Review

have you got YOUR MOJO?

RHODES JOURNALISM Review

Cover picture by Paul Hills
The startling psychedelic graffiti on the cover and on this page were photographed by Paul Hills in Bogota, Colombia, when he encountered streetscapes like this one below. See his story and more pictures on pages 52-54.

IN THIS ISSUE

This edition of *Rhodes Journalism Review* is timed for the annual Highway Africa conference, Africa's biggest gathering of journalists, happening this year in Cape Town in September, and which takes as its focus one of humankind's biggest challenges and one which should preoccupy journalists too – our impact on the Earth (see Harold Gess' guest editorial below). At the same time media activists and journalists from all over the continent gather for the Pan African Conference on Access to Information to take stock of not only media freedom but also how deep democracy is rooted in Africa, a test taken by judging just how much its citizens can know. It's 20 years after the Windhoek Declaration, and Guy Berger, convenor of the event, asks whether Africa can do it again and get a day declared "World Access to Information Day" (see his guest editorial on the next page, and see the section on Media Freedom, starting on page 67).

The theme for this edition of *Review* is "Have you got your mojo?" – or "Have you got your mo(bile) jo(urnalism) [sorted out]?" Not many people thought the ubiquitous cellphone would confront journalism with such a powerful test of its adaptability (and survival skills), or change the relationship between makers and receivers of media so radically. So we asked those using its tools and theorising about this interface to give us the benefit of their insights. JM Ledgard, *The Economist*'s correspondent in Kenya, talks about how mobile works in Africa, Julie Posetti challenges us that the audience is no longer who we thought they were, and Chris Kabwato and Alette Schoon show us the personal and social dimensions of an internet connection. Then Matthew Eltringham, Matthew Trench and Robert Brand, who

all work on this frontier, tell us how they do it. Carlo Angerer and Adam Haupt take up the issue of making digital media products pay the bills (and the shareholders) and pose the very important question of journalism's old relationship with free information and whether monetising communication risks shutting down the very commons the profession has always relied upon.

But as Robert Brand remarks (page 17) there is still an important essence to journalism, regardless of its new tools/ toys, and so we focus an entire section on Doing Journalism. Kim Gurney looks at the Murdoch empire and phone-tapping and Brett Lock interrogates WikiLeaks. Arts journalism battles along because, despite its audiences and their appreciation, somewhere someone with power believes it to be uneconomical. John Hogg, Mary Corrigall, Suzy Bell, Gayle Edmunds, Sean O'Toole and Phakama Mbonambi urge us to hold the faith. Harry Dugmore and Mia Malan, who've started a new course in health journalism, look at ethics and Aids. Then two new experiments: Paul Hills and Laurence Mazure team up with indigenous communicators in Colombia to do both research and journalism, and Media Monitoring Africa puts child reporters into the field.

As Tripoli falls, we pay tribute to Anton Hammerl, another photographer lost in a war, and John Rose unpacks what's going on in North Africa. We look again at how mobile technologies are implicated in all this change and focus on Al Jazeera and their very interesting reporting methods.

Hein Marais, journalist turned author and sharp analyst gives us the Last Word on moving from the literal (daily journalism) to the lateral (writing a book).

ANTHEA GARMAN, EDITOR

CAN JOURNALISM ADAPT?

BY **HAROLD GESS**

There has been much discussion in the last decade about the crisis facing journalism, with speculation as to how to adapt journalism to a communication world dominated by the internet and social media, yet perhaps the biggest challenge to journalism will be whether it can adapt to climate change.

This might seem an odd claim but it is one that bears contemplation.

Conventional journalism, and even more so up-to-the-instant internet-based journalism, relies heavily on phenomena or events whose coverage can be encapsulated within small or short allotted spaces. It is very poor at dealing with complex ongoing phenomena that develop gradually over a considerable period of time.

Climate change stories, as with many other social-ecological stories, are often challenging to journalism in that they are complex and ongoing with a slow chain of events. Sometimes there are no visible personalities involved and nothing dramatic takes place.

As readers, viewers, and listeners have been challenged by ever-growing amounts of information (quantity replacing quality?), the technological changes to journalism have tended towards supporting short information bites rather than in-depth investigation, but this is, ironically, the complete opposite evolution to that which is necessary to adapt it to effective reporting in an age of climate change.

Climate change was, at first, framed as a scientific issue and, to date, much of the coverage it has received has been about scientific theories and predictions, but it is very much also a social issue. It is a phenomenon with wide-ranging and inter-linked social, economic, political, and environmental causes and consequences.

As the effects of climate change become more severe, it will generate more stories around economic and political decision-making, water security, food security, energy security, disease, political instability, economic instability, human migration and war.

The complexities of a changing world are often reduced

by journalism to local or isolated events, reported without any apparent understanding of, or linking to, the complexities from which they result. This is exacerbated by the perceived need for up-to-the-moment reporting, leaving little time, space or appetite for in-depth analysis.

Some players see the possible redemption of journalism in the evolution of the multi-skilled, all-singing-dancing creature called convergence; one individual who can shoot and edit video, photographs, and audio and who can also write copy. While juggling all these technical skills, and producing a journalistic product in ever-decreasing amounts of time, there is little time for in-depth research or analysis.

Others point to the citizen journalists snapping images and video on cellular phones and adding their 50 cents via sms or Twitter and believe that the redemption lies in letting the public make their own media while the journalists collate it. Once again, this is a recipe for more information about the hyper-local with little or no depth of understanding.

The only beneficiaries of these two methods are the media companies and their investors who have fewer staff salaries to pay and all the other associated costs. They do a disservice to both the journalistic profession and to the public who rely on it for knowledge and understanding of an increasingly complex and challenging world.

There is no way to make climate change sexy: it never appears on the red carpet in a skimpy frock. It won't often be exciting, except when its events are framed as (un)natural disaster. There will be a lot of challenging developments that cannot be easily understood without greater analysis of 'the bigger picture'.

The challenge for journalism, if it is to have any real value going forward, is to find a way to draw together and make sense of the complex, interlinked issues of climate change for readers, viewers and listeners.

One cannot adapt to new challenges unless one knows they exist and understands what they mean. This applies as much to journalism itself as it does to the readers, viewers and listeners who depend on it to understand the changing world they live in.

AFRICA CAN DO IT AGAIN
BUT THE MEDIA NEEDS FRIENDS

BY GUY BERGER

Can African media make world history again? This is the challenge being faced by media activists in September 2011, when they hope to mobilise a critical mass of voices in support of global official recognition of a "World Day of Access to Information".

Their quest echoes and complements the efforts of an earlier generation, whose gathering in Windhoek in 1991 went on to successfully convince the UN General Assembly to endorse 3 May as World Press Freedom Day. More than 100 countries worldwide marked the occasion this year.

As with the meeting 20 years ago, Unesco is a key partner in the September 2011 meeting. The prestige of this particular international organisation carries a lot of clout around the world, and it was largely thanks to it that 3 May secured traction internationally.

There are several rationales for a focus on access to information this time around:

Only six of 54 African countries have serious freedom of information laws, with the effect that transparency is in short supply – and not least in regard to the rip-offs and ravages that characterise deals around oil and mining rights in this resource-rich continent.

South Africa as an early adopter – the Promotion of Access to Information Act in 2000 – has been going through enormous wrangles to prevent the spirit of this law being undercut by the recent Protection of Information Bill (popularly dubbed "the secrecy bill").

In this post-WikiLeaks era, and with cyberwarfare becoming more and more mainstream, the issues around defining and regulating exceptions to access are becoming acute.

What's significant about the notion of access to information is that it embodies the need for citizens to have a right to information *and* it goes further to point to the need to make the right practical. In an age of internet and digital technology, the issue is how to use these assets to materialise rights in ways that make it easy to find and interpret information. That means ICT access, and info-literacy.

The issue here includes the extent to which public information becomes privatised, or remains in the public domain. And it also underpins statements like that of the US-based Sunlight Foundation which defines public information as necessarily having to be online.

In terms of international law, access to information is described as part of the wider right to freedom of expression – for instance in the UN Declaration of Universal Rights and the later elaboration in the International Covenant on Human and Political Rights. There's a logic here, in that free speech is rendered meaningless if the public is denied access to that speech – and the speech itself becomes circumscribed by being forcibly uninformed.

Media freedom is one of the central manifestations of the right to free speech, which is why World Press Freedom Day is of relevance to everyone, and not only newspapers. In comparison, a "World Access to Information Day" is of invaluable relevance to journalists, but it also goes much wider than the media sector. Activists around pollution or the extractive industries, companies, donors, banks, NGOs, academics, librarians, etc are also direct stakeholders in getting access.

There's an interesting interface between news and information that illustrates the difference – and the interdependence. A classic definition of news is that it is information that someone somewhere does not want revealed. A more cynical take on this, by journalist David Beresford, is that news is what any given editor hasn't yet heard of. (He told this to the editor of *The Times* (UK), and didn't get the job – instead *The Guardian* secured his talents.)

The point is that the media constituency has to get its head around realising that it is just one stakeholder operating a special filter for gleaning and giving out information. Journalists should realise there's a huge potential alliance for access to information, involving many more sectors of society and individuals who are far from the traditional business and news nets of journalism. And often it's these other sources of information who produce light, while what passes for journalism is too often just noise.

If anything, the recent contestation around the South African "secrecy bill" showed exactly this – that media alone is far less powerful than media-among-many. The Right to Know civil society coalition, rather than media organisations like the SA National Editors' Forum, led the successful charge to get some of the most obnoxious provisions dropped.

The same basic principle has been evident in countries like Liberia, Nigeria and Uganda. In all of these, the media has been a valuable beneficiary of getting transparency entrenched, and by extension, so too has the broader public. But in all these, if it were left up to the media to do the job alone, far less progress would have been made.

What media people can also do is to keep the public informed about these wider social campaigns around access to information. That also means educating audiences about the issues at stake. And journalists themselves need to be informed about these very matters. One example would be the debate around the extent to which public access applies to private bodies as well as to the state.

Another key issue is the definition of legitimate limits on access. Journalists should know and apply the three-way international test in assessing when secrecy can be acceptable:

- with transparency as default, the exceptions to be kept under wraps need to be tightly defined and codified in law, so as to avoid arbitrary refusals to release information;
- the rationale for keeping some information confidential must be a legitimate one, and not a ruse to hide corruption or human-rights abuses; and there must be an independent appeals system against refusals to grant access;
- penalties for violating any limits on access must be proportional to the damage caused by disclosure, and actual harm should be demonstrated by those allergic to sunlight.

Informing the public about these issues, and assessing practices against these international standards, is part of media's important – but highly neglected – role of promoting information literacy.

It's not enough for the public to have rights and practical access to information, they also need the capacity to understand whence it comes and what it means. They especially need to know what criteria affect the selection, structuring and credibility of news. Just like they need to know what a wiki is and how to "read" Wikipedia.

Part of the Cape Town conference agenda is precisely to promote dialogue between media and other stakeholders. Besides Unesco, other organisations involved include the African Union Commission, and the special rapporteurs for free expression of the UN and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (an organ of the African Union). Also affiliated to the initiative are the World Association of Newspapers (WAN-IFRA) and Article 19. The convenors of the event are known as the Windhoek+20 coalition, made up of influential NGOs spread across the continent (see www.windhoekplus20.org).

It's time for the media to descend from its pedestal and make friends with everyone else with an interest in information access. If it works, this kind of synergy will add another contribution to world from African experience.

ESTE STENCIL ES UN VIDEO

DIGITAL AFRICA

IN A CONTINENT WITH FEW COMPUTERS AND LITTLE ELECTRICITY, A **SMARTPHONE** IS NOT JUST A PHONE – IT'S A **POTENTIAL REVOLUTION.**

The front line in Mogadishu was just beyond the ruined cathedral. You could hear the small-arms fire of the al-Qaeda fighters and the return of heavy machinegun fire from the sandbagged positions of the African Union troops. But the scene on the sun-washed street in the Hamar Weyne district was calm. Women were shopping for fruit and vegetables, and the ciabatta and pasta Mogadishu gained a taste for in its Italian colonial days. A couple of cafés, serving also as electronics shops, were crowded, with people inside making VoIP phone calls and surfing the internet. Outside on the street boys were fiddling with mobile phones, Nokia and Samsung mostly, but also those fantastical Chinese models you find in poorer countries, nameless, with plastic dragon-like construction, heavy on battery-guzzling features like television tuners. I asked my Somali companion what the boys were up to. He wound down the window and summoned his gunmen to go and ask. The answer came back. "They're updating their Facebook profiles."

According to a recent intelligence estimate by a defence contractor, 24% of residents in Mogadishu access the internet at least once a week. This in a city in a state of holy war, too dangerous for foreigners to visit freely, where a quarter of the 1.2 million residents live under plastic sheeting, infested, hungry, and reliant on assistance brought in on ships that are liable to be attacked at sea by pirates. Half the population of Mogadishu is under 18. Some of these teenagers end up uploading and downloading ghoulish martyrdom videos and tinkering with websites celebrating the global *jihad*. But far more spend their time searching for love, following English football teams, reading Somali news sites uncensored by the jihadists, and keeping track of money transfers from relatives abroad. It takes more than violent anarchy to extinguish the desire of the young to stay connected, and to keep up with the contemporaries they see on satellite television.

When it comes to electricity, Africa remains the dark continent. There are a billion Africans, and they use only 4% of the world's electricity. Most of that is round the edges, in Egypt, the Maghreb and South Africa. The rest of Africa is unlit; seen from space, the Congo River basin is as dark as the Southern Ocean. Demand for power is already outpacing economic growth. With its population expected to double to 2 billion by 2050, Africa will have to build entire new power grids just to stand still. So far, the failure has been systematic: of Nigeria's 79 power stations, only 17 are working. All of this increases political risk. Some African countries could collapse by 2020 unless they can power an industrial base. Yet Africa's virtual future is not dependent on its physical future. You don't need much electricity to run a phone network. You need even less to run a phone itself. Even the scabbiest African village has worked out how to charge mobiles and other devices using car batteries, bicycles and solar panels. Connectivity is a given: it is coming and happening and spreading in Africa whether or not factories get built or young people find jobs. Culture is being formed online as well as on the street: for the foreseeable future, the African voice is going to get louder, while the voice of ageing Europe quietens.

What makes this possible is a series of undersea cables which have finally hooked up Africa to the rest of the internet. EASSY (the East African Submarine Cable System) emerged from the Indian Ocean at Mombasa last July, looking as fine as gossamer and delivering 3.84 terabits per second to 18 countries. It seemed inconceivable that it could carry the weight of so much information and so many hopes. But EASSY and other fibre-optic cables are freeing Africa from the costs and failings of the satellite internet, and for the first time making it affordable for Africans to talk to the outside world and, crucially, to each other. Prices are down, speeds are up: it takes minutes now instead of hours to download a YouTube video. The future is not supposed to feel futuristic – it's usually far more like the present than the novelists and film-makers imagine – but the present in Africa has been rudimentary for so long that this future really does feel like science fiction.

Ethan Zuckerman is a leading thinker on the internet based at Harvard University. His blog, entitled My Heart's in Accra, speaks to his long association with Africa. He arrived in Ghana from New England in 1993, on a Fulbright scholarship, to learn African drumming. Every few weeks he would wander down to the central post office in Accra and place a phone call to his future wife in the United States. The line was indistinct and the call cost $5 a minute. His Macbook 1000 died after two weeks in the humidity. On the other side of Africa, Joe Mucheru, a Kenyan who now

heads Google's Africa office, remembers the internet kicking off in Kenya in 1994. Yahoo! and Hotmail e-mail accounts became popular in 1998. The government held onto internet access as a cash cow. Everything was rotten and dormant. "I didn't know you could make money from air," said a Kenyan minister, delightedly. But corrupt governments could, simply by withholding access. A 64k modem cost $16 000 a month, if you could get one. By 2000, the price dropped to $3 600. Soon after, as a result of legal challenges and pressure from tech enthusiasts and entrepreneurs, the Kenyan government agreed to open up to competition. For those with the money to buy the new modems, the change was instant, both in terms of information and speed. The post in most African countries was expensive and slow. Parcels frequently went missing (they still do), and there was no home delivery, just post-office boxes. Similarly, African governments had never had the money or the inclination to set up libraries; even university libraries were shoddy, so up-to-date printed material was hard to come by. Then, suddenly, there was the internet, with a cornucopia of knowledge on gardening, or cancer, or the stars of "Friends".

Plugging a PC into the world wide web was only part of the story. Cheap Chinese black-and-white television sets hit the African market around the same time. For $50, poorer families in towns and cities suddenly had access to what had previously been an elite colonial medium. That stirred up the continent. Then came mobile phones. In 2000 Kenya's largest mobile-phone operator, Safaricom, had 20 000 customers. Executives at Vodafone, which then owned Safaricom, reckoned that number would grow to 400 000, peaking around now. That was before cheap phones and prepaid airtime. Safaricom now has 12 million customers and is the most profitable business in east Africa. Its biggest achievement has been M-Pesa, a service which allows people to send each other money over their mobiles. M-Pesa will move at least $1 billion in Kenya alone this year. Michael Joseph, the South African-born executive who masterminded Safaricom's rise, claims it as "the greatest-ever innovation in the mobile phone industry".

So far, that is. Computers are merging with mobiles in a way that suggests the innovation is only just beginning. The internet vision for the past decade was internet cafés (or "community data centres" as donors called them) in villages, which were supposed to make money by printing off birth certificates and CVs. That has been replaced by a more potent vision: a supercomputer in the pocket of every African.

There are already 84 million internet-enabled mobiles in Africa. It is predicted that 69% of mobiles in Africa will have internet access by 2014. A week's worth of data can be had for $3. That's still too much for the majority of Africans, who earn less than $2 a day, but it seems a miracle to those who were shelling out $1 500 for a sim card in 1998. And the mobile web is a more potent communication tool than anything else in African history, because it is interactive, participatory, and to some degree democratic and anonymous. On the internet you can doubt, you can challenge, you can be openly gay, join the opposition or find fellow believers, and most of all you can be entertained and informed in those long hours in traffic jams or evenings in crowded rooms lit by a single bulb.

Three companies will dominate digital Africa for the next decade. The first is Facebook. This social network, born at Harvard and based in Palo Alto, California, is not just a skin on internet-enabled African mobiles, it is the skin. Pricing is driving its popularity. The site was zero-rated in 2010 – that is, made almost free of data charges in several African markets (the bill is footed by Facebook, the network operators and the phone manufacturers). "The zero-rating of Facebook was the most significant tech story in Africa in 2010," says Erik Hersman, who has two influential blogs, White African and Afrigadget. So while text messages are cheap, sitting on Facebook is even cheaper. Facebook's own numbers show growth coming fastest in Egypt, Morocco, Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa.

There were about 17 million Facebook users in Africa at the start of this year, and there are expected to be 28 million by the end of it. That means Africa is by far the least

Facebooked continent, but the growth patterns indicate that the numbers will surge ahead as mobiles and data become more affordable. Facebook is already making its way in poorer countries. The number of Facebook users in Tanzania quadrupled in 2010, to 200 000. It is expected to quadruple again this year, giving Tanzania more Facebook users than graduates.

This new connectivity has consequences for African politics. About 140 000 Tunisians joined Facebook every month last year. The government censorship was such that the site served as a parallel media. When the protests that toppled the country's strongman, Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, began in the town of Sidi Bouzid, coverage was coming at first from posts on Facebook and Twitter, then in incendiary footage on Flickr and YouTube. The role of social media in the Tunisian revolution and in the subsequent upheaval in Egypt may have been overstated by an international media less attentive to underlying trends: texting, phone calls on landlines, and meeting in cafés and the mosque were more useful organisational tools. Facebook played a part in helping people keep track of the unrest, but the real force in Tunisia and Egypt was television news. Where the news channel Al Jazeera was seen in some parts of Africa as presenting a distorted view of tribal violence, in Tunisia it was critical in emboldening the protesters. Arguments about the indispensability of Facebook are to some degree a red herring: no authoritarian regime in Africa will make the same mistake of underestimating it. The Mubarak regime shut down not just social media but the entire internet for days during the uprising. Egypt's largest mobile-phone operator said that Egyptian intelligence had demanded that it "turn down the network totally". That is just buying time. Within hours, tech-savvy Egyptians were turning to ham radio and finding ways to access the internet using proxy sites abroad. The new rules were dramatically shown by the actions of a young Egyptian Google executive, Wael Ghonim, whose Facebook blog galvanised the opposition. Ghonim was detained for several days by the security apparatus, which had the sole effect of shedding light on their brutality.

The default view of Facebook is that it will enable African voters to ask more of their politicians. There are already plenty of examples of citizen activism. A colourful one is RSVP in Nigeria. The acronym stands for Register Select Vote Protect, or, as some will tell you, Rice and Stew Very Plenty. The RSVP campaign uses Facebook and Twitter to try and elect credible Nigerian politicians. But, since devils don't talk to angels, the activists often end up talking to like-minded idealists. The politicians themselves are not standing still. Many have created their own fan pages. They push out messages of fund-raisers and splash around pictures of themselves in constituencies. There are signs

that a new generation is outmanouevring the old. January Makamba, a youthful Tanzanian politician touted as a presidential hopeful, used Facebook to rally supporters and money when he won a parliamentary seat for the Bumbuli constituency in the hills between Mount Kilimanjaro and the Indian Ocean last year. Makamba brought an aide on the campaign trail whose role was to take pictures and write stories for Makamba's Facebook page. The target audience was not impoverished Bumbuli, but Makamba's peers back in the city: a sophisticated web presence was meant to attract ideas and funds and set Makamba apart from the bruisers, apparatchiks and army officers who also have designs on the presidency.

Where Facebook will have a bigger impact is in the way it changes the behaviour of young Africans with disposable income. Patronage cycles, with the elders instructing the young, are breaking down in favour of verifiable information. "In the past", says Mucheru, "young people relied on teachers and parents for advice. Now they get real experiences, real situations online." Where in the past a career choice would be decided by elders, now it is decided by going online.

Audrey Wabwire is a Kenyan tech worker in her 20s, part of whose job is to update her company's Facebook page. She spends another three hours each day on her own page. "A year ago only a few of my classmates were on Facebook," she says. "Now nearly all of them are." Within a year of getting onto Facebook, Wabwire had 490 friends. The site for her is a tool for talking to friends who have gone abroad, a place to hold family conferences, as well as a way to share photos (taken on the phone), and to follow fashion and politics. Through work she has access to computers, but that is unusual. Most young Africans get to Facebook on their mobiles, using the free browser for mobiles produced by Opera, an Oslo software company (even the competition will tell you that Opera has the best compression technology for mobiles). Screen size does not seem to be an obstruction: when African programmers use laptops, they tend to work with many small windows open, as if in imitation of the mobile.

Still, there are worries here. Globally, there are 94 web domains per 10 000 people. In Africa, it's one per 10 000. So is the internet going to be just a distraction, a clanging vacancy in the large parts of Africa where education, media, civil service and law are lacking? Might venting online by unemployed young Africans lead to new political movements? "Violence is extremely empowering to young people," warns John Githongo, a Kenyan anti-corruption campaigner. The internet could organise it.

Evgeny Morozov, a Belarussian internet expert based at Stanford University, believes the consolidating power of the internet in Africa and other emerging markets is often

overrated. He argues that "cyber-utopianism" and "empty McKinsey-speak" is producing a generation of "slacktivists" who can barely raise themselves from their keyboards and keypads. A characteristic of Facebook in Africa, so far, is the way acquaintances from school or work who belong to different tribes and religions seldom last long as Facebook friends. "It is easier to confirm and then delete," explains a Christian Facebook user in Kenya, talking about the way she deals with Muslims she knows. That bears out the thesis of Zuckerman and others who argue that social networking reinforces what feels comfortable. "What drives me mad about Facebook is that it isn't the world, it's your friends," says Zuckerman.

Most Facebookers in Africa so far are at school or university. This is borne out by the dominance of youth culture, which tends to put government sites in the shade. "Big Brother Africa", a television reality show, for instance, had 100 000 followers in December, compared with 27 (not 27 000: just 27) for the African Union, regarded as the continent's leading political organisation. There is a simple way to correlate age and usage, which is to look at the spike in Facebook traffic at the end of the school day. A well-visited Facebook page, at that hour, is like a pond with a shoal of fish circling. Throw in a question about a Nigerian hip-hop artist or the Man U-Arsenal game and you get your hand bitten off.

Still, no one can deny that Facebook allows for valuable conversations. Take the example of *Shujaaz*, a comic read by about half the children in Kenya. It is among the first comic-strip representations of the daily lives of African children; the slums, the villages, the ramshackle schools and playgrounds. The characters are buoyant, some drawing on the tradition of the classic British comics *Beano* and *Dandy*, others breaking new ground. The hero is Boyie, aka DJB, a boy who has his own ham radio station. When DJB appeals in the comic strip for business ideas, they flood in for real on Facebook. One girl proposes selling homemade popcorn; a boy says money can be made from taking photos of families heading upcountry for the school holidays. Many of *Shujaaz*'s storylines take on corruption and tribalism. These too produce a response. "Hey DJB," wrote Judah Ngali, a boy from the country town of Voi, "I'm 14 years old and my dad is a chief. He discriminates and gives only the rich kids bursary funds. I showed him your story [on corruption] and he agreed with it." Together, the comic and the social network created a challenge from son to father that might not otherwise have happened.

Shujaaz is run by Rob Burnet, a Scotsman who has run galleries and art foundations in Kenya for two decades. "I hold up the comic to investors and say: this is ICT. It may not look hi-tech to you, but in Africa it is cutting-edge." The difference now is that the comic which is passed from child to child in tenements and farmyards is enhanced by Facebook, as well as by a radio show, text messages and a website. It's like a house with many doors into the virtual world of DJB and his friends.

The second company is Google, the search and advertising colossus, also based in Palo Alto. In Africa, Google looks omniscient. It wants to make the internet a part of everyday life in Africa by eliminating entry barriers of price and language. Even with the drop in prices, Africans still pay many times more for broadband than Europeans do. Google hopes to bring the price down further by establishing data caches in Africa, greatly reducing the time taken to reach popular websites – particularly those with African content. Detractors say Google is buying up swathes of Africa's digital real estate at bargain prices: it seeks transparency of others, but reveals little of itself. How much is it spending on the new infrastructure? "We don't

THERE WERE ABOUT **17 MILLION FACEBOOK** USERS IN **AFRICA AT THE START OF THIS YEAR,** AND THERE ARE **EXPECTED** TO BE **28 MILLION** BY THE END OF IT.

discuss numbers," says a Google executive, "but we are committed to Africa."

Google's most interesting initiative is with languages. The person in charge is Denis Gikunda, a Kenyan whose interest in technology goes back to the 1990s, when he was the computer-room monitor at Starehe Boys School in Nairobi. He went on to work for a computer-games company in Canada, where his job was to tailor games for different language markets – different scripts and voice-overs. His job with Google is to think of ways to localise the internet in Africa. There are over 100 African languages with 1m or more speakers, and Google wants to offer knowledge, transaction services, and entertainment in all of them. Already, on his HTC phone, Gikunda can speak a sentence in one language and have it simultaneously spoken back in another. When he was running late for our interview, because rain had turned the road to mud, he didn't type a text, he spoke an e-mail.

The challenge looks impossible, given that some of the languages exist in written form only in missionary dictionaries, which may have missed some of the finer points. "This will be the first time for these 100 or so languages to be written at scale," says Gikunda, a Meru. The opportunities for enhancing local cultures are innumerable. Meru is a language with 1.3m speakers centred on Mount Kenya. Gikunda argues that websites in Meru will deepen the understanding of Meru culture: how to take care of cattle and goats, how to look at the night sky, how to get married, or buried, the Meru way. A new technology will turn into a recovery of a world that existed before.

and the iPhone. Nokia executives admit the company has "lost the thought leadership" in some markets, but not in Africa.

Nokia is more clear-eyed about the economics of digital Africa than Facebook and Google are: how much technology can the average African realistically afford and what does he or she really want to do with it? That is partly because it actually makes stuff, but also because it understands the bottom of the pyramid, the bop, where customers eke out the life of a handset for years in the harshest conditions. Nokia knows that Africa is still mostly a sachet economy, where people, many of them illiterate, buy tiny amounts of soap, milk, or airtime where they can. The media talk is about smartphones, because African coverage of technology is pitched at the rich, but 90% of the phones Nokia sells in Africa are at the low end.

These are the models that people in richer countries happily used a decade ago. You made calls, you texted a lot, you fiddled with ringtones, and you played simple games. The steady earner remains the Nokia 1100. This is the AK-47 of communication, the most popular mobile phone ever made, already established as a design classic. There are over 50m Nokia 1100s in use in Africa. Only when these are upgraded to internet-enabled phones can the mass of Africans be said to have gone online. A souped-up version of the 1100 will have to be cheap, and offer sophisticated speech-recognition software, with translation features similar to those Google is touting, and it will have to retain the durability and add-ons like flashlights that have made the 1100 so popular (fishermen in West Africa like the 1100

Apple is nowhere in Africa and shows little interest in democratisation, but Nokia is facing stiff competition at the top of the market from BlackBerry, the smartphone made by Research in Motion, based in Waterloo, Canada. The head of BlackBerry's Africa office, Deon Liebenberg, says his company's sales defy logic. BlackBerry had seen itself as providing a secure platform for businessmen and government officials. Now it is selling models with consumer appeal: rounded phones in shades of tangerine and strawberry lipgloss. To the young African professional, the smartphone is highly aspirational: it is the house and car you can't afford. In a culture where so much is shared, the smartphone is a space which is all yours – your music, your plans, your tomorrow.

This year electronic tablets will start to make an impact on the African market. A cheaper and more robust version of Samsung's Galaxy should have wide appeal if the price can be brought down below $100. "That's a given," says Brockhaug of Nokia, though he won't be drawn on whether Nokia is interested in developing a tablet. A library in the hands of 100m Africans sounds fanciful, but no more so than the idea, back in 1995, that the poorest African cattleherder would have a mobile phone of his own.

Richard Seymour, a British industrial and technology designer, points to the demographic shift to youth in poor countries. "Understand the young," he says. "Emergent behaviour starts with them." It could be that social networking is the emergent behaviour in Africa. Or it could be that everyone is looking in the wrong place and the real innovation is in the hacking that goes on in Africa's informal sector. Hersman's Afrigadget blog celebrates African inventors who have hacked into their mobiles and got them remotely opening and closing doors, setting up 400-volt electric shocks on their doorknobs to lie in wait for burglars, and even make pots of tea – on their way home, they send a text message to their home phone, which sets the tea-maker to work.

Not everything will be about uploading and downloading. As prices for memory cards drop, there will be a shift from hawkers selling pirated dvds to drivers stalled in traffic jams, to hawkers loading entertainment bundles onto memory cards for a flat fee. Games for mobiles will become more important. There needs to be a move by game-makers to embed literacy, numeracy and logic skills into games pre-installed on mobiles: a kind of mass education by stealth. YouTube will take off. "We are a social species. We spark off each other," says Chris Anderson, the curator of the TED conferences. He expects video to spread virally through Africa in the course of this year. That will produce dance crazes and superstar Pentecostal mobi-evangelists, but also circulate knowledge.

Finally, digital Africa will become a spoken tradition. African cultures are among the most oral in the world. Storytelling under the tree is still commonplace. Speaking is still preferred to writing and Africa happens to have timed its digital age to coincide with new voice-activated technologies. The generation gap between those who were trained to guide a fountain pen with their fingers, those whose kinetic memory is dominated by their thumbs, and those even younger who are used to the sweeping movements of the touchscreen, will give way to the return of voice – Africa's voice.

Meru will have to wait its turn. For now, Google is concentrating on Africa's so-called Tier One languages: Swahili, Amharic, Wolof, Hausa, Afrikaans, Zulu, and possibly Setswana and Somali (in addition to English, Arabic, French and Portuguese). This is Google as an anti-Babel, with the utopian goal of a future in which all information is available in anyone's language. The tragedy for many African languages is that there is not nearly enough written down: millions of words of text are needed to create a database for statistical-based translation. The hope is that as the global is pulled down, the indigenous is pulled up. "At the moment, indigenous knowledge is trapped," says Gikunda.

The third big player in Africa's digital revolution is Nokia, the mobile-phone maker from Tampere in Finland, which has history and substance in African eyes. It claims a 58% market share in Africa and vies with Coca-Cola as the continent's most recognised brand. It was Nokia's ability to distribute phones through subsidies in rich countries that allowed it to sell basic models at low prices in Africa. Nokia has lost ground at the high end in rich countries to Android

because it floats, and can be taken apart and dried in the sun and still work). Price won't be a problem. The cheapest internet-enabled phone from Nokia is expected to cost $25 by 2015.

The question for Nokia is how to bring some of the features of the internet to the bop. "The first part of the mobile revolution was about communication. The next is about value-added services," says Jussi Hinkkanen, Nokia's head of government relations for Africa. Nokia is betting on its own add-ons such as Ovi Life Tools and on a software shop aping the revenue-sharing model pioneered by Apple's App Store. Life Tools aims to enhance AK-47 phones by providing pricing and tips for farmers, lessons for teachers, and books and games for children. So far the African peasant farmer is reluctant to part with pennies for any service. "That will come if it offers real value," says Brad Brockhaug, Nokia's head of sales in Africa. Next up are accountancy and supply-chain tools for small businesses: practical rather than sexy. But Nokia's market share is so big that if Life Tools does take off, and boost income and learning, it could add a point to Africa's GDP.

MOBILE

THE CHALLENGE OF A UNIQUE NEW SPACE FOR JOURNALISM

WHEN ONE THINKS ABOUT BRINGING TOGETHER JOURNALISM AND MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS, THE POSSIBILITIES SEEM ENDLESS. THE IDEA OF BEING ABLE TO INSTANTLY ACCESS INFORMATION WITHOUT GEOGRAPHICAL LIMITATIONS THROUGH OUR MOBILE PHONES SHOULD MAKE MEDIA COMPANIES GIDDY WITH THE PROSPECT OF ANOTHER AVENUE FOR ADVERTISING AND CAPTURING AN AUDIENCE AT UNIQUE TIMES OF THE DAY – COMPLETELY DIFFERENT FROM THOSE WHEN THEY USUALLY HAVE A CAPTIVE AUDIENCE.

The speed with which technology is improving in the mobile communications market is widening the scope for opportunity to engage with audiences, provide information and capture their attention for that little while longer. Current technology such as 3G wireless technologies, which allow for high-speed data transmission, and access to multimedia content, as well as smart phones and tablet computers have already illustrated the potential for users to access information that is tailored to mobile devices and available anywhere.

In developed countries such as the UK and US, news organisations are already targeting content for mobile devices and quickly tailoring not only the information they receive but the advertisements that go along with it. This means providing consumers with applications for smart phones and mobile websites which are quickly downloaded, suited to small screens and targeted to provide instant information. A competitive environment among service providers means low costs. This, coupled with the income earned in developed countries, and access to handsets and tablets with the latest applications, means that developed countries are an attractive and growing avenue for mobile specific journalism, and have meant changes in the manner in which journalism is produced and distributed.

But what about the possibilities for media organisations and journalism in South Africa within the mobile communications context? South Africa enjoys excellent mobile phone subscription rates and, according to the ITU (2009), has almost full mobile coverage of all inhabited areas (92%), and growth rates, which although they have slowed down since the initial surge in mobile communications, are still faster than developed countries (ITU 2009: 13). While this makes South Africa a leader in mobile communications infrastructure, service and access in the developing world, the manner in which mobile phones are used by the majority of the population is unique – for example the active use of "call me backs", mobile instant messaging and the huge prepaid service market. Any kind of journalistic content accessed and available via mobile phone or mobile technology has to take into account the manner in which people use their mobile phones, and the connection they have with the technology.

The South African mobile communications context
"Compared to fixed broadband, third generation (3G) mobile cellular networks seem to be holding greater potential for many countries in the region [Africa]" (ITU 2009: 8). This holds true for South Africa where fixed internet penetration is particularly low given its relatively high GDP, as a result of high prices, a regulatory environment which does not actively promote internet penetration, and an infrastructural environment which fails to ensure access in all areas. There is no denying that the internet failed to achieve the promise many initially thought, but the growth of mobile communications could be an avenue for information sharing, gathering and production which could not only provide an avenue for media organisations and a different kind of journalism, but for other organisations and the government to enable social development and perhaps even economic growth.

The South African mobile environment is dominated by two large companies, MTN and Vodacom, with CellC having a smaller share of the market. The lack of a diverse and competitive environment has resulted in relatively high prices for subscribers and users and, although access to networks is vast and operators claim 100% penetration, the figure is more likely closer to that published by the RIA Household Survey of 62% (for South Africans with mobile phones over 16 years of age) (ResearchICTAfrica). The South African mobile market is dominated by prepaid or pay as you go customers which indicates that mobile phone users do not have high incomes and are in fact from low income households (Chigona et al 2009: 6).

While these figures (see table over page) provide interesting and useful figures about who owns and uses a mobile phone, it does not tell us what mobile phones are currently being used for in the South African context, nor by who. This is crucial to examining the relationship between journalism or news and the mobile communications environment in South Africa. By understanding what people are using their mobile phones for, one is then able to examine how news will be used, distributed and produced in relation to the mobile landscape for the South African context. As a result of the fact that most mobile users purchase their own mobile phones and use a prepaid system, one can argue that the manner in which they use their phones will be determined by the kind of phone they have and the amount of money they have to spend on their phone. Although relationships between users and their mobile phones are changing and people are using their phones as more than just a communication device, the exact usage will vary and change over time and the journalistic environment has to adapt to these changes.
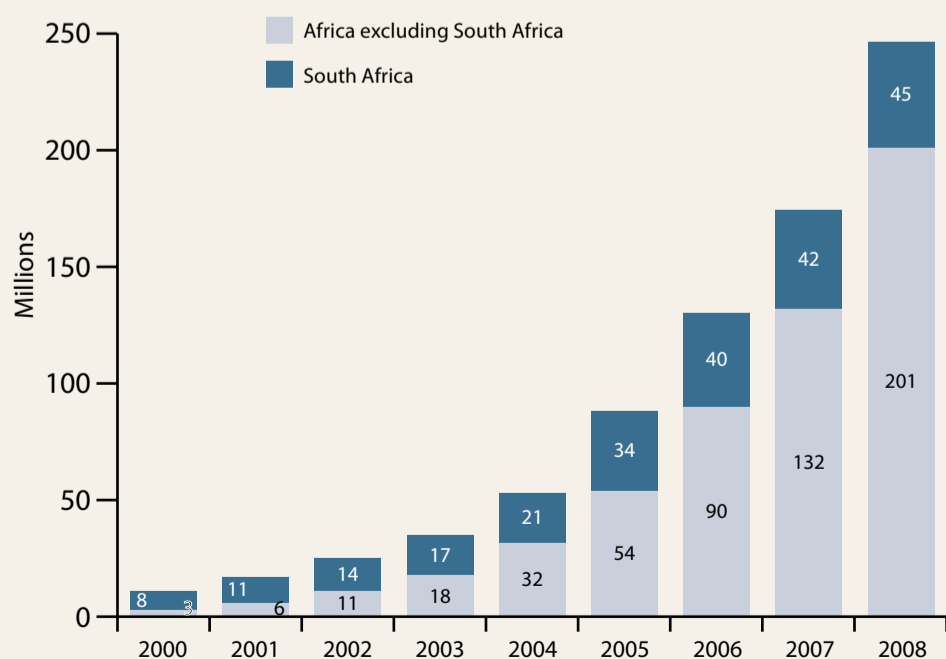
Mobile cellular subscriptions in Africa.
(Source: ITU World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Database.)

RIA household survey. (Source: ResearchICTAfrica.net)

Indicator	Value	Year	Source
South Africa 16+ with mobile phone	62.10%	2007	RIA Household Survey
South Africa urban 16+ with mobile phone	70.60%	2007	RIA Household Survey
South Africa rural 16+ with mobile phone	48.90%	2007	RIA Household Survey
Monthly average mobile expenditure in US$	15.88	2007	RIA Household Survey
Share of prepaid users	78.64%	2007	RIA Household Survey
Untapped market in million US$ based on WTP of non-users	36.27	2007	RIA Household Survey
South Africa 16+ that use the internet	15.00%	2007	RIA Household Survey
South Africa 16+ that have an email address	12.60%	2007	RIA Household Survey
South Africa 16+ that use public phones	42.00%	2007	RIA Household Survey
Average monthly fixed-line expenditure in US$	31.31	2007	RIA Household Survey
Households with fixed line	18.20%	2007	RIA Household Survey
Households with computer at home	14.78%	2007	RIA Household Survey
Households with internet at home	4.76%	2007	RIA Household Survey
Fixed termination rate	1.475		
Mobile termination rate	0.65		
Vodacom South Africa EBITDA margin	34.00%	2011	Vodacom website
Installed fixed lines (DELs)	4 319 800	2009	ITU Database 2010
ADSL subscribers	378 000	2007	ITU Database 2010
Number of public phones (fixed)	158 000	2007	ITU Database 2010

South African journalism can find a unique space on people's mobile communications devices. Journalism production and distribution, however, will have to be targeted at specific audiences with very different needs and access. Chae and Kim make the point that "we cannot simply transfer the rules of the stationary internet to the mobile internet "game" because the mobile internet differs significantly in various aspects from the stationary internet" (2003: 240). The challenge in South Africa is not only changing content from the internet for the mobile web, but also adapting it to what I regard are the two main audience types in South Africa.

The first is the low-end user, who is on a prepaid system, has had to buy their own cellphone and is very conscious of how much money they spend on their mobile phone. As a result of having to buy their own mobile phones, these tend to be basic which, although they may have mobile internet access, also have small screens and limited applications. Some users may even share a mobile phone with their parents or only have access when they borrow their friends'. Although this is not as prevalent in South Africa as in other countries, studies have shown that the practice does exist (Kreutzer 2009). Users of this kind tend to opt for cost-saving options when using their mobile phones, using techniques such as flashing or call me backs and the use of mobile instant messaging (MIM) as a communication and social networking tool.

This has seen the advent and growth of MXit, a network-independent MIM tool. "MIM is a synchronous communication tool that works on mobile devices… unlike sms, MIM uses internet protocol to exchange messages. MIMs function in a way similar to computer-based instant messages" (Chigona and Chigona 2009: 43). As a result of the fact that it is mobile-internet based, MIMs are significantly cheaper than sending sms', contributing to its vast popularity amongst South African youth and low-income mobile users. As of 2009 there were seven-million MXit users and 9 000 new subscribers daily (though this figure has been quoted to be as high as 10 million more recently). These are the kinds of audiences who are likely to use the mobile internet rather than fixed internet (because they don't have access to a PC) – there are approximately seven-million South Africans who regularly browse the mobile internet without access to fixed internet (Joubert 2008).

The second kind of user is at the other end of the cost spectrum: with high incomes, access to subscription mobile contracts with high-end mobile or smart phones and a greater budget for mobile communications. This means they will be able to spend more time on the mobile internet, use the mobile device for lengthy communication and buy applications to facilitate some everyday uses such as buying cinema tickets, checking event information, social networking and multi-media downloads. These kinds of users will expect high definition pictures, and video which they can view on their smart phones, tablet computers, Blackberry's and other latest technology. While this second user is a much smaller segment of the market, the reality is that these kinds of people are spending more time on their mobile platforms and demanding content of a higher quality.

Changes in journalism

The key to providing news on a mobile platform is to target content for the mobile environment. It is not enough to simply be able to access a newspaper online through the mobile phone, users should be able to access the newspaper's mobile site. "Creating the appropriate and relevant content may be a key driver for the development of a next-generation mobile infrastructure" (Feldman 2002: 352). Feldman goes on to add that "ubiquity of content does not necessarily create relevance, and pure availability does not create demand. It is context that creates relevance" (353).

The problem with mobile content in South Africa at the moment is the same kind of problem that media organisations encountered when the possibilities of publishing online were first approached. Media organisations wanted to simply cut and paste content from their hard copy printed newspapers onto their websites without tailoring content for the web. Today new media is a well established market of its own, with its own conventions, specific products and targeted audiences. Mobile journalism has to be the same. Although it took a few years for South African media organisations to grasp the potential of new media, today one sees innovative multi-media websites providing content to online users which are very different to the content being provided on their traditional platforms. This is the kind of attitude that South African media organisations and journalists have to have with the mobile environment.

The kind of news mobile users access on their cells. (Source: PRC-Internet and American Life Project and PRC-Project for Excellence in Journalism Online News. Survey – 28 December 2009 to 19 January, 2010.)

	% mobile users who get this on a mobile device
Weather	26
News and current events	25
An application for news content	18
Sports scores and stories	16
Traffic info	13
Financial info	12
News via emails and texts	11

Production

The very nature of journalism won't change because of mobile communications, in that the media should continue to function in society playing the many roles that it does today – such as that of watchdog, entertainer, educator, and a voice for the people. In a country like South Africa, the media continue to play a role in democracy making, portraying and purveying the divergent and diverse discourses in society. Journalists will be able to use their mobile devices to produce the same kind of journalism, but in a much faster way that allows for information to be updated more regularly, available as events happen and easily brought back to newsrooms. I would imagine that for breaking news type events, the mobile device will prove especially useful because journalists can provide short, instant tweet-type updates of information as events are unfolding. This means journalists have to continue to look at the big picture, but also be able to summarise events into short, sharp but informative pieces which can be easily accessed by other mobile devices.

Perhaps the biggest change in journalism production as a result of the advent of mobile communications is that the users themselves will begin to contribute in greater numbers and with more diverse content to citizen journalism. Today, even the least hi-tech mobile phone is equipped with video camera capability and people are using their mobile phones to tell stories. The recent protests in the Middle East and North Africa were often reported on television with footage gathered by locals who had posted their videos (often captured by mobile phone) to social networking sites. Schoon wrote that "If your phone has a video camera, you are ready to become a video journalist. It's really not that difficult. The most important first step is to decide what to shoot. You need to consider the media audience. On our continent bandwidth is scarce, so think about what readers will really want to see." (Schoon, 2010).

I expect the production of citizen journalism will flourish with the advent of mobile communications and the fact that it's cost effective, convenient and fits in with the trend of social networking that people are currently engaged in means it could be a bigger avenue for civic engagement than the fixed web. In order for South African media organisations to tap into this wealth of information and on-the-spot reporting, they need to create avenues

10 000 000
Mxit

3 761 160
Facebook

800 000
Twitter (approx.)

MXit vs Facebook vs Twitter in South Africa. (Sources: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MXit; mybroadband.co.za). Infographic designed by @ivanisawesome.

for their audiences to engage with them. I think this could be especially useful for community media which can gather information, text and video based, from community members and share it with others in the same community.

Distribution

"Web content for mobile phones has for long been a neglected aspect of Web design, and many sites have not been formatted for the much smaller screen. With the recent growing popularity of mobile phones and the mobile internet in the United States and in other countries, a growing number of websites are becoming more accessible to users of the very small screens and limited bandwidth which characterizes mobile phone use" (Kreutzer 2009: 59).

The biggest change that media organisations and journalism itself must undergo with regards to the mobile environment has to do with the distribution of content. As Kreutzer has argued above, content has to be reformatted for the smaller screen, for smaller bandwidth and for the trends in mobile phone use.

The BBC's mobile website, tailored to mobile phones.

If South African media organisations don't begin to distribute their content in a tailored and relevant fashion for the mobile market, users will start to look for content elsewhere. With mobile sites such as the BBC available with news about global events, South African users will begin to draw heavily on these resources which allow for quick access to information (because the sites are tailored for limited bandwidth) and snapshots of events – perhaps even South African ones. Even beyond this, media organisations should take

UBIQUITY OF CONTENT DOES NOT NECESSARILY **CREATE RELEVANCE,** AND PURE **AVAILABILITY** DOES **NOT CREATE DEMAND.** IT IS CONTEXT THAT CREATES **RELEVANCE.**

advantage of the trends in mobile communications used by different audiences to distribute content. If research is showing that users are using the mobile environment to send MIMs, check their Facebook and send tweets, why shouldn't media organisations tap into these kinds of resources to reach their audiences?

South African news and journalism should be available and tailored for mobile phone users through sms, MIMs, updates on social networking sites, updates on mobile sites, and easily accessible video, text and sound content.

Although examining the potential for publishers from almost a purely economic perspective, Joubert makes the point that "digital publishers who ignore the potential of the first screen strategy to deliver the internet to the mass market risk losing out on the massive growth potential of digital publishing in developing markets and most certainly in Africa" (Joubert 2011).

Conclusion

Regardless of whether you are looking at the distribution or production of journalism on the mobile platform, the key aspect to keep in mind for media organisations and journalists is that information has to be relevant, and targeted. If you want to target the larger low-end user then the information needs to be easy to download, cheap to access and fast to download. If you want to target high-end users, information can be more extravagant – good definition video, multi-media news stories and pictures. At the moment, South African media organisations are losing out with both these audiences to international news content and failing to provide information at the local level. The mobile market in South Africa is dominated by the wider population which has a low income and economic, and social constraints, opening a gap for community media who have the potential to play the greatest role on the mobile platform. If media organisations are able to target their content for the mobile market, journalism in South Africa will not only have found a new avenue for old audiences, but may even successfully target new audiences. If they can harness the environment and adapt content to suit the user, they will find that mobile communication will have a positive and rewarding role on the future of journalism in South Africa.

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HAVE YOU GOT YOUR MOJO?

THE EMBEDDED AUDIENCE

Journalists need to shift their mindset to talking with – instead of at – the "people formerly known as the audience".

That was a take-home message from the BBC Social Media Summit staged in London in May. It's a notion others (including me) have written about in academic research regarding media representation of minorities. But it was *The Guardian's* Meg Pickard who articulated the idea during the summit in reference to mainstream media approaches to social media. She told the over-packed conference room at the BBC's White City headquarters: "Social media is a thing we do with an audience, not to an audience."

The summit was a combination of controversially-closed workshops held on day one, operating under Chatham House Rules for invited representatives from the world's most recognisable media brands, and a one-day open conference. The event, shorthanded by the hashtag #BBCSMS on Twitter, gathered international journalists, community media and academics interested in the development of a social future for journalism.

The event was criticised by some as too focused on legacy media and demonstrative of the slowness of some mainstream media outlets to adapt. And they had a point. During the day one workshops, I watched others cringe as one experienced journalist revived the brain surgery metaphor ... you know the one: "You don't crowdsource brain surgery, so why would you crowdsource journalism!?"

But while there was evidence of residual pockets of resistance, at the other end of the spectrum, the very progressive editor-in-chief of *The Guardian*, Alan Rusbridger, demonstrated the transformative impact of social media on journalism. In his closing address, he rebadged social media as "open media", saying, "People working in this generation of journalism just have to accept ... open media is better than closed media."

Precisely.

One thing was clear at the end of #BBCSMS: audience engagement is now embedded in editorial processes. And the fear of audience interaction is no longer the barrier it was to journalists' entry to social media when I ran a conference with the theme "The Future of Journalism in the Social Media Age" at the ABC in Sydney in 2009. Then, the question was "Why should we engage?" Now, it is "How can we best engage?"

And: "How do we manage the logistics of this new journalistic function?" and "How do we measure our success with engagement?"

Interestingly, the key themes identified in my early research on social journalism – summarised in an article carried in the 2009 edition of *Rhodes Journalism Review* – audience engagement; the merger of the personal and public spheres via social media; and verification issues; remain the big concerns confronting mainstream journalists practising or managing social media. And Twitter was clearly the social media platform of choice for most of the mainstream journalists present.

Verification: still the big issue

"The biggest issue with social media is verification," one journalist said to me during the invitation-only workshops staged in the BBC's boardroom on day one, during which I acted as a facilitator-rapporteur. That statement was met with vigorous nods of agreement – from newspaper reporters and online editors to radio producers.

But how do you define verification? Can it evolve in the manner of a radio news story, filling in blanks over time? Can it be crowdsourced, with media consumers acting as widely-distributed fact-checkers with collective expertise? And what standards of verification and accuracy do audiences expect of professional journalists in the social media sphere?

What was clear from the conference was the great variety of approaches to verifying social media content within professional media organisations.

One participant reported: "Our default is to publish unchecked information with a disclaimer that it's unverified." Such an approach has become relatively standard for some of the world's big media brands on breaking news stories, but many journalists remain concerned about the implications of this shift for professional practice and traditional ethics. There was debate about the methodology of crowd-sourcing verification, often attributed to NPR's Andy Carvin, with criticism of the practice from Sky News' Neal Mann. Mann insisted that traditional journalistic processes of verification should be applied to tweeting. In his view, Carvin risks magnifying inaccuracy. I expressed the view that a combination of both approaches equates with best practice in social media verification terms.

At the very control-oriented, conservative end of the social media spectrum, another contributor reported that a political correspondent in his organisation had her tweets vetted prior to posting as part of a strict social media policy that reflected residual corporate nervousness about accuracy and editorial integrity in the social media space. "If she's

SOCIAL MEDIA IS A THING YOU DO WITH – NOT AT – AN AUDIENCE.

on air, nobody vets what she says beforehand. But it's a bit of a sop to management to have tweets checked before publication," he said.

While some journalists spoke of simply transposing traditional processes of verification onto the Twitterverse, for example, by following up tweets with direct messages, phone calls and face-to-face meetings where appropriate, others talked of the need for technology development to assist the process and, importantly, appropriate newsroom resourcing for the tasks of verifying "User Generated Content" (as the BBC still refers to external editorial contributions) from myriad sources.

At the BBC, a critical role is played by a group of journalists attached to the UGC Hub -- a desk in the centre of the London newsroom that seeks to verify social content.

One idea emerging from day one's closed discussions that fascinated me was the concept of various platforms being imbued with different standards of verification and audience expectations.

One participant spoke of the lower threshold for publication of unverified information on Facebook: "We might put it out there unverified on our Facebook page, but we wouldn't print it until we'd verified it." And another print journalist shared a similar approach: "Our journalists use social media to correct over time, in between print runs."

These comments reflect a view within the mainstream media that audiences have lower expectations of accuracy and verification from journalists' and media outlets' social media accounts than they do of "appointment TV" or the printed page. As one participant observed, "It's deeply insulting and condescending to audiences to assume they can't tell the difference between professional and personal social media publication by journalists."

What does "open media" look like?

While the themes of the discussions at BBCSMS appeared at times to have hardly shifted from 2009, there were many examples of progress and, in particular, four big names showcased how social media is creating openness, collaboration and creativity in legacy media: Al Jazeera, *The Guardian*, *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*.

Al Jazeera Turkish social media co-ordinator Esra Dogramaci, offered a useful formula for distilling social media content: (Information - noise) + context = responsible reporting.

She also told the conference about Al Jazeera's role in the Middle East and North Africa as a social media trainer and equipper of citizen journalists – functions that became important during the Arab Spring when attacks on Al Jazeera from regimes under fire resulted in reliance on unofficial correspondents who'd been trained and equipped by the Qatar-based broadcaster.

Dogramaci's address was one of the most impressive of the conference, but she was questioned by senior BBC journalists in the audience, who effectively accused Al Jazeera of facilitating revolutions. The inference was that an activist model of journalism, particularly one that involves "collaboration" with citizens and equips them to report, was incompatible with professional journalistic practice and the value of objectivity. In the context of a global conference on social media, that view seemed particularly narrow.

While *The Guardian's* representatives demonstrated why they've been so successful in the social media space, with an emphasis on openness, *The Washington Post's* managing editor Raju Narisetti highlighted the importance of metrics (stats on number of followers, replies and hits on links shared) in effecting cultural change within newsrooms reluctant to enter the social media age: "Show them the metrics. Link the move to audience and ego," he urged.

Meanwhile, one of *The New York Times'* social media editors, Liz Heron, announced the move to humanise the *NYT's* main Twitter news feed which operated as a cyborg account. She reported to the conference that a blend of personal and professional content was proving most successful in reporters' efforts to build audience via social media, pointing to two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning *NYT* foreign correspondent, Nick Kristof's successful approach to Facebook journalism.

What's next?

Despite the organisers' stated desire to avoid another talkfest about social media, that's precisely what #BBCSMS was. But that's not necessarily a bad outcome. Opportunities for reflective practice in journalism are few and far between. The consequence: nowhere near enough critical examination of the profession by practitioners once they graduate from journalism school. And talking generates ideas that can trigger action and relationships across geographic, cultural and corporate boundaries. This, in turn, could help mature the profession's engagement with social media.

The event had some ambitious (and as yet unfulfilled) goals, including the possible formulation of a universal set of social media principles for journalists. The key goal, articulated by one of the conference organisers, Claire Wardle, was to generate real action from the conversations. And she concluded the conference by challenging participants to ask themselves "So what?"

So, what now? Well, for my part, I outlined some research goals designed to steer a course for scholars investigating the impact of social media on journalism ahead of the conference.

And, in the aftermath, I established a Facebook page (BBCSMS Social Media Research Incubator), curated in partnership with some of the other academics involved in the conference, designed to connect researchers, journalists, start-ups, media outlets and developers. So, that's one tangible outcome.

More broadly, the vibrant conversation started during the event continues under the #BBCSMS hashtag on Twitter. But sustaining the conversation and facilitating funded research outcomes from these conversations will be the real test.

For journalism educators grappling with how to train the next generations of journalists, the message from the summit was clear: *The Guardian's* Pickard said she expects all journalism students to be tweeting in their first year, while *The Washington Post's* Narisetti said he looks for evidence of social media skills during recruitment.

As for ongoing attempts at converting those social media detractors and cultural change resisters lingering in the dusty corners of some newsrooms? A combination of carrot and stick approaches was suggested, while the benefits of mentoring from senior journalistic converts were also mentioned. But one of the participants in the day one workshops summed it up best for me: "It's been long enough. Time to stop encouraging and tell them to just get on with it."

A version of this article first appeared online at PBS Mediashift in June 2011.

FACEBOOK IS A ROLODEX

JULIE POSETTI SPEAKS TO **VADIM LAVRUSIK** – FACEBOOK'S NEWLY APPOINTED JOURNALIST PROGRAMME MANAGER – ABOUT FACEBOOK, JOURNALISM AND AFRICA.

JP: What's Facebook's mission inside the world's newsrooms?

VL: Facebook is a people-powered news platform that anyone can tap into. This also applies to the world's newsrooms. We want to provide newsrooms with tools to connect with their audience and community on Facebook. In the last year, the average news organisation saw a 300% increase in referrals from Facebook. It's a way for people to discover content and connect with journalists and news organisations.

JP: Twitter is a natural homeland for news junkies, how can Facebook compete with the 140-character domination of breaking social news?

VL: Social tools have made the lives of journalists easier and their work more efficient. What Facebook is great at enabling you to do is reporting at scale and crowdsourcing content from authentic sources. Its strength is in scale. For example, when I was reporting on a student suicide three years ago, I went to the police station and picked up the policy report. There was one witness, who wasn't listed in the student or local phone directory, but she had an account on Facebook. I was able to message her privately and got a response in five minutes. I was the only person she gave an interview to from the press. I later asked her why, and she said it was because I contacted her through Facebook and she was able to learn something about me and decide whether she would do the interview. This also exemplifies one of our other strengths: the idea of authentic identity, a person is who they really say they are on Facebook. Because I wasn't a reporter cold-calling her, she decided she would give me the interview.

JP: How do you see the relationship between Facebook and journalists changing in the next year?

VL: In the next year, I expect more journalists will tap into Facebook as a reporting and distribution tool. For journalists, Facebook is a rolodex of more than 500-million people who can be sources for their work. Journalists today have more work and have to do that work 10 times faster. Facebook can help them be more efficient in finding sources, getting story tips and provides them with a way to distribute their content.

JP: How does Facebook see the future of journalism in Africa – a continent of developing nations, where desktop internet access remains extremely limited but mobile connectivity is prolific?

VL: There is a lot of opportunity for journalists in Africa to tap into Facebook as a reporting tool. As we continue to improve our feature phones app, this opportunity will come to fruition as journalists in the developing countries will be able to access Facebook on-the-go through their mobile devices.

JP: Does Facebook have a strategy for gaining traction within African media and among news consumers? What is it?

VL: We're in the process of developing our international strategy as a whole, which will include resources for African journalists and media.

JP: How many active Facebook users have been identified in Africa?

VL: Those aren't publicly available at this time. (But) I can assure you that we're continuing to grow in developing countries.

Lavrusik is also an adjunct professor teaching social media at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. He previously worked as the community manager and social media strategist at Mashable.com

SOC MEI

Two days before the fall of Egypt's Hosni Mubarak my two friends and I were sitting in some lousy bar toying with some lousy beer and trying to ignore some equally lousy music. A conversation began between Noah (a medical doctor) and Amos (a businessman).

Noah: Just two weeks ago I declared that I would not join Facebook. But who knew that Facebook could topple a government? By coincidence my daughter bought me this iPhone in the US and now I can access Facebook on it.

Amos: Ah Facebook. What turned me off was when this young man, Hope, told me how he meets all these women on Facebook and goes all over Southern Africa to see them. Can you imagine your wife being on Facebook and talking to Hope?

I didn't need to make a contribution. Harare's stories come to you...

Before going into the question of how Zimbabweans use social media one needs to establish who uses it in the first place. What people forget in the whole hullabaloo about social media is the small word called ACCESS. Now access can be broken down into two main bits: AVAILABILITY and AFFORDABILITY. Is the technology available to the greatest number of people?

It is a given fact that Africans across the continent pay more than North Americans and Europeans for access to telephone, internet and mobile. The landlocked nature of Zimbabwe means that we suffer a double burden. The several optic-fibre cables that are being laid around the Western and Eastern shores of Africa land in places like Mtunzini (South Africa) and Mombasa (Kenya). Zimbabwe's tele-communications companies have to pay the costs of laying inland cables and of leasing bandwidth on these cables. When you throw in other factors such as the lack of competition (Econet versus a bankrupt NetOne), the upshot is that the Zimbabwean consumer gets a really bad deal.

Statistics on internet use in Zimbabwe are notoriously unreliable and figures of 10-15% of the adult population are tossed around. But what everyone seems to have in Zimbabwe is a mobile phone. At a recent workshop on citizen journalism for rural people only four out of 26 participants did not have cellphones but all knew how to use one. This, of course, is significant because the majority of Africans will access the internet for the first time in their lives on their mobile phones.

But for Zimbabweans it will be a while before the majority of users access internet on their mobile phones. The reasons are varied. A third-generation network is only available in Harare although the largest mobile company in the country is slowly beginning to roll this out to other cities. Unlike in the SA environment where handsets and contracts are easily obtainable, Zimbabweans have to pay upfront for smartphones. The result is all too visible: an archaic Nokia 3330 is a common site. On the plus side the importation of cheap handsets from China and the Middle East means that gradually people will move to phones with more features.

In places like Harare many companies have set up wireless networks and one can access free internet at some of the prominent hotels. A couple of arts spaces offer internet access either for free or for a very small fee. Young people tend to patronise these places with their laptops. Econet's mobile internet service is also becoming popular but outside of Harare the connection is notoriously slow.

So what does the fraction of the population with internet access do? Sms, Facebook and e-mail are the major interactive tools Zimbabweans use and for three simple reasons:

IAL
DIA

- connecting with family;
- connecting with friends: the nature and size of the Zimbabwean diaspora means that there are various permutations in the way we use social media (almost exclusively Facebook);
- gaming.

The fourth reason that we all fantasise about is more an event: political mobilisation and advocacy. Studies have been done on how sms has been used in election monitoring, advocacy and political commentary but in Zimbabwe the use of text-messaging in this manner remains under-developed.

A Facebook revolution in Zimbabwe?
Given the so-called Spring Revolution in the Arab world, social media has moved from the margins to the mainstream in terms of people's consciousness. We should now brace ourselves for a myriad donor-funded projects that will be driven by the hope that the more people use social media, the more they can engage and mobilise against repressive regimes. There will be many disappointments with the results.

A technology cannot mobilise people all by itself. Zimbabwean society is not very well organised at the community level (the exception seems to be Matebeleland where I have a chance to work on a citizen journalism project with amazing potential). In being critical of Zimbabwe I am comparing with South Africa where there is strong local organisation and a clearly visible community leadership. Zimbabwe seems to me to be a society used to developing coping mechanisms. South Africans, however, react on the spot. Now what does that mean for social media use? Throw in Facebook and sms and hope the people will meet virtually and protest electricity cuts, non-collection of refuse and lack of clean water?

The new fixation with social media and its possibilities smacks of the same old modernisation paradigm. The strong belief that the mere introduction of technology will bring about certain effects. People are poor because they lack information and we give them information that having less children will sort out the issue of poverty. Sixty years of information has not brought water closer to villagers. But it is not all doom and gloom.

One Facebook group that fascinates me (more so because they speak to the world I grew up in) is called Dangamvura Chete. Let me describe the group and its kind of conversations to illustrate a few points.

The Dangamvura Chete group describes their township of origin in the Manicaland Province as follows:

Munezhu via Natvest (DANGAMVURA). A location we grew up in with all sorts of fun, full of rich entertaining incidences you can mention them to bring back the golden old days. Keep in touch and encourage as many ladies and gentlemen to join the group, bear in mind it's just a social engine to bring back childhood memories and laugh nechikwata pamhepo. If you have anything for as long as not political please feel free to communicate with the rest of the GROUP. Things like the popular pick pockets Tuturi, Andrew Kashiri, Shadhi Mapopo and a host of other funny characters male or female, it used to keep us occupied and alert every time we went to town or the shops in the evenings, but the truth is they never mugged anyone they know but quite capable of asking their fellow unknown colleagues to try their luck and later enjoy the loot together at a Braai stand kwaMunoz, Matongo or kwaTukuza. How organised n why not be orginised as well as a group DANGAMVURA CHETE, home to all the Great and decent guys n pretty girls too. We stay too far from town and it encouraged us to be wiser and organised, God bless the Pool ''Dangamvura and its people all over the world'' This is a surburb located on the south eastern side of the railway line and surrounded by Rahin mountain now the Heroes acre and the Rocky Sheni mountain believed to have a passible underground gap (NINGA) to the other end of the mountain and Gimboki on the western end of the location, a place popularly known as a rifle range for shooting practice. A somehow land locked quiet suburb during our days before the population exploded may be because people were carrying out studies on how good the ' POOL' was. Now quite a big location and takes almost two or three hours to drive right round the sections. Blessed with nearly all churches found in the entire nation. Two good secondary schools and four primary schools but i think there have to be more schools now say double the current number to accommodate all the kids in one sitting. But of course I know there might be some private or church study groups taking another lot to educate the community and eradicate illiteracy. The construction of the link road was great and fantastic development and it cut the distance by three kilometres and a very big disadvantage to people in the other sections of the city, T and A in terms of transport, very few omnibuses ply that root. Socially it's quite a good place with pubs in nearly all sections of the city a culture quite popular with all city councils '' a cow ready to milk'' What lacks are sports fields, we need an Olympic size stadium, pool and any other facility you might think of fellow club members.

Who qualifies to be a member? Interestingly, the group is closed, meaning it is an invitation-only affair or that an administrator will have to "vet" and approve requests for membership. Currently, there are 225 members in the network. Most of these members are now living outside both Dangamvura itself and Zimbabwe. What kind of conversations do they have? The group thrives on nostalgia. More importantly it brings people together and therefore fosters collective memory.

What normally happens is that someone asks a question and people begin to respond. It could be a question about the whereabouts of long-lost friends or an enquiry about what sort of change has taken place in the suburb. Members also post pictures. These pictures and wall posts are subject to key Facebook functions of "Like", "Comment", "Share" and "Subscribe" – this latter one allows members to get instant notifications from particular people posting in the group.

Below is an example of a conversation started by one member and the subsequent responses:

Morzies Mustapha Mukuhwa added this post: Was just thinking, we cud set up a Dangamvura Trust, which will look at some requirements of our Hood, Sporting Facilities, Health Club, HIV/AIDS Program, Children's Home, Old People etc. If we are game we can get inputs from those on the ground (i.e those still staying in D'vat), then we put a committee in place, then give a bit back to the community that made most of us who we are today. Can we discuss this? (This post had 17 comments)

Eddie Mlambo wrote: *It is a gr8t idea & a very sensetive 1. how are we going to meet obviously dis is not gonna b discused on facebook & frm de luks of it we are all ova de wrld. We mst make it wrk mayb frm branches in different places.*

Houston Roberts wrote: *Way to go bro I want in... How can we all meet and form this group guys.. Moze, this is a goood idea, lets give back to our community.. It made us who we are today by the way...*

Judith Gwarada wrote: *Let's try people good idea*

Conversation and connection
The example of the Dangamvura Chete group points to how Zimbabweans are using social media. Having gone through the trauma of dislocation, they tend to gravitate towards nostalgia (Zimbabwe was) and love re-connecting with people they went to school with. Families scattered across the globe announce university graduations, weddings, births, deaths etc on social media. Increasingly there is a sense of wanting to find a role in the rehabilitation of Zimbabwe.

The emphasis people make is on conversation and connecting. Anyone wanting to devise a strategy to engage with Zimbabweans on social and political issues will have to bear in mind that the top-down one-way broadcast model of communication is on its death bed. People want to be engaged – not to be preached to.
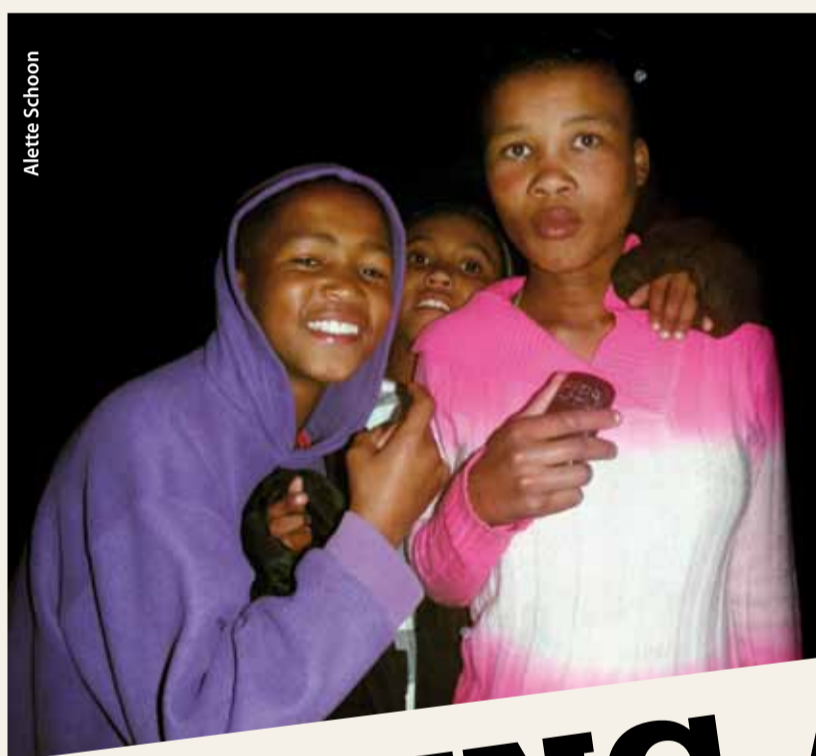
AND THE PEOPLE FORMERLY CALLED THE AUDIENCE.

HAVE YOU GOT YOUR MOJO?

Alette Schoon

Alette Schoon

Alette Schoon

It was dusk, and a group of young men with a dog trailing behind them, were walking past on a dusty township road in Hooggenoeg, an RDP village on the rim of the Grahamstown bowl. While they ambled along, one was holding up a mobile phone on which music was playing, dancing while he walked. This was exactly the kind of thing I was hoping to observe in my new identity as researcher and participant observer, and was why I had agreed to judge the Hooggenoeg fashion show which turned out to be more of a beauty competition. While I'm not generally fond of these kind of shows and the way they essentialise beauty, I agreed because I wanted to get more of a sense of how mobile phones are integrated into the everyday lives of these young adults.

The basis of my study is that information and communication technology needs to be understood contextually, and that its meaning is socially defined, just as it in turn transforms the social spaces it find itself in. This dialectical approach to technology and society is the basis of the "domestication approach", developed by media studies scholars Roger Silverstone, Eric Hirsch and David Morley. It was applied by anthropologist Daniel Miller to study the mobile phone in Jamaica, where he found the mobile phone was used very differently there – compared to patterns of use in developed countries – to express a particular Jamaican identity which prioritised social link-ups and music.

Back at the fashion show in Hooggenoeg, it was clear that music on mobile phones was an important part of expressing identity here too. Groups of young men would come to the front and dance elaborate routines to hip-hop tracks while the young women were changing their outfits in the kitchen. All these hip-hop tracks were saved on their phones, and I observed how one young man Bluetoothed a track to the DJ's computer, displaying his competence in the technology with discreet efficiency.

In my research interviews with young adults they described how they habitually download music and then share it with friends on street corners via Bluetooth. Their music collections become a way of expressing identity, and here in this township, in which apartheid race constructs of African and coloured had blurred, several of my interviewees used their music to express this.

Interviewer: So wat dink jy sê jou songs omtrent jou, watter soort mens jy is? [What do you think your songs say about you? What kind of person you are?]

Beronice: (laughs) Dat ek nie racism is nie. Ek hou van alles. [That I'm not racist. I like everything.]

The township of Hooggenoeg was built in 1995 as a social experiment by the municipality, who explicitly tried to counter the divisions of apartheid by allocating housing in equal percentages to coloured and African backyard and informal settlement dwellers. Several of the young people I spoke to changed their racial identity depending on the company they were with, and expressed discomfort that they had to choose between coloured and African on job application forms. Instead, they called themselves "Mix" and switched easily between Afrikaans and isiXhosa.

They code-switched between languages when talking to friends on MXit too, which often intrigued those living elsewhere, who wanted to know more about "living the life of two cultures". Here it was common for young men whose parents would describe themselves as coloured to participate in Xhosa circumcision ceremonies, or as they say in Hooggenoeg: "Almal kan mos nou bos toe gaan om 'n boeta te word". [Everyone can go to the bush to become a brother]

A much more important division in this community is class. Here a young person who tries to claim some status, but does not have a phone, is mocked. Class determines one's phone, as only those with access to credit can buy phones with special features. Young adults who had phones that were incapable of playing media or accessing the internet were acutely aware of this deficiency, and would describe their phones as not being "real phones". Here a mobile phone is synonymous with a portable media device. In fact, as I took photographs of the fashion show with a digital camera, several young people asked me what type of phone I was using.

From my chair in the front with the judges I observed an intriguing ritual, where a young woman in the audience coyly passed her phone along to a chuffed young man whose friend took his photograph and then passed the phone back to her. According to the other young adults this was a common flirtation ritual, and handing your phone to someone you liked, for a photo or a MXit contact, was common.

This gesture of entrusting a romantic interest with one's most valuable possession, leant a sensual haptic quality to mobile phone flirtation. Posing has become an everyday township practice, and young people could spend great effort in dressing up in a particular style – hip-hop or Italian in a suit – and posing for a

HAVING A PHONE HAVING style...

photo, in order to have the right wallpaper image.

The wallpaper photo on a young adult's mobile phone is not only an expression of identity, but also a very important security feature. If they locked a phone with a security code, the face would remain to mark the phone as theirs. One young woman had actually had her phone returned to her after the thieves were unable to unlock it. Most of these thefts happen on the border of Hooggenoeg where one has to pick a shortcut through the bushes.

Young women negotiate this dangerous journey with a please-call-me to get a friend to meet them halfway. One young man chose a phone with a good torch in order to navigate the bushes at night. As some little girls had been raped in these bushes, one of the young women now used Google on her phone to find information for her little sister's school projects so that she didn't have to negotiate the journey to the library.

On the dusty streets of Hooggenoeg it is relatively safe however, and here young men walk a ritual walk in the evening, snaking through all 11 roads, briefly stopping to meet with others on the corners or flirt with girls in front of their gates.

It's an opportunity to be seen and recognised, a social walk akin to the Italian *passegiata*. The mobile phone is integral to this walk, and young men not only use it to provide a soundtrack, but also to engage in constant conversation over MXit with friends in other parts of town while they walked, a practice which the Japanese refer to as an "augmented flesh meet".

Sometimes they chatted to those who were right in front of them. Danny, the self-confessed bad boy, would use MXit to encourage young women to leave the safety of their gates and walk halfway towards him down the street, or go "fifty-fifty". He seemed to take pride in initiating young women into the world of sexual relationships, and described how he used MXit as a way of engaging a shy young woman on a first date.

Danny: So I had to remain on MXit, 'cause she wanted to remain on MXit, because she wanted to sit with us, but she was too shy, because like all the girls are there, like, and she was too shy to, like, talk to me, communicate face to face, she wanted to communicate over MXit while she's sitting over there and I'm here. And so it was like: "I'm OK with that", 'cause most of them do that.

Here MXit helped to create a parallel private booth for the flirtation. The young men were adamant that their phones were their only privacy, and that otherwise privacy was impossible here as everyone here knew everyone, and gossip on MXit and gossip site Outoilet made all one's actions visible.

This concept of the phone as private means that it is common for young men to store their home-made pornography on their phones. Young women, on the other hand, were acutely aware that their phones were not private, as they faced regular phone inspections by their boyfriends, where the double standards of sexual propriety were applied. This meant that a young woman preferred

storing photos online on MXit, and that she engaged in a range of stealth tactics to avoid detection of other romantic interests, such as entering the names of a female friend when saving such a name on her phone.

What moved me most in this study, was how one young illiterate woman had been inspired to go to a literacy class so that she too would be able to write an sms. According to the other young women there were many who had dropped out of primary school who were now being taught by others how to write so they could use MXit.

Here the mobile phone is providing a key role in improving literacy, even if it is just learning to write in sms-style abbreviations. One young woman I interviewed used her phone to write love poems that she forwarded to friends.

The phone as creative device was also evident in the hip-hop musician who saved his tracks on his phone, and the young man who used his phone to film a satirical news report to impress his friends. Others manipulated photographs and added captions through a phone application.

As a media device, the mobile phone in this community is a way for young people to not only express who they are through consuming particular media, but for producing their own media through a range of techniques, to craft these identities. Here the mobile phone has become a device that has meaning in relation to the local context, and the tensions of race, class, gender and personal safety that define this very particular, but also typically South African, space.

CYBERSPACE CACOPHONY IN NIGERIAN POLITICS

BY LAI OSO, DELE ODUNLAMI AND TOKUNBO ADAJA

The internet has changed for good the ecology of communication across the globe. And Nigeria, the largest black nation, is no exception. A number of politicians in this country are already swimming with the tide of online applications for interactive exchanges. Leading the pack of social media-compliant actors of political information in Africa's most populous nation is President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan. Other public figures on Facebook and using other social networks before the last May elections include Vice President Namadi Sambo, Senate President David Mark, his House of Representative counterpart Dimeji Bankole and Lagos State Governor Babatunde Raji Fasola. In a recent study we analysed President Jonathan's exchanges with participants on his Facebook wall.

Jonathan became the President of Nigeria following the death of President Umaru Yar'Adua after a protracted illness. He was Yar'Adua's deputy. Controversy trailed his assumption of office and his candidature in the subsequent elections in 2011. Some politicians in the northern geo-political zone insisted he stepped down for another northerner in line with the zoning arrangement of the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP).

Although he had tactically avoided a discussion on the issue of his presidential ambition in the initial dialogues, a lot of people saw Jonathan's Facebook page as a scheme for his political communication. Within a few weeks of its debut, more than 100 000 Nigerians, mostly youths, had reacted to it. Current estimates put Jonathan's Facebook fans at over 500 000. This places Jonathan second after United States' Barack Obama among world leaders on Facebook. The Facebook interaction also provided him a platform to mobilise the youth in support of his candidacy.

Of the 335 respondents whose comments we analysed, 294 were male and 41 were female, reflecting the male-dominated nature of the Nigerian politics and political discourse in the country. In terms of geographical origin of the respondents, we found that the North was overwhelmingly under-represented. Northern participants numbered 19 (5.7%) while there were 252 respondents from the South (75%).

The issues that dominated discussion ranged widely. They included development, national unity, youth employment, infrastructure, education, the Niger Delta Crisis, security (kidnapping, armed robbery), banking and finance, elections, sports, agriculture and food.

Addressing these issues, Jonathan used patriotism and nationalistic themes to lay down the terms of dialogue. However, the respondents' reactions showed indications of alternative premises. An example: when the President defined the country's problems as a lack of national unity owing to the the negative attitude of the people, a good number of the respondents attributed the country's problems to bad leadership and corruption.

When the President discussed the re-branding Nigeria campaign in terms of "how thoughts influence action", he got this response from Tunde Obajolu: "Mr President, please focus on main issue… you rulers of Nigeria are looters and try to hide behind 'DISTRACTIONS', Distraction ko,

distraction ni…What has the executive arm achieved? All we know is that billions are budgeted and Nigerians are suffering and dying more everyday… Is it possible to have a functioning NEPA and the generator and diesel barons to still make their billions? Is it possible for police to have good pay without collecting bribe or kill all danfo drivers because of 20 naira?"

Responses like this are rife in Nigeria's social media and they indicate that unlike in the industrial media, the Nigerian ruling class has been unable to exercise total hegemony in this emergent public sphere.

HAVE YOU GOT YOUR MOJO?

A SERIES OF
UNFORTUNATE
EVENTS

These images, all photographed from Google Street View, were taken by placing a camera on a tripod in front of a computer screen in Paris. Google Street View is a technology that displays images taken by a fleet of specially adapted cars, providing online panoramic views of different places around the globe. Since its launch in May 2007, it has expanded from just a few cities in the US to cover a range of locations worldwide. The technology has raised privacy issues, although Google maintains that photos are taken from public property, that features can be blurred on-screen and that users can flag inappropriate or sensitive imagery for Google to remove. The service was nevertheless suspended in a number of countries, including Austria, Australia and the Czech Republic, as a result of objections on privacy grounds. Italy asked Google to give its citizens notice before starting mapping operations, and, in November, Germany became the first country to negotiate an opt-out before the service went live, with almost 250 000 Germans requesting their properties be pixelated.

Mark Kuipers
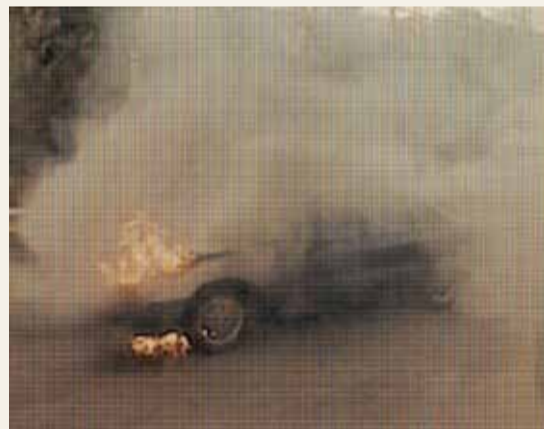
PUSHING FOR
SOPHISTICATION
AND POLISH

Aware of a broadening in demand beyond the still image, World Press Photo organised its first ever multimedia contest. On the eve of the Awards Ceremony, when the winners of World Press Photo's multimedia competition were announced, we spoke with Nancy Donaldson, a multimedia producer at *The New York Times*. Donaldson was involved with two award-winning productions: *The Home Front** (first prize, linear category) and *A Year at War*** (third prize, interactive category).

Carly Diaz: During the judging, many discussions revolved around definitions of multimedia. What is your definition?

Nancy Donaldson: Multimedia is technically anything that involves multiple types of content. The multimedia team at *The New York Times* consists of producers, of visual narratives and animations, designers and programmers. Technically we're all multimedia producers, but the skill set is very diverse. The World Press Photo contest broke it down into interactive and linear categories. I think there definitely is, and should be, a distinction between more in-depth packages and single narratives. But there needs to be visual storytelling in terms of photography and video in each.

CD: What distinguishes single narratives from in-depth packages?

ND: Linear productions give the reader guidance. There is only one way to experience the story. With interactive productions, the idea is to give people a sampling of what's there. In our production *A Year at War*, about a US battalion in Afghanistan, you can meet the troops, spend time with certain soldiers and see their opinions and experience change over the course of a year. But to get the full story, you don't have to do that. You can also look at the narratives describing the whole battalion going off to Afghanistan or the commander talking about one mission. Interactive productions give the reader more avenues to go down and dig deeper.

CD: Does the freedom in navigation not entail a risk that people will miss the best starting or

Nancy Donaldson, a multimedia producer at *The New York Times*

ending point, or a critical part of the story?

ND: We discussed at length whether we could assume people had seen the earlier pieces or whether we had to give a full explanation, even though we explained it two videos ago. I think it's clear that there are larger storytelling pieces and that you can dig deeper into characters and experience certain moments. Our aim is that each piece offers enough for everyone to get something out of it. The more intrigued they are, the better.

CD: What do you see as the necessary elements of an effective production?

ND: I think strong characters and a narrative arc are important. You have to be very careful to present your story in a way that's engaging, both visually and from a storytelling standpoint.

CD: Is there one medium that you consider the backbone of multimedia?

ND: I think the audio narrative is the backbone. People are much more willing to watch something that photographers may not find very strong visually than to listen to audio that's hard to hear. The threshold for listening to bad audio is much higher.

CD: As a producer, can you describe the process of creating a multimedia piece, from idea to publication?

ND: The most important lesson I've learned is that the earlier you have the right team in place, the better. Even before the photographer goes out to shoot, you should involve the multimedia producer. The writer, photographer and producer should all be on the same page when they go into the reporting process. Usually, we start with a conversation about the story and the reporting trip. Then we create a plan around what we expect to find. I think it's really beneficial for me to stay in New York while the photographer reports back from the field. That way photographers have the unbiased feedback of someone who is not experiencing the same things. When they come back, we have a conversation about what they gathered and what we think the story will be. I then start working through the interviews, pulling them into a narrative structure. After that, we keep meeting through all the various steps and edits down to the last minute, to make sure it represents what they found in the field. The process works best when all parties are involved. The heavy lifting for the photographer starts when they go out to report, and the heavy lifting for the producer is when the photographer gets back. But it's really important to be together every step of the way.

CD: What role do you see photography playing in multimedia?

ND: I think photography has a lot of strengths. It gives people insight into the issues within the story and can be very emotional. The shooting style is perhaps different when photographers are shooting for a visual narrative than when they are creating images for a magazine or newspaper, which are not necessarily published in chronological order.

CD: Speaking of the shooting style, can you describe the way a photographer works in the field for a multimedia piece?

ND: A lot of photographers I work with are either

new or almost new to shooting video. Often they are more accustomed to shooting stills for audio slideshows. For photographers, this is still a relatively new medium and it's important to stress visual variety, both in terms of angle and depth. You don't need one shot that tells the whole story. For a visual narrative – that ultimately becomes the form of video – you have to shoot more transitions, details and scene setters. They are really important to thread a piece together and give a sense of place, movement and progress.

CD: Which new ways of storytelling do long-form narratives open up?

ND: The longer narratives enable us to evolve a story over time, as things develop. We are just finishing the last part of *A Year at War*. We're surprised where some of the characters are, what has happened in their lives and what they have learned. It's been really interesting to see where they have ended up, to compare their initial objective with what they found when they got there, and to say how things played out and how they've measured success. A longer narrative allows you to give more, check back in and update people. It also allows you to let people probe deeper into certain issues and characters.

CD: How do you think the creation of multimedia productions has changed over the years?

ND: On a fundamental level, bandwidth and the ability to deliver a high quality product have changed a lot. This has enabled people to take multimedia to the next level. It took a while for print photography to evolve into multimedia. They are different things, although they're based on many of the same principles. Also, people's interests and understanding of what you can do with the web and with photojournalism – beyond individual stills – was part of the learning process. Audio slideshows were probably the first visual narratives on the web. In my first three years at *The New York Times*, the main focus was still on those. But then there was video and people began mixing the two. Today the main focus is blending video with still images and doing interviews on video.

CD: Where do you think multimedia is headed? What would you like to see happen next?

ND: My interest lies in the more in-depth, longer form, like mini documentaries on the web. I'm not hoping that the medium itself will change. But maybe the platform will, so it can be delivered on iPads and iPhones. TV shows and movies are now online. Everything becomes more of an equal playing field, which increases the level of competition and expectation on the web. People will continue to be pushed to make more sophisticated and more polished productions. As to what the ultimate platform for these pieces is, and where they should and will go, I think the lines will begin to blur. The medium will move along as more people engage and learn to shoot and produce multimedia.

* The Home Front *is the story of two boys in the US who struggle to adjust when their father, a single dad and US soldier, is deployed to Afghanistan and they are sent to live with relatives.*
** A Year at War *examines the year-long deployment of one US battalion in Afghanistan.*
See http://www.worldpressphoto.org/multimediacontest

RETOOLING

BY ROBERT BRAND

HAVE YOU GOT YOUR MOJO?

In *The Tin Men*, first published in 1965, playwright and novelist Michael Frayn describes an academic project, presided over by a computer engineer with intellectual pretensions called Dr Goldwasser, to automate journalism:

The soporific quiet which filled Goldwasser's laboratory in the Newspaper Department was disturbed only by the soft rustle of tired newsprint. Assistants bent over the component parts of the Department's united experiment, the demonstration that in theory a digital computer could be programmed to produce a perfectly satisfactory daily newspaper with all the variety and news sense of the old hand-made article… Once Goldwasser and his colleagues had proved the theory, commercial interests would no doubt swiftly put it into practice. The stylisation of the modern newspaper would be complete. Its last residual connection with the raw, messy, offendable real world would have been broken.

We haven't quite realised Goldwasser's dream, and we probably never will. But journalism production has changed since Frayn's day, and in ways he could not have imagined in 1965 (though that does not make *The Tin Men*, which rivals Evelyn Waugh's *Scoop* as a satire on journalism, any less worth reading).

Picture this scene: It is 11am in one of the many committee rooms in the parliamentary complex in Cape Town, six or seven journalists are waiting for executives from Eskom to brief Parliament's energy committee on the parastatal's plans to ensure electricity supplies throughout the coming winter. Three of them have laptop computers open, with USB modems prominently visible. They are reporters for the three major news agencies, for whom this relatively mundane event holds more interest than for your average newspaper hack.

They are writing for investors whose livelihoods may depend on a reliable energy supply at an affordable cost, for traders who may buy the bonds Eskom plans to sell to finance its new power stations, for company executives who are deciding whether or not building a factory in South Africa is worth their money. Those readers pay a premium to receive fast, accurate and dependable news from the financial news agencies. In the financial markets, information is everything, and a split second in time or a small factual mistake can often mean the difference between making or losing money.

Since I started my career in financial journalism about 12 years ago, the tools of the trade have changed. Back in 2000, in the absence of ubiquitous broadband coverage, dictating a story over your cellphone to an editor in Johannesburg was about as technologically advanced as it got. These days, I can connect online to the Bloomberg server and file directly from my laptop into an editing queue. What's more, I can flash headlines straight to the wire without the intermediation of an editor, thus saving precious seconds in the contest to get the news out first.

That does not make editors superfluous; far from it. Any story that runs on Bloomberg has to go through the hands of two editors who not only edit for language and style, but also check facts and numbers rigorously. Even one- or two-paragraph "flash fills", which have to be on the wire within five minutes after flashing a headline, have to be back-read by at least one editor before publication.

To save time, reporters and editors work in a chat room, which can be accessed via laptop or smart phone and where editors can back-read urgent copy and suggest changes in a real-time interaction with the reporter. In this way, the technology enables as near to "live" coverage as any print journalism is ever likely to get. I can add value to stories by attaching an audio recording, a video clip or a graphic which readers can access by the click of a mouse.

But the technology not only provides a means of publishing stories faster and better. It also allows me to research facts or data while out in the field, as if I were at my desk. Eskom is planning a bond sale. Have we reported that before? Not sure how to spell the executive's name? How much have electricity prices increased in the past year? The information – including data that is not available on the web – is available at my fingertips to help me provide more relevant, contextualised and accurate news to my audience.

Without a doubt, digital technologies have helped us produce news faster, more accurately and more completely.

Of course, all of those tools are worth nothing in the hands of someone who can't do journalism. To be first with the story, you need more than the latest smart phone and fast thumb-typing skills. You need what Goldwasser terms "news sense": an ability to recognise what is significant and relevant for your audience. That is something that comes with knowledge of your subject, and of the needs of your particular audience. In addition you need to be able to construct and craft a news report that is informative and entertaining, that makes people want to read it. Those were the things that Goldwasser's computer couldn't do. So, have digital technologies changed the way we produced journalism? Yes. Have they made our job easier? Certainly. Have they changed the essence of journalism? No.

Robert Brand writes in his personal capacity.

AND THE ESSENCE OF JOURNALISM

SOCIAL REPORTING TOOLS FOR STORYTELLING & NETWORKING

BY ANNE TAYLOR

Social media tools are increasingly being used to gather and disseminate news, giving news organisations new avenues to build audience, especially through referral traffic. But perhaps the most appealing attribute of these tools is how they allow journalists to interact directly with their audiences and there's no argument that one of the most effective ways of connecting and engaging with readers is Twitter, the microblogging tool.

In June this year, Twitter launched 'Twitter for Newsrooms' (#TfN) to help realise the platform's potential as a reporting tool and to help journalists new to the service get to grips with "joining the conversation".

Described as a "best practices guide for journalists", TfN contains tips and tricks for journalists wanting to explore social reporting. The guide is aimed at journalists who are new to Twitter and contains information on how to find sources quicker, top search tips, as well as advice on how to the best ways to get your story out there and build an audience.

It also contains a glossary as well as short case studies that show how journalists use Twitter. See http://media.twitter.com/newsrooms/

See Julie Posetti's interview with Vadim Lavrusik (page 9) for information on Facebook's Journalism page http://www.facebook.com/journalists

MobileActive.org launched the Mobile Media Toolkit in August, a collection of resources to help journalists, especially citizen journalists, find the right tool, use it correctly and reach the broadest audience possible. Content includes detailed how-to guides that cover taking photos, creating audio and video, tips and tricks for reporting on a smartphone, as well as inspiring case studies. See http://mobilemediatoolkit.org/

THE NEW FRONTLINE IS INSIDE THE NEWSROOM

It is a truism bordering on cliché that the growth of social media has brought the news closer to the newsroom. For a while, user-generated content, filtered back at base, has been a crucial component in the coverage of big stories like wars and disasters, providing a first wave of material before conventional news operations kick in.

And even before the emergence of social media, agency wires and pictures – piped into the newsroom at home – gave war correspondents in the field the context necessary to make sense of events happening immediately in front of them.

But the events of the past few months have seen the emergence of a new, virtual, frontline – not thousands of miles away in the desert where battled-hardened war correspondents operate, but right in the heart of the newsroom.

Previously, exposure to difficult content and editorial decisions in reporting conflict or disaster was generally limited to journalists in the field or a small number in the newsroom. Now, almost any journalist in the newsroom can find themselves faced with this kind of material.

It's an important development. The emergence of this new frontline raises big questions about how we practise our journalism and how we train and look after our journalists.

Let's take a look at some examples:

Firstly, raw content. Conventionally shot agency footage is certainly graphic – planes taking off, bombs being dropped, guns being shot. Journalists in the newsroom are not spared the sight of the resulting horrific injuries, death and destruction.

But until now it has been rare to see the bomb or the bullet arriving at its destination with its resulting devastation. More significantly, agency pictures tend to be shot by professional cameramen who are arguably more aware of the power of the images and how they are likely to be used. They tend to be shot from a wider angle, with limited attention to the worst injuries.

Now, it is not unusual for user-generated content to capture events as they happen – like the fatal shooting of Neda Agha-Soltan on the streets of Tehran, or a bomb landing a few yards away from a group of rebels in Misrata.

Shaky mobile phone images taken by participants or bystanders tend to focus in, close and long, on the most graphic and upsetting injuries, because the individual taking the images either wants to make a point or because they themselves have no previous experience in such extreme situations, so their attention is gripped.

There is also, of course, simply more of it; more readily available; found and shared. Some of the sharing is done responsibly – with many tweeters re-tweeting hard-to-watch video with warnings about its graphic nature, but someone has to view it nonetheless.

And it is the personal testimony provided by user-generated content that gives the emotional power to the storytelling – unlike much of the professionally shot material which is one step removed from the events portrayed. It is an emotional power that has an impact on our audience and newsroom journalists alike.

But it is not just the graphic images that make up this new frontline. Technology – from mobile phones to Skype – now allows participants and bystanders to share their experiences direct and unmediated.

Most famously, in 2008, Mark Abell, a British lawyer caught in his Mumbai hotel room a few floors above a group of terrorists holding scores of people hostage, gave the BBC regular, real-time updates about his situation.

That kind of direct conversation between journalists in London, and frontlines anywhere, is now commonplace. Calls or emails to and from doctors in hospitals that are under attack, with rebels and campaigners, with local loyalists and expats, bringing the conflict directly into the newsroom for the first time, are now part of daily business.

One tragic example hammers this issue home. BBC journalists had been in regular contact with an activist based in Benghazi, in eastern Libya. He had been supplying us and other news organisations with images, eyewitness reports and live interviews, until one Skype call asking if he would do a two-way was answered by his wife, who told the journalist that he had been killed.

Journalists now constantly have to make difficult decisions about protecting the safety of people caught up in these events. The BBC won't use the real names of anyone in Yemen, Syria, Libya or Bahrain. It won't even identify people outside of those countries who have family there.

But being aware of the need to do this doesn't always come naturally if you're not used to reporting wars from the newsroom. What about the monitoring of phone calls or even email traffic? What language can be used to identify yourself without endangering the contributor? How do we introduce ourselves? Is Gmail safer than Hotmail?

In 2009, a number of individuals in Tehran who had previously been happy to talk to BBC journalists asked us to stop contacting them because they were worried about their safety. And however brave or secure individuals feel about their current situation, journalists have an obligation towards them, as contributors, to be aware of potential future developments.

Activists and campaigners are feeding news organisations intelligence about the military action of both sides: what are the editorial issues there? The newsroom has always played a role in supporting the reporting of conflict and disaster. But now that role is central, feeding back more content and information to the field than ever before. As a result, what were once relatively specialised skills have become essential, core skills for the entire newsroom.

That transition, already well under way, calls for some careful thinking about the implications for both the training and support of individual journalists and wider editorial issues about the handling and dissemination of raw material which arrives in the newsroom.

This article was originally published on the BBC College of Journalism's website. http://www.bbc.co.uk/journalism/blog/2011/03/how-the-newsroom-handles-confl.shtml

THIS IS **NOT** THE FUTURE, **IT'S THE** NOW

Earlier this year there were wonderful headlines in a number of South African newspapers about a young man called Mandla Lamba who was being trumpeted as the country's "youngest billionaire".

He had supposedly made his fortune with savvy mining deals and financial wheeling-and-dealing and was not averse to blowing R50 000 in a night at one of Joburg's swankiest clubs.

But it was all a lie.

Lamba was no billionaire. He was a fraudster and a fugitive from justice and just about every detail of his life turned out to be an elaborate fiction. It took my Media24 Investigations team little more than a morning to pull the stitches from his fabric of lies – and in doing so we turned to the many new tools available to journalists today.

For example, we used online databases to check company records which showed us where we should start looking to track down people connected to his past. Colleague Julian Rademeyer and I began sending out tweets on Twitter asking if anyone had, or knew anyone, who had worked at any of these now defunct companies. Within a day we had been contacted by people who had worked with Lamba and who were willing to talk about his dodgy business activities.

This is one example of how we can harness the power of social media to accelerate what would have taken many days of gumshoe reporting to achieve.

The digital tools available to us open new potential and power in our reporting. Using webscrapers we can, for example, mine thousands of pages of government gazettes for information on tender deals turning what used to be an exercise in looking for a needle a haystack into a five-minute search.

Late last year I scraped about one million records of mining and prospecting right applications from the Department of Mineral Resources website. I wrote a programme in Python to rapidly search through these records for evidence of a company mining rights or applications across South Africa, a tool which remains valuable to this day. We have used it to write about companies connected to disgraced former ANC chief whip Tony Yengeni bidding for mineral rights. We also used it to tell a major story about the mining interests of Chancellor House, the controversial ANC front company.

There is a brilliant website called Scribblemaps which we make regular use of. It produces amazingly useful maps, allowing you to layer data in really useful ways. We used it often in our reporting around mining applications since the mining application data came with geo co-ordinates which made it a breeze to get information onto a map. In doing so we could see, for example, that a large number of prospecting sites by the controversial Imperial Crown Trading company ran along, and in, the Vaal River, producing a story which would have been almost impossible to uncover in any other way.

I believe that any journalist who is not learning how to unleash these tools and technologies on their journalism is about to get left in the dust.

Consider the power of social media. There are an estimated four million people using Facebook in South Africa today and they're spending about 50 minutes a day on it, far more than they are spending on news sites or reading newspapers. Twitter's online audience has grown from some 90 000 at the beginning of 2010 to more than one million by mid-2011.

That's a massive opportunity to make journalism richer even as it gets faster. We don't have to become hamsters on a treadmill, as some critics suggest of our profession. We simply need to work smarter and quicker.

A journalist who knows how to use social media and who can access significant audiences on these networks will fly. There is wonderful potential for crowd-sourcing information and bringing in an even richer set of voices to our reports in a fraction of the time it would take using traditional methods.

Social media provides a rich source of news leads. At the end of last year we wrote a major expose of Yengeni, whom we discovered was illegally a director in a number of companies following his fraud conviction. Where did this lead come from? Straight off Facebook where a savvy user posted an update wondering how Yengeni was able to drive a Maserati and live the high-life considering his apparent fall from grace.

That story led to a high-level criminal investigation into Yengeni which continues.

But there are many other possibilities that still lie ahead. For example, journalists in the United States are starting to use Foursquare, the location-based social network, to locate potential eyewitnesses to stories.

Another journalist in the US wrote a fascinating piece about how hotels exorbitantly pushed up their room prices during snow storms, exploiting vulnerable travellers. She did it by analysing Twitter feeds for key words and was able to build the framework of her story from these indignant tweets.

YouTube and other user-generated video websites provide rich hunting grounds for exclusives and for the investigative reporter. Following a tip-off recently we were able to locate footage from different sources (and the details of which we corroborated ourselves) showing that South African-made sniper rifles had been sold to Libya and were being used by government forces there. The South African government has never officially confirmed this weapons transaction despite being repeatedly pressed to do so. We were able to reach across the world into a major conflict to report on a story of significance in South Africa simply by harnessing the power of the Net.

I often have conversations with colleagues who talk about the things that I have mentioned here as "the future". I always tell them: "No, this is not the future, this is now".

JOURNALISTS WHO **DO NOT UNDERSTAND** THAT THESE **TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES** NEED TO BE PART OF OUR **DAILY ROUTINE** ARE SIMPLY SIGNING THEIR OWN REDUNDANCY NOTICE.

Read more

http://erikapryor.com/2010/04/12/how-journalists-are-using-social-media-for-real-results-from-mashable/

MONETISING
ONLINE NEWS
A SMALLER COMMONS?

THE **MONETISATION** OF ONLINE NEWS COULD **TARNISH ESTABLISHED NEWS BRANDS** AND **IMPOVERISH** THE INFORMATION COMMONS ARGUE **CARLO ANGERER** AND **ADAM HAUPT**. THIS IS **BAD NEWS** FOR BUSINESS AND BAD NEWS FOR **DEMOCRACY**.

In March 2011, *The New York Times* started charging for online access to its articles. The system is set up in a way that occasional readers will not have to pay, but that regular users will. While *Times* subscribers continue to have free access, others are only able to read 20 articles a month for free and have to pay at least $15 every four weeks to access the rest of the content. Any article accessed via search engines such as Google and Yahoo, or via social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, will remain free with daily limits in some cases (Peters 2011). *The New York Times* hopes to combine the revenue stream of advertising by gaining traffic from occasional visitors with the revenue stream of paid subscriptions.

The New York Times joined several newspapers charging for accessing their articles online, the most prominent of which is *The Wall Street Journal*, which has had paid online subscriptions for several years. Going from purely advertising-supported online media to a subscription model will undoubtedly have an impact on newspapers, their readers, and society. This article will examine the impact of different changes to online media business models as newspapers are trying to capture new revenue streams and offset falling advertising revenue due to the recent financial crisis and the move from print to online ads. It shows that the proposed changes would negatively affect the public domain. The examples contained in this essay focus on major US news publications, as they have been at the forefront of the attempt to monetise online news. The implications are likely to be the same if similar systems of monetisation would be instituted in other countries.

Despite the bleak economic outlook, news media are gaining consumers. According to Walter Isaacson, once CEO of CNN and managing editor of *Time*, newspapers are gaining readers, as "their content, as well as that of news magazines and other producers of traditional journalism, is more popular than ever – even (in fact, especially) among young people". A minority of these consumers pay for news, while the majority is getting its news online for free. In 2010, 57% of Americans visited at least one digital news source regularly. The Pew Research Centre found that the percentage of Americans consuming online news on three days or more rose from 29% in 2004 to 46% in 2010. Similar tendencies can be seen in other countries as people gain access to the internet and the price for printing rises. The recent financial crisis has further weakened the traditional print news business model of newsstand sales, subscriptions, and advertising. Newspapers and news magazines are now searching for new business models and hope to monetise their online presence through advertising and readers' fees.

In 2002, online media commentator Steve Outing outlined eight business models for online news: free ad-supported unlimited access without registration; free ad-supported unlimited access requiring registration; free ad-supported access with some paid content; free ad-supported unlimited access with possibility of paid ad-free access; paid subscription with limited free content without ads; paid subscription with limited free content with ads; free content for certain users along paid subscriptions; and paid subscriptions with regional partners creating a regional news monopoly. Outing's overview demonstrates that news media have online business models available to them. In general, these can be located in the fields of advertising, registration of users, cost of access, and market control through merging or co-operation of news organisations.

Advertising

Advertising is still considered the backbone of the business model. According to a 2004 study, nearly 90% of American news sites had at least one ad present, with an average of 5.03 ads found on a typical news homepage. This figure has likely increased and the pervasiveness of advertising can be seen on news sites worldwide. *The Times of India* website (http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com), the *Mail&Guardian*'s website (www.mg.co.za) and *Le Monde*'s website (www.lemonde.fr), all feature at least 10 advertisements ranging from graphic banner ads at the top of the page to sponsored links and simple text ads. Even the news sites, which demand a fee to read most of the content, often feature advertisements. *The Wall Street Journal*, for example, features at least five ads on its home page (www.wsj.com). New York Times Company, which owns *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, About.com, and other media entities, reports that digital advertising makes up 27% of overall advertising revenue.

By competing in the digital advertising market, news organisations are now competing with other corporations, such as YouTube, for traffic and advertisers. However, even YouTube fails to monetise traffic – despite its low production costs. Exact figures have not been released, but in 2008 worldwide ad revenues were forecasted to be about $200 million, far short of Google's expectations (McDonald 2009: 391). This situation has improved, as YouTube has been able to rid itself of the stigma of copyright infringement by striking deals with copyright holders. Analysts expect YouTube's ad revenue to surpass $1-billion in 2012.

For news media organisations, the challenges are similar. According to comScore, Newspaper National Network, which includes all major US newspaper companies, is able to reach 54.3% of American internet users. This is only slightly higher than YouTube's single website reach of 53.1% of US internet users. This is very different from digital advertising networks that have contracts with many websites across categories.

THE INTRODUCTION OF **PAYMENT FOR ONLINE NEWS HAS NOT ONLY** PUT **A PRICE TAG ON CONTENT** BUT ALSO **RESTRICTED** READERS' USE EVEN **AFTER THEY HAVE PAID.**

For example, BrightRoll Video Network has a potential reach of 99.2% of US users and TubeMogul Video Ad Platform has a potential reach of 97.2%. The reach of advertising on news sites is therefore relatively poor. This is especially important in light of the fact that newspapers in many cases had a quasi-monopoly in limited spaces, especially on local levels. Now, news media have to compete with a variety of offerings that are often able to capture more traffic, such as free email sites, search engines or social media sites.

Registration of users
An additional requirement by some news sites is user registration for accessing

articles or for using certain services, such as sending an article by email. On mg.co. za, users have to sign up to comment on articles, use advanced printing functionality, and save articles. Readers of nytimes. com have to register in order to see certain articles and to send articles by email. Since August 2010, the website has also offered users the chance to link their nytimes.com accounts with Facebook accounts to share *New York Times* articles with online friends. In March 2011, it also started to make personalised recommendations of links to other news stories designed to increase traffic and advertising revenue. The website collects information on each registered user and then publishes a personalised list of links to articles embedded on most of the pages they visit on nytimes.com as well as on a separate "Recommendations" site (www.nytimes.com/recommendations). Users therefore pay with personal data for

personalised services. Users do have a choice to opt out. Some scholars have called this a form of data extraction exploitation, as "this data is captured in order to be returned to its producers in the form of an external influence: the congealed result of their own activity used to channel their behavior and induce their desires" (Andrejevic 2009: 421).

The use of these algorithms might increase traffic on some news sites as people are offered more articles that are personalised for them; however, this might only be a short-term gain, as it is contrary to how news media have presented themselves in the past. "Feeding" users only a limited genre of articles based on past user behaviour is contrary to the choices print newspapers and early news websites have offered: *The New York Times*'s promise "All the news that's fit to print" turns into a user experience of "All the news that the algorithm predicted". Offering content only based on perceived value in traffic can hurt the quality of content. While traditional news sites have not yet succumbed to the allure of traffic alone, this has happened at other media sites, such as at the blog

network Gawker (McGrath 2010).

Furthermore, if newspapers behave more like social media sites by monetising the accumulation of personal data, they could tarnish their own reputation. News organisations build their brands on trust. Newspapers have spent decades trying to persuade readers that they are able to trust that the reported facts are true, that reporters do not have a personal gain in the stories they report, or that things will be uncovered even if it is against advertisers' interest. They still seem committed to these ideals, as the recent resignation of a Reuters journalist and internal review of two colleagues' behaviour has shown. They failed to disclose their financial interests in companies they covered: "While Reuters has uncovered no evidence that any of its employees benefited from improper trading in shares of companies they covered, not disclosing a financial conflict of interest is a violation of its ethics policy" (Peters 2010). While news media work to retain readers' trust by being open about their employees' dealings, they seem to be less open about
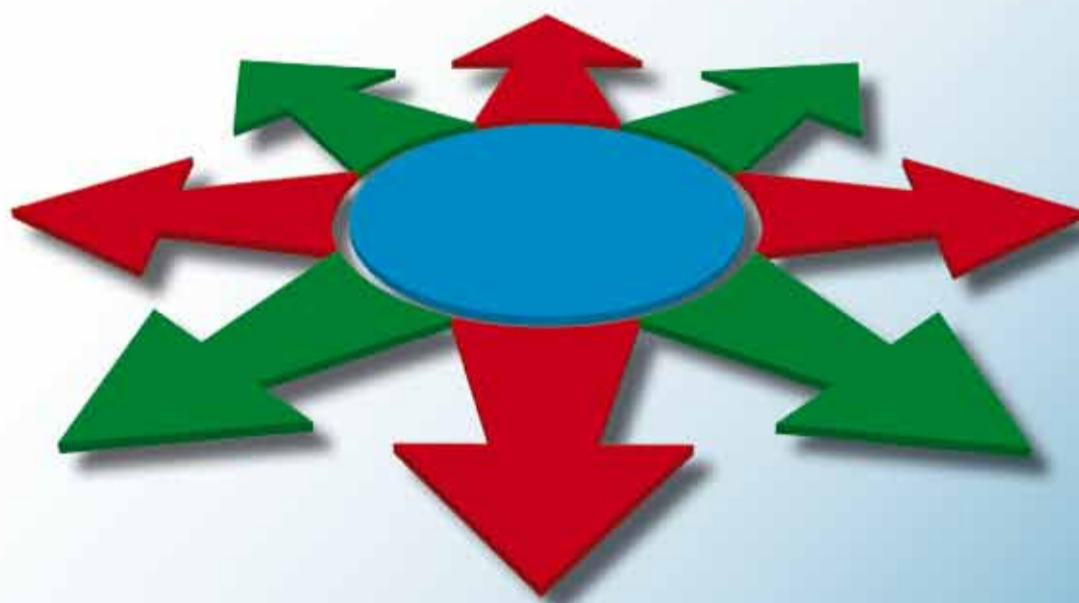
JOURNALISTS **RELY ON** THE **INFORMATION COMMONS** WHEN REPORTING – MAKING GOOD USE OF **FAIR DEALING EXCEPTIONS** IN COPYRIGHT LAW, FOR EXAMPLE. WHERE WOULD **PROPOSED RESTRICTIONS** ON ONLINE CONTENT **LEAVE THE INFORMATION COMMONS?**

the data collection on their websites. In fact, users do not have a chance to opt out of the data collection if they want full access to the site. According to its privacy policy, *The New York Times* restricts access to its website if users do not allow the use of cookies, which store user preferences on the browser and can be used by sites to aggregate typical user behaviour. Furthermore, *The New York Times* acknowledges, "we do not have access to, nor control over, advertisers' or service providers' cookies or how they may be used".

While these cookies do not include personally identifiable information, other services, especially social media sites, could technically use these cookies and link them to personally identifiable information. If news sites are unable to provide the trust they promise readers in the offline world, they could seriously compromise their brand. The threat of users leaving Facebook in light of privacy problems shows that users are concerned about what happens to their data. By mining user data much like social media would, news sites risk harming their brands just to gain more traffic. However, they seem to be enticed by the much higher prices advertisers are willing to pay. For example, Dow Jones indicated it was willing to introduce "behavioural targeting" as far back as 2005.

Cost of access
However, advertising, including targeted advertising, does not provide news media with enough revenue to sustain their cost structures. News organisations are increasingly trying to roll back free access to monetise on online traffic. *The Wall Street*

Journal has been at the forefront of charging for access and its executives believe that it is vital for all news organisations to charge for content. Other media providers in the entertainment realm have paralleled this trend by exploiting the online sale of video or audio content.

The introduction of payments for online news has not only put a price tag on content, but also restricted readers' use of content, even after they have paid. The subscriber agreement of *The Wall Street Journal*'s online payment scheme shows how the rules are much more restrictive than traditional copyright laws restricting the use of print media products: "Only one individual may access a service at the same time using the same user name or password, unless we agree otherwise". Clearly, this is very different from the ability of sharing information using print products. By restricting use of content even after users legally purchased it, news organisations are acting in a way James Boyle has described as the second enclosure movement. With the first enclosure movement describing the 15th to 19th century privatisation and commoditisation of commonly-owned agricultural land, the second enclosure movement relates to intellectual property today: "True, the new state-created property rights may be 'intellectual' rather than 'real', but once again things that were formerly thought of as common property, or as "uncommodifiable", or outside the market altogether, are being covered with new, or newly extended, property rights" (Boyle 2008: 45).

Commons enclosure can be seen in the entertainment industry with the legal challenges over sampling (Schumacher 1995) and in natural sciences through the use of synthetic biology (Boyle 2008: 171-178), for example. The introduction of pay systems in online news shows similar tendencies. Even though news organisations relied on monetising publicly available information, the nature of their print products ensured that the information would quickly enter the public domain. In the case of digital subscriptions, this

will likely not be the case anymore, as newspapers are trying to control the flow of information. Instead, the information will stay on the privately-controlled web sites of the news organisations and will not reach the public domain, as it does when news organisations release content on free sites or in print.

Market control
While most online news is still free, major companies are trying to team up and introduce paid models simultaneously to ensure that users have few options to migrate. US broadcasting networks were successful by co-operating and offering reruns of television shows on hulu.com – first free and then at a cost for some content once it has captured a significant audience (Hansel 2009). Rupert Murdoch's "Project Alesia" attempted to unite News Corp's content with other UK and US outlets (Andrews 2010). This project was put on hold recently. A similar initiative in the 1990s failed quickly. Norwegian rival newspapers covering news in the same area started to co-operate in 2002 and all charged users to access content using the same micro-payment system. Instead of competing in the market of information by offering a better product or cheaper access, it seems that many traditional news organisations are trying to use anti-competitive measures instead.

Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's propaganda model showed that mass media's ability to set the news agenda is influenced by commercial factors. The filtering of news is influenced by advertising as the primary source of income; the reliance on government and business experts for information; and concentration of ownership.

In his book *Communication Power*, Manuel Castells shows that within networked global communication, an ongoing concentration of media ownership can be observed in the vertical integration of media companies, as "media organisations are moving into the internet, while internet companies are creating partnerships with media organisations and investing in streaming video and audio functionality". So even within the decentralised online world, which has turned consumers into producers, news organisations are attempting to extend their influence.

Conclusion
News media's strategies to monetise their online content are built on the options of selling advertising; registering users (and mining data); charging for access; and controlling markets. As shown, all these options can have a negative outcome for users – such as restricting their usage of content or mandatory registration – and for news organisations because some strategies could tarnish their brands.

Each approach erodes public access to information. With higher barriers in place, only a privileged number of individuals would be able to access the information needed for them to make informed decisions about the common good. News media's role as the fourth estate in functional democracies would be undermined by exclusively commercial imperatives that potentially erode public trust in journalistic practice and create a walled garden.

Journalists rely on the information commons when reporting – making good use of fair dealing exceptions in copyright law, for example. Where would proposed restrictions on online content leave the information commons? Commons enclosure threatens trust in news media and threatens constitutionally-enshrined access to knowledge and free speech rights. From this perspective, state control of the media in the form of the Media Appeals Tribunal and the Protection of Information Bill are not the only nemeses of democracy.

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When
Anton Hammerl left for Libya at the end of March, he had a tiny budget and his cameras. He had contacted a few media organisations to say he was going and there was tacit agreement that they would use his work. But, essentially, he was on his own and the only person he was in regular contact with outside Libya was his wife, journalist Penny Sukhraj, who was on maternity leave after the birth of their then six-week-old baby.

That would have been fine if he got the shots he wanted, sold them to publications around the world and got home with a smile on his face, some published photographs and some money in his pocket.

But that didn't happen. Instead, Hammerl was gunned down by Muammar Gaddafi's forces just five days after he arrived and was left to die in the desert. The journalists he met there and travelled with were witness to his shooting and were then captured by the loyalists and held for six weeks. All the while, Hammerl's family and friends were led to believe the Libyan government had captured Hammerl and were holding him as well.

For six weeks, a small group – including his wife and a few other former colleagues and friends – did whatever we could to try and find him, free him and bring him home. As we were all journalists, we did what we do best and kept Hammerl's plight alive in the media. We also contacted people we knew in governments, and in human rights and journalist organisations around the world, asking for help. We contacted the United Nations, Reporters without Borders, the Red Cross and many others to see if they would help. Many offered to help and some went out of their way to do what they could.

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Unai Aranzadi

Anton Hammerl, above, was photographed in Libya by Unai Aranzadi. All the pictures in this section are Hammerl's, supplied by Africa Media Online.

But, there was no media organisation behind him and there was no powerful media mogul who could throw his or her weight around with the government. It was just this small group of journalists who were doing what we could but didn't really have any firm plan or strategy in place. There were times we believed that if our campaign was being run by a national media organisation, Hammerl would have contacted home and more information would have been disseminated about his whereabouts and situation.

Despite this, we gave our all because we had a real sense that the campaign wouldn't last long before Hammerl would be able to go home to his family. We held protests, vigils, sent letters to the South African president and numerous other powerful people, and we wrote copious press releases.

After the fifth week of no news about Hammerl, we asked members of South African National Editors' Forum (Sanef) to arrange a meeting with the Minister of International Relations and Co-operation to find out what the government was really doing about Hammerl's situation.

It was clear that once Sanef was involved and making waves, the South African government wanted to prove it was doing something and was concerned about its seeming inaction with regard to Hammerl.

But the night before the scheduled meeting – which had already been postponed a week – the journalists who were in captivity in Libya were released.

And then the truth came out…

The next day, Sanef still met with the minister who was hopelessly apologetic and blamed the Libyans for lying. The minister was concerned about the potential bad publicity and power behind Sanef.

Had there been a huge media organisation behind Hammerl all along, would we have known the truth earlier? It wouldn't have

saved him, that much we know. But it certainly would have put more pressure on our government to act faster and sooner. It would have alleviated the pressure on this tiny group to make things happen. It would have given Sukhraj a sense of not being alone in this fight.

So, if there is one thing we have learnt in this horrendous situation it is: there needs to be an organisation set up to safeguard and protect freelancers in conflict areas – whether this is in a protest in downtown Johannesburg or the deserts in Libya.

In less than six months after October 2010, South African conflict photographer Joao Silva was severely wounded when he was blown up in a landmine in Afghanistan, South African CNN television reporter Lara Logan was sexually assaulted in the Cairo uprising and Hammerl was killed. Logan was working for CNN and they did what they needed to in order to help her. Silva was a freelancer on assignment for *The New York Times*. The newspaper immediately put him on staff so they could provide the necessary medical and financial help he needed. But Hammerl did not have this.

With newspaper and magazine budgets being cut more and more, they are not sending their own staff to countries in conflict and are relying on freelancers like Hammerl who are willing to take the risk. So, the South African media needs to look after their freelancers so that they are not alone.

We need to make sure that they are trained (as far as possible) to deal with the situations they encounter. We need to ensure there are funds to help them if they are in difficult situations and we need to have funds to help their families do what it takes to get them out, if need be. There are such organisations around the world but not here.

So, there is now a drive to set up the Anton Hammerl Foundation and Trust. The initial idea is that it will provide support for South African freelancers covering conflict. Discussions around this are in their infancy but if anyone is interested in helping with this project, email me on peta@mediak.co.za

AN INTERVENTION BY MILLIONS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

FOUR OVERLAPPING factors are driving the New Arab Revolution which began this year in Tunisia with the toppling of the dictator Ben Ali, which has reached its most advanced form in Egypt and which is now affecting all of the Arab world, though at varying levels of intensity.

The first and most obvious factor is the widespread demand for democracy. The second is the revulsion at the extreme gaps between rich and poor, provoking fury at what is seen as the unashamed looting by Arab dictators of the peoples' wealth. The third factor is a revival of Pan Arabism, a sense that the Arab world shares a common destiny thwarted by Western domination in the last century. This is exacerbated by what is perceived as the imposition of an aggressively expansionist racist European Jewish colony in Palestine, at the heart of the Arab world.

The final factor is, in many ways, the most important: the intervention by millions of ordinary people changing and creating events from below. It is this factor which justifies the description "revolution", and which may be compared to the great revolutions and revolutionary periods of the 1640s, 1790s, 1848, 1917 and 1968.

But why now? Interestingly, so extreme were the conditions, that the revolt in Egypt – and for the sake of simplicity and brevity, but also because of its centrality and importance, this article will focus exclusively on Egypt – was predicted with astonishing accuracy in essays in *Egypt: The Moment of Change* (Zed Books 2009) written by Egyptian activists (and their UK supporters) – all of whom would take part in the Tahrir Square demonstrations. But there is in addition what we might call in Marxist parlance "a detonating contradiction" – the particular spark of the global economic crisis of 2008 that set alight the rotting economic and political infrastructure.

Many mainstream commentators are noting the impact of the failed Western economic model of neo-liberalism. Thus *The New York Times:* "On paper, the changes transformed an almost entirely state-controlled economic system to a predominantly free-market one. In practice, though, a form of crony capitalism emerged, according to Egyptian and foreign experts. State-controlled banks acted as kingmakers, extending loans to families who supported the government but denying credit to viable business people who lacked the right political pedigree."

Or as the Arab writer Larbi Sadiki has put it: "It is not the Quran or Sayyid Qutb [the Muslim Brotherhood leader who is in absentia charged with perpetrating 9/11 despite being dead since 1966] Western security experts should worry about. They should perhaps purchase *Das Kapital* and bond with Karl Marx to get a reality check, a rethink, a dose of sobriety in a post-9/11 world afflicted by over-securitisation."

From Tunisia and Algeria in the Maghreb to Jordan and Egypt in the Arab east, the real terror that eats at self-worth, sabotages community and communal rites of passage, including marriage, is the terror of socio-economic marginalisation.

The armies of "khobzistes" (the unemployed of the Maghreb) now marching for bread in the streets and slums of Algiers and Kasserine and who tomorrow may be in Amman, Rabat, San'aa, Ramallah, Cairo and southern Beirut, are not fighting the terror of unemployment with ideology. They do not need one. Unemployment is their ideology. The periphery is their geography. And for now, spontaneous peaceful protest and self-harm is their weaponry. They are "les misérables" of the modern world.

Western security experts worry about the centrality of Egypt in the fast evolving drama, not least because of Egypt's role in propping up the US-Israel strategic alliance in the region. Thus George Friedman, founder of the American "strategic intelligence" website Stratfor: "Egypt is one of those countries whose internal politics matter to more than its own citizens."

This remark echoes a key theme in *Egypt: The Moment for Change* (edited by Rabab el Mahdi and Philip Marfleet) which showed how Egypt under Sadat and Mubarak became, along with Israel and Saudi Arabia, the basis of the system of alliances through which the

Anton Hammerl/Africa Media Online

US has maintained its hegemony over the Middle East. The Mubarak regime proved its value to Washington in many ways: helping to orchestrate the alliance against Saddam Hussein in the 1991 Gulf War; intelligence co-operation against the Islamists (Wikileaks cables reveal how highly the US embassy in Cairo valued Omar Suleiman, Mubarak's intelligence chief and short-lived vice-president); renditions for torture in Egypt's prisons; and maintaining the blockade on Gaza. In exchange, the Egyptian armed forces that remained the basis of the regime received their annual "strategic rent" of $1.3 billion in US military aid.

We might agree that this is a revolution, but what kind of revolution? Can the great Marxist revolutionaries of the past help us here? In his *History of the Russian Revolution*, revolutionary leader Leon Trotsky wrote: "History has known… not only social revolutions, which substituted the bourgeois for the feudal regime, but also political revolutions which, without destroying the economic foundations of society, swept out an old ruling upper crust" (1830 and 1848 in France, February 1917 in Russia).

What we have seen so far in the Arab world are political, not social, revolutions which have so far succeeded in removing rulers rather than their regimes.

But Trotsky also noted: "The masses go into a revolution not with a prepared plan of social reconstruction, but with a sharp feeling that they cannot endure the old regime… The fundamental political process of the revolution thus consists in the gradual comprehension by a class of the problems arising from the social crisis – the active orientation of the masses by a method of successive approximations."

Trotsky here highlights a key feature of revolutions: that while they revolve around decisive episodes where control over state power is settled, they are *processes* that unfold in time. The great French revolution lasted over five years. The failed German revolution, its failure symbolised by the assassination of the great revolutionary leader, Rosa Luxembourg, nevertheless lasted five years from 1918 to 1923.

The different phases of these processes, with their advances and retreats, victories and defeats for the forces of revolution and counter-revolution, and for left and right within the revolutionary camp, represent a learning process for the masses. The "successive approximations" onto which they latch in pursuit of a solution to their problems can lead to the progressive radicalisation of the masses and a decisive transfer of political power that

inaugurates a social revolution.

But there is nothing inevitable about this outcome. The closest equivalent to such a process in the Arab world, the Iraqi Revolution of 1958-63, started with the overthrow of the monarchy by nationalist army officers led by General Abd al-Karim Qasim, but, very differently from Egypt in 1952, gave rise to a massive popular radicalisation that mainly benefited the Communist Party, which won considerable support within the army itself.

But in May 1959 the party leadership backed away from making a bid for power, in part because of pressure

But it's the mediating structures which are going to be decisive. Most obviously the way in which a version of parliamentary democracy will be installed to protect the existing economic power structure – albeit with some cosmetic changes. As this aspect of the process develops the role of the Muslim Brotherhood is going to be crucial.

Despite being the object of so much Islamophobic speculation in the West, the Brotherhood is in fact a highly ambiguous and heterogeneous formation that has taken a number of different forms: the mass anti-colonial movement of the 1940s and 1950s was crushed by Nasser,

undoubtedly many workers have supported it in recent years as the most powerful opposition force.

In fact the Brotherhood's support for the regime trying to crack down on strikes, which, incidentally, precipitated the final overthrow of Mubarak, has limited its influence in the new and fast-developing independent trade union movement. It is here that the potential leadership and organising centre for renewed social revolution will be found. But it is far too early to speculate about the future of the Democratic Workers Party, founded by revolutionary socialists and one of several leftist parties now organising openly, rooted amongst the new rank and file worker activists.

However if they help Egyptian workers develop a clear political voice of their own, then dramatically greater revolutionary possibilities open up. Democracy may be the main slogan of the revolution, but equality is the implicit demand of the strike movement with a potentially massive audience across Egyptian society – and indeed the rest of the Arab world.

UNEMPLOYMENT IS THEIR IDEOLOGY. THE PERIPHERY IS THEIR GEOGRAPHY.

from Moscow, which regarded Qasim, like Nasser, as an ally in the Cold War. The resulting demobilisation and fragmentation gave the initiative to the Ba'ath, which staged a coup with CIA support in February 1963 that toppled Qasim and subjected the Communists themselves to bloody repression and inaugurated the dictatorship of Saddam Hussein.

The interim military government in Egypt, and indeed their would-be duplicitous US backers as they struggle to keep up with the pace of events, is desperate to avoid a continuing social revolution. We have already witnessed their willingness to employ the same repressive methods of Mubarak but alongside a much greater determination to develop what we might call "mediating structures".

Since Mubarak fell, the army has continued quietly arresting and torturing activists, some of whom have been given five-year prison sentences by military courts. Attacks by gangs of thugs on women demonstrators on International Women's Day (8 March) and simultaneously on members of the Coptic Christian minority in Muqattan, north Cairo, were interpreted by some activists as pro-Mubarak forces in the military hitting back.

but the Brotherhood has revived since the 1980s as what Sameh Naguib in *Egypt: The Moment of Change* describes as a "populist political force", building up the strong base in the universities and professional syndicates and in poor neighbourhoods that allowed it to win nearly 20% of the seats in the relatively open parliamentary election of 2005. The Brotherhood's revival took place, incidentally, at the same time as the regime's murderously successful campaign to crush the armed jihadist groups, elements of which went on to help form al-Qaeda.

The Brotherhood's solidly pro-business leadership has been divided between advocates of the alliances with more secular opposition forces that saw it cooperate with Nasserites and revolutionary socialists in the Cairo conferences against occupation and imperialism and support the *Kifaya* democracy movement in the middle of the last decade and political quietists favouring an accommodation with the regime. The latter were in the ascendant before the 25 January Revolution, but this did not prevent Brotherhood activists joining the rising. That pro business character of the Brotherhood meant that it has taken an ambivalent attitude towards the strike wave. But

That desperately impoverished Tunisian street trader who set himself alight was both spark *and symbol* of a revolution disgusted at the avarice and greed of the corrupt Western-backed wealthy elites. The Egyptian workers' insistence on trying to evict the "little Mubarak" bullying managers and bosses and their demands for a maximum as well as a minimum wage cannot be dismissed so easily as the narrow interests of a particular segment of society. Such demands clearly have universal appeal.

The politics of demands for equality in the Arab revolutionary movement has yet to translate as demands for a socialist alternative to capitalism. That is understandable given the deadweight of memory of the failure of the Russian Revolution and the Stalinist dictatorship that replaced it. But providing the mass mobilisation intensifies, sooner or later that debate will surface.

This article is based on an adaptation of an essay by Alex Callinicos, Professor of European Studies at Kings College, University of London, "The Return of the Arab Revolution" in International Socialism Journal *130, Spring 2011. http://www.isj.org.uk/index.php4?id=717&issue=130*

Anton Hammerl/Africa Media Online

TECHNOSOCIALITY:
WHEN TECHNOLOGY MEETS
SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

BY **NARNIA BOHLER-MULLER** AND **CHARL VAN DER MERWE**

THE 2010/2011 REVOLUTIONS in Tunisia and Egypt were largely organised, supported and driven through the use of social media-based tools like Facebook, Twitter and mobile phone technology which allowed for extensive political expression against government corruption both on- and offline. Calls for socio-political transformation heard on the streets of Tunis and Cairo were echoed around the globe, gaining much sympathetic support internationally. The recent events in North Africa may be a sign of things to come for the rest of the continent as technology continues to reach more Africans. Narnia Bohler-Muller and Charl van der Merwe argue that the use of social media tools has high potential for bringing about political and social change throughout the continent as their use enhances opportunities for political participation and opens new spaces for active citizenship.

"The day of the revolution against torture, poverty, corruption and unemployment" was the name given to an online event created on the social networking site Facebook, and scheduled for 25 January 2011, to express solidarity with the emerging socio-political protests in Egypt.

The uprising against Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian ruler of 30 years' standing, and his government manifested in large-scale public demonstrations in Egypt's two largest cities, Cairo and Alexandria, that actively lasted for 18 days. As result of these prolonged but largely peaceful public demonstrations, Hosni Mubarak officially resigned as president of Egypt on 11 February 2011.

What was remarkable about this protest – following the trends established in Tunisia's "Jasmine Revolution" – was that it was organised and supported to a large extent by the use of social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter as communication tools: more than 80 000 people online joined the Facebook "event" in support of the Egyptian revolution.

Another example of social media-based action that contributed to public awareness in Egypt about dissatisfaction with the Mubarak regime was a Facebook page, titled "We are all Khaled Said". The page was dedicated to the memory of Said who was beaten to death by police in the city of Alexandria for wanting to expose government corruption. Using dramatic photographs of unrest in the city, posters were also created online to advertise the planned protests of Friday 28 January 2011,

Another interesting dimension of the North African socio-political activism is the role played by mobile phone and internet usage via mobile phones. On the African continent, mobile phone usage is expanding rapidly. According to the United Nations' *Africa Renewal* magazine, Africa today has more than 400 million mobile phone subscribers.

According to Essoungou (2010) there is massive interest in the use of mobile phones and social media in Africa. Facebook is the most visited website by internet users on the African continent, and 17 million people on the continent currently use Facebook. This may appear to be a small percentage, considering that the population of Africa stands at just over one billion, but it depicts an increase of seven million from 2009.

There are, however, still many constraints and challenges in Africa regarding access to

mobile phone technology and internet connectivity. Africa remains the continent with the lowest internet penetration rate with about 100 million users, or one out of every 10 on the continent being connected to and using the internet.

Erik Hersman, prominent social media blogger and an entrepreneur who has helped to drive the development of an internet platform called *Ushahidi*, notes that: "…with mobile phone penetration already high across the continent, and as we get to critical mass with Internet usage in some of Africa's leading countries (Kenya, South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria, Egypt) … a seismic shift will happen with services, products and information" (quoted by Essoungou).

The first revolution of this century began in Tunisia, North Africa. Alex Howard, a technology reporter, writes about the reflections of Rim Nour, a young Tunisian online activist (or "hacktivist") who participated in the Jasmine Revolution that began in earnest when a fruit vendor, Mohamed Bouazizi, set himself ablaze in response to police cruelty.

Although the role of Wikileaks has been speculated upon (the protests in Tunisia began shortly after the release of the "Palestine Papers" by Al Jazeera), according to Nour, the 2010 Tunisian revolution was not a Wikileaks or Facebook or Twitter revolution but an uprising fundamentally powered by people and the socio-political and economic conditions of their lives.

The people of Tunisia chose to protest against government corruption and unemployment with communication tools that were mostly web-based or mobile phone related. Consequently, the online and offline worlds interacted with one another in unprecedented ways (many expert observers have commented on the decline of the distinctions between "cyberspace" and the material world, see Howard 2011).

The online world played an active role in fuelling the struggle, and camera phones and other mobile devices kept communication open and accessible. As Bryce Roberts has observed, "mobile devices are the Gutenberg presses of our generation" (quoted by Howard 2011).

Besides the internet and mobile revolutions, Nour also emphasises the role of Al Jazeera, which has played a galvanising role in most of the Arab protests. The livestream AlJazeera.net creates awareness and allows a global audience to experience to some extent what is happening far from their own homes.

Nour highlights four roles that social media played in the Tunisian revolution: grassroots mobilisation, the role of organising the rise of civil society and active citizenship, the role of being a counter-rumour of propaganda tool, and the role of helping people to analyse statements released by government (in Howard 2011).

Nour concludes that the Tunisian revolution would have happened without social media intervention, but "it wouldn't have happened as fast".

The Tahrir Square protests: a marriage of technology and social behaviour

Regarding events in Cairo that were instigated by the Tunisian uprising, once again it was access to social media and mobile technology, as well as the coverage and interventions of Al Jazeera, that assisted in fuelling public protests against Mubarak and his government.

In an interview, journalism professor Claudette Artwick, who conducts ongoing research on the impact of social media, discusses the recent events in Egypt. According to Artwick it was the marriage of technology and social behaviour that played a big role in the revolution. She has named this phenomenon "technosociality" (in Howard 2011).

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This relationship could be seen at many levels, including people organising protests, media coverage of the story, and government reacting to the uprising with attempts at controlling traditional and social media.

Google executive Wael Ghonim has been credited for initiating the Egyptian revolution on Facebook. He started a page in June 2010 mourning Khaled Said's death. Said was reportedly pulled out of an internet café by plainclothes police and beaten to death because he had obtained evidence of police corruption. People were outraged, and Ghonim's Facebook page, as well as several others, provided a community space or platform where people could call attention to government abuses.

The day Mubarak resigned, Ghonim tweeted, "Please don't make me the face of this revolution. It's not true as every Egyptian was the face of this revolution."

Analysing the use of social media in the Egyptian revolution, Artwick emphasises many of the same points as Nour does on Tunisia.

First, journalists used Twitter to report on the ground in Egypt by posting their direct observations in real time. They also uploaded links to their stories, photos, videos, or blogs. For instance, Nicholas D Kristof, a reporter for *The New York Times*, has a popular Facebook page and is currently posting and tweeting from Libya.

Second, Al Jazeera played a leading role by tweeting and posting links to photos and video that was then also used by other mainstream news sources.

Third, the Egyptian people themselves contributed to the news. Their tweets were picked up by journalists and bloggers and re-tweeted by them. This appears to have marked the emergence of a new form of reporting, referred to on CNN as "I-Reports", which is seen as a form of public or popular journalism.

This allows people to contribute to the news with pictures, videos and commentary from any breaking news stories around the globe. When Mubarak tried to control the open flow of online and mobile information by blocking Twitter and Facebook, people managed to access the services through their mobile phones and turned to third-party applications like Hootsuite and TweetDeck to tweet.

When the government seized video cameras, reporters and protesters used applications (apps) on their mobile phones to record audio and post it to Twitter. *The New York Times* transmitted video through satellite devices and Google created the Speak to Tweet service.

It was apparent that it was near impossible to stall the flow of information both in Egypt and beyond, although Mubarak did use national television as a propaganda tool. But the socio-political movement had gained too much momentum.

As the social, political and technological environment has developed, some have already begun to explore new opportunities for digital activism. Part of this activism is a trend of protecting freedoms on the internet by, for instance, the group Anonymous that have referred to their interventions as "new activism" in the sense that revolutions can now be broadcast and as such the protests will spread to other countries where government oppression and corruption has taken its toll.

Some have argued that this type of new activism will spread across the African continent, mentioning Mugabe's reign of 30 years and the volatile service protests in South Africa as candidates.

The scenarios sketched above are not based on a naive attitude of cyber-utopianism, where the internet equals democracy, but are examples used to illustrate the developing potential of technology to influence the socio-political climate across the continent.

"The political power of social media"

Clay Shirky, in an article with the above title that appeared in *Foreign Affairs,* refers to a number of countries and world regions where social mass media have been used in the past 10 years to trigger and initiate changes in the governments and societies of those countries. These are all examples of the positive impact of social media on such events.

From an analysis of the events in North Africa over the past months, it is clear that social media here also had an important role to play. However, Shirky also raises two arguments against the idea that social media can make a difference in the national politics of a state.

The first is the fact that the tools themselves are actually ineffective, a critique which has been mostly used by Malcolm Gladwell in *The New Yorker* on the grounds that such actions cannot bring about any useful action when casual participants such as large-scale social protests seek social change through low-cost activities such as joining a particular Facebook group like the "Save Darfur" group.

Shirky says that even though this critique is correct, it is not central to the question of the power of social media. The fact that actors who are barely committed and who just join Facebook groups and make comments online does not mean that actors who are very committed cannot use social media affectively to influence socio-political change.

The second argument is that these tools can produce as much harm to any process of democratisation as they can produce good. This has to do with the fact that the state is gaining increasingly sophisticated and more technologically advanced means of monitoring and interdicting social media tools. Authoritarian states are increasingly shutting down communications networks and grids in their countries to deny dissidents the opportunity and resources to co-ordinate and broadcast documentation of any event in real time.

It is thus necessary to point out that social media tools can and will be used as tools of state oppression. However, the success of social networking in providing momentum and support to the popular uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt cannot be denied.

Conclusion: social media on the African continent

Historically, revolutionary movements began with people gathering together in the marketplace or town hall to discuss their common grievances. There have been spaces such as these in almost every society throughout history with the atmosphere at the market being politically effective, as in 18th century Paris. At the moment, social media partly play the role of this public space by facilitating social interaction, information sharing, and fast and easy communication.

The organisers of protests demanding democratisation and socio-economic change in the modern context play a similar role to those of French, Russian and Chinese activists who met publicly and in secret to organise protests against state oppression and corruption. It is significant that both Tunisia and Egypt have been referred to as "leaderless" revolutions. The success of the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt teaches us that the youth are globally connected and see democracy as part of their identity as people deserving a say in government. This is significant as it raises the potential for developing a more "direct" form of participative democracy, with many more voices joining in "real world" and online socio-political activism.

The African Union (AU) declared 2011 the year of "Shared Values". This is a discussion that needs to filter down to member states. Governments must engage their people on issues of good governance and democracy, or other African leaders may face the same fate as their compatriots in North Africa. The tide of popular expression is rising and resonating across the continent.

In South Africa, recent attempts at creating a government framework in the form of a tribunal to regulate the press and to ensure "ethical reporting" do not take into account the fact that a new form of journalism has emerged. Based on lessons we are learning as we write, the suppression of information, communication, knowledge-sharing and experience-sharing is becoming more difficult.

In fact, reactions against regulation and censorship have become quite radical in nature. Every conventional newspaper and news broadcaster could be controlled or censored or shut down totally, and the internet could be interfered with, but online and mobile communications will continue to spread. Social media activists, bloggers, tweeters and speak-to-tweeters keep the world updated even if the television cameras have been switched off.

Through the use of internet technology, organisations such as Anonymous will continue to protect the freedom of those who speak out against oppression and corruption.

In essence, the over-regulation of the right to freedom of expression and association cannot achieve its ends in the context of connected societies where ordinary citizens – most of them young – cannot easily be manipulated or controlled.

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This is an edited version of an article which first appeared in Policybrief, the Africa Institute of South Africa Briefing no 46 March 2011, and is used here with permission. See http://www.ai.org.za/media/publications/Policy%20Brief/AISA%20Policy%20Brief%2046.pdf for the full version.

PRO AND ANTI JOURNALISM IN YEMEN

BY YAZEED KAMALDIEN

Overwhelming shock – that's what I felt upon entering Yemen's media landscape in November last year to edit a publication that claims to be among the country's scarce "independent" newspapers.

In reality, there is no independent media in Yemen. Its political landscape has not allowed for much critical debate or dissent under the leadership of President Ali Abdullah Saleh who has been in power since 1978.

Based on first-hand experience, journalists in Yemen fall into two categories: pro- or anti-government. There is very little middle ground for a conversation between the two ideologies.

When an anti-government uprising started in Yemen in mid-January – as part of a regional wave to oust long-standing Arab leaders – a more assertive media appeared. Voices were projecting strongly their support for either opposition or government leaders.

By the end of January I ended my short-term contract with the "independent" newspaper and was offered a job to work on a newspaper that was taking less political risks. Its editorial red line was to avoid publishing reports that criticised President Saleh. It wanted to avoid run-ins with the government but failed to adequately serve its reading public.

Both newsrooms gave me insight into the ongoing media wars. I had maintained contact with journalists from the "independent" newspaper while editing at the low-risk newspaper. Journalists at the "independent" newspaper could condemn the Yemeni government more openly for its shortcomings – of which there are many. Its reporters also give prominence to opposition party leaders and seldom obtain comment from government sources. Their assumption was often: "The government won't speak to us."

Stranger still was discovering that foreign reporters – very often inexperienced and with no formal journalism ethical or academic background – had also taken on the role of activist-journalists in some cases. One scene in particular reminds me of the faults of assigning foreign correspondents with no experience but who merely get lucky because they are in the right place at the right time.

Yemen was not issuing journalist visas to foreign correspondents who wanted to enter the country to report on the anti-government uprisings. In the local newsrooms were inexperienced journalists who had contacts with media in their countries, including England and the United States, and they were ready to offer black-and-white news reports devoid of the complexities of the socio-political situation.

One of the younger foreign reporters – a fresh Middle Eastern studies graduate on a first job – often exclaimed slogans in the "independent" newspaper's newsroom that President Saleh should step down.

This reporter ended up working for major English language news outlets, ran with the rumour mill and this resulted in unchecked and unbalanced reporting. It was always bad government versus good opposition. As if opposition politicians were even clean to begin with. Yemen is complex, politicians are imperfect everywhere.

It was strange to see the "independent" newsroom's journalists so fiercely hateful of their government while seeing no problem with supporting opposition politicians. I wondered when the rule to keep politicians at arm's length became applicable only to government officials. The result of course was unbalanced reporting.

Unfair reporting was also perpetuated at the newspaper that was more supportive of President Saleh. The government voice was always given prominence, especially on the front page. Ironically, most of the journalists at this newspaper wanted regime change and also hoped for an end to government corruption but they could not publish those sentiments. They needed their small salaries to keep life going.

They resorted though to blogging and writing on social media websites about how aggrieved they really felt about the political and resultant socio-economic instability.

This was pure activism as opposed to fair and balanced journalism. That's acceptable though as they were not writing in their capacity as journalists but more as concerned citizens with an opinion and a platform. Their reporting on the situation for foreign media also reflected a less inhibited voice.

Overall, there was very little shift in the manner in which pro- and anti-government media reported on the political turmoil and tension as it progressed. Propaganda wars continued as usual. This is a direct consequence of the hostility towards any form of political dissent in Yemen. Everyone knows the team they're on and they keep it that way.

In the early days of the protests, most work environments were less prone to political debates. But as the economy pushed people out of work, those who were still at work became more vocal about their stand.

At this stage I was at the pro-government newspaper and journalists who did not support the government were regularly attending anti-government rallies. They also started ensuring that opposition voices were reported. I found that they had become braver but still knew that they should not cross a certain red line. President Saleh would not be criticised.

I also participated in a two-week United Nations Development Programme workshop for Yemeni media leaders during my time in the country. Insight gained about Yemen's media – via conversations and debates – was worrying. It signalled that journalism as we would like to have it in more outspoken parts of the world is non-existent in Yemen.

Yes, the country's media is more free compared to other Arab countries where independent journalism gets a much tougher time. Sure, in Yemen there are anti-government newspapers but censorship shuts many of these down. Journalists have also not been faced with extreme attacks as in Libya and Syria during the wave of uprisings.

Yemen's media landscape, along with its political mess, needs an overhaul if it is to be anywhere near international journalistic standards. I had long given up on the idea of unbiased journalism in general because we all know that bias creeps into our work from the moment we draw up our news diary.

Our world view and by default our reporting is not going to be untainted by what we have read, heard or observed in our realities. So I used the term "neutral journalism" to try to get across the concept to my colleagues at both newspapers. I used to change headlines, introductions, and even whole stories because they were not "neutral and we could be accused of being biased". I won small battles. The big fight to save professional journalism from its inexistence in Yemen continues.

Anton Hammerl/Africa Media Online

BY **MELISSA ULBRICHT**

AL JAZEERA'S CURIOUS EXPERIMENTAL APPROACH

LET'S PUT ASIDE THE **SILLY DEBATE** ABOUT WHETHER TWITTER **CAUSED REVOLUTION** AND **LOOK** INSTEAD AT HOW IT HELPED **TELL THE STORY.**

Recent events in Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya have been on the minds – and on the screens – of people around the world. News organisations are covering the events in innovative ways, and people have noticed. More generally, the role of social media itself in protests and revolutions is also being debated. But, as Charlie Beckett writes on his blog, let's "put aside the silly debate about whether Twitter 'caused' revolution and look instead at how it helped tell the story". Twitter is just one platform being used to help tell the story, as we see from Al Jazeera, one of the most innovative newsrooms in the mix.

Melissa Ulbricht spoke with **Riyaad Minty,** head of social media for **Al Jazeera Network**, and **Safdar Mustafa**, who heads up the mobile media unit, to learn more.

Al Jazeera takes a multi-platform approach to coverage and incorporates live blogs, Flickr pages and audio reports, Twitter, Facebook, and Youtube. (During the Egyptian protests, the online live stream was one of the most popular items on the website and web traffic grew by 2500% during this time.) For the audio reports, Al Jazeera uses Audioboo, a mobile and web platform, to record, listen and share audio content. In Egypt, for example, Al Jazeera used Skype to call individuals, recorded the conversation using Call Recorder software, and posted it online via Audioboo.

The Al Jazeera web team also uses Scribble Live, a content delivery platform for posting and editing real-time, user-generated content. This way, people could call in audio reports, even if they were on the move. "This proved very handy in Egypt when people were getting attacked. They were able to just dial a number, record the report, and this would be posted online," Minty said. The report would be reposted on Audioboo and embedded on the Al Jazeera website or shared on TV.

Al Jazeera is often seen as a leader in media innovation. So how did it get there? "There is no checklist," Minty said. But part of the answer lies in a curious, experimental approach. "One of the things about innovation is being flexible and agile," Minty said. His team is constantly looking for the newest tools available. Knowing how to stay connected, regardless of conditions on the ground, is critical.

The team at Al Jazeera knows how to work in any number of conditions, in what Minty calls different "phases" of connectivity within a region. At one end, there is full connectivity to the internet and mobile networks; limited connectivity, and no connectivity, Minty said. "We outline these three and try to find the best tools for each scenario."

In volatile environments like Egypt during mass protests, in Tunisia, and now in Libya, equipment is key for correspondents and citizen reporters, especially discreet equipment like mobiles and smaller satellite equipment. Mustafa notes: "If there is a communication blackout, you need to know how you can connect a satellite to a mobile phone, because these are often the only things you may have with you." In such an environment, a news organisation may need to readjust its approach quickly.

"That's the basis I've been working under – what is the minimum amount of equipment here, and what can we do?" Mustafa said.

Preparation is key. Based on previous experiences, Minty said, he realised that the first thing that often gets disrupted during volatile events is the internet, and with it, access to online media. When this happens, a good back-up plan is necessary to ensure that events are covered.

One of the first steps is to identify key people on the ground before (and often, as) things are happening. "We were able to get phone numbers and establish a network of bloggers on the ground that we could connect with directly," Minty said. "So when and if the internet is down, Al Jazeera can use these phone numbers and contacts to call and get firsthand reports."

While it is difficult to predict what news gathering tools or platforms will be the most popular on a given day or at a particular scene, it is possible to be prepared.

Al Jazeera tests various tools at its newsroom headquarters in Doha, Qatar. So, once they are out in the field and "things start happening", the team and the correspondents have a good understanding of how the tools and platforms can be used.

"But things change quickly, so sometimes it's just hacking things together that makes the most sense," Minty said. For example, calling people in Egypt to record audio reports via Skype and on Audioboo wasn't something the team tested in Doha. Rather, faced with the internet blackout in Egypt, Al Jazeera suddenly found it needed to call people for updates. The team put the Call Recorder-Skype-Audioboo process together on the fly.

The environment in which you are reporting is key. Mustafa said that in new platform or tool trials, adoption is slow. "But when a war breaks out or there is mass protest, people really want a way to get information to us. Then, suddenly, the project takes off." Put lightly, there are often "a lot of half-baked projects in which you think, let's see if this flies," Mustafa said. "Some of them don't, and some of them really take off."

Or, "incredibly important", in Minty's words. In fact, Minty does not even consider citizen media through social channels new media; it is simply media at this point.

Al Jazeera has been a key leader in the use of citizen media, before events in Egypt and North Africa, and they have learned some things along the way. The first is quite obvious:

citizen reports can augment traditional news gathering when professional correspondents can't get to the story or the sources.

In Tunisia, for example, Al Jazeera was banned and had no correspondents on the ground. During the early days of the revolt, the majority of content was coming through social networks and social media, Minty said. The newsroom would repost and rebroadcast much of this citizen content.

It was different in Egypt, where Al Jazeera had camera crews on the ground. It was able to track, in real time, what was happening with the protests. "I think what a lot of people found useful from us was the live shots we had of Tahrir Square," Minty said. "But where we wouldn't go live we had a lot of citizen media reports coming out."

Another key lesson from Al Jazeera is using social media to not only glean and augment traditional media content, but to push content to the public. The team learned from covering the Gaza War that "when we weren't getting a lot of citizen media, we could take our images and video and use social media or digital media to redistribute it online so the world could see it," Minty said. "It's taking our content and pushing it out."

On the English channel, Al Jazeera has a citizen media platform called Your Media; in Arabic, it's called Sharek. The citizen media sites ask people who have witnessed or been involved in a news story to submit contributions. Citizens can send pictures and video via email or using a form at the Your Media/Sharek sites.

Minty said: "There is always verification. There is a lot of noise that happens out there."

So, how to do this? "In a lot of countries, we try to identify people beforehand. We get phone numbers and location verification of people we could trust," Minty said. "We started building a database of people we could follow." One way to do this is to search for people in a region who are already posting online content. A key lesson here is timing: these trusted relationships need to be established early on, before any potential internet or communication blackout within a region.

For content that is submitted via email or on Your Media or Sharek, Al Jazeera tries to get in touch with the citizen journalist. "We try to get a phone number, an email address, to get direct contact with them to have a discussion to see where the information came from and when it was recorded," Minty said.

Verification of time is important with citizen media reports. "What we see a lot of the time is content that might have been recorded three or four days ago but it gets uploaded today," Minty said. "So it's not relevant to today's breaking news but it can add more information or context." Content of this nature is put in context, and includes information on "where we received it, how we received it, and the date we believe it was taken".

At Al Jazeera, Mustafa looks at mobiles from two perspectives. The first is equipping correspondents with the right mobile tools, especially when it becomes difficult to get into or report from certain regions or countries. "We're having to resort to mobiles, and seeing how they can be used when there is a communication blackout," Mustafa said.

The second is creating avenues to receive mobile content from citizens. "We're getting a lot of content which is being recorded via mobile and being sent in to Al Jazeera through various channels." Al Jazeera is currently building a number of applications which will allow the user to send content direct from Android or Blackberry phones. "But even without that, we're getting so much content from mobile from the general public," Mustafa said.

Giving citizens options to submit content is ideal. "It's up to the people on the ground," Mustafa said. "So, if you have a basic mobile, you're probably going to go home, transfer content to your laptop and upload it to the website. Or, if you can send email from your mobile, you're probably going to send it direct to our email address."

One reason for Al Jazeera's success in innovative coverage is support from the top down. "We have a lot of support from senior management who believe in the power of new media and believe that this is the future of media," Minty said. "When I speak with a lot of other news organisations, a lot of them are still asking the questions that we were asking four or five years ago."

A shift toward innovation also comes from within the newsroom, too. "There is a fundamental shift that needs to happen within a newsroom to make it successful," Minty said. Those that understand new media strategies and tools share with others. The new media department at Al Jazeera is 12-people strong, and growing. But the important thing is the transference of skills to the newsroom.

"It's not about having a single dedicated social media team to handle everything," Minty said. "We come up with the strategy and experiment with the tools to see how they can be handed over to the newsroom to own the project and try it themselves."

While the Al Jazeera lab team does not offer specific training in new media development, Minty has spoken at meetings and seminars. "A lot of people involved in this are connected, everyone is open to bounce ideas and identify ways to move forward. From our side, we are very open with our strategy and what has or hasn't worked."

Anton Hammerl/Africa Media Online

RE**THINK**ING

PRIVATEPUBLIC
ETHICS**DATA**TRUST
RESPONSIBILITY
CREDIBILITYARTS
ACTIVISM**AFRICA**
AUDIENCES
SOWHAT?**AIDS**
COLLABORATION
CONFLICT**CHILDREN**
PHOTOGRAPHY
NEUTRALITY

THE SHIFTING PRIVATE-PUBLIC AXIS AND THE REJUVENATION OF ETHICS

News International has attracted much opprobrium since the phone-hacking scandal broke, but I confess to an unfashionably small corner of sentiment in my journalistic heart. Back in 1998, as a starry-eyed postgraduate journalism student in London, the company granted me an internship. I was not posted to its now defunct red-top rag but its broadsheet sister, *The Times*. I hasten to add that in good intern tradition, I was on more familiar terms with the kettle than the telephones.

The News of the World spectacularly made the headlines instead of reporting them when Rupert Murdoch in July axed the 168-year-old paper from the News International stable. Much media commentary since has used the bad-apple argument in part to deflect calls for a regulatory review. Such reasoning is guilty of misplaced exceptionalism in a profession that holds others to account; the scandal is part of a deeper malaise with implications the media should acknowledge. The answer lies in rejuvenated ethics around the shifting public-private axis and not increased legislation.

For a sense of the broader context, one just has to peruse *Flat Earth News* (2008), written by the journalist who broke open the scandal in the first place, *The Guardian's* Nick Davies. He sketches a compelling picture

Caricature of Rupert Murdoch by Rodney Pike (http://rwpike.blogspot.com/)

of the developed world's media outlets that should be in the business of truth-telling. But he perceives journalists as trapped in a professional cage that "distorts their work and crushes their spirit", essentially from intensified commercialisation of news.

Related issues include inadequate staffing and front-line reporters, the news factory's pragmatic rules of production, and the influence of public relations and propaganda on the news agenda. It would be a fallacy to think South Africa is somehow exempt from such forces on news production.

And that is the continuum along which Davies positions the hacking story, before it became a scandal. In a chapter called "The Dark Arts", he recounts in detail how police officers, private investigators and civilians ("blaggers") were corrupted by *News of the World* journalists to get confidential bank and phone company information. Davies writes: "By the mid 1990s, Fleet Street was employing several dozen different agents to break the law on its behalf" (271).

It didn't stop at tabloids either: by the late 1990s, Davies cites similar infringements by newspapers including *The Sunday Times*. Lord Justice Leveson, chairman of the recently announced UK judicial inquiry into the scandal, said at its launch: "It may be tempting for a number of people to close ranks and suggest the problem is or was local to a small group of journalists then operating at *News of the World*. But I would encourage all to take a wider picture of the public good and help me grapple with the length, width and depth of the problem as it exists."

A 2006 report by the UK Information Commissioner's Office, *What Price Privacy?*, underscores a more pernicious problem. It found an extensive illegal trade in confidential personal information including data illegally supplied to 305 named journalists working for a range of newspapers. The *Daily Mail* topped the list with 952 transactions by 58 of its journalists. *News of the World* was only fifth with 228 cases among 23 journalists.

THE NEW TECHNOLOGY MOMENTUM IS **INEXORABLY TOWARDS DISCLOSURE** ... ESTABLISHED GATEKEEPERS ARE **INCREASINGLY UNDERMINED** AND DATA CAN BE ACCESSED, REPLICATED AND DISSEMINATED IN PREVIOUSLY UNFATHOMABLE WAYS.

The Information Commission also noted in a follow-up report the different approach – taken by some media commentators regarding breaches of the law by journalists and by others – that suggested journalists should be treated differently. "It is important to note that the Information Commissioner is not proposing to criminalise any conduct that is not already against the law," he wrote. "However, journalists … who either directly or through middlemen obtain personal information from public and private sector organisations by bribery, impersonation and similar means are engaging in conduct which, unless they can clearly demonstrate a public interest, has quite rightly been illegal since 1994."

Journalists, as the fourth estate, rightly claim certain privileges in their quest to unearth facts in the public interest and speak truths to power. Even Davies says in a July *Guardian* video clip that it was the arrogance of the power elite that angered him in the hacking story. "It's about how they all spontaneously colluded together to make everybody's life easier, about the way in which they casually assumed that the law didn't apply to them and in which they equally casually assumed that it was perfectly alright to lie to the rest of us because we are little people, we wouldn't know that they were doing it," he said.

The telephone hacking allegations involve a breach of both privacy and legality with no public interest motivation. The law will run its course, as it should, and adequate legislation exists to sanction such acts. But the case is compromising for the journalism profession as a whole since its legitimacy is based upon the assumed balance of journalistic privilege with ethical responsibilities.

The onus is upon the media to self-correct by rejuvenating its ethical principles and restore public trust. At the heart of this challenge lies a broad renegotiation in society between the private and the public, which is playing itself out in the media in battles between the right to privacy and the public interest.

Social media is fuelling this dynamic. For instance, before the hacking scandal broke, various British celebrities took out injunctions against newspapers preventing them from disclosing certain stories. But in the case of a footballer, social media just ignored it. Journalist Titia Ketelaar, London correspondent for *NRC Handelsblad* in the Netherlands, writes in an email interview: "On Twitter nobody cared and tweeted the information anyway. That resulted in some really bizarre reporting: newspapers not being able to

name somebody while the entire country was talking about him."

The new technology momentum is inexorably towards disclosure – as the Arab Spring and WikiLeaks stories show, established gatekeepers are increasingly undermined and data can be accessed, replicated and disseminated in previously unfathomable ways. This encourages on the one hand an ethical levelling; on the other, it is also open to abuse. What interests the public and what is in the public interest will come under increasing scrutiny as the UK judicial inquiry in the first instance investigates the relationship between the press and the public.

This is welcome but in the short term, there are risks. Foremost is tougher regulation, a popular political response to scandal. In the UK, the Press Complaints Commission has been roundly criticised and self-regulation of the media appears under threat, sounding a warning bell for countries like South Africa that have modelled their media regulatory systems on the British version.

Only time will tell if such fears prove warranted but the hope is they are overstated. Ketelaar is not sure regulation will be tougher. She says regulation only works if people follow the rules and part of the problem is the shifting definition of journalism: "Is gossip about a footballer's love life journalism? Is it in the public interest? And where do you draw the line – is a blog still journalism? Is Perez Hilton a journalist? And will he have to abide by the same rules?"

In the meantime, newsrooms face increasing pressure. Ketelaar says it takes time and money to talk to people, look around, investigate, and soak up information for just an ordinary story and with facts being online within minutes and retweeted that becomes very difficult.

She says: "I applaud all newspaper editors and owners who give their staff room to breathe – speed isn't everything. Getting your facts straight, the original story or angle that nobody else has, is [everything] and that is what your readers pay for."

Ntone Edjabe, editor of literary journal *Chimurenga*, appreciates how hard that can be. When we speak, he is putting the finishing touches to a once-off "speculative" newspaper called *The Chronicle* that travels back in time, to the week of xenophobic violence in 2008, to re-imagine the past by re-creating it in the present. This disruption of time and place reproduces a newspaper aesthetically with subtle subversions. Part of the aim is to move away from the notion of South African exceptionalism regarding the xenophobic attacks. Edjabe says: "Instead we chose the same moment and asked how do we write it away from our own anxieties. It's not only 'what is happening to us?' but 'what is happening?'…"

Edjabe concedes it is very expensive to research and write in the present tense. "Anyone who can write can write but cannot necessarily become a journalist – there are questions of mobility and access and institutional power. But for a small literary magazine, this is a joke.

"We had to find a way to deal not so much with news in a classic sense of bringing new information into a public space but working with a library of news that is already accumulated into the reader's mind and dealing more with language: how do we write about this stuff? We get bombarded daily with information that in part from a creative standpoint it was [a question of] how do we process this? We focused on the language, the presentation, the layers and depth."

The process of "shaking off the prison of fact" has taken a year, constantly filtering information into the final product. Edjabe says it's been a confronting project for contributors also: "To create a vehicle that breaks these barriers down, to use their imagination to talk about reality, that has been very challenging."

It seems symbolic that as *News of the World* closes, a new experimental newspaper will appear on our stands – if only as a once-off. What insight might it offer us in a time of news crisis? Edjabe regards any opportunity to reinvestigate the meaning of journalism in the West is good.

But he is more interested in new media and who owns it – not in terms of corporate ownership but in terms of language. "Who is this thing for? Not necessarily the audience in terms of readers and so forth … but the texture and the language used. That for me is the gap in the press here – in some way it feels so far from the people and the events it reports. How does one close that gap?"

It is a question the South African media might do well to consider, along with its own tendencies towards exceptionalism.

BY BRETT LOCK

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
WHISTLE-BLOWING
AND DATA-DUMPING

Tomas Hajek

The editor of the satirical magazine *Private Eye* – which specialises in exposing the myriad hypocrisies of the political establishment and the media – received a curious phone call from Julian Assange, the founder of the website WikiLeaks. Assange snapped that a critical piece on WikiLeaks in the magazine was "crap". Asked what was "crap" about it, the WikiLeaks czar slurred that he "hadn't read it".

In full rant mode, Assange went on to claim that there was "an international conspiracy" against WikiLeaks led by the (British) *Guardian* newspaper and – that old canard – "Jews". What had upset Assange was the fact that *Private Eye* – following the lead of political bloggers – had exposed Wikileak's involvement with a shadowy figure of the European far-right known as Israel Shamir.

This somewhat deranged haranguing of *Private Eye's* editor must prompt questions about the good sense of hailing secretive and unaccountable internet-based initiatives as mediators of important information. Journalists should stop and think about how this undermines the role of the press in society as the most suitable watchdog against power and corruption. Editors of respectable newspapers are able to tell the difference between "the public interest" and what "the public is interested in". Internet mavericks tend not to know the difference, nor care to. Certainly in Wikileak's case, the failure to competently redact put innocent people in danger. A whistleblower with specific information would be better advised to go to a reputable newspaper; one driven by a sense of newsworthiness, not sensation for the sake of sensation.

But this really is the trouble. Bradley Manning – one of Wikileak's most notable so-called whistleblowers – was nothing of the sort. Manning had no specific issue to blow the whistle on. What he did was data-dump – a sort of digital tantrum. Data-

dumping is made possible by modern technology where vast reams of information can be copied onto a thumb-drive. In reality, this is what WikiLeaks specialises in: data-dumping, not whistle blowing. The difference is best illustrated by the fact that until WikiLeaks sought out "media partners" (the UK's *The Guardian* and Germany's *Der Speigel*, in particular) much of the information they'd dumped on their site went unnoticed.

Ironically, despite its best intentions, any site engaging in this activity is fooling itself if it thinks it is providing the tools to bring down tyrants. It is democracies – where data exchange is less paranoically guarded and where journalists and whistleblowers do not simply disappear and where personal data technology is more ubiquitous – that are most prone to having state and corporate secrets leaked. This is why China, North Korea, Iran and Saudi Arabia have not been rocked by major WikiLeaks scandals and why few, if any, whistleblowers have come forth. Tyrants remain in power because, well, they're tyrants. Revelations laid bare in WikiLeaks, some say, prompted the so-called Arab Spring. But where did that actually go? A civil war in Lybia, Islamists, not democrats, poised for a take-over in Egypt and thousands dead on the street of Syria as the regime does what regimes untroubled by internet-led scandals do. The sword is mightier than the byte after all.

No, the whistleblowers have chiefly been from the North America and Western Europe – places that already have a robust press and human rights watchdogs. This observation alone leads one to ask whether it all isn't a form of personal narcissism both for the leakers and the facilitators like Assange. Certainly his sexual antics and the bizarre conspiracies he's constructed to avoid answering criticism for them point one to this conclusion.

It really wasn't about a wild "information wants to be free" ethos all along. No, it wasn't long before Assange fell out with *The Guardian*. Bizarrely, according to *The Huffington Post*, Assange threatened to sue *The Guardian* for releasing some of the leaked information without his permission "arguing that he owned the information and had a financial interest in how and when it was released". This is an extraordinary position for a free-information crusader to take; but an unsurprising one for a narcissist and self-publicist.

It was a mistake for the mainstream media to get into bed with a data maverick in the first place. For some editors, reading private diplomatic correspondence and classified military documents must have been a similar thrill to the one their tabloid colleagues got from listening to celebrity voicemail. But the honeymoon is over and the established print and broadcast media needs to take stock and get back to what they should have been doing all along: serious investigative journalism and maintaining the trust of the public, and the respect of democratic governments and the anxiety or tyrants.

Information needs to be mediated by experienced – and above all – ethical, agents, not internet cowboys. That is why, after all, we're called the media and must make our case to the public.

TRUST.
CREDIBILITY.
RESPONSIBILITY.
ACCOUNTABILITY.

Between 2007 and 2008 South Africa's biggest weekly newspaper, *The Sunday Times*, was mired in controversy. The paper was forced to retract and apologise for three nationally relevant stories – one alleging that the then president Thabo Mbeki had accepted a R30-million bribe – after the South African Press Council ruled against the paper as a result of inaccuracies in the stories.

The reputation and credibility of the newspaper, a leader in the South African press industry, was tarnished, as readers began referring to the increasingly sensational paper as the "Sunday Slimes".

In a bid to "enable *The Sunday Times* to produce bold, incisive journalism that maintains the utmost credibility with its audience", then editor Mondli Makhanya sought the assistance of a panel of South African media experts to investigate the stories and *The Sunday Times* newsroom operations.

The panel consisted of Prof Anton Harber, head of the journalism programme at Wits; experienced media lawyer Dario Milo; *Mail&Guardian* ombudsman and Press Council judge Franz Kruger; and Inter Press Service African regional director and Fray Intermedia founder Paula Fray. The four spent some months investigating the work processes of the stories in question, the editorial policies of *The Sunday Times* newsroom, and interviewing its staff.

Some of the panel's findings were to be expected. In an age of increasing commercialisation and juniorisation in newsrooms globally, this had an impact on the overall quality of the journalism produced in *The Sunday Times* newsroom. But, some of the problems identified by the panel indicated an arrogant disregard for accuracy and accountability. The panellists made a list of recommendations for change at *The Sunday Times*, all with the intent of instilling and maintaining ethical rigour in the newsroom as well as re-instating the public's confidence in the newspaper. One of these recommendations was "that at least the executive summary of this report, and a response from the editor, be published in *The Sunday Times*, and the full report be made available to the public on the internet".

But, *The Sunday Times* never published the full report. Instead, the newspaper published a 900-word summary of the 88-page report, which clearly left out not only the crucial detail of what went wrong at *The Sunday Times*, but also excluded the panel's particular recommendations that would assist in re-instating the public's trust.

In the months following the Jayson Blair scandal at *The New York Times*, where the young journalist was found to have plagiarised and fabricated several nationally-relevant and high-profile stories, the paper undertook not one, but several investigations into its newsroom processes and policies. After these investigations were completed, the paper released a full report, the Siegal Committee report, of its findings and recommendations.

In this report, the committee stated: "After the damage inflicted by the Blair scandal and the events that followed, we recommend a dramatic demonstration of our openness to public accountability," and later added that "we must affirm the values of transparency, fairness, and accountability throughout our newsroom".

Where *The New York Times* sought to reach out to their readers, *The Sunday Times* instead chose to leave theirs in the dark. And after a source provided me with a copy of the report, under the condition that it was not publicly distributed, I sought to bring the report to light by first making informal requests to Avusa (the owner of the paper) for the report to be made public.

My requests were refused. Then, in April this year, I requested that the full 2008 report be released to the public. Using the mechanisms provided by the Promotion of Access to Information Act, I had hoped that leading journalists at *The Sunday Times* would use this opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to transparency and accountability, but instead, on World Press Freedom Day, my request was again refused by Avusa .

In his refusal to release the report Makhanya stated: "Avusa Media Limited is a private body under the [Promotion to Access to Information] Act," and adds that the "transparency obligations in relation to private bodies are obviously different from public bodies".

But does the absence of legislated power or duties attributed to *The Sunday Times* (and private media in general) mean it does *not* exercise a public power, or perform a public function?

Recently the South African media has faced the twin evils of the proposed media appeals tribunal and the Protection of Information Bill and it has been pointed out to me by fellow journalists that, by pursuing the release of this report, I may have provided more weaponry for the pro-state media regulation debate.

But, while this may be true, I find the burial of the report unconscionable. How can we hope to fight this onslaught if respected media houses like Avusa are too afraid to air their own shortcomings in public?

Therefore, while Makhanya's contention that "transparency obligations in relation to private bodies are obviously different from public bodies" may (in some instances) be valid when referring to any *other* private bodies, this does not hold true for a media institution. Simply because *The Sunday Times* is not mandated to be transparent, does not mean it should not be so.

Professor Herman Wasserman, deputy head of Rhodes University's School of Journalism and Media Studies and a seasoned journalist and media ethics writer, said that without responsibility, the fight for media freedom "does not mean much".

"How can the media celebrate journalists as heroes when they are captured in distant countries, but remain too cowardly to subject themselves to scrutiny at home? Refusing to be fully transparent on a matter of ethics is cowardice. Surely any journalist worth their salt would be suspicious if a government agency claimed that a summary of a report is sufficient and refused to divulge the full report. Why then apply a different yardstick to the media's own affairs?" he said.

This sentiment is echoed by Tettey, who writes that the media "have had a positive impact on democratisation in Africa as conduits for political education, watchdogs of political accountability and forums for civic engagement" (2006: 244). He adds that these expectations are based on the hope that media institutions that hold government officials accountable will themselves display qualities of good governance expected from government, which includes truthfulness and transparency. "The extent to which the media exhibit these characteristics has far-reaching implications for whether they earn the right to freedom of expression and public support for that right vis-a-vis the state," he continues.

In light of Avusa's role as "watchdog" on behalf of South African citizens, as well as its associated power in society, *The Sunday Times* and all journalistic media institutions have a *more* pertinent and crucial obligation to transparency than any other kind of private institution. This is echoed in *Media accountability and freedom of publication* by prominent media theorist and researcher, Denis McQuail: "The power of the media, like that of government, has to be used in a legitimate way, which is not far removed from the notion of responsibility."

If the only concern regarding *The Sunday Time's* cover-up of the report was the lack of transparency and openness from the paper, then that problem has been resolved. On 15 June this year, *Business Day* (part owned by Avusa) published the full report. And while this action is commendable, Avusa has yet to show any accountability for covering up the report in the first place. In a Q&A with a *Business Day* reporter, Mondli Makhanya said: "We have spoken openly about the contents of the report. We have never 'hidden' the report. Staff members who requested to see it had full access to it."

But then, why not publish the report?

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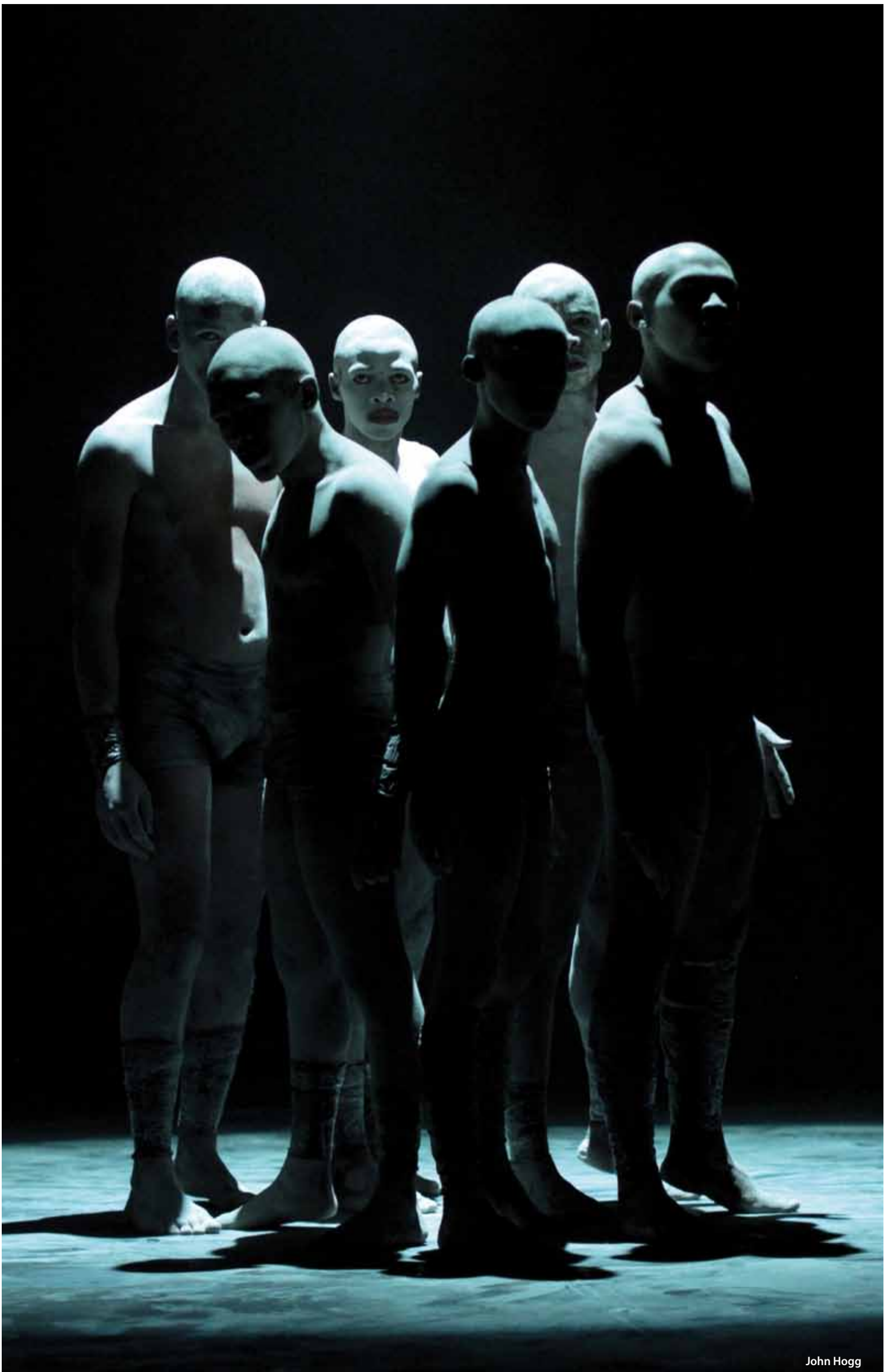
John Hogg

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BEING A FREELANCE
ARTS PHOTOGRAPHER

While I am a photographer I have some difficulty in categorising myself. I see myself a photographic wanderer with a range of interests in life and photography. I found a job in the media and by default became a press photographer cum photojournalist and I happened to have specialised in the arts. Although calling myself an arts photographer is akin to the actor who is in reality a waiter.

I cannot make a living in South Africa doing this. I have a theory that the interest that government and society at large has in arts and culture is because it appears on a tick list for a democracy, we have to have one to comply. The interest is not an organic and deep-rooted interest like the French, for example, have. Most of the media support this by being entertainment driven, something the public at large apparently are more than satisfied with.

I do supplement my income and creative need by photographing various dance and music festivals and productions. For this I am grateful and enjoy the interludes that take me away from events, PR functions and corporate work. For which I am equally grateful for sustaining me financially. Understanding the balance is crucial.

What helps as a freelancer in this environment is the indispensable versatility that comes with learning your craft while working on a newspaper.

It is becoming more and more apparent that being a specialist photographer in one field only makes you less viable in the market. *American Photo* magazine back in 1996 dedicated their September/October issue to the question of whether photojournalism is dead or not. Among other reasons it was felt by Carol Squires that the first blow to this noble profession was television and that another threat was the celebrity culture. Television and celebrity culture are possibly even stronger now and added to by online and social media. All sound bites and flashing images. But I, and many others, feel that there is still a place in the sun for photojournalism. Very little in the way of media can burn its way into your memory like a riveting and iconic photograph, and they abound. Think of World War 2, of Vietnam and of Soweto in 1976.

Is there an audience for photojournalism? This was another question posed by Squires then and she felt that, despite some negative editors, there was an eager and enthusiastic one. This, I feel, is still the case.

Another question is one that I posed for myself in the 1980/90s was whether what I photographed in the way of the arts was photojournalism. There were those who loudly proclaimed it was not, comparing it to the photography of the upheaval of those times. I eventually settled on the fact that, in the way I approach it, it is. I photograph live performance as a preference, cover festivals in the same manner as I would a political rally. A portrait of a leading artist is no less important that a leading political figure – who needs the artist to complete his checklist.

Rencontres d'Arles and Visa pour l'Image in Perpignan are the two leading photographic festivals in the world and both in France. Perpignan deals with photojournalism and the conversations revolve around this almost exclusively. At the Arles festival the conversations are as varied as you want them to be. Digital has been embraced along with the more traditional analogue at both and at Arles has "broadened the photographers' palette".

Being an arts photographer often is little more than an ideal but is an ideal that I don't mind striving for. Sometimes the effort outweighs the financial rewards, but then anything you care for should be approached in this way.

ARTS JOURNALISM
NOT INCIDENTAL TO LIFE OR MEDIA

BY MARY CORRIGALL

To declare that arts journalism is in a state of crisis is nothing new. Historically art journalism in this country has always been marginalised in the mainstream press. However, steadily declining circulation figures in the newspaper industry are placing this vital form of journalism in a much more precarious state, which is impacting on its quality as well as its quantity.

Arts journalism has been one of the biggest casualties of the on-going crisis in print journalism. Deemed a superfluous addition and subordinate to news, business or sports reporting, this area of journalism has been hardest hit by budget cuts and other cost saving strategies implemented to secure the financial viability of newspapers – and magazines.

This has resulted in reduced column space for reporting on art, dance and even more popular arts, such as literature, film and music. There are fewer permanent positions for arts reviewers/commentators and commissioning has decreased substantially. Consequently, press releases and international wire copy has become a mainstay of culture/entertainment pages or sections.

As a result few talented arts scribes remain in this branch of journalism; many are drawn to academia or snapped up by editors for political reporting, where their critical skills are put to other uses. With most freelancers earning less per word than they did five years ago, despite incremental increases in the cost of living, undoubtedly there are few financial incentives for them to remain in the field.

Many established writers pursue other forms of commercial writing to line their pockets while foregoing their fee for arts articles in order to maintain their public profile and engage with cultural developments. This has further engendered the notion that arts reporting isn't a valuable media commodity.

The internet has provided a few more platforms, but not all of these have necessarily expanded the field. Many specialised arts websites are parasitical in nature, working as portals that feed off arts reports published elsewhere thus avoiding commissioning articles or reviews. In light of these conditions arts journalism is under severe threat.

The marginalisation of arts journalism in the mainstream press has impacted on its quality, which has paradoxically substantiated its marginalisation. Few editors demand the same level of critical rigour and research from their arts reporters as they do from their hard news writers. Nor is there the expectation that arts writers, or even culture editors, be knowledgeable in their field.

There is also often little recognition that the arts encompass a range of specialised disciplines that require specialised knowledge. Though few editors would dream of dispatching a rugby writer to cover a tennis match, a film reviewer is often requested to cover a dance event. Granted, there have been some advantages to this practice: it has given rise to a new brand of multidisciplinary arts writer, who is ideally positioned to decode interdisciplinary art products, but it has also, in many instances, detracted from the accuracy and legitimacy of the reporting.

Awareness of the worsening state of arts journalism in South Africa needs to be raised. Those arts journalists remaining in the field need to be proactive in drawing the media's attention to this crisis, while substantiating the continued relevance of arts journalism in an age where celebrity culture appears to be eclipsing cultural reporting and is perceived as a reliable way of attracting the attention of prospective readers.

It is hard to quantify the number of people in our population who are interested in arts coverage but the latest attendance figures from the National Arts Festival in Grahamstown give us some idea of the size of that readership. Given that the more than 200 000 visitors to this annual arts event reflect only a small percentage of those who patronise the arts, one could surmise that a sizeable amount of South Africans would find quality arts reports, reviews and features appealing.

It is common knowledge that the *Mail&Guardian*, a newspaper prized for its investigative reporting, recently conducted a survey which uncovered the fact that a large proportion of their readers were buying their newspaper to read their arts reports. They subsequently doubled the size of their culture supplement.

In many ways arts reporting complements political stories and op-ed pages as artists/playwrights and filmmakers often address the same issues that feature in those sections
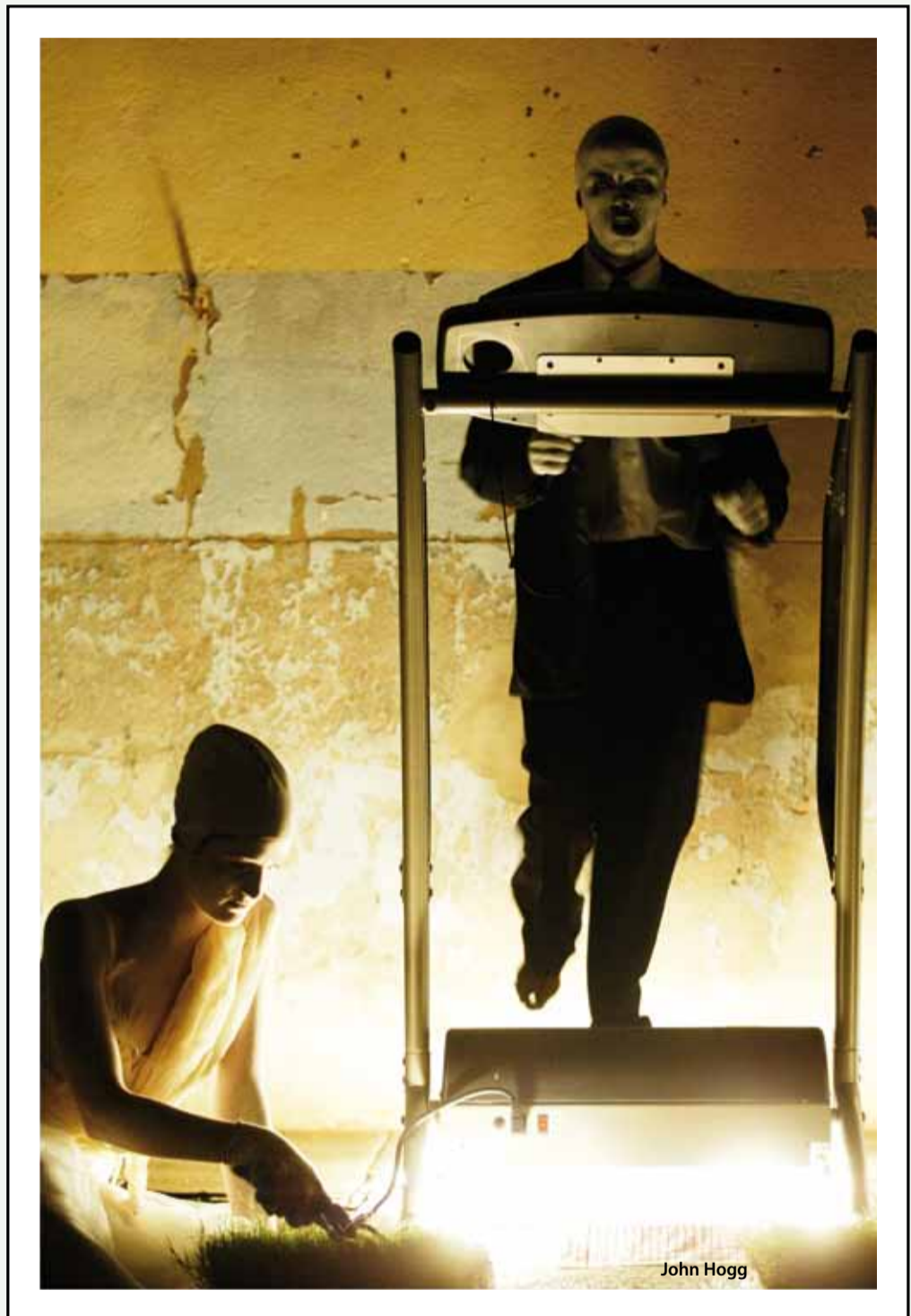
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of newspapers – Eric Miyeni and Navan Chetty's recent documentary *Mining for Change: a Story of South African Mining*, which substantiated the ANC Youth League's call for the nationalisation of the mines, is an obvious example. Thus quality, in-depth arts reporting is able to make a meaningful contribution to the sociopolitical discourses that journalism is tasked with cultivating.

Arts journalism of a high standard also makes a substantial contribution to the development of the cultural landscape or character of a society. It educates and grows audiences for the arts but also engages in a critical dialogue with cultural producers which, if effective, cultivates the development and quality of their work, while creating a historical archive of these often ephemeral products.

In principal few oppose the preservation of arts journalism, however, it shouldn't simply be tolerated or viewed as incidental to media products. It should be enhanced and exploited to bolster the quality and diversity of publications. Arts critics and writers should also turn their critical gaze inwards and discover ways in which they can remain relevant within the fluctuating world of journalism.

ARTS WRITERS AS CULTURAL SUPERHEROES

I am a firm and passionate believer that there is a potent and fundamental synergy between arts writers and cultural and human rights activism. It would be most beneficial to our communities if every arts writer on our continent was more socially engaged in cultural activism. This can effectively be achieved by highlighting the most pressing socio-political issues through festivals with a defined philosophy. It is through our stories, our poems, our visual art, our films, our music, our theatre or our beautiful dance and the exploration of our diverse cultural identities that will lead us to transform, to heal, and to understand one another, regardless of what language we speak.

Cultural and creative development are vital for our emerging societies and in achieving this it is most necessary to establish regular, monthly or annual creative platforms to allow individuals and communities the opportunity to empower themselves.

Poet and English professor Kelwyn Sole reminds us of art's power when he speaks of the work of visionary artist, Ezrom Legae: "Inspired by the story of Steve Biko, Legae produced a series of graphics using the chicken and egg imagery. Yet in spite of its explicitly political inspiration, he avoided any directly political reference either in the content or in the title of this series. Legae used images of birds and eggs as a metaphor for a new awakening of consciousness. For many artists (of this time) art needed to become like music: instead of reflecting reality, it would try to create a new reality, more illuminating and more sublime than the lived experience under apartheid."

With continued socio-political pressures in Africa, there is a need for the arts writer to employ a multi-dimensional role in civil society to continue to uncover new truths. We need to take into serious consideration the stimulation and wider growth of the arts community on many levels. We as arts journalists directly benefit by making a living writing about art, and benefit in being enriched with daily access to new meanings and new truths through witnessing and experiencing the multi-dimensional worlds of creativity through art.

The cultural activism I undertake comes to life in response of the need to develop larger audiences to celebrate art, and most vitally to address key socio-political needs in our communities. The questions I always ask when planning a potential cultural project are: what and where is the need, and can arts journalists as cultural activists who curate contemporary cultural projects, synergise effectively with artists and the media to attract new art audiences and new readers/listeners/viewers? I am also convinced that as arts writers we too need to explore the interdisciplinary in the way we work in much the same way as successful and highly engaged artists experiment and explore it.

Youth pop culture festivals: Red Eye @rt

Red Eye @rt started in 1998 in Durban as a monthly youth pop-culture arts festival founded by myself and a small collective at the Durban Art Gallery. It was a time when there was no budget for new acquisitions at the national galleries. We knew that no new art would be bought to reflect the art of a changing nation unless we did something.

At the time I was an arts editor of a newspaper under the editorship of Kaizer Nyatsumba, the first black editor of a newspaper in South Africa. I was privileged to witness art on a daily basis, but saddened by the lack of audiences for each creative discipline, whether visual art, dance or theatre and I was most disheartened by the lack of young people in these audiences.

The answer, I reckoned, was simply, give them young art. Give them what they love and know and most importantly mix it up with what they don't know so there is something new for them to discover or something old and timeless for them to rediscover. Red Eye @rt as a new arts model made space for live music, DJs, street fashion, performance art, design, short film screenings, open mic poetry and contemporary dance melting into one hellova raunchy tango under a Trevor Mokaba painting.

A young poet read her heart out, a hip-hop artist rapped on the stairs, gospel singers blessed the creative ceremony, a maskanda musician in amabeshu strummed his home-made tin guitar and DJ Siyanda spun phat beats. In a small gallery room a young woman, artist Nicolette van der Walt, dressed in a sheet bathed herself in cow's blood in a bid to cleanse the sins of her colonial ancestors. Short film screenings, photography, comic book art by Nikhil Singh, a live punk band, graphic design by iJusi and art installations by James Beckett were all exhibited and attracted mass audiences.

Every first Friday of the month became known as the night to celebrate art, and people came in their hundreds. Red Eye @rt worked as a highly successful model and was copied around the country and we now have an art collection reflecting the younger generation of artists and a live archive of the issues they have been grappling with during this time of post-independence.

Amani Arts Festival in Khayelitsha

In Cape Town last year a small group of volunteers started African Artists Unite as One to kick-start an annual arts festival to celebrate African Human Rights Day on 21 October. We chose to do this in a community where there is not only a serious need for the celebration of the healing and upliftment of the human spirit, but also for crucial cross-cultural communication in a place where some of the highest incidences of xenophobia are experienced in the Western Cape.

I really love Khayalitsha because there are people living there that are insanely inspiring and I reckon there are more artists and creative people in Khayelistha than in New York City. In every household of on average say nine in a family, three children will be dancers; two will be singers, one a hairdresser and the other a painter, a jazz musician or poet. And the mother will either be growing her own organic vegetables which she uses to run a soup kitchen or she is looking after 20 Aids orphans and sings in the church choir on Sundays and on the side, beside her full-time job she designs clothes for herself and her children.

After networking on Facebook, we met on Nelson Mandela Day at the Oliver Tambo Hall. I invited everyone I knew in arts media, artists, friends, community activists and leaders and NGOs. A month later after meeting every Saturday in Khayelitsha we started African Artists Unite as One, a small but dedicated and committed community group. Through art and workshops, we seek as artists, poets, songwriters, filmmakers and cultural activists to create conversations about xenophobia.

We explore interdisciplinary and cross-cultural collaborations with original African music, poetry, hip hop, film, video, performance art, theatre and dance and a visual art exhibition with established and emerging artists. Performing artists and artwork attempt to explore "the other", attempt to re-negotiate the term African and celebrate cultural diversity. African Artists Unite as One includes poets from Rwanda like Epiphanie Mukasano, composers like Patricia Matongo from Zimbabwe, Bienvenue Mambote from DRC who has been playing music since he was nine years old, Cosmos Mairosi from Zimbabwe a performance poet and teacher, animation artists and a gospel choir form Khayelitsha, local theatre groups, traditional and contemporary dancers, internationally acclaimed artist Sue Williamson, respected poet and playwright Malika Ndlovu, Cape Cinnamon of Royal Matabele lineage, Phila Ndlovu, a cultural activist and poet from Gugulethu, Emile da Mic and his hip hop crew from Blue Sky Poetry and Kwamalimi, hip hop artists from Nigeria, Deon Skade an arts blogger and Zizipo Mgobo, a spoken word artist from Litha Park in Khayelitsha.

Some insights from these projects
Working on no budget
Never let money ever stop you from wanting to make a difference. Despite the challenge, the positive news is that these kinds of events can be achieved with passion, determination and by involving sponsors in kind and

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the media. A film production company in Khayelitsha responded to our call to transport all artists and our audience, a sound company responded to our call to supply lighting and professional sound for free, printing companies did posters. Media responded by writing stories, local radio stations were more aware of the need to interview more Pan African artists and artists in Khayelitsha who were previously marginalised in the mainstream media.

A book shop offered us a free venue to hold our press conference, and a retail store sponsored drinks for the artists. We were simply cheeky, asked for it and got it, if someone said no we would just move on to what we knew would be our next potential generous sponsor.

Aligning with existing campaigns
Key for us was to align with experienced NGOs who specialised in this field. We used their studio space to hold meetings and to connect with community leaders and media partners.

Media as cultural champs
Live arts events should be sponsored by the media so the media are seen carrying the torch as cultural champions, of taking ownership to some degree for added marketing value and reaching wider newer audiences. Print media is under threat and should capitalise on such opportunities to develop new audiences. The media then has wider social/cultural cachet. As *Guardian* columnist Simon Jenkins said: "To pay was not to read, it was to join."

Innovation and volunteering are key
Arts writers have the power to potentially create small societal shifts and be responsible and equally respected as serious art critics and cultural activists assisting societies undergoing transformation. But this means reviving and respecting the value of being a volunteer and sharing the many ways we work to create opportunities and network.

An ethos of sharing
It is about sharing contacts, sharing media access, sharing opportunities, sharing stories, mentoring, nurturing and offering meaningful public platforms for artists to engage directly with their communities, empowering them and in doing so creating news stories for the media to report on and most importantly working from a root social cause.

In conclusion, if it is the weight of the artist's responsibility to make sense of the world, the artist's innate responsibility to create order and clarity of vision, then it is the arts journalist, essentially the messenger, who has the most crucial role to spread these messages, of a new truth, a new vision, especially at the height of socio-political changes in Africa's history, like this time, right now, today.

Excerpted from the paper presented at Africaphonie in Cameroon in March. To read the full version of this paper go to www.isuzybell.tumblr.com
Read more on www.artsinafrica.com and
http://culturalpolicy-economics-africa.blogspot.com/

FESTIVALS WITH A DEFINED PHILOSOPHY CAN:

- Offer new platforms for emerging artists to kick-start their creative careers and get them known in their communities.
- Tackle and highlight socio-political issues.
- Shed a positive light on communities in need of healing and transformation.
- Develop new and larger audiences for culture.
- Cross-pollinate artists and audiences with theatre houses and art galleries.
- Raise funds to buy new art collections.
- Stimulate arts stories for the media and create vital cultural debate.
- Provide work for emerging and established arts writers.
- Provide work to mentor young arts curators.
- Develop new audiences.
- Opportunities to explore sponsors to commission dance pieces/art works.
- Create a strong media profile for the venue/art gallery hosting the festival.
- Create a sense of cultural pride among the artist community, a sense of unity and belonging.
- Create cultural ambassadors and more cultural activists among artists and arts writers.
- Create cross-cultural communication and cross-pollination of art genres.

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ARTS ACROSS AFRICA
SIMPLY EXHILARATING

I attended the exhilarating six-day Harare International Festival of the Arts (HIFA) in April 2010 as a guest of Arterial Network, the African Arts Institute and Africalia, with 20 inspiring arts writers from 15 African countries which included Cameroon, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Uganda, Zambia, Botswana, Tanzania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Malawi, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Kenya.

We met to stimulate discussions about the state of arts journalism in Africa and create a pan-African network of arts journalists in an attempt to improve the state of arts journalism on the continent. We all agreed there was a dire need to mentor and train young arts writers, to share experiences and resources, to ensure that news and developments in the African creative sector were being recorded and critically evaluated. We all felt the need to promote and defend independent arts journalism against intrusive economic, political and social pressures.

By the end of the festival the African Arts Journalism Network (AAJN) was formed and a task team was elected to take the recommendations further and a draft constitution and strategic plan was devised.

Interestingly a year earlier at a workshop in Maputo, the Campus Euro-Africano De Cooperacão Cultural (also with generous support of Africalia) voiced the same challenges of arts journalism on the continent. With the AAJN's awareness of issues of linguistic diversity and our concerns that the African print media reporting on African arts and culture is generally weak with more interest in gossip and entertainment, we are aware of the many challenges. But more positively we agreed with Paul Brickhill's Reflections on the

State of Arts Reporting in African Print and Web Media from the Maputo conference that: "Mostly arts journalists are transforming the landscape of arts coverage through web sites and blogs on the internet, many of which are excellent."

Peter Rorvik, a founder of Arterial Network and director of the Centre for Creative Arts in Durban, who co-ordinated the workshop on arts media in Maputo commented that the restraining contexts in Africa, poverty, poor infrastructure, lack of skills, economic instability, volatile societies, and repressive environments, inhibit freedom of expression and precipitate censorship and self-censorship.

"Space for culture in newspapers is diminishing," said Rorvik. "Syndication of articles is reducing space for local content and the disproportional presence of foreign cultural content in African media threatens development of local culture and exerts excessive external influence.

"The fact that cultural products have become the leading export of the US, for example, should motivate the strengthening of creative industries in Africa," he said. "The proliferation of web sites, social networks and mobile phone technology offers exciting opportunities. New practices offer new dimensions for cultural expression."

The AAJN's strategic plan includes starting an online forum with a minimum of 75 arts journalists across Africa, launching an AAJN website and an e-newsletter. The network aims also to produce arts radio and arts television slots aired in collaboration with media in member countries; create a comprehensive database of arts journalists with bios and pictures from photojournalists; set up a six-language pan-African magazine on the

arts and to run an independent arts news agency.

The network plans to reach into high schools and talk to pupils about reporting the arts as well as working with Unesco to find out what's in the curricula of arts and journalisms schools across Africa. They will also support arts criticism through workshops, scholarships and fellowships.

Subsequently there has been a successful arts journalism training workshop with AAJN and Arterial Network working in collaboration with African Synergy/Marimba media, supported by Africalia. The training workshop for arts journalists from East Africa took place in Zanzibar in February 2011 with 11 participants from East Africa (Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Tanzania).

Telesphore Mba Bizo, a member of Arterial Network's steering committee and task team member of the AAJN who attended the training said: "I spoke to the trainees about the broader vision of the AAJN of the importance of creating a technically and financially sustainable link on the continent working towards affording a platform to promote artistic creative excellence through wide exposure, reviewing, previewing, criticising and carrying out research on all forms of art."

Following this, I joined Mba Bizo in the Cameroon in March this year with Africaphonie representing AAJN to present papers on arts journalism and to convince the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism at the University of Buea to include arts journalism in their curriculum.

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BY GAYLE EDMUNDS

SIFTING AND ANALYSING ALL TO ANSWER THE SO WHAT? QUESTION

So what? is always the most important question to answer for any journalist – whether you chronicle the latest foot-in-mouth incident from the lofty corridors of power or review a film, play, art exhibition or musical recital.

So what? is what encourages your reader to bother, to go out, buy the newspaper, magazine or to log on to your site or blog to get your opinion. Without this hook to draw the readers in, what's the point?

Whether you freelance and swap between dry annual reports and adjective-heavy press releases, with some journalist writing to keep you sane; or if you work full time for a specific publication – the reasons for writing your stories remain the same. To be meaningful to your reader. This is what really matters and what makes your readers come back the next day, week or month.

In some ways it is easier to be meaningful to the reader when you are sifting, analysing and presenting a piece that explains why the latest rate hike is bad news in practical terms that can immediately be applied to every reader's life.

While a piece of art or a theatrical production can change your life, it's very seldom in a practical way. Instead it is a frame of reference or mind shift that occurs. As intrinsically valuable as reducing your mortgage – but the evidence is often not as visible in quantifiable amounts.

This is one way in which reporting on the arts is a little different – it's what editors refer to as "the soft stuff", the "added value". Terms that are meaningless because it is just as important and the rules of writing about it just as rigorous.

Arts writers chronicle the creative output of the artistic community so that it can be more accessible to the greater community. Exactly the same as a political writer who chronicles the policy output of the political community so it can be more accessible to the greater community.

One thing that does vary for writers is the nature of the reader they write for. That everyman the researchers like to tell you about is usually nobody you know. He or she is much easier to find in the passing comments, snatched conversations and letters that come your way while you work.

A good example of sifting something out as irrelevant is a brilliant updated version of Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance* that was on stage not so long ago. The six actors were clever and funny, they had adapted the 150-year-old musical in a novel way – but for my readers I just couldn't see how I could tell them that this was the life-changing piece of art they should diarise for this week.

This sifting is something all journalists do every day in a thousand ways without even realising it. The longer you work a beat, the more you write for a particular reader, the more intuitively in touch you become with both. This is the old-fashioned notion of putting in the hours and years to become an expert – the 10 000 hours theory put forward by Malcolm Gladwell.

One colleague made the point that all journalists should be able to write about anything, because the skill of the job remains the same – it's only the content that changes. The structure of a story remains the same whether you are reporting from court or from the front row at the opera. Whatever the story the journalist collects the information, sifts out the unimportant stuff, analyses the rest through the filter of experience and presents a piece of writing that tells the reader something new and meaningful to them.

News reporting allows no latitude for subjective opinion, while arts writing depends on it to a large degree to help the reader with the decoding process. However, that same reporter who tells you the facts of the story on page one often offers his subjective opinion of that story on another page.

This subjectivity doesn't translate into writers inserting themselves into the story. This is something a hack friend of mine laments about the younger generation who think that reporting on celebrities makes them one. While the journalist does get unfettered access to all sorts of lives because of the profession, this is expressly because of the job not because of the person who has it. There's very little point in my writing about a wonderful play I saw, but which was for invited guests only as it fails to answer the ultimate question – so what if I have seen it, why should you care because I am nobody to my reader but a sifter and analyser who writes stories down in a way that the reader likes. As a person divorced from my job I am meaningless to my reader – and it is always for meaning that I strive. Otherwise my days really are numbered.
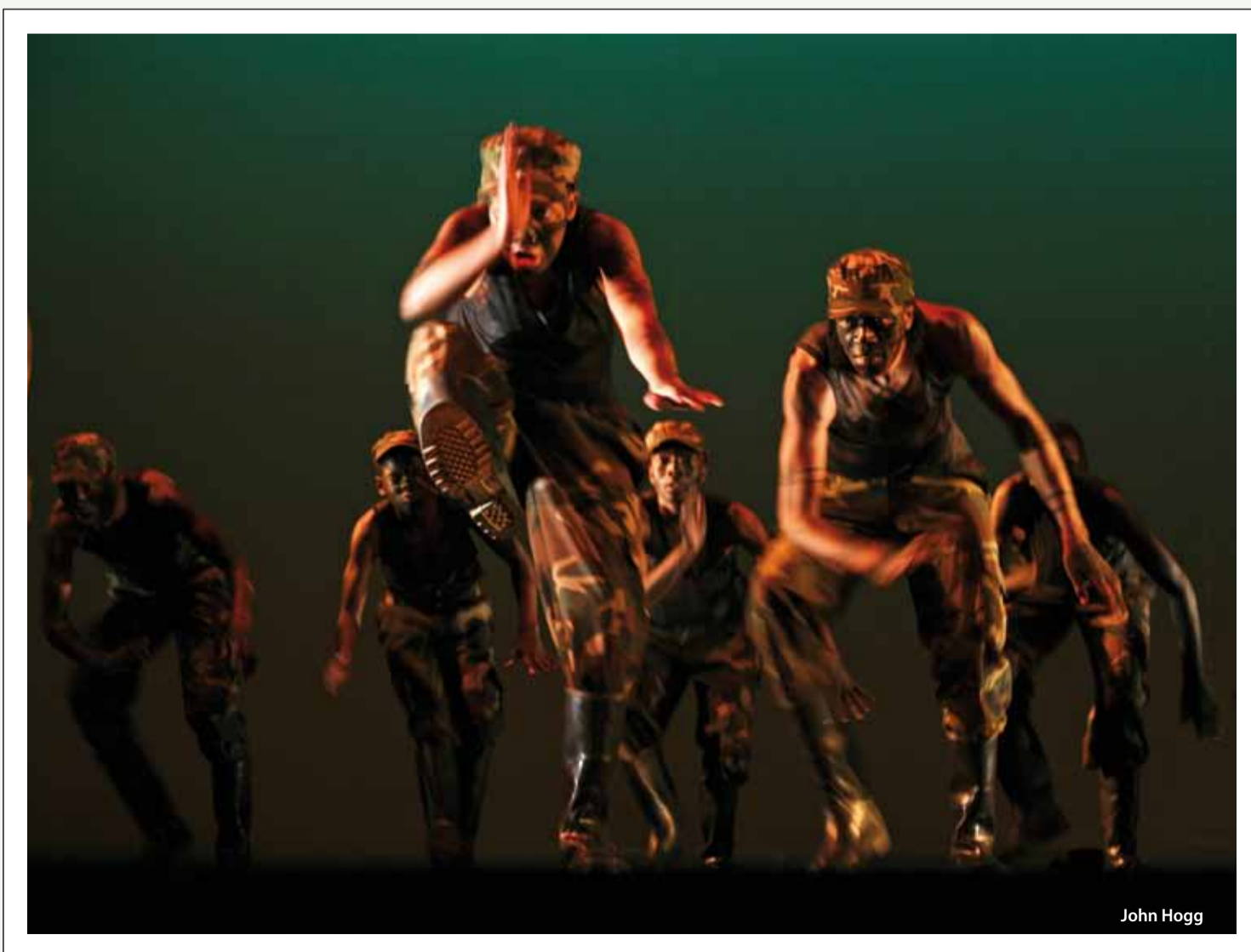
John Hogg

DIARY OF A BAD HALF YEAR

Reflexivity is an essential part of being a critic. It's not a complicated condition, all it requires is that a writer occasionally pause, scratch her/his head, and wonder, "Hey, what am I doing?" More often than not, this innocuous and singular question is marked by a sneeze, a noisy "Achoo!!" that heralds the onset of a flu-like virus of uncertainty. What quickly turns into why: "Why am I doing this?" It's a slippery slope from there. "For who am I doing it?" "At what cost?" I doubt whether this sort of reflexive narcissism is typical only of critics; any writer who cares about the construction and reception of their word-ideas will have experienced a similar crisis of faith, not once but many times.

The word crisis has, however, become something of a catchphrase in recent debates about the health of the arts pages, locally as much as elsewhere. Reflexivity, a healthy and necessary condition for any writer, has lapsed into pathologising. We're sick, our profession is sick, we're all going to die. The diagnosis is fatal when it comes to contemporary arts journalism. Basically, it's kaput. Sometimes I agree, but mostly not. In explaining why, I could do one of two things. I could rehearse three centuries' worth of debate around the "substantive social function" of criticism, as Terry Eagleton and countless other critics have done, or I could tell you what I've been doing the past six months. I'm more familiar with the latter.

JANUARY

I'm in training for Kilimanjaro. Artist Jacques Coetzer, who is also a consultant to the Pretoria-based coffee roaster TriBeCa, has engineered me an invite on a tour of the Tanzanian coffee growing region. Good news, except I have a bunch of deadlines: 1. interview artist Nicholas Hlobo for an Italian publisher (fee €1 200); 2. write a short fiction for artist Malcolm Payne's exhibition catalogue ("write anything," he says; fee R3 000); 3. interview comic book artist Jo Daly for *The Sunday Times* (fee R3 000); 4. write a fake account of me chasing JM Coetzee, a noted cycling enthusiast, during *The Argus* Cycle Tour, for the blog Mahala's print edition (no fee); also 5. write entries for the *Wallpaper** City Guide to Cape Town (fee £750).

In Tanzania, I show Coetzer my white shirt and black tie, which I plan to wear when I summit. The idea was partly prompted by something he told me a few weeks earlier: "I don't fly to a place without doing something. I must use the petrol. So I always keep making art, always." Jealously impressed, Jacques runs off into Moshi town, returning with an aluminium ladder: he plans to climb 1.5-metres higher than anyone else. Executives from the trip's sponsor, Woolworths, grimace, doubly so when I write about Jacques's madcap escapade for *The Sunday Times* (fee R5 446). They wanted a sober story about the impact of global warming on the local coffee industry, but instead.

John Hogg

FEBRUARY

The short fiction I wrote for Malcolm Payne has been demoted to the back of his catalogue and carries the oversized header, "Afterword" (my original title was "File under Payne, Malcolm"). The downgrading reminds me of something artist Robert Hodgins told me: I am not reverent enough of artists. I prefer the novelist Richard Ford's version of things. "I am a sceptical man," he told a Franschhoek book crowd in 2008, "not a cynical one." Ditto. The *Wallpaper** job continues to drag, the work to fee ratio long since exceeded. While in Joburg I interview artist Tracey Rose for a *Sunday Times* profile (fee R3 000). She's sober, giggly, engaging. So is her show, which I review formally for *frieze* (fee £125).

On my Joburg trip, I also meet artist Joachim Schönfeldt. He wants me to collaborate on a new book. Like Malcolm, he uses the dreaded word "anything" in his brief. There is no fee, he adds. Okay, I say, I'll write a short story. Fine he replies. I feel confident. In 2003 Joachim asked his long-time friend, author and essayist Ivan Vladislavic, to contribute something/anything to his Model Men project. Ivan's contribution was the first draft for his 2006 novel, *The Exploded View*, which is dedicated to Joachim. Later in the day I meet Ivan. We chat about *Double Negative*, his new novel, written to accompany a book of photographs by David Goldblatt. He talks about the declining state of book reviews. A two-century-old critical enterprise is on its way out, he mourns.

MARCH

I present a paper on Ivan's new book at a conference on the same day as Hokusai's great wave materialises as fact and crashes into northeastern Japan. "Does knowing what criticism is, ontologically speaking, necessarily help explain what we expect or want it to do?" I ask my small audience. "I am inclined to say no. Perhaps then we need to start thinking the other way round and let our desires fashion the form of the critical response." Arguably, that is what blogs are doing.

"Where once reasoned debate and knowledgeable evaluation flourished, there are now social networking and marketing algorithms and a nattering gaggle of bloggers," wrote AO Scott, *The New York Times*' movie critic, in a reasoned assessment of sea change in arts journalism occasioned by the advent of online ("A Critic's Place, Thumb and All" *New York Times* 31 March 2010). Scott sounds glum; he isn't. He is a sanguine critic, which we need more of. "The future of criticism is the same as it ever was," he offers. "Miserable, and full of possibility. The world is always falling down. The news is always very sad. The time is always late. But the fruit is always ripe."

But you know all this. Let me conclude my March report with a financial status report. Professional fee for speaking on Ivan's work at a University of Johannesburg conference: zero. Publication fee for usage of conference paper in June issue of *Art South Africa*: zero. Days spent researching, writing and editing final paper: one week, more or less. All of which explains why, for 10 days in March, I travel to the Zimbabwe border to research a 3 000-word reportage feature on illegal migration and cigarette smuggling for the *Mail&Guardian*. Hey, it's what you have to do to pay the bills. More than that, these encounters with the real are vital for sharpening one's critical insights. Go stand in the pre-dawn queues outside Musina's refugee reception centre, then watch *District Nine* again.

An internal memo describes the journalist (me) as having suffered severe altitude sickness (true).

Five days after summit night I'm in Holland to view four exhibitions and write about one of them. Dutch contemporary art museums have a €1 600 fund that enables them to fly an English-language art critic to Holland to write a print (not online) review. I write a bi-monthly art column for the London-based magazine, *frieze;* more prosaically, I also write reviews. On day two I visit a mini-retrospective devoted to Russian artist Olga Chernysheva at BAK, in Utrecht. "The post-perestroika proletarian figure is the defining leitmotif of this exhibition," I write in a 1 300-word synopsis of my trip for my editor. At the Van Abbemuseum, in Eindhoven, I meet the museum's director, Charles Esche, co-founder of the art journal *Afterall.* I rant about Facebook, misquoting Stephen Burt's June 2010 article in the *London Review of Books* ("internet-driven disintermediation," writes Burt, "covers the rise of downloaded music, the lawsuits about it, the migration of 'little magazines' to online-only versions, the universal availability of porn, the universal availability of twee hedgehogs, and the disappearance of books review sections from newspapers"). Esche sends me a friend request the next morning.

APRIL

The real. "At some point South African artists need to take a deep breath, peg their noses, and dive out into the deep-end of experience, the unknown and uncharted depths of reality in making," wrote Ivor Powell in 1997. "I see few artists that one might think of as being at the cutting edge who are actually exploring and defining the contents and the nature of experience in South Africa." I am researching Powell, a former art critic who transformed into an accomplished investigative journalist. I email Ivor some questions. He is evasive, as is his manner, yet also forthcoming. "The way that art works right now," he offers during one email exchange, "I really don't understand it and I don't understand it with an intensity that amounts to blinding insight. Value is entirely opaque and determined by forces that are alien to what I care about in art." Art has been hijacked by the marketing of art, he adds, describing this practice as a species of commodity trading. "And it pisses me off." Speeding fines on my drive up to Grahamstown from Cape Town to present my findings: one. Speaker's fee at conference: none.

MAY

A bad month: I have to write about painter Vladimir Tretchikoff, twice. His exhibition at Cape Town's National Gallery is an aberration, an exercise in hubris, overzealous ambition and ideological gerrymandering. I say as much in my online review (fee R2 300). The most interesting debates, however, occur in private. "If one criticises this kind of show you dignify it with the attention and feed the monster that it is," remarks a colleague. "Yet passing over it with silence seems an act of bad faith." I also fall off my bicycle. Four stitches under my right eye. Everyone thinks I was punched.

JUNE

An even worse month: Piglet and I break up, after six years. Piglet used to be a film critic. Advertising is more profitable. I fly to Pretoria to see Gerard de Leeuw's toppled Verwoerd sculpture at the Voortrekker Monument for an 1 800-word *Mail&Guardian* feature (fee R5 625, I pay for the flight). The architect of apartheid lies on his back, his green body covered with mud-coloured dauber nests. *Art in America* ask me to pitch more reviews after reading my Zwelethu Mthethwa review (fee $150). I should be celebrating; instead I cry, a lot. And write about Santu Mofokeng's photo of his brother, Ishmael, who died from Aids-related complications in 2003. In London I tell an audience at the Victoria & Albert Museum how Santu cried when he told me about Ishmael in an interview. I stumble nervously during my reading, which is unremunerated; I also paid my way to London. On my last day in David Cameron's financially-bruised capital, I stumble, differently bruised, into a bookshop near Great Russell Street. I buy Terry Eagleton's book *The Function of Criticism.* I smile at his description of the 17th century critic as a "*flaneur* or *bricoleur*, rambling and idling among diverse social landscapes where he is everywhere at home". I'm doing okay, I realise.

THE BOOK REVIEW
AN ESSENTIAL MAP
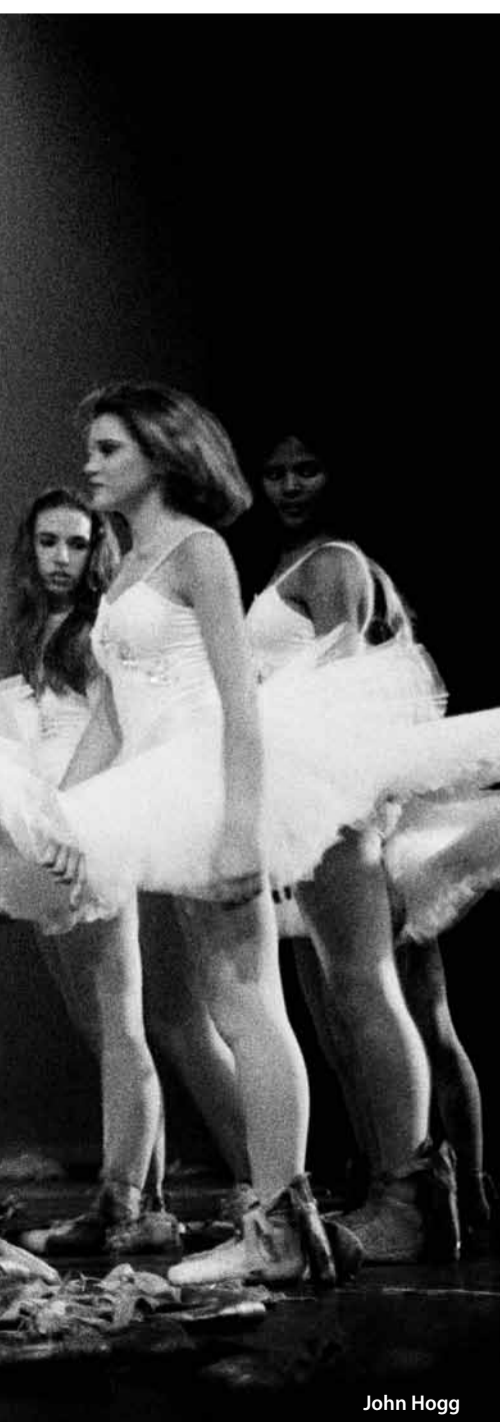
At the moment South Africa is experiencing a boom in book publishing. New writers are constantly minted, and the stories they tell, whether in fiction or non-fiction, are as diverse as they are exciting. It all bodes well for readers as it means a greater choice of books to choose from. It also means that books compete fiercely for buyers' attention. Which is why book reviews are regarded as essential maps to help buyers navigate aisles at bookstores.

With such vigorous book publishing taking place one would imagine that book reviews get prominent space in our media. Not so, say writers and journalists Arja Salafranca and Melinda Ferguson. Salafranca, a fiction writer, poet and editor, says: "Unfortunately book pages in some newspapers are shrinking; some papers have got rid of book reviews altogether, which is a huge pity.

"But we do still have papers (such as the *Mail&Guardian*) as well as magazines (such as *Wordsetc*) and online journals (such as Litnet and Slipstream) that give literary matters space and offer room for debate."

Ferguson, a books editor at *True Love* magazine, agrees: "There are very few magazines and newspapers that dedicate meaningful space and respect to books, authors, book launches and so on. Perhaps it's a reflection on what the population wants, for whom, if we look at stats, reading is not a top priority."

Why are book reviews so important in the first place? What is their function? "Essentially, a review should serve to tell the audience whether a book is worth buying and why, without giving away too much of the plot. The nature of reviews varies. Serious literary or academic journals often run longer and more analytical reviews. By contrast, reviews in the mass media lack deeper analysis because of a shortage of space," Salafranca says.

When reviewing books, neutrality flies out of the window. Whether in favour of or against the book, opinions matter. "I like opinionated reviews, where the reviewer has a strong stance. It doesn't matter whether I agree with him/her or not. I like these reviews because they encourage readers to see things in a new way," Ferguson says.

On the other hand, reviewers can miss the point or can have opinions that are loaded with venom. Ferguson, who wrote two bestselling autobiographical books on overcoming drug addiction, *Smacked* and *Hooked*, knows this phenomenon too well. She vividly remembers the reviews *Smacked* got when it came out in 2006.

"Hardcore reviewers tended to get stuck in the horror [of the book]. Very few got further than the sensational aspect and reviewed it as a literary work. I was disappointed. There was even one reviewer who had some connection to my ex-husband (who was in the book) and his family. She got quite personal and went on and on about how much I had hurt people and so on. She didn't stick to the book at all. I was pretty irritated. But *Smacked* has sold brilliantly. I guess all the attention, whether the reviews were accurate or not, have worked for me in terms of sales."

But, can a bad review truly harm book sales? Is the reading audience out there easily swayed by the subjective opinions of a reviewer? While acknowledging that book reviews serve as a "useful" tool to generate publicity, Salafranca believes that, ultimately, word of mouth and advertising are more potent drivers of book

sales, which can help counter negative book reviews. "People may occasionally be put off by a bad review, but then again they may go into a bookshop and pick up the badly reviewed book and read it for themselves and think to themselves, 'Hmm, I think I like the sound of this. To hell with whatever so-and-so said in the review.' It's important to have local books in our bookshops so that people can explore gems that may not have attracted publicity."

It stands to reason that a vibrant book publishing environment needs quality book reviews. For Ferguson, book reviewing takes more than just going to Google, as some local reviewers are wont to do, or merely reading the back jacket of a book so as to regurgitate. She acknowledges, however, that "there are some very fine reviewers out there who do the job brilliantly". She says: "I think *Hooked* is a better written and constructed

book but I don't feel enough reviewers have seen that. But as a writer you never really feel like all people get you and you can't force people to look at your book in the way you would like them to. As writers we land up being quite pathetically passive, panting for a drop of attention..."

Salafranca, who wrote a collection of stories *The Thin Line* in 2010 and recently edited *The Edge of Things: South African Short Fiction*, keenly follows reviews of her work. "Sometimes they focus on aspects you'd never considered. Other times, you do feel they are missing the point. It's all so subjective. We interpret anything from where we are standing, and our mood influences our responses to a particular piece. I'm generally happy that my work has attracted attention and reviews – and favourable ones. I am ready too to learn from what has been said or might be said."

FORGED IN
THE HEAT

25 YEARS AGO THE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM AND MEDIA STUDIES AT RHODES UNIVERSITY LAUNCHED *CUE* – A NEWSPAPER DEDICATED TO COVERING THE **NATIONAL ARTS FESTIVAL** IN GRAHAMSTOWN. CUE'S FIRST EDITOR, **GAVIN STEWART**, GOES BACK TO THE BEGINNING

Cue's instant success in 1987 came from a coincidence of events and places around, as much as inside, the Department of Journalism and Media Studies at Rhodes University.

The smouldering surround was a national State of Emergency, a punishing campaign by the apartheid government to put down a decade of rebellion. The liberation movements had sworn to make the black townships ungovernable; the youth demanded "liberation before education". Weekend funerals ignited more violence; more funerals.

But the tensions of repression and rebellion in any society also set off a creative surge, a burgeoning of all the arts, of allegory and satire and, more awkwardly, of protest theatre. The arts offer catharsis and a shared cloister, escape and engagement, an eye in the storm. The inconvenience of Grahamstown for everyone who does not live there makes the National Arts Festival a pilgrimage, as Guy Butler liked to say.

Increased funding from Standard Bank ensured a greater scale of productions and exhibitions, record audiences and the presence of most of the country's top arts journalists. This was surely the largest festival in the world to happen in a town without its own daily newspaper. The bank wanted to know if the journalism department could fill this gap.

Desktop publishing (DTP) was about to change print forever, but it was in service only at the *Weekly Mail* in Johannesburg. The journalism department had one small computer room and five IBM desktops – their 384K RAM about 1/1000th the power of today's desktop; an adjoining seminar room, created a rudimentary newspaper set-up.

Don Pinnock, then a senior lecturer, insisted: "We have to have a DTP system and Simon Pamphilon" (then *Rhodeo's* layout expert). Don conjured equipment and instruction in exchange for advertising. Charles Riddle volunteered his diplomatic and phenomenal proofing skills. We wrote to the editors of the major papers asking to use their writers – we could give all a

presence while competing for sales only with the *Eastern Province Herald*. Brainstorming with honours students for a word to fit all the arts came up with *Cue*. Student skills drove production.

Journalism was housed with drama in the Rhodes Theatre Building, close to the centre of the sprawling festival and home to two theatres and a small cafeteria. Other come-ins for reviewers, until the early hours of morning, were the company of colleagues, the heat of the debates – and help with the new technology. Gone was the security of office typewriter or dictate typist, editors wanted the copy electronically. *Cue* had an on-board technician.

In return the reviewers assumed a proprietary concern for policy and content. Competing reviews were printed side by side: "With the Pigs – against the Pigs". Acerbic observations filled the *BaQstage* column. Visitors streamed up the stairs to see the show.

As technology advanced *Cue* would lose "the smell of midnight oil".

At the height of the emergency state-funded performing arts councils and independents were producing trenchant theatre. Marthinus Basson's *Anatomie Titus – Fall of Rome* (Pact), Athol Fugard's *Place with the Pigs,* Terence Shank's *Strider* (Capab) and Gibson Kente's *Sekunjalo* were undeniably political. But *Titus* was set in Rome; *Pigs* about a Russian deserter, and *Strider* a Tolstoy story about an outcast among thoroughbred horses: "What do they mean: piebald?" Only *Sekunjalo* was overtly South African, a cautionary tale about rising vindictiveness in the struggle: it was banned in King William's Town under emergency regulations.

Cue's tenuous hold on reality came in the *Herald* posters on the front page each day: 50 from SA to meet ANC… Necklace victim: wife speaks… Priest shot in East Cape town… Swazi hit on ANC trio… Payroll robbers kill PE women...

Cue concluded its first festival with two ambitions: to review every production, main or fringe, the morning after it opened; and to replace the ungainly word "festivalgoer", which would embrace everyone there.

Over time a large panel of arts lovers volunteered, many teaching at Rhodes or local schools. Their incentive was two tickets for each performance; their equipment an A5 card large enough for a short comment. The back of the card was for productions which deserved more.

"Festino" and "festivore" ("as in culture vulture") leapt from a page of suggestions by Prof Jean Branford, head of the South African English Dictionary Unit, spawning "festoaf", "festitot", "festering" and "fested out"…

Cue was not exempt from criticism, which produced a calculation that the paper could, if necessary, fly on advertising and sales without sponsorship. But sponsorship won and, when I left Grahamstown, fringe reviews were relegated to the back of the *Cue*.

The festivals of the late 1980s brought a rare concatenation of political upheaval, artistic excellence, escape and engagement, deadlines, technical innovation, geographies, sponsorships, talent and skill, tiny rooms and giant egos, and huge appreciation. *Cue*, as David Williams put it, was "forged in the heat".

John Hogg

AN ETHICS
OF CARE FOR
HEALTH JOURNALISMS
(AND THEIR EDITORS)

Health journalists are not immune from pressures to break great stories before the opposition does and, in the digital age, all stories have to be entertaining and enticing to be read. So how do we think about the ethics of health journalism in the 21st century? Does health journalism, because it is about health, a special case, require different ethics to that of other subjects covered by journalists?

These kinds of issues formed the focus for an intimate symposium at Rhodes University in June this year, where about a dozen journalism scholars and a dozen journalists gathered for a two-day deep think and dialogue about ethics.

In partnership with Idasa, the Open Society Foundation, and the newly-established Discovery Centre for Health Journalism based at Rhodes, the symposium focused on linking new thinking in global media ethics to the day-to-day dilemmas faced by working journalists in Africa. The symposium also focused on the role of health journalists in promoting civic awareness and the health rights of citizens.

Key to this were ideas presented by Professor Clifford Christians, one of the world's leading scholars on ethics in media. Christians introduced discussion on developing an "ethics of care" that could have especial relevance for health journalism.

Christians' foundational idea is to centre ethics on a desire to encourage "caring communities and compassionate citizens". Christians pointed out that all ethical theories are based on philosophical presuppositions, and an ethics of care approach is grounded in what he sees as a universal "protonorm" – that all human life is sacred. "Different cultural traditions affirm human dignity in a variety of ways, but together they insist that all human beings have sacred status without exception."

He elaborated three key principles that this ethics of care invokes: other-regarding care, human dignity, and truth in context. This approach has profound implications for the doing of health journalism and challenges some of the core values of the liberal journalism tradition, such as the neutrality of the reporter. Christians put it starkly: "In the ethics of care, journalists are morally responsible to help citizens contribute to healthier communities. The primary mission of health care journalism is not the watchdog role but facilitating civil society."

Seeking to reintroduce an emotional component into media ethics, Christians draws on philosophies such as Confucianism, where equilibrium and harmony are seen as desirable ends to be striven for in human societies. He also draws on African notions of ubuntu as a foundational ethic. If the tenets of ubuntu are correct and a person's humanity derives from their interaction with other persons – and the notion that communities exist prior to individuals – then locating health journalism in what Christians calls a communitarianism ethics of journalism, creates a different kind of ethical calculation.

This leads Christians to suggest: "We are humans first, and journalists second," and that "emotions give us benevolence that we need to represent human experience"

– and that this is especially important when writing about health.

Christians used this as his basis to talk more practically about how to reduce what is often an external "gaze" or voyeuristic view of subjects. This can be particularly true when doing stories about people who are ill, or seeking medical help for some condition, or who are "different". Using the example of Joseph Merrick, the so-called "Elephant Man" (as he was called both in real life and as depicted in the famous film of the same name) Christians suggests that by foregrounding an other-regarding care drawn from feminist theory, journalists can and should become "pre-occupied" with those they are reporting on, particularly when they are writing about suffering, ill-health, or any difference from what is defined as normative in any society, including alternative sexualities.

Christians introduced the notion of "engrossment" – a real involvement with the subject rather than mere "looking" and describing – although he conceded this is often hard to do, or even think about doing – when it comes to actual day-to-day news journalism. But he made a strong case for the necessity of this kind of ethic for health journalists which also involves an element of "steadfastness", Christians' notion of an ongoing commitment and compassion and a desire to see things through.

Deepening this into an ethical paradigm for every-day work life as journalists is complex. Christians suggests that this necessarily involves a commitment to "truth in context". The fullest possible context should always be given in stories and ideally, the truth should enable audiences, "the public" to make better decisions, better health decisions and, ultimately, to be better citizens.

A wide variety of issues were discussed at the conference that echoed the themes and challenges that Christians raised. Sessions included looking at the media's role in facilitating the public understanding of health and medical science, asking in terms of "Stigma, blaming and shame: are journalists helping, healing, or harming?" and a presentation by David Holwerk from the Kettering Foundation on the relationship of journalism to civic life, particular with reference to community journalism in the US.

A particular area explored was how to equip journalism students (and working journalists) with every-day ethical tools, inspired by Christians' communitarian approach, or by other philosophical traditions. In the context of a decline of "disinterested science" and what appears to be a rapid rise of privately-funded research and even co-authorship of scientific research articles by pharmaceutical companies and their PR agencies, questions were asked about how to ensure the credibility of health journalism in particular. Should health journalists for example reference their articles (particularly online) in ways that journalists don't usually do, so audiences can easily verify sources and data?

A discussion about how the tension between indigenous knowledge, alternative medicine and scientific knowledge could be balanced, took place, which is particularly important in a context where many South Africans rely on all three traditions for their health care advice. How does the state impact on this, and how do health journalists make sense of their role as nurturers of civic awareness, in both health care and health policy? was an important question.

The journalists at the symposium said they were often troubled by their news organisations's expectations of them. In the final session, which focused on a possible Hippocratic oath for health journalists, particularly for graduates of Africa's first specialist postgraduate degree in health journalism now offered at Rhodes, most journalists felt that any such code of ethics should be bought into by management and editors first of all.

The relentless pressure to get the story, even in the face of what is often a special set of challenges for those writing about human health, seems to be getting worse, not better, in a more competitive and digital media environment. How, in this context, might the space be found for thinking about and putting into practice an ethics of care as the basis for better health care journalism?

BY PETER BENJAMIN

MOBILE TECH AND HEALTH COMMUNICATION

Today, in countries like South Africa (where 90% of youth and adults have access to a cellphone), almost anyone just about anywhere can communicate with nearly anyone else, immediately and for low cost (relative to any other way of doing this). This is extraordinary; it has the potential to transform how society is organised. We are just starting to explore what this means – many clever people have already learnt how to make lots of money.

But how can any-to-any immediate cheap interaction assist in areas such as health? I work with a not-for-profit company called Cell-Life which is taking the first steps in exploring the uses of cellphones in dealing with the overwhelming burden of disease there is in the country.

Mobile technology in the health sector (now referred to as mHealth) has exploded in the past year. There are dozens of mHealth initiatives, projects, reports and conferences (a global mHealth Summit was held in Cape Town in June this year).

South Africa is one of the countries in the developing world most active in mHealth. One example is that the Department of Health recently received 12 000 cellphones from the cellphone networks, and will distribute them to all the 4 300 public health facilities by the end of the year. Today only a third of these facilities have a working email, so these cellphones can greatly improve health information systems.

Most attention in mHealth goes on the amazing devices being developed in richer countries – the over 8 000 health apps for an iPhone; and "body area networks" that people wear connecting blood-pressure reading bracelets, installed blood-glucose meters, to a cellphone in your breast pocket listening to the heart for indications of arrhythmia.

However, in developing countries most people will not have such high-tech tools for many years. The health system in SA is as unequal as most areas of our society with the 16% with medical aid having a fairly good healthcare, while the public sector has much poorer resources for the remaining 84%.

For most people, assessing the public health system involves long travel, hours of waiting, frustration and poor service. Eighty percent of black South Africans consult a sangoma for health complaints before they go to a doctor. On one level, this is simply because a sangoma is easier to access and will treat the patient with respect. A major role that mHealth can play is in reducing the barriers to accessing the formal health system.

It is easy to get downloads, ringtones, games, love tips, pornography and horoscopes on your phone – why isn't it as easy to get health advice? Clay Shirky said, "These tools don't get socially interesting until they are technologically boring." The 100 000 or so iPhones in the country will have minimal impact on health care: they are amazing gadgets with beautiful health apps, but people with iPhones probably already have an internet connection at home or work and most have medical aid – that isn't where the health problems lie in South Africa. However, if we can turn the normal cellphones that 42 million people have into a tool for healthy living, then we can transform the way health care is communicated in the country.

There are many ways this could work:

- Health promotion and disease prevention: sms health tips and MXit chatrooms to help people stop smoking, lose weight, learn about nutrition, start exercising and generally encourage people living well.
- Providing general health information: why isn't there a free service that allows someone to sms the word "fever" or "nausea" in any SA language and receive sms information on how to deal with it?
- Dial-a-doctor: rather than having to travel and wait for hours to be seen by a nurse, why don't we have a way to phone a medic for a phone consultation, like NHS Direct in the UK or similar services in over 20 countries? If the doctor thinks the patient needs to go to a clinic, a referral note can be sent via sms. This sms would allow the patient to jump the queue in the clinic, and over time this would be a strong incentive for people to use the phone service to screen patients so only those that need to end up at the clinic (mHealth could reduce the numbers of people going to health facilities just like mBanking reduces the demand for bank branches).
- Treatment support for people with chronic conditions like Aids, diabetes or hypertension. Many examples have shown that mHealth can help people to adhere to medication and continue in treatment.
- Reduce the "three delays that kill" in maternal health: 1 500 women die every year in SA during pregnancy and childbirth, and mobile phones can reduce the delay in reaching a health professional when there is a problem, the delay in diagnosing the problem, and then the delay in receiving treatment.

Over the next few years, there is great potential for mHealth to make a difference in the lives of people. This is just one example of how the mobile revolution is changing the way we live.

AIDS IS A MIRROR

PEOPLE OFTEN ASK ME IF I **DON'T GET TIRED** OF COVERING THE **"DREARY"** AND **"DEPRESSING" SUBJECT OF AIDS.** I UNDERSTAND WHERE SUCH PEOPLE ARE COMING FROM, AND I FORGIVE THEIR IGNORANCE. **BUT FAR FROM BEING FATIGUED** BY CHASING DOWN STORIES AROUND ONE OF **THE GREATEST PANDEMICS** THE GLOBE HAS YET KNOWN, **IT INVIGORATES ME.**

How could I ever become bored reporting on Aids and the myriad issues surrounding it? To my mind, Aids is a mirror, reflecting everything dysfunctional in modern societies – from racial and sexual prejudice, to political inaction, to homophobia. Aids highlights the ever-widening gap between rich and poor, the cracks in countries' governing structures, the role (or lack of it) that civil society plays in trying to seal those fissures.

Many people I meet equate Aids with death. But for me, Aids is about life. Yes, I have watched it destroy lives. Yes, I have seen it making idiots out of highly intelligent people. Yes, I have seen it force the hands of powerful individuals into making decisions that have resulted in the deaths of thousands of people. Yes, I have gazed upon the beast as it has melted souls into dust.

But far more often, I have witnessed it transforming lives for the better, as it became testimony to the power and sheen of the human spirit. I have seen it turn racists into humanists; I have witnessed it morph misogynists into defenders of women's rights. I have looked into its eyes as it has moulded souls into gold.

I wasn't always enthusiastic about covering Aids. My eyes were just as firmly shut to the possibilities it offers as many African reporters' eyes are now. When I covered my first HIV conference in 1999 in Geneva, as the South African Broadcasting Corporation's health correspondent, I knew next to nothing about the politics of Aids and even less about the science of HIV.

I froze when I realised how many media conferences there were at any given time. I had no idea which to attend. I didn't know any of the role players. At the very first press briefing, a huge lump rose in my throat when I didn't even understand my fellow journalists' questions, let alone the scientists' responses. But then, I got lucky. I found someone to guide me through the morass.

Fatima Hassan was not a journalist. But she was someone with an extremely deep knowledge of Aids and the issues surrounding it, from science to politics, and she was very media savvy. After all, she was a lawyer who had worked for South Africa's then Aids Law Project.

Geneva was the spark that lit my relationship with Fatima. And, over the ensuing years, we would meet on occasion. She introduced me to topics she thought I should cover, and to experts who could speak on those topics.

Through Fatima's patience and selflessness, a new world opened up to me. I began to view society through the lens of Aids. The HIV epidemic took me into the heart of civil society and activism, into the oft dark bowels of ruling party politics, into the exhausting realm of science and medicine, into the incredible ability of humans to endure suffering and to transcend it.

Slowly, as I learned to tell compelling, human stories about Aids, and to unravel the terrible consequences of Aids dissidence and quack cures to a national audience, I gained confidence. I began to battle with news editors for more airtime for Aids stories.

Some of those battles I lost. But most, I won because I had knowledge, and through this knowledge, I could better argue my points and positions. Knowledge is power. And no one understands this cliché better than a journalist.

Fatima Hassan had vision. She realised the importance of the presence of a reporter who was clued up about Aids and its controversies at South Africa's public broadcaster –– especially at a time in the nation's history when its president was denying that HIV caused Aids, and its health minister was slamming life-prolonging antiretroviral drugs as "poisonous".

Such mentorship as that offered by Hassan, in my view, is the essential element missing in health journalism throughout Africa today. This void, I would argue, is the main reason why stories about HIV and Aids are mostly hidden deep inside newspapers and cut from radio and TV bulletins and programmes across the continent.

As I've tried to argue, it's not because the subject is inherently boring that this is happening. It's rather because of the formulaic way in which many HIV stories continue to be told, and because journalists for the most part have not been given the guidance and training necessary to give them the skills, and thus the power, to tell informed and – at the same time – gripping, Aids stories.

Aids is a complex epidemic. It requires considerable scientific and policy-related knowledge, as well as a good understanding of intricate topics such as the pharmaceutical industry's pricing structures and the politics of aid organisations. It's easy to get stories involving complicated issues like these wrong, especially if you aren't immersed in them every day.

What do reporters without backgrounds in reporting on HIV do when there's no one back at the office who knows more than they do about the politics and science of Aids? Well, my experience as a trainer in various newsrooms across Africa has shown me that they invariably knuckle down and write a story that's to the best of their abilities. The clock is ticking and they have to deliver.

More often than not, though, their stories about Aids lack strong angles, they often miss the real news at an event and, sometimes, they unwittingly misrepresent the facts… because mentorship simply isn't available to them – more so with regard to science reportage, of which the dearth on this continent is huge, than any other field of journalism in Africa.

In South Africa, to some degree, journalists now reporting on Aids and surrounding issues face a more daunting task than their colleagues of the past. Gone are the days – thankfully – when the country had a health minister punting garlic and potatoes as cures for Aids. Now, we have a far more "boring" minister in Aaron Motsoaledi. He actually believes that HIV causes Aids. He's actually doing his best to give his HIV-positive people medicine to keep them alive.

The topic of Aids is thus far less sexy in South Africa than it was in the past. Well, all the more reason for good mentors who are able to guide less knowledgeable journalists towards the wonderful, unusual stories about Aids that still abound, but remain untold.

For example: improved treatment means HIV-infected Africans are now living far longer than they ever have. Where are the stories about children who were born with HIV and are now graduating from university?

To explore their hopes and fears and dreams as these intensified and waned, or even dissipated, in their childhood, and where they are now in their lives, would surely make for a fascinating feature story. How does a 10-year-old child feel, being on a modern-day regimen of antiretroviral medicines? How does this affect his or her life?

Of course, to break stories such as this requires considerable skill, not to mention a grasp of the ethics involved in getting them to a wider audience. It demands good old fashioned spadework, but it also demands technical knowledge of HIV treatment and its implications.

There are experienced journalists in Africa, and particularly South Africa, who are outstanding writers on Aids. But many stories about the epidemic continue to be told by reporters who don't know much about it.

If we are to improve health writing on the continent, we must change this from within. The experienced journalists must be given the scope to lead from the front, and to impart their knowledge to their less-experienced colleagues. Obviously, this will require commitment from all concerned – including senior media managers. Are they brave enough to make this commitment for the future of health journalism in Africa?

Aids isn't boring. Rather, no one wants to read boring, ill-considered stories – on any subject. No one has to read, listen or view a report filled with bland statistics without any human face, simply because it focuses on a major epidemic. People want compelling stories. Good journalism. If an Aids story is exciting, people will read, listen to or view it. News editors will allocate space or airtime to it. And, at the same time as entertaining, it could very well save lives.

THE **HIV EPIDEMIC** TOOK ME INTO THE **HEART OF CIVIL SOCIETY** AND ACTIVISM, INTO THE OFT **DARK BOWELS** OF RULING **PARTY POLITICS**, INTO THE **EXHAUSTING** REALM OF **SCIENCE AND MEDICINE**, INTO THE INCREDIBLE **ABILITY OF HUMANS** TO **ENDURE SUFFERING** AND TO **TRANSCEND IT.**

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Coming through customs at Cancun, Mexico, I noticed how streamlined the passage to Washington/Bogota-bound flights was. Plan Colombia, conceived as a US$7 billion antidrug and antiguerilla military aid since 2000 to grease US geo-strategic relations and clean Colombia of "subversive" presence, was evident in the ease with which I slipped into that country. This was one border post the Colombian National Army appeared not to need to police so vigorously. And just as well, for without a work permit my arrival as a foreign journalist intent on digging deeper into the conflict zones and Colombian media would have raised unnecessary interest in quarters responsible for that country's reputation as one of the most dangerous places on earth.

On a Fulbright Fellowship to the University of Maryland, I was researching the viability of community media models in the US, but my investigation led me to the recognition of the very compromised nature of that media, and I was keen to identify examples of good practice.

The indigenous media of Colombia have survived an escalating conflict in the countryside. These media use a range of technologies and discourses to inform and mobilise an indigenous population of less than a million, a minority left over from 500 years of more-or-less systematic genocide perpetrated by colonial and neo-colonial occupation. And they also articulate their work with Afro-Colombian communities and other sectors of society opposed to government policies.

Indigenous media form an organising and mobilising voice co-ordinating the ideologies and activities of a resistance that has come to represent a thorn in the side of a government intent on plundering the social and raw capital of Colombia, often with the assistance and to the benefit of international interests.

Colombia is ruled by a broad neo-liberal consensus, firmly committed, on one hand, to a laissez faire capitalism that sees indigenous populations as mere hindrances to profit, and on the other, a cosy and lucrative relationship with the US (and its misconceived and ineffectual war on drugs).

Also, Colombia lives with the consequences of a 40-year-long conflict split between warring groups which include the National Army, assisted in an underhand way by private paramilitary groups, against the marxist-guevarist FARC, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, in a context of increasing narco-trafficking. As the military is constitutionally entrusted with providing security for transnational corporations, military action against FARC puts indigenous populations firmly in the cross fire.

Los medios de comunicación indígenas en el fuego cruzado, "indigenous media in the cross fire", was then to become my primary research focus. Using video as a research tool to record interviews and to broker personal interaction with my case study participants, I was faced with a seemingly insurmountable challenge: to communicate with them in Spanish. I turned to Laurence Mazure with whom I had worked extensively in South Africa in the 1990s. Working mainly in print for *Le Monde Diplomatique,* Mazure has been covering the Colombian story from Bogota for the last decade. She was ideally suited to tune me into the oppositional readings of a society depicted by the Colombian government as Latin America's success story.

In the next few weeks we traversed the Andes, gathering material for Mazure's print articles and my research documentary from the media projects which we felt would best describe the nuances of the Colombian mediascape.

Our research journey started in Bogota and moved over the Andes to the distant South West region of Cauca, to the cities of Popayan and Santander de Quilichao, as well as the rural town

of Belalcazar. This region hosts indigenous populations under military threat. Parts of Cauca, for example, have become no-go areas under control of the military in hot pursuit after FARC leader Cano, and killings in this region have escalated.

Our case studies included commercial community TV stations, rural and urban indigenous media projects, underground graffiti culture, ethnographic film-makers, alternative documentary film-makers and critical media academics.

We investigated political assassination of indigenous leaders and the court processes of their murderers, an in-depth analysis of traditional indigenous culture and political economy in the traditional indigenous strong-hold Belalcazar, and the role of indigenous Andean cosmology and its influence on the practice of community journalism.

In addition, practices of disaster management and their relationship to the problem of environmental degradation and the role of transnational corporations in that damage were used as a tangible example of indigenous media's role in opposition to neo-liberalism.

A historical analysis of the indigenous peoples' movement in terms of the phenomenon of the *minga* (non-violent protest marches and political mobilisation) forms a contrasting backdrop to patterns of neo-liberal market-driven media consumption in mainstream Colombian society.

Unanticipated and divergent perceptions and descriptions of the role of a journalist in Colombian society, and its relationship to the challenges of sustainable community media models were explored with the producers of these media products.

Finally, lessons we could learn for their applicability to African contexts were explored with a view to highlighting successful responses by media which habitually find themselves having to work in hostile environments.

Speaking to *comunicadores* ("communicators"), as indigenous community media workers call themselves, I found their stories ranged from the most basic difficulties faced in their work such as exorbitant transmission fees, the sabotage of transmitters by actors in the conflict, and the harassment of communicators in the field.

But their stories also cut deeper, with tales of murder and forced removal from their lands, always with the official aspersion that indigenous people collude with rebels, are not committed to a new Colombia and are in some way responsible for their own predicament. Because communicators see their media work as just another aspect of their communitarianism, they live an existence where the war on an independent media in Colombia is bound up in the circumstances of their lives in general, that of an incessant war.

One communicator spoke not only about her station's transmitter being blown up by FARC, but also her fears for the safety of her family and community. A man crying over the displacement of his family following a rebel attack, was all the more distraught because he now stands accused by the National Army of collaboration with these same rebels.

A leading, outspoken and critical TV journalist awarded a Nieman Fellowship to Harvard explained how he was targeted by phone- and mail-tapping and death threats perpetrated illegally by the secret services.

An academic told of the frustration of teaching students from the elite who genuinely abhor critical thinking as unpatriotic, and of a society which uses news as justification of a national narrative bearing no resemblance to reality.

We saw full-scale police and army violence against peaceful indigenous marchers, their dead, and their wounded, while, in between the shootings, indigenous communicators challenged their actions with vox pops on the front-line, cameras rolling.

To capture research interviews and some of the contexts on video, has been a very powerful way of working. In the process I came to agreements with interviewees for the rights to include their media products in the documentary, so their images are used either for their explanatory value, or are subjected to analysis as media texts.

The research process captured in the 72-minute documentary production now continues in the editing and write up of these findings, as a process of self-reflection and analysis, where my own emerging understandings are constantly interrogated, and shaped.

COLLABORATION ENHANCES THE STORY

The collaboration with Paul Hills for the research documentary on Colombia, *Media in the Cross Fire*, has been a unique opportunity to reflect more deeply on collaborative journalistic practices in the context of one of the worlds' most complex and under-reported long term conflicts.

We did not work within the usual hierarchical "correspondent/stringer" paradigm, but within the framework of a co-operative and reciprocal collaboration.

This was actually an extension of the type of work we had already done in South Africa in the early 90s when we ran a foreign correspondents' office on an alternative logic: journalists from different countries and types of media (some did print and radio, others, television, for both small and major channels) shared access to their primary sources of information together without the usual worry of petty individual competition, just as they shared logistics and costs, too. When, for example, a print journalist worked with a TV crew on a specific story, they shared travelling costs and access to various sources, while remaining obviously free to angle their respective reports without fear of interference or redundancy.

The shared logistics enhanced their way of being creatively complementary rather than pettily competitive towards each other: as a result, their shared dialogues also enriched their experience and understanding of "the story".

Our team in Colombia functioned like that again at the level of our two-person crew: Paul's focus on the political economy and discourses of Colombian community media, more specifically, indigenous media, was really an academic topic. His medium, television, is different from mine – print. I started the pre-production doing what is routine for me: contacts with a broad range of interlocutors, and gathering leads which I knew I could use to convince my own clients to take reports on some general interest topics. Being the only Spanish speaker of the two, my linguistic skills helped our team establish a valuable dialogue with our interlocutors and facilitate our mutual understandings and positions.

This co-operative and collaborative organisation of work also proved to be particularly appropriate to access, on the ground, the realities of community media whose equally co-operative and collaborative structures are re-enforced by the specifics of having to work in the middle of an armed conflict.
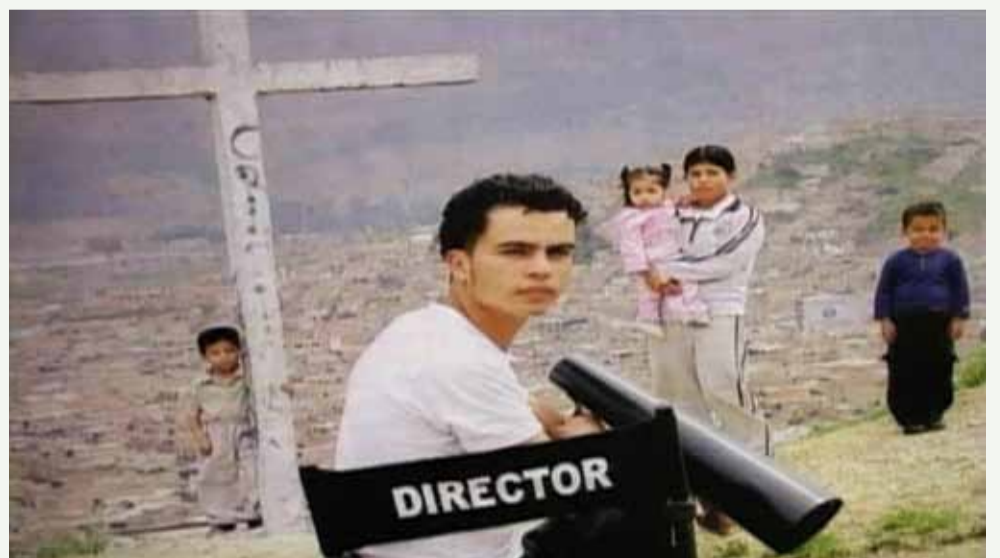
This has to do with the fact that, in Colombia, community and alternative media have the closest and most direct access to the situations causing the conflict as well as resulting from it: these media and their workers live and work in the marginalised urban and rural areas where the conflict unfolds its crudest militarised and economic manifestations.

When, for instance, (as reported by Pax Christi in the Tolima region http://www.ikvpaxchristi.nl/files/Documenten/LA%20Colombia/Cajamaraca%20rapport%20Spaans.pdf), South African mining transnational Anglo Gold Ashanti does not fulfill environmental procedures, alternative and indigenous community media are there, reporting on and following up the alleged dirty tricks used by AGA along with the legal armed forces and paramilitary groups, to intimidate communities and forcibly access their land.

Our co-operative and collaborative way of working also helped equalise the playing field of the extensive dialogues and in-depth interviews we held with our interlocutors, thus strengthening crucial reciprocal trust in a context as delicate as that of the conflict. This mutual trust allowed us to push our investigation quite far, thus exploring the links between specific organisational forms of community/alternative media with their unique proximity with the armed conflict and its underlying macro-economics, and critical reflection produced by these media.

Apart from the collaboration with Paul for the documentary, the whole pre-production/production process also allowed me to file three major double-page stories on the destabilisation of Colombia by mining transnationals – for Belgium daily *La Libre Belgique* (accessed, with European Union institutions, by employees and civil servants of 27 countries), for Swiss daily *Le Courrier*, and for international monthly *Le Monde Diplomatique* which insures a translation into English of its original French articles. A confidential newsletter with which I have been collaborating for a long time, *Risques Internationaux – Nord Sud Experts*, also benefited from an economic angle on the same topic.

Colombia provides a good example as to why the political economy and the sustainability of alternative and indigenous community media is actually a strategic question. Beyond the specificities of Colombia, the status of alternative and community media might well provide an accurate insight on the strategic issues at stake in the daily lives of common citizens, and the level of willingness of governments and economic groups, to hear about them.

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"IT IS A CRISIS, IT JUST WASN'T A CRISIS ACCORDING TO HOW WE AS JOURNALISTS EXPECTED IT TO BE. IT'S AN INDICTMENT, IT'S A PROBLEM WITH JOURNALISTS THAT WE FOLLOW THE PACK, AND WE FOLLOW CERTAIN STORIES THAT ARE IN THE NEWS AND WHEN IT'S OUT OF THE NEWS IT DIES."
KHADIJA MAGARDI, JOURNALIST

"DO I THINK WE ACTED RESPONSIBLY? ABSOLUTELY. DO I THINK THE NGOS ACTED RESPONSIBLY? NO. I THINK THERE WAS A LOT OF FEAR MONGERING BEFORE THE WORLD CUP."
KEVIN RITCHIE, EDITOR, *SATURDAY STAR*

"I'M NOT REALLY CONCERNED ABOUT FIGURES FOR ONE REASON AND THAT IS, WE WERE BUSY WITH AWARENESS FOR TWO YEARS."
CORINNE SANDENBURG, DIRECTOR, STOP

"YOU ALSO HAVE TO BE AWARE THAT SOMETIMES DONOR INTERESTS DRIVE CONCERNS."
JOAN VAN NIEKERK, CHILDLINE

"WHEN YOU GET TO THE CHARGE OFFICE [WITH A VICTIM OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING] THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, THEY REFER YOU TO A TRAUMA ROOM, AND THEN IN A TRAUMA ROOM THEY'LL SAY WE DON'T KNOW HOW TO HELP YOU."
BABALWA MAKHAWULA, NEW LIFE CENTRE

"IT'S NOT ALWAYS THAT SIMPLE TO IDENTIFY A VICTIM OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING, MANY OF THE GIRLS OR THE WOMEN WHO ARE VICTIMS OF THIS CRIME, THEY THEMSELVES DON'T ALWAYS KNOW THAT THEY ARE VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING DUE TO ITS SUBVERSIVE NATURE AND THE AMOUNT OF DECEIT THAT IS INVOLVED."
DETECTIVE SERGEANT **MARCEL VAN DER WATT**, HAWKS

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These were just some of the comments and insights uncovered by child journalists tasked with exploring how human trafficking exists in South Africa, and how the issue was portrayed in the media in advance of the 2010 World Cup, and whether the two are complementary or conflicting.

The comments were included in the radio documentary created by Media Monitoring Africa's (MMA) first two child journalists, grade 7 pupils Khotso Zinhle and Khumo Baduza. The documentary *Child protection and trafficking: is the media telling the right(s) story?"* was a component of Media Monitoring Africa's broader project by the same name.

The project's vision was to bring this specific child-related issue to children, to equip them with knowledge and skills that would enable them to critically engage with media, to develop their own understanding of the issue of human trafficking and finally have them evaluate how it was handled by the media by using their newly-acquired skills.

The capacity and capabilities of our 13-year-old journalists were never in doubt. What was challenging was setting out with them to untangle the complexities of human trafficking in a South African context, how it was portrayed by the media, why it was reported in this way, and ultimately whether this was helpful or unhelpful, and why.

This would have been a challenge for any journalist, and indeed we went on to find out that there were many misunderstandings and misconceptions about this issue at different levels. It certainly helped that our child journalists were curious, critical and hungry for answers.

The project was a multi-faceted one. MMA trained child media monitors and it was from these media-savvy students that we selected our trainee reporters. Even in the earliest stages the child journalists demonstrated great insight into the issue, with Khumo Baduza telling a press conference on children's rights on 12 June 2010, day one of the project, that "human trafficking didn't arrive with the World Cup!"

A valid question is why we opted for a radio documentary rather than a written story. Essentially we wanted to produce a product in which the children's voices would be heard, and in so doing, challenge any idea that this is an adults-only discussion, especially when it largely affects children. It is one thing to have journalists and media professionals report on children's issues, it is quite another for children to then hold the journalists as well as the NGOs to account for the way the issue was put across.

A child's voice would catch the ear of listeners in a radio documentary in a way not possible in a written piece and this medium provided a much more imaginative and tangible platform for the children to reach an audience of adults as well as their own peers.

The plan was to equip children with greater knowledge and understanding of the broader issue of human trafficking, but specifically within the South African context. Then to pose the question and help them come up with a way of getting that question answered.

Their journalistic training began with a workshop to introduce the two girls to the process of compiling and producing a story, and examining where news comes from, and the choices involved from picking a story idea, to identifying interviewees, to deciding how a story should be structured.

We also explored with them the different types of journalism, from reactionary news stories, to opinion pieces, to investigation and analysis. Aside from, "the who, what, where, when, why and how" questions they would need to ask, we also examined why "so what?" was going to be an important tool for them in establishing the impact and relevance of the information they were to uncover.

Next up were the particulars of making a piece for radio, and how they may differ from print or television. Concepts such as using sounds alongside voices to create interest for listeners were explored, and the impact sounds could have was teased out.

Interview tips and techniques were also on our mini-syllabus, as well as exercises on structuring a story, without pre-empting your interviewee's answers. But the real classroom was out in the field. Before setting off to untangle the mixed messages about human trafficking and the World Cup, our journalists took on a shorter documentary, examining issues of child safety more broadly.

This exposed them to the realities of identifying a story they wanted to tell, choosing interviewees, setting up interviews and carrying them out, and sifting through material to structure a radio piece that was both informative and engaging. The theme of child safety was also closely linked to human trafficking and whet their appetite and interest for the slightly more daunting challenge ahead.

The journalists embraced the task of asking "is the media telling the right, or indeed, a human-rights based story about human trafficking?" As media monitors, they had already been looking at how various media outlets were reporting human trafficking, and this gave our journalists a head start. MMA also had a team of adults conducting media monitoring of these articles and was keeping track of different articles that appeared dealing with this issue.

Our child journalists selected a public service announcement by NGO STOP; warning that 100 000 women would be trafficked into South Africa for the 2010 World Cup; and a newspaper article "Human trafficking – the cup crisis that never was", and began their journey of finding out what lay in between.

We brainstormed with the children about who they would like to access. They very quickly determined that police, social workers, NGOs and media professionals were the ones who could help us. Additionally they felt it necessary to speak to ordinary citizens as they were the ones who the media communicated to.

What followed was an insightful journey with our two child journalists, not only in getting to the bottom of the question we were trying to answer, but additionally into the solid grasp that they had of the task at hand. With each new interview they conducted, the girls' tenacity increased, as did their realisation that adults can sometimes talk in very indirect language and not simply, clearly and straight to the point; in fact at times avoiding directly answering their questions entirely. During interviews, despite having had already decided on certain questions in order to stay on track, new dots were connected, and incredibly intuitive and important questions were asked by the girls that had previously not been thought of.

Press release reliance, unhelpful stereotypes, a lack of local context, an NGO's inability to stand over figures it

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disseminated, and indications that well-intentioned but perhaps over-eager and ill-informed international donors all contributed to a frenzy about human trafficking, followed by fatigue. This was the story uncovered by the two 13-year-old journalists.

Theirs was an exceptional journey that culminated in the documentary premiering to an audience of journalists, government and NGO representatives, police, and other interested stakeholders. Their work sparked a debate about roles, most especially those of journalists and NGOs, and how to ensure accuracy and balance sensationalism against sensitivity.

Both journalists were commended by host Jeremy Maggs for "probably having the best handle on the issue", while Khotso Zinhle had this advice for her fellow journalists: "Media need to stop being lazy and give Google a rest."

Through the entire process, what became apparent was the capacity of children who, if given the right support, input, encouragement and skills, can and want to accomplish something truly significant. MMA's first two child journalists have been equipped with so much more than merely the ability to operate a

voice recorder, they have been given the courage to ask questions and call on people to answer them. They are able to analyse media and assess what is communicated to them in a far more critical manner. They are able to discern what messages they receive.

We have helped set them on a road to critical analysis and media awareness, the rest of the journey is up to them. What is even more exciting is that with the establishment of the Children's News Agency, more children are following in their footsteps. In the meantime look out for these names – Khotso Zinhle and Khumo Baduza. We strongly suspect you have not heard the last from them!

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AS A PHOTOGRAPHER I OFTEN ASK MYSELF WHETHER WHAT I'M DOING IS IN THE VICTIM'S BEST INTEREST. I USE VISUAL IMAGES TO TELL A STORY; IT'S HOW I COMMUNICATE A PERSON'S HUMANITY, HOW I CONVEY THEIR PAIN AND ANGUISH OR THEIR HOPE FOR AND PURSUIT OF SURVIVAL.

STORIES OF THE VICTIMS

STORY AND PHOTOGRAPHS **BY MELANIE HAMMAN**

Sometimes I wonder if I am crazy to be covering the issue of human trafficking as a photographer. That's when I realise how life can have its own way of deciding such things; it's what I've been compelled to do. Nothing about this job makes it easy – there's the photographic challenge of getting shots of criminal activity, which by its very nature is clandestine. Equally difficult is bearing the weight of absorbing and communicating the unrelenting pain of the victims.

Yet this is what I do, and so my journey brings me face to face with many victims of the global trafficking of human beings, most of whom are women, many still children. In most cases they are helpless to escape the horror of what their lives have become, though some do. In hearing their stories and, in some cases, following their journey of recovery, I have come to understand the interwoven layers of my responsibility—as a photographer, a journalist, and a human being.

The pursuit of any documentary photographer or photojournalist is to tell a story visually – so the image conveys the story without the necessity of words. To do this, I find ways to personify the issue, to bring an abstract subject into the realm of reality. Data about human trafficking, while horrifying to learn, can't do justice to this story: Visual images – with the capacity to draw us in to another human being's existence – have a vital role to play as powerful storytelling vehicles. Absent this personal connection, people remain detached.

The fine line between being a journalist and being someone who exploits a victim has become clear to me in my attempt to cover this story. During the past year, as I have met with women and young girls who were victims of domestic sex trafficking in South Africa and with social workers who work with victims who have escaped, I have more fully understood the human dimensions of this issue – and how it connects to our efforts to report on these lives. Merely by retelling her story, a victim can be retraumatised, severely complicating her recovery. For minors, the risk is even greater since the level of manipulation and trauma they've been exposed to often leaves them with severe psychological problems.

I experienced this with the first young woman I spoke to in South Africa who had been trafficked. She was 17 years old and had been entrapped in this circumstance for five years before she escaped and found refuge. Even after she was "safe", she suffered from psychotic spells; the effects of her trauma meant that she could not recall with any certainty the timeline of her experiences. Soon after she related her story to me, I learned that she had relapsed into a mental health crisis. Additionally, questioning victims too early (or at all) can risk jeopardising possible police investigations, which in South Africa are frustratingly more the exception in such cases than the rule.

As a photographer I often ask myself whether what I'm doing is in the victim's best interest. I use visual images to tell a story; it's how I communicate a person's humanity, how I convey their pain and anguish or their hope for and pursuit of survival. I've come to accept that it is not always possible for me to remain emotionally detached, as much as I might feel this to be a journalist's obligation.

When human trafficking surfaced as a story during the World Cup in South Africa, numerous reporters sought me out, and they asked me "Can you get me a victim?" The insensitivity of their request hit me hard, revealing the ugly side of journalism. Insensitive sensationalist reporting of human trafficking – conveying little beyond the hype of headlines based on hugely exaggerated speculation – has led to a media backlash. The surge of misinformed reporting during the World Cup resulted in small but unrealistic expectations that government or legal authorities would respond in some positive way and in the public's belief that once the World Cup left the stage, so, too, would the issue of human trafficking. It was as if South Africans convinced themselves that something foreign arrived with the sports event— and would be gone when the games were over.

Yet the truth is that human trafficking, even though it hadn't been covered by the news media, has been part of the migrant flow into South Africa for decades. Nor does it happen only to women who aren't South African. And eradicating it will not take place in a vacuum.

Similarly, reporting about it needs to be embedded in the complexities of how this nation's poor women and children are marginalised – and yes, trafficked – as they confront obstacles in acquiring an education and in being kept healthy and safe. It should surprise no one that human trafficking is happening in this country in which two-thirds of children live in poverty and sex crimes against women and children climb year after year, and yet these crimes remain among the least of the government's priorities.

Through my photography I work to reveal the reality and horror of human trafficking. Yet in doing so I am acutely aware of the traumatic scars these experiences leave inside their victims. Being a journalist does not give me the right to invade their lives in ways that will reignite their pain.

PRECISELY. NOT FIVE. NOT SEVEN. SIX.

THE **HOWLS** OF PROTEST WERE **LOUD AND LONG**. AND THEY **SOUNDED SINCERE**. BUT FROM FIRST YEAR STUDENTS THEY OFTEN DO – **THEIR OBJECTIONS** TO THE HARD NEWS ASSIGNMENT IN WEEK TWO HAD BEEN **HEARTFELT**. REPORT A 40-MINUTE PRESENTATION IN 250 WORDS? **WE CAN'T!** YOU HAVEN'T TAUGHT US ENOUGH! **BUT THEY DID IT**. NOW IT WAS WEEK FOUR AND THEY WERE HOLLERING ABOUT THE TUTORIAL. **WRITE A PERSONAL NARRATIVE IN SIX WORDS? BARBARIC!** A CRIME AGAINST THEIR **WRITING GENIUS! IT CAN'T BE DONE!**

After just one month at university, they had to tell their life story in six words. Precisely. Not five. Not seven. Six. And they were scared. So they made a noise. So I did too. Eventually they listened and this is what they heard.

The six-word story is not my doing. Ernest Hemingway started it, or so literary legend has it. Ernest who, ma'm? Hemingway. Google him but remember to omit the second *m* then read his work. Story goes he wrote the world's first six-word novel in response to a challenge, either one of his own making or one made in a bar. But the birthplace of the genre is not as important as its first example. *For sale: baby shoes, never worn.*

In recent years, the six-word story has attracted a considerable following including themed competitions in publications like *The New York Times* (http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/tag/six-word-memoirs/?scp=4&sq=six%20word%20memoirs&st=cse). There are websites devoted to the genre and online magazine *Smith* assiduously nurtures the six-word industry. Recently its editors published an anthology of six-word memoirs. The collection, called *Not Quite What I Was Planning,* includes pieces by writers known and unknown: **Secret to life: marry an Italian** (Nora Ephron); **Fifteen years since last professional haircut** (Dave Eggers); **Fearlessness is the mother of reinvention** (Arianna Huffington); **Mom, Dad. Daphne, Owen. Who's next?** (Sean Wilsey); **Revenge is living well without you** (Joan Carol Oates); **Liars, hysterectomy didn't improve sex life!** (Joan Rivers). Well, no, I didn't use those last two as examples in class.

Using six-word stories in the classroom is not a new idea. According to Wikipedia, there's already a teacher's guide to using the six-word memoir as a tool for teaching. And playing with the form in newsrooms is not new either. In response to the competition copy in front of them, editors in *The New York Times* City Room wrote **Dead tree's future limited. Now us.**

In the lecture hall, however, howling continued in sporadic outbursts. But eventually, like all good stories, the six-word memoirs succeeded in silencing the student listeners into wonder. I didn't do this alone: I was helped by a 10-minute NPR segment (http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=18768430) which is the most infectious introduction to the genre I have yet sourced. In it, the *Smith* editors explain how diverse the six-word form is and how much literary, intellectual and emotional potential it has. Thoroughly infected, I designed a tutorial session which aims to help students isolate the main focus of a story, and then to tell that story concisely, precisely and winningly. In six words.

Obviously, lead stories of six words are not a prescription for newsroom promotion. But reporters who know what the story is, and have the confidence to tell that story concisely yet compellingly, would be a newsroom asset. So, by writing their own stories in six words, students would – I hoped – learn how to get to the point succinctly, yet subtly and clearly.

The Rhodes journ school's weekly tutorials are led by senior journ students, and provide a more intimate and supported learning environment than the relative anonymity of a neon-lit lecture venue with more than 200 students. So, in week four of 2011, tutors introduced students to the six-word genre by calling on Hemingway, NPR and the examples above. Students were then encouraged to write multiple stories, covering various aspects of their lives. They then had to winnow this selection, alerting them – I hoped – to matters of editorial discernment and readers' needs.

In designing this tutorial, I deliberately discarded topics apparently popular with newspaper editors. So out went mothers (not every student has one), love (potentially perilous on many levels), and philosophy (who cares). But life stories offered potential, both for learning and for reading. The writing assignment that week had been a personal narrative so students were fresh from encountering themselves. What was the point of that exercise, ma'am? The point was that if you do not tell the truth about yourself you cannot tell it about other people. Virginia Woolf said that too. Google her but remember to insert a second *o* in the surname.

After reading the results of that personal narrative assignment, I realised that many students had epic life stories already lodged under their 18-year-old skins. Instinctively, I knew that Rhodes University's first year journalism students could write beautiful stories, with the best words they could find. And many of them did.

Financial Times columnist Lucy Kellaway nails work in six words: http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/e0e11924-bfa9-11e0-90d5-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1W9lJwWST

Crazy dad. Loud sisters. Normal one.

Parents died but wasn't the end.

One way traffic, in wrong lane.

She loves me, but I don't.

Mom was love. Dad was absent.

If hell is real, I'm screwed.

She left, he left, I'm left.

One person, two families, three lives.

Life is tough. Fit off-road tyres.

Lost the path, so slipped away.

Can't really colour inside the lines.

Black cats. Ladders. Bring it on.

Mom giving birth, they both died.

I will always believe in fairytales.

Stone dropped, ripples spread, life changed.

Born there, live here. Not moving.

Mismatched, multicoloured, tied-together shoelaces: tripping.

Well, the line was never toe-shaped.

Born right. Lived wrong. Alive again.

THE NEO-COLONIALISM
OF JOURNALISM EDUCATION

Visit any university in China and the Middle East and you will find staff and programmes bought in from universities across the developed (especially Anglo-Saxon) world. For the rapidly expanding education sectors of the Bric countries and their fellows, by far the easiest thing to do is to bring in ready-made programmes and qualifications from the increasingly cash-starved universities of the first world. The added cachet this gives of a foreign (and still, despite everything, often perceived as 'better') qualification just brings more students to the doors, and more money for both the university and the parent institution back home in Perth, or Manchester.

What seems like a win-win situation for all, is never as simple as it sounds. As these programmes expand from the more technical, engineering, medicine and accounting, to the more subjective and socially-constrained subjects like media and journalism practice, problems are thrown into relief. This hasn't stopped the universities and their paymasters, however, and the neo-colonialism of education continues, regardless (Baty 2009; Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2009; Universities UK 2009).

In 2009, a colleague, Caroline Hawtin, and I set out to research the ethical dimensions of these international journalism and media programmes, and how lecturers negotiate the minefield of teaching Anglo-Saxon-style journalism in the non-Anglo-Saxon world. By examining curricula and course materials, and conducting interviews with teaching staff at 14 of these foreign programmes in the Middle East and China, we hoped to elucidate the specific problems facing journalism lecturers in these contexts, and to start a debate about what, exactly, we are hoping to accomplish.

The study was presented at the World Journalism Education Congress in Grahamstown in July last year, and published in the *Journalism and Mass Communication Educator* in winter 2010. Overall, we found some common frustrations for staff teaching in these programmes, and some common issues across the regions studied.

For staff based in the home countries in the study (the UK, Canada, the USA, Australia and New Zealand), the frustrations were largely the function of the additional workload and the reluctance of their parent university to accept that delivering the same programme thousands of miles away in a completely foreign culture was not as simple as they thought.

Programmes were mostly the product of the business or internationalisation divisions of the universities concerned, with little consideration for the concerns of the journalism departments and their staff. More than one programme leader described coming into their office one day to discover that they were now responsible for arranging the delivery of their carefully-constructed and -managed local journalism programme at a university in a country they had never visited, and had no specific knowledge of.

In the case of many of the nationally-accredited programmes in the UK, Australia and New Zealand, this

IF ONE TEACHES **THE TRADITIONAL FOURTH ESTATE JOURNALISM** OF THE ANGLO-SAXON WORLD, COMPLETE WITH ITS **WATCHDOG FUNCTION** AND **OPPOSITIONAL ATTITUDE** TO **POWER**, ONE RUNS THE RISK OF **EXPOSING STUDENTS** TO SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES, FROM AN **INABILITY TO FUNCTION** WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THEIR ENVIRONMENT, TO **IMPRISONMENT AND WORSE.**

included modules on media law and shorthand. There are journalism schools in China gamely teaching Teeline shorthand to Chinese students in order that they pass the UK's National Council for the Training of Journalists' required 80-words-per-minute, despite the fact that the NCTJ does not accredit programmes delivered outside of the UK, and that shorthand routinely defeats all but the most diligent and determined of UK journalism students. What it must be like for Chinese students, one cannot imagine.

Most of the staff interviewed had difficulty in adapting their course to the new local context. Aside from having to, as one interviewee put it, "teach myself a crash-course in Arabian media law", there was often reluctance on the part of the host university to accept an altered course. The selling point for most of these universities was that their students would be receiving exactly the same course as studied in London/Toronto/Chicago/Wellington/Sydney, with no variation.

Any attempt to localise the content was met with bafflement on the part of the parent university administrators and advisers who expected the journalism schools to simply pack up and deliver the content exactly the same as at home, and resentment on the part of the host university's staff who felt that they were being short-changed and deprived of what they had paid for – the EXACT same programme.

Some problems proved insurmountable. At least one programme in the Middle East now has students and staff role-playing English common-law courtrooms so that students can complete the mandatory component on court-reporting, a journalistic function that, while fundamental to the freedom of the press in a democracy, is completely denied to journalists in most of the Middle East and in China. Aside from the potential for farce, this raises serious questions for the staff teaching these programmes – what is the point of teaching this?

For staff teaching on these programmes in the host country (all but one of whom had no prior connection with, or experience of, the host country), this forms the crux of the issue with these programmes. Who are we teaching, and why? Journalism education is a reflexive process, and one that has a close relationship with the industry and society our graduates work in.

Teaching journalism in an environment and culture with which one is unfamiliar is a challenge, and any good journalism teacher would respond to that challenge by learning as much as they could about the context. In the process of the research, however, it became apparent that neither the university administrators in the host country,

nor (in many cases) the staff at the parent institution cared particularly about the students' expectations or future careers, and any attempts to customise content or consider the future employability of the students were either explicitly suppressed or politely ignored until they went away.

Part of this problem stems from the overt commercialisation of these programmes, and this is by no means limited to foreign franchises. As universities in the developed world become more and more commercialised, journalism and media programmes come under increasing pressure. These programmes are far more popular than the industry can support, and we routinely graduate more students than there are places willing to hire them (Luckhurst 2009).

However, in foreign programmes although there may be places for these students to work, the limited nature of the programmes provided creates a serious ethical dilemma for the staff concerned. If one teaches the traditional fourth estate journalism of the Anglo-Saxon world, complete with its watchdog function and oppositional attitude to power, one runs the risk of exposing students to serious consequences, from an inability to function within the framework of their environment, to imprisonment and worse.

If, on the other hand, you simply accept the constraints of the environment and teach the kind of practice that is appropriate for it (complete with the acceptance of bribes, rampant plagiarism and routine "what a wonderful thing the ruler did today for the glory and benefit of his people" stories), you're not teaching what you were trained to do. And, for all of the staff included in the research, this was an uncomfortable compromise, at best.

This is not to say that these programmes are failures, but that they present a specific kind of problem for those involved in them. All of the staff interviewed believed that what they were doing was benefiting the students, and that the programme was making some kind of a difference to media freedom within that country (and those of us who have taught in the Middle East have been watching the events of the last six months: as we see our former students agitating for change and freedom we cannot help but feel some sense of pride for the small role we may have played in that).

All of the teaching staff had thought long and hard about what they were doing, and why, and how to negotiate the delicate balance between cultural sensitivity, preservation of one's job, and the broader ethical considerations and practices of both journalism and teaching – something we should all be doing, regardless of where we are, and who we are teaching.

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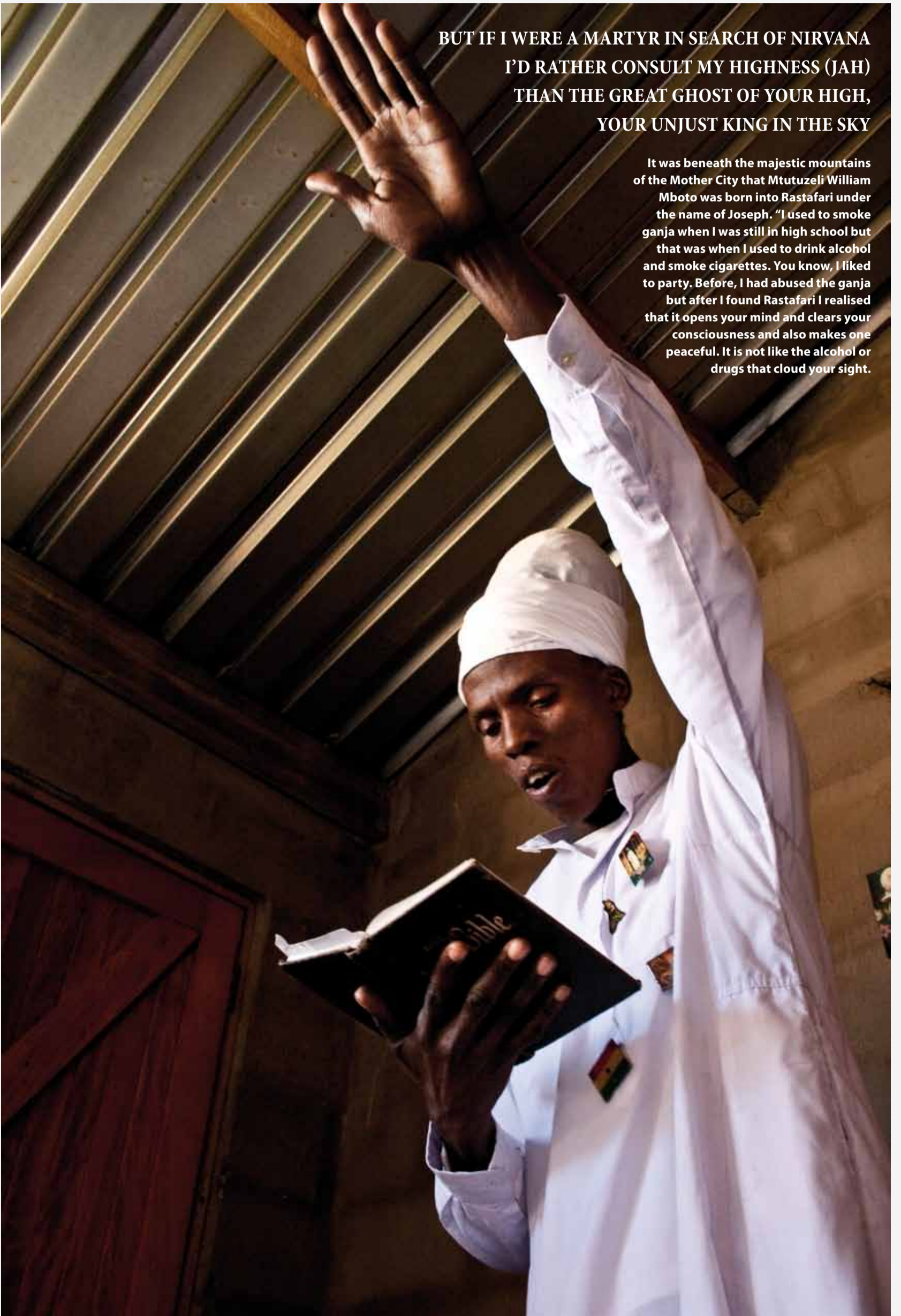
BUT IF I WERE A MARTYR IN SEARCH OF NIRVANA
I'D RATHER CONSULT MY HIGHNESS (JAH)
THAN THE GREAT GHOST OF YOUR HIGH,
YOUR UNJUST KING IN THE SKY

It was beneath the majestic mountains of the Mother City that Mtutuzeli William Mboto was born into Rastafari under the name of Joseph. "I used to smoke ganja when I was still in high school but that was when I used to drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes. You know, I liked to party. Before, I had abused the ganja but after I found Rastafari I realised that it opens your mind and clears your consciousness and also makes one peaceful. It is not like the alcohol or drugs that cloud your sight.

This photo essay was produced as part of the third-year photojournalism curriculum run by Jenny Gordon at the School of Journalism and Media Studies, Rhodes University.

"THE BROTHERS IN CAPE TOWN SHOWED ME THE PATH OF THE RASTAFARI AND IT WAS DURING MY TIME THERE THAT I FOUND MY SPIRITUALITY AND FAITH IN JAH."
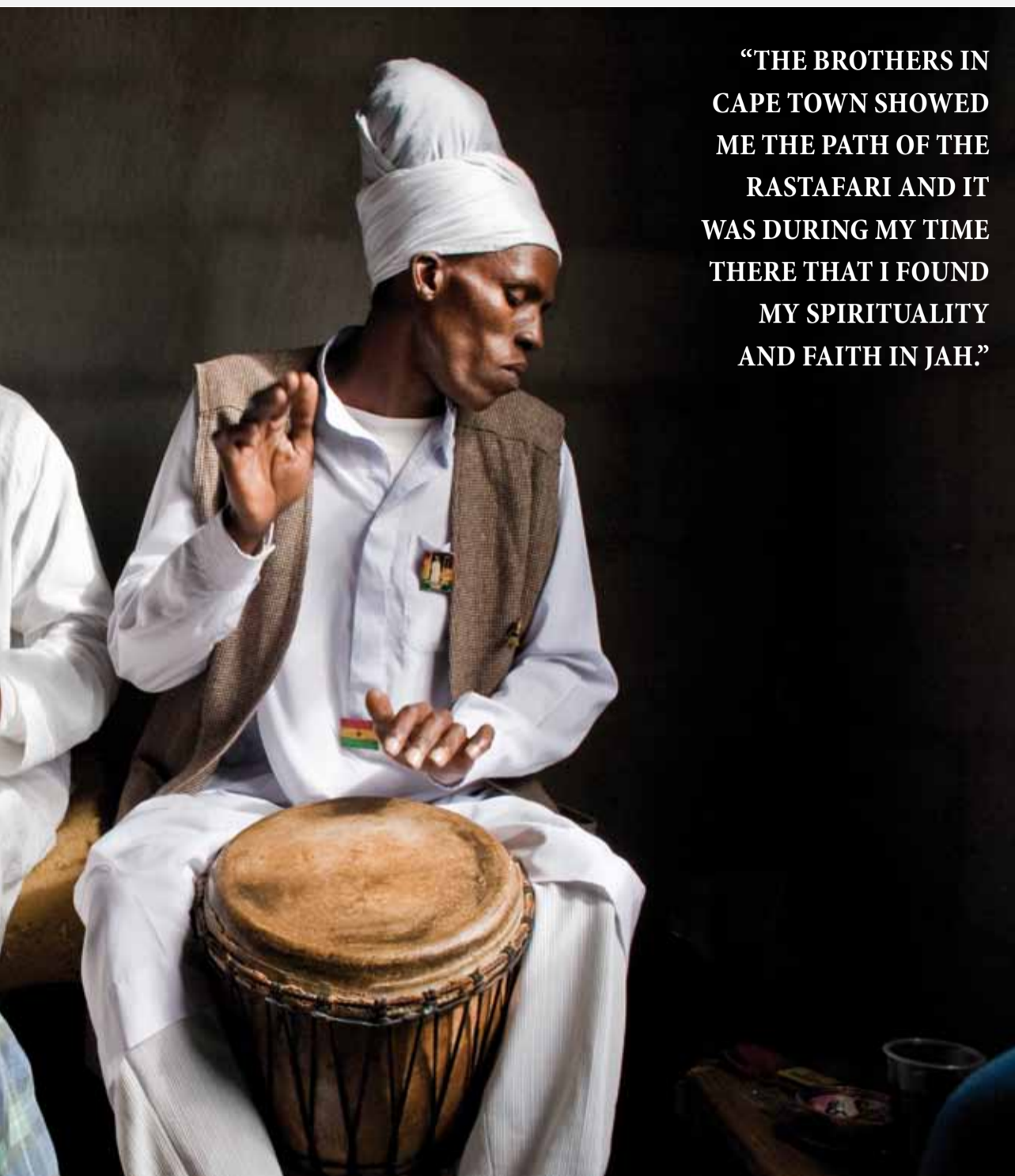
JOSEPH IS FREE
HE BEARS THE NAME OF THE SPIRIT HE WAS REBORN INTO

He is free because he bears the name of the spirit under which he was reborn into Rastafari – Joseph, during the month of February. He is also sometimes referred to as Jah Manasseh by his Rastafari brothers. He tells me that under his isiXhosa birth name, he cannot be free because it comes weighted with too many earthly burdens. He believes that to be truly free, one must not live as a subject to the confines of the systems which man has built so superficially. As such, he does not vote for any other man to wield power over him or participate in politics in any way, he is a being sovereign over himself.

"The only time I voted was in 1994 for Nelson Mandela because it was the first time black people were able to do so. Normally, the Rastafari do not take part in politics because we believe we as people are not subject to the jurisdiction of man. Jah is the supreme authority."

JOSEPH IS FREE
HE WORKS FOR NO OTHER MAN

Joseph makes shoes and bags and various other things out of leather. His shoes in particular are individually crafted works of art, he makes both his own designs as well as custom jobs for people on request. He also does shoe repairs for members of his community. He sells his products at the National Arts Festival every year but says that this year he will not be having a stall. "I want to walk around with all my merchandise hanging from my body so that I can just move between places and sell things. It is too expensive to have a stall; I don't think it's worth paying all the money," he says. He also spends many hours collecting herbs and plants in the mountains and plains that surround Grahamstown. He has an extensive knowledge of the local fauna and flora and knows the plants which can be used for different medicinal and healing purposes. "Mountain potato is good for the skin and for back problems," he says holding a dark brown tuber, fresh from the fertile soil of the Eastern Cape.

SECRECY IS A SLIPPERY AFFAIR

Assume for a moment this scenario: the South African government thinks it is possible that the increasingly unstable state of Canada, where power has recently been usurped by a moustachioed gunslinger who was formally a naval petty officer, has deployed agents to discover some of South Africa's intimate mining secrets. South Africa deploys counter-intelligence officers to Canada, including an agent code-named RS352.

An employee of the Chamber of Mines of South Africa, sympathetic to the compelling aura of the new Canadian leader, gets wind of the deployment of Agent RS352, and provides documentary evidence of his existence to a South African journalist. Should the act of accepting that information alone constitute a criminal offence in South Africa?

How do you know if information is potentially threatening to an individual or South African security until you have seen it?

Change the scenario a bit. What if the Chamber of Mines official provided the information not out of sympathy for the revolutionary Canadian leader, but because RS352 was stupidly deployed with an inadequate cover and was arrested and is now languishing in Canadian jail, known to be one of the most horrible flea-pit prisons in the world.

Revealing the information would be embarrassing to the South African authorities, arguably deservedly. But it would also harm relations between the Revolutionary Government of Canada and South Africa. By making a public issue of it, the publication could force a diplomatic row that until then both sides were keen to keep under wraps.

With the best will in the world, defining secret information is a slippery affair. But it would be patently false to assume that genuinely secret information does not exist and therefore should not be protected. So much depends on how much public trust administrators and politicians can command in constructing rules to govern this information. Judging by the recent arguments about the Protection of Information Bill, the answer is "not much".

Contrary to public opinion, the bill was originally designed to improve, not degrade, South Africa's official secrets legislation. Yet along the line, a whole combination of events caused the debate over the bill to become something of a *cause célèbre*, to the extent that this tricky debate turned into a media rumpus.

The first problem was that the legislation itself was conflated with a different debate about the establishment of media tribunal within the ANC about how to "strengthen" the current regime of self-regulation by the media.

The second problem was these two essentially separate issues coincided with dramatic international events including the Wikileaks saga, in which a whole raft of confidential cables written by US diplomats were leaked. To confuse the issue further, these leaked cables actually helped bring about democratic change in a whole range of North African states. But they also embarrassed some US government officials, and possibly also put some informants at personal risk.

Is it possible to unpick this whole catastrophe?

The starting point is to distinguish the argument over the media tribunal from the actual content of the Protection of Information Bill, formally the State Information Bill, which did not arise out of the Polokwane resolutions and makes no reference to a media tribunal.

The genesis of the State Information Bill predates the ANC's Polokwane conference, and, although it is hard to believe, it was originally intended to open up state information since the existing legislation actually dates back to apartheid days and is patently unconstitutional.

In a paper written for the Nelson Mandela foundation by Iain Currie and Jonathan Klaaren of Wits University, the duo write that the argument in favour of new legislation is unimpeachable.

"The reform of South Africa's antiquated and paranoid security law is a necessity," it says. It was always meant to be subservient to South Africa's existing constitutionally mandated freedom of information act, the Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA).

But somewhere along the line, the ambit of the bill was conceived in a way that took it way beyond "secret" information to include a kind of wholesale management of state information, including information in public sector corporations. The Act became not an official secrets legislation but addressed a wider ambit of the security of information generally.

After a furious debate in parliament and elsewhere, this position has now been reversed, and the information security aspects of the legislation have been removed, leaving official secrets legislation.

What does it say?

The original bill had five categories of information: sensitive, commercial, confidential, secret and top secret. Only the last three now remain. Furthermore, the original description of "national interest" has been narrowed to "national security".

In classification levels, it says

> BUT IT WOULD BE **PATENTLY FALSE** TO ASSUME THAT **GENUINELY SECRET** INFORMATION **DOES NOT EXIST** AND THEREFORE SHOULD NOT BE **PROTECTED.**

state information may be classified as "confidential" if the information is "sensitive information, the disclosure of which is likely or could reasonably be expected to cause demonstrable harm to the security or national security of the republic or could reasonable be expected to prejudice the republic in its international relations".

"Secret" information is classified as "sensitive information, the disclosure of which is likely or could reasonably be expected to cause serious demonstrable harm to the security of national interest of the republic". Or it "could reasonably be expected to jeopardise the international relations of the republic". Or it is likely to endanger the physical security of a person.

"Top Secret" information is that which is likely to cause "serious or irreparable harm to the national security", or "is likely… to cause other states to sever diplomatic relations" with the republic. Or, it may endanger the life of the individual concerned.

The minimum prison sentences for unlawful disclosure have been removed, and there is now provision for appeal to a retired judge rather than a serving cabinet minister. All good.

But the current working draft does not contain provision for a public-interest defence, and this remains controversial. However, the Wits lawyers argue that because the bill is still subject to PAIA (the Protections of Access to Information Act), it could be argued that it effectively does include a kind of public-interest override contained in PAIA.

In other words, if a document is classified "secret", it still needs to be disclosed unless the mandatory or discretionary grounds for refusal applies to it. And even if one or other ground of refusal is applicable, it must still be disclosed if disclosure "would reveal evidence of a… substantial contravention of, or failure to comply with the law; or… an imminent and serious public safety or environmental risk" and the public interest in disclosure outweighs the reasons for non-disclosure.

A real public interest defence is something different however; it does not just allow circumscribed disclosure; it operates as a defence to the criminal penalties. That is quite a distinct concept, say the Wits researchers.

Former intelligence minister Ronnie Kasrils was, in fact, in favour of the inclusion, saying it was a "vital requirement" and if not included would "certainly generate the impression of a government and ruling party wishing to conceal its own misdemeanors by obstructing investigative journalism".

As it stands however, in the draft version it remains a criminal act to not only disclose but even to possess classified information.

The 2008 version of the bill had a different approach to criminalisation, by criminalising the harm caused rather than the mere possession of classified information. The Wits duo suggest this may be a good compromise; not quite a public-interest override, but an escape hatch allowing information to be assessed.

So, what about the examples cited at the start? In the first case, the act of passing on the information alone is a criminal offence, as is the act of receiving it. But if the suggestions for reworking the legislation are accepted, it would only be a criminal act if the information is published and some harm actually comes to Agent RS352.

In the second situation, it is still a bit up in the air. It seems most likely, the disclosure would be morally defensible yet attract criminal sanction. However, there is a chance that even in terms of the draft legislation the journalist would get off, because although it's a state secret, there may have been a substantial contravention of the law.

Clearly, more work needs to be done, and perhaps more campaigning too.

CRACKING DOWN ON THE DIASPORA AND DISSENT

The internet penetration rate in Cameroon, according to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), is 3.8%. Quite unremarkable when compared to other African countries such as Morocco (41.3%), Tunisia (33.9%), Nigeria (28.3%), or South Africa (13.9%). Similarly, Cameroonian presence on leading social media platforms is minuscule. As of June this year, there were only 380 460 Facebook users in Cameroon, that is, slightly over 50% of the country's online population, but a mere 1.97% of the general population (compared to 2.5 million users and 17.5% of the population for Tunisia). Statistics on Cameroonian presence on Twitter are not available, however, anecdotal evidence indicates that there are far less Cameroonians on the microblogging platform.

Given the low internet penetration rate and the fact that Cameroonian cyber-activism is primarily a diaspora-driven endeavour, one would have expected that Cameroonian authorities would be largely indifferent to online dissent and critical speech on the internet. That has, however, not been the case as the Biya regime has been on a warpath against "cyber-terrorism" allegedly perpetrated by diaspora-based cyber-activists whom it accuses of "disinformation and intoxication".

The regime's hostility towards Cameroonian political activism culminated in the adoption of a controversial law on cybersecurity and cybercriminality in December 2010. The law tackles a variety of important issues such as the spread of paedophilia, child cyber pornography, and banking system intrusion, but also criminalises online speech or "the spread of false rumors", to quote its explanatory statement.

Specifically, the law sentences anyone who uses electronic communications to design, to publish or propagate a piece of information without being able to attest its veracity or prove that it was true to a term of six months to two years in jail and/or fined 5 to 10 million Francs CFA. These penalties shall be doubled if the offence is committed with the aim of disturbing "public peace".

In addition, the law holds liable internet service providers and "persons in charge, even gratuitously" for the content "of the storage of signals, written material, images, sound or messages of any nature supplied by the users of such services". In an obvious attempt to cow online activists in the diaspora, the law authorises the Government of Cameroon to leverage international judicial co-operation to prosecute individuals who threaten public order from abroad.

Attempts by the Biya regime to muzzle anti-regime activities on the internet have thus far not had the expected chilling effect. In the last year alone, the number of Facebook pages, blogs, websites and online forums seeking to mobilise Cameroonians around the idea of regime change has more than doubled. Even more disturbing from the point of view of the regime is the fact that Cameroonian cyber-activists have slowly begun to merge their online political activism with offline or grassroots mobilisation – a key lesson from the social media-driven revolutions of Tunisia and Egypt. For example, in February this year, Cameroonian activists abroad used social media platforms to launch a series of anti-government campaigns which were supposed to culminate in nationwide protests on 25 February.

In a pre-emptive move, Issa Tchiroma, Cameroon's Minister of Communications and government spokesperson, took to the airwaves on 22 February to condemn Cameroonians in the diaspora whom he accused of trying to instigate Egypt-style protests: "They are quietly living abroad… send[ing] messages through the internet or Facebook, instigating people to demonstrate… government is aware of the intoxication... Cameroonian families will not allow their children to go to the streets to be massacred."

Although the February protests were mainly concentrated in the city of Douala, due to the massive deployment of troops across the country, the event highlighted the value of social media as a tool for building broad political coalitions, mobilising the public around political campaigns, and for providing an alternative information channel during news blackouts. The events in Douala were reported in real-time on Twitter from where it was picked up by the international media not usually interested in events in Cameroon.

It was therefore no surprise when barely three weeks later, on 8 March, MTN's Twitter via sms service, which allows subscribers to send and receive tweets on mobile phones, was suspended after the government ordered it to be shut down for reasons of "state security". Tchiroma tried to justify the ban by declaring that "it is the government's responsibility to protect the nation", while Biyiti bi Essam, Minister of Post and Telecommunications, argued that the problem was not with communications networks themselves, but with their subversive content. The service was eventually restored 10 days later after widespread international outcry but not before highlighting the Biya regime's increasingly clumsy attempts to muzzle online speech.

And the Biya regime has not relented in its efforts. On 31 March 31, parliament adopted two bills relating to Cameroon's intelligence services, one of which deals with threats stemming from the "rapid development of new technologies easily accessible to criminals and groups nurturing malevolent and aggressive projects against state security and the vital interests of the nation". Like the cyber security law which seems fairly innocuous first glance, this law contains provisions which give intelligence officers a free hand to penetrate, disrupt and hound Cameroonian "subversive" and "cyber-terrorists" cycles abroad, which are supposedly threatening the state.

The Biya regime's obsession with cracking down on Cameroonian online activists may seem excessive and misplaced to observers, however, there is a reason for it. The regime is aware that donor agencies, Western governments, foreign investors and even tourists increasingly rely on online reports when making key decisions about Cameroon. The growth of websites and blogs that are critical of the regime, and of social media platforms that are used to attack the regime is therefore a major cause for concern. In fact, some within the government argue that diaspora online activism has the potential to become an existential threat. The regime is also aware that while the majority of Cameroonians don't have access to the internet, the few who do regularly download and print "subversive" reports which are then widely distributed across the country and even published in local newspapers.

As a result, the Biya regime does not view Cameroonian cyberspace as a viable space for civic engagement and public discourse, instead, it sees it as a threat to the regime – a space that must be either be controlled, co-opted, contained, or simply coerced into submission, even if it is a largely diaspora-driven phenomenon.

ATTEMPTS BY THE BIYA REGIME TO **MUZZLE** ANTI-REGIME ACTIVITIES ON THE INTERNET HAVE THUS FAR **NOT HAD** THE EXPECTED **CHILLING** EFFECT.

ANGOLA'S CYBER OVERKILL

ANGOLA HAS HAD A VERY BUSY 2011 so far, going through a major revision to bring laws in line with the new constitution adopted in February last year. A few new laws are coming to deal with new realities such as the age of the information society. In usual Angolan style, laws are dealt with and sometimes even approved wholesale in "packages" of related bills. One such package related to ICTs came before parliament in May this year, containing a bill that would seek to criminalise day-to-day activities using the internet and ICT equipment. Opposition to the bill spearheaded by the Sindicato de Jornalistas Angolanos (SJA – Angolan Journalists' Trade Union) managed to get the bill chucked out of the package, which went through without it. But how did things get to this point?

The first thing that should be noted is the isolation that has characterised life in Angola for decades. Besides the war, Angola is surrounded by Francophone and English-speaking countries. Shielded beyond this language curtain, coupled to exorbitant hotel prices, Angola manages to stay out of range of international human rights activists and workshops on all kinds of rights, best practices and capacity building.

Plug the country into the world, flip on the lights, and the regime backs off. This we saw years ago with the Press Law, which – when the spotlight fell on it – was put away to gather dust for eight years.

But let's remember that Angola is flush with cash, making it fairly immune to outside pressure. Civil society is disunited, weak and – being primarily donor-funded – suffers from a legitimacy crisis, often accused of doing the work of foreign agencies. UN bodies and International NGOs are equally vulnerable and tread carefully, especially since Angola unceremoniously ordered the closure of the UN Human Rights Office in 2005. Diplomats do at times stand up, but the more prominent embassies are those of countries with vested interests in the oil business.

Journalism in a legal wild west
After years in limbo, the Press Law was finally approved in 2006. As the mother of all media laws, it makes provision for subsidiary laws that cater for specific media sectors and activities. Legislation on radio, television, etc, are in different stages of completion, most held in abeyance.

Public participation in the legislative process is not conducive to debate across a wide spectrum of society. Consultations involve "recognised stakeholders", such as the SJA on media legislation. It is virtually impossible to obtain a digital copy of a draft bill. Photocopies or printed copies are handed out, making it unwieldy to distribute widely to get them under the spotlight of international rights activists.

With no law in place, a private free-to-air television station, TV/Zimbo, and a private radio station have been licensed – on an "experimental" basis, without the prescribed tender processes. The radio station, Rádio Mais, enjoys nationwide coverage, while the Catholic Rádio Ecclésia, is restricted to Luanda area and Rádio Despertar (formerly the Unita radio station) was taken off the air in 2007 for broadcasting beyond its radius. At the same time, would-be applicants for community radio licences are told that they will have to wait until the law is published.

Change in tactics – replace the independent media
With broadcasting taken care of, there was only one sector left to deal with – the pesky independent private weeklies. Well-resourced media groups introduced a swathe of new newspapers, offering better quality papers and good salaries to lure the best journalists from the independent papers. In terms of the Press Law, owners of media enterprises must be on record and cannot hide behind an anonymous "group". This is not happening with Score Media, Media Investments and Media Nova – it is still a mystery as to who exactly owns these groups. All that is known is that they belong to the inner circle. This orchestrated move failed to completely take the wind out of the sails (and sales) of the independents, calling for an outright hostile takeover. Media Investments in one fell swoop bought out *Semanário Angolense*, *A Capital* and 40% of *Jornal Novo* – known for reporting on corruption. Concentration of media is equally in violation of the Press Law.

The drive to control news is such that whereas in other sectors, including telecommunications, the foreign ownership threshold is 50%, this is pegged at 30% for media.

Plugging up the holes
It is this drive to control news that brings us to the law on cyber crimes. The catalyst was no doubt the Arab Spring. There is a difference though. Corrupt as it may be, the ruling People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola has won every legislative election so far. The splintered opposition is weak and poorly resourced and Unita struggles to shake off its war past.

So, what does the MPLA desperately want to hide? The short answer is corruption. All other societal ailments of this oil-rich country can be blamed on corruption. Embezzlement, shady privatisations, forced removals instigated by powerful people, land grabs. That is the kind of stuff that ignites society and that is what the law on internet crimes seeks to prevent.

It is about plugging up the holes in the mesh. When the papers were the problem, they were invariably dealt with either by invoking the famous criminal defamation provisions or laying charges of spreading false news, which is a crime, made easy by government sources invariably refusing to give out information. In many cases, national security could also be invoked, leaving the courts to do the dirty work. That was easy to do when the outlets were few – now the outlets are literally hundreds of thousands.

Hansjoerg Richter

ANGOLA IS **FLUSH WITH CASH,** MAKING IT FAIRLY **IMMUNE TO OUTSIDE PRESSURE.** CIVIL SOCIETY IS DISUNITED, **WEAK** AND – BEING PRIMARILY DONOR-FUNDED – **SUFFERS FROM A LEGITIMACY CRISIS,** OFTEN ACCUSED OF DOING THE WORK OF FOREIGN AGENCIES.

The bill on internet crimes

By its full name, the Law on Combating Crime in the Domain of Information and Communication Technologies and on Information Society Services, is part of a package of laws on ICTs, together with the Law on Electronic Communications and Information Society Services and the Law on the Protection of Personal Data.

The bill highlights the lofty ideals it aims to protect and makes the right noises about protection of copyright and combating child pornography. But beneath the veneer, the real intent of the law is quite apparent. In their eagerness, the drafters elevated it above the Penal Code, stating in Article 6 that provisions in the Penal Code also apply to ICT crimes, "provided they don't contradict" the provisions of this bill. Article 79 says that all legislation contradictory to the provisions of the bill is henceforth repealed. Interesting, as quite a few provisions are in conflict with the Constitution, as pointed out during the debate to block the bill.

The bill targets primarily legal persons, which makes sense as most people do not have internet at home. State institutions are exempt from the law and to add injury to insult, criminal investigators of the police and the judiciary (Angola has an inquisitorial legal system) enjoy carte blanche to search and confiscate data and in some cases even delete it without due oversight.

Penalties range from a few days to years, with most often eight or 12 years – three times that in the case of terrorist organisations. Fines are calculated on the basis of potential monthly earnings. Someone earning R15 000 a month,

sentenced to eight years, would have to pay a fine of R1.45 million. A legal person will be fined three times that – R4.3 million.

Besides the astronomical fines, a company can have its operations suspended or even closed down or have its assets sold to pay the fines – and the owners will still be responsible for paying salaries while out of business. Article 4(b) makes bosses responsible for the cyber crimes committed by their workers if this happens as a result of "lack of surveillance". That in itself would be incentive enough for bosses to control the use of the internet in the workplace.

The SJA and its partners were specifically concerned with the provisions in Article 17 as the biggest threat to freedom of the media and the work of a journalist. Article 17 is indeed unfathomably draconian. It criminalises the use of any recorded material without the express permission of those on it. So, no sound bites, no photos at events, no video material. That, even if journalists collect those at an event for which they had been duly authorised and accredited. And if the journalist received such material from a source, both are liable. Quite a blow to would-be whistleblowers.

The distribution of information with the intention of harming the country's integrity or sovereignty constitutes a crime of terrorism. These provisions are so wide that even information of the spread of a plant disease could be classified as an act of terrorism. Anyone coming into possession – via electronic means, including a mobile phone – of any classified information – can be charged with espionage. If all else fails, the material could still be subject to perusal for any possible copyright infringement.

An attempt to commit an ICT crime is as good as committing it. Everything reverts to lowest denominator, so even accessing someone else's equipment is as good as having gained access to the data therein. Any storage device can be pounced on as containing evidence – even text printed on a network printer. One could get two to eight years in prison plus three times the prescribed fines for "disturbing the peace and quiet" of another person if you do so using ICTs.

A pyrrhic victory

Media freedom is juicy, sexy, it commands worldwide attention and brings in knights ready to join the fight a distant fight. But now there is no fight, there will be no internet crimes bill. The government has outmanoeuvred its opponents – the ICTs legislative package went ahead without the ICTs crimes bill. So now, after "addressing" pressing concerns, the provisions in the bill will be integrated in the new Penal Code being drafted as we speak. Cyber crimes will not have a name to call it by, and any debate on the provisions will be swallowed up and drowned out in the general consultations on the lengthy Penal Code.

LESSONS FROM THE REPUBLIC OF SAMSUNG

Many lessons for developing countries can be found in South Korea. The small East Asian country has come out of decades of dictatorship to become a developmental success story. It is now a model for many developing countries making the transition to democracy and free market economies. South Korea confronted the challenge of establishing a free press in a country with an authoritarian history, but nowadays it is perhaps providing lessons in what not to do.

South Korea's press freedoms were recently downgraded from "free" to "partly free" by Freedom House's Freedom of the Press 2011 survey. Contributing factors included an increase in official censorship as well as government attempts to influence news and information content, says Freedom House. While South Korea's economic and technological advancement garner praise outside the country, the recent regression in media freedoms receives far less attention.

Media freedoms are not something South Koreans take for granted, but are the result of a prolonged battle against authoritarian instincts. A free press was a key victory of the democracy movement of June 1987 made to then-president General Chun Doo-hwan, whose government was forced to cede power by the protests. Prior to the late 1980s, the South Korean media was subject to strict government control and operated with almost no editorial freedom.

After democratisation, South Korea's media had gained formal independence but retained the attributes of authoritarianism. Ownership of media outlets was concentrated in few hands, management lacked transparency and government figures continued to influence coverage.

South Korea's media landscape is still dominated by three main newspapers: the *Chosun Ilbo, Joongang Ilbo* and *Dong-A Ilbo,* which gain much of their power from guaranteed advertising from South Korea's big conglomerates. These three papers account for more than 60% of the South Korean readership. Their influence in public life has earned them the moniker, the "unelected power".

Critics, including Freedom House's recent assessors, cite government censorship as a serious problem among the big newspapers.

According to veteran foreign correspondent Donald Kirk, much of the censorship may come from within the papers themselves. "They're quite supportive of the government and the *chaebol* system. There's an issue of self-censorship. Their views are in accordance with people who are in government and in big business. They're very much dependent on the big corporations for their advertising and they're very much in line with them philosophically."

Like in media markets elsewhere, the new media options provided by advances in technology are eating into newspapers' power in South Korea. Kim Hee-kyung, a former newspaper reporter and editor who quit journalism out of frustration with changes in the industry, said: "The changes in society have reduced the influence of newspapers. But their influence is still strong among the upper classes because the upper classes share interests with the administration. These days major newspapers act as propaganda outlets for the government."

The ruling government of President Lee Myung-bak has fostered warm relations with major media outlets, but it has distanced itself from medium and smaller outlets, which tend to be more critical.

Lee Jung-eun, a national politics correspondent for the *Dong-A Ilbo* newspaper, said: "The Lee Myung-bak government has kept good relations with the major media outlets. The view could be quite different from the liberal and conservative outlets."

Conservative media outlets generally have much friendlier relations with the big businesses that dominate South Korea. These outlets are largely sustained by advertising from South Korean conglomerates. Many in South Korea

The most significant structural change in the South Korean media landscape in recent years was the passing of a media reform bill that relaxed broadcasting ownership restrictions, allowing cross ownership of print and broadcast outlets. The pre-existing law was rewritten to allow the country's big three newspapers to open television networks.

The newspaper companies are hoping this will make up for the losses in revenue and influence they have suffered in recent years. The ruling Grand National Party claims that the media reform bills will promote competition in the media industry, whereas the opposition Democratic Party argues the reform drive reflects a conservative push for more control of the media. Many fear it will become too easy for the large companies to monopolise the spread of information.

When the newspapers' channels hit the air later this year, they will bring the total of major television news networks to seven, all of which will have to share a limited pool of advertising revenue. As critics of the move fret over centralisation pushing out smaller outlets, others are questioning the wisdom of moving into an already-crowded market. There is no guarantee they will all survive. Said Lee of the *Dong-A Ilbo*, "They will have a very bloody fight in their red ocean."

The countries of the Arab Spring have more pressing concerns than the establishment of a free press. They need to be primarily concerned with devising a more just division of power and addressing the materials needs of citizens, many of whom live without proper access to education or health care.

Developing countries can learn from both the mistakes and successes of South Korea. Recently liberated countries would do well to heed the example of South Korea's persistent pressure for a free press from an engaged and concerned public.

MEDIA FREEDOMS ARE NOT SOMETHING SOUTH KOREANS **TAKE FOR GRANTED**, BUT ARE THE RESULT OF A **PROLONGED BATTLE** AGAINST **AUTHORITARIAN INSTINCTS.**

feel the media is not at a sufficient distance from the government and business, often opting to be uncritical.

For example, the Samsung group's strong influence on the South Korean media can be considered a serious problem. "Samsung is the most sensitive issue in Korean journalism. Samsung funds almost all newspapers in Korea, so the papers don't dare to report Samsung's faults. They hide everything bad that Samsung does. It's not the Republic of Korea; it's the Republic of Samsung," Kim Hee-kyung said.

They may avoid South Korea's current troubles by insisting on greater separation between the media, big business and government and a more transparent style of management from the establishment.

Protestors in South Korea in the late 1980s and in the Arab world in the spring of 2011 learned that the euphoric movement of ousting a dictator is not an end, but the beginning of the much longer process of establishing a just society. As the case of South Korea shows, the fight for media freedom is long and harsh, but also rewarding.

I DIDN'T SEE IT COMING

There were 15 of us shoehorned into a meeting space the size of a bathroom. It was lunch break, on the last day of a conference on democratic transitions or some such, in Dakar. It was early 1994. Samir Amin, the Egyptian economist and author of *Eurocentrism* and dozens of other books, was presiding.

"And you, Marais," he said, "you're in charge of the book on South Africa; we'll talk about the structure later."

"I think there's been a mistake," I protested. "Everyone here is an academic. You write essays and books – that's what you do. I'm a journalist. I write articles. I can't do this."

"That doesn't make sense," Amin said, with a dismissive wave. "You'll write the book. We'll talk later."

We talked. I relented. I wrote the book like a journalist would. Or like I thought a journalist would: Gather information, sift and filter. I read, did interviews, read again, then began writing… only to see more questions proliferate. So I read and discussed more, wrote, read more, wrote, realised there was more reading and talking and thinking to be done. You get the picture.

That's when I realised Amin was wrong: This really is different. Not so much because you're now writing 120 000 words, as opposed to 1 200 or 4 000 (yes, there was a time when 4 000-word pieces got published – and read by people besides family and close friends); it's not the sheer toil that's so unique. It's the liberty it involves.

A book deadline isn't like a newsroom deadline. It's not that hulking presence that sucks the air out of the room, leaves you cross-eyed and flinching. For most of the process, it is a faint, distant glimmer. Between it and you lies this vast expanse of freedom – to experiment, pursue ideas, change your mind, discover that a passing remark flares into pages of discussion, or that pages of text should invert into a footnote. Most of all, you acquire the freedom – the luxury – to reflect, to "lose" yourself in the process of thought.

I tried to finish my first book, *South Africa: Limits to Change*, while senior producer on SABC Radio's AM Live back in the mid-1990s. Awash in the flicker of daily news, I figured this was the perfect launch point for longer-form writing. The facts lay close at hand; all that was needed was the time to stitch them together. Wrong.

The bustle of daily, even weekly, news and analysis involves a different arrangement of time and space. It pins you in the realm of the immediate and the literal. Room for reflection is cramped, and this imposes a certain obviousness, which a rare few journalists consistently manage to escape. You're not really thinking; you're making judgment calls, a lot of it instinctive and instantaneous.

A book, I found, involved a more languid, "dreamy" process. You migrate from the literal to the lateral, the angles of approach multiply, and thinking becomes more elastic, fractal, unpredictable, narcotic even.

Magazine journalism can involve something similar, but within a much more regimented order. I experienced book writing as a spellbound, trance-like affair. Still do. And I still can't find that zone on-demand in the hour or two I lever from another schedule. I locate it only when I have the time to lose myself in it.

Another difference emerged. I was now constructing (and dismantling) arguments, marshalling factual data to test

or compose them. Those data were not simply illustrative, the decorations one applies to an opinion, nor did they point decisively to simple, singular conclusions. Often they were gateways to other circuits of questions, and yet more exploration.

News journalism, I felt, had prepared me poorly for working with data, especially statistical data. In the downsized newsroom, the tyranny of deadlines invites a casual approach to facts. Often they're not even checked, and primary sources are neither sought nor provided. Repetition seems to confer on data the status of factual "truth".

If anything, that degeneration has worsened. The dissolving barrier between news and opinion seems to sanction ever more lax and opportunistic handling of factual data. Odd, because the internet makes it so much easier and quicker to check and contest "facts". But it has also, of course, spawned a vast excrescence of showy, flippant opinion, much of it in the form of blogs. The upshot is a bigger, more frantic contest for readers' attention (and time), which encourages an even more cavalier approach, and which rewards flashy notions over careful exposition. It also delivers on the interactive appeal of writing in ways that books cannot rival.

Almost all journalism nowadays enters the public realm in both inked and digitised formats. The latter invite readers to comment, signal their dis/like, and insert an article into the chitter of social media. It exposes journalists to readers as never before, all of which titillates – including the disapproval. Like all performers, journalists crave attention – and even criticism gratifies the ego.

On that front, long-form writing disappoints. For the most part you're deprived of an audience. It will arrive at some point, but by then the thrill will feel faint. Your book might trigger pride (or surprise – I often have no conscious memory of having written entire sections, and find myself reading them as a stranger would), it might even encounter admiration. But it never acquires the immediacy, the quick "high" of journalism.

So the sprawl of time and the freedom that makes writing a book such a distinctive and bewitching experience comes at price. Whereas journalism is a social act, long-form writing is a solitary, almost hermetic one. Which makes book writing – for all the reflection, self-questioning and ambiguity it involves – an extremely declarative act. Yet it separates the author from the witness.

Recompense arrives in the form of recognition, though that positions you at the mercy of readers. It's an exacting but proper type of democracy. Your book demands not five or 15 minutes of a readers' attention, but claims entire days of their lives. Leaving aside publishers' marketing (meager to absent for serious non-fiction), those readers decide the book's fate, as they should. They, and pure happenstance – some event or development that directs topical interest toward the book.[1] You can work the lecture and interview circuit, but it won't shift the basic arc of that destiny. And much of that, oddly, occurs by word-of-mouth, slowly and incrementally. By the time you realise your book's done surprisingly well, you can barely remember writing it.

What will have changed, though, is the perception of others. Suddenly, there are invitations to conferences and seminars (to speak, rather than only observe and listen), requests for interviews, slots on talk shows, pleas for articles and soundbytes. Emails arrive addressed to "Prof Marais", and interviewers decide that you're an "economist" or "public health expert" – even when you're nothing of the sort.

One is taught to associate books – and their authors – with a certain assuredness, a sense that the written text is basically a transcription of knowledge and insights that mill, more or less fully formed, in the author's mind. That may apply to writers in academia, but not, I think, to those who stay journalists at heart.

What we "journo-writers" bring to the craft is curiosity, a kind of puzzle-solving monomania, and the arrogant confidence that we can crack the code, any code. The pleasure of writing, of materialising a book is not so much the writing of it, but the process of discovering what you write: the exploration, the hunt.

The rest feels incidental… until you feel the heft of the published volume, and find yourself wondering, "How did that happen?"

Hein Marais' new book South Africa Pushed to the Limit *is published by UCT Press and Zed Books.*

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1. When I wrote a short book on AIDS policy in South Africa in early 2000 (*To the Edge*), for example, nobody knew that Thabo Mbeki would embroil himself and the government in AIDS "denialism". Serendipity meant the book got outsized attention. Five years later, a much better book of mine (*Buckling: The Impact of AIDS in South Africa*) encountered none of that good fortune.

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to Review issue 31

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