Resource constraints:** Grassroots media are invariably operated by very small teams (many as small as one or two people), and training outside the workplace or training that disrupts production is therefore impossible.

What are the challenges they foresee?

The two key new threats identified by respondents are:

The Borg: This threat has been informally named for the Borg race of conquering aliens in *Star Trek*. Their conquests are always prefaced by the ultimatum: "Resistance is futile. You will be assimilated".

Opponents who refuse assimilation are annihilated, regardless of the cost. Community print is, according to AC Nielsen, the only (print) advertising sector to show dramatic year-on-year growth over the past five years. In 2004, conglomerate community media posted a 51% increase, earning R605-million from above-the-line advertising revenue alone – and excluding revenue from inserts or other revenue streams.

In addition, the old gentleman's agreement among the conglomerates around territorial spheres of interest and language markets has broken down. The conglomerates are aggressively challenging each other's dominance in the more lucrative provinces, in under-serviced regions, and in poorer rural regions that are predicted to be the target for future government development funding or major retail expansion.

The stellar ad performance, the growing imperative to grow new markets, and the rise of vernacular media have all sparked a feeding frenzy that includes buy-outs, new titles and aggressive headhunting of successful entrepreneurial publishers and skilled production staff.

Grassroots publishers are caught in the crossfire, or are being squeezed out of existence because they are unable to compete with the resulting heavily discounted ad rates and saturation distribution.

Many of the larger grassroots publishers report being presented with ultimatums: sell or face direct and targeted competition from the conglomerates. The tactic is not always successful, with at least one Gauteng-based newspaper (*Free People's Press*) turning to the Competition Commission for relief.

Caxton's establishment of its "Urban Newspapers" portfolio with plans for 11 new titles (most in Soweto), its buyout of the Rising Sun group in KwaZulu-Natal, the expansion of its existing Gauteng motoring and property supplements to KZN, and the launch of the first in a planned network of 20 "community" magazines are perhaps the most notable indicators of the trend.

KZN, in particular, is the scene of an escalating three-way turf war between Caxton, Media24, and Independent Group (IG). The Rising Sun Group of six newspapers and the *North Coast Courier* (in Ballito) purchases by Caxton appear to have prompted Media24 (through its local Witness Group) to purchase the South Coast Fever and Herald Group of newspapers – which in turn appears to have sparked an unusual alliance between Caxton/IG to launch a new freesheet in Pietermaritzburg in direct opposition to Media24's local neighbourhood titles. Caxton has also launched the first of its 20 new *Get It* community magazines in KZN's Newcastle district.

The KZN turf war is mirrored in the neighbouring Eastern Cape, where Johncom and Media24 appear to be facing off following Media24's incursion into the Bisho and Umtata districts. Johncom has countered by launching an aggressive buying spree, snapping up ownership of 10 of the province's oldest, most credible, and/or most vibrant grassroots titles, including *Talk of the Town* and Grahamstown's *Shoppa*.

Caxton expects to have launched all 11 of its planned new Soweto titles by the end of October, is buying out smaller independents in Mpumalanga (*Lydenburg News* and *Barberton Times*), as well as creating new community titles in the province (*Mpumalanga Mirror* and *Corridor Gazette*) and neighbouring Mozambique, and is also experimenting with a new concept provincial title targeting government and parastatal advertising and that is inserted into the group's existing network of community titles (thereby ensuring that existing ad revenues are not undermined).

Very little qualitative information is available, no formal research is being done, and little is being reported publicly on the trend. AIP is considering launching a monitoring and research project in partnership with entities such as MDDA.

Big Bang: Several factors are seriously affecting continued sustainability and diversity of existing grassroots publishers. These include:

- MDDA's funding of new greenfield publications and rise of state-funded media in already contested markets, often fatally fragmenting marginal revenue and readership "pies".
- The consolidation and expansion of conglomerates, their tightening control on access to national/provincial advertising (plus government centralisation) and tightening control of distribution networks are all making it increasingly difficult to survive or compete.
- Adding to the urgency are the looming municipal elections (and competition for access to related advertising), the rollout of the Financial Services Board and Department of Trade and Industry's financial literacy programmes, other charter education campaigns, looming print/paper cost increases, and rocketing telecomm and information technology licensing costs.

Interventions

Grassroots Ad Procurement Portal (GAPP): AIP has secured seed funding from NiZA and the MDDA for a technical feasibility study into the most commercially viable intervention mechanism for improving grassroots media (print and radio) access to provincial/national advertising.

Capro Intervention: AIP has made presentations to the Capro board's emergency task team investigating alternatives to the proposed liquidation of what is effectively SA's only sales house for community press. Capro turned over R75 million last year and has cash reserves of R5-million, but has received notification that its majority shareholder, Caxton, intends withdrawing due to the high 25% commission charged on sales.

Systems and Resource Development: Publishers need more than just skills – they need practical management tools. AIP has developed software tools as part of its flagship "Newspaper-in-a-Box" initiative. The tools include an automated stringer payroll system, a basic budget planning tool, a powerful advert booking and invoicing tool, and an FTP transfer tool. AIP is also in the process of customising a circulation management system, and a basic market/audience research toolkit. In the pipeline are: a court and crime


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textbook; a design resource kit (including templates on a CD), an appropriate printing solutions resource kit (alternatives to commercial printers), and a grassroots marketing/branding resource kit.

Innovation Awards and Grassroots Media Summit: At the Grassroots Media Summit held in Johannesburg recently six awards were given out: Innovative Editorial/Content Systems; Innovative Management/Business Systems; Innovative Circulation/Distribution Systems; Innovative Revenue Generation Initiatives; Innovative Advertising/Marketing Campaigns and Innovative Audience/Market Research. Prizes for each category are valued at a minimum of R15 000 each and are designed to help winners exploit their business ideas. The summit included training (12 workshops); roundtables on policy; an expo, and the dissemination of research.

Some further developments:

- The IAJ, AIP, AMAC, and NiZA have drafted a proposed national training strategy for grassroots/community print media, switching the emphasis from straight editorial skills training to business and technical production skills training.
- OSF, MDDA and AIP/PMSA are lobbying for a streamlining of ABC accreditation procedures for grassroots newspapers, with the possible creation of a special certificate for such newspapers.
- AC Nielsen has agreed to make its AdEx and other research tools plus training available in exchange for AIP members submitting their newspapers for analysis.
- Idasa has agreed to produce a free tailored advisory and newswire service for grassroots newspapers on everything from budget analysis, to healthcare indicators. ■

"The current growth in grassroots media appears to be due largely to MDDA and corporate responsibility funding, as well as social education programmes."

List of acronyms

ABC – Audited Bureau of Circulation
AIP – Association of Independent Publishers
AMAC – Arts and Media Access Centre
Capro – Sales house for community press
IAJ – Institute for the Advancement of Journalism
Idasa – Institute for Democracy in South Africa
LSM – living standards measure
MDDA – Media Development and Diversity Agency
NiZA – Nederlands Instituut voor Zuidelijk Afrika
OSF – Open Society Foundation
PMSA – Print Media South Africa

What can we do now?

The nurse pointed at the long funeral procession coming down the slopes of the Drakensberg. “We are dying,” she said. For the last 30 years Mme Makaoe had been riding up into the highlands on her Basotho pony, to treat the sick. The villagers trusted her, she had grown up with them, they wanted her to be the one who tested them for HIV. I had arrived in a Piper Cub, writes ***Henk Rossouw***, landing in a fallow maize patch, the only way to reach the village when the Senqu River was high. That night, Mme Makaoe sat me down in a stone house,


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➟ and, in the figurative language she used to explain things to the people of the mountains, she talked me through the hard science of CD4 counts, viral loads, how HIV causes Aids.

Six thousand feet above sea level, it became my moment of truth. As a journalist, Aids stories had been part of my routine but not part of my conscience. I knew the clichés about Aids but not how it felt:

Mme Makaoe routinely had to watch her patients die without antiretroviral treatment. That night, I couldn't claim ignorance anymore. "We are dying," she had said.

Only on my return to Jo'burg, where ARV treatment is commonplace – though not common enough – did I realise what Mme Makaoe meant.

Listen to her pronoun: "*We* are dying." She didn't have HIV but she included herself and myself and you – the audience, in her sense of "we". A death because of Aids, a treatable disease, is a loss for every member of the body politic, from the Union Buildings all the way down to Mathibestad, 70km to the north of Pretoria, population 21 700.

Mme Makaoe died a few days later, a taxi accident. This is in her memory. With the assistance of the Ruth First Trust and Wits University, I spent the winter of 2005 reporting in Mathibestad, a small town rife with Aids, in the fiscal shadow of the metropolis.

There are three pervasive things in Mathibestad: Dust, wood smoke, and generosity to strangers. In a town of massive unemployment, where some families of eight survive on a single child grant of R180 a month, I was often fed. Outside homes of corrugated iron there's always a couple of chairs under a tree for visitors to pass the time of day.

As subjects, even during times of grief and despair, the people of Mathibestad accepted my motives. I am a journalist. In turn, they wanted to be heard – loudly, clearly, honestly.

If the trust I gained seems automatic it's because they had first met me at the town's clinic. It's an anomaly within the health system. Three years ago, Dr David Cameron from the University of Pretoria converted the abandoned storerooms belonging to the adjacent public health centre into a new clinic. For the first time, other than nurses, the town had a regular doctor. Consultations are free; in exchange his students on rotation get to practise rural medicine.

In any society, healthcare is a barometer. To take an accurate reading, I sat in on dozens of consultations over the months. One patient skipped pills because the instructions on the packet said they must be taken after food and she had none; a household came down with tuberculosis because they lived in one room; another patient had facial bruises. The HIV epidemic is both the cause and the consequence of more hunger, more coughing, more bruises. These are the symptoms of South Africa's ills, the shrapnel of apartheid.

There's no glory in rural medicine. Doctors who leave medical school feeling omnipotent, who go into rural practice with ambitions of sainthood, quickly become disillusioned.

Giving patients what they really want is unsettling. I'm not talking about administering blood tests or filling out disability grant forms but a far deeper need: to be understood. There's no pill for that.

Often diagnoses are unclear – how to explain bodily pain that has no definable cause? Doctors raised on X-rays, MRIs, CAT scans, the tools of the city hospital, struggle to accept this uncertainty and then make a decision anyway. And you'd be surprised how many patients come to see the doctor with make-believe symptoms, in order to talk.

Truly listening to patients can be harder than surgery. Meanwhile, North West Province, where Mathibestad falls, has the lowest number of doctors in the country. The health department has raised the salaries of rural doctors higher than in the city but district hospitals remain bereft of staff.

In the age of medical aid's fifteen minutes or less, it's astounding that, at a clinic where patient's cannot pay, consultations may last for an hour, or however long it may take for a patient to tell their story.

The same principle applies in journalism. The truth – whether a truer diagnosis or truer reporting – needs time.

The Mathibestad clinic is a necessary luxury and a fellowship like the Ruth First is too rare. South African journalists need to have far more time to invest into their stories, especially when the agenda is this urgent. Spending enough time with people with HIV earns their trust and that bond is priceless.

By conventional standards of journalism, I wasted a lot of time. But if I had not sat through many days of consultations, recording the lives of patients who didn't end up featuring in the work, I would not have met Johannah Baloyi.

She was a one-woman army, visiting bedridden patients without payment. One of her patients, Martha M, infected with HIV, had begun wasting away. After she began talking with Johannah, she gained five kilos in a week – I saw the proof on a bathroom scale.

Her story was the story of her town. Her husband had vanished, unable to accept the fact that his wife still loved an infected man. Their son and their seven-month old infant were also infected. Johannah brokered the husband's return, a return to love.

This is a portrait of a family with HIV – they are smiling. What you can't tell from the photograph is that husband and wife had spent the day reading to each other at a writing workshop, honest about their betrayals and failings. As I speak, they are moving into their first brick house, built by the government, where Johannah will be a neighbour.

Harvard's Global Equity Centre estimates that Africa needs one million more Johannahs. Without people like her, the ailing rural health system would become terminal.

Johannah became my guide, even after a neighbour accused her of being HIV positive and cut her with his knife. During the five months, she commandeered my vehicle to distribute tens of thousands of condoms. Her sense of humour kept us going through the winter.

Once I woke up in her tin house at 4am, to be in time for an Aids funeral we had to attend, and she cracked that her place was colder than a mortuary fridge. It was. She was the eyes and ears of Dr Cameron, leading him to the houses of patients too weak to get to the clinic. Their relationship became the nub of my story.

One patient that Cameron visits at home is Lydia M. In March, when the nearest district hospital first promised to begin antiretroviral treatment, Lydia had a CD4 count of seven. This measures her body's ability to fight infection. In South Africa, the cutoff to be eligible for antiretrovirals is a CD4 count of 200. A healthy person usually has a count of 500 to 1 500. By now Lydia is close to zero. This means her immune system welcomes meningitis, pneumonia, tuberculosis, dementia, renal failure, cancers, thrush.

Two weeks ago, she asked Cameron: "Why can't I die?" But her diarrhea cleared up and she is hopeful again. If the clinic had a direct supply of ARVs, Cameron could have begun treatment in 24 hours. His students did a study on the clinic to see if it was ready to handle the drugs. The answer was yes. They also wrote up a database of all HIV patients at the clinic. Half of them needed ARVs immediately.

But the way the health system works is that HIV patients must be referred to the district hospital, Jubilee, 20km away. A few days ago, Jubilee was finally accredited to give out ARVs, probably from September onwards. But it's six months later than promised.

During one week's delay I recorded the deaths of several patients. According to the Health-e news agency, in June, in the most industrialised country on the continent, 42 000 South Africans were on antiretroviral treatment at government sites. (The figure doesn't include non-government programmes.)

In July, Uganda already had 65 000 on treatment. When I was there, in Uganda, I saw one working traffic light in the capital city. One traffic light; 65 000 on treatment. So is the delay here about our capacity or is it political will?

Let's be clear about one thing. This wasn't my agenda. I didn't set out to document the lack of ARVs. My original proposal was to write about their arrival. I kept hoping to interview a patient taking the drugs for the first time but it didn't happen. When Cameron pleaded with the nearest hospital with an antiretroviral programme, in Gauteng, he was told that his clinic is in North-West and besides, they have their own queue.

Rustenburg is in North West, it has ARVs, but it's two hours away. The hospital in Gauteng is half an hour. On maps, the boundary line between the North West Province and Gauteng is literally the fence of Jubilee Hospital. His patients missed treatment by millimeters, the width of the fence. During the five months I spent driving past the fence, it was the boundary between living and dying.

I once met a patient, William M, who had walked to the clinic to prove that he could. It was shortly before the Soweto derby; he wore a Pirates cap and his six-year old son wore a Chiefs jersey. William had recovered from TB, one of Aids' most lethal partners. Cameron had pulled him back from the threshold but only just. He had no laces in his shoes but he was walking again.

I asked him about ARVs. He personified the drugs, like a saviour. "I want him," he said, "But I don't know if I can get him." In Mathibestad, it seemed like we were waiting for Godot, the saviour who never comes.


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"The truth – whether a truer diagnosis or truer reporting – needs time."

Jubilee Hospital has made another promise. I hope it comes true. ARV treatment can buy us more time but it can't be a saviour. The shrapnel beyond the reach of medicine remains.

When I began reporting in Mathibestad, the question I had was simple: When their Aids patients go on dying, how do those in rural health find meaning in what they do? When I met Cameron, a serene doctor, my question became: What is his secret?

But Cameron is frank with the patients and the students who also ask why he carries on: He can't provide an answer, they need to find their own. "I don't look for meaning," Cameron once told me quietly, after a senseless day of treating Aids without treatment. "I ask myself," he said, "How do I act now?"

And that's the question I want to leave with you: How do we act now? ■

This talk was delivered at the Ruth First Memorial Lecture at Wits on 24 August 2005.

Every number is a life

To get beyond the stats and make the reporting of Aids meaningful, requires different journalistic techniques. ***Neiloe Khunyeli*** *spoke to proponents of narrative journalism.*

Waiting to die is a lot like writing the perfect story. It starts off slowly, with the end a bit blurry. But somehow it always just seems to come together, and everybody has a story to tell while waiting to die. But with South Africa having the fifth highest prevalence of HIV in the world, death for those infected and affected turns into a horror story. Thus coverage of Aids by the South African media seems somewhat lacking when one considers the grotesque proportions that the effects of the disease have reached.

According to the Department of Health's National HIV and Syphilis Antenatal Sero-Prevalence Survey released in September 2004, approximately 5.6 million South Africans were living with HIV in 2003. And since surveys, especially government ones, are never iron-clad, it can be assumed that the number is higher.

But that is exactly what 5.6 million is; just a number. And to people buzzing on caffeine, worrying about school payments, car payments, house instalments or where their next meal is coming from, 5.6 million is not even a particularly scary number.

That is why narrative journalism stories are able to get beyond the numbers and focus on individuals who can communicate to people's souls. "Narrative journalism is about telling a story like a story," says Dave Hazelhurst, the creative director at *The Star*. "It's a way to drag readers into the lives of people."

According to Hazelhurst, *The Star's* special narrative journalism focus to tell the story of Aids, "A Fall of Sparrows" started out as various stories centred around 28 teenagers and how they coped with family responsibilities after the adults died of Aids related diseases.

"We really could not capture the atmosphere, so what was lacking was people would not know about the root of their situation," said Hazelhurst. "We needed to tell stories about a single mother who had Aids and would die of Aids, and then readers would understand." And so the story of two women living with HIV materialised in the informal settlement of Loli, 20 kilometres west of Johannesburg.

"A Fall of Sparrows" is a three-part narrative ➡

journalism piece that was run by *The Star* in October 2003. The story was written by Nalisha Kalideen and the images were provided by Debbie Yazbek and over a four month period, they observed and participated in the lives of Peggy and Julia.

Kalideen and Yazbek were asked to regard the two women as people with real lives and feelings instead of as just statistics. And reporting on life stories and not vague numbers is ultimately how narrative reporting on HIV/Aids differs from regular Aids-related, hard-news stories in newspapers.

"I think one of the most important lessons that I learnt from the story was about our common humanity," said Kalideen. "And one of the things I set out to achieve by writing the piece was to get our readers at *The Star* to understand who these women were. I wanted them to identify with Peggy and Julia and to realise, as I had, that they were just ordinary women."

Images played a crucial role in "A Fall of Sparrows" in providing pictures of the women with the disease who looked like everyday people. "By photographing people with HIV, the disease is demystified," said Yazbek. "The pictures depict them as ordinary people no different from you and me."

The United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/Aids and the World Health Organisation (WHO) says there are currently more than 60-million HIV-infected people worldwide. These numbers are overwhelming, but focusing on just two out of the 60 million can have a greater impact on people than a simple overview of the issue.

"There are stories that are better told in a narrative form and papers like *The Star* have a duty to say what stories demand this." says Hazelhurst. "'A Fall of Sparrows' did nothing for our circulation, but it was a great piece of journalism that enriched our lives, the lives of the readers and knowledge on HIV/Aids."

And for those who explore the issue creatively, certain aspects of it are made clear. "To me Aids was a serious issue but what I never considered was the actual pain that those infected go through," said Yazbek.

By its very nature, narrative writing engages with the reader. Franz Kruger, the editor of website www.journalism.co.za, describes narrative journalism as the use of narrative techniques in journalism. "The structure is often chronological rather the usual inverted pyramid," he said. "There is great use of character description and it usually reads like a short story or a novel." This is why such a complex issue like HIV/Aids lends itself to being made more digestible in narrative form.

In her paper delivered at the 2005 Narrative Journalism conference hosted by the Nieman Foundation and the Wits Journalism School, journalist Kerry Cullinan, who works for the Health-e News Service agency, said: "We need to write stories…that will strike a chord with the average reader, moving them from 'ag shame' or 'ag sies' to 'yebo'!". The aim of these stories should be to evoke how people feel and live."

"HIV/Aids reporting is very much driven by conflict and key events," says Natalie Ridgard, research co-ordinator of the HIV/Aids and the Media Project atWits.

American journalism teacher from the Medill school in Chicago, Doug Foster, who has been writing about Aids in South Africa, says the issue should be covered as "an onslaught that affects five million South Africans directly, because they have HIV, and millions more parents, partners, friends and children affected indirectly."

But media workers often say that newspapers do not have the time or financial resources to invest in long narrative stories. "I think that problems within newsrooms; which include time constraints and resources, can and should be managed to accommodate writing such as this because it obviously adds value to the publication," said Kalideen.

Sometimes such constraints can be solved by simple prioritising. "Every editor makes choices about where to put his or her limited resources and most stories do not call for in-depth treatment," said Foster. "But a pandemic which threatens the lives of so many certainly calls for a sustained, significant, creative journalistic effort to engage and inform readers about it."

Reporting on HIV/Aids does seem a tad formulaic. The same stories are being told in the same ways. "There are issues of representation around HIV, whereby the face of the disease seems to always be a poor black woman," said Ridgard. "There is no sense of how other people live with HIV/Aids."

Solutions can be found in the type of stories we choose to tell. But more importantly in *how* these stories are told. ■

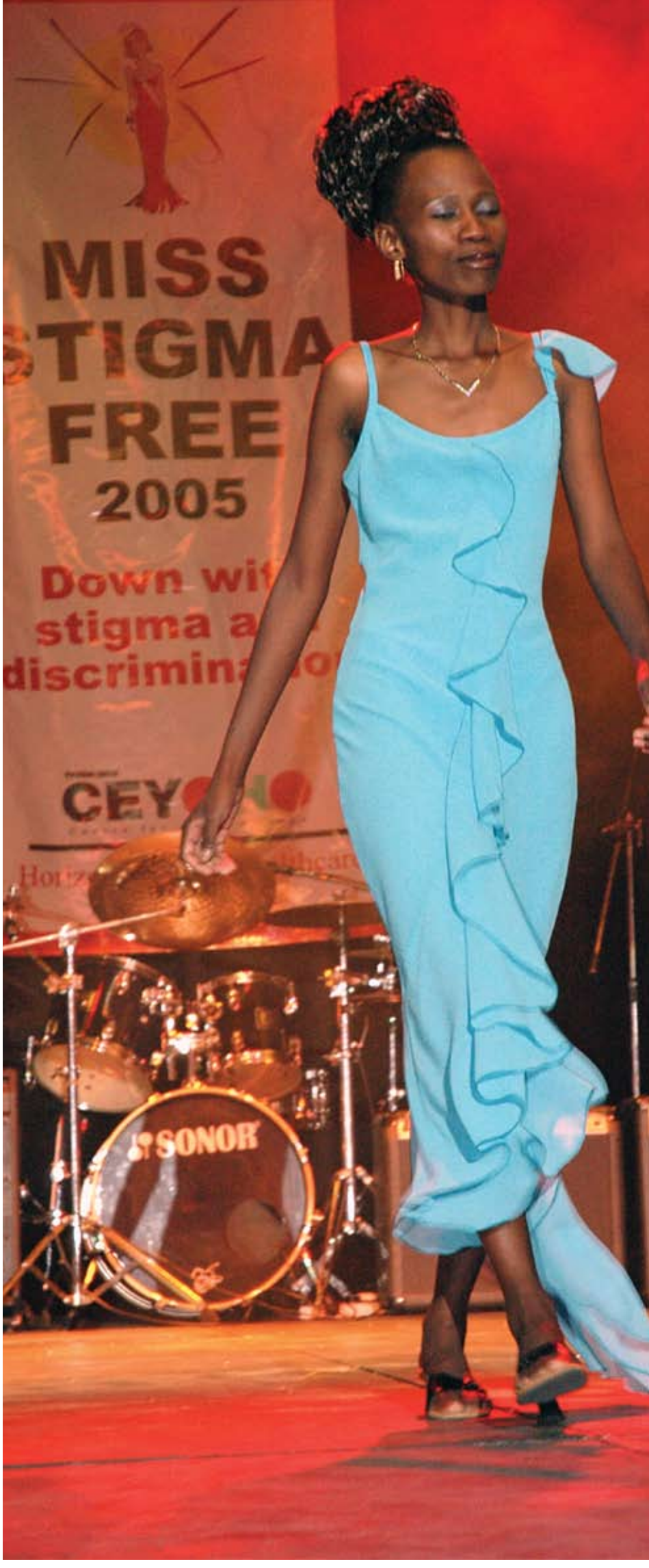
How to do narrative journalism

Mark Kramer, writer-in-residence and director of the Nieman Programme on Narrative Journalism, and who was the guest speaker at a recent conference on this form of journalism, in Johannesburg, says: "Sometimes terms that everyone uses but no one can quite define are about vast, various concepts. I get asked 'What's narrative?' all the time and, given the name of our slice of the Nieman Foundation, I've been pressed on it. When the programme was new, I suggested, in jest, that we should call ourselves The Nieman Programme for 'Contactful' Journalism – journalism that doesn't assume the reader is a robot, that acknowledges the reader knows lots and feels and snickers and gets wild. Perhaps the question 'What's up with this narrative stuff?' is an uneasy one – a question that denotes factions and discomfort with the clear movement toward more narrative in news coverage. At a minimum, narrative denotes writing with:

- scenes
- characters
- action that unfolds over time
- the interpretable voice of a teller – a narrator with a somewhat discernable personality, and
- some sense of relationship to the reader, viewer or listener,

which, all arrayed, lead the audience toward a point, realisation or destination.

For further information see http://www.nieman.harvard.edu/ and follow the links.



Aids for Journalists

HIV/Aids and the Media is a project to research reporting on HIV/Aids. It is run from the Wits Journalism and Media Studies programme in partnership with the Perinatal HIV/Aids Research Unit at Baragwanath Hospital and supported by Johns Hopkins University and USAID.

"Journ Aids is a website run by the project and was set up to help journalists report better on HIV/Aids," says Natalie Ridgard, the project co-ordinator. "It is an online resource specifically aimed at the journalism community."

The objectives of the HIV/Aids project are to enable journalists to play an informed role in combating HIV/Aids; to promote discussion and debate among journalists and other key role-players; to monitor the impact of the media and to provide research which ensures an informed and useful debate around this issue.

So far journalists attached to the project as fellows have done the following work in this area: Alan Finlay has done a comparative analysis of the print media's coverage of the HIV/Aids during three months in 2002 and 2003; Ida Jooste conducted a study of the reception of HIV/Aids news coverage in Cato Manor, Durban over a month-long period in November 2003; Philippa Garson has looked at the effects of stigma in Soweto and Nicola Spurr has focused on mother to child transmission programmes.

The Journ Aids website contains basic fact sheets, has a blogging section, as well as overviews of the main Aids issues – prevention, treatment, living with Aids, it also covers statistics and, crucially for journalists, focuses as well on the ethics of reporting the disease.

Follow the link to Journ Aids from www.journalism.co.za.

Chris Kirchhoff

Chris Kirchhoff

Living with the stigma

"The Miss HIV Stigma Free Pageant in Botswana asks contestants 'What are you going to do to reduce stigma in your community?'"

With over two million inhabitants, Soweto is the most populated black urban residential area in South Africa. Poverty co-exists with pockets of wealth. Most people are working class, live in matchbox homes, shacks or rented rooms. Unemployment is as high as 50% among people aged 20 – 29. Single-parent families make up one third of all households. The HIV rate in the general population is estimated at 10% and is 30% in pregnant mothers. Although knowledge of HIV/Aids is widespread, 88% of people interviewed in a recent survey said no-one in their homes had HIV.

As part of a six-month study for the HIV/Aids and the Media project journalist ***Philippa Garson*** interviewed nine women to explore their experiences of stigma as people living with HIV. Garson found that despite the sheer numbers of people living and dying with HIV/Aids, and the public campaigns around Aids awareness, stigma has not diminished as much as one would expect.

She also found that some women are beginning to stand up to the tyrannies of isolation and rejection and in so doing, are acting as agents of change in their own communities. "In a climate where denial around HIV/Aids still prevails in both public and private spheres, and where women are often blamed for 'bringing the disease into the home', the burden they carry is immense."

Garson adds that research shows that the media's preoccupation with the politics around Aids in general continues while the personal experiences of people living with the illness continue to be ignored. However there is a hunger, particularly among those directly affected by HIV, for more media coverage on real life experiences of the disease.

The following are the voices of some of the women:

K *has disclosed to her partner but is unable to tell her immediate family. "The way my sister talks about HIV. She says 'I really hate them.' I said 'What if I tell you I have HIV.' She said 'Then I won't see you again in my house.'"*

D *with two children, has disclosed to her mother but not to her partner. "When I got the results I didn't tell him. It was just my secret …You know, it's a question of who came with the disease or what happened, you know. I don't know whether I am the one who came with the disease with my first relationship or was he… At the end of the day I am the one to be blamed."*

Z *has a two-year-old and baby who is HIV-positive and sick. She has disclosed her status to no one. Because she was too scared to disclose to the hospital where she gave birth in Kwazulu-Natal, her baby wasn't given Nevirapine. "It's not easy to just disclose yourself. Ja, because you are thinking, eish, lots of questions. Maybe these people, they'll neglect me, you see, all these questions."*

D is unable to tell her partner of her status because she fears a violent response. She has not told him that their first baby died as a result of hospital negligence; neither did she pursue the matter with the hospital, as she feared her status would be revealed. *"He was just negative about this HIV thing, he doesn't want to know anything, even now. You see. There was a time last year when I tried to tell him, but he said if he can find out that he is HIV-positive he is going to kill himself, so I can't risk that, I can't test that… So you won't know if he will kill himself only or he'll start with the baby and then me and then himself, those are the things that made me know I must never touch this, he will do something that is very hurting to the family."*

T is a single mother of four children from three different fathers – two who have died of Aids. T has experienced ongoing rejection from her mother and sisters. She was forced to leave home several times and recently stayed in the HIVSA shelter. *"My mother just said, 'Hey, she's got Aids, she's got Aids… I don't want her in my house.' Now my sisters came, all of them now, saying, 'Ja, she must be out, she must be out.' Now I was crying. I asked myself, 'where must I go now?'"*

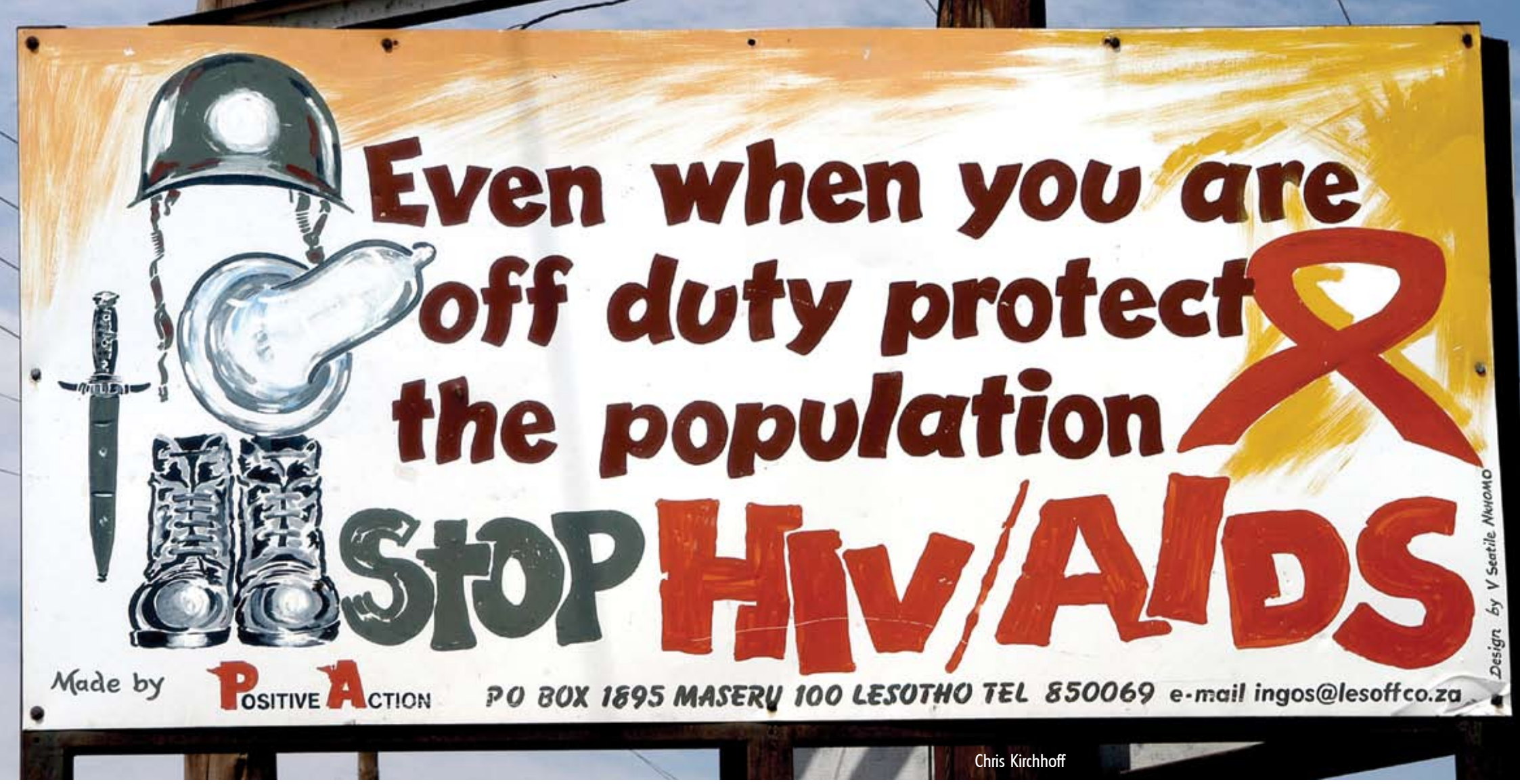
J discovered her status in 1993 when pregnant. Her child died three years later. To date she has never disclosed to the father of her child who had another baby in a subsequent relationship, who also died. The only person **J** disclosed to was her mother, who rejected her. *"I don't know what she thinks but my mother doesn't like me from the age of three years. She even took me to the welfare, I don't know what's wrong with her, but I have been trying to come closer to her, you understand? … I was living positive with my child, I didn't take any treatment because I was scared. (My mother) didn't even give me any support about this thing, the only mother, my biological mother. She is just avoiding and ignorant. I can't force her to understand this thing and accept it, and to face it. I just told myself it is with me and then I will face it myself."*

A: *"Disclosure has its advantages and disadvantages. For me I thought it was an advantage to disclose. I told my family and other friends. When they visited last Sunday we cooked and no-one wanted to eat the food because they thought it was infected with HIV. We had to throw away the food. It's better to disclose to someone you don't know. It's better to trust the support group than family members. Sometimes it hurts to disclose to family members and then you don't get the support you need."*

T reports that suspicions around her status were confirmed when she bottle-fed her baby with Pelargon (issued as part of the PMTCT programme). *"The problem started at my home when they said, 'Ja, you've got Aids now because mothers who have Aids, they get this milk, the Aids milk'. They knew before but now they didn't have proof, you understand, because I was fit and strong. But when they saw that tin now, they said, 'Here it is'."*

M whose baby is negative, has the support of her mother in Lesotho but is trapped in an abusive relationship. *"I am ready to confront everyone to say living with HIV is not a problem. I want people to know about HIV. I don't care whether the others are going to talk. I think we have to go house-to-house to teach the families – especially boys and men – about HIV/Aids. The people who have to go there must be the people who are HIV-positive. If you go there they say, 'She's lying. She's not HIV, see how healthy she is.' We must take our results. Explain why we are still living healthily, so they know everything about HIV."*

A disclosed to her husband straight away. *"What encouraged me is I was not alone. There were many others. There were 10 that day and seven were positive… I was in a hurry to tell my husband because I know my husband, he is faithful to me."* ■



Chris Kirchhoff

Sustaining the coverage

__Natalie Ridgard__ and __Nicola Spurr__ say it seems that media are unable to sustain meaningful coverage on PMTCT and HIV/Aids outside of key events or to engage with public or policy agendas without relying on conflict between government and civil society.

Conflict between civil society and government makes for great copy. Indeed, the South African media's response to government efforts to prevent mother to child transmission of HIV has been to provide a fair amount of coverage of the issue. It is the nature of this coverage and what it reveals about the nature of the media which is worth further investigation.

This year the HIV/Aids and the Media Project, in partnership with the Media Monitoring Project (MMP), conducted a content analysis of print media in order to investigate news media coverage of the prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV (PMTCT) in South Africa.

A total of 807 articles were extracted from a database of news clippings from the years 2000, 2002 and 2004.

In 2004 media project research fellow Alan Finlay found that the frequency of coverage drops in the absence of key conflict events or key "celebrities", for example, the chairperson of the TAC Zackie Achmat or the Minister of Health Manto Tshabalala-Msimang.

To a certain extent loyalty to news values accounts for this kind of coverage: news is supposed to be new, dramatic and exciting. His findings also pointed to a lack of "personal" stories about Aids and we wanted to investigate whether this is also true of PMTCT coverage.

We were also interested in the various ways in which agendas on PMTCT are played out and to what extent the media should play a role in sustained and meaningful coverage and continue to set a public and policy agenda in the absence of key conflict events.

"Reporters often neither trust governments nor agree with them."

Agenda-setting

The idea of agenda-setting is premised on a model in which in any political debate primary actors set up their own ideological stance on an issue and the media set up the conflict between these competing ideologies. Government develops policy and legislation and communicates its policy agendas to the public through the mass media. Civil society also uses the media to advance and publicise its advocacy aims and mobilise support, and this, in turn, influences the broader public policy cycle.

The media, ultimately, has discretionary control over which issues and events are highlighted for public attention, which depends on newsworthiness and readers' interests.

Findings

Some of the more general findings are:

- 65% of all articles are news stories: this is not particularly surprising as news dominates newspapers in general, but it does point to the newsworthiness of PMTCT in the monitoring period and the responsive role of the press in covering the issue.
- Over the three years it is clear that reporting peaks around specific events, such as those mentioned above.
- 68% of stories are nationally focused, supporting the premise that most coverage focuses on the debates around national policy on PMTCT.
- Two categories of findings – sources and key messages – best illuminate the issues of agenda-setting and will be discussed in more detail below.

Sources

It emerges that 33% of all stories quote government sources, including the national and provincial departments of health. The Minister of Health is the most prominent individual quoted. Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are the next most prominent sources, with 13% of stories quoting NGOs, especially the TAC, Aids Law Project and the Aids Consortium. TAC leaders Zackie Achmat and Mark Heywood feature as the most prominent individuals here.

Government and the TAC are often quoted in the same stories. Out of the 33% of stories featuring government, the TAC is also quoted 21% of the time. Out of the 13% of stories featuring the TAC, the government is also quoted in 56% of them. This indicates that these two actors are highly likely to be played off against each other in articles, thereby fuelling the idea of conflict.

The TAC is clearly favoured in 17% of all the stories and is only clearly opposed in 1% of the stories. The government, on the other hand, is favourably portrayed in 11% of stories and clearly opposed in 78% of stories. This, together with the regular use of multiple government sources, indicates that reporters often neither trust government's standpoints, nor agree with them. Although the TAC and other civil society movements may be depicted as disruptive in their protest tactics, there is evidence of implicit support for their agendas.

Stories sourcing government officials and politicians most often feature multiple government sources. In fact, some stories feature up to four government sources at a time. Stories sourcing the TAC and other NGOs, however, usually only feature one source.

This seems to indicate that journalists struggle to

Chris Kirchhoff

obtain a clear message from government sources, or that there may be different messages coming out of different government structures. This also shows the inability or reluctance of government to engage with or to use the media effectively to set its agenda.

It also indicates that the TAC is more direct and clear in its messages – the use of a single voice in the press here is a mark of successful advocacy.

Overall, the most likely people to be sourced on issues of PMTCT are those government officials responsible for policy and legislation, and those civil society leaders who contest it.

Although the TAC is a grassroots movement, with many members able to speak from personal experience, the media return to those same sources that they know. Ordinary people affected by PMTCT hardly feature at all.

Only 15 stories out of the total sample feature people living with HIV (0.9%) and nine stories (0.6%) source mothers or pregnant women. Fathers barely feature at all, only mentioned in two stories (0.1%).

Thus, those ordinary people most affected by issues of PMTCT – HIV-positive women attending antenatal clinics, and their male partners and families – are almost invisible in the press.

Key messages

A set of 153 possible key messages was developed for the monitoring in order to analyse what perspectives are most prominent within the coverage. Positive messages around Nevirapine feature most often:

- "NVP is central to PMTCT" (7.4% of all stories and overall most prominent message);
- "NVP is good because it prevents transmission" (3%); and
- "NVP is an antiretroviral" (2%). Negative messages about Nevirapine are far less prominent:
- "Resistance to NVP has an impact on your broader health" (1.1%);
- "There are better alternatives to NVP" (0.6%); and
- "NVP is not a good intervention" (0.5%).

It is interesting to see how NVP is mostly positively promoted by the media, despite the active debate about its side-effects and possible resistance. It seems clear that the TAC's messages about the efficacy and safety of Nevirapine have been incorporated into the media's discourse too. Whether or not media should be investigating why we do not have a more effective and safer intervention is an important, but related, issue.

The second most prominent message overall is that "It is the government's responsibility to provide PMTCT", which features in 5.1% of all stories. A message stating "The government is being stubborn (in the face of scientific evidence and other public pressure)" arises in 4.2% of all stories.

Generally, there are many negative messages about government which feature prominently, including "Government lacks a comprehensive policy to deal with HIV/Aids" and "Government lacks the political will to deal with HIV/Aids". The prominence of these messages points to the media's generally negative portrayal of government.

These findings support the idea that the public agenda around PMTCT is being set and challenged, in turn, by civil society and government actors in South Africa.

The media seem to be mostly responding to and reflecting this conflict, using the idea of opposing forces to stimulate tension and create news.

Ultimately, it seems as though government has not been using the media as effectively as the TAC and others, when it comes to promoting their own PMTCT agenda. Although government is obviously a major player and needs to be quoted and acknowledged, the media seems disinclined to actively promote government viewpoints.

Conclusion

It seems that media are unable to sustain meaningful coverage on PMTCT and HIV/Aids outside of key events or to engage with public or policy agendas without relying on conflict between government and civil society.

Yet the battle for an effective PMTCT roll out has not been "won" and there are many related issues that should be investigated further. For instance, why does South Africa not not have a better intervention when other resource-poor settings do? Or why are there are inconsistencies between provinces in the roll out of PMTCT?

Yes, there are remarkable constraints that journalists and editors face when reporting the HIV/Aids story, but even within these constraints there are ways to be creative and report meaningfully. Asking these questions not only provides an opportunity to set public and policy agendas but also promotes a sustained media agenda on HIV/Aids. ■

The prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV (PMTCT) is of critical strategic importance. With proper implementation it forms a crucial part of the South African Government's current prevention campaigns.

In all provinces, with the exception of the Western Cape, PMTCT comprises a basket of interventions, including voluntary counselling and testing, single-dose Nevirapine to mother and baby, counselling on infant feeding choices and free formula for six months.

With this kind of intervention transmission of HIV from mother-to-child can be reduced from around 35% to 12%. In the Western Cape, instead of single dose Nevirapine, dual therapy (a combination of AZT and Nevirapine from 28 weeks is offered: this kind of intervention is not only better for women's health but further reduces transmission to 5%.

Like most other aspects of HIV/AIDS, PMTCT has been mired in controversy from almost the very start. In the late 1990s government rolled out a handful of pilot sites around the country. Many criticised this approach as being too slow in the face of an urgent public health crisis.

After a sustained campaign the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) took the National Department of Health to court over the issue and in a landmark Constitutional Court ruling in 2002 government were "forced" (to quote Health Minister Manto Tshabalala-Msimang) to roll out PMTCT nationwide and without delay. The department built its case on a number of factors, including concerns about Nevirapine "toxicity" and "resistance".

"The media return to those same sources that they know."

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The symbiosis between capitalists

Between the Lies:
Rise of the Media-Military-Industrial Complex
By Stan Winer
South Universities Press

Review by Simwogerere Kyazze

Question: Who is the most famous writer of the New Millennium?
Answer: JK Rowling, author of the Harry Potter stories.

If you answered in the affirmative, you will be forgiven for sharing the view of many teenagers (and an increasing number of young adults) around the world who swear by Mr Potter's benign witchcraft.

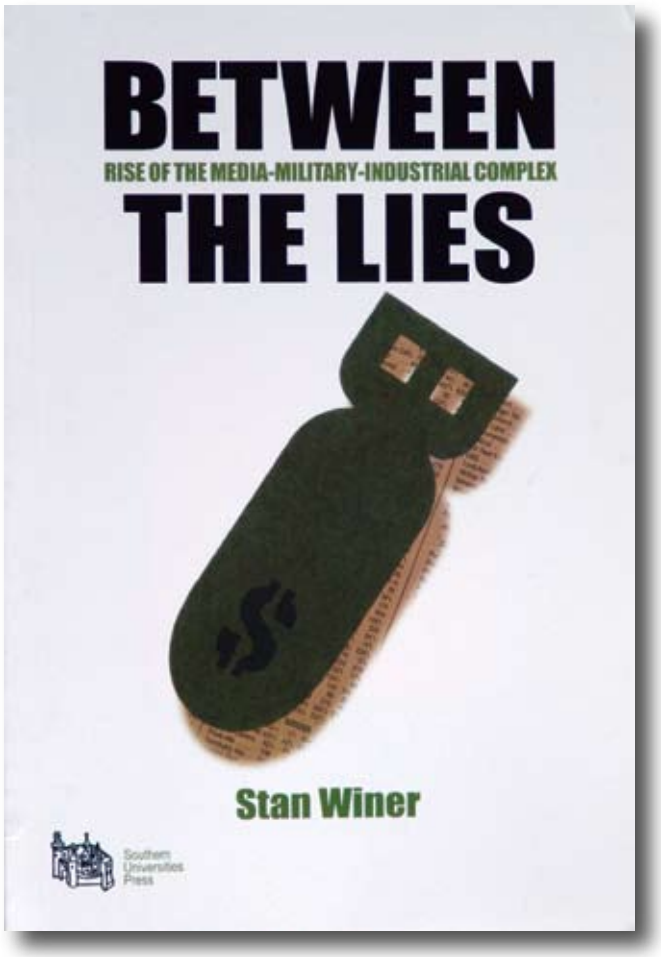
But while we ponder the Harry Potter juggernaut (Ms Rowling's books are bestsellers in any language), let us also ponder why very few serious intellectuals make it to the top of the world's most famous best-seller lists (*The New York Times*, Amazon.com, *Times* of London, etc). There is a reason why Gore Vidal, Jeffery Sachs, Noam Chomsky and Edward Said, have all had some of their best work published by little known outfits such as St Mark's Publishing House, and not celebrated imprints of the Simon & Schuster or Alfred Knopf calibre.

Independent publishers have small budgets and cannot therefore take out full-page colour ads to promote their authors the way Ms Rowlings, John Grisham, or Bill and Hillary Clinton are promoted. Small publishers don't print enough books to pass on as free reviewers' copies to generate good word-of-mouth. They certainly do not have the money to pay the large advances demanded by celebrity authors.

That might indeed explain why not many of us might have heard of Stan Winer, or his new book *Between the Lies: Rise of the Media-Military Industrial Complex* from Southern Universities Press. Winer, who was born and raised in South Africa but is essentially a citizen of the world with 30 years as a journalist/human rights agitator/researcher, holds views, like Vidal, Sachs, Chomsky, or Michael Moore, that are very much to the left of most everything.

And with a title like *Between the Lies*, Winer had to take on the Bush administration. And we should probably start from there. Recall, if you can, US Secretary of State Colin Powell's thundering speech at the UN in 2003, when he asserted with satellite images and Power Point, that his government had incontrovertible proof concerning Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). Powell's diatribe was the most explicit but by that time, the whole of America Inc., including media houses like *The New York Times* and *Newsweek*, was parroting these lies about Saddam Hussein's WMD and his links to Al Qaeda, the terrorist group that carried out the 9-11 attacks in New York and Washington.

Between the Bush White House, the Industrial Military Complex, Congress and almost the entire American press corps, there was no chance of the 280 million Americans opposing an illegal war against



the government of a sovereign country that had not committed any of the crimes it was accused of.

As you read this, most Americans have perhaps even forgotten why their young soldiers are dying in a foreign land. Winer quotes former US Treasury Secretary Paul O'Neil saying: "'Go find me a way to do this'," – President Bush's words as soon as he assumed power, asking his lieutenants to find him an excuse for invading Iraq just after being sworn in 2000.

"Barely five hours after American Airlines Flight 77 plowed into the Pentagon, Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was telling his aides to come up with plans for striking Iraq, even though there was no evidence linking Saddam Hussein to the attacks." There is still no link between Saddam and 9-11 and WMD, but the war was fought anyway, because Iraq was "an imminent threat to world peace" and because what the Americans were doing was not an invasion, but "a pre-emptive action conducted in the humanitarian interests of the Iraqi people."

That war has been disastrous for the Bush administration and for the US generally. But surprisingly, the rhetoric is still sound, according to Winer. As a result, Americans are not even aware that their soldiers are dying because of their government's obsessive need to secure Iraqi oil reserves (the world's second largest), as an insurance policy against instability in Saudi Arabia (with the world's largest oil reserves).

"Bush and his administration manipulated public opinion, and took the country into an illegal war with a rationale that defied common sense," Winer writes. We knew this already. What we might not have known is the willing complicity of American, Australian and British media organisations in the propaganda war that Mr Bush has waged for the last five years and which successive US and British governments have waged for the last 150.

Otherwise, how can journalists of the calibre that brought down the government of Richard Nixon fail to notice some of the most obvious things about Iraq, Winer wonders? That Saddam had "no nuclear, biological or chemical weapons of any kind. No stockpiles. No facilities for producing them. No hidden Scud missiles, or other means of launching them. No research labs developing prototypes. Not a functioning gas shell. Not an ounce of uranium. Not an incriminating document. Nothing."

Winer is convinced, and it's easy to convince others, that the US government connived with the Military Industrial Complex (which manufactures the F16 fighter planes, the Humvee armoured vehicles, the Abrams battle tanks, the Patriot missiles, etc), to basically lie to the American public through the American media, to justify an illegal war for their private gain.

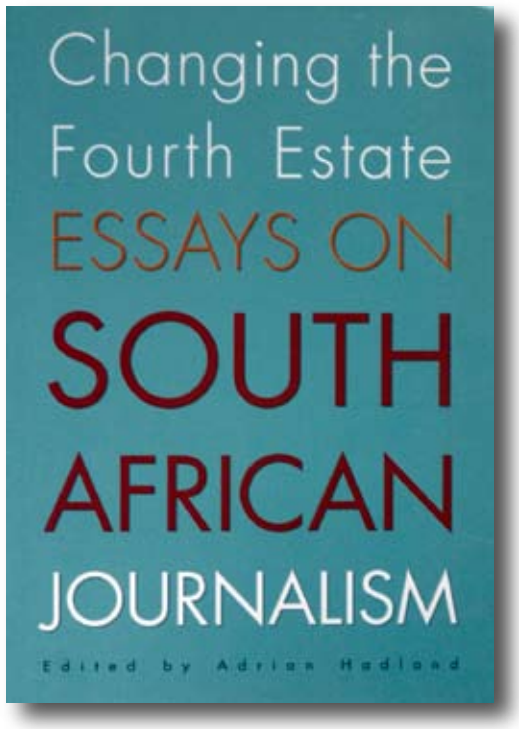
Between the Lies does not dwell only on events from our lifetime, but returns to the turn of the 20th Century, when US imperial ambitions were just fledgling while Britain's were in full bloom.

Successive governments on both sides of the Atlantic have used propaganda to dupe their countrymen and women into supporting the most mind-bending military adventures all over the world.

Winer has examples from Cuba in 1898; from Coventry, Pearl Harbour, London, Hamburg, Tokyo, Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War 2; from Seoul during the Korean War; from Hanoi, Laos and Saigon during the Vietnam War and from a dozen cities in Central America and Eastern Europe during the Cold War.

Winer's book could of course have been a little more History-Lite, as fewer and fewer people have good recollections of, or even care about such conflicts as past as World Wars 1 and 2.

But then again, perhaps because he was painting a picture of this beast called propaganda, he needed to show that the Bush phenomenon is not new, but is rooted in the shameless symbiosis between capitalists – some selling information for profit, others selling weapons for profit and all depending on implicit approval of a fearful, angry or confused population. ■



A practical guide for a new

Changing the Fourth Estate:
Essays on South African Journalism
Edited by Adrian Hadland
Human Sciences Research Council

Review by Andrew Kanyegirire

Changing the Fourth Estate is a collection of "how to" essays by some of South Africa's leading journalism practitioners and commentators. Their task, in the words of Adrian Hadland, the publication's editor, is to provide "practical advice and best-practice guidelines" to the new generation of journalists that are yet to get to grips with their role in the new democracy".

It is in this regard that Guy Berger of the Rhodes University School of Journalism and Media Studies offers an easy-to-use, context-driven set of criteria through which journalists can redress the sensationalist, inaccurate, elitist and disengaged reportage that is prevalent in the contemporary media landscape.

Before going further, it is important to note that while there are other important contributions from academics such as Ruth Teer-Tomaselli at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal who takes an analytical look at public service broadcasting in SA, this publication is not an academic text on theoretical debates to do with journalism.

Rather, the bulk of the book is made up of thoughtful and interesting personal narratives by journalists recounting their daily lived experiences of practising journalism in pre- and post-1994 South Africa. In a particularly insightful entry into the risky and murky world of investigative journalism, Mzilikazi wa Afrika reminds us of the desirability to be sceptical, thorough in preparation and yet also relentless in the pursuit of stories that involve exposing corruption and the abuse of power.

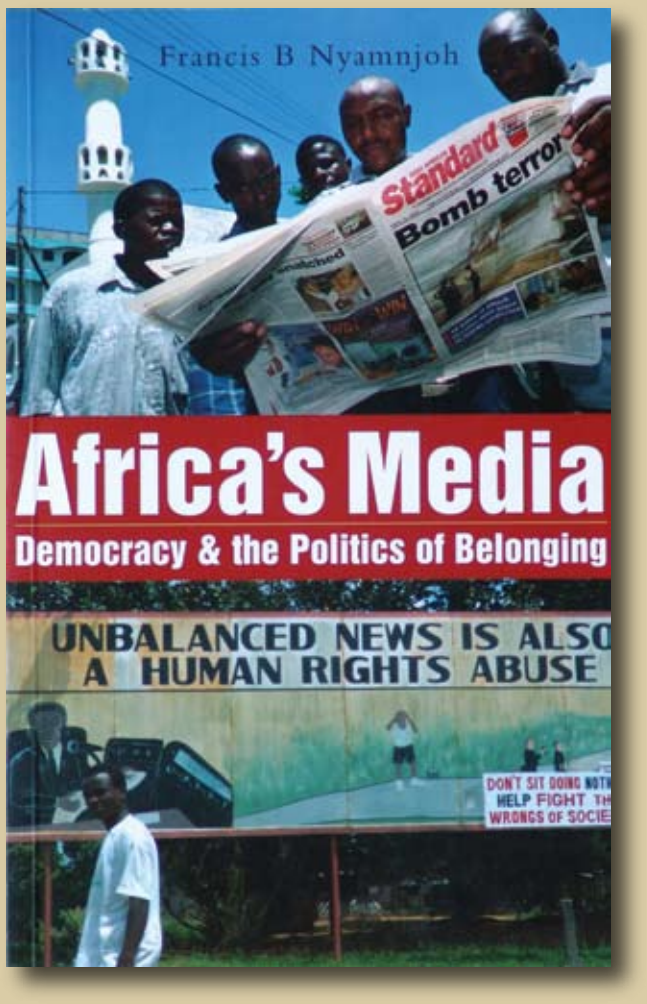
Political editor Angela Quintal highlights the "dearth of political reporters" at a time when political power is increasingly being centralised.

SA National Editors' Forum chair Joe Thloloe reminds us that TV doesn't have to be shallow and that it can be effectively used to

The politics of belonging

Africa's Media:
Democracy and the Politics of Belonging
By Francis B. Nyamnjoh
Zed Books and Unisa Press

Review by Lilian Ndangam



This book of nine chapters goes beyond a mere examination of the performance of Africa's media in the democratisation process of the 1990s, to critically interrogate the assumptions of liberal democracy and its inadequacies in Africa.

The author argues that in foregrounding the autonomy of the individual and homogenous civic citizenship, liberal democracy insufficiently appreciates the "African cultural realities that might well have enriched and domesticated" it.

He spells out how the myriad processes of globalisation have ushered in insecurities and anxieties within individuals and communities leading to an "obsession with citizenship, belonging, and the building or re-actualisation of boundaries and differences through xenophobia and related intolerances" in several parts of the continent. This has rendered identity politics essential to the political process in Africa.

The book examines various aspects of African media to illustrate how the media have performed against the common assumptions of liberal democracy and within the context of a growing obsession with belonging on the continent (Chapter 1).

The author equally outlines how the broad regulatory framework under which the press operates has contributed to the media's poor performance in the democratic process thus far.

Nevertheless, Nyamnjoh dedicates substantial attention to issues of ethics, professional standards and training to demonstrate how the African media share some responsibility for the quality of democracy evidenced on the continent (Chapter 2).

Unethical practices such as partiality, inaccuracy, speculation, and the use of non-attributed sources considerably undermine the credibility of the media and damage the profession itself. The author suggests that "being professional and ethical is a sure way for the media to regain public trust and respect, and to contribute meaningfully to democratisation however defined".

Nyamnjoh uses a detailed case study of Cameroon to demonstrate his central argument (Chapters 3-6). Indeed, Cameroon's dual colonial legacy (French and British) and diversity in cultures, religions and populations renders it arguably "Africa in miniature".

Government control of state-owned broadcasting media in the country has ensured that the most extensive reach serves as a public relations arm of the regime while denying opposition parties equal access to these media.

Despite enacting new laws on press freedom in 1990 and 1996, a selective application of these laws ensured that government authorities continued to stifle the private press by intimidating journalists, and seizing and suspending publications that were critical of the government. Throughout the analysis, Nyamnjoh extensively draws from cases across sub-Saharan Africa highlighting the similarities in practices and experiences.

Chapter 7 considers alternative ways in which Africans have sought to participate as active agents in national life. Of importance to this process is the creative appropriation of information and communication technologies (facsimile, Internet, cellular mobile telephony) to satisfy various communication needs.

In Francophone Africa, political rumour through *radio trottoir* and derision through political cartoons serve as alternatives to the mainstream uninformative media.

The stalled democratic process on the continent thus far points to the need for a more nuanced approach that domesticates liberal democracy by combining "ethnic cultural citizenship" and "civic citizenship" (Chapter 8).

Such an approach will counter the limitations of liberal democratic rhetoric and create space for media that are "in tune with the predicaments if their audiences, be these individuals or groups, minority or majority ethnic communities, citizens/nationals or immigrants".

Nyamnjoh concludes with an endorsement of Cecil Blake's (1997) communication policy model which broadly advocates privatisation and self-regulation of the media as an option for promoting the "democratisation-driven imperatives of communication in Africa" (Chapter 9, p268). Appealing though they are, the viability of these proposals remain problematic given the centrality of politics of belonging and the polarising role of the media so far which Nyamnjoh explicitly threads throughout the book.

By his own admission, the detailed ethnographic case of Cameroon takes up a considerable part of the book. A comparative analysis could have considerably enriched the study. This should however not detract from the merits of the work.

In detailing the politics of belonging as essential to understanding democratisation on the continent during the 1990s and situating the role of the media within that context, Nyamnjoh, without doubt, offers a refreshing critical perspective on both African media and democracy itself.

Such a substantial contribution to the debate on media and democratisation in Africa should be useful to academics, media practitioners and media rights activists.

generation of journalists in SA

take "the viewer to the scene of the story while making him or her a participant".

SAfm's John Perlman focuses on the need to ask probing questions. Cartoonist Jonathan Shapiro (aka Zapiro) entertainingly talks about the task of making an "incisive comment" while also advising budding cartoonists not to "try to do too much in one drawing".

Furthermore, David Hazelhurst guides us through how *The Star's* editor, designers, photographers, writers and graphic artists have managed to deploy the multi-pronged WED (Writing, Editing and Design) approach to the overall design of the newspaper.

Dennis Pather, Editor at the *Daily News* talks about the responsibilities of the editor – from knowing your audience and trusting your journalists to the increasingly prevalent role of joining the advertising team "for courtesy visits to leading advertisers to keep the revenues ticking over".

In a pertinent entry on media and transformation, *Business Day's* Rehana Roussow argues that transformation and diversity is not simply about representative numbers of men and women in the newsroom but rather about mindsets that need to be changed.

There are over 20 chapters in the publication with many of them taking on a do and don't approach to other key aspects: sports journalism, travel writing, ethics, online journalism, freelance writing, feature writing and multimedia journalism.

In a nutshell the publication attempts to provide insights into the main aspects of journalism in contemporary SA. As it is, the content of the book is broad and – although there are some commonalities – varied.

The entries, however, tend to steer clear of the specific socio-cultural and economic pressures that are faced by journalists in SA. In other words, although the entries are based on the personal experiences and worldviews of the writers themselves, the implications on journalism of the competing powers in the wider societal context could have been investigated further.

And, with the exception of a few entries, the bulk of the collection is also shy on the concerns, needs and interests of the new up-and-coming audiences in less affluent communities.

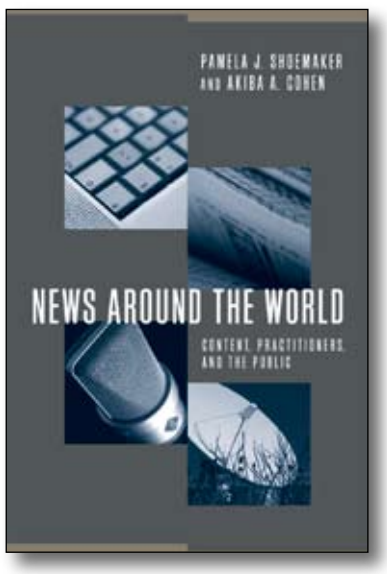
In relation to this – and as is pointed out by Hadland – there are some aspects of journalism such as sub-editing, arts journalism and news photography that are not addressed.

However, the plan is to include these topics in an upcoming volume. One could hope here that this follow up volume will also address community and business journalisms and topics on pertinent issues such as black economic empowerment, the rise of tabloidisation, SA's role in Africa and HIV/Aids – all of which are mediated by the changing face of media in South Africa.

Having said that, the strength of *Changing the Fourth Estate* lies in its readable, practical and interesting narratives that are based on the experiences and knowledge of people whose insights can be used to "enhance the quality of South African journalism" for the purposes of "deepening democracy".

In addition, due to its broad appeal this book should be of interest to practising journalists, students and academics and readers that are simply interested in gaining a first-hand account of journalism in South Africa. ■

Get Reading



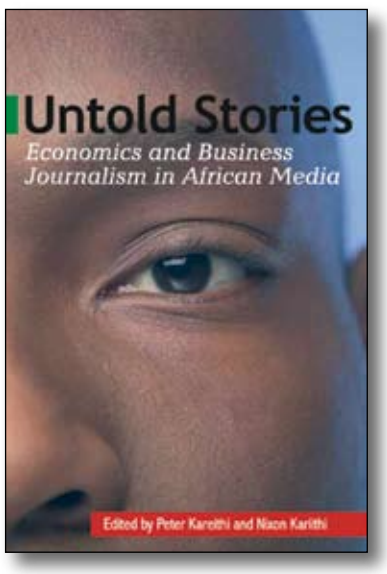
News Around the World: Content, Practitioners, and the Public

By Pamela J. Shoemaker and Akiba A. Cohen
Routledge

What makes front page news in the US might not in China. *News Around the World* examines how local notions of newsworthiness make a crucial difference in what stories are reported throughout the world. The authors have undertaken exhaustive original research and present here case studies of journalism in 10 countries: Australia, Chile, China, Germany, India, Israel, Jordan, Russia, South Africa, and the United States. The nations were selected for study based on a central principle of maximising variation in geographic locations, economic and political systems, languages, sizes, and cultures. *News Around the World* provides remarkable insight into how and why news stories are reported (or not reported) across the globe, and is essential reading for anyone seeking to understand international media and journalism.

Pamela J. Shoemaker is the John Ben Snow Professor of Communications at the SI Newhouse School of Public Communications, Syracuse University. Her books include *How to Build Social Science Theories, Mediating the Message: Theories of Influences on Mass Media Content, Gatekeeping,* and an edited volume, *Communication Campaigns about Drugs: Government, Media Public.* She is co-editor of the journal *Communication Research.* She is former president of the Association for Education in Journalism.

Akiba A. Cohen is Professor of Communication at Tel Aviv University in Israel. He is author of The Television News Interview and co-author of *The Holocaust and the Press: Nazi War-Crimes Trials in Germany and Israel, Global Newsrooms, Local Audiences: A Study of the Eurovision News Exchange,* and *Social Conflict and Television News.* He served as president of the International Communication Association and is an elected Fellow of the Association.



Untold Stories: Economics and Business Journalism in African Media

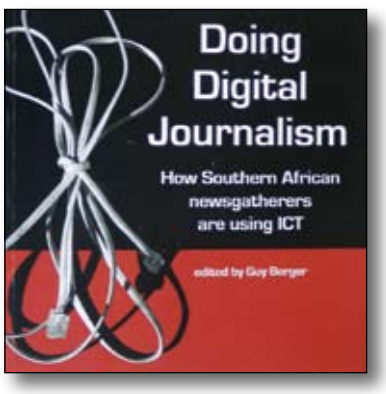
Edited by Peter Kareithi and Nixon Kariithi
Wits University Press

Untold Stories is an attempt by African media scholars to fill the void created by the dearth of research and publications on African economics and business journalism. It explores how African media organisations and journalists have covered the continent's protracted economic crises, reform programmes, governance issues, and the current push towards globalisation. It is aimed at media scholars and practitioners, as well as those in the fields of economics, political science and sociology who have an interest in African development.

Towards a Sustainable Information Society Deconstructing WSIS

Edited by Jan Servaes and Nico Carpentier
Intellect Books, Bristol

This book aims to evaluate the potentialities of both the Information Society and the WSIS in supporting and constructing more democratic, just and developed societies. It is the second book arising from the intellectual work of European Consortium for Communications Research members. Jan Servaes is Professor and Head of the School of Journalism and Communication at the University of Queensland, and was President of the European Consortium For Communications Research (ECCR) and Vice-President of the International Association of Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) from 2000 to 2004. Nico Carpentier is a media sociologist working at the Communication Studies Departments of the Catholic University of Brussels (KUB) and the Free University of Brussels (VUB). He is co-director of the KUB research centre CSC and member of the VUB research centre CEMESO. He is also a board member of the ECCR.



Doing Digital Journalism: How Southern African Newsgatherers are Using ICT

Edited by Guy Berger
Project Manager Sonja Boezak
Published by Highway Africa
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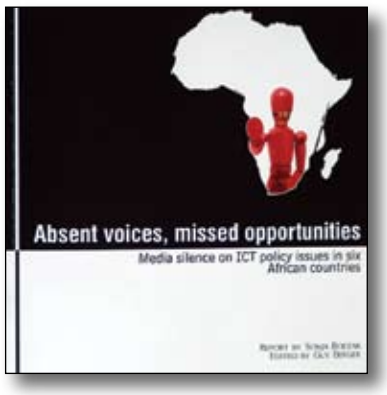
This book consists of studies into the use of ICTs – especially Internet and cellphones – in selected newsrooms in nine Southern African countries. It covers Mozambique, Namibia, Botswana, Tanzania, Zambia, Swaziland, Lesotho, Malawi and Zimbabwe. Although the project does not lend itself to generalisations, it does provide qualitative insights into the infrastructural and policy institutional environments in which many journalists work and into the way they regard and use new technologies.



Absent Voices, Missed Opportunities: Media Silence on ICT Policy Issues in Six African Countries

Report by Sonja Boezak
Edited by Guy Berger
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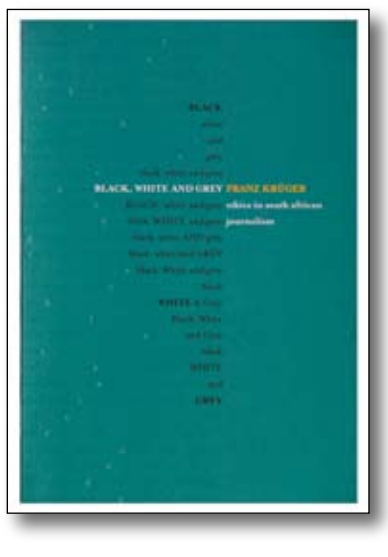
Publisher Highway Africa

This research report reflects studies conducted to assess and evaluate the nature of ICT policy coverage in influential media in Kenya, Mozambique, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, Ethiopia and Senegal. Issues raised include questions of language and appropriate content, knowledge valuations, and some of the assumptions within the global ICT discourse that impact on media understandings of, and interactions with, ICTs. Regarding policy around ICTs the editor makes the comment that good coverage by media can help make the difference between ad hoc policy-making or thoughtful, engaged, consultative policy-making.



Black, White and Grey: Ethics in South African journalism

By Franz Kruger
Double Storey

In South Africa, the debate about journalism ethics has taken particular turns in recent years. Issues of transformation and race have sparked heated debates in the profession, and there have been calls for the ethical codes of journalistic practice to be revisited, to bring them into line with the new South African reality. This title grew out of these discussions. Among other things, it attempts to measure the traditional standards of journalism against the demands of a changing society. The title is also intended to encourage journalists to take the time and trouble to explore ethical decision-making as a professional skill that is as important as any other. As the title suggests, the title reflects an approach which is prepared to see beyond simple black and white, and acknowledge shades of grey. Besides the discussion of various areas of ethics, the chapters contain a set of case studies drawn from real events. They also include talking points – short contributions by some of the most prominent people in South African journalism. They provide additional voices on the various areas, offering a different perspective or sometimes discussing the way an issue plays itself out in particular circumstances. The text is intended to be as practical as possible. The author has developed a tool to use when dealing with a particular dilemma – called the ethics roadmap. There is also a set of discussions and exercises that could be used in a classroom situation. Finally, a selection of codes has also been included.

Introduction to Journalism

By Gwen Ansell
Jacana Books

Southern Africa's most comprehensive, home-grown journalism textbook, Basic Journalism, has been revised and updated to deal with the latest developments in media law, HIV/Aids, and journalism ethics issues. Written by veteran journalist and media trainer Gwen Ansell, the second edition of the user-friendly textbook has been renamed "Introduction to Journalism" but still retains the original style and content that is specifically designed to answer South Africa-relevant questions and circumstances. New chapters in the textbook include:

- a fully updated law and ethics section, including recent controversies and precedents
- expanded information on covering not only the HIV/Aids pandemic, but also the science around treatment
- guidance on the new newsroom training climate under the National Qualification Framework

The textbook has also been restructured to assist learners working towards the new National Qualification Framework (NSB04) National Certificate in Journalism Level Five, as well as for degree and diploma journalism courses. Practical exercises and assignments make it equally useful for media trainers, and as a self-study manual.

Gwen Ansell has been a journalist and media trainer and consultant in Southern Africa since 1983 and was most recently executive director of the Institute for the Advancement of Journalism (IAJ). She holds an MA from Oxford University and a Certificate in Education (specialising in Adult Education) from the University of London, and is the author of several other books.